Gentlemen,

It has been a few weeks since we all traveled as part of the Honor Flight. I have sat down many times and tried to write a letter to show my appreciation for your efforts. This morning I was awoken by a phone call from my mother. Last night my father’s spleen ruptured and he was first taken by ambulance to the hospital in Medford, and then flown by medevac to Wausau’s Aspirus hospital. Because of his lung disease and cancer, as well as the result of his past surgeries, there was some doubt on whether or he would survive the necessary emergency surgery. Being the fighter he is, my dad chose to have the surgery and by God’s grace, he survived. We now wait for word on if he will ever be able to be removed from the breathing machine that was used during his surgery.

I am not a poet, or a writer, so my appreciation for what you have done for my dad may not seem like much. I wear my emotions on my sleeve and on my face so I can only describe the tears of pride that are now rolling down my face. There is not a fitting way to describe what the trip did for my father, most of all the “Welcome Home.” But, please know that for years, he kept his time in Vietnam to himself, and after 48 years he was finally able to share his emotions with his family. No matter what happens in days, months, or years to come, he is now at peace with those memories from years ago.

I look forward to crossing paths with each of you again in the years to come. What you have done for one veteran, and now for his family can never be fully repaid. Please know that I carry a special place for each of you in my heart and that if there is ever anything that I can do to assist your efforts with our veterans, please ask. I am forever indebted.

Yours respectfully,

Bryce Kelley

**PS from NFHF: John L. Kelley died 10/3/2013, five days after this note from his son Bryce**