

From the mid 1960's till April 30, 1975, the brave American men and women serving in South East Asia returned to the states to a welcome home that never arrived. They were treated like criminals and some of the American public turned their backs on our troops as they walked down the airport ramps.

That was then and this is now. The Vietnam Vets that gave so much during a turbulent time in America have never been given a proper welcome home, but thanks to many people, some of their missions will be finally put to rest, at least from a coming home stand point.



**LZ Lambeau**

May 20-23rd

It's been month's of anticipation as I waited for the day to come for LZ Lambeau, (a ride to welcome our Vietnam Vets home). The days wound down till the Thursday we headed to LaCrosse, WI to catch the meet and Greet at the Varsity Club. Hundreds of bikes filled the many parking lots around the club.

The new glory flag bike from the Minneapolis area was in attendance as well as Brothers and Sisters from all over the country including many people that I know, respect and call friends. Many motorcycle clubs and groups including the Vietnam Vets MC, U.S. Military Vets, Devil Dogs MC and American Legion Riders were in attendance. All motorcycle veterans clubs that I could think of from the Vietnam era were represented including some I have never heard of.

As Lorie and I walked through the crowd the 1st person I stopped and chatted with was from Oklahoma on his way to D.C for the Rolling Thunder Run. The next person I chatted with was from Watertown, WI, the 3rd from South Carolina and the 4th from Iron River, MI. This gives you the scope of the attendees that made the trek to get the welcome home that is way to long over due.

Gary Wetzal a congressional Medal of Honor recipient lead the Honor Ride from LaCrosse the next morning in the rain and the group arrived in Green Bay mid afternoon. This included 1,244 Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans and Vietnam era vets, representing the Wisconsinites who were killed-in-action (KIA) in Vietnam and still missing-in-action (MIA) for whom we still search.

Lorie and I watched the group ride by from our hotel room as we had mechanical issues that were not fixed till early afternoon. But this is a story in itself that I would rather not remember. In fact LaCrosse Area Harley Davidson dealer parts counter Matt did a very good job helping me out and kept me from blowing up. Thanks Matt. I also need to thank Joe and Cathy from Ohio that helped me out with tools and rides to the HD dealer- thanks brother. Old school biker headed to Wyoming that knows what brotherhood is all about.

Gabe and Roger from S.E Wisconsin who also had mechanical issues that we met at the dealership, rode the route to Green Bay with us with a quick stop at Free Riders Press advertiser The Roadhouse in Necedah for lunch. We finally rolled into Green Bay around 7pm after the 200 plus miles of clear sky's. I guess good things do happen. (New friends and no damp clothing.)

After arriving Lorie and I along with friend Pauline went through the gallery of letters, obituaries, memorabilia, and displays. With live talk squak boxes that played what a soldier in the field would hear during the war. There were other demonstrations and visuals that really could take a non veteran like myself to Vietnam in a way that I could relate to what the soldiers went through. There is no way to actually know but I can't think of any better ways to create the fear, hope and uncertainty than what was displayed.



I talked to Kris and her dad Dale Jante of Union Grove, WI who was also accompanied by his wife. Dale served in Vietnam in 68-69 with the Screaming Eagles. Kris said Dale didn't say much about the war but that she thought he was getting some closure.

Young Elliot at the crayon table coloring in pictures that were available along with a young man of 10 or so that told me that his uncle was in Vietnam as a pilot and flew many missions. He seemed really proud to say that, as he should.

I needed to take off and wasn't able to attend many of the other events that weekend. Lorie and Pauline headed to an Aircraft exhibit at

Austin Straubel International Airport and also to Lambeau to see the many military vehicles on display. There were ceremonies including the big tribute inside Green Bay's Lambeau Field that honored and thanked Wisconsin's Vietnam veterans, while offering a warm welcome home that many never received.

I wish I could have attended more of this event, but after talking to Vietnam Veteran's in the weeks after LZ Lambeau it became very evident that the Welcome Home was well received by many of the attendees. Many veteran's didn't attend for personal reasons, but from Lorie & I and the readers of the Free Riders Press, we thank you ALL for your service and "Welcome Home".

For more on the event as well as sponsors and other resources associated with Vietnam go to [www.lzlambeau.org](http://www.lzlambeau.org)



Gary Wetzal and Cat



Kris and Dale Jante



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