

The Parade

By BOB DUNN

They had the "Home with Honor" parade in New York City last Saturday. One thousand servicemen, including 240 soldiers from Fort Dix, marched up Broadway, paused for a silent prayer at Father Duffy's statue in Times Square, and then continued on to Central Park West.

Once there, they became Grand Marshals of the parade, entered the stands and reviewed the parade of upwards of 150,000 firemen, policemen, veterans organizations, hardhats and just plain people.

The parade, was sponsored by the "Home with Honor" Committee, to honor those servicemen and women who served in Vietnam. As hard news goes, that's about all there is — but there's a lot more to the story.

There were good vibrations in New York Saturday— spontaneous displays of warmth and appreciation everywhere— between the marchers and the crowd and the servicemen.

As Staff Sergeant David Williams, the Army "keyman", put it, "Today the people of New York showed that they love us."

All of the servicemen were volunteers, 240 men from each service. Not the "you-you-and-you" volunteer, but real volunteers. They were Vietnam veterans, proud of their service, who chose the parade over having the day off.

It had to be one of the most unusual parades ever. When is the last time you saw military men on the reviewing stand watching civilians march by? And when ever did you see group after group of paraders stop to cheer the reviewing party and be cheered in return?

Some anonymous hardhat in the parade tossed his hat to one of the soldiers - a souvenir - and by parade's end, most of the servicemen had caught a hardhat's hard hat.

There were the aging veterans of the 369th Infantry Regiment an all-black unit- evoking memories of the big war and how things were then.

Flags, flags flags everywhere. Majorettes, pom-pom girls, snappy salutes, hot dogs.

The "Home with Honor" Committee said, "The men and women who have served the United States during the war in Vietnam have come home with honor. And history will not record that there were no brass bands to greet them."

The brass bands were there, and the men felt honored.

First Sergeant James E. Hunt, 532nd Military Police Company, said, "It was the best thing that could have happened in honor of the people who fought in Vietnam and came home, the ones who died, and those who were POW's."

Specialist 5 John E. Morgan, Medical Company, thought it was "a beautiful parade".

"I've never been honored like this before in my life," said Sergeant First Class Shelton Jones 759th Military Police Battalion. "I cried when the paraplegic veterans came by in wheel chairs. I was impressed because the whole thing seemed so genuine."

Marine Staff Sergeant Robert L. Calderwood, U.S. Marine Corps OCS, Quantico, Va. expressed the feeling of most of the military guests; "I thought the parade was outstanding. I was surprised and overwhelmed by the appreciation the people of New York City displayed."

"I remember how I felt overseas when I heard about all of the demonstrations and all of the negative publicity. Everything seemed to be negative then, but you come back to something like this and it doesn't matter what happened four or five years ago, or what's

pl. XXXI — No. 13

Fort Dix - New Jersey 08640 - - -

Published in the interest of personnel at Ft. Dix, N.J.

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"I remember how I felt overseas when I heard about all of the demonstrations and all of the negative publicity. Everything seemed to be negative then, but you come back to something like this and it doesn't matter what happened four or five years ago, or what's been said in the past - you forget all about that and enjoy the moment - it's tremendous."

So for a brief time on Saturday some people came together to discover their commonality and maybe that made it all worthwhile.

True, the parade was different from the euphoric impromptu celebrations that marked the end of the big war more than a quarter of a century ago. (Was it really so long ago?) But that was a different war in a different time and then we weren't celebrating the same thing as now.

Published in the interest of personnel at Ft. Dix, N.J.

Fort Dix - New Jersey 08640

Friday, April 6

FT DIX POST