

# Memorial Day

1965 highly decorated envelope,  
letter describing Vietnamese girl's injury  
and  
his units ability  
to purchase her prosthesis,  
picture included.

1966 a 9 year old girl  
is returning home from school,  
she sees the distinct olive green car,  
she notices the three men  
in dress uniforms  
- as she breaks into a run  
she screams  
*No - you promised*

Angelo Francis "Mike" Michelli  
was killed in action VietNam,  
carrying a wounded comrade to safety.

[pause]

1980 I was not able to ask him  
for his daughter's hand in marriage.

1990 his 4 year old grand daughter cried  
when we found his name  
on the Memorial Wall  
she cried when she realized  
she had never known,  
would never know her grand father.

14 years later that memory is the inspiration  
for her High School  
Senior year Art Project.

Mike's death  
created a cascade of events  
and memories  
within his family,  
that we would  
rather not have experienced.

At the same time,  
his commitment and death  
are partially responsible  
for our ability  
to do what have done since.

As much as we still grieve his death,  
we are ever thankful  
for his contribution to life as we know it.

Too many of you share similar experiences.

Too many families across  
Mississippi County,  
Arkansas, and  
the United States  
share similar experiences.

These experiences  
create a communal obligation  
to all veterans.

On this Memorial Day, or next Veterans' Day  
perhaps we should find a veteran  
or veteran's family in need,  
and not worry so much  
about the white sale  
or long weekend at the lake  
or Bar B Q ...

[pasue]

In Arkansas  
we may have a special opprotunity.

You've likely read about the Veterans' home

and the over charges  
to families of aged and disabled vets.

I was pleased to hear  
our Governor Mike Bebee's  
promise that those families  
will be reimbursed.

I was disheartened to hear  
that Arkansas will have to evaluate  
**IF** we can afford these two homes.

I was also disheartened  
by the recent controversy in Little Rock  
about the placement of a halfway house  
for troubled vets.

The best neighborhoods  
should be bidding  
for the privilege to host these homes,  
not finagling to avoid them.

**WE**  
should take all necessary action  
to ensure all Arkansas veterans,  
veterans every where  
have all the care they need.

And if that means WE raise the funds,  
because tax revenues are not available,  
then so be it.

It is a small measure of the gifts  
these veterans have already given us.

[PAUSE]

There is a future set of veterans  
we need to be preparing for.

Those who have or will return  
from duty in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Many of these vets have survived  
terrible wounds  
they would not have  
in Viet Nam and earlier conflicts.

That is welcome news.

However, it also creates a future obligation  
for disabled vets  
and we must be prepared

to honor that obligation.

They have honored their obligation  
to each and very one of us.

[pasue]

May this memorial Day  
evoke in us thanksgiving  
for all those who served  
in our Armed Forces  
from the Civil War  
to the present wars,  
  
and provoke us to fully prepare  
to meet all the needs  
of all our honored Veterans.

Let us pray

Almighty God, we commend to your gracious  
care and keeping all the men and women of our  
armed forces who currently serve at home and  
abroad, and those who previously served. Defend  
them day by day with your heavenly grace;  
strengthen them in their trials and temptations;  
give them courage to face the perils which beset

them; and grant them a sense of your abiding presence wherever they may be; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.