

Subject: PTSD - Timberlake - Spirituality

Date: Sun, 05 Sep 1999 06:35:09 -0400

From: Mike Sloniker

To: "Bruce E. Carlson", Don Lewis

Robert Witt

Mike & Mary Brown

, Ken Mayberry

keith d wysong

Gary Roush

Fenwick

Earl Baldwin

Don Purser

Don Joyce

Del Belanger

David Freeman

Bob Whitford

"Walker A. Jones"

Tom Marshall

Thomas Payne

Rick Miller

Randy Zahn

Pat Dougan

Mike Melia

"Michael J. Wheeler"

Laurence Burbridge

Ken Powers

"Wm. Robert Stanley Sr."

> Not all on the address lines know each other.

Ken Powers is a Tennessee based United Methodist Preacher who I met during the Plummer wars via Timberlake. It was my honor around 11 Nov 98 to take him down to the VVM. He had two tours in the Nam. For those that don't know, Rev John Plummer, 2 tour VN vet, and currently pastor of Bethany United Methodist Church in Purcellville VA lied to the media around 11 Nov 96 about his implication in the napalm attack on Trang Bang. He inserted himself into a situation so that he, as Methodist Minister could show the flock how reconciliation works.

Unfortunately he got Ted Koppel ABC news exposure, Wash Post and Baltimore Sun, 54 speaking engagements, and a spot on the Promise Keepers radio show before he was exposed as a complete liar.

Ken, Don Lewis has been to seminary, runs an airport service in Beaumont TX. Same for Don Purser. Bruce Carlson is a Reverend in Nebraska. In Nov 67, as I was with my parents for Thanksgiving just prior to going to my first tour, Don Lewis was taking the dead off Hill 875 vic Dak To after an errant air strike killed them. They were in 4/503d Inf. Don Purser runs a prayer chain of 40 VN helo vets that provides peace of mind to the tormented

Bob Witt is a Methodist VN helo pilot, who wakes up every morning just amazed his son is a Methodist preacher, and was a CLOSE friend of Ron's. Lives in GA

Steve Becker is a very close friend who is steeped in VN history, was in a helo unit that supported the 173d Abn Bde

Randy Zahn, Walker Jones, and Julie Kink represent C/1-9 Cav. Randy lives in Scotland, and flies helos today. He was the subject of a BBC show, voices of Vietnam, where his audio tapes home to his parents were used to vividly depict the maturation process of a 19 yr old Cobra pilot. I have taken that tape to the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial, played it so I could hear Kevin Frye talk as I touched his name on the VVM. Julie Kink was 8 years old in 1969 when her

brother died as a result of wounds received in C/1-9. She has done more for 1-9 Vets than any process I have ever seen. They treat her with high respect and honor her as the symbol of what they hoped would have been done with their sister if they had not come home alive.

Rick Miller, Joe Kline, Larry Burbidge, Earl Baldwin were crew chiefs, who like Becker, have returned from the Vietnam experience, made successes of their lives, been strong fathers to their children and have set a good example.

Bill Stanley makes carvings of our unit crests that tear you up when you get them, because you can see the love that was put into the construction of that symbol. He has done so much for so many. People regain or for the first time fell pride in their unit and their service in VN, merely because of Stanley's gift.

Ken Mayberry flew with C/158 the Phoenix, in my view, the most heroic helicopter company in the 101st. He flew huey 607 into Firebase Ripcord in July 1970, rescued some shot up grunts, got them to Charlie Med at Camp Evans and could not move their aircraft because she was so shot up. She delivered her load, saved some lives and could go no further. Because of MS, Ken became wheel chair bound in 1976, told nobody, and had a no notice visit from members of the Phoenix who came to a tiny town vic York NE to show him their concern and love. Ken attends VHPA reunions. He once drove his special van 60 miles to visit me in Kearny NE when I was visiting my mom and sister. I have intense loyalty to Ken.

Mike Brown flew one half a cobra from 4000 feet on 21 June 72, and survived. I know of no one who has had a single most terrifying act imposed on them to be so at peace with himself today, 27 years after the event.

It was my honor to take George Miller to the VVM. It is my honor to just know Don Joyce, who was flying helos in VN when I was still in High School.

Jack Kennedy commanded F/8 Cav during the Easter Offensive and had the horrible task of sending letters to parents as a result of multiple scouts getting killed in two days in June 1972, letters to the parents of Blue Ghost 39 who made a failed attempt to rescue Bat 21 Bravo in Apr 72, and witnessed the beginning of the end of the Vietnam War in 72-73. His compassion for his subordinates can be reflected in his efforts that resulted in the awarding of the Distinguished Service Cross to a mother in 1974 for a 1972 action taken by her scout pilot son in an unsuccessful attempt to try to rescue his platoon leader. McQuade's last words during the planning for the rescue were, "let's do it."

All the rest of the folks are people I hold in highest regard.

We have had a young man show up on the helicopter net, who I do not believe is a Vietnam Vet, attack the late Ron Timberlake. He made statements that are not true, i.e. controlling airstrikes as a crew chief in a slick from the 187th AHC, which was Ron's unit, and pulled back the PTSD scab reopening the wound. As a result, we have run the gamut of folks wanting to make sure all know they have PTSD, they have defined PTSD not only as a VN era cause, but also causes like after tour aircraft crashes, failed marriages, failed opportunities in life, etc. A gamut of things that get lumped under PTSD.

I am well known for running into the breach of the action with my hair on fire attacking whatever I consider to be wrong. I have a deep problem with the way PTSD has been burdened onto all Vietnam vets. Our hero that started all this pontificated that Ron had it, etc, and made a remark, that I akin to pissing on Ron's grave, that assumed we all considered Ron a hero and he wasn't.

Ron laid into Julie Kink on subjects that just don't make sense. Once he got the media exposure of proving Plummer is a liar, he would not let it lay, and he pretty well pissed me off on Nov 27th 1998 where talking to him ever again

was not going to be one of my priorities. Ron was a tormented soul, who as a 19 year old warrant was awarded the Silver Star, by time he was 21 had his first son, and by age 23 had his first divorce after his second tour in the Nam.

Like Mike Brown, I witnessed his incredible heroism in a cobra, call sign Saber 20, while flying like a covey of quail into the cauldron that surrounded the surrounded city of An Loc in 72.

What I gained from knowing Ron Timberlake was that I was dealing with a very tortured soul who was trying as hard as he could, with probably a premonition of his impending death, to try to fix as much as he could, the only way he could, before the clock ran out.

Yesterday afternoon, after having served as a pallbearer in another funeral, I stopped by Ron's grave at Arlington National Cemetery. While standing, alone, under an umbrella that was magnifying the steady beat of the rain drops, at Ron's grave, I came to realize that Ron was a symbol for us all. He caused us to rethink our position, attitude, beliefs and spirituality. I would have NEVER gone after Plummer at all had it not been for RT's demanding questions that made me think.

His vicious attacks on PTSD as a be all to end all, and an title that blackened the honor of all Vietnam Vets, led me to reach out to a local vet who has to restage his symptoms each year in order to stay qualified for PTSD compensation from the Govt. I am running out of airspeed, ideas and left pedal trying to help this guy. But in the spirit of RT has caused me to keep trying.

What came to me at ANC was that this local guy I keep trying to reach out and help WILL be helped. But he will not be helped on my time schedule. He will be helped on God's time schedule, alone. I may not ever be around to see it.

But one thing for sure is that I have peace in my heart knowing that IF God wants to help those afflicted with the tyranny of the memory of our past, all we have to do is lay it on the altar and just leave it alone. If we want to check on what we have completely given to God to fix, we can check in with prayer, and this is all we can do.

I don't know about the spirituality of the folks reading this note, and obviously don't care. This is my belief right now about an issue that tugs at us all the time. Especially Walker Jones, Randy Zahn, Tom Marshall and me as we relive the moments of the past while recording the history either for an organization or in book writing. I am still honored to be able to reflect on my internal feeling of awe as I sat with the warriors of the Easter Offensive of 1972 at Nashville, recording their history for the VHPA directory and the CD-ROM.

Those moments were gifts from God and I thank Him for that opportunity to discern just exactly what was before me.

WHAT PTSD has done to folks I care about will always be a main concern of mine. Whether I believe it exists is not an issue.

Mike Sloniker