

Village News

NEWS

ABOUT

COLUMNISTS

CRIME

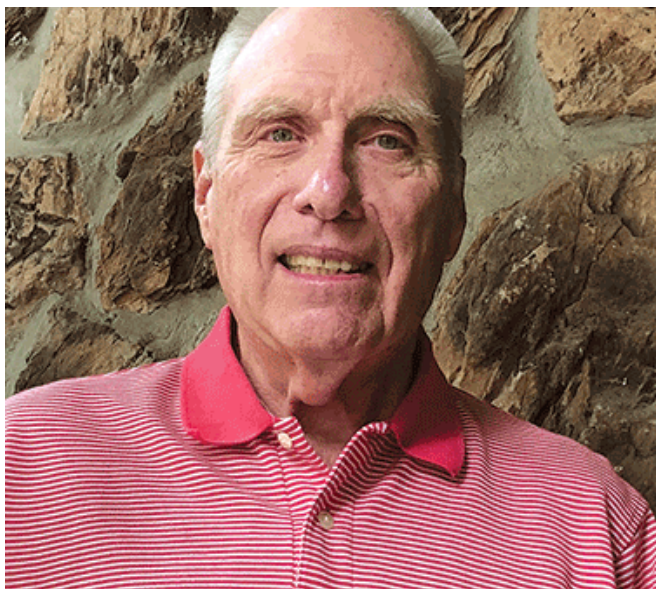
SPORTS

ABOUT ▾

SUBMIT NEWS

ADVERTISING RATES

YOU ARE AT: Home » Features » Vietnam War veteran found humor in the darkest hours



Vietnam War veteran found humor in the darkest hours

Q 1

BY AMANDA CREASEY ON JUNE 19, 2018

FEATURES

Ask Larry Gable how he survived his stint in Vietnam in the late 1960s, and he is likely to point to his healthy sense of humor.

Even his draft date offers fodder for comic relief.

RECENT POSTS

JULY 30, 2020 Q 0
Chester Clergy make statement on race

JULY 30, 2020 Q 0
Supervisors question school superintendent

JULY 30, 2020 Q 0
Teachers, parents split on re-opening

JULY 30, 2020 Q 0
VN sunbathes in Yorktown

JULY 30, 2020 Q 0
Volunteers at Pocahontas State Park gear up

"When I went to the induction facility in 1967 for my physical, the doctors found a heart murmur. I thought I had escaped the draft," the Chester resident said. "Wrong.

Within the year, they called me back for another physical and my heart murmur had cleared up. I was drafted on April Fool's Day."Perhaps that mischievous date set the tone for Gable's overall perspective on his time as a soldier. Though he will open up about his wartime memories occasionally, his time in Vietnam was not an experience that traumatized or defined him. In fact, Gable views "the time spent in the military and Vietnam as just another chapter in my life, and thankfully, I suffered no ill effects."

Even with his good sense of humor, Gable admits that he felt "apprehensive on my way to Vietnam, seeing all the bloodshed on the nightly news for years prior." He recounts how, upon landing at his designated camp, he was greeted by "extreme heat and a smell I was not familiar with." After a few days and still unaccustomed to the foreign smell, Gable asked a seasoned soldier what it was. "He turned to me and said, 'Death.'"

Despite this harrowing welcome, Gable's clearest memories of his time in Vietnam are largely fond. "We had several unusual pets," he recalled, "a monkey, a boa constrictor, and my favorite was an otter." He and his fellow soldiers named the monkey Sam and the otter Ralph. "Both the monkey and otter were tame and domesticated. They lived in and around our hooches."

"Ninety percent of the time felt routine," he said, but for the other 10 percent, "your life was turned upside down." One attack in particular stands out in his mind, especially for its comic value. "Deep in the bowels of the Mekong Delta in 1969, I was living in a tent along with three other GIs when our base camp was hit with rockets and mortars during the wee morning hours," Gable said. He was sleeping in his cot draped with mosquito netting, when he heard the gunfire. Gable's gear was on a shelf at the head of his cot. The first item he found was his flak jacket.

"I put it on, then grabbed my rifle and my helmet. Unbeknownst to me, a lizard had made a home in my helmet for the night, and when I put my helmet on, he made a mad dash down the back of my flak jacket."

Gable remembers how the lizard scrambled to escape, scratching and clawing his back. "As I reflect on that frightful night, I often wonder who was more afraid: me or my lizard friend."

SHARE.



ABOUT AUTHOR

AMANDA CREASEY

RELATED POSTS

JULY 9, 2019



'Mr. Fixit': Bishop built child's train, has worked on planes and ships

JULY 9, 2019



Just read to them! Program aims to make reading enjoyable for kids

JUNE 4, 2019



The Sinning Saint: West pens book about overcoming life's struggles

1 COMMENT

CYNTHIA on JUNE 20, 2018 9:13 AM · EDIT

I enjoyed this article very much, written by my friend and colleague, Amanda Creasey.

PHONE

EMAIL

ADDRESS

8/5/2020

Vietnam War veteran found humor in the darkest hours

(804) 751-0421

news@villagenewsonline.com

Physical: 11801 Centre Street, Chester, VA 23831 Mail:
PO Box 2397, Chester, VA 23831

Copyright 2020. All rights reserved.