

Two Sister's Journey

By Patricia (Cox) Owen



The Background:

On July 12, 1969 our family received notification from the Army that our brother/son, Harold (Buddy) Cox, had been reported missing in action since July 7, 1969. His death was confirmed five days later and his remains sent home on July 28th. We didn't know the details surrounding his death and naturally wanted to see his body, but we were told the casket had been sealed and could not be opened. We never received any information as to what had happened the night he died. In the end, we had to believe that what we had been told was true, but every time the news showed footage from Vietnam we searched the faces looking for him.

Then in July 1971, I was driving home from work and the news item on the radio was momentous. The POW's had been released and were on their way home. My immediate reaction was deep anger. I couldn't imagine why I was feeling that way. I was confused and ashamed. Then it dawned on me. If the POW's were freed and Buddy wasn't among them, that meant his death was real. My rage dissolved into a sea of tears. My sister, Barbara had the same reaction when Saigon fell. Neither of us was even aware that we had been holding on to the false hope that there had been a horrible mistake.

For the next forty years, Barbara and I wove a protective, but isolating cocoon around our sorrow. We built a sturdy wall against our grief and never dared to peek over it. -----Until Memorial Day, 2011. That evening I went to my computer and the virtual wall on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund website. Several messages and a picture had been posted to Buddy's page. I had seen the page before, but for reasons I can't explain I never reached out to the men who left those messages. So that night, I e-mailed the person who had left the most recent posting, which was two years old. I didn't even know if the address was still valid. To my amazement Bruce Farder wrote back and a most profound journey began. Bruce suggested that I get in touch with Bill Farrell who had been their lieutenant and had posted the picture of Buddy taken on highway 19 in February 1969.

When I e-mailed Bill, he answered that he had "been waiting for years for the families to get in touch" with him. Barbara and I were stunned. There were actually people out there somewhere who remembered Buddy. That thought never crossed our minds. Bill, in turn, directed me to Gary and Jeanne Simon. Gary and Buddy had been best friends living in track 19. We all kept in touch over the next two years sharing memories, information and love. We became family. When it was announced that the 2014 - 2/1 CAV reunion would be held in Milwaukee, a reasonable distance for all of us, Jeanne told us, "You have to go."

The Reunion:

Barbara and I boarded our flight to Milwaukee, having no idea what lay ahead of us. We were nervous but determined to do this-----to meet Buddy's friends and to honor him. We had no expectations and decided to let things unfold as they were meant to. Nothing could have prepared us for the outpouring of love and support that was showered on us all weekend. Here, at last, were people who truly understood. For them as well as for us, the pain is always just beneath the surface. For all of us the tears come, oh, so easily when we remember the men who didn't come home. The horrors we all still live are different in detail, but similar in consequence. They shaped and continue to shape our lives. Vietnam changed us forever.

After checking in, Barbara and I went to register for the reunion. To our great surprise when we walked off the elevator, there were Bruce, Gary and Jeanne. The hugs could have lasted forever. We did it! We were all here.

By far, the most poignant, tender and loving event was the Memorial Service. We were asked to join the troopers in placing roses in the Wreath of Honor as the names of the fallen were read. The order in which the names were read had been changed so that we could honor the five men who also died on July 7, 1969, Dave Bonesteel, James Knowles, Ronnie Newell, James Bedell and Curtis Stephens. Our deepest thank you to whomever did that. That moment brought great peace and healing. After the Memorial Service, we were invited to take Buddy's place in the Troop B photo. That has become a family picture; the 2/1 CAV Blackhawks, our new family.

Throughout the weekend, we laughed more than we cried as we got to know brothers and sisters. We even partook of "CAV communion". Gary told us that Buddy would have wanted us to do that. Yuck! Thanks Buddy and Gary.

In the end, sharing this reunion with the men and the wives of the 2/1 CAV was so healing. When we got home, someone asked me if it brought closure. As you all know there will never be closure. Vietnam happened fifty years ago-----but no, it happens every day. A sound, a look, an image can spark a memory that erupts from our very souls in sorrow and fear. It never goes away. Perhaps it shouldn't. Perhaps it is the price we pay for loving all of those men so dearly.

The words simply don't exist that could adequately express Barbara's and my gratitude to each and every one of you.

To paraphrase Ecclesiastes, there is a time and a place for everything. This was our time, our place. Thank you.



*Gary Simon, Barbara Cox
Cardano, Patricia Cox Owen,
Bruce Farder*



B Troop Milwaukee Wisconsin

Milwaukee Memorial DVD

By Patricia (Cox) Owen

The DVD of the Memorial Service just came. My husband and I sat down and watched it right away. Once again I am at a loss for words. How can I thank you? Being able to relive the Memorial Service is so moving. It brings our journey full circle. This will be a family treasure forever. Please extend my deepest gratitude to everyone who had any part in this. I am anxious to share it with the rest of our family.