I'm Glad I'm a Veteran

I was fortunate that, during the Viet Nam era, when I got out of Navy boot camp I was sent straight to the Pentagon. I already had a B.S. degree in Mathematics with training in computer science, and there were few with that skill-set back in 1969.

While in the Pentagon, I worked for the Office of the Secretary of Defense. My most significant programming responsibility was to code a communist land movement model written by a Captain in the Air Force. The Captain and I worked together well as I had the math skills to read all his work, and could run all the needed scenarios.

I only had to serve two years active duty, coming out of boot camp as E-2 and leaving as E-4. The Navy requires two additional years of reserve duty, so when I started graduate school I joined a reserve unit. Quickly, I was promoted to E-5 and found the extra money useful while going to school. I can't remember the details any longer, but I was offered a direct commission in the field of security because of my math background, and became an Ensign.   A couple years later, I was promoted to Lieutenant Junior Grade. However, shortly after that, because of budget cuts, the government decided to pay officers only half-pay for attending reserve meetings. In 1977, I finished my Ph.D. and got a good paying job, so I dropped out of the reserves.

Everyone seems to have so much respect for veterans these days, as it should be. This is so much different than the Viet Nam era. Of course, today is Memorial Day, a day to memorialize those who lost their lives serving our country. I was fortunate when I was in the service getting a job where I could contribute to saving the lives of Americans. How lucky I was compared to so many others who were sent off to Viet Nam and never returned.

Today we honor those fallen who were not so fortunate but I also want to close by thanking two great scout friends who spent their career in the military, **Jim Shannon** and **Pete Armstrong**.

I enjoyed reading your latest article, especially the beginning – a very nice start. I have a suggestion to make which of course, you can keep or toss. Rather than close with the idea of saving money at your local Lowes, I'd suggest a different ending. Today is Memorial Day, not Veteran's Day, a day to memorialize those who lost their lives serving our country. I think it would be a stronger ending if you shared how fortunate you were in getting a job where you could contribute to saving the lives of Americans – how lucky you were compared to so many others who were sent off to Viet Nam and never returned.

And you can end with something like, "I am one of the fortunate few service members who came out of the Viet Nam era whole. Today we honor those fallen who were not so fortunate."