

ALABAMA VETERAN MIKE BARBER:

“There's a stigma that goes with being a veteran of any war, and that's the fact that you don't talk about what happened while you were away, of course that's just being human. Why on earth would any of us want to recall or relive some of the atrocities we saw or were a part of in combat? It's hard to think of any good reason to dwell on things nobody in their right mind would want to remember. For years I put the things I saw in Vietnam in the attic of my mind. I came home and got on with my life. Then something happened that made me think that perhaps, as one of the ones who made it home, I should talk a little more about the sacrifices, the price of freedom.

“I was at a baseball game with my son who was then just eight years old. The national anthem was being played and I stood and put my hand over my heart as I had always been taught to do. My son said, "Dad, why are you doing that? Nobody else is." I looked around and he was right. With a few exceptions, people all around us were talking and going about their business without paying attention to the song or the flag. That was when it struck me that, as a veteran, maybe I should bring to more people's attention the stories of my friends who made the ultimate sacrifice so we could hear that song and see that flag. To be a little bit more vocal about what I went through and, more importantly, to speak for those veterans who didn't make it home to tell their stories.”