CLOSURE

The United States of America needs you right now! The election is over, it was a dogfight, and my fangs were bared as much as any. If you were a Democrat, independent, a Kerry-supporting Republican, or a member of any other political group, and anything I said in any editorials hurt or offended you, I apologize. It is now time for us all to come together in unified resolve to support our commander-in-chief and our troops. Our fight is over, but the war is not.

As a Vietnam veteran, I personally still have issues with John F. Kerry, which most-likely will never see resolution, but that right now is inconsequential. I respected and appreciated John Kerry's comments in his concession speech for an end to divisiveness.

This election was a time for healing and great closure for most of us who walked those fields of fire in the steaming emerald-colored hell of Vietnam. After years of silent agony and an American public who hid us in the cellar as their bastard stepchildren, John Kerry, unwittingly or not, forced us to march upward into the sun-like-brightness of self-awareness, and ultimately, of our own self-worth.

Eyes burning from acid tears, we who fought so hard back then, fought once again with a great resolve, and so with our hearts as a walking point, our pens and keypads became rifles and munitions. Old wounds, scabbed over by years of shame and denial by our country, were ripped open and memories were dragged, kicking and screaming, into our conscious minds.

For months now, those wounds have bled, as we cried out, cleansing ourselves of proud flesh and corrupted tissue. And in so doing, we unwittingly let them properly heal this time from the inside-out, with the re-election of George W. Bush the final antiseptic needed to ward off future infections and pain.

And now, at long last, America finally knows the true mettle of Vietnam veterans: American honor and decency, courage, and a relish to serve the cause of freedom for the oppressed, or to simply ward off future attack or to keep tyranny from our very shores.

Fellow Americans, It is now a time for healing, and for planning. It is now time for Vietnam veterans, Korean war veterans, too, to receive the accolades that were never shared, the parades never organized, and the celebrations never held. This now must be the quest of those of you who now understand, truly understand, that yes, there were some atrocities as in any war, but most Vietnam veterans were quite simply men and women of honor. They were, and are, Americans, period. It is now time to say "Thanks and welcome home."

It is a time to zealously protect our young fighting men and women in harm's way today. Just as they are protecting us from the terrorists overseas, Al Qaeda, Iraqi militias, or the Taliban, we must protect them from us, from our own naiveté, denial, and indifference.

We cannot love beheaders and fanatical suicide bombing zealots into submission, or appeal to their reasonable side. That would be akin to crawling into the mouth of a crocodile to seek sanctuary from the rain. President Bush has the keys: We must strike them hard with a mighty swipe of our sword of justice, and we must also plant the seeds of freedom in their very midst, so they might later reap a crop of success and happiness not realized under the upraised tyrannical fist of subjugation. Give a man a taste of freedom, and he will move mountains to possess it.

God bless all of you veterans, who tossed your canes aside, rose up from arthritic repose, and swore to one and all, "Not ever again! Not on my watch! Not in my country!"

We must all now have that steely resolve to thwart the idealistic rantings of those who think that just wishing will make the evil go away. Our troops in harm's way now will need closure, too, and it is time for those of us who tasted its sweet aroma to lead the way for our children and our grandchildren, for our legacy, and for our nation, calling us to service once again.

God bless my fellow veterans and I thank you for going into battle with me, for trying to make a difference - you did! - and never giving up on a nation that once gave up on you. Welcome home and thank you. May God bless our troops and our commander-in-chief, and may God again bless America, our home sweet home.

God bless America and the best its over known; the silent heroes, the fighting men and women of the Vietnam War.

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