



The Worth of a Dollar Bill

BY FRANK W. GIROUX

The mood was tense at Sky Harbor Airport in Phoenix that July day in 1967. My father was struggling with his PTSD, holding back a flood of emotion with more than enough bourbon. I was on my way to war; Dad was reliving his.

As I stood at the gate awaiting the call for boarding, my father squared his shoulders and reached out with his hand. This was tough. A wave of the unknown broke above us; we locked eyes and then I felt it. A dollar bill, folded to a small square, met my palm. Instantly I knew and said, "It might not come back."

Father's reply through a calm and steady smile was, "It will be where it is supposed to be." So off it went with me to Vietnam.

This dollar bill is a gold seal silver certificate that was used as invasion money in North Africa. It had traveled for twenty-two months of World War II through North Africa, Sicily, and Italy up to the battle of Casino, where Dad was severely wounded and evacuated. This dollar bill carried the names of the men who had fought alongside him.

When I was growing up, the dollar bill was brought out on Memorial Days. It sat on the floor with Dad and a bottle of very good bourbon, while time slipped back to the smoke and din of battle with comrades of Anzacs, Brits, Canucks, and Nisei of the 442.

I carried his dollar bill for eighteen months in Vietnam, where I added the names of gun truckers and combat engineers who did their duty for God, country, and a free people of South Vietnam. I was sent to the 54th Trans. Bn., 8th Group of the 1st Log.

For the next six months I worked primarily as a weapons man in a gun truck team providing security to the cargo shipments into the Central Highlands from the Port of Qui Nhon to the 1st Cav., 4th Inf. Div. and the 173rd Airborne at Bong Son, Duc Pho, An Khe, Pleiku, Kontum, and Dak To. Around New Year's 1968, I was transferred to the 39th Combat Engineer Battalion at Chu Lai, where I provided support as a construction surveyor with the line companies deployed to widen and elevate QL-1, the main highway that runs the length of the country. My responsibility was principally with C Co., working in Quang Ngai Province and the Song Ve River rice-growing country.

Upon my return home, Dad and I took a quiet trip across Arizona to Mayer, where we met Cousin Bill Heaton. He and Dad were close, both born in 1919. Bill was more of a big brother and one hell of a man: cowboy, master mechanic, war fighter, soldier of fortune, weapons inventor, and Arizona lawman.

We sat in the parlor of the historic White House Hotel, three seasoned veterans and a bottle of very good bourbon. I leaned over and reached my right hand out to Dad and passed back the dollar bill. He never looked down, just smiled, nodded his head, and pocketed it for safe keeping.

He returned it to me before he died in October of 1981. He had typed a brief story and framed it with the bill. He said it was time for me to take it back and continue its journey.

I see it each day, smile, and thank my God for the good men who sacrificed for me and others. I think of those Dad spoke of every Memorial Day. I think of and, yes, see those who fought alongside me—as I am sure Dad saw his buddies of long ago. ■