

VFW Member Donates Photography Collection

An Army museum in San Antonio now displays a photo exhibit that details a Vietnam War veteran's tour in 1967

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When Dave Buhr was serving in Vietnam in 1967 with the 36th Evacuation Hospital in Vung Tau, he found a new hobby in photography.

One of Buhr's battle buddies brought his 35-millimeter camera with him to Vietnam. Buhr played around with the camera and soon purchased his own Yashica 35-millimeter twin lens reflex camera. He used it to capture his perceptions of Vietnam while serving as a medic.

The images Buhr captured were eventually used to show people all over the Midwest what the Vietnam War really meant to Buhr and others who sacrificed their time, strength and lives in support of the Vietnam War.

"Once I started learning how to use the camera and experiment with things, I started capturing a lot of unique photos," said Buhr, a member of VFW Post 3404 in Springfield, Missouri.

During his time in Vietnam, Buhr took several photos of everything from wounded soldiers to Buddhists to families affected by the war. He enlarged and framed a number of his photos to create an exhibit that has been showcased at a variety of museums. Buhr said he also made a book to go along with the exhibit to explain each photo and different things about Vietnam.

Buhr said his photos have been showcased at the Churchill Memorial Museum in Fulton, Missouri, a veteran celebration and parade in Branson, Missouri, and the Blanden Art Museum in Fort Dodge Iowa, along with several other locations across the Midwest.

"I had two or three themes I really wanted to portray to the people that came to the museum

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shows,” Buhr said.

He said he expected some veterans to attend, but a lot of people who came were often families of veterans. Knowing who much of his audience would be, Buhr made sure his exhibit presented what he considered to be the most important things to know about the Vietnam War and Vietnam as a country.

In May 2022, Buhr donated his 20-photo exhibit to the U.S. Army Medical Department Museum at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, as part of its permanent collection.

The museum has items from all wars that the U.S. has participated in, including a transport medical train car from WWII, a medevac helicopter from Vietnam, as well as numerous vehicles, clothing, medical instruments and more items on display.

Buhr received his medic training at Fort Sam Houston before deploying to Vietnam. After graduating from high school in 1965, Buhr attended a 15-month program in Minneapolis, where he learned lab work and how to conduct EKGs and X-rays. When two of his close friends received their notices that they were going to Vietnam, Buhr enlisted with them under the buddy program.

One of Buhr’s favorite photos from his time in Vietnam is of a Vietnamese prisoner with a foot injury in the radiology lab in the hospital. Buhr described the photo as the prisoner and the medic working the X-ray machine look at Buhr while he took the picture. Buhr posed the question of putting U.S. soldiers in the prisoner’s shoes in that moment.

“What do you suppose we would look like if we were the enemy, and we were in their medical facility, which would not have this kind of technology,” Buhr asked. “What would we look like?”

Buhr said he believes his photos categorize the people of Vietnam, the physical effects of war on troops as well as the beauty of the country.

“I hope more and more veterans realize that we did make a difference.” Buhr said. “There also was a lot of good that occurred over there.”

This article is featured in the January 2024 issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by Madeline Mapes, a freelance writer based in Kansas City, Missouri.