

This awesome, inspiring, easy to relate to, and heartfelt address created and experienced by Army Veteran Rosa Stewart. Autographed and presented to The U-Can! Man 15 October 2010. Thanks Rosa for sharing this address with me. My heart and mind was and is touched by your story. Yes my uniforms and awards are in the closet. After serving over 25 years in the Army retiring 1 December 2007 I can certainly relate. I am placing your address on our U-Can! Shuttle for former and future Veterans to view and enjoy. Thanks for your service and Story.

**The Box in the Closet
by Rosa Stewart**

There's a box in the closet marked military papers. As you open the box with its tattered edges, so many emotions and memories flood through.

There's a 201 File (Military Personnel Record), orders, personnel actions, old LES' (pay vouchers) and if you're lucky a copy of your Service Medical Records. There are award covers that hold Certificates of Achievement, Army Commendation Medals, Meritorious Service Medals and the coveted Bronze Star.

Inside the old cardboard box folded away is a booney hat tattered by the age of sand exposure and many handwashed srcubs,

which was worn in the Gulf War during Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

This box holds 24 years of camaraderie, fear, sorrow, pain and joy; All the emotions of a combat veteran.

Camaraderie- of your military sisters and brothers. They were and still are your family. They were your family on the battlefield, combat zone and in the foxhole. No one understands a vet like a vet.

Fear- of not knowing whether the next scud was going to claim you as a target.

Fear- of not knowing if the scud held neurological or biological chemicals as you ran to put on your chemical suit known as MOPP gear; as the chemical alarm sounded.

Fear- of not knowing whether you would see your 14 month old daughter again.

Sorrow- when you go to mail call and have no mail.

Sorrow- of your battle buddy getting wounded or killed.

Sorrow- for the soldiers you took care of and watch them struggle for life or sanity.

Pain- as your comrade dies.

Pain- when the casualty of war is a child taken too soon.

Pain- of missing your family.

Joy- when the Patriot missile hits the scud and you get to live.

Joy- when the war is over and you get to come home.

Joy- when you can visit with your comrades back on US land.

Over that box in the closet there's hang a Battle Dress Uniform (BDU's). Hung beside them are the dress uniforms adorned with badges and medals. Ever wonder why a soldier keeps their uniforms and the box in the closet? Because that's a part of their life that means so much that a soldier is so proud to be a soldier and remain a soldier until their last breath. Many may not understand a soldier, but another soldier understands. Most of the time, a combat veteran may find it too painful to share experiences with family and friends.

This peep into the box in the closet, in case you were wondering, is my personal box as a Practical Nurse in the US Army. I nursed the wounded veterans and tended to those with psychiatric issues while in the Gulf War and during OEF/OIF at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Germany. Why I am I up here speaking today? I wasn't in the infantry, but I am the medic that help took care of the fallen infantryman. I had to bear arms and become Sergeant of the Guard and take up post of the perimeter where IED's (Improvised Explosive Device) could enter.

If you ever encountered a combat veteran who willing to tell their story: LISTEN!

9/11 victims were defenseless soldiers killed/wounded in action and they like some of the combat soldiers did not have the opportunity to have a box in the closet. There box is the grave in which they lie. Their box tells a story too; A story of their greatest sacrifice-----their lives.

When a veteran dies there are bits and pieces of every veteran that you may never know until you are able to look in the box in the closet.

Thank you,