

A Million Thanks
Veteran's Day
Letter Writing Campaign
"June 7, 1968"

In honor of Veteran's Day, RMHS is conducting a letter writing initiative in conjunction with A Million Thanks—a year-round campaign to show appreciation for our U.S. Military men and women, past and present, for their sacrifices, dedication, and service to our country through letters, emails, and cards.

Attached, you will find a narrative called "June 7, 1968" by Viet Nam War veteran James F. Miller. In this narrative, Miller writes. "When a veteran...returns from combat, that soldier needs a very strong support group..." Many veterans share Miller's view of returning home from war.

After reading this narrative, write a letter to a member of the U.S. Military expressing your gratitude for his or her service. Please keep your comments positive and offer support to the military personnel. All letters will be delivered to A Million Thanks and sent to members of the U.S. Military.

Thank you for your participation in this campaign!

For Veteran's Day

Mark

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June 7, 1968
by James F. Miller

I was a young, 22-year-old old officer in the Navy. I was the X.O. of a five-man team Special Forces, SEAL Team.

We were fifteen clicks out of Da Nang on a mop-up, after the VC had gone through and executed an entire village. As we were walking in the village I could see men, women, and even children just lying there dead in their tracks. Some shot in the head, some in the back. I was in shock to see a dead mother still holding on to her dead child. It was like a dream state and everything was in slow motion. The VC had killed over sixty-three people.

We gathered in the middle of the village to discuss our next plan of attack. We decided to gather the dead in one central location. As I looked around for a high point to keep watch, my C.O. supervised the three men with the gruesome duty of gathering the bodies.

I found a tree suitable for recon.

It seemed like I had been up that tree for hours but in fact it had only been about forty minutes. All of a sudden something caught my attention from the north. It was a young girl about 10 or 11 years of age. She looked like she was a village survivor, or was she somebody new? I was not able to tell the difference from three hundred yards out. I signaled my C.O. and he passed the word around the men to take up locations. They did, blending into the dense jungle. I took a better position on the tree, and when I signaled my C.O. that she was about thirty-five yards away, he gave me the signal to bring her down.

That was the signal I did not want. Now I was wishing I were moving the d.b.'s (dead bodies) and one of the other men would take this shot. I had not killed anyone but I knew I would have to one day. I had been no more than

Returning Soldiers Speak

three weeks in-country. By this time the girl was about 25-yards away. She had a cold look on her face. I was in a cold sweat, my hair on the back of my neck started to stand up. I reached for my .45 and locked my eyes on her. She locked her eyes with mine and just kept walking towards me.

Her hands were behind her back.

I squeezed the trigger and shot her in the forehead. Her eyes rolled back and turned white before her body started to fall. Her head and her body exploded from behind her.

It turned out she had a hand grenade behind her back. She was willing to use it on us while sacrificing herself in the process.

It was June 7, 1968, at approximately 14:23. I was young, twenty-two. X.O. of a 5-man team. It was my third week in-country and my first sight of death.

That day was the day I grew up and innocence was left behind in that village. Sixty-five people died there that day and I killed a young girl and she killed my soul at the same time. I have never been the same since. There were more after that, but that young girl—that is one face I have seen every day for over forty years.

I wake up every night in a cold sweat.

She did not affect the other soldiers as much as she did me because they didn't look in her eyes like I did. They didn't see her eyes turn white with death like I did.

It was so hard to write this down. But I decided to write to let the civilians know that when a veteran—a warrior—returns from combat, that soldier needs a very strong support group not only from the Veterans Administration but also from their families and friends.

Try to understand this for your child, brother, sister, or a family member, or even a friend. They need for you to understand.

I need for you to understand.