

# A Vietnam Veteran's Story: Gilbert Tyree

One Halloween afternoon in the 1960s, a little girl was running around outside and stepped on a nail. She was eager to go trick-or-treating and didn't want her parents to discover her hurt foot. Knowing he'd give in, she went to her oldest brother for help. Out of the kindness of his heart, as well as not wanting their parents to find out, he took her to the emergency room to get a tetanus shot and allowed her to trick-or-treat afterward.

The little girl from that frightening night was my aunt Robin and her brother was my uncle Gilbert. In 1966, Everette Gilbert Tyree graduated from James Blair High School in Williamsburg, Virginia, and enlisted in the army to go to the Vietnam War on January 8, 1968. He served from 1968 until 1971. He survived the war unscathed, but unfortunately passed away in a truck accident just fourteen years later. Gilbert was only thirty-seven years old when he passed and even though I've never met him, he's been able to inspire me in countless ways. His sense of duty to his country and family, his diligence for any task given to him, and his resilience throughout and after the war are only a few of the many reasons why Gilbert Tyree influences me always to be the best version of myself.

During high school, Gilbert Tyree was an exceptional basketball player. He was responsible for leading his school's A-list basketball team to the state finals and was able to play for college. After graduating high school, he instead chose to enlist in the ongoing war. Gilbert believed it was his duty to his country to fight in the war, even though the majority of the country was against it. Gilbert scored high on the mechanical engineer component and was put into the 15th Transportation Corps Battalion under the 1st Cavalry Division as a helicopter mechanic.

Gilbert's duty and love for his family kept him motivated throughout the war. In his downtime, he wrote letters and sent rolls of film to his parents and siblings. His letters always contained an equal amount of humorous and heart-touching moments which would make his family laugh and smile. On July 28th, 1969, he wrote, "I imagine Robin is still reading as many books as she can find and Margaret Ann is trying to follow. It must be nice to have two girls that are as close as they are because Robin can help with schoolwork. I guess they're really growing up." In that same letter, he also mentioned that he wasn't going to shave his mustache off until he returned to the United States in eighty-seven days. He and his family would joke about him having a mustache, but he kept his word and made it his small, silly duty to keep it until he returned home. His examples of duty for every moment in life have inspired me to always do what I believe is right, even when it seems silly.

Whenever there was an upcoming rescue mission, Gilbert Tyree would always agree to go--even if it wasn't asked of him. During rescue missions, he would bring wounded back and strip disabled helicopters so the parts wouldn't help the enemy. His constant diligence in his work benefited him as he was promoted to section sergeant for a month until the regular sergeant returned. He was a hard worker and never complained. This plays into his resilience and his untiring flexibility. In a letter, he described that he got soaking wet on green line guard from the rain, but that he'd feel lost without it. He quickly adapted to the constant rainfall of Vietnam up until the point that it became his second home. When he did officially return home on January 11, 1971, his family welcomed him with open arms. The rest of the country, however, treated the Vietnam veterans harshly due to their opposition to the war. He overcame their hate by focusing on being back with his family until his sudden death on October 22, 1985.

As a result, his duty to all, his continuous diligence, and his resilience in any situation were only a small part of what makes him inspirational. Gilbert showed great duty by voluntarily enlisting in the Vietnam War. His diligence served him well as he was temporarily promoted. His resilience kept him going before, during, and after the war. Gilbert Tyree's sacrifices for our country have left a lasting impact on me and many others.

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