



*Photo taken 45 years ago at Con Tien  
A Marine Combat Base in South Vietnam.  
Bill Burns is the in the top left of the above picture.  
He is the Recipient of Purple heart and  
Bronze Star Medals United States Marine Corp*

I am a Viet Nam Veteran. Just one of the millions of young men and women who served our nation during the years of that conflict. I served as a 19 year old squad leader in the jungles and the mountains of "I Corp", South Viet Nam's northern most region, from May of 1968 to March of 1969.

Most of us hadn't been out of high school for much more than a year when our shiny new jungle boots first set foot on Vietnamese soil. We were young and idealistic, the sons and daughters of World War II parents. We were a long way from being professional soldiers and we knew it..... we did the best we could with what we had.

In March of 1969, after having spent 10 months in a combat unit, my tour of duty was cut short when our unit was involved in a major operation in the mountains of northern "I Corp". On the fourth day of an ongoing fire fight with a battalion of NVA soldiers, a bullet from an enemy AK 47 rifle destroyed portions of my left hand. After returning home and spending a period of time in a Naval hospital, I was retired from the Marine Corp, a 20 year old Sargeant.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to have returned home from our respective fields of battle throughout the history of our great nation, could never have imagined that the memories of the events that had taken place during the years of our service would forever remain in the forefront of our minds.

We all tried to set those memories aside.....Some did better than others!

## **“ARLINGTON”**

**WHEN I AWOKE THIS MORNING AT THE WATER’S EDGE,  
THE AIR WAS CRISP AND CLEAN.  
THE SUNRISE WAS AS BEAUTIFUL AS MY EYES HAVE EVER SEEN.  
AT THAT MOMENT, A MERE MOMENT IN TIME,  
MY THOUGHTS WERE OF HOW GRATEFUL I AM  
FOR THE FREEDOMS I ENJOY.  
TODAY I THOUGHT, I WOULD, IF ONLY FOR JUST A LITTLE WHILE,  
LEAVE THE PEACE AND SERENITY OF MY MOUNTAIN HOME  
FOR I HAVE A NEED WITHIN ME  
A NEED TO PASS ALONG A THANK YOU  
A THANK YOU TO HE WHO FOUGHT OUR COUNTRY’S BATTLES  
IN THE SUMMER OF ’42.**

**SO I TUNED THE OLD JEEP’S RADIO TO THE DAILY OLDIES SHOW  
THOUGH I SWEAR THROUGHOUT THE DAY’S LONG DRIVE,  
I HEARD NOT A SINGLE NOTE THAT PLAYED.  
IT WAS LATE AFTERNOON WHEN I ARRIVED.  
THE SUMMER BREEZE WAS SOFT AND GENTLE  
AS THERE I STOOD SILENT,  
NEAR THE MARBLE CROSS THAT BARES HIS NAME.  
MY PLAN WAS TO SHARE ANOTHER SUMMER SUNSET  
WITH A FATHER I NEVER KNEW.  
HE, WHO FOR ALL OF US, GAVE HIS LIFE IN THE SUMMER OF ’42.  
OUR DADS, OUR HEROES....**

**ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY  
ARLINGTON, VA 22211**

**BY: W. THOMAS BURNS**