

Next weekend most of America will celebrate Memorial Day, 2021.
I recently reflected on my relationship to this event.

Tribute

by Gordon W. Brown

I am a Veteran. I never saw combat.

As an enlisted man I served as a Behavioral Science Specialist.
Among other duties, I was trained to anticipate and evaluate and treat what was then known as Combat Fatigue, now it is known as PTSD.

I knew many men who had seen combat in Vietnam and many who never had and never would see combat in any theater of operations.

Some of you are Veterans. You know who you are.

I have driven through or walked around several National Cemeteries.

What is always striking is that every headstone or marker is the same.

Those who are eligible for burial in a National Cemetery have served their country Honorably, whether in combat or not.

We are all the same, soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, or seamen, in uniform, male, female, every race and every class, gay, straight, draftees and volunteers.

During the Vietnam Era I knew them. All were prepared to give up their lives for their country.

I never saw combat.

I was assigned to a hospital in Okinawa, Japan and was a mental hygiene counselor.

In Fort Stewart, Georgia, I was assigned as a drug and alcohol counselor and would have been assigned to a MASH (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital) if we had been deployed, responsible for a small sub-unit ready to assist those in mental distress.

I never saw combat. I am so grateful for this fortune.

I remain deeply indebted to those who did go into combat, and those who gave their lives for their country, whether or not they were sent into a legitimate conflict does not diminish my gratitude.

My father came home from the Battle of the Bulge.

He had volunteered for the infantry after having been a Signal Corps printing press operator in England, he actually printed the maps for D-Day.

My uncle came home from WWII after having served as a Navy corpsman in Europe.

The military taught us all something about respect, chain of command, and skill.

Our training was specific and intense and we were made ready to serve our unit and our comrades and our country.

I never saw combat.

The US Army was the best education I ever had.

The people I met were a real cross section of the United States, partly because of the draft, they were called to service from virtually every walk of life.

I am better for the experiences I had.

I am a Veteran. I never saw combat.