

Letter from Invalid Veteran NVT

Addressing Ms Quach Thu Thuy and Tinh Thuong Foundation,

My name is NVT , I am one of the wounded veterans of QL/VNCH , Service Number XX/YYYYY, KBC AAA, Company C, Battalion B, TQLC. I was wounded in March 171 whilst ... I was wounded while quartered at Ha Lao, in the battle of Lam Son.

I was wounded by a bullet in the abdomen area, resulting in my intestines being severed, my right liver had to be excised. After being wounded I was taken to Tổng Y Viện Cộng Hoà to be treated and then at Lê Hữu Sanh TQLC hospital. On examination, the doctor classified my wounds as Grade 3 wounds with 60% disability. After that I came back to my unit to wait for my discharge papers. After leaving the army I came back to Ay Hamlet, B Village, C District, Gia Định. After the 30th April 1975, my family was forced to relocate to a new economic zone in Z Province. I live there until now.

In those years I had to put up with don't know how much anguish of life under the new government. I had to shoulder many unfairness, abuse, pain and shame. I am sure you are aware thus I do not have to list the treatments I received being a soldier of the old regime. Not only I had to suffer but also my kids. They had to live a life of misery, going without meals, an education, and medication.

In 1988, after a long period of illness without medication or treatment my wife passed away leaving me with 8 young kids. It was a trying time and I did what I had to do to look after my kids to prolong their existence. I had to fight for survival, and found any number of ways to scrape a living, to survive day by day.

In the end I did survive those days of hardships. My children have all grown up now and have their own families but I am still full of sadness and regrets. It is because I didn't have the capacity to give them an education and thus they have to endure continual hardships in their daily life. Having to live such harsh lives themselves, surviving on a daily struggle, there is no conceivable way that they could also support their invalid father.

At the moment I am renting a small cafe on the corner to sell coffee, as a mean of income, since my health does not allow me to work as a labourer. Now my happiness is found in coffee and music. Watching the afternoon turn into night, looking back at my life, all that I have been through all that is left of me is loneliness and am deeply moved.

By chance I met up with a friend from the city. He gave me the address of Tinh Thuong Foundation and advised me to write for aid. I have thought much before writing this letter. The truth is I am ashamed to put all our hardships on paper.

But then I thought by writing what we as veterans had to endure is a way of speaking up and our only wish is empathy. I am also hoping to find a friend...friends who have shared my youth in war time. Writing made me reminisce of the battles, the young faces of the soldiers, those who have fallen, and those that have gone. Even now in this isolated area, to find a musical album by Nhat Truong is quite difficult.

I hope this letter will make it to the intended recipient. Please treated as intended by me, a confidence from the heart. Please send my best wishes to everyone, best of health and may all your dreams come true.

Sincerely, NVT

(Translator: Le Uyen Vy)

