

Rex Ferguson

Lowe Veterans Appreciation Video – November 11, 2020

First of all, Lars, I want to thank you for interviewing some of us veterans and putting this DVD together. My name is Rex Ferguson. I was born in St. Johns and have lived, most of my life in the St. Johns area. My time in the service was very inconsequential. So if you don't mind, I'll speak briefly about me and then tell you about some of my friends.

I was drafted into the Army on - on December 2nd, 1968, and went to boot camp at Fort Knox, Kentucky. After boot camp, I was ordered to Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, Georgia. The Airfield was a training school for Cobra attack helicopter pilots. I never had anything to do with the helicopters while I was there. After Hunter, I was ordered to South Korea and wound up in the 2nd, Infantry Division along the border with North Korea. After 13 months in Korea, I was honorably discharged from active duty on August 4th, 1970. And I've had a wonderful life ever since.

Now more importantly, I'd like to take a couple minutes to talk about my friends that couldn't be here today. These are guys that I went to grade school and or high school with. Two of them went into the Marine Corps, two went into the Army, and one in the Navy.

The two Marines were Rocky Schneider and Ron Fitch. Rocky and I were in grade school together at East Essex School. He was a handsome young man with sparkling eyes and a mischievous smile that made you think he had just pulled a prank on somebody.

Ron Finch was a stoic young man. He appeared to know what he wanted out of life, and had a plan, how to get there. Ron and I attended East Essex School and Rodney B. Wilson High School together.

The two Army friends of mine were Duane Downing and John Sickles. Duane's a couple years younger than me, and I got to know him in high school shop class. I was a teacher's assistant in Duane's class. As far as I know, Duane was friends with everyone he met. He was just a great young man.

John Sickles and I were in several classes together in high school. He was an outstanding football player and wrestler. He also was friends with everyone he met.

My Navy friend was Bernard Newhouse. Normally, when you think of someone in the Navy, you think of someone around ships, but Bernard was a corpsman attached to the 1st Marine Division in Vietnam. A corpsman treats injured and wounded Marines, similar to a medic in the Army. Bernard and I attended high school together. He was a year ahead of me and I didn't have any classes with him. Again I think Bernard was friends with just about everyone.

All five of these friends were killed in action in the Vietnam War. Rocky was just 18 years old. John was 19, Ron and Dwayne were 20, and Bernard was 21.

I feel guilty that I was so lucky to be in safe places during my Army assignments and my friends had to suffer the horrors of war.

If you're ever in St. John's, and have a few minutes to spare. Please consider stopping by the Clinton County Veterans Memorial at the foot of Main Street. The memorial proudly salutes Clinton County's veterans from the Civil War through our country's current conflicts. Every branch of the Armed Forces is recognized and remembered at this honored memorial.

The black granite monuments display the names of the veterans from Clinton County, who served their country with honor and distinction and made the supreme sacrifice. My five friends' names are etched on those black granite monuments along with the names of over 500 more young men who perished while fighting in our country's wars over the last hundred and sixty years.

Additionally, there are over 1,400 red bricks that display the names of many more veterans that served our country along with other organizations and businesses that helped make the memorial possible.

Thank you for letting me speak to you today about my time in the service and my five friends .