

Diana T. Engle

S/SGT James M. Ray Scholarship

30 July 2010

Welcome Home?

The American public has not treated all returning veterans the same. Veterans returning from World War II were enthusiastically welcomed home by the public. Vietnam veterans were shunned, as they were an uncomfortable reminder of a subject no one wanted to speak about (American Perspectives). Veterans returning home from the Middle East have been met with thanks and respect. Public opinion is the underlying culprit, fueled by irresponsible media.

I am a Naval Officer's daughter (Vietnam veteran), a Naval Officer's niece (veteran of WW II, Korea and Vietnam), and an Air Force Officer's sister (veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom Trans-Sahara). My ancestors have fought in every war/military conflict since this country's inception. I am eleventh generation on my mother's side and ninth on my father's. My father served in Saigon June 1966 to June 1967. I was six years old. It was "daddy's job." I never thought much about it until the end of the Vietnam War. By then, I was old enough to understand what "war" really was. While I did not like the idea of our soldiers having to be in Vietnam, but I understood they were "just doing their job and following orders." It did not matter to me why the United States military was involved, only that our soldiers needed our support. And they did not get it from the government or the public.

The majority of the American public viewed the Vietnam conflict as a disaster (The Vietnam War and Its Impact). Vietnam was brought into every home that had a

television every evening, with plenty of raw/sensationalized footage. Not a very accurate manner in forming an opinion. Who could view what was presented and not have a negative opinion? Many thought our military should not be there, fighting someone else's battle. In their minds, Vietnam simply was not essential to American national interests (Vietnam-Era Antiwar Movement). Unfortunately, these people, the antiwar movement, vented their frustrations with racism, the federal government, and the war on the returning veterans (The Vietnam War and Its Impact). The supporters of the movement sought peace alone, with or without honor (Vietnam-Era Antiwar Movement). They could not differentiate between the soldier who fought, as ordered, and the politicians who gave those orders.

While military activity in the Middle East is in the media, limited information is released about the conflict, in an effort to prevent another "living room" television war. The architects of the Gulf War relied on precision bombing rather than ground troops in order to minimize casualties and preserve public support for the war (The Vietnam War and Its Impact). The American public has had many years to learn and digest the truths of the Vietnam War. They have "learned from their mistakes." Following the Persian Gulf War the American public showered returning troops with a level of adulation not witnessed in the United States since 1945 (The Vietnam War and Its Impact).

I am impressed with everything that the American people, common folk to celebrities, have been doing recently to support our troops. I am grateful to see Old Glory flying in so many places, yellow ribbons abounding on cars, Service Flags in windows with blue stars, personal "welcome home" banners displayed across lawns, songs supporting the troops, the stories of thanks. This is how it should be, every day.

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