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to info

Raw emotions simply prevent me from calling you and verbally expressing my gratitude for the most unbelievable experience I had on the Honor Flight yesterday.

I was totally unprepared for this experience, as well as those fellow veterans aboard the plane yesterday, from the wonderful tour of D.C. and ESPECIALLY the "MAIL CALL" near the end of our flight. A truly special and emotional touch to the whole event.

Don't believe there was a dry eye aboard that plane. The organization and the planning that went into making this one of the most memorable events in my life were mind boggling. And I am certain the other veterans aboard felt the same as I. I was amazed to speak to so many of the other Veterans, who like me, had put off applying for the Honor Flight for one reason or another.

The honor to which was attributed to the spouses was especially appreciated, especially that which took place before our return home yesterday evening. My wife and children were so much a part of my time in the U.S. Navy as a Hospital Corpsman. They and I experienced this whole episode in my life together.

We were so very fortunate as a family that I was never sent into combat during my 4 years in the Navy, unlike so very many of my fellow Hospital Corpsman, one of whom which I was able to honor yesterday at the Vietnam Memorial. That moment in time yesterday was one of sorrow but also of healing. Michael John Thirkettle was the first friend that my wife and I ever had to our home for dinner when we were both stationed at the U.S. Naval Hospital in Portsmouth, VA.

Mike left for Vietnam in July of 1967 and was killed in action just a short time later on 26 November 1967, exactly 13 days after the birth of our first child.

His loss brought a true sense of realization to the horrors of Vietnam, and he would eventually become one of the more than 600 Navy Corpsmen killed while serving with the Marines in Vietnam.

Your organization has offered me the opportunity to bring some level of closure to this chapter in my life and remind me and my family of the fate that could have befallen me as well.

The twists and turns of fate have affected Veterans throughout the history of America, hence the often-spoken phrase of, "All gave some, but some gave all". It was an honor and a privilege to spend time with my fellow Veterans yesterday thanks to your kind, thoughtful, and most generous organization.

The many volunteers, both in Wausau and D.C. were extremely appreciated. An undertaking of this magnitude requires the efforts and generosity of many. I am just one of those Veterans yesterday that would like to express his gratitude to ALL who were

responsible for making this a most special and unforgettable day. Your organization left no stone unturned. Each and every detail was attended to from the start to the finish. Truly remarkable and the result of intense dedication.

My most humble thanks to everyone involved with your organization, not only from myself, but my wonderful family as well.

Joseph A. Perez HM2 USN 1966-1970