

FOREWORD

Many years ago, when I originally began this adventure my goal was simply to ensure that my grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and beyond would have means to learn something of their heritage. However, as I traveled further down this road, my goals changed dramatically. I soon came to realize that my efforts should not be about me, but rather the incredible young men with whom I served and my place among them.

Prior to setting pen to paper, I committed to being accurate, pull no punches, and let the chips fall where they may. The reader can trust that every event described within these pages did occur, although, the exact surrounding circumstance may have been different. To accomplish the task, I was forced to delve into numerous command chronologies, after-action reports, and the corroborated memories of others, as well as my own, all of which, until I began my research, I had painstakingly attempted to forget, or at least bury deep within my memory. As a result of my research and reliving the suffering that Vietnam was, I realized that rather than bury these memories, America needs to be made aware of and appreciate the unequaled mental and physical suffering the young men it sent off to war in Vietnam were forced to endure.

The vast majority of Americans are totally unaware of so much regarding the daily suffering that our young men were forced to endure in Vietnam. Imagine, if you can, ninety continuous days of jungle warfare during the unrelenting rain of the northern monsoon season. Being sent off to war in the “sub-tropics” of Southeast Asia, yet, for a three-month period, shiver through the nights, soaking wet, with temperatures in the mid to lower 40 degree Fahrenheit range. Forced to endure the hardships of combat for as many as three months at a time without a hot meal or a hot shower, with the skin on your face and hands shriveled up from the monsoon rains, suffering through the pain of trench foot, and countless additional diseases and anomalies. Your uniform, not just dirty, but rotting off your body. Months at a time of nothing but twenty year old WWII or Korean War leftover C-rations. Being covered in blood after removing twenty to thirty leeches from your body, each leaving behind an anticoagulant to enhance bleeding, and night after night of standing in a fighting hole, mid-calf deep in rainwater, in pitch blackness like you have never witnessed before, waiting to either kill another human being, or be killed. The mental torment of continuously patrolling the same tens of thousands of square meters, known to be laced with hundreds, if not thousands of mines and booby traps. And finally, casualties! What goes through a young man’s mind as he

helplessly look down at a friend lying at his feet with a leg blown off, from a mine, bleeding profusely and going into shock. A courageous corpsman, often times dodging enemy fire, scrambles his way to the casualty and immediately attempts to stop the loss of blood, and perhaps save a life. It's all quite easy to describe in several hundred words or less, but try living through it for 360 days.

I believe in my heart that the WWII generation is and shall always be the greatest generation. But think of this! During WWII, the average number of days per year a Marine spent in actual combat was approximately forty five. Granted they were forty five days of terribly violent combat. However, once the island was secure they went back to Australia for ten months or more to make ready for the next island hopping campaign. The average length of actual combat time for thousands of young men in Vietnam was eight times longer or as much as 360 days.

In Vietnam, the Marine Corps casualty rate was more than double that of any other service. Marines suffered a total of more than 103,000 killed or wounded. One quarter of all Marines who served in Vietnam were either killed or wounded, almost double the percentage of any other service. Not many Americans are aware of the fact that the Marine Corps sustained 13,000 more casualties in Vietnam than during all of WWII. Finally, as a result of "Agent Orange," Vietnam veterans are still fighting the war. Notwithstanding the fact they are considerably younger, Vietnam veterans, for the past 40 or more years, have been dying from cancer and other diseases associated with "Agent Orange" at a rate considerably higher than the much older WWII or Korean veterans.

Once I realized all of the above, my overall purpose in this writing changed, as did the audience it was intended for. It became more about the thousands of young men who served with honor and distinction, whose lives were forever changed. Especially those who gave all and will never sire a son or daughter, never celebrate a child's birthday, never welcome in a New Year with family, and never hear a grandchild, whisper in his ear... "I love you Pop-Pop."

Finally, I would like to say thank you, especially to Terry, my wife, and my best friend, and our three children. Of whom, I am extremely proud. To each and every one of the magnificent young Marines I served alongside of in Vietnam. The foundation of whatever pride I may have in mind and heart, is to have served with each of you.

He which hath no stomach to this fight, let him depart, and crowns for convoy put into
his purse.

We would not die in that man's company that fears his fellowship to die with us.

This day is called the feast of Crispian,

He that outlives this day, and comes safe home, will stand a tip-toe when this is
named, and rouse him at the name of Crispian.

Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars, and say,

"These wounds I had on Crispian day."

But he'll remember, with advantages, what feats he did that day.

This story shall the good man teach his son, and Crispian, Crispian, shall ne'er go by,
from this day to the ending of the world.

But we in it shall be remembered,

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.

For he today that sheds his blood with me shall forever be my brother.

Henry V. Act IV Scene iii (3)

William Shakespeare

Semper Fidelis

Frank McCarthy

Major USMC retired