

Reprint
Never Forget the Soldiers
By Sam Dunn

Our own Sam Dunn wrote an article which was published in the *Highlands Today* newspaper on May 29, 2008. Below is a reprint.

“It's early on Monday, May 26, Memorial Day. As I sit here at my desk, I took some time to remember my own Army days in Vietnam. I distinctly remember the smell of Vietnam as I stepped off of the plane in 1970. I remember fellow buddies that I flew with in that year. I remember the landscape below us as we flew in the mornings in the helicopter. The cool air and the beautiful country below me so ravaged by war.

I remember, and still can hear, the rockets and mortars coming in from the mountains, every evening. And I remember pilots, crew chiefs and regular soldiers who flew out and did not come back. I remember the sad parts of my tour, waiting for helicopters to come back from their missions, some so full of blood that it took hours to clean it up. And I remember helping load the body bags onto the airplanes to go home to their final resting place.

To this day, when I go to Washington, D.C., I cannot hold back the tears thinking about the Vietnam Wall. Some of my friends' names are on that wall. In my room, there is the picture of a man, standing at the wall, crying with his hand upon it, with the reflection of soldiers looking at him. This is the picture that will stay with all veterans and myself all of our lives.

I took some time this morning thinking about the wars in years past, and our soldiers who served. Starting with the Civil War, of which I have always been interested in. Wars that changed the world, World War I and II, Korea, and the conflicts that we have been involved in since Vietnam, including the present war in Iraq. Even having served in battle, I can't comprehend what our soldiers thought as they walked across the meadow in Gettysburg, brother against brother, made their way onto the beaches of Normandy, flying over Germany with the flak, the snipers in Battan, the cold harsh war of Korea, and the roadside mines and suicide bombers that our soldiers are subjected to every day in the Middle East.

It is Memorial Day, a day that was created to honor the people who have served and given the ultimate sacrifice. Too many times people do not think of the day that we celebrate in May as Memorial Day in the way we should. They often think about a day off of work, a holiday, barbecues and times with the family. Please take the time to honor, think about, and pray for the men, women, and their families who have sacrificed the greatest gift of all. Life.

Having said all of this, take the time to think about the present war in Iraq. I am taking no political sides, pro or con about this war, but I want you to ask yourself, how many soldiers have paid the price in this war? Is it worth the cost? How many mothers, fathers, brothers,

sisters and friends have been given the notice, just today, that they have lost a loved one, or he or she has been injured?

The answer is, as of today, the United States has suffered 33,000 casualties. Out of these 33,000, there are 4,084 deaths and 28,916 soldiers who are wounded and possibly maimed with missing limbs. People who might be confined to a chair or bed for the rest of their life. These are people that will need care, which you, I, our children, and grandchildren will be paying for.

In May, we had, as of today, 18 deaths stemming from the war in Iraq. Fifty two in April. The list goes on and on. My point is, do not become jaded in the reports and news stories you read, or hear about the war in Iraq. We have become a nation that is immune to news reports in Iraq. We hear, but don't pay attention to the reports of casualties and deaths. Take time to listen and hear what is going on in our country, the greatest country in the world.

If I were young enough today, I would be in the service, proudly serving my country in any way that they needed me. Our soldiers, from all over the United States, are doing their best to fulfill their duty. Unfortunately some of these very soldiers will not be with us tomorrow. They will give the supreme sacrifice. And we, at home, give them one day to honor them. Try to let Memorial Day enter your mind every day. Honor our fallen soldiers, and never let a day go by without thinking of the cost they have paid, for our freedom. Thank a veteran every day, for their service to our country. They deserve it. They have earned it.”

Sam Dunn lives in Sebring.