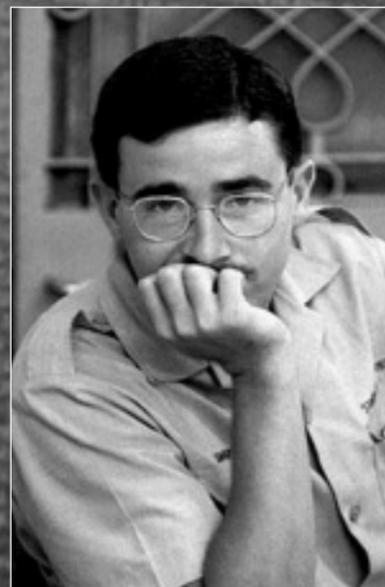


Tucker Smallwood has been a working actor on stage, film and television for the past 35 years. He served as a Military advisor in Vietnam, is a published essayist, as well as a recorded delta blues singer and guitarist. His work and curiosity have taken him around the world, a love of travel fostered by having spent five years in Europe as a young man. The "Spoken Word" venue in Los Angeles has given him an opportunity to share essays written over the past 15 years about his travels, his impressions and his life experiences.



I was filming in Washington DC, the city of my birth this past weekend, and as always, felt compelled to revisit The Wall. On it are the names of two of my Tac Officers, some of my OCS classmates, some of my OCS candidates. Six men named Smallwood died in Vietnam, none of whom I knew. There should have been seven, but for the grace of God. Yet to me, the most affecting, the most impactful name there is Paul Savanuck. He was a friend from college; enjoyed guitars and girls and beer and poker, as did I. Paul was easy going, with a ready smile and sly sense of humor. He was a combat photographer, and he died with great valor, while trying to protect and rescue several wounded soldiers.

I attended the dedication of The Wall, back in 1984 and have the strongest memory of having touched his name that day. It is etched high atop Panel 26W; oddly enough, fully ten inches beyond my reach on tiptoes.

This past Saturday was grey and overcast, a typical DC winters day. As I stepped back from Panel 26 to collect myself, I noticed among the crowd two middle-aged men, one in a flight jacket. After allowing them a private moment with their own memories, I approached and asked, "You were a chopper pilot. Did you fly slicks or gunships... or dustoffs?" He replied, "Yes, I flew Medivacs, 1969-70, out of Cu Chi." I said, "I was with MACV in 69; my dustoff flights came out of Bien Hoa...but someone like you, maybe someone you knew, took care of me and my people when we were most in need. Thanks."

Then we shook hands and exchanged the phrase that is our benediction; expressed with gratitude by all Vietnam veterans who made it back. "Welcome Home."

## THE WALL December, 2002

FOR THOSE WHO FOUGHT  
FOR IT, FREEDOM HAS A FLAVOR  
THE PROTECTED WILL NEVER KNOW.



Tucker Smallwood