

Dear Lieutenant Michael Joseph Blassie,

I am writing this letter to thank you immensely for your service and the sacrifices you made for your country. I have chosen you to write this letter to because your remains were originally placed in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier until you were identified. I have done some research on you and your life after you graduated high school. After graduation you went to the United States Air Force Academy, from which you graduated in 1970 to continue your schooling. You then attended Undergraduate Pilot Training qualifying as an A-37 Dragonfly pilot, serving as a member of the 8th Special Operations Squadron deployed to Southeast Asia. The A-37B Dragonfly you were flying in the Vietnam War near An Loc, Vietnam was shot down and you unfortunately perished.

Sadly, your remains were not recovered until five months later and your family had still not been notified that you had passed. After your remains were recovered you were identified as yourself only to be reclassified as unknown after the relative age and height didn't match. President Ronald Reagan and First Lady Nancy Reagan had attended your funeral to pay their respects and rewarded you with the Medal of Honor. After that you were then placed in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier held your remains for upwards of ten years. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is a very inspiring place to attend. A United States Armed Forces member guards the Tomb for twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week and thousands of people attend the Tomb each year.

After being in the Tomb for fourteen years, you were still unidentified. DNA identification was not yet advanced enough to identify your remains when you were placed in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. You remained in the Tomb until 1998. After receiving permission from your family, you were exhumed in May of 1998. You were then transported to Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery. Sadly, after you were identified, the Medal of Honor placed under the name of the Vietnam Unknown was not transferred to your name after you were identified. After your remains were removed from the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier a new unidentified soldier was placed in the Tomb and remain there to this day.

Recently, the eighth graders of Wadsworth Middle School had the chance to visit the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and I had the chance to dedicate a wreath to all of the unknown soldiers. Dedicating the wreath made me think of all of the soldiers from Vietnam who passed in battle. But sadly while we were at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier there were students who thought the ceremony was stupid or they were laughing which is very disrespectful and deeply saddened me. All in all it made me think about why we should honor Memorial Day and all of those who lost their lives while serving.

I would really like to thank you for your service and for all of the sacrifices you had to make. I am extremely lucky to live in a country where there are people willing to show extreme selflessness by supporting our nation. It must have been hard to leave your family. It is quite a shame that you didn't get to see the Medal of Honor awarded to you. I would again like to thank you! You are one of the reasons all Americans should honor Memorial Day.

Sincerely,
Olivia Wittlock