

Bob Spencer said: July 28th, 2011 11:38 am

Why attend the reunion? For most of us, leaving Viet Nam was the happiest day of our lives. Unfortunately, leaving Viet Nam also meant leaving some very close friends behind, that was the price we paid. To move on in our lives required wiping the slate clean, forgetting about the past and focusing on our futures. Most of us did that very well; at least we thought we did. For 40 plus years, it was out of sight and out of mind. Most of us adopted the philosophy, if you don't think about it, it didn't exist, although the experience stayed in the back of our minds because it was real. We dealt with the experience in many ways. We drank too much. We raised hell. We found it difficult to settle down and just be like everyone else. As a result, we had (have) damaged relationships, lingering medical problems, and remaining psychological issues. Reunions are about repairing that damage. Attending the past two reunions has helped me realize the feelings I harbored for so many years are the same feelings shared by many. It wasn't just me who felt guilty about leaving everyone behind and forgetting about them as I returned home. It wasn't just me who carried the weight a Viet Nam experience can have on a 19 year-old. It isn't just me who can't forget, even after spending years trying. Reunions are about normalizing those feelings and experiences, about repairing the damage. So, for those of you who may be straddling the fence, not sure if you are ready to attend a reunion, please give it some thought. I encourage you to do so. You owe it to yourselves and you owe it to those who served with you. Even if you don't need the reunion to help heal your life, many of us need you to help us heal ours. You are just as important to the 589th Engineers Battalion now as you were 40 years ago, we do not want to leave anyone behind.