



The Sergeant Mitchell W. Stout Medal of Honor Recipient Memorial, Virtue Cemetery, West Knox County, Tennessee, incorporates the U.S. Veterans Memorial, Tennessee Medal of Honor Memorial and the Knox-Loudon County Vietnam Wall. The site is located near Farrigut, Tennessee.

Volunteers of Tennessee

James R. (Buddy) White Speaks at the Sergeant Mitchell W. Stout Medal of Honor Recipient Memorial Dedication, March 12, 1975

**NDQSA archive
memorial dedication
12 March 1995**

During the Mexican War, Tennessee was asked for 3,000 volunteers. Thirty thousand volunteered, thus giving us the name Volunteers of Tennessee. Mitchell Stout was a volunteer. He volunteered for the Army in 1967 at the age of 17; in 1968 he volunteered for Vietnam, staying for a year. Like so many others, he could not adapt back to the stateside military service, so he volunteered to go back to Vietnam. After hearing that he was going back, and while he was home on leave, I tried to discourage him from going back and asked him one question: "Why?" He reply was, "Maybe I can help someone." He went on to say that they were sending kids over there that could not even clean a rifle.

After returning to Vietnam, on 12 March 1970 -- 25 years ago today -- he volunteered his final time when he gave his life to save others at Khe Gio Bridge, Republic of South Vietnam. After hearing the details of that night from this man beside me, Sergeant Richard E. Dunn, who spent three and one-half tours of duty there, there were 13 Americans on the hill (two KIA [killed in action] and nine WIA [wounded in action]). There were also approximately 40 South Vietnamese with a

captain. They were nowhere to be found. They had deserted 13 Americans and left them to fight their battle. After hearing this account from Rick first hand and face-to-face, I have to say that there were 13 heroes on that hill, especially the driver of the Duster -- the only thing left that would run on that hill. Rick can't remember his name, but knows that he was close to the only way out and could have left the wounded there and gone on. But instead he made a circle of the compound, picking up the wounded, with Rick dragging Jim Silva, the last one picked up. This happened only after they were completely out of ammunition and had no choice but to get out and actually had machine gun barrels melted down.

Everyone was touched by this war in one way or another. In a few minutes you will hear the names of 117 men from Knox and Loudon counties. When you hear it took 56 hours to read the names on the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C., at its dedication service, you can visualize the vastness of the casualties. May we hope and pray our elected officials will take a second look at what they asked our soldiers to do and never, ever, let another Vietnam happen.

I started this memorial from reading the paper about the problems Richard O'Brian was having trying to get Mitchell recognized in his own community. No one seemed to know and in some cases didn't even care about him or 58,000-plus others who died or the other Vietnam veterans who lived to come home. I hope that this token of appreciation and gratitude to them is accepted and that Mitch and all the Vietnam veterans will accept our apologies for being so late to recognize them.

Mitch has been honored by buildings being named after him at Fort Bliss, Texas, Fort Hood, Texas, and Fort Knox, Kentucky. The convenient thing for me to have done would have been to put something up for Mitch and let that be. I remember what Faye [Sergeant Stout's mother] would say when she went to these places; that she always felt for the other 58,000-plus and their Gold Star mothers, for her loss is no greater than their's. We have several of those mothers here today. Today we honor all our veterans of all wars, especially the Vietnam veterans. Today is not just for Mitch, but certainly in his honor.

Since the Civil War, with the exception of the Indian Wars, our veterans have been able to keep outside aggression off U.S. soil. It is indeed sad that on Veteran's Day or Memorial Day at our national cemeteries, the participants sometimes outnumber the attendance, especially when we see 100,000 at a ball game. We have not had our cities bombed and our civilians killed, and we had better hope that this administration does not tear down the greatest military left to us by President Regan and Bush. They have a good start at it. We must not forget that the aggressors are still there.

I don't intend to debate the merits of the Vietnam War, but we were in it, and the men who went were ordered to go and fight a war that was so unpopular in this country that there were riots, demonstrations, burning of draft cards and even burnings of the American flag.

It is good that we live in a free country where we have the right to disagree, but burning the flag is a form of treason which should be dealt with in that manner. Even our present president of these United States was in foreign countries protesting the war. It was so bad then that those returning who were not in the constant stream of body bags were spit upon, called murderers and baby killers. Some were told, "Don't

wear you uniform home," as if to say "sneak back home and don't talk about the war." We need to talk and never let us and the people in Washington, D.C., forget it. We should thank God everyday that we have men and women like the Vietnam veterans.

There is no way to compensate the men and women who served in Vietnam. It can't be done with concrete memorials or flowers, but I want to say "Thank you" to those who died and those still with us. If one veteran gets a little peace of mind from this, it has been worth it. I am not a Vietnam veteran, but after this I feel like a first cousin. I want to personally thank you and want to think that all in attendance today feel the same or else they would not be here. I want to apologize for all America for the guilt, shame, humiliation and rejection that was bestowed on you when you returned or any insinuation the war was your fault. If anyone leaves here today unmoved, then I have not accomplished my goal because this service is for you.

The physical scars of Vietnam may heal, but will the scars you got when you came home? I don't know. May God bless you and relieve the burdens I know you carry after talking to so many of you this past year. The Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C., is the nation's most visited memorial. It was built after a lot of controversy, but thanks to people like Jan Scruggs and others like him that did not let even Ross Perot's millions stop the wall. May that wall and all that it memorializes continue to heal our nation.