

Fifth Battalion, Seventh Cavalry Association

First Cavalry Division (Airmobile) (1966-1971)

Third Infantry Division (2004-Present)

Annual Veterans Day Reunion Banquet

Holiday Inn

Crystal City, Virginia

“Reflections on the Meaning of our Service” ©

November 10, 2019

Maurice O. Edmonds

Major General, USA, Retired

Commanding Officer, 5-7 Cavalry, 1970 (Vietnam, Cambodia)

It's my honor to stand, once again, before such a wonderful group of friends, battle buddies and patriots, veterans who wore our 5/7 Cav colors and your family members. I was blessed throughout my 35 yrs. of active duty to serve with, and benefit from, a remarkable group of American soldiers who shared a sense of duty to each other and to our mission. There were none I was more proud of -- nor benefited more from -- than those in our great Battalion. It didn't matter how you came to wear the uniform. What mattered was that you wore it. Your actions when it counted is what mattered.

A lot has been said about those who served during WWII being from the Greatest Generation. And I don't deny them that distinction -- my father was one of them -- drafted in his mid-30's. When offered a deferment because he was working on a Defense contract, he declined it. His comment was "*if someone has to go, it might as well be me*". His first fight was in the Battle of the Bulge with others to come until the war was over.

So, they deserve all the honors given them.

I submit that those who served during our War in SE Asia -- during a period of violent protests and disrespect from many of our fellow citizens -- equally deserve such accolades. You & your families deserve to be proud that when your country called -- you answered; you did your duty.

Our memories of those days -- and of those with whom we served -- come back to us as a series & sequence of vignettes --

some funny; some sad; some scary; some reverent – all connected to the men with whom we served.

They remain in our mind's eye. We remember their faces; we remember their names though sometimes now we may struggle to recall some names. But we always remember their Faces.

We remember how they were when we were just shooting the breeze; how they behaved under fire; and, we recognize how they seemed to care more for us in dangerous times than they did for themselves. In those snapshots of memory, it's always their faces we see.

It's been almost 50 years since I joined the BN at FSB Wood in the Dogs Head of SVN. Never once have I doubted my good fortune.

It was clear to me then – and remains so today – that your character and the character of those who came both before & after you was based on the strongest level of commitment to your duty and to each other.

In the direst of circumstances, you did not falter. You can be proud – as am I – that when others may have hesitated, you did not; when others may have stumbled, you stood tall; when your buddies and leaders needed you, you were there. You were patriots then – and, remain so today.

I speak not just of those who served during my time. It was clear within just a few days of my arrival that the BN – as a whole - reflected a character that was forged by the leaders &

troopers who served so valiantly throughout its SE Asia service. Complete the mission; Take care of your buddies; Go home standing tall. You did that.

Tomorrow, we will -- again -- gather at the Wall to reverently and faithfully remember and honor those whom we lost as well as all those with whom we served.

We will see their faces.

We will honor their sacrifices and the ages long sacrifices of their families. That is our eternal obligation.

It's wonderful that we still have the opportunity to get together. Don't let advancing age & creeping infirmity get in the way. Your friends need you – just as you need them. So, I urge you to show up; and, to stay in touch as often as you can.

God Bless you and keep you safe and in good health.

GARRY OWEN!