

## Chapter 17, The wall.

In the spring of 1975 the Americans were long gone. North Vietnam was now able to complete the conquest that they tried in 1972.

There was little opposition to the advance of the NVA. On April 30<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. evacuated the remaining Americans from Saigon. At 7:52 am Vietnam time, the last 11 marines left from the roof of the U.S. Embassy. This marked the end of the American involvement in Vietnam which cost over 50000 lives and 150 billion dollars.

When I started putting my thoughts together in 1999, I contacted some of the people I served with and learned that 2 more of the people I served with, Lee Billingsly and Glenn Nowakowsky were killed when their Cobra crashed while taking fire on 7/22/1972.

While writing this, it is not my intent to portray myself as a hero or a warrior, just a guy doing his duty as best I could. Along the way, some of my friends lost their life to combat, others their soul to drugs. The war, right or wrong, cost so many so much.

In May 2004 Linda and I were privileged to visit Washington D.C. The visit to the Vietnam Memorial was one that I dreaded, yet was compelled to do. The Wall, that marble record, is such a simple, yet elegant and moving memorial of those that lost their lives. I found the locations that bear the names David Stamper, Claud Strother, Thomas Shaw, Lee Billingsly, and Glenn Nowakowsky. It was a very moving time. All I could do was touch the wall and step back and salute with tears streaming down my face. Rest in peace my brothers.



Gene Castellano 2007