



Laos and Vietnam

Mick Guttau and his son Josh continued talking about a trip they made to Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

Mick recalled two people from Treynor that worked with him in Laos and Vietnam. Guy Foster was a pilot in the same platoon he was in. Guy was shot down in Vietnam. Denny Underwood was an air traffic controller in Laos. When it was really foggy, the air traffic controller would help the

Cobra pilots land. Denny recalled that he helped Mick land 2 or 3 times.

The Vietnamese would build tunnels to protect people from bombs. Mick's family went through one of the tunnels. The tunnel itself was narrow and not very tall. Mick said both of his shoulders would hit the sides and he had to bend over in many places to walk through the tunnel.

Mick talked about Khe Sanh air base in Vietnam. It had two runways, one for landing and one for takeoff. When the North Vietnamese cut off access to the base, C130s would bring in supplies, get unloaded in 10 minutes, and takeoff again. It was the busiest airport in the world at that time.

Mick and his family spent one day in Laos. They visited the location of Operation Lam Son 719. On March 2, 1971, Mick was chosen to lead an expedition of over 600 helicopters into the area. This was the largest US military battle since D-Day.

According to Wikipedia, "the 101st Airborne Division alone, had 84 of its aircraft destroyed and another 430 damaged. Combined U.S./South Vietnam helicopter losses totaled 168 destroyed and 618 damaged. During *Lam Son 719* American helicopters had flown more than 160,000 sorties and 19 U.S. Army aviators had been killed, 59 were wounded, and 11 were missing at its conclusion. South Vietnamese helicopters had flown an additional 5,500 missions. U.S. Air Force tactical aircraft had flown more than 8,000 sorties during the incursion and had dropped 20,000 tons of bombs and napalm. B-52 bombers had flown another 1,358 sorties and dropped 32,000 tons of ordnance." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Lam_Son_719

Mick said that after Lam Son 719 he asked himself "Why did I survive?" A complete check showed that no mortar had penetrated his aircraft, even though he saw tracers flying by on both sides of his head.

Josh read a very emotional synopsis of letters home to his wife during the war.

Mick shares a message with his family about his experiences, which he calls the three Gs':

- Guys – the guys he worked with
- Gal – his wife
- God – his experiences in life have strengthened his faith.

When Mick had his triple-bypass heart surgery he sent a message to all his wartime buddies. He said he received either a phone call or an e-mail from 100% of them.