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December 2012: Welcome Home

As we come to a close of the fall semester, there are many great things to take note of at the university. In light of last month's wonderful Veterans Day event, I have to admit a special appreciation for a long-sought accomplishment at University of Houston-Clear Lake: the establishment of a Veterans Service Office. It will open spring 2013 semester. That is great news for the veterans who are here, and those who will be coming over the coming years.



Veterans and December conjure up a tune in my mind: "I'll Be Home for Christmas." I always associate veterans and the holidays with that song.

Being home is important to veterans and their family. In fact, I wrote the following poem for all veterans, but particularly the Vietnam era men and women who served. I read it at last month's Veterans Day event, and hope that it brings you some comfort or joy. Clearly, a lot of the vernacular comes from that of the military during that time, and I encourage you to look up any words or acronyms that you might not know.

Welcome Home

by Dion McInnis

We were in our home country
You were...in country.
We were worlds apart.

In your world, a different language

We swelled with pride for "The Eagle has landed"
You looked to eagle flights for victory.

We went camping to laugh around a friendly fire
You watched your back for friendly fire

We smiled and loved our litters of puppies
You watched your brothers taken away on litters

We wondered if after the moon, would Mars be next
You used MARS to call loved ones back home.

Memories persist, questions persist
Gone
Is the concertina wire, C-rations and M-16s
Gone
Are the Monday pills, Cobras and Caribous
Gone, gone, gone
Is much, but possibly not enough.

Slowly gained has been the country's appreciation and respect.
Slowly, slowly...but we have learned and grown
And strive to not repeat our mistakes now, of then

GIs and jet jockeys
Grunts and COs
Everyone played a part
To each of you a debt is owed.

SOP for your homecoming
Wasn't what it should have been
What should have been *boo-coo* gratitude
Only appeared now and then.

We can't forget the MIAs
The POWs we still remember
The Wall reminds us of the toll
That has somehow now brought us closer together

We honor those who we have lost
And their lives so bravely lived
We honor all veterans' service
And their families for all they had to give

Not everyone who served
Worked so many miles away
Many in our military
Did not leave, but stayed

We needed their participation
They needed more of our support
It takes everyone's contribution
When a country goes to war

You maybe felt like a stranger
Living in your own land
You, too, needed a welcome home
You, too, needed a hand.

We honor all who served then
We can't begin to know what you felt
No matter where and how you served
You have Vietnam stories to tell.

You recall two dates:
The day you arrived and the day you left
A world a world away.

While we watched John Wayne in the Green Berets
And Puff the Magic Dragon on film and TV
You traipsed through the boonies
Looking forward to some R&R
Today, we say welcome home

While we relaxed on beaches and porches
And watched the stars in the sky
You witnessed stars in the making
Both Silver and Bronze
Today, we say welcome home

Arty and Huey were your close friends
Hercules was more than mythical
You longed to be on the Freedom Bird
You and your loved ones longed for DEROS
Today, we say welcome home.

Decades ago
We were in our home country
You were...in country
To us, you were a world away
To you, The World was home

Today,

The World
Says welcome home.

Here's hoping that you and your loved ones are home and healthy this holiday season.



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