

Thank you. I am here today to speak for the nurses of the Vietnam War.

They were the unsung heroines of that senseless war. They nursed the sick, the wounded and the dying. I served aboard the USS Sanctuary AH17 during the period of 30 December 1969 to 16 December 1970.

The Sanctuary was then operating in the coastal waters of Vietnam. I was the charge nurse of a busy Intensive Care Ward. The average age of the patients was 19 years old. We cared for the seriously wounded and critically ill patients. I could go on and on with sad, sad cases, however my point is not to tell war stories, but to ask that we take the time to remember and recognize the role women veterans played in this part of our nation's history. I am immensely proud of my service. I was honored to help those brave and frightened men. I would do it again in a minute.

Now I would like to share with you a poem that was given to me by a World War I veteran, it means a lot to me. It is entitled *The Ballad of the Woman Veteran* by Frank Warman

I was a soldier, a fighter tried and true

You don't remember me, but I went there for you.

I had my share of combat, I saw the blood and gore,
But somehow I'm forgotten when they tell about the war.

I was just a frightened kid, fresh out of school.

When I volunteered to go, my friends call me a fool.

I believed in my country, and all that it stood for,

I believed I'd be remembered when they told about the war.

But everything seemed different when I got to the war zone:

The men had their buddies, but I felt all alone.

I was true to my country, faithful to the core,

But began to feel excluded when I came home from the war.

I was erased from your memory by the cruelest of ploys.

You don't recognize me 'cause I am not one of the boys.

I am the woman who saved you when you were at death's door.

My God, don't forget me when you tell about the war!

They say we weren't real soldiers, even though our blood was spilled.

They forgot about our wounded, they forgot about our killed.

Some say we just partied there, and enjoyed our deadly chore.

I resent those lies about me when they tell about the war.

Women have war stories we need desperately to tell.

They're not very pretty, their painful as hell:

Body bags and body count, we kept the grisly score,

Now reduced to cold statistics of long forgotten wars.

From the days of Revolution and the bloody Civil War,

In the world wide conflagrations, the uniform I wore.

In the battles of Korea and the jungles of Viet Nam.

Don't tell me now I wasn't there, I know who I am.

I'm a woman and a veteran, and I say it with great pride.

I gave the very best I had, there's nothing I need to hide.

I have the right to know that the burden that I bore

Will always be remembered when they tell about the war.