

In 2013, while on a visit to Washington D.C., I finally got the courage to walk the path of the Vietnam War Memorial. I had tried before but emotionally it was unsuccessful. Words cannot describe the emotions that ran through me that day as I finally walked that path and in the shadow of the "Wall". As I placed my hand on the wall, sights, smells, sounds and voices of the past became real and I melted into the past. It was a fellow veteran and brother who put his arm on my shoulder that brought me back to reality. This event was the inspirational catalyst to the writing of this poem.

I walk in the Shadow ©

I walk slowly in the shadow of a Wall,
Surrounded by silence,
Except for the tears that fall.

Now the door in my mind is ajar,
As I move forward sounds become real,
Choppers, artillery, and the yell of "incoming" comes from afar.

It's hot and the monsoon rains are ready to fall,
Lock and load! it's time to hit the road again! is the call,
Still, I'm in the shadow of the Wall.

It's Cowboy, Country Fred, and I as Rudy Bags,
Will we return home as we are,
Or will mom see us only, only as Tags.

Now I close that door,
But still in the shadow of the wall,
A passerby stops and asks, "Know anyone on this Wall?"

I look and stare at the never ending names on the Wall,
And with sadness my aching heart replies,
"I know them all."

With his arm around me I see tears in his eyes,
He's a stranger but a brother, and has no rank.
But as our pain lingers, we ask, who lives, who dies, and the whys.

For he, as I, long ago answered the call,
now in tears we embrace and continue our walk,
In the shadow, the shadow of the Wall.

by

Frank A. Russo

Vietnam 1971 - 5th Bn 2nd Bde

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