

Cam Ranh Bay AB, 1966

12th SPS, Cam Ranh Bay AB

37 Years...

A look back and forward of 37 years at Cam Ranh Bay AB RVN

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37 years

It is very hard for me to realize that I'd been back in the world for 37 years. The innocent youth that went to war and came home forever changed.

I wonder how my life would have changed if I hadn't gone to war.

I could have stayed home and *protested* the war.
I could have been married with two kids, before my own kids arrived in early 1970's.
I could have been college educated with *BS in life*.
I could have had more beers with my former buddies.
I could still be paying off my education.
I could have served 6 years in the National Guard.
I may be a lifer or NCO or No Chance Outside.
I would have never been in a loveless marriage for 20 years.
I could have tried drugs and found PEACE.
I could have spent more time listening to my parents.

But...

I did enlist in the USAF and was volunteered to be cop.
I was not a career airman at Dow AFB in Bangor Me.
I only wanted to get out of USAF and become "Mr." again.

Then came Vietnam...

I didn't know my life would be changed forever after year in Nam.
I still have a few non-Vet friends, two brother-in laws, single guys who chase young woman.
I wonder if these males understand what VIETNAM did for our lives.

Looking back... *The world has changed in 37 years.*

Most of my male friends are VSPA and VVA members.
Some of our brothers have died and gone home to God. I hope not to the other place.
I can wonder "what if " in the world of fairy tales. But life is not a fairy tale.
Vietnam was a place of death, destruction, and a place of Peace and beauty.
We were there to fight a war and stop the communist.
If we lost Vietnam, the bad guys would conquer Asia.
The communist didn't conquer Asia---Vietnam is a Communist state today.
Some of our fellow Vietnam Vets have returned to Nam—to help country and people—to rebuild their lives from this experience.

Cam Ranh Bay AB, 37 years ago, we could not leave the base---now we can't get back on the base---some things never change in Nam. I would like to return one day. Just fly in Cam Ranh Bay AB Air Base, run off the airplane, and find my 12 Air Police Sq. roots.

Have we as a group changed over the last 37 years?

That answer will vary from Vet to Vet.

My life has changed for the better, thanks to my wife—who made me face NAM and win the PTSD battle.

T hanks to my grandson, who I could be honest with about Nam about what I did in Nam.

My kids who look at me as still DAD and had the good sense to tell me Joan was the best thing in my life.

To special friends of VVA and VSPA who have been there for each other in bad times and good times.

To a really nice guy named MeatBall who served in Nam with the Army, near the golf course. This guy was a combat medic in Nam, served two tours, and saved lives of our fellow Vets.

But our lives have changed for better or worse.

Some of our cops have died and others disappear into the world. I guess we should appreciate the fellow VSPA and VVA members we know presently. A true story took place several years ago in Yeadon, PA. A

fellow VSPA and VVA was picking up a fellow VSPA and VVA member for a monthly meeting. After picking his peer up the one Vet said to the driver, "You can't trust white people in your house because they take your toilet paper and steal your phone books". I just looked at my peer and laughed like hell. Paybacks are a bitch. Several months went by again and I picked up my fellow Vet and gave him a clean roll of toilet paper [not used] and current phone book. Believe it or Not?

To our GOD who gave us all a second chance at life in the world.

Many words can be said about Vietnam after 37 years. We came home, 58,000 did not. I have very mixed feelings in writing this piece. I know the sun will still rise tomorrow and set in the evening.

BUT...

somehow the persons who served in Nam were changed forever... good or bad? How did we change in our lives?

Do our women understand us now?

Do our kids and grandkids change because of what we did in Nam?

I guess life will answer all these questions... if there is an answer.

Next year ...

38

Frank Pilson

VSPA and 28 Life member

We Take Care of Our Own

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