

Remarks prepared for delivery Sunday July 2, 2000, at VHPA Memorial at The Wall: Joe Galloway

Is there anyone here today who does not thrill to the sound of those Huey blades?? That familiar whop-whop-whop is the soundtrack of our war...the lullaby of our younger days. To someone who spent his time in Nam with the grunts I have got to tell you that that noise was always a great comfort. It meant someone was coming to help...someone was coming to get our wounded...someone was coming to bring us water and ammo...someone was coming to take our dead brothers home...someone was coming to give us a ride out of hell. Even today when I hear it I stop...catch my breath...and think back to those days...

I love you guys as only an Infantryman can love you. No matter how bad things were...if we called you came. Down through the green tracers and other visible signs of a real bad day off to a bad start. I would like to quote to you from a letter Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman wrote his friend Gen. Ulysses S. Grant at the end of the Civil war: "I knew wherever I was that you thought of me, and if I got in a tight place you would come ---if alive." That was always in our minds and that is how we thought of you. To us you seemed beyond brave and fearless...that you would come to us in the middle of battle in those flimsy thin-skinned crates...and in the storm of fire you would sit up there behind that plexiglas seeming so patient and so calm and so vulnerable...waiting for the off-loading and the on-loading.

We thought you were God's own lunatics. And we loved you. Still do.

We are gathered here this morning to appreciate the lives and honor the memory of 2,209 helicopter pilots and 2,704 helicopter crewmen who were killed while doing their duty in the Republic of Vietnam between May 30, 1961 and May 15, 1975. Theirs are some of the names among the 58,220 on this precious Wall. So many good men...so many good friends.

Before I come here I always remind myself of what another good friend...Captain B.T. Collins...who is now gone...liked to say at gatherings like this: "No whining and no crying! We are the fortunate ones! We survived...when so many better men gave up their precious lives for us. We owe them a sacred debt...to live each day to its fullest...trying to make this world a better place for our having lived and their having died."

So we come here today to remember them...and to celebrate their lives and their deeds. I like to come here at dawn...or around midnight...when things are so quiet you can hear their voices. What they are saying...when you listen hard enough...is this: "We are at peace; so should you be...so should you be..."

I would like to close by reading to you something written by a World War I poet named Lawrence Binyon:

They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old,  
Age shall not weary them...nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,  
We will remember them!

God bless all our absent friends...and God bless you.