

WELCOME HOME

In October Of 1997, I happened to chance upon a girl I had known since our days at a local junior high. Although we talked for just a few moments, I remembered a time long ago when a young Marine came home from Vietnam.

Arriving home late one evening in May of 1971, I made a few phone calls and made plans to meet a girl I had dated before I left for Vietnam. I was to pick her up at the local high school at the end of classes.

After checking in at the front office, I was allowed to wait in the front hall until the end of classes. As I stood there, a few students that had known me before I left for the Marines, came up to me to see how I was and where I had been. One jumped in and speculated that I must have been in Florida because of my dark tan.

As they walked away, I wondered what they would have thought if I had explained that I was a Marine that just came back from Vietnam.? To avoid anymore unwanted meetings, I moved a bit farther down the hall. As I stood there, a girl I knew came around the corner and screamed my name. We talked briefly but before she walked away, she hugged my neck and said “welcome home”.

Years later, being a Vietnam veteran became acceptable and we were actually acknowledged for our service to our country. The hugs and “welcome homes” seemed endless and although well intended, they seemed hollow.

Of all the hugs and “welcome homes” I have felt and heard over the years, that one hug, that one “welcome home” has always stayed with me. That one hug, that one “welcome home” momentarily helped a young Marine grunt forget about the ambushes, the endless patrols, and the death he had left just a few days earlier. I have carried that one hug and “welcome home” with me for many years.

Sometimes something touches your soul and becomes a part of you forever. So it is with that one hug...that one “welcome home”.

**Dedicated to the families that never got the chance to give that one hug that one “welcome home”
and to Cathy...my friend.**

C. V. Egan

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