



# “In Memory of Skip”

## MEMORIAL DAY 2015

I  
 You always seemed a little  
 older,  
 And it wasn't the two years  
 Time you had on us.

A maturity perhaps found  
 In learning to be  
 A husband;

While we were still  
 Half in half out,  
 Hobbitlike tweens,

More carefree  
 Than we knew and  
 Not quite responsible;

For all life ahead  
 Was an unknown path  
 Into the Wild,

With dangers we thought  
 We knew something of,  
 From class and training,

Barely beyond Toy Soldiers  
 Mustering, but tasked  
 To lead real men

With very real lives,  
 Both sturdy and fragile  
 Before the human storm,

To beard Death  
 At his own hearth  
 And bring them back

In one piece  
 After duty was done...  
 “Objective Secure, Sir!”

So we slipped and slid  
 On the red clay mud,  
 Benning's best batch.

And the wait-a-minute  
 Vines held us fast.  
 Looked good on the map!

And you took the BS  
 And messing around  
 With our minds

With quiet good humor,  
 steady calm patience  
 Through it all.





II  
 Vietnam... In Country!  
 Fourteen months, or was it  
 A lifetime later.

Amidst eighteen laboring  
 Air conditioners inside  
 The Cam Ranh Bay O-Club.

Talked of my R and R  
 To be, and yours just past,  
 With the wife you loved,

And how the combat forced  
 Changes within yourself  
 Made necessary

Painful reintroduction  
 To whom you had become.  
 Hawaii would wait

Till you knew each other  
 Again. Then back it was  
 to jungle, NVA and battle.

I promised I'd write  
 On return from R and R,  
 and I actually did,

But never was there reply,  
 And in three months,  
 Came time to go home.

On the hot dusty runway,  
 With duffel and my thoughts,  
 Boarding beginning...

The company jeep comes  
 Flying up to the plane.  
 A waved tan envelope

In the clerk's hand.  
 "We regret to inform you..."  
 Official notice inside.

And my letter unopened.  
 Dead already four days  
 After Cam Ranh Bay,



## PHOTOS BY LEE BAC PHAN



On Easter Sunday. Did I  
 Pray for you at Mass  
 in Bangkok's cathedral?

No memory, but suspect not;  
 Other things on my mind,  
 Not all of them holy.

A very sober homecoming  
 From the start, but you  
 Never had even that.

III  
 Find myself thinking  
 About you more often;  
 As I grow older.

Am double the age  
 I was then, and I wonder  
 Why you were the one

Taken, and the rest of us  
 Allowed to further continue  
 To make our marks in life;

As husbands and fathers,  
 Employers or employees,  
 As just human beings;

Have our acts and omissions  
 Improved our world, justified  
 God's gift of time?

Have I lived my life  
 In a way that honors  
 Your life sacrifice?

God knows I'm not  
 What I was created  
 To be... At least, not yet!

So I bumble on,  
 An older dog still learning  
 To become truly human.

Rest easy, my friend.  
 We haven't taken ev'ry hill,  
 But haven't given up either.

—Gerald Alan Ney

