

My name is John and I served in the army in Vietnam, 1967-1968. I did not want to go, at 18 years old halfway around the world to fight in a jungle, but the country called, and I went as did most during that war.

I was scared but had to do what was right. I served 14 months in Vietnam, saw a lot of fellow servicemen die. I should have been killed also 5 different times but was somehow protected. I was scared every day for 14 months and was not prepared for what happened to me and thousands of others on our return home! We were spit at, mocked and had things thrown at us. I didn't want to be in Vietnam, I was called to go. It wasn't my fault I was there, it was the government who sent us all there and thousands to be killed. Protest the government not us! It hurt to come home to those anti-Vietnam feelings. Who were they to protest me for doing what I was told to do!

I was always proud to be an American, but after coming home and saw how badly the young American's treated us, I was ashamed of the people of America. To this day, my favorite song is Lee Greenwood's "Proud to be an American." I still get tears in my eyes when I hear it. I love my country, but even after 50 years, I still remember the hurt upon coming home.

Branson, Missouri has the largest Veterans gathering I have seen in the USA every year. I love Branson because the people love the Veterans. They really roll out the red carpet for thousands of veterans every single year, especially those who gave their all. Branson has lessened the hurt feelings from the past.

Thank you, Branson, anyone who has part and ever has had part in their honoring of the veterans. Also, thank you to the many who now acknowledge the veterans, even with just a simple thank you for serving, because you see to us, that simple "Thank You for Your Service" means the world to us, we now feel accepted!

- John, Arizona