

Alexander, AR 72002
August 17, 1995

Dear Ms. Ruth Fitzgerald,

Thank you so much for your letter. Apparently you have read the Eulogy of my Son Gary so I will not burden you again with that information here.

I am very sorry to hear of your brother's death and great suffering with cancer. No one can know what families go through as they watch their loved die, unless they have experienced it.

My Son Gary was in DaNang in September 1967 until October 1968. Had your Brother been there at that time it is a very good possibility they would have known each other, for part of Gary's duty was receiving the wounded from the "Jolly Green Giants" and having to make the decision as to who could be saved and who could not. There is no way any of the men in the field could have experienced more horror than my Son or your Brother. Each day was a constant stream of wounded and trying to save them under very adverse conditions.

I have waited to answer your letter, to give myself more time to think about your suggestion of a plaque honoring these thousands of men who have died and are still dying from exposure to Agent Orange. Your Brother died from one of the two types of cancer that is recognized by the Government as being Agent Orange originated. All of the many others with stomach, liver, lung, esophagus, kidney, bladder, pancreas, spleen, etc, cancers have never been recognized or compensated by the Government in any way. Now if a man chose to drop out of society, do the drug scene, shirk his responsibilities, then he was recognized as being traumatized and was compensated and his family financially supported.

You see Ms. Fitzgerald, I have been through three Wars. The Second World War, Korean, and Vietnam. I knew and loved men in each of them. I know personally that in the first two, men came home, picked up the pieces and went on with their lives. That is exactly what my Son Gary did after the Vietnam War. He had no time to waste on the ones that could not get their lives together.

I suppose what I am really trying to say is, yes, I too would like to have a plaque honoring those who have died from the result of their Vietnam War Wounds. Somehow there has to be a distinction between those who died from their war wounds and those who drink or drug themselves to death on our streets today.

I believe if we are to install such a plaque we will have to finance it from the families of the "wounded" who have and still are dying. The cost should be very nominal from each family since there is so many of us.

If you wish to proceed with this project and I can be of any assistance, please write.

Yours very truly,

Helen Lederer