

As you all know I don't use this paper for any political sway either way. I know what I believe and you may think different. This is America! But sometimes I find something really interesting. Like this story in the National Alliance of Families newsletter. www.nationalalliance.org.



Like Kerry or not, you should read this. Bring it on, John

Oliver North August 27, 2004

"Of course, the president keeps telling people he would never question my service to our country. Instead, he watches as a Republican-funded attack group does just that. Well, if he wants to have a debate about our service in Vietnam, here is my answer: 'Bring it on.'" -- Sen. John Kerry

Dear John,

As usual, you have it wrong. You don't have a beef with President George Bush about your war record. He's been exceedingly generous about your military service. Your complaint is with the 2.5 million of us who served honorably in a war that ended 29 years ago and which you, not the president, made the centerpiece of this campaign.

I talk to a lot of vets, John, and this really isn't about your medals or how you got them. Like you, I have a Silver Star and a Bronze Star. I only have two Purple Hearts, though. I turned down the others so that I could stay with the Marines in my rifle platoon. But I think you might agree with me, though I've never heard you say it, that the officers always got more medals than they earned and the youngsters we led never got as many medals as they deserved.

This really isn't about how early you came home from that war, either, John. There have always been guys in every war who want to go home. There are also lots of guys, like those in my rifle platoon in Vietnam, who did a full 13 months in the field. And there are, thankfully, lots of young Americans today in Iraq and Afghanistan who volunteered to return to war because, as one of them told me in Ramadi a few weeks ago, "the job isn't finished."

Nor is this about whether you were in Cambodia on Christmas Eve, 1968. Heck John, people get lost going on vacation. If you got lost, just say so. Your campaign has admitted that you now know that you really weren't in Cambodia that night and that

Richard Nixon wasn't really president when you thought he was. Now would be a good time to explain to us how you could have all that bogus stuff "seared" into your memory -- especially since you want to have your finger on our nation's nuclear trigger.

But that's not really the problem, either. The trouble you're having, John, isn't about your medals or coming home early or getting lost -- or even Richard Nixon. The issue is what you did to us when you came home, John. When you got home, you co-founded Vietnam Veterans Against the War and wrote "The New Soldier," which denounced those of us who served -- and were still serving on the battlefields of a thankless war. Worst of all, John, you then accused me -- and all of us who served in Vietnam -- of committing terrible crimes and atrocities.

On April 22, 1971, under oath, you told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that you had knowledge that American troops "had personally raped, cut off ears, cut off heads, taped wires from portable telephones to human genitals and turned up the power, cut off limbs, blown up bodies, randomly shot at civilians, razed villages in fashion reminiscent of Genghis Khan, shot cattle and dogs for fun, poisoned food stocks, and generally ravaged the country side of South Vietnam." And you admitted on television that "yes, yes, I committed the same kind of atrocities as thousands of other soldiers have committed."

And for good measure you stated, "(America is) more guilty than any other body, of violations of (the) Geneva Conventions ... the torture of prisoners, the killing of prisoners."

Your "antiwar" statements and activities were painful for those of us carrying the scars of Vietnam and trying to move on with our lives. And for those who were still there, it was even more hurtful. But those who suffered the most from what you said and did were the hundreds of American prisoners of war being held by Hanoi. Here's what some of them endured because of you, John:

****Capt. James Warner** had already spent four years in Vietnamese custody when he was handed a copy of your testimony by his captors. Warner says that for his captors, your statements "were proof I deserved to be punished." He wasn't released until March 14, 1973.

****Maj. Kenneth Cordier**, an Air Force pilot who was in Vietnamese custody for 2,284 days, says his captors "repeated incessantly" your one-liner about being "the last man to die" for a lost cause. Cordier was released March 4, 1973.

****Navy Lt. Paul Galanti** says your accusations "were as demoralizing as solitary (confinement) ... and a prime reason the war dragged on." He remained in North Vietnamese hands until February 12, 1973.

****John**, did you think they would forget? When Tim Russert asked about your claim that you and others in Vietnam committed "atrocities," instead of standing by your sworn testimony, you confessed that your words "were a bit over the top." Does that mean you lied under oath? Or does it mean you are a war criminal? You can't have this one both ways, John. Either way, you're not fit to be a prison guard at Abu Ghraib, much less commander in chief.

One last thing, John. In 1988, Jane Fonda said: "I would like to say something ... to men who were in Vietnam, who I hurt, or whose pain I caused to deepen because of things that I said or did. I was trying to help end the killing and the war, but there were times when I was thoughtless and careless about it and I'm ... very sorry that I hurt them. And I want to apologize to them and their families."

Even Jane Fonda apologized. Will you, John?


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