

Respectfully submitted by Duane J. Pupp

## Why Are We Here today ?

Veterans Day presentations at two schools at Auburndale and three schools at Stratford November 10 & 11 2016  
Duane J. Pupp

Three short stories I hope tie together for you:

**Elmer Hayes** was our band director at Stratford High School for 40 years. Elmer was also our bugler at VFW Post 6352 in Stratford for over 50 years ! When he talks about "taps" at our Honor Guard in funerals there is an almost religious reverence and awe in what he says: "There are only 24 notes in taps. I try to draw out each note to get the most out of it I can.". He was stationed in Fort Sheridan, Illinois. He is 92 now. He remembers dates, times, events as though they were yesterday.

I was discharged from the U.S.S. Enterprise on Pier 12 Norfolk, Virginia on January 7, 1965. I was processed out by 09:30 hours. Even though I was really tired of military rules and regulations it took me till 14:00 hours to leave that ship. Sometimes it is really really hard to leave what is then your 'family' knowing you will never see most of them again. Like Elmer, I remember every detail of that day. I went out Gate 2 to my civilian locker and changed into my 'civvies'. You did not want to be seen in uniform in civilian life. That was it. No welcome ceremony at Pier 12, no welcome home at home home. For most of us here that was how it was in the 1960's. For most of us these precise dates and times never leave us.

Recently I attended a presentation by Holly Chilsen, Channel 7 newscaster. She talked about preparing the nightly news like for 2 or 3 hours and sometimes late breaking news can change it all.

She noticed I was wearing my Honor Flight gear. She asked me "what was it that impressed you most about *your* honor flight. I think, on the spur of the moment, I said something about the triangle of Lincoln - Vietnam - Korean memorials being impressive but also in easy walking distance of each other. But Holly really made me think. My most impressive memory will be about the men.

How about: Ninety-eight men all laughing and crying at the same time. I think the other 97 guys got the same feeling about our flight: **WELCOME HOME !**

What Elmer said, what Holly asked, what I experienced has kind of all came together for me. I hope it makes sense to you.

PS: Holly, I remember Walter John Chilsen very well.

It must have been a zoo to fill each day with limited resources and technology in the 1950's. If you have anecdotes about his time you wanna share them with us at our VFW meeting?