



7668 Four Mile Ck Rd.
Three Lakes WI
54562

10/2/18

The Highground
Jelencs Memorial Park
W 7031 Ridge Rd.
Neillsville, WI 54456

To the Staff, Volunteers & Contributors,

I meant to write this letter earlier in the week, but I was almost afraid to. I was afraid, and still am, because I may not be able to express the thanks and gratitude I feel for the event you had Sept. 22, 2018.

The 30th Anniversary of the Highground and "Fragments" was absolutely fantastic. It was so well organized and thoughtful, it was unbelievable.

I entered as a participant in the parade. My SUV decorated with signage and the American, POW and flag of South Vietnam. I could not believe the town of Neillsville and all of the people lining the parade route. All of the flags and yellow ribbons and people waving and saying thank you.

It was the "welcome home" we Vietnamese never



FOR THOSE WHO FOUGHT
FOR IT, FREEDOM HAS A
FLAVOR THE PROTECTED
WILL NEVER KNOW.

received and it was so needed and it felt so genuine and good.

Along the parade route someone had written on an old door "Thank you Vietnam Veterans" and placed it by the curb so we could see it. It was a door that allowed all of the feelings and tears to start to come out.

Further down, on the street going back out to Hwy 10, there was a family standing in the yard by their house. A mother and her adult children. The mother was holding the folded burial flag of her husband or child by her heart and she was crying.

I wanted to stop and get out and salute her and the flag, but I didn't. I will always regret not doing that.

all of the people, all of the thanks, all of the emotions. It was so wonderful.

At the Highground entrance, to see it lined with people and large flags and the gigantic flag over the driveway was breathtaking.

I was privileged to park my SUV, as it was decorated near the center of the parking lot, in back of the trailer with the veterans pictures on it. It was an honor to have it there.

Shortly after arrival they announced the Huey was coming in. I went over to the side of the plaza, as did everyone else, to see it land.

I don't know about other "Nam Vets", but to see and to hear the Huey was almost "spiritual" to me. It was as if the realization of this Huey, the symbol of the war we fought. The symbol of life and death in a far away country, in a war long ago, was bringing life back into some weary vets souls.

After it landed and the rotors stopped the crowd was almost reverently silent. Maybe out of respect or of not knowing what to do, or of doubt this really happened and what we saw wasn't real people held back. Slowly the crowd began to approach this ghost of the past. To touch it, to see it up close, to wonder at all of men it carried into battle and all of the wounded and KIAs it brought back. The blood of our brothers baptised that Huey, and it was owed a lot of respect.

The whole anniversary celebration was so wonderful and uplifting.

The yellow ribbon I was given is now in our front yard by the road, up here in the north woods.

I did not have a sense of fear or apprehensiveness from any of the vets at the High Ground. I believe most of us felt a peace, a serenity, and in such a large crowd that was mentally uplifting.

I've never received much "free stuff" in my life, but the patch and beads I received really brought a few tears. You gave them to me for free — thank you — they are now on my "Nam" vest.

I purchased the book "Behind My Wings" and had the author B.J. Elliott Prior autograph it for me. She personalized it for me and I briefly talked with her. She asked me when I went over to Viet Nam. I told her it was 1969, and she hugged me and said that was when she started with the MAC flights.

To think she may have been one of the flight attendants on my flight to Nam.

I remember as we deplaned in Viet Nam, the flight attendant told me "We will save you a seat for your return flight in one year."

I wonder how many of that flight did not make it.

I had not been to the Highground in a long time. I was first there about 25 years ago and then again about 15 years ago. The Highground has really grown into a place of beauty and peace in that time. I can't believe all of the additional memorials and statues. The Persian Gulf Tribute, when viewed from the plaza is beautiful, but the one that tore my heart out was the Fountain of Tears. Who ever did the mother and the daughter captured their anguish perfectly. They are not only MIA, 'Missing in America', but also P.O.W. in that the war is holding them prisoners.

Well I think I have expressed myself as best I can. And yet it feels like I haven't done your efforts and the 30th Anniversary justice.

I have shed a few more tears in writing this.
Please accept my sincere thanks for this event and
all of the work that everyone at the Highground put
into it.

If you can, express my thanks to the town of
Thiellsville for all of the outpouring they gave us
Viet Nam Veterans. I'm from a small Northern Wisconsin
town and it was nice to be welcomed home by the small
town of Thiellsville. I was a welcome I never received
when I returned.

And we can never let that happen again.

Again thank you so very much for such a
wonderful event.

God Bless you all —

Mike Silber

Corpsman
Luna Co. 3/4 3rd Marine Div.
Dong Ha - I Corp
Republic of Vietnam
1969