

A Thank You to Vietnam Vets from a Marine in Iraq



A guy gets time to think over here and I was thinking about all the support we get from home. Sometimes it's overwhelming. We get care There are boxes and boxes of toiletries and snacks lining the center of every tent; the generosity has been amazing. So, I was pondering the question: "Why do we have so much support?"

In my opinion, it came down to one thing: Vietnam.

I think we learned a lesson, as a nation, that no matter what, you have to support the troops who are on the line, who are risking everything. We treated them so poorly back then. When they returned was even worse. The stories are nightmarish of what our returning warriors were subjected to. It is a national scar, a blemish on our country, an embarrassment to all of us. After Vietnam, it had time to sink in. The guilt in our collective consciousness grew.

It shamed us.

However, we learned from our mistake.

Somewhere during the late 1970's and into the 80's, we realized that we can't treat our warriors that way. So, starting during the Gulf War, when the first real opportunity arose to stand up and

support the troops, we did. We did it to support our friends and family going off to war. But we also did it to right the wrongs from the Vietnam era. We treated our troops like the heroes they were, acknowledged and celebrated their sacrifice, and rejoiced at their homecoming instead of spitting on them.

And that support continues today for those of us in Iraq. Our country knows that it must support us and it does. The lesson was learned in Vietnam and we are better because of it.

Everyone who has gone before is a hero. They are celebrated in my heart. I think admirably of all those who have gone before me. From those who fought to establish this country in the late 1770's to those I serve with here in Iraq. They have all sacrificed to ensure our freedom.

But when I get back, I'm going to make it a personal mission to specifically thank every Vietnam Vet I encounter for their sacrifice. Because if nothing else good came from that terrible war, one thing did. It was the lesson learned on how we treat our warriors. We as a country learned from our mistake and now treat our warriors as heroes, as we should.

I am the beneficiary of their sacrifice. Not only for the freedom they, like veterans from other wars, ensured, but for how well our country now treats my fellow Marines and I. We are the beneficiaries of their sacrifice.

**Semper Fidelis,
Major Brian P. Bresnahan**



