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On **Veterans Day** we gather to show our respect and reverence to those who served our country and gave their all. Words cannot express the experience of battle and the lasting memories one carries as each Vet lives in the shadow of the sights and sounds of war.

When a soldier goes away to defend freedom the family left behind struggles with the possibility of never seeing their loved one again.

I want to express my thanks to those who supported their serving soldiers while they were away.

I was inducted as a conscientious objector into the U.S. Army on June 7, 1967 and sent to Ft. Sam Houston, Texas for training as a Combat Medic in a 20 week program. After leave I was sent to Ft. Lewis, Washington for a jet flight to Cam Ranh Bay, Viet Nam.

I recall a Chinook flight to Pleiku where I would report to the Fourth Infantry at Camp Enari for a unit assignment. As a replacement you were placed on a Duce ½ with 15/20 soldiers to be taken to different infantry companies. I was assigned to **3rd Platoon Company C of the 1/22 Battalion, 4th Infantry Division**. This random selection reminds one of how your military destiny is shaped by a chance assignment. I was sure I would be in an evac hospital with 3 hots and a cot, not humping the boonies living out of a backpack! A few days after sharing a Thanksgiving meal in camp, I took a chopper to our highlands jungle camp. The first day I experienced combat and a night hike to another location with the company. All I owned was what I had on my back, a 60/70 LB. rucksack, containing my shelter ½, poncho, 4 days c-rations, medical supplies, and personal items.

From November 67 to April 68, I lost 40 lbs. and received numerous tick bites and skin fungus infections. When we would move to a firebase each platoon would take turns patrolling on search and destroy missions. We were combat assaulted to different location for a week at a time during Dec/ Jan.

The Chinese New Year called "**TET**" was celebrated Feb 1st. The **NVA/VC** hoping to use the sound of the celebrations as cover for their attacks on the cities aiming to cause a general uprising! We were airlifted by chopper to provide airport security in the city of **Kontum**.

Over the course of a week we helped **Co D**. clear out the **NVA** imbedded in the **Special Forces** compound north of the city. I was called forward to give aid to a wounded soldier pinned down in the building complex; as I moved forward an **NVA** soldier rose out of the rocketed building and started to draw down to aim at me. The men who were near me were able to shoot before he could fully aim on me. They did not have to do that but I pray that I was valuable enough for them to protect me. I had replaced another medic who refused to move forward during a November firefight even when the men drew down on him he would not get off the ground. I knew what to do; whenever and wherever I was need I was to respond. The men always checked where the medic was before going on patrol. All the medics were respectfully called "**DOC**".

On **Feb 5** our company was directed to patrol the firing range east of **Kontum**. The sights and sounds of a large enemy unit were all around. While 2 platoons broke for lunch a squad provided security @ 150 yards away. We heard an explosion and one squad member came running back to say that they had been hit by a rocket and had taken casualties. We ran back to the shell crater where the injured buddy was. Others moved up to form a perimeter for protection as we could hear the **AK-47**'s being all around us. Some of the men thought I was at 12 on the perimeter and moved up to cover me and ran into a machine gun nest that was keeping us pinned down. They found me at 9 and a machine gun team came to the crater to help. One of the ammo carriers was next to me and received a

fatal head injury. I will someday ask the Lord in heaven why I was not hit by that shot. We were in the firefight till about 4 PM when a tank took out the machine gun. We lost 8 men in this ambush.

Much more went on that we don't have time for or that I do not recall. We were on patrol during Feb, March and April, doing search and destroy missions till we were sent to **Chu Moor Mt. 6 miles from the Cambodian border near Kontum** where an NVA regiment was dug in. We attacked the Mt. on the 26, 27 and 28th. each time taking casualties. On the evening of the 27 we received orders to attack the hill on the 28th no matter how many men were left! When we heard that we figured it was all over for us and that we would lose our lives. As senior medic I knew I had to be with my men.

On the morning of the 28th I found a place to read my New Testament and prayed to the Lord that I knew I could do nothing to save myself and that if he saw fit to save me I would serve him by being a teacher according to His will! When the command came for us to leave our bunkers to attack the hill a jet was dropping a 500 LB bomb on the MT. The NVA used the sound to cover the mortar noise as we were moving up. About 20 ft. away I saw a flash and felt my right hand go numb just like you do when you bump your elbow. I thought I had just lost my hand but I looked down and it was still there; I knew I was hit so I returned to the bunker and told the 1st Sergeant I was hit. He lifted my right collar and his eyes got big as he confirmed the injury. I was also hit in the other arm and both legs but I did not know that. The med-evac chopper came in with 3 gunships to cover us and suppress any NVA fire. Of the 120 men in the company, 30 were KIA and 15 were choppered out; the 70 injured were treated by their fellow soldiers or medics.

My friend **Richard Cassano** escorted me to the LZ to help load the wounded; he never made it back to his foxhole!

Another great medic, **Bud Roach**, came in to replace me when I left. Come to find out that there were no other medics on the ground and that I was the last one to leave till he arrived to evacuate the rest of the men.

When the chopper landed at the aid station the corpsmen did not move because we were such a sight; me with no helmet just boonie hat, sunglasses, a 5 day beard and a messy uniform. The sargt. ordered them to get the wounded off because they were hesitant to be in such a mess. Inside the station they thought I was a hippy and moved me to a corner to protest the war!

After I recuperated 4/6 weeks in Japan I was assigned to Dewitt Army Hospital at Ft. Belvoir, VA to assist in the emergency room from June 68 to April 69. After my discharge I finished my Education Degree at CAU and started 38 year educational career in 1970 as I had promised the Lord.

The beautiful young girl I was dating wrote to me mostly every day and she would send me care packages ½ a week to tell me I was not forgotten. I want to thank JO, my family, friends and the VA for being there all these many years and what they have done to show their appreciation for my service.

When you go to the **Viet Nam Wall**, please go to **panel 52 E** and see the names of the 30 + fellow soldiers from **Company C** who gave their best on **Chu Moor MT. on April 28 of 1968**. Since 2003 those that remain have met each June to continue the legacy left by those fallen heroes.

You may Google my name to see some of the photos of my **Viet Nam** experience!

Greater Love hath no man than to give his life for his fellow men!

Will you join me in continuing to cherish their honorable sacrifice.