

## Vet Continued from A1

camera. A Yashica Lynx--his \$35 pay-off from a guy who he beat with a better hand.

"He was going home the next day and said he'd send me the \$35. I was young and dumb but I wasn't stupid," Marc says.

A brief negotiation, won Marc the camera around the soldier's neck and he started snapping away. Anything and everything. Combat, R and R time, preparations and those nightly poker games.

His fellow soldiers would shoo him away and insist on one cared.

"But I said, 'No, people are going to want to see this.' I was wrong."

He'd been so sure because he grew up enthralled with war history. From books to movies to boyhood games. He absorbed every piece of narrative from pens that had been on the ground, in the thick of war.

Maybe that's where it started. Of course, it could have been years after the war when, after receiving the typical reception granted to Vietnam soldiers, Marc stuffed his pictures into a box and forgot about the war. He forgot about his three tours. About how he lay on the floor of the jungle with bullet holes in his body, in between his friends and the enemy, one waiting for the other to blink and come retrieve him. He forgot about the pictures. And he forgot about everything as he walked with his wife, on vacation, and stumbled upon the traveling Vietnam Veteran Memorial wall.

"I saw it. And then I saw people laying mementos. I saw how they decorated. I saw all the names," he said.

He saw a glass box with a teddy bear. And a note.

"You could never sleep without this bear, Johnny. I hope now you can rest in peace," it was signed "Mom."

Marc remembered. "I'd been in Vietnam." He remembered the pictures and he remembered the film.

The 80s came and with it, permission to make movies about Vietnam. Marc was working in Hollywood, a gig that would later garner him an Emmy. On a visit home, he told his mother he was collecting his photos and home movies again. He was going to help. He was going to show the world what had happened in that jungle.

"She says, 'Oh. You might need these, then,' and she comes back with a shoe box. It's every letter that I wrote her while I was over there in chronological order."

Maybe it started there. Through occasional tears and pats to Ben, Marc recalls the hours that turned into days that turned into weeks and the years that went by. There were visits to his Marine friends for interviews about their time together in Vietnam. A divorce. A partnership with a music producer to put his experience into song. A purchase of a Harley motorcycle because it's not about having a destination, it's about finding a road and seeing how far it goes. There was a self-published photo book. A call that a friend had committed suicide. And then another. The son he was raising alone fell ill with leukemia, recovered. And then fell ill again. He sold his Harley. He kept going.

"I was living with my ex-wife at the time because she was raising my grandson. My daughter was an addict and I thought the least I could do is provide financial support for my ex who had taken on this job of raising our grandson," Marc said.

That's when his book arrived. And maybe that's where it started.

"I was showing it to a friend. We went down to a bar and sat at the counter. I saw a man there and said, 'Hey, let me buy you a drink.'"

The man was wearing a Marine's hat, on the Marine's birthday.

"That's when my friend shoved the book in front of us

and said, 'Oh you were in Vietnam, look, he just published this book of photographs.'"

The man took the book. He sat in the booth with his wife. Marc and his friend found a table of their own.

"We're talking and I look back and his wife is out of her seat and on his side of the booth. She's petting his head and he's turning pages and pointing and pointing. And she has tears running down her face. They were talking. That's healing. That's healing happening," Marc said.

That's where it started. It's been more than 20 years of counseling now. A disability label due to the PTSD suffered at the hands of Vietnam. But every day, Marc says he wakes up with one thought: The book.

It's his memoir. It will accompany his photo book, published by Stack House and eventually, an album of those songs he worked on and a documentary made up of all those home movies and interviews with his fellow veterans. The photos and letters from the shoe box.

"I don't get any money, really. It's not about money. It's about saving people and healing people. A veteran has killed himself in the time we have been here talking," he said.

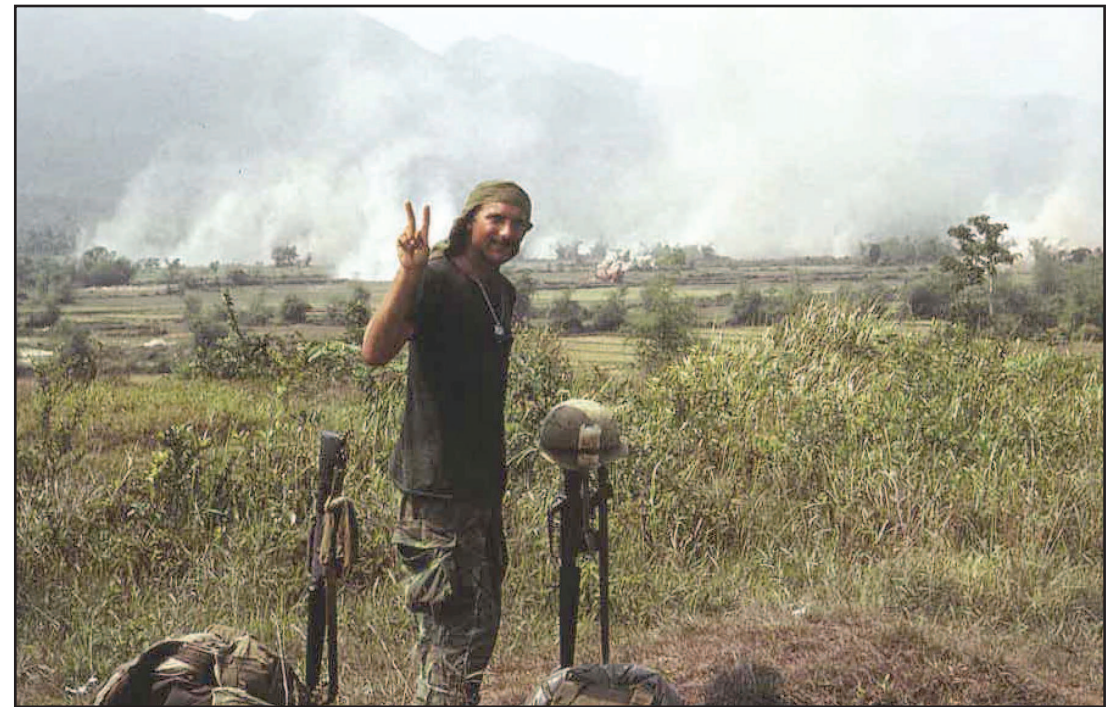
He'll hold a book signing for his photo book at the Book Mine this Friday during the Art Walk. Ben will be at his side as he has been for the last five years. He's not sure when the documentary will debut--he needs a venue first.

But that's just the logistics. It's been 31 years and he knows he can wait a week more. He knows when he wakes up tomorrow, it will be with a bit of a sentence to scratch out for his memoir or a touch of a memory that may send Ben closer to his side.

And that's all he wants now. To continue his work with his constant companion. And if he can do it on a Harley, even better.

"This is my life's work," he

says with the weight of tears pinning his words. "It's my life. And if I can do anything else while I'm doing this it would be to get another Harley with a side car for Ben. And we would get in it and we would head towards Drain. There's a road up there and I want to see how far it goes. That's what it's about. Getting on the bike, leaving the city, finding the highway and just going. It gets quiet. If I get hungry, we stop at a diner. If I get tired, we'll stop at a motel. But it's not about a destination. It's about traveling the road when you don't know where it goes or where it ends."



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