

Perception of Vietnam Veterans

Victory gardens and food rations, patriotism and tight-knit communities. These were common in America during World War II. When Pearl Harbor was attacked, Americans were outraged and, in return, citizens came together in a time of crisis. There were men lining up to fight and a public proud of that. When these soldiers returned home there was an outpour of praise and patriotism. The Vietnam War was not so similar. America was not attacked on home soil and many Americans did not approve of this war. There was no push to enter this battle nor were their men jumping at the chance to fight. The soldiers who went to Vietnam were not perceived by the public as heroic as those in WWII. After speaking with my Uncle Leo Anderson, a Vietnam veteran, I realized something about all soldiers that I hadn't thought about before. They're all brave and deserve the same prestige, regardless of which war they fought in.

Many Americans said, "We have no business in Vietnam". Citizens were very tired of sixteen years of battle in a war they wanted nothing to do with. My Uncle referred to it as, "a stale mate that dragged on". I imagined that he would also tell me how disappointing the not-so-warm welcome was when he returned to his hometown of Cass Lake, MN. Surprisingly, he told me that he never really noticed. He said, "I never had anyone spit on me or degrade me in any way. There was more of a problem with this sort of thing in the bigger cities".

I am very appreciative that my Uncle was never insulted for his time spent at war but it is saddening to know that other soldiers were. The war that these men were

fighting may not have been well received by the public but I do not agree that this should fall on the shoulders of the courageous soldiers. Vietnam Veterans are just as valiant as World War II Veterans. The only difference between the two types of veterans is the goal they were fighting for. And for the public that was all they needed to judge Vietnam Veterans poorly. The negative connotation that went along with the war, stuck to the men that fought in it. This is a shame.

As a niece of a Vietnam Veteran, I am just as proud and thankful for my Uncles efforts, as I would be if he had fought in World War II as my grandfather did. By no means should the value of a soldier's service be cheapened by the outrage of the public due to the reasons of entering a war. It is important to always praise and thank any man or woman who has or will serve our homeland. Which is why I thank my Uncle Leo, Vietnam Veterans, and all United States soldiers.