

Seventeen Days Later...

-Jacque Dorazio

Our country honored our veterans last month. I frequently think of all the men, women, and K9's that provide services to our armed forces. Now that Veterans Day has passed, do thoughts remain of this special group of American patriots, their families, and their life changing experiences? Has the flag waving celebration waned until the next national day off? I have been an advocate for veterans since the 1960's. I joined Tybee's American Legion to offer support to vets by creating an informative website with possible useful links for physical and mental health, feature special events the Legion has and post interesting related history bytes. I realize, after three years of providing my complimentary services to Post 154, I need to step up my mission and feature their personal paths, putting faces on these selfless souls that have sacrificed their youth for us.

Vietnam veteran, James Carter, is a member of Post 154 along with numerous veteran organizations in Chatham county. He was named the donor of the year, June 2007, for the Vietnam Vets of America. I met Jimmy on Veterans Day 2015. We participated in the Savannah parade with members of Post 154. He was in a WWI uniform armed with his written pages- his personal thank you to all veterans. At the end of the parade route he recited it to the officials at the reviewing platform.

I spoke with him about his own path. Candidly, he spoke of his issues with PTSD and how he greatly appreciates what others do for vets. Are the words, "thank you for your service" good enough I ask? Of course he replies with a hearty laugh! Ironically, people also say "thank you for being there" and I reply "Thank God you weren't there." He and I share many of the same opinions of Vietnam. Years of studying and teaching a graduate class of this era I realize he is also quite knowledgeable on that difficult time in our history. Jimmy had a hand in organizing historical accounts at the Mighty 8th AF Museum. He is open about his journey with the 3rd Marine Division and readily shares his "book" "*Vietnam Veteran- POW/MIA They Fought For This Country, It's Time This Country Fights For Them*" boldly displayed on the cover. It is a strong portrayal of Jimmy turning 19 and landing in Vietnam seventeen days later. How many more young men and women grow up this way?

College was not for him. He signed up March 1965 and went to Parris Island for basic training in air flight mechanics and parachutes. He was shipped to a duty station in Okinawa, to last about two years. It lasted 6/8 months. The DaNang airbase had gotten hit- Vietnam was just getting hot. Stationed on the airstrip's perimeter, Jimmy was assigned to anti-tank detail. He lost half his friends at 19 and today to Vietnam. He served one tour, was offered a mere \$2100 to reenlist. His Mother bluntly stated if he reenlisted he would not be welcomed home again. God-Mother-Country-Core, Jimmy knew what he had to do. He returned to sneers of the confused public. He joined the ranks voicing opposition to the war and helped vets assimilate into the "peaceful" society. Jimmy faces his embedded issues head on by creating incredible 3-D diorama scenes in bottles. He also builds to scale shrimp boats, planes, and lighthouses. Please visit tybeeislandamericanlegion.org to view his photos from Vietnam, his words, and miniature dioramas- how **does** he get a pack of cigarettes and matches into a tequila bottle? After you learn about his path, recall what you were doing 17 days after you turned 19.