Vietnam War Story: How This Cellar Saved My Friend

One day, I saw my neighbor Jerry slowly climbing out from somewhere below his backyard.

At first, I thought my eyes were playing tricks on me, but looking closely, I saw stairs leading into the ground and realized he must have built something…like a hidden basement. To say I was intrigued would be an understatement. Why? **Jerry is a 70-year-old disabled war veteran living on a fixed income.**

How To Build a Small Bunker in Your Backyard with $400

He became a prisoner of war after stepping on a mine and losing his leg in Nam. For a whole year, he was taken from camp to camp and bunker to bunker and endured incredible hardships. Through forced labor, hunger, and constant beatings, Jerry found one thing to focus on to keep himself sane. He planned to escape one day and reveal all he had seen and learned during his captivity. One thing in particular caught his eye more than anything else **– the bunkers being built with a speed and ease Jerry had never seen before.**

When he served in the U.S. Army, Jerry helped build the American bunkers, which took 5 men working for weeks to make and were quite exposed. The Vietnamese bunkers, on the other hand, were completely different.

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You see, the Viet Cong had become master builders because they were forced to adapt to some of the deadliest conditions known to man. They didn't have bricks or mortar, but they still managed to build underground shelters that were strong enough to withstand the constant pounding of powerful American bombs. This is where they kept all their food and tactical supplies. The Viet Cong bunkers were so efficient that the CIA estimated that for every 100 bombs dropped on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, just one North Vietnamese soldier died.

On the day he was rescued, Jerry weighed 95 pounds at the most. He was so fragile they had to feed him through a tube for days. The intel he provided on enemy tactics ended up saving countless American lives…so the army gave Jerry a medal and a plane ticket back to the U.S.

While the war was soon over and American soldiers were happily returning to their families, for Jerry, the struggle continued. Things that most people take for granted don't come easy at all for Jerry. Losing his leg early in life meant he had to learn to do things differently, without hard physical work or breaking the bank. Jerry never complained about his disability and never asked for or expected help from anyone. He is truly a hero, but he never bragged about it.

Instead, he is probably the most self-reliant man I know.

What he built in his backyard **was a unique kind of root cellar…**but here comes the truly shocking part. It only took Jerry a week to get it done-on his own! When I went down the stairs, I felt as if I had traveled back in time… right to my grandfather's root cellar.

While smaller, at probably 150 square feet, everything else was exactly the same-even that old smell I missed so much! Jerry had all sorts of cans, rice, beans, and jerky hanging from the ceiling, but he also had modern supplies like Progresso soup, pasta, peanut butter, dry goods, candles, water bottles, meds, an AR-15, a really big ammo box, and a lot more that I'll tell you about soon.

Jerry affectionately called it his "life cellar", and I could really see why. This thing could keep you and your whole family alive for months, even years, with no outside help. He also improvised a homemade ventilation system. When I examined it closely, I realized that his so-called charcoal "life-vent" would actually be able to filter out almost everything you can think of, including radioactive particles.

The life cellar he had built in his back yard was a brilliant mix of 3 things:

Jerry had always wanted to have an old-fashioned root cellar just like his great-grandparents had. This is where they kept all their harvest from spoiling. They had healthy, nutritious food on their table year round. The problem with this kind of root cellar is that they are quite flimsy and can become a death trap in anything more than a storm. And they are not that easy to build.

The second thing Jerry considered was the **temporary American Army bunkers.** They had a tactical advantage and provided safety from bullets, shockwaves, and floods. More than that, they were made out of inexpensive materials, but on the other hand, they were exposed in plain sight and were not that easy to build either.

And **the third most important part** was the Viet Cong secret method of building hidden, quickly bunkers which were so easy to buildthat two people could build one in less than a day. They don’t look like much from the outside because they blend in with the environment, but they are incredibly resilient to bombardment, grenades, and shelling. They also had a second exit so those inside would never get trapped. But they did not make use of good enough materials for these to last for more than a few short years.

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