



What I most remember about being in the war in Viet Nam is the terrible uncertainty that burdened all of us soldiers

Would we get through this day? Would we get through this month? Would our luck run out and we wound up in a body bag?

Almost every American soldier who came to Viet Nam would initially start a calendar and mark off each day as it went by. Each of us had a sentence of 365 days. Every day was a minor triumph. Every month was a victory.

I can remember standing in the hallway of our headquarters building in Nha Trang City. There was a large display with names on metal plates attached to the display. These were the soldiers who had given their lives. I calculated how many soldiers had been in Viet Nam with my unit and how many had been killed. I tried to figure what were my chances and probabilities.

Also events could happen very quickly. I remember one young lieutenant who had only been "in country" for one week. He was sent out to the border with his unit to take back part of an "A" Camp that had been partly overrun a few days before. The enemy was holding on and seemed determined to wipe out the entire camp. So the young lieutenant raced up the outer hill of the camp, urging his men onward, and attacked the enemy holding camp trenches. The enemy bullets cut into the attackers' ranks and the lieutenant fell, mortally wounded. The camp was retaken because of this aggressive spirit, but at the supreme cost. All the training, all the sweat, all the courage, and one week was one soldier's career and life.

Another time on a beautiful Sunday afternoon, the enemy rocketed our base. All of the base soldiers spent the afternoon and evening hunkered down in the bunkers in full battle gear. Where was I? Earlier that day I had a few hours off which allowed me and some fellow soldiers to head to a sandy white beach several miles away from the base. So we enjoyed a few hours of rest, a barbecue dinner, and even swam in the warm bay waters. When we returned late in the evening, we found the base at full alert. War had these contrasting moments when one group of soldiers were going through hell while another group was headed for Rest and Recreation in Bangkok or Hong Kong.

Many times I took helicopter trips to various places including remote "A" camps on the borders and returned safely to our base camp. I marveled at how the pilots flew their patterns and sometimes dropped to tree level in order to avoid enemy fire. Again we were playing a form of Russian roulette. Our helicopter made it through, other copters

# Memorial Day 緬懷為國捐軀的將士



War in Viet Nam  
Joseph Patrick Meissner, Veteran of Viet Nam

would be shot down and their passengers wounded or killed.

For all of us, death was always nearby. Early one morning our base was rocketed by the enemy. Their normal procedure was to fire a few long range mortars from the low nearby hills, hurt or kill some of us, and then race away before we could return fire. At about 7:00, I headed across the base and approached our office building. In the roof there was a huge hole. A rocket had smashed into our building and sprayed deadly fragments everywhere. As one of the other soldiers reported at the morning briefing, "If we had been at work earlier, we would all be casualties."

The strange fact was that anything could happen at any time and in any place. Even in the "rear areas," there was always the risk of death or injury, even while walking down a street filled with people. At the same time, soldier could go weeks patrolling out in the jungles and never hear an angry shot or spot enemy activity.

So I endured my time and finally received my orders to return to the United States. I packed my six boxes of various items, taped them tight, and sent them to the base post office. All of the boxes survived and reached my home in Ohio. I bought various gifts and gave them to the local Vietnamese whom I had come to friends. I had books and jewelry boxes and other PX items. To one woman who had been our year long interpreter, I gave her a heavy red English dictionary.

Later, when she and her family had to leave Viet Nam in 1975, all of them resettled in our Cleveland area. She had the dictionary with her.

War is a terrible and unexplainable human activity. There are over fifty eight thousand American soldiers who gave their lives in Viet Nam. There are so many wounded and crippled. There are also thousands of soldiers who came home physically all right, but even to this day they have not returned in heart and mind. They are the ongoing victims of the battles. At the same time, many of us forget there were over 300,000 Vietnamese soldiers who gave their lives in the war for a free country. And the enemy? They suffered losses of over 600,000. These statistics do not even begin to count all the civilians—the old people, and the women and the children—who were hurt or killed.

It is now over forty years later and yet I can still remember the smells of colored smokes, the smell of the shells, and the sweet horrible odor of bodies rotting after a battle. I was lucky and the roll of the dice has left me alive. Every day I thank God for that and I try to remember how much I owe to those who did not make it back alive. Finally, there must be a better way for all of us on this planet to resolve our problems than to resort to killing and war.

## 紀念日 懷念戰友

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千百年來,在世界在中國都發生過無數次戰爭,雖然時間、地點、規模都不同,但不外乎為領土之爭、利益之爭、權力之爭。戰爭總是非常殘酷的,必定會造成生靈塗炭、民不聊生、財產損失、江山蹉跎。所以世界上絕大多數人都反對戰爭,熱愛和平。中國一百多年來更是累遭侵略,任人宰割,戰火不斷,苦難深重,中國人民更加熱愛和平。過去因為中國落後所以挨打,現在中國開始崛起,比過去強大了,但有人在大造“中國威脅論”!不管怎樣,歷史告訴我們,保衛祖國是要有實力的。只有祖國的強大,每一個中國人才能揚眉吐氣。

我原是一個軍人,1951年為保家衛國參軍,1952年入朝。從鴨綠江徒步走到三八線,當時只有十六歲。每天夜行軍八九十里,身上負重幾十斤,腳底下血泡一個連一個,不僅要咬着牙跟上部隊,還要一路做宣傳鼓動工作,因為我是連隊的文化



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教員。遇到下雨,渾身濕透,忍到宿營地就和衣倒地而睡。一天部隊過清川江,因有美機封鎖,連續奔了好幾里,那晚天黑得伸手不見五指,當我走在鐵路橋中央時,突然聽到有人呼喊:火車來了!當時我來不及躲避,趕緊扒在橋邊欄杆上,這時火車就在我身邊飛馳而過,好險啊!有天白天,我們在宿營地休息,美機飛來偵察,不久就俯衝下來,一顆炸彈就在我

不遠處爆炸,還好沒碰到我一根汗毛!到了三八線,炮彈整天在頭頂上呼嘯而過,虧得不是專門來找我的。但我的戰友在執勤過程中犧牲了,炮彈將他的面部全削掉了,真是慘不忍睹!至今我常懷念他。1953年朝鮮停戰了,以後我得到回國進軍械技術學校學習的機會,經過刻苦學習,畢業時獲得“優等生”稱號,以後一直在大軍區機關工作。1969年轉業到地方。

今年我已75歲,但身體比較健康,想想我那些為國犧牲的老同學、老戰友,他們什麼都沒有享受到,祖國和人民應該不會忘記他們!我是個幸運兒,至今能健康地活着,還有什麼不滿足的?

During the Civil War, many newspapers had long articles telling President Lincoln how to win the war. By way of reply, he told about a man riding horseback on a dark night. The man lost his way

during a terrible storm (war). Each crash of thunder (complain, criticism, argument) made the ground shakes. But every flash of lightning (prayer) helped him to see where he was going. After one very loud clap of thunder (very loud complain, very loud criticism, very loud argument), he fell to his knees and prayed. "Dear Lord," he said, "if it's all the same to you, could you please give a little more light (prayer) and a little less sound (complains, criticisms, arguments)?"

\*\*God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over all the earth..." (Genesis 1:26) Every your



thoughts good or bad thoughts are influencing every atom of the universe. Every your thoughts, words and actions are the cause of war or peace on earth. Please lower your tone of voice and speak gently (kindly) and pray for our soldiers who are fighting for the freedom of you and me, and the whold humanity in the world. Your freedom is not free, millions people gave their lives

for it. Be grateful. Thank you. God bless you and God bless America and my prayers are with you all.

With love,

Gina

Eunju Gina Smith



## 老友重聚

哥倫布老人 劉欽宴

沈水同窗硯  
春城共燭光  
友誼結鄉梓  
別情擊異邦  
垂老始一聚  
舉杯盡十殤  
暮雲與春樹  
何時再返鄉

