

No room for war: vietnam

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No Room for War: Vietnam Aside from the start of the Vietnam War, the 1950's was a rather positive and successful decade. The word "boom" was often used to describe many things about the 50's: the booming economy, the baby boom and the booming suburbs. "Between 1945 and 1960 the gross national product more than doubled, growing from \$200 billion to more than \$500 billion. Much of this increase came from government spending" ("The 1950's"). A booming economy is bound to bring on rapidly populating suburbs. Architects and builders saw this as a great opportunity: "

. [famous] William Levitt began to buy land on the outskirts of cities and built inexpensive houses there" ("The 1950's"). Lower costs attracted people out of the city to the suburbs, especially homecoming soldiers from World War II. "The G. I Bill subsidized low-cost mortgages for returning soldiers [from WWII], which meant that it was often cheaper to buy one of these suburban houses than it was to rent an apartment in the city" ("The 1950's").

Growing economy and suburbs were two booms that occurred in the 1950's. One of the most famous booms in history to this day is the "baby boom." After the end of World War II many people were eager to have children because they were sure that the future held prosperity and peace. The initial "boom" started in 1946 in the U. S.

"About 4 million babies were born each year during the 1950s. In all, by the time the boom finally tapered off in 1964, there were almost 77 million 'baby boomers'" ("The 1950's"). The Vietnam War was a grueling twenty-one year battle lasting from 1954 to 1975. Millions of brave soldiers were sent

overseas to fight for our country and help South Vietnam fight against the North Vietnamese; better known as the communists. North Vietnam had around 1.

1 million deaths while South Vietnam lost about 230, 000 soldiers (Rohn). The United States lost around 60, 000 of our beloved soldiers over the course of the twenty-one year battle (Rohn).” The U. S. failed to defend South Vietnam against the North Communists and probably lost the war politically rather than militarily as Vietnam was far from the war of major battles.

In the bigger picture of containment [of communism], the U. S. did achieve their initial goals to a certain extent” (Rohn). Many veterans believe they suffered the consequences of bad political choices. “ Those who fought in Vietnam, were as great as any generation that preceded them.

Their misfortune was to draw a bad war, an unnecessary war, a mistake by American politicians and statesmen, for which they paid” (Sheehan). The end of the war meant the beginning of another battle for the soldiers and their families. Even to this day many veterans face hardships from the war, better known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD. This disorder is defined as having anxiety, upsetting memories, or flashbacks of a traumatic event. Some veterans face more severe cases and every person handles it differently.

“ Despite the passage of fifty years since the war, for some Vietnam Veterans, PTSD remains a chronic reality of everyday life” (PTSD and Vietnam Veterans). Forrest Harshe is a great example of having to fight battles caused from his time served in Vietnam. Though his courage and love
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for his country is greatly appreciated by many, his experience in the service is not one he enjoyed. I had the pleasure to ask Forrest Harshe a few questions about the Vietnam War. He had always had an urge to serve his country. At just eighteen years old he enlisted into the service and was deployed to Vietnam.

As a United States Marine he faced many hardships and battles, but overcame them all. Forrest was given countless awards for outstanding service and bravery, including the Purple Heart, Gallantry Cross, and four bronze stars. Multiple times he was directly acknowledged by president Lyndon Johnson for extraordinary heroism. “ Extraordinary heroism? C’mon I was trying to stay alive, I was just a kid.” Forrest explained to me. Though he does take some pride in his accomplishments, he has nothing positive to say about war.

His wisdom is that there is no reason or room for war. Battle after battle he continued to meet new friends and people that will forever have an impact on his life. Each person taught him something new. Without his experiences in Vietnam he would be nowhere near the same person he is today. One of the good things that came from the war was being able to meet those people from all over the world. There is one person that sits above all of the others and will always remain heavy on Forrest’s heart; Peanut.

It was an overcast day like the many days before and Forrest’s battalion had just entered a war zone. Later that day as he was doing his duties, trying to save his life and the lives of his fellow soldiers he stumbled across a little boy hiding. The boy was quite terrified and couldn’t speak any English. Forrest

was aware that American soldiers were not to take in any outsiders but he couldn't just leave him there to die, so, he and some of his friends took the boy. When Forrest got back to camp with this boy, he reached in his pocket and pulled out a handful of peanuts.

He called him Peanut from then on. They were best friends. For about six months Forrest hid this boy in his camp and kept him safe, fed, and warm. One night Forrest's battalion was sent on a search and destroy mission. So, Forrest decided to leave him at a village that was supposed to be safe. Later that night the village was attacked and someone had told the intruders that a young marine was watching out for the little boy.

When Forrest had come back later that evening the boy was decapitated, with a marine emblem stuck to his chest. It took many doctors and years for Forrest to get over the emotional damage of that night; though, the heartache will never quite subside. He wonders if Peanut is still young in heaven or if God has let him grow. He hopes that Peanut has forgiven him for not saving him that night. To this day Forrest keeps a torn up picture of " his little Peanut" in his wallet. Forrest has many reasons to despise war.

The four years he spent overseas ruined his peace of mind and his return back home made him lose faith in human decency. When Forrest returned home he felt he wasn't treated like an American soldier. He was disrespected more than he was praised and was called a " baby killer" countless times. Even though he wasn't treated how he should have been for fighting for his country, he wouldn't change the experience for anything because the life lessons are irreplaceable. " No one is ever going to come up and give you

things, they're going to try and take away what you already have. Work for every inch of life.

Be proud of what you put into life, strive for greatness, and always have a good heart." -Forrest Harshe Works Cited Harshe, Forrest. Personal interview, 29 Dec. 2016. Rohn, Allen.

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