

The Last Time I Saw Her

By Jim Thomas

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Like a butterfly in flight she came dancing across my mind. She was someone special from long ago. Yet here she was in my thoughts, dragging all those old memories and feelings from their hiding places. One does not easily forget leaving someone dear to the heart. We had suffered an emotional goodbye many years ago.

She had once stood by me and journeyed with me through the tough times. She had seen me at my best and my worst, never complaining, always giving her best. Never once did she let me down. No one should have asked for more but I moved on and eventually her memory was buried with a lot of others.

Now the memory had become a hurt and needed resolution. I toyed with the idea of finding her. But how do you find that special someone from the foggy past? I began with e-mail to folks that had known both of us. There were a lot of internet searches and phone calls.

Finding her had not been an easy quest but today I would see her, talk to her and hopefully mend the broken fences. I wondered how she would look? Had time been kind to her? Was her life a good one? Would the old magic still be there?

My heart almost stopped when I saw her and tears formed in my eyes. I hoped no one would notice but I could not hold them back. The emotion and feelings from over the years came too fast. All I could do was stumble toward her.

I reached out, forty years were gone and we were together again. Thousands of memories flooded my mind and senses. There had been times of joy, times of fear, and times of sadness. We had experienced it all. The highest of highs and the lowest of lows.

She had fared well over the years. In fact she had aged better than I had. She had a beautiful home and a large family. We talked some but I don't remember much about what was said. All too soon it was time to leave. We made our peace in those brief moments and this goodbye was a lot different than the previous one.

I turned for one more look at her. She looked even better than the last time I saw her and leaving this time was the toughest ever.

My eyes were misty again and on shaky legs I made my retreat. We could not be together. Too much time had gone by and too much had changed. She would always be special to me and claim a big piece of my heart. I turned and waved another goodbye to OV-1A 60-03736. She was a Phantom Hawk airplane that I had flown in Vietnam. Things were right between us once again and the sun seemed to be shining just a little brighter as I stepped outside.