

What You Don't Know About the



By Sgt. Clyde R. Horn

I watch documentaries. I realize they can be close to accurate historically or shaped by the bias of those who make them. The Vietnam War had many facets that are rarely reported. You know that news, entertainment and even history has often been shown from the sensational-negative point of view.

I want you to hear my story as a Vietnam combat veteran and Purple Heart recipient. I served with the 199th Light Infantry Brigade, Company E in 1967-1968 that included surviving the TET offensive of 1968. My company was a light mobile unit that moved by helicopters throughout the Iron Triangle of Vietnam. Our main base was Long Bien next to the city of Ben Hoa. We were dropped off in the jungles of the Iron Triangle for weeks at a time and then brought back to Long Bien for recovery, hot food and relaxation then back to the jungles.

I and other soldiers could interact with the citizens of South Vietnam prior to the TET offensive. I found the Vietnamese people hard working, smart, and family oriented. Most of the soldiers I served with had no ill will toward the Vietnamese. Most of us did not use racist or degrading terms referencing them. We befriended many children and their families.

We could let Vietnamese families do our laundry instead of using the military system. I took advantage of having my clothes cleaned by local families. The children would take our dirty fatigues to their family. When we returned from our jungles patrols our clothes were waiting. They were exceptionally clean and I never lost a sock. We paid a small fee that helped the family and we both appreciated what we received.

Our contact with the local Vietnamese community did not only exist in the town of Bien Hoa where we ate at local café's and enjoyed local entertainment. During a patrol in the local rice patties around Saigon we had to camp out at night. Late at night, we heard movement coming toward our camp. At that incident, we had no night goggles, did not want to use flares (it would reveal our numbers) so we shouted out warnings to no avail. We began firing our weapons toward the sounds. The early dawn revealed four dead water buffalo. Rather than just accept that incident we searched the area and found a small village

Vietnam War

on the outskirts of the jungle. We engaged with the village chief who admitted the water buffalo belonged to the village. We negotiated with the chief and paid him for the water buffalo so he could replace them. We apologized and went on our way.

Our contact with the local Vietnamese did not end there. My company would also patrol through local villages. We never committed atrocities nor burned down villages nor killed innocent people. We always respected the leader of a village, gave him an explanation of our intent, treated families with respect and on occasion purchased some of the local bread baked in the charcoal ovens in a village. The bread was wonderful. We never stole from villagers or disrespected them in our searches.

We contributed to some local orphanages, paid to help some children attend school along with some of our medics helping with some minor medical issues for some of the children or families who had cuts or infections.

I refused to harbor hate for the Vietnamese people including those from the North who were our enemy. I realized they were humans with families, dreams and hopes of a future. They were also as scared as I was fighting a war. They loved their mother, father, siblings and family just as I did mine. They believed in their cause just as I did mine.

It's important for you to understand that killing for me was never a natural act. I was a combat soldier wounded in action fighting to the best of my ability. Whenever I killed another it took part of my soul with it. I never got used to the experience or "had a rush" as some soldier described in a recent documentary. It's my prayer that no one should ever have to kill another even in war. It is the most horrific thing a person can do or experience. The acts of war imprint on the brain. I have never been the same since I returned from war. It's taken a lot of work taking moral inventory, making peace with my soul, working through the survivor and moral guilt. I have lifelong PTSD because the death and destruction I encountered.

Wars happen throughout history but it is not always in hate or disregard for the enemy or committing atrocities. Good things alongside the fighting did happen. I served with the generations of soldiers. I stand proud.

Veterans Day at Los Gatos Meadows

By Alex Gerasimov - Life Enrichment Manager, Los Gatos Meadows

Veterans Day is an opportunity to say thank you to those who have served in the United States Armed Forces and who protected their fellow citizens at home and abroad from harm. We thank our veterans who fought for our freedom, made sacrifices beyond comprehension, and did it because of a love of their country. Today, and every day, Los Gatos Meadows say thank you for your service!

