

Letter from Mike Eberhardt, 1LT, Retired Army. He was the soldier with
my brother, Jon, when he was killed in action in Vietnam on October 7, 1970.

Nov. 19, 2019

Dear Julie,

I apologize for delaying in responding to your card. Robin and I have become quite involved in a variety of responsibilities in our church, along with regular ESL class preparations. Hopefully, two that have taken so much of my time will be over within the next couple of weeks.

I approached and experienced Veteran's Day with mixed emotions. Our time together in Washington provided some degree of relief in being able to give you all more information that allowed clarity about what happened on October 7, 1970. I am grateful that this helped your family.

Although the events, not only of that day, but of other experiences in Vietnam, were brought back to the surface of my memories. I have somewhat relived those experiences with mixed emotions. I am grateful that God saved my life on more than one occasion. I can't remember if I shared with you that on two missions, I heard the bullets fired by Viet Cong soldiers pass by my head. One of those bullets was close enough for me to feel as it missed me by inches. So, I realize that my life was spared on those missions. When these memories pass through my thoughts as odd times, I also have a degree of guilt that I survived. I have asked God to help me understand why I was not killed on the day Jon and Mac were killed. I am grateful that I am alive, but I struggle that these two men should also be alive. I try to accept the fact that I will never really understand any answer that might come.

So, Veteran's Day brings back memories. Over the celebrations and observances of that day, I watched some of the programming focusing on honoring veterans. I am still troubled by the fact that only one time in those few programs I watched part of did I hear the words Vietnam War mentioned. Although a number of older veterans were shown in audiences, only once was one spoken to and questioned about his service. There may have been more on other broadcasts, but I still feel that our national leaders do not want to bring back memories of this conflict. At least we have the Wall to show honor to those who served. For that I am grateful.

One evening while Robin and I were watching TV, I noticed that the History Channel was broadcasting the series done several years ago on the Vietnam War. Over the course of the day, they showed segments based on years. One of the segments was entitled "Vietnam: 1969-1970-The Changing War." This one Robin and I watched. During the program there was a specific emphasis on Ben Tre Province in the Mekong Delta. Ben Tre is where MAT V was located. A number of comments were made about how heavily imbedded in that region were the Viet Cong. They showed an aerial photo of that entire portion of the delta with the province highlighted. I got out the map that I was using that day and I identified on the tv screen the area we were in for our mission on Oct. 7, 1970. With tears in my eyes, I voiced a prayer for you and your family. I do so wish I could have done something to spare you your grief.

I am grateful that you had Jon for as long as you did. I am grateful that he had your family to love him and mourn for him. I am also thankful that our Lord allowed us to meet and share a bit of that sorrow and to honor Jon at the Wall. Please know that I feel God has allowed Robin and I to get to know you all. I hope He will also allow us to share some time together again in the future. You are a very loving family and I pray God's blessings on all of you.

With gratitude and prayers for you,

