

Dennis Strecker
2019 Never Forgotten Honor Flight #35



On April 8th, I was honored to go on the Never Forgotten Honor Flight from central Wisconsin along with my guardian, daughter Paula. What a privilege and incredible experience it was from the time we entered the Hilton Garden Hotel in Wausau for the banquet, our flight, the tour of Washington DC Memorials, and until we reached home late Monday. It was a Welcome Home celebration that wasn't there in the 60's or 70's when I and other Vietnam Veterans came back..

I served in the Vietnam War completing three tours in country for a total of about 31 months. The first tour was in DaNang in 1965; since we were sent there from Guam our time in country did not count as a complete tour of 13 months. Therefore, I was required to go back in early 1966 to our next site in ChuLai and rotating back to the states in early 1967. I volunteered for a third tour in 1967 and was sent to Hue/PhuBai. During this period the Tet offensive occurred. Our battalion was relieved of duty in mid-February, and I was discharged from our main base in California in March of 1968.

We were told during the discharge process not to wear our uniforms while traveling due to the anti war movement. I was fortunate not to have experienced any of the hateful anti-war incidents as some returning veterans did. No one called me a "baby killer"; no one spit on me.

After a few years, I went to one military service club and found that Vietnam vets were not very welcome by the older veterans. We were told that we lost the war. I feel we did not lose the war, a peace settlement was negotiated and we pulled our troops out of Vietnam only to have North Vietnam violate the agreement and take over all of Vietnam.

From 1968 until about 1998, I didn't talk about the war. I kept it all to myself, as many veterans did. I believe it was in 1998 the Traveling Vietnam Wall came to Oconomowoc for the first time, and I went to see it. I met an incredible group of guys from Vietnam Veterans of American Chapter 635. I spent much of the night talking with them, people who understood our issues. It was soon after that I was able to say I was a veteran and was proud to be a Vietnam Veteran. They are my brothers.

The service club did, after a few years, began accepting and receiving the Vietnam Veterans. I have since become a life member of the Vietnam Veterans of America, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Disabled American Veterans.

Since retirement, I devote much of my time serving and honoring our veterans. While we lived in Colorado, I had the privilege to serve on as honor guard providing funeral honors at Fort Logan National Cemetery. Upon returning to Wisconsin, I have turned to volunteering with the Disabled American Veterans providing transportation for vets to medical appointments throughout Wisconsin taking them mostly to Tomah, Madison, and Wisconsin Rapids.

Thank you to the Never Forgotten Honor Flight organization. It was very special for me to have Paula accompany me on my Welcome Home journey. And thank you to all of you for the wonderful acknowledgments in the "Mail Call" letters. I'm blessed to have such a loving wife and family and great friends. Thank you all for your love and support.

God bless you, Dennis

Thank you, Thank you, WHAT A GREAT DAY.