

This Was My Best, That Day

by: Louis G. Parrillo

(Deceased)

L/LCPL, USMC 1/1,

Vietnam 1969

submitted by, Gene Parrillo (son)

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FORWARD: I've had these poems and journals that *my father wrote* for several years. I never knew he was in Vietnam until after he died. *He never said a word.* I wonder what made him so ashamed? The certificate with his second Purple Heart states that he was wound in a night defensive position in Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam. He served with the 1st Marine Division Alpha 1/1.

My grandmother also gave me my father's decorations, pictures, a NVA flag and some other items.

He was a very giving man, who couldn't do enough for people. He loved kids. Growing up, the kids in the neighborhood, including myself, adored him. It's funny to look back. He would be outside doing something and in twenty minutes there would be a half a dozen kids out there helping. He made everyone feel important. I remember when we moved, kids in the neighborhood brought him little gifts that they made. He used to say that only people who liked him were kids, older people, and animals. He was right. He had very few friends his own age. He spent as much time with older people as he did with kids. They admired him as well. He helped organize a Senior Olympics locally that was one of the first programs of its type. I always went with him when he worked with senior citizens, and it was fun to watch how they behaved around him. It was almost like watching the neighborhood kids.

People his own age seemed to be fearful of him, as if he knew something that they didn't want to know. It took me a while to understand why this was true. People his own age sensed that he had faced his own mortality and that was something they were denying. They were fearful of that.

His whole life was spent helping people. He received a lot of recognition for his efforts. I guess I'm still trying to understand why someone who did so much was still unhappy. Anyway, thank you for reading his poems. I'm not sure what to do with them. My greatest fear is that if given to the public to read, they would judge him unfairly.

Sincerely,

Gene Parrillo

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Dear Mom,

I held him in my arms like a father
holding his newborn son,
proud and afraid.
I was afraid that he would die
before I had a chance to tell him
what he needed to hear.

He looked up at me and smiled,
trusting me, believing in my strength
and courage; believing that I could
carry him to safety.

I lied to him. I told him fairy tales,
stories I heard as a child.
He looked at me and listened,
his eyes filled with wonder and hope.
He was innocent and pure, a child
cradled in the arms of weakness and doubt,
swaddled in trembling fear and desperation.

His eyes closed slowly, and his arm slipped
off my shoulder. It hung limp and lifeless
at my side.

His body, draped over my arms like a
green shroud, relaxed and rested,
shed its *bone-tired* weariness
and final fear.

Your son,

L/Cpl L. Parrillo.
USMC 1/1,
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