

A Thank you Letter to Vietnam Veterans from a Marine in Iraq

A guy gets time to think over here and I was thinking about all the support we get from home. Sometimes it's overwhelming. We get care packages at times faster than we can use them. There are boxes and boxes of toiletries and snack lining the center of every tent; the generosity has been amazing. So, I was pondering the question, "Why do we have so much support?"

In my opinion, it all came down to one thing: Vietnam Veterans. I think we learned a lesson, as a nation, that no matter what, you have to support the troops who are on the line, who are risking everything. We treated them so poorly back then. When they returned was even worse. The stories are nightmarish of what our returning warriors were subjected to. It is a national scar, a blemish on country, an embarrassment to all of us.

After Vietnam, it had time to sink in. The guilt in our collective consciousness grew. It shamed us. However, we learned from our mistake. Somewhere during the late 1970's and into the 80's we realized that we can't treat our warriors that way. So...starting during the Gulf War, when the first real opportunity arose to stand up and support the troops, we did. We did it to support our friends and family going off to war. But we also did it to right the wrongs from the Vietnam era. We treat our troops of today like the heroes they were, and are, acknowledge and celebrate their sacrifice, and rejoice at their homecoming...instead of spitting on them.

And that support continues today for those of us in Iraq. Our country knows that it must support us and it does. The lesson was learned in Vietnam and we are all better because of it. Everyone who has gone before is a hero. They are celebrated in my heart. I think admirably of all those who have served before me. From those who fought to establish this country in the late 1770's to those I serve with here in Iraq. They have all sacrificed to ensure our freedom. But when I get back home, I'm going to make it a personal mission to specifically thank every Vietnam Vet I encounter for THEIR sacrifice. Because if nothing else good came from that terrible war, one thing did. It was the lesson learned on how we treat our warriors. We as a county learned from our mistake and now we treat our warriors as heroes, as we should have all along. I am the beneficiary of their sacrifice, not only for the freedom they, like veterans from other wars, ensured, but for how well our county now treats my fellow Marines and I. We are the beneficiaries of their sacrifice.

Semper Fidelis,
Major Brian P. Bresnahan
United States Marine Corps

Museum Hours:

The museum is open to the public on Saturdays and Sundays from 12:00pm to 5:00pm. Private educational tours can be schedule with prior agreement and confirmation with the museum's staff. Hours of operation are subject to change due to restoration in progress.

Admission:

Admission to the museum is free.

Donations always appreciated!

For Additional Information, please call us at (407) 601-3047.

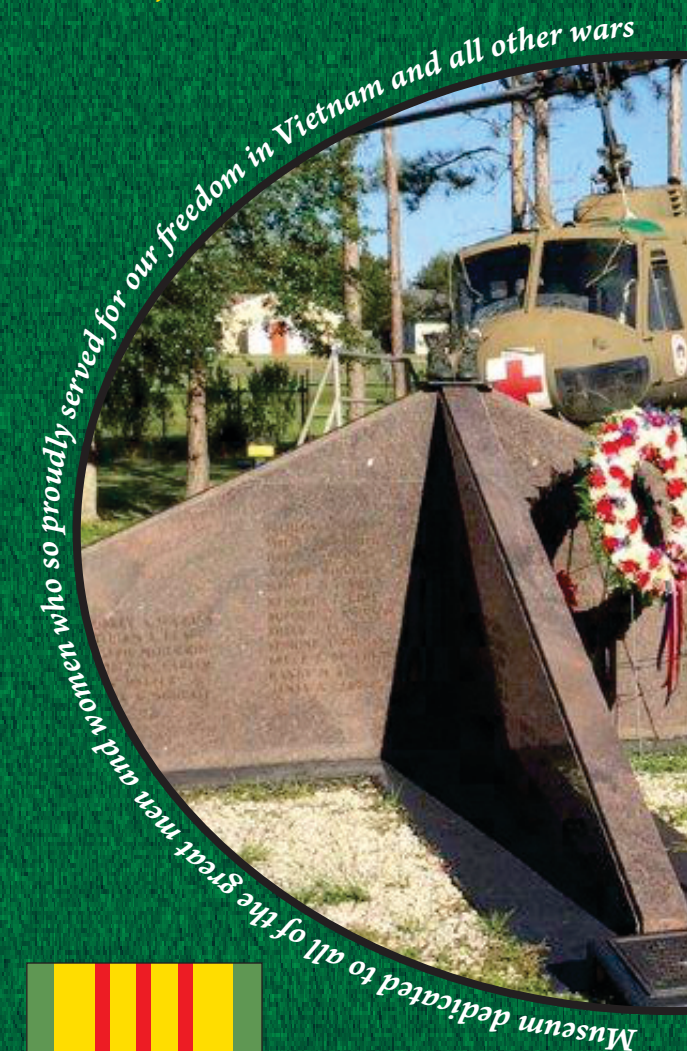


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Visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at thewall-usa.com

Corporal Larry E. Smedley National Vietnam War Museum

Orlando, Florida



**3400 North Tanner Road
Orlando, Florida 32826**

Corporal Larry E. Smedley National Vietnam War Museum



The museum is named in honor of Corporal Larry Eugene Smedley, who was born on March 4th, 1949 in Front Royal, Virginia. He attended Howard Junior High School in Union Park Florida, leaving in 1964. He enlisted in the United States Marine Corps on March 18th, 1966 in Orlando, Florida.

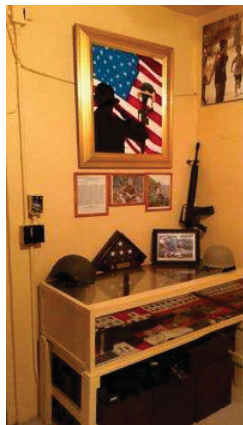
In July 1967, L.Cpl. Smedley arrived in the Republic of Vietnam. He was assigned duty as a rifleman and squad radio man with Company D, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division, and was promoted to Corporal on September 1st, 1967.

On December 21st, 1967 Cpl. Smedley was killed in action in Quang Nam Province and was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor posthumously. The citation read as follows: "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a squad leader with Company D, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, in connection with operations against the enemy."

On the evenings of 20-21 December 1967, Cpl. Smedley led his 6-man squad to an ambush site at the mouth of Happy Valley, near Phouc Ninh (2) in Quang Nam Province. Later that night an estimated 100 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army regulars, carrying 122mm rocket launchers and mortars, were observed moving toward Hill 41. Realizing this was a significant enemy move to launch an attack on the vital Danang complex, Cpl. Smedley immediately took sound and courageous action to stop the enemy threat. After he radioed for a reaction force, he skillfully maneuvered his men to a more advantageous position and led an attack on the numerically superior enemy force. A heavy volume of fire from an enemy machine gun positioned on the left flank of the squad inflicted several casualties on Cpl. Smedley's unit. Simultaneously, an enemy rifle grenade exploded nearby wounding him in the right foot and knocking him to the ground. Cpl. Smedley disregarded this serious injury and valiantly struggled to his feet, shouting words of encouragement to his men. He fearlessly led a charge against the enemy machine gun emplacement, firing his rifle and throwing

grenades, until he was again struck by enemy fire and knocked to the ground. Gravely wounded and weak from loss of blood, he rose and commenced a one-man assault against the enemy position. Although his aggressive and singlehanded attack resulted in the destruction of the machine gun, he was struck in the chest by enemy fire and fell mortally wounded. Cpl. Smedley's inspiring and courageous actions, bold initiative and selfless devotion to duty in the face of certain death were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the U.S. Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.

Corporal Larry E. Smedley was buried with full military honors in Arlington Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia. His name is engraved on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington D.C. on Panel 32E, Line 40.



Museum History

The Corporal Larry E. Smedley National Vietnam War Museum, Inc. (formerly known as the National Vietnam Veterans War Museum) established in 2000, is a Central Florida non-profit museum, owned and operated by the Vietnam Veterans of Central Florida, Inc. also a non-profit organization in Central Florida, founded in 1982. This organization also assists the servicemen and women of all wars and branches of military service. While mainly an organization of Vietnam War Era members, the VVCF welcomes all who have served with the Armed Forces of the United States.

Recognizing that the tragedy of the war in Southeast Asia has become comfortably distant in the minds of many Americans, this organization has embarked on a very ambitious undertaking—building a war museum that will bring the people and events of this bitter, divisive conflict to life, so that current and future generations of Americans remember the Vietnam Veterans' legacy of service and sacrifice and valor. The museum is dedicated to all Americans, from local schools and youth organizations to soldiers currently defending our great nation, in the hope that everyone passing through the gates will leave with a better understanding of past and present military conflicts.

The National Vietnam War Museum Includes the first monument in the state of Florida dedicated to fallen Vietnam War Veterans, with 167 names of men and women from Orange County, Florida. Other static displays consist of a U.S. Navy Patrol Boat River (PBR), also known as "River Rat", a Douglas A-4B Skyhawk aircraft that is currently on loan from the National Museum of Naval Aviation, Pensacola, Florida, and a Bell UH-1 (Huey) Dust-off helicopter. The existing museum center includes numerous artifacts from the Vietnam era, a room-size, to scale, firebase re-creation that took approximately eleven years to complete, and a recently remodeled educational media/research room with enhanced audiovisual capabilities.

