

FROM THE OTHER SIDE

At first there was no place to go
Until someone put up that "black granite wall"
Now every day and night my brothers and sisters wait.
To see the many people from places afar file in front of this "wall"
Many stopping briefly and many for hours
And some that come on a regular basis.

It was hard at first
Not that it's gotten any easier,
But it seems the attitudes towards that Vietnam War
We were involved in . . . Have changed

I can only pray that the ones on the other side
Have learned something,
And more "Walls" as this one,
Needn't be built.

Several members of my unit,
And many that I did not recognize,
Have called me to the "Wall"
By touching my name engraved upon it.
The tears aren't necessary, but are hard even for me to hold back.

Don't feel guilty for not being with me, my brothers,
This was my destiny as it is yours, to be on that side of the "Wall"

Touch the "Wall" my brothers,
So that we can share in the memories we had.
I have learned to put the bad memories aside
And remember only the pleasant times that we had together.
Tell all our Brothers out there to come and visit me,
Not to say: "Goodbye . . . But to say: "Hello"
And be together again . . . even for a short time . . .
And to ease that pain of loss that we all still share.

Today, an irresistible and loving call summons me to the "Wall"

As I approach, I can see an elderly lady...

And as I get closer, I recognize her...It's Momma!

As much as I have looked forward to this day,
I have also dreaded it.

Because I didn't know what reaction I would have.

Next to her I suddenly see my wife,

And immediately think how hard it must have been for her

To come to this place.

And my mind floods with the pleasant memories of thirty years past.

There's a young man in a military uniform

Standing with his arm around her-My God!-He has to be my son!

Look at him trying to be the man without a tear in his eye.

I yearn to tell him how proud I am,

Seeing him standing tall, straight and proud in his uniform.

Momma comes closer and touches the "Wall"

And I feel the soft gentle touch I had not felt in many years.

Dad has crossed to this side of the "Wall"

And through our touch,

I try to convey to her that Dad is doing fine,

And is no longer suffering or feeling pain.

I see my wife's courage building,

As she sees Momma touch the "Wall".

She approaches and lays her hand on my waiting hand.

All the emotions, feelings and memories of three decades past

Flash between our touch

And I tell her that:

It's alright . . . Carry on with your life . . . Any don't worry about me.

I can see as I look into her eyes that she hears,

And a big burden has been lifted from her,

On wings of understanding.

I watch as they lay flowers and other memories of my past
My lucky charm that was taken from me and sent to her by my CO,
A tattered and worn teddy bear that I can barely remember having
As I grew up . . . as a Child,
And several medals that I had earned and were presented to my wife
One is the Combat Infantry Badge that I am very proud of,
And I notice that my son is also wearing this medal.
I had earned mine in the jungles of Vietnam,
And he had probably earned his in the deserts of Iraq.

I can tell that they are preparing to leave,
And I try to take a mental picture of them together,
Because I don't know when I will see them again.
I wouldn't blame them that I was not forgotten.

My wife and Momma near the "Wall" for one final touch,
And so many years of indecision, fear, and sorrow are let go.

As they turn to leave,
I feel my tears that had not flowed for so many years,
Form as if dew drops on the other side of the "Wall".

They slowly move away with only a glance over their shoulders.

My son suddenly stops and slowly returns.
He stands straight and proud in front of me,
And snaps a salute!

Something draws him near the "Wall"
And he puts his hand upon etched stone
And touches my tears that had formed dew drops
On the face of the "Wall" . . .
And I can tell that he senses my presence,
And the pride and love I have for him.
He falls to his knees and the tears flow from his eyes,

And I try my best to reassure him that:
It's alright,
And the tears do not make him less of a man.

As he moves back wiping the tears from eyes,
He silently mouths:
"God Bless you, Dad . . . "

God Bless, YOU, Son . . .
We WILL meet someday,
But in the meanwhile, go on your way.
There is no hurry . . . there is no hurry at all.

As I see them walk off in the distance,
Yell out to THEM
And EVERYONE there today,
As loud as I can . . .

THANK YOU FOR REMEMBERING!

And as others on this side of The Wall join in
I notice that the U.S. Flag,
Old Glory,
That so proudly flies in front of us every day,
Is flapping and standing proudly straight out in the wind
From our gathering numbers this day.
And we shout again . . .
And . . . again . . .
And . . . again . . .

THANKS FOR REMEMBERING!