

mistake at home, a foreign policy of misjudgment in Southeast Asia and a personal tragedy for the tens of thousands of Vietnamese and Americans who paid the price for the misadventure.

I had lost my college deferment in 1966 and received my "Greetings from the President of the United States" draft letter in early 1967. I decided to do my best and serve even though I thought our policies in Vietnam were wrong. A lot of awful experiences in the war would follow that decision but not one day of regret.

In Vietnam you joined your unit one soldier at a time, not in groups that trained together back home or from old time group enlistments. My unit was Company C, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry, 4th Infantry Division. That night in July 1968 when I joined Charlie Company as an incoming sergeant E-5, I was ordered to take out a night patrol. I was exhausted from days of travel and processing but I didn't sleep a wink all night, and never solidly for the rest of the year I was there.

Three days later, on patrol in a cornfield, my radio operator who was walking just behind me was shot through the neck by a sniper. I later lost another radio operator who was shot while clinging perilously to rungs of a hastily departing helicopter. If he had been able to survive his wounds, he would never have survived the fall from the chopper into the trees below. We found his body three days later.

Discipline was strongly enforced in our division. No intentional killing of civilians or torture of POWs was tolerated. After several reprimands I had one soldier in my company court-martialed for cutting off the ears of dead North Vietnamese soldiers and mailing them home to his girlfriend.

The final tragedy for me was that the man I recommended to succeed me as squad leader in Charlie Company was killed as he walked in the squad leader position in the field the day after I left for home. It is his name I look for first on the wall in Washington when I visit it.

There were some light moments, too. I was able to keep a pet monkey in my bunker for several weeks until he learned to pull the pins on hand grenades and kick them off the mountainside to explode below.

My war experiences only served to support my initial doubts about our involvement. Once when a convoy of U.S. Army and South Vietnamese Army units that I was traveling with on Highway 1 was ambushed by NVA regulars, we American soldiers jumped off our trucks facing the enemy and returned fire. The South Vietnamese soldiers jumped off the other side of the trucks and ate lunch. Whose war was it?

I recall numerous incidents when U.S. Army officers instructed us to count each body part from a NVA soldier as one casualty so as to swell the total body count reported. Similarly, we noted that some known U.S. casualties were listed long after the deaths in Stars and Stripes, the weekly military newspaper. These small deceptions, multiplied across the country and if practiced widely, could have contributed to an inaccurate picture of battlefield situations. And it would have been done purposefully.

What would I want future generations to know about the nation's experience in Vietnam?

First, that governments of men can and do make huge mistakes. In understanding political situations in other cultures, in intelligence gathering and interpretation, and that an overzealous military can and will cover up their miscalculations of enemy strength, exaggerate U.S. military effectiveness and minimize cost projections and outcomes. Once committed, reversals of policy are slow in our system of government and

often come too late for too many in harm's way.

Second, I would urge future generations to get informed and involved in public affairs as a matter of civic duty and personal interest to guard against poor political leadership that can get the country in deep trouble because of political ideology, showmanship or the pursuit of short-term partisan advantage over the national interest. Not only is eternal vigilance the price of liberty in Jefferson's phrase, but it is also the price of intelligent foreign policy and peace in the world.

Third, I would want those who look back at what happened in Vietnam to recall that it was not victories in combat by soldiers and airmen that got us out of there. No, it was not that at all. It was the courage and aggressiveness of people of all ages here at home who protested in the streets that finally turned the political tide in this country against the war. Their courage and tenacity forced a reversal of policy in Washington as time and events revealed military failures and unacceptable losses.

Finally, I would not want my children or anyone's children to ever know the details of what war looks like up close. It is very gruesome and terrifying for the safe and the wounded and all those who survive are burdened with the awfulness for their lifetimes. As time passes, the joy and fullness of life can repair the damage and soften its impact for those whose lives lead in healthy directions. For those who returned to dysfunctional families, lack of schooling, joblessness, illness, they are the walking wounded of Vietnam who cannot ever come home.

I would want my children to know that I tried to do my duty when my country called even when I disagreed deeply with the policies and conduct of the war in which we were engaged. I would want them to know I felt no regrets or ill feelings toward those who chose not to serve; those decisions of conscience required a certain kind of courage as well as any I saw in the war. Lastly, I would want my children to work for a country that is a more thoughtful, careful and respectful force in a world of divergent cultures, one that expends its resources in war only when our national security interests are genuinely at stake.●

#### MR. JACK WILCOX INDUCTED INTO PLYMOUTH HALL OF FAME

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, on April 18, 2000, the Kiwanis Club of Plymouth, Michigan, with the assistance of the Plymouth Community Chamber of Commerce, the District Library, the Plymouth Historical Society, and the City of Plymouth, will honor three men whose commitment to the community has earned them a place in the Plymouth Hall of Fame. These men are being recognized because over the years their dedication and many efforts have played a large role in making Plymouth the wonderful town that it is today. With this having been said, I rise today in honor of Mr. James Jabara, Mr. James B. McKeon, and Mr. Jack Wilcox, who are rightfully taking their place among the "Builders of Plymouth."

A graduate of Plymouth High School and the University of Michigan, Mr. Wilcox is a retired U.S. Navy captain. He has served the community of Plymouth in many, and varied, ways. A semi-professional actor, he is a charter member of the Plymouth Theater

Guild. He is a past president of the Plymouth Historical Society, as well as a lifetime member of this organization. He has served as City Commissioner, and helped to organize the Plymouth Council on Aging and the Plymouth Economic Development Corporation. Mr. Wilcox is a trustee of Riverside Cemetery, a member of the Municipal Tree Board, and a member of the Block Grant Citizen's Advisory Commission. In addition, Mr. Wilcox is the host of the local cable television show "Profiles in Plymouth."

Mr. President, I applaud Mr. Wilcox for his many efforts to better the quality of life for every resident of Plymouth, Michigan. His dedication to the town over the years is truly admirable, and I am glad that the Kiwanis Club has taken this opportunity to recognize his many contributions. On behalf of the entire United States Senate, I congratulate Mr. Wilcox on his induction into the Plymouth Hall of Fame.●

#### MR. JAMES B. MCKEON INDUCTED INTO PLYMOUTH HALL OF FAME

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, on April 18, 2000, the Kiwanis Club of Plymouth, Michigan, with the assistance of the Plymouth Community Chamber of Commerce, the District Library, the Plymouth Historical Society, and the City of Plymouth, will honor three men whose commitment to that community has earned them a place in the Plymouth Hall of Fame. These men are being recognized because over the years their dedication and many efforts have played a large role in making Plymouth the wonderful town that it is today. With this having been said, I rise today in honor of Mr. James Jabara, Mr. James B. McKeon, and Mr. Jack Wilcox, who are rightfully taking their place among the "Builders of Plymouth."

Mr. McKeon came to Plymouth after graduating from a school that I myself am quite familiar with, Michigan State University. He has served Plymouth both as City Commissioner and as Mayor. He has been president of the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce, and was named Volunteer of the Year by that organization. Mr. McKeon is chairman of the Downtown Development Authority, and sits on the Board of Directors of Growth Works and the New Morning School. In addition, he is a member of the Schoolcraft College Development Authority Board and a benefactor of the Plymouth Community Arts Council.

Mr. President, I applaud Mr. McKeon for his many efforts to better the quality of life for every resident of Plymouth, Michigan. His dedication to the town over the years is truly admirable, and I am glad that the Kiwanis Club has taken this opportunity to recognize his many contributions. On behalf of the entire United States Senate, I congratulate Mr. McKeon on his induction into the Plymouth Hall of Fame.●