

Solemn reminder long overdue

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We see them every day and never take note. Given what they've done on our behalf, that is a shame.

Even if they may prefer it that way.

Those thoughts occur as one of them was being honored Saturday at the Coeur d'Alene Casino. Very few people know exactly what happened 39 years ago on that remote, non-descript, useless hill in Vietnam but we do know it was horrific, terrifying and tragic.

And we know that Vic LaSarte is a hero.

The fact we did not know that for 40 years speaks volumes about the Worley resident and the millions of others who served in the armed forces. And with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it becomes more common every day.

We live with these people every day n it could be the kid you watched play basketball a few years back n they enlist, go to war, come home. Little is said. We never know of the things they see, the deeds they accomplish, the sacrifices they make or the heroism with which they conduct themselves.

Life just goes on.

Like it did for Mr. LaSarte - for four decades - before anyone took notice of his act of heroism. Perhaps family and close friends knew what the 60-year old army vet did that day. Perhaps they didn't. Most people would agree that the veterans they know talk little about that war. But now we do know what Mr. LaSarte did, thanks to the efforts of Col. John Davis, who understood that our country owed Mr. LaSarte recognition and thanks.

So it happened that the former Army soldier received four medals, including the Bronze Star, at a ceremony in front of hundreds, Saturday.

And this stuff happens every day.

Not the public recognition.

The heroism.

Literally every day.

While the biggest risk most of us face every day is spilling hot coffee on our lap, soldiers, Marines, airmen and sailors face the unthinkable as a matter of course. Acts of bravery that the rest of us cannot fathom are commonplace. Acts of service, dedication and heroism by the dozens go unnoticed. Just as Mr. LaSarte's story was untold, thousands of anonymous heroes return home every year with their own stories. Some come home to our neighborhoods.

Some people might think this missive is exaggerated; over the top. Nothing more than a cheap effort to employ the occasion to recognize an American hero to manufacture copy to fill space.

Understandable.

That's because we only know what is reported. With very rare exceptions individual acts of

heroism are not the stuff of daily news reports. Instead the focus is on the bigger picture, or worse and exceedingly more common since the war in which Mr. LaSarte fought - politics.

But if you look past the nightly news, see more than the daily headline, there is some quite thorough and extensive war reporting. Reporting filled with accounts of incomprehensible heroism and sacrifice. Where common people do uncommon things and if they survive return home to live among us.

Books by Bing West about the Iraq War are filled with accounts of untold bravery. Names, dates, places, specifics. Young kids and seasoned veterans doing the unimaginable every day.

The Surge, which is credited for turning the Iraq war in our favor, was treated by the press as more as a strategic exercise destined for failure or success depending on one's politics than the bloody, savage fight it was. Michael Yon, who has spent more time in Iraq and Afghanistan than any reporter, was there alongside the troops. His reporting puts the massive, unbelievably dangerous effort into context. And, in the process, tells the stories of dozens upon dozens of heroes.

Not all of whom returned home.

With blessings and good fortune Mr. LaSarte did return home and now, four decades later, we know some of his story. While the recognition is little and late, it is a poignant reminder of what some do for the rest of us. - DAN HAMMES is publisher of this newspaper.