

**This past Memorial Day, Monday, May 30, 2022, I had the distinct honor of delivering the dedication speech for the brand new Hicksville Vietnam Era Veterans Monument.**

**It was very emotional to see our hard-earned Vietnam Vets' Memorial standing proudly alongside the monuments I had seen at (what was at the time) Hicksville Jr. High School. I remember as a skinny 7<sup>th</sup> grader seeing the names on those plaques and thinking how wonderful it was to permanently honor those brave young Hicksvillians for their service.**

**At the time (1957), our country was enjoying a hard-earned peace, thanks to our parents' sacrifices in World War II (and the wars that came before). We were living what we all *thought* would be a lifetime *without* war. But by the time I graduated in 1963, the peace we took for granted was coming to a bloody end-especially for the few brave souls of our own generation who stood up to answer their country's call.**

**Once again, Hicksville would be sending their sons to fight and defend democracy in a faraway place. We did not choose who and where we fought, we only did what we were honor bound to do. *Our* homecoming, however, was nothing like our parents' and grandparents' had been. The heroes coming home from Vietnam did *not* get parades and accolades...mostly the opposite.**

**Today, thank God, our country truly honors those who serve and *have* served. It gives me hope for the future when I'm wearing my veteran's cap at a store and a young person says "Thank you for your service!"**

**It is said that, throughout our history, only 1% of U.S. citizens have stood up to join the military- making it possible for the other 99% to treasure the freedoms they enjoy today.**

**So the dedication I was so honored to deliver this past Memorial Day was long overdue, and the result of the hard work of a dedicated and patriotic team (of which I was a very small part), who spent years making the dream a reality.**

**It was great being back at the school that inspired me to become a life-long musician- plus having helped a 12 year old appreciate the honorable history of our Hicksville forefathers. With my *own* name now on a plaque-that was truly the closing of a circle. I hope that long into the future these names, now including those added last month, will continue to inspire generations to come.**

**Special thanks to my lifelong friend Jay Tranchina, for his and his team's tireless efforts on behalf of all Hicksville Vietnam Era veterans... and for tasking me with delivering his heartfelt words last month. Jay- you are truly my brother from another mother!**

**June 13, 2022**

**Tommy Sullivan**

**Hicksville High School, Class of 1963**

**U.S. Army 1965-1968**