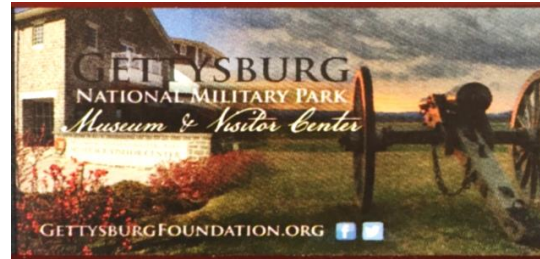




ALPHA AVENGERS REUNION

JUNE 4 - 6, 2018
GETTYSBURG, PA.



**A/2-501, 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH VIETNAM, 1967-1972**

**HONORING SSgt TONY WARD AND HIS FAMILY
THE *SUM GAVE ALL* RECOGNITION IS PRESENTED TO
TONY'S SISTER, SHIRLEY HAYNES
& TONY'S BROTHER, WAYNE WARD.**

**THE FOLLOWING IS THE TRANSCRIPT OF THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS GIVEN BY
GUY RUDAWSKI, COMPANY MEDIC FOR ALPHA COMPANY IN 1970**

In March 1970 I completed about half of the 9 month Special Forces Medical Specialist program at Fort Bragg. I had gotten into some serious trouble and was told to report to the CO's office. Waiting for me in the office were three Green Berets: the Captain, a Lt Colonel, and the First Sargent. The First Sargent, having served multiple tours in Vietnam in remote Special Forces Camps, was the embodiment of a *hard-core* Green Beret soldier and he was a zero tolerance kind of guy. The three of them took turns ripping me a new one, issued me an article 15, reduced my rank by 2 pay grades, and kicked me out of Special Forces. Finally the First Sargent leaned in close to me and with a satanic grin he ended this one sided conversation: *"Soldier, you're going to Vietnam!" (deep raspy voice) That's how I became a member of Alpha Company.*

I proudly served as a field Medic in Vietnam in 1970 with the men of Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 501st Infantry, 101st Airborne Division. *"Drive On" ("Can I get a 'Drive On' please!")*

General Mitchell frequently reminds us that “*those we’ve lost, gave us the gift of another day*”

I want to elaborate on the meaning of this profound concept by combining ideas from an inspirational presentation made by *pilot Brian Shul*. He was the main speaker at a dinner-fundraiser I attended recently for the Champaign Aviation Museum in Urbana Ohio. This nonprofit all volunteer organization, restores to flying condition, WWII aircraft. Their passion is to educate the public about the experiences of past generations and to honor the crewmembers who flew these aircraft into combat *thereby keeping alive their gift of another day*. The atmosphere at this dinner-fundraiser was vibrant with pride and patriotism and it was a welcoming tribute all veterans and their families.

Brian Shul, who flew missions for the CIA, was shot down in Vietnam along the Cambodian border. He was rescued but so badly burned and required so many major operations he was told he would never fly again and to consider himself lucky to be alive. Although disfigured from scar tissue and missing fingers on his left hand he returned to flying fighter jets. Against all odds, he was chosen as one of 93 pilots to ever fly missions in the SR-71A Blackbird Spy plane, the worlds' fastest and highest flying jet. It could fly coast to coast in 64 minutes at altitude above 80,000ft and cruising at 2000 mph.

Brian Shul delivered a clear and simple message:

*“LIFE IS SHORT AND LIFE IS UNCERTAIN;
FIND YOUR PASSION AND FOLLOW YOUR DREAM.”*

In January 2017 I had an appointment with a VA Psychiatrist. *(FYI it was not court ordered)* I requested this appointment because in August 2016 I experienced a full blow flashback while I was inside an MRI Tunnel. The flashback was triggered by the two alternating scanner sounds which are similar to a 50 Caliber machine gun and a cobra gunship mini-cannon.

Over the years I learned to manage and live with flashbacks but this one blindsided me and was intensely vivid with elements of dissociation from reality, meaning, I was no longer in Lansing MI, I was back in Vietnam.

For the first time, I went to the VA, did all the necessary paperwork, and had my appointment with a psychiatrist.

The Psychiatrist asked me to tell him, in my own words, about the traumatic events I experienced in Vietnam. I explained to him that in 2010 I began writing fact based war stories and I made a list of the 10 most violent experiences I had in Vietnam. I told him how I had to watch helplessly as life turned to death and there was no time for grief.

He said to me “I want you to pick one story, pick the worst one, the one that disturbs you the most.”

I then proceeded to tell him what I experienced on May 20, 1970.

ALL GAVE SOME . . . SOME GAVE ALL

MAY 20, 1970, SOUTHWEST OF PHU BAI, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH VIETNAM

Written by Guy Rudawski, Company Medic for Alpha Company 2-501st Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, 1970

*This story is based on events described in my letters from Vietnam and
my recall of details as the first responder.*

*Tactical background information was provided by Brigadier General
James Edwin Mitchell, US Army, Retired*

On May 17th the 101st Airborne Division issued a serious threat warning of a possible NVA attack on the Phu Bai Combat Base to honor the anniversary of Ho Chi Minh's birthday. On May 18th, Alpha Company, commanded by Captain James E. Mitchell, air assaulted southwest of Phu Bai to carry out a "screening operation". Our mission was counter-reconnaissance to locate and disrupt enemy forces that might attempt to infiltrate the area. *I was assigned to 3rd platoon of Alpha Company as their field Medic. It was my first combat mission and I was apprehensive, but a year of training, including Special Forces Survival and SF Medic training, gave me confidence.* At nightfall on May 19th, 3rd platoon established defensive positions on a knoll covered with high grass. There was no imminent threat reported that night so we maintained watch with 2 hour exterior guard shifts at each position.

Between 0100 and 0300 hours on May 20th an explosion rocked the hilltop. Believing we were under attack, every position opened fire as frantic screams came from the south west sector of our perimeter. *“THEY’RE OUT THERE! GOOKS! MEDIC! MEDIC!”* I started low crawling through the high grass, dragging my medical bag and M16 toward the wounded soldier. *Explosion, gunfire, screaming, adrenalin surging, my heart pounding.* Suddenly there was movement on my left and I froze . . . Staff Sargent Bob Nichol was advancing beside me scanning for the enemy. As we reached the horrific scene the first soldier was found sitting up, pointing and yelling: *“THEY’RE OUT THERE! HELP ME! MY LEG!”* His left leg was broken. Three feet away Sargent Tony Ward lie dead and in the middle was PFC Roy Carter, fighting to stay alive, unconscious but breathing with shallow gasps. *The hissing sound of sucking chest wounds, the stench of explosives and the metallic scent of Carter’s blood are unwelcome flashbacks.*

The soldier with the broken leg was terrified and his constant screaming was giving away our position, so I stoned him out on morphine. Kneeling over Carter I was desperate, rapidly trying to seal the puncture holes in his chest. *So many holes oozing blood, more than I could contain.* Tony Ward's body was within reach next to Carter, lying face up and completely silent, his lifeless eyes watching me. *It was less than two days ago that I first met Roy Carter and Tony Ward. We shared stories about home and I got the impression they were friends.* Artillery support provided illumination and the gunfire stopped. There was no enemy! Incredibly, there was no enemy anywhere! The rhythmic "wop-wop" sound of the fast approaching medivac offered me hope. Carter was fatally wounded but still breathing as we carried the three soldiers to the chopper. Covered in Roy Carter's blood, I stood in disbelief watching the medivac lift off. *After the adrenalin fades, haunting images of violence and death eat at your soul.*

Epilogue: Roy Carter and Tony Ward sacrificed their lives after less than 3 weeks of service in Vietnam. Their deaths are listed as “Non-Hostile Ground Casualty” from an apparent accidental grenade explosion. No one knows how or why this happened. From February thru July of 1970, Alpha Company, 2-501st, lost 25 gallant men and had countless wounded. To cope with the many experiences of brutal combat and death in Vietnam I became emotionally detached and learned to suppress these traumatic events, yet, they would forever haunt my subconscious.

“Not one of us who survived emerged the same as we arrived. The images of killing, dying and suffering indelibly marked us all.”

Joseph Galloway, Vietnam War Correspondent, from the front lines of the Battle of Ia Drang, November 1965

I chose this story for the psychiatrist for 3 reasons:

It was the *most painful*. Understand that I arrived in Vietnam only three weeks prior, the same as Tony and Roy, and I wasn't yet numb to the suffering and dying; *I was still able to feel emotional pain*.

It was also the *most intimate* because I just met Tony and Roy on the 18th, we shared a connection and I felt a bond with two soldier brothers. I even wrote home about this meeting in my first letter from Vietnam.

It was certainly one of the *most tragic* stories because of the unanswered questions and circumstances surrounding their deaths.

From the Book of Isaiah, Chapter 6 verse 8:

*I heard the voice of the Lord say: "Whom shall I send; who will go for us?"
and I answered, "Here I am, send me."*

Tony is buried in Floral Memory Gardens, Albany, Georgia.

Roy is buried in Springbank Cemetery, Yellowbud, Ohio.

I never think of Tony without thinking of Roy.

Life is short and life is uncertain.

Tony and Roy gave us the gift of another day.

The Psychiatrist recommended that I keep writing about my Vietnam experiences, that writing would help me more than anything he could offer. Writing personal stories has allowed me to portray combat from the human viewpoint as well as the brotherhood we shared.

“we band of brothers; for he that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother.”

William Shakespeare, Henry V

Sebastian Junger is an American journalist, anthropologist, and author, who has written extensively about war and its effects on soldiers. Here are some his reflections on Brotherhood: Returning home from war, soldiers feel a painful absence. They don't miss war or the adrenaline rush of combat, they miss the brotherhood and the intense connection to other men. Brotherhood is a mutual agreement that you will put the safety of the group above your own. Ignoring all differences, soldiers bond with salt-of-the-earth men that you know will have your back. Brotherhood brings out the best in us, you fight for each other and you never leave a fallen comrade. Brotherhood provides leadership and mentoring, helping boys become men. As many of us witnessed in Vietnam, brotherhood can inspire unprecedented acts of loyalty and courage, including the *ultimate sacrifice*.

The lives of our Brothers Tony and Roy were cut short and the circumstances of their deaths remains uncertain. However, they both *discovered their passions:*

For Tony it was motorcycles, cars and drag racing;
for Roy it was agriculture, farming and livestock 4-H,
yet they never lived long enough to fulfill their dreams.

They never had the opportunity of fatherhood; to be a grandfather, or to be with us today as part of the Alpha Avengers Brotherhood.

Tony and Roy are among the 58,276 warriors we lost in Vietnam.
Their sacrifice gives us a gift . . . every day.

All they ask in return is that we walk for them, speak for them and always remember their gift to us.

To safeguard that we never take life and the privileges we enjoy for granted, we must remind ourselves and remind each other, that *our freedom stands tall on the shoulders of their sacrifice.*

The legacy of our fallen heroes is meant to inspire us *to find our passion and follow our dreams.* Welcome each new day in *their honor* by saluting them and their gift to us, knowing that *life is short and life is uncertain*; knowing that *those we've lost gave us the gift of another day.*

Welcome Home and "Drive On" Brothers!

Guy Rudawski