



“Grown-Up Tears”

A SPECIAL NEWSLETTER REPORT

On May 22nd, 23rd, and 24th the City of Green Bay and the State of Wisconsin paid a special tribute to their sons and daughters in arms who over forty years ago served in the Vietnam War, a war just as viscusly debated and protested as it was fought. Lambeau Field and Austin Straubel Airport become Landing Zone Lambeau. For 48 hours it was my LZ.

It was difficult to decide where or how to start this article. My emotions still swirling within me in the aftermath of one of the most exhausting and draining weekends I have ever spent. Then I thought of the meeting and talk I had with an American Indian Hero of our war who was a special guest and speaker at LZ Lambeau. He read a poem at the event and I told him later the next day I was very thankful for what he had to share. I have always been envious of the American Indian in that whenever they speak, they seem to quite naturally speak in poetry, seemingly to understand the essence of life in its simplest of terms. So I looked to him as an inspiration of how to tell my story of these three days. Thank you Jim.

“Grown-Up Tears”
Richard Rooker

Warriors' hearts opening the pain.
Forty years of guilt now shared
With strangers in peace but brothers in war.
So many grown-up tears.

Memories buried deep but as clear as new.
Come together now in this place
With strangers in peace but brothers in war.
So many grown-up tears.

Trembling anticipation of old demons
We stood on the tarmac unsure of what to do.
War birds now idled and washed of their blood.

Old men all around once but kids in the fight
With aging bodies but toughened souls.
We now fight the peace.

A fellow saber tells of his horror
When once by mischance he shelled his own.
Hearing his words his only solace.
So many grown-up tears.

Another trooper tells of his battles,
Limbs lost but not the spirit of his youth.
His battle for health robbed by war.
So many grown-up tears.

A wife inquires of medals on my chest,
Never asked before I was proud to tell.
Flashing memories the speed of light.

Standing on the map of a country in war,
Looking for LZs we called home.
Strangers in peace, brothers in war.
So many grown-up tears.

A stadium in hush with awe and pride
Of one thousand two hundred forty four
Never to share this LZ.
So many grown-up tears.

The images on screen larger than life
Told others the horrors of war we already knew.
Holding on tight now.

The wives knew them too
Standing by their heroes all these years.
Tonight this LZ belongs to them too.

The empty table ceremoniously set
For all those never to be heard from again.
Remember our missing, the bagpipe played.
So many grown-up tears.

A salute from our new soldiers
Reassuring us of young warriors
Willing to give so we may be free.

Honoring our American colors
Knowing in our hearts what we did was right.
What we did was right.

Strangers in peace, brothers in war.

So many grown-up tears.