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NORTH COUNTRY HONOR FLIGHT

2026 COMMEMORATIVE GUIDE

The magic of Honor Flight

North Country Honor Flight had yet another strong year in the 2026 flying season. The organization saw 115 veterans across eight flights take the trip to Washington, D.C. this year. Participating veterans are taken on a day trip to visit the memorials in the capital dedicated to their service. All veterans are flown free of charge. For more information, visit northcountryhonorflight.org or call director Barrie Finnegan at 518-569-7429.

COVER PHOTO
CARLY NEWTON/P-R FILE PHOTO
Veterans taking part in the Honor Flight sendoff listen on during the pre-flight ceremony on Sept. 5.



VETERAN BIOGRAPHIES

For every North Country Honor Flight send-off ceremony, short biographies are read for each of the veterans traveling on the flight. Flight leaders for each of the trips travel to and interview the veterans on their experiences in the service, with the write-ups then organized and read aloud at the send-off events. The write-ups are nostalgic, heartfelt and often with a touch of humor.

Below are the biographies for the veterans who traveled this year. North Country Honor Flight takes area veterans on all-expense-paid flights to see the war memorials in Washington, D.C.

FLIGHT 68

WILLIAM BURDO

U.S. Air Force, 1973-1993, Vietnam

William Burdo enlisted in the Air Force because it offered the career field in construction he wanted. He received nearly a year and a half of training at McChord Air Force Base in Washington as a structural technician.

He remained at McChord doing building removal and construction until he was shipped to Osan Air Base in Korea, then transferred to California. There, Burdo underwent back surgery. Healed, he returned to the Osan base, assigned to the Red Horse Civil Engineering squadron for a year.

Over his 20 years of service, temporary duty assignments allowed him to travel to multiple locations. Burdo ended his career back in California at McClellan Air Force Base, serving his final five years.

DAVID COLVER

U.S. Army, 1970-1972, Vietnam

David Cover was drafted into the Army and trained as a wheel vehicle mechanic, followed by an additional six-week training as a rough terrain mechanic.

In Vietnam, Cover worked in the 984th Land Clearing Company for nine months using a Rome Plow, a type of large, specially modified armored bulldozer, and D-9 equipment. He was then reassigned to Fort Carson in Colorado where he picked constantan wire in the field until he was discharged.

He enjoyed weekend duty assignments in the carpool, which had a portable TV and radio. Despite being drafted, Cover appreciates the training that provided him with a living after the military and instilled a good work ethic.

He recalls Vietnam as a beautiful country, best seen in peacetime. Like many young men, he didn't fully understand the mission at the time.

JEFFREY LAMPHERE

U.S. Army, 1968-1969, Vietnam

Jeff Lamphere served in the Army, same as his father before him. Drafted, Lamphere followed orders and kept his nose down during basic training. At Fort Belvoir in Virginia, he received advanced training as a Powerman, followed by jungle training.

Reporting to Oakland Army Base in California after 30 days of leave, Lamphere was shipped to Bien Hoa Air Base in Vietnam. He spent a week there until joining Army Camp Eagle's 101 Airborne Division, where he was assigned to maintain power sigma to remote fire bases. He served in Vietnam for 13 months.

Lamphere earned the Bronze Star, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Service Medal and Army Commendation Medal, as well as other commendations while serving his country.

Today, Lamphere is accompanied by his nephew Bryan, who is an Air Force veteran.

EUGENE LOUGHRAN

U.S. Air Force, 1964-1968, Vietnam

Eugene Loughran completed specialized training as a jet engine mechanic in four months at Amarillo Air Force Base in Texas.

Assigned to Del Rio Air Force Base in Texas, he earned three awards for his improvements to jet engines, each accompanied by a cash reward. While there, he enjoyed fishing. He would give his catch to the locals that appreciated the food.

Loughran called his longtime next door neighbor and girlfriend, asking her, "How about we get married?" She informed him he didn't earn enough money. However, he managed to persuade her to fly down to Texas, and they got married at the base chapel.

At end of his enlistment, Loughran wanted to reenlist, but his wife was ready to return home. He continued for eight years in the Saranac Lake Reserves and another eight in the Vermont Guard, serving both as a medic and performing engine inspections.

He used his medical training as a civilian EMT to deliver three babies during his career.

ANDRÉ MERCIER

U.S. Army, 1970-1971, Vietnam

André Mercier was drafted into the Army and completed nine weeks of advanced infantry at Fort Ord in California before being sent to Vietnam for 366 days.

He left for CủChi Base Camp in Vietnam from Seattle on his birthday. Assigned to the 25th Infantry Division, 2nd Battalion Mechanized Triple Deuce, Mercier was placed into an active land-combat zone.

Receiving an assignment with the second of the 17th attached to 101st Airborne, Mercier assumed the role of helicopter point man, the first to enter and exit for rescue and recovery operations.

During a month-long deployment in Khe Sanh, they located a buried Marine ordnance. At A Shau Valley, the warrant officers did not want to come in due to monsoon conditions, as the infantry based there were being shelled with CS gas.

Mercier received the Purple Heart when his vehicle ran over a landmine and the Bronze Star, along with other distinguished service medals.

It was important to Mercier that he went to Vietnam so others wouldn't have to.

MICHAEL SHOWALTER

U.S. Navy, 1965-1969, Vietnam

In basic training, Michael Showalter felt his first shared spirit, pride and loyalty among a group, as well as how to shave correctly. He went on to feel a sense of accomplishment in his training in Aviation Electronics as he was challenged by being both dyslexic and left-handed.

Sent to the Quonset Point flight line in Rhode Island, he fixed planes' navigation radios and equipment.

Transferred to Beeville, Texas, he joined the Chase Field Naval Air Station's VT-25 Training Squad, working with pilots on takeoffs and landings.

Next, he joined the VX-6 Air Development at McMurdo Station in Antarctica, providing support for exploring scientists, earning the Antarctica service medal. They found relief during liberty at Christ Church, where the pastor ran a still.

Showalter received a surprise over the radio from his wife that the "rabbit had died." He is honored to have served with a great group of servicemen, all dedicated to their duty to the country.

JENS SORENSEN

U.S. Navy 1963-1967 Vietnam

Jens Sorensen entered the Navy following in the footsteps of his grandfather and father. In San Diego, he completed his advanced training in Machinery Repair at the top of his class.

Assigned to the USS Tutuila, Sorensen remembers the not-so-welcoming signs in Norfolk for "All dogs and sailors, keep off the grass." He participated in Operation Springboard, a crucial Navy training exercise with NATO members.

Directed to Vietnam, Sorensen found himself in the Gulf of Thailand and on the ground at the border of Cambodia. He was placed on a swift boat for coastal patrol of Cambodia and assigned to Cat Lo Naval Base, a crucial strategically located site at the northern shore in South Vietnam.

Sorensen's five brothers also served. He's proud of his service, the opportunity to travel and is grateful that he was warmly welcomed home by his community.

MITCHELL TERRY

U.S. Army, 1970-1973, Vietnam

After high school, Mitch Terry enlisted in the Army. He completed basic and advanced infantry training at Fort Dix in New Jersey then proceeded to Fort Rucker in Alabama to undergo training as a Food Service Specialist.

While stationed at Fort Jackson in South Carolina, Terry received orders for Vietnam. However, the orders unexpectedly changed to Mannheim, Germany's 126th, 69th Transportation Company. At the Turley Barracks, he worked in the mess hall and performed record keeping tasks. These barracks had once been a German military complex with subterranean levels that Terry never got to explore.

After over two years in Germany, Terry was discharged early. He was happy to have traveled and to have been present for the Munich Olympics.

MICHAEL THOMPSON

U.S. Navy, 1961-1965, Vietnam

Michael Thompson received training for flight aviation electronics and anti-submarine warfare electronics. Never aboard ship, he logged 1,600 hours of flight time flying patrol planes for anti-submarine warfare surveillance.

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FLIGHT 68

May 16, 2026

William Burdo
David Colver
Jeffrey Lamphere
Eugene Loughran
André Mercier
Michael Showalter
Jens Sorensen
Mitchell Terry
Michael Thompson
James Walker
Gary Wells
Randy Wells
Wilson Wheatley III
Robert Williams

FLIGHT 69

May 16, 2026

Samuel Blanchard
Richard Charlebois
Wayne Dubay
Thomas Fredette
James Hammaker Jr.
James Hughes
Keith Lunn
Kenneth Maurer Sr.
Mark Mercer
Joseph Patyjewicz
Mark Rigsbee
Roy Soderberg
Charles Sturdevant
Dennis Wells

FLIGHT 70

June 20, 2026

C. Edward Bombard Jr.
Richard Brosseau
David Burl
James Canfield
Harold Carlson
James Davis
Elmer Durant
Gary Durant
Allen Lacy
Robert Leclerc
Richard Onufer
Paul Perry
Robert Woodard

FLIGHT 71

June 20, 2026

John Bingham
Bernard Gwinn
Bruce Hale
Daniel Jackson
Bruce Jarvis
Kenneth LaFave
Walter Lafave
Samuel Marotta
James Mazzotte
Richard Pepin
Richard Perez
Michael Reil
Raney Rock
Robert Rock
Allen Rule

FLIGHT 72

Sept. 5, 2026

Dennis Bardelcik
John Buttolph III
Michael McCole
Paul Gainer
Richard Harwood
Dennis Hatch
Ron LeBlanc
Laurent L'Esperance
Edward Lynch
William Clark Mason
William Poupore
Stephen Rivers
David Swarts
Anthony Trombley
Karl "Kit" Twetan Jr.

FLIGHT 73

Sept. 5, 2026

Seyit Murat Aldas
Donald Joseph Auclair
Raymond Bigrow
Patrick George Blinn
William Robert Burns Jr.
George Desotelle Jr.
Dennis Raymond Doyle
Kenneth Paul Ellis
John Adrian Girouard
Robert Paul Lewis
John Wayne Patnode
John Poulin
Brian Robert Stork
Gary Earl Taylor

FLIGHT 74

Oct. 3, 2026

William Bowen Jr.
Daniel Connell
Lawrence Dorsey
Joseph Gentles
Thomas Highers
Lawrence Houston
Lucille Malaney
Thomas Patrick Millea
Steven Morrow
Stephen Pinello Jr.
Curtis Provost Sr.
Vincent Puliafico
Roger Sherman
Stephen Silver
Peter Tripi Sr.

FLIGHT 75

Oct. 3, 2026

Gilles Brunet
Steven Ciardelli
Michael Clark
James Cross
James Gokey
Larry Greene
Daniel Johnston
Bruce King
Charles Langlois
Robert Joseph LaValley
Steven O'Brien
Dale Perry
Warren Plumadore
Michael Smith
Richard Somerset

FLIGHT 68

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

His first assignment was to VP-30 in Jacksonville, Florida. There, he flew patrol in the P5M Marlin and the P2V Neptune. He was then moved to the VP-23 Seahawks in Brunswick, Maine. As a 1st Tech at VP-23, he moved up to squadron commander.

Thompson traveled extensively and flew above the Arctic Circle, earning him a "blue nose" designation. He celebrated with the Norwegian military after locating a Russian Foxtrot Submarine.

While in Sicily as his duty station, he attended church. He still recalls the young priest's words: "The only decision you have to make is whether you love Jesus or you don't."

He met and married his wife, Carol, while stationed in Maine. They will celebrate their 60th anniversary in June.

JAMES WALKER

U.S. Army, 1967-1970, Vietnam

James Walker's enlistment in the Army took him to Fort Belvoir in Virginia for eight weeks of heavy equipment training. He received his first assignment to Fort Knox in Kentucky where he worked as a tank mechanic for a year and a half, as they had no heavy equipment at this location.

He was assigned to Artillery Fire Base upon arriving in Pleiku, Vietnam. He spent a year in country as an artilleryman and working in maintenance.

His service earned him the Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Service Meal with two overseas service bars and M-14 Sharpshooter Badge.

Walker takes great pride in having served his country. He grew up quickly from these experiences.

GARY WELLS

U.S. Navy, 1963-1967, Vietnam

Even though he couldn't swim, Gary Wells considered being aboard ship a better option for enlistment.

His first placement had him assigned to the brig, picking up and delivering prisoners. On a flight transfer, none of the prisoners were handcuffed; they had three clips of ammunition and only one guard qualified with a 45.

Assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Midway, off the coast of Vietnam, they returned to San Diego for ship rehab during a typhoon with waves over 100 feet. After repairs, they returned to Vietnam. From their offshore location, they could see bombs drop.

While aboard ship, Wells found the flight deck the most dangerous. He saved a man from falling off the catwalk. There was no talk of reenlistment, as his wife told him he would be divorced if he didn't come home.

RANDY WELLS

U.S. Navy, 1974-1978, Vietnam

Randy Wells, like his brother Gary, enlisted in the Navy. Sickness and a two-day hospital stay at the end of basic training challenged Wells' obstacle course completion, but fellow sailors helped him through.

Assigned to the USS Vancouver, Wells reported to find the ship was not docked in San Francisco. It took him five days to finally board the ship off the shore of Vietnam. His dress whites had turned quite brown. He would have been considered AWOL if not for having all his location orders stamped.

He was aboard the USS Vancouver during the Fall of Saigon, assisting thousands of evacuees in their journey to safety. He went on to attend A School for lithography and serve aboard the USS Tripoli in the Western Pacific. His final time was spent at the Pentagon.

Despite facing numerous early challenges, Wells emerged with numerous commendations and decorations for his service.

WILSON WHEATLEY III

U.S. Army, 1970-1972, Vietnam

As a member of ROTC at the University of Vermont, Will Wheatley III began his enlistment at Infantry Officer Basic training at Fort Benning in Georgia. He was then assigned to the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell at the border of Tennessee and Kentucky where he served as a training officer. His role was to prepare recruits for combat.

In preparation for Wheatley's orders to Vietnam, he completed jungle operations training at Fort Sherman in the Panama Canal Zone. Upon completion, he joined the 101st Airborne Division, 2nd Platoon, Charlie Company at the Phu Bai Combat Base for search and destroy missions.

After a leave, Wheatley returned to Vietnam and served as an Assistant Intel Officer. He participated as an observer in hunter-killer missions involving Loach and Cobra helicopters.

Monsoon season, mosquitoes, leeches and sleeping on the ground were all part of Wheatley's time in Vietnam. The Bronze Star Medal and Combat Infantryman Badge were just two of the distinguished service medals he was awarded.

As he reflects on his service, Wheatley is proud to have served his country as a combat infantry platoon leader.

ROBERT WILLIAMS

U.S. Army, 1966-1968, Vietnam

Robert "Bob" Williams was drafted like so many others. He first went to Fort Bragg in California, but there was no room, so he was sent to Fort Hood in Texas. After bouncing between units, he landed in the 2nd Armored Division, where he trained on the 155mm artillery piece.

In September 1967, Williams shipped out to Vietnam. He arrived in Saigon with the 1st Field Force then moved quickly to Da Nang and Dong Ha, joining the 8th of the 4th Artillery attached to the 26th Marines at the DMZ. When he and two others arrived, they were told: "One of you will handle artillery, the others drive trucks." Williams had never driven a truck, but he was soon transporting 6,000 pounds of gunpowder through hostile territory.

It was dangerous work. Once, under incoming fire, he jumped from his truck and took cover in a ditch for six hours. Williams drove all over northern Vietnam. He reflects on it simply: "I made it home" and "I made a lot of good friends."





FLIGHT 69

SAMUEL BLANCHARD

U.S. Army, 1971-1974, Vietnam

After receiving his draft notice, Samuel "Sam" Blanchard headed to the recruiter. At basic training, he was separated from the others due to his size and asked if he could take care of himself. The corporal then made him squad leader and offered him a bottle.

In Heavy Construction, Blanchard's initial assignments had him guarding the stockade and working in the motor pool shop. The first Vietnam War ceasefire order altered his orders, sending him to the 79th Engineering Battalion in Germany for repair and utility.

There, Blanchard found himself in a realtime F-Troop. They had no functional purpose, the barracks were nasty and in extreme disrepair, and drug and alcohol abuse were rampant. A request by Blanchard to relinquish his stripes was met with medical review by the Army as they didn't understand why he would want to do this.

Traveling home, protesters rocked his bus and called them "baby killers."

Blanchard has dedicated his life to supporting veterans and honoring his family's many military generations. He appreciates that service teaches individual strength, offers a path that can change your life, and builds lifelong friendships.

RICHARD CHARLEBOIS

U.S. Army, 1967-1969, Vietnam

Richard "Dick" Charlebois was drafted as a Canadian citizen after taking a year off from college. At Fort Jackson in South Carolina, he received medical training, which lead him to a nursing career as a civilian.

From Fort Hood in Texas, Charlebois was deployed to Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam. Charlebois flew medical evacuation for his year in Vietnam. On a disastrous mission, his helicopter propeller was hit; they took shrapnel, dropping nearly 50 feet. Charlebois exited safely, experiencing hearing loss from a blown eardrum.

He received numerous medals, including the Combat Medical Badge, Army Commendation Medal and Purple Heart.

When the war was over, he returned to a solid support system. He appreciates the camaraderie between the nearly 170 he served with and is grateful for the Air Force support that allowed him to travel safely into non-safe areas.

WAYNE DUBAY

U.S. Army, 1966-1968, Vietnam

At the age of 19, Wayne Dubay was drafted into the Army. He headed off alone to Fort Dix in New Jersey for infantry training, receiving a commendation as a Rifle Sharpshooter, and training as a light vehicle driver.

Dubay spent a year in Vietnam. His service time earned him the Vietnam Service Medal with three Bronze Service Stars and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.

Today, Dubay has little memory of his service years but has great pride in his service to the country and the connections he made while in the service. He looks forward to visiting the memorial in Washington, D.C., and spending time with his fellow service members.

THOMAS FREDETTE

U.S. Marines, 1969-1971, Vietnam and Desert Storm

After high school, Thomas Fredette attended Champlain College. Avoiding the draft, he enlisted in the Marine Corps. Sent to Parris Island in South Carolina, Fredette found himself doing a lot of pushups and training as a Heavy Motor Vehicle Operator.

From Camp Pendleton in California, he was sent to Camp Schwab in Okinawa. His service took him into the waters and land of Vietnam in a training capacity. Much of his service was spent loading equipment and working in the motor pool. Like other Marines, he had his time digging foxholes and guard duty.

Fredette was called back to active duty while in the Army Reserves during Desert Storm. His unit was sent to Germany with a mission to fill rail cars with missiles and other ammunitions.

His travels allowed him to meet and serve with people from across the globe. Fredette appreciates the camaraderie and loyalty of those he served with.

JAMES HAMMAKER JR.

U.S. Air Force, 1972-1994, Vietnam and Desert Storm

James "Jim" Hammaker Jr. chose the Air Force for its quality of life, beginning with water survival training and specializing in inflight refueling. Over time, he advanced through leadership roles, serving as both an instructor and evaluator.

His assignments took him to Loring, Griffiss, Castle and Plattsburgh, while temporary duty missions carried him worldwide. He refueled over Vietnam, earned the Air Medal for service in Thailand, traveled to Tehran before the fall of the Shah and worked as a structural crew member in Turkey and Iran.

At Castle, Hammaker became a central flight instructor, training flight line crews. At Plattsburgh, he conducted evaluations, served as alert facility manager and, during Desert Storm, was senior flight refueling superintendent. He oversaw nighttime refueling of F-111 aircraft over Baghdad, earning the Bronze Star and the Kuwait Liberation Medal.

In Hammaker's 22 years of service, he received numerous commendations and decorations. He values his many years of service and commitment to his country.

JAMES HUGHES

U.S. Air Force, 1968-1972, Vietnam

Avoiding the draft lottery, James "Jim" Hughes decided to enlist in the Air Force. At Lowry Air Force Base in Colorado, he trained as a Munition Maintenance Specialist then continue training at Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico. A six-month temporary duty took Hughes to Okinawa where he worked with real bombs, as well as Cambodia and Thailand.

While assigned to the fuse shop, a passing 40-foot flatbed ended up in the ditch as the driver was swatting at a bee. The bomb came flying off the flatbed; it had not yet been activated, but it was still scary.

While in Okinawa, a typhoon came through. The planes were all safely removed from the base, but the water rose to the second floor. They had no plumbing and only sea rations for meals. After the typhoon cleared, all the aluminum poles were bent over from the rushing water. Hughes was discharged exactly four years to the day from the start of his service.

KEITH LUNN

U.S. Air Force, 1968-1972, Vietnam

Keith Lunn remained at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas after basic training, obtaining a top-secret security clearance. He continued into a specialized department focused on advanced instruments.

On leave, he married his wife, Carol. Excited about heading to a three-year assignment in Australia, they learned just before the wedding the assignment had been canceled.

He chose Greenland, hoping it would lead to a preferred reassignment. This offered a unique and memorable experience. While there, Neil Armstrong landed on the moon, and Lunn's detachment was responsible for monitoring communications to ensure the astronauts' safety. He also had the chance to spend an evening with Hank Williams Jr.

An equipment reassignment sent Lunn to Lowry Air Force Base in Colorado to serve as an instructor. There, he discovered a passion for teaching, which he continued in civilian life. He still maintains a 55-year close friendship with a serviceman who shared a similar journey.

KENNETH MAURER SR.

U.S. Navy, 1969-1973, Vietnam

Kenneth Maurer Sr., in his youth, was rebellious. Meeting with the Navy recruiter, they did not initially want him without a high school diploma. His lessons began with an unforgettable, tough drill sergeant.

Assigned to the USS L.Y. Spear out of Norfolk, Virginia, he spent his time laboring aboard ship. He trained as a torpedo man without assignment to this duty. On the USS Diamond, they performed exercises in the areas around Cuba and Haiti.

Maurer earned his GED while in the Navy, and later went on to earn an associate's degree in criminal justice. Continuing into the National Guard, he served in the Military Police. These experiences lead him to civilian opportunities working for the Department of Corrections as a weapons instructor.

The military gave Maurer the love of service to his country, God and family. His military experiences redirected him, and from experience, he knows that others can benefit from this path in life.

MARK MERCER

U.S. Air Force, 1967-1971, Vietnam

Mark Mercer chose four years in the Air Force over the draft, realizing it offered more opportunities. He trained as a passenger and household specialist and in freight logistics.

His first assignment was at Plattsburgh Air Force Base where he would meet and marry his wife. Mercer was sent to Vietnam, spending time in Saigon and Da Nang as noncombat troop support. He returned to Plattsburgh, followed by an assignment in Puerto Rico, where his daughter was born.

After discharge at Charleston Air Force Base in South Carolina, he moved to New Jersey with his family, living there for 15 years before returning to Plattsburgh.

Mercer is proud of his service, which made him mature quickly, instilled responsibility and taught him respect.

JOSEPH PATYJEWICZ

U.S. Army, 1963-1966, Vietnam

Joseph Patyjewicz, though not a U.S. citizen, grew up in the U.S. and completed three years of ROTC in high school. His advanced infantry training specialized in rifle, machine gun and missile use. He also underwent jungle warfare training and two months of survival training in the Yukon with limited supplies to test their resilience.

Expecting an assignment to Vietnam, Patyjewicz was sent to a military hospital in France, working in personnel records management. While there, he played basketball for both the United States and French national basketball teams.

On what was supposed to be a Mission for the chaplain, Patyjewicz and the assistant chaplain took a military ambulance for a weekend on the beach. Patyjewicz had to also think quickly to divert the attention of the Military Police from a cigarette sale taking place with some of the French troops.

Patyjewicz appreciates the diverse cultural experiences of his service and was fortunate that it included travel and many educational experiences.

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FLIGHT 69

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MARK RIGSBEE

U.S. Air Force, 1972-1993, Cold War and Desert Storm

Mark Rigsbee's interest in space led him to the Air Force where his drive earned him his first stripe out of basic training. At Chanute Air Force Base in Illinois, he joined the Yellow Rope program and trained in aircraft maintenance, quickly earning the nickname "Rocket" for his fast response.

While serving as a tanker task force shift supervisor in Guam, a monsoon delayed his return from leave. In trying to get back, he made an unauthorized entry onto the flight line and was briefly detained, though the situation was resolved quickly. He didn't have to spend the night in custody.

His career and temporary duty assignments took Rigsbee worldwide. During Desert Storm, he deployed to Saudi Arabia under missile threat, adding to his many meritorious decorations.

While stationed in Plattsburgh, Rigsbee met and married his wife, Julie. With her support, he continued to excel, achieving his goal of becoming a Senior Master Sergeant in under 20 years. The Air Force instilled valuable life skills and a sense of pride in serving his country.

ROY SODERBERG

U.S. Air Force, 1968-1989, Vietnam

Roy Soderberg's drill instructor laughed at him when he told him that in 20 years, he would retire as a Master Sergeant. He proved his instructor wrong. Sent to Denver, he trained in Aerospace Photographic Systems for electronic recon and a top security clearance. In his work, he could see a license plate at 55,000 feet.

Within 72 hours of exiting the military, Soderberg met up with someone in the hospital that made his goal of flying a reality. A re-up switched his field to Boom Operator and require survival training.

Soderberg spent 5,002 hours in the air as a Boom Operator, with 105 of those hours in combat. Years later, he was grounded due to health issues. Unable to continue flying, he exited the military.

He left with a long list of decorations and commendations, which include the Air Medal and Vietnam Service Medal. With his security clearance, there are limits to Soderberg's shared experiences, but he does have many stories, such as the Dining-Un, a napkin bow-tie event held at Plattsburgh. This formal occasion thoroughly roasted one of the alert service personnel.

CHARLES STURDEVANT

U.S. Air Force, 1970-1992, Vietnam

Charles Sturdevant, with a draft number of 74 and membership in the Civil Air Patrol, selected the Air Force as his preferred military path. His successful basic training was due to his drill sergeant's guidance and support. Despite hip issues that made running painful, he was allowed to miss regular training runs if he passed his final run.

After basic, Sturdevant was sent to Tech school at Chanute Air Force Base in Illinois where he received specialized training as a jet engine mechanic.

Throughout his 22-year military career, he dedicated himself to repairing aircraft engines. His assignments took him stateside to Pope, Griffiths and Plattsburgh. He also received assignments in Thailand and Turkey.

While in Turkey, temporary duty missions took him off base for recovery repairs.

DENNIS WELLS

U.S. Air Force, 1969-1972, Vietnam

Dennis Wells spent a year in the work force after high school before enlisting in the Air Force. Growing up in our Air Force community influenced his choice. Traveling to Albany with a buddy, only Wells made it through boot camp.

Wells completed his advanced training at Keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi where he specialized in electronic surveillance. With a top-secret security clearance, he was assigned to Crete, Greece, where he was stationed for his remaining enlistment. Temporary duty assignments took him to Italy to learn new equipment and, briefly, to Ireland.

If not for his commitment to family, Wells would have reenlisted. While he found his assignment interesting and enjoyed his time in the military, his obligation to his family ultimately required him to return to civilian life.

FLIGHT 70

C. EDWARD BOMBARD JR.

U.S. Army, 1960-63, Cold War

After basic and clerk-typist training at Fort Dix, New Jersey, C. Edward Bombard Jr. trained at Fort Eustis, Virginia, as a transportation movement specialist, coordinating the movement of military vehicles.

He was later deployed to North Africa with the 3rd Army, serving in a small unit that oversaw port operations for the Libyan government. Although the unit included 10 officers, Bombard recalled the enlisted men handled most of the day-to-day work.

At just 20 years old, Bombard earned a rapid promotion to E-5 after stepping in as chief of operations during another soldier's medical leave.

During his 25 months of service, he valued both the responsibility and opportunity to travel aboard C-130 flights to France, Germany and England.

Looking back, Bombard said he would enlist again without hesitation, calling military service a rewarding experience that taught him responsibility and maturity at a young age.

RICHARD BROSSEAU

U.S. Navy, 1966-70, Vietnam

Richard Brosseau joined the U.S. Navy through the delayed enlistment program while working construction in Vermont.

Service ran in his family. His father served in World War II, and his brother was also in the Navy.

He trained in Pensacola, Florida, where he became a plane captain, responsible for inspecting propeller aircraft and ensuring they were ready for flight.

Later, in Oceana at Virginia Beach, he worked on F-4 Phantom jets, maintaining those same high standards.

Brosseau spent three months aboard the USS Independence, including a stop in London where he took part in performances held for the queen.

He later completed a nine-month European cruise, spending 40 days at sea before sighting land.

During carrier war games, lights went dark as opposing aircraft searched for them. If found, 100-pound bags of flour hitting the deck meant they'd been "hit."

Brosseau values his Navy service and the opportunity to see the world.

DAVID BURL

U.S. Marines, 1967-72, Vietnam

After completing infantry training at Parris Island, South Carolina, and Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, David Burl trained in Texas as a reciprocating aircraft mechanic and later in California as a crew chief, responsible for his own CH-34 helicopter and crew.

"It was my aircraft," he recalled.

Following air survival training in Okinawa, Japan, he deployed to Vietnam, arriving briefly in Da Nang, Vietnam, before serving in Dong Ha along the Cua Viet River in Quang Tri province and aboard the USS Princeton.

As part of the "Ugly Angels," Burl flew resupply and recovery missions, including operations into Hue, Vietnam, during the siege. He found the work deeply meaningful, often helping evacuate wounded soldiers from combat zones.

In 1967, while serving with Marine Helicopter Squadron 364, he received the Air Medal for heroism. He still reflects on "The Man in the Door," a poem written by a fellow crew chief that captured the intensity of those missions.

After returning home, Burl reenlisted.

"I'd do it all again in a heartbeat," he said. "I just did my job."

Yet, the impact of that service remains with him every day still.

JAMES CANFIELD

U.S. Navy, 1970-72, Vietnam

After earning an English degree from the University of Michigan and a medical degree from the University of Pittsburgh, James Canfield completed pediatric training at the University of Vermont before entering military service.

He trained as a Navy officer in Coronado, California, preparing for deployment to Vietnam.

Canfield served as a medical officer aboard the USS Benewah with a river patrol unit, working alongside five Navy corpsmen to treat wounded soldiers under intense conditions. Constantly moving — often staying in one location less than a day — the team triaged patients, stabilized the wounded for evacuation or treated them on board before returning them to duty.

The experience left a lasting impact, and Canfield continues to manage his post-traumatic stress disorder, something he noted was common among medical personnel in Vietnam.

After returning home, he completed his pediatrics residency and spent 21 years specializing in neonatal intensive care. Reflecting on his service, Canfield said he would serve again with thoughtful deliberation.

HAROLD CARLSON

U.S. Marines, 1963-66, Vietnam

Harold Carlson and his lifelong friend and fellow Marine Alan Lacy have shared similar paths since they were five years old and classmates in Westport.

At 17, Carlson left high school, traveled to Plattsburgh and enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps.

After Parris Island, South Carolina, and advanced infantry training at Camp Geiger, North Carolina, he was assigned to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. His early service included three months aboard the USS Chilton in the Caribbean, followed by a six-month Mediterranean deployment.

Carlson was later sent to Vietnam where he spent 13 months with the 3rd Marine Division beginning on Mountain 225. He often says he was fortunate to be reassigned to the heavy 81 mortar unit at headquarters after other mortar Marines were moved into frontline combat units carrying lighter weapons. The reassignment kept him off the front lines.

From Da Nang, Vietnam, Carlson traveled to Okinawa, Japan, and eventually home for his discharge.

Along the way, he earned his GED, and later, Westport Central School awarded him his high school diploma — an achievement he remains deeply proud of.

JAMES DAVIS

U.S. Army, 1964-66, Vietnam

James Davis was drafted into the U.S. Army. His uncles served in

WWII in the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy.

Davis was a radio relay carrier operator responsible for setting up, operating and maintaining multichannel tactical communications. He set up 196 channels of teletype to distribute messages.

Davis' first assignment was in Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, and from there, he went to Virginia and then overseas.

When he had 100 days left, he was one of 2,500 soldiers shipped to Vietnam by a boat that was 350 feet long, stacked four high like a pack of sardines. Davis spent 70 days in Vietnam.

Before he left Vietnam, his replacement was killed in country in an accidental shooting.

Davis would serve his country again and still has his Vietnam service medal and good conduct medal. He said he "just didn't get caught".

ELMER DURANT

U.S. Coast Guard, 1965-71, Vietnam

Elmer Durant initially tried to join the Marines, but with no recruiter available, he enlisted in the Coast Guard through the buddy system, following his father's service in the Coast Guard during World War II.

He served as a seaman maintaining Aids to Navigation systems, performing damage control and firefighting, small boat operations, and attended ammunition and weapons school at Parris Island, South Carolina.

He was assigned to USCGC Woodrush, a storied 180-foot seagoing Iris-class buoy tender in the U.S. Coast Guard known for icebreaking and search and rescue missions.

Elmer's brother Gary was drafted into U.S. Army while Elmer served in Vietnam. Elmer refused to sign paperwork allowing Garry to deploy there, and he was instead sent to Korea.

Elmer received two Bronze Stars and Coast Guard Commendation Medal for saving lives during fire caused when a soybean barge and jet fuel barge collided.

He becomes emotional reflecting that the most meaningful outcome of his service is that he and his brother both survived and made it home together and alive safely.

GARY DURANT

U.S. Army, 1967-69, Vietnam

Gary Durant was one of seven men from Malone drafted into the U.S. Army.

At Fort Dix, New Jersey, he qualified as a sharpshooter and expert, then graduated first in his class at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, earning Soldier of the Month. His commander urged him to attend drill sergeant school, but Gary declined. Doing so meant a six-year commitment and immediate deployment to Vietnam.

Instead, he served in South Korea with artillery, supervising 35 Korean workers and one U.S. specialist. During that period, hundreds of barrels of Agent Orange and other herbicides were transported there — exposures that would trigger health issues for Gary decades later.

Nearly 50 years after his service — about five years ago — he was stunned to receive the Combat Infantry Badge in the mail, along with a letter acknowledging his contributions.

After discharge, Gary headed straight to Memphis to reunite with his brother, Elmer, who had just two days left in service.

The Durant brothers, born one year and 22 days apart, now share another honor: flying together on Honor Flight 70. It's a tribute to their service, their brotherhood and the long arc of recognition that finally reached them.

ALLEN LACY

U.S. Marines, 1963-66, Vietnam

Allen Lacy's lifelong friend Harold Carlson convinced him to travel to Plattsburgh to enlist in the Marines. Lacy had planned to stay in school and had no interest in military service, but before the trip ended, both young men enlisted.

They soon headed to Parris Island, South Carolina, and Fort Geiger, North Carolina, for infantry training, and Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Lacy also served aboard the USS Chilson during a Mediterranean deployment.

Later, he spent six months at Guantanamo Bay providing base security, walking fence lines, standing tower watch and monitoring Cuban activity. While there, he learned of President Kennedy's assassination from a Cuban soldier whispering through the fence.

Scheduled for Vietnam after returning to Camp Lejeune, Lacy instead remained stateside after a hernia required treatment. He finished his service at the Brooklyn Naval Shipyard brig.

Like Carlson, he earned his GED in the Marines and later received his diploma from Westport Central School.

Lacy said he was glad he served. He learned a lot about life.

ROBERT LECLERC

U.S. Army, 1962-67, Vietnam

At the age of 23, Robert Leclerc was married and working at General Motors in Massena when he was drafted.

He trained as a medic and went to Munich, Germany, for 18 months to provide field medical care, administering vaccinations, prescribing medications, removing stitches and other medical needs. He also got to drive an ambulance a lot and deliver blood.

While in Munich, his wife was there for 15 months, and his daughter was also born there. He didn't have a rank so had to pay for everything. He and his family lived in the home at a German Colony right outside of Germany.

Leclerc said he was upset at first due to being drafted, but after a while, it didn't bother him.

He got his job back at General Motors and said it was a good experience. He got to travel and see a lot, and the German people were nice.

RICHARD ONUFER

U.S. Army, 1970-71, Vietnam

After college, Richard Onufer enlisted in the Army and completed basic training at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, followed by mortar training at Fort Polk, Louisiana, preparing for deployment to Vietnam.

Once overseas, however, mortar specialists were no longer needed, and he was reassigned as a radio operator.

Onufer first served with his company commander before moving to battalion headquarters near the demilitarized zone, where he spent much of his time on patrol under constant pressure from the Viet Cong. Though often close to danger, his role kept him somewhat removed from direct combat.

During his service, he was named Soldier of the Month, an achievement he still values today. Despite the intensity, he recalled a brief week of rest and recuperation in Hong Kong as a welcome break, even though he missed a Bob Hope Show.

After a year in Vietnam, Onufer returned to Fort Hood, Texas, and was discharged shortly after.

He considers himself fortunate to have avoided front-line fighting, though the constant threat of booby traps and hidden explosives was never far from mind. Looking back, he said it rained a lot in Vietnam and was cold enough to see your breath.

He reflected simply, "I'm glad I had the chance to serve. I learned a lot."

PAUL PERRY

U.S. Army, 1968-79, Vietnam

Since Paul Perry was between 10 and 11 years old, he wanted to go in the service. His father was a retired Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army.

Perry enlisted in the Army and went to Vietnam. While there, he received a draft notice to an APO box.

Perry was in the Army Security Agency, spying on the spies. He would listen to their communication, and if not appropriate, he would get the proper chain of command.

Uncle Sam wanted Perry to go to Asmara, Ethiopia, but he said no and took an early out. He re-enlisted for Ranger School and went back to Vietnam where he changed to Airborne School. He ended up becoming a vessel master, the person in charge of ships, for the U.S. Army.

Perry had the most fun in Vietnam. One time, while going into the Cua Vuet River where two ships were taking too much fire, he and his crew and vessel went in and got the Marines off the beach. They weren't going to leave anyone behind.

Perry remembers quite vividly that he spent two years, eight months and 24 days in country in Vietnam.

ROBERT WOODARD

U.S. Navy, 1960-64, Vietnam

Robert Woodard's Navy career began at Great Lakes, Illinois, followed by Guided Missile Maintenance training at Dam Neck, Virginia. He then traveled to Philadelphia to join his newly commissioned ship, the USS Berkley (DDG-15), before reporting to Newport, Rhode Island.

As a new destroyer, the Berkley embarked on a public relations tour through Puerto Rico, the Panama Canal, Mexico and California, later demonstrating its capabilities for President Kennedy off Portland, Oregon. The voyage continued to Hawaii and Thailand before becoming active duty near the Gulf of Tonkin during the Vietnam conflict.

Woodard recalls the journey lasting nearly a year — an unforgettable adventure for an 18-year-old seeing the world for the first time.

The tour later took him to Subic Bay, the Philippines and Hong Kong before he flew home from Okinawa, Japan.

Discharged in San Francisco, Woodard returned to Vermont.

He said he would do it all again. Aside from the years spent with his wife, these were the best years of his life.

FLIGHT 71

JOHN BINGHAM

U.S. Navy, 1961-69, Vietnam

John Bingham felt a duty to serve, following the example of two uncles — one an admiral and the other a physician — who served in Korea.

Originally hoping to become a submariner, he was unable to pass the pressure test required for submarine training. Instead, he attended Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island, later spending a year in graduate studies focused on defense intelligence and Arabic in preparation for a diplomatic assignment.

For two years, Bingham served aboard an ocean-going minesweeper, a non-magnetic warship designed to locate and destroy naval mines in deep waters. He described it as "a wooden ship with iron men," where every piece of iron had to be carefully tracked.

His final assignment in 1968 involved intelligence operations in the Mediterranean, monitoring Soviet naval activity. He also carried the disappointment of being

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unable to reach the USS Pueblo before its capture.

Awarded the Naval Commendation Medal, Bingham reflected that warfare is awful and demands immense sacrifice.

Asked if he would serve again, his answer was a simple, "Yes, but I'd do it better."

BERNARD GWINN

U.S. Navy, 1971-77, Vietnam

Bernard Gwinn's father was in the U.S. Navy, and he had one uncle was in the U.S. Marines and two uncles in the U.S. Army.

In April of 1971, Gwinn was in the early enlistment program. For the first two year of his marriage, he was gone 15 out of 24 months.

Gwinn was a hull technician, or ship fitter, and damage control man, being responsible for the watertight integrity of the ship.

In 1972, he was assigned to the USS Edward McDonnell and was one of five hull technicians on the ship. He was on the ship for three years and was only sick once, as he knew what not to eat.

Gwinn wanted to retire from the military so after two years of inactive service with the Navy, he joined the Army. In Fort Drum, he was a heavy vehicle operator, drove a deuce and a half, and got supplies and rations for the field.

One of his best memories was when he crossed the artic ocean and got his "blue nose." During that U.S. Navy artic cruise, he got to go on a Dutch ship and eat their food and drink their beer.

BRUCE HALE

U.S. Army, 1966-68, Vietnam

Bruce Hale's military service began with Reserve Officers' Training Corps at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, followed by basic training at Fort Benning, Georgia.

After a two-year deferment for graduate school, his first assignment was at the Pentagon where he briefed the U.S.A. Staff Communications team each morning on secure communication channels cleared for military messaging.

He was then deployed to Saigon and Vung Tau in Vietnam, commanding a signal unit roughly the size of a platoon that transmitted radio-frequency messages worldwide. Soon after, he was tasked with establishing a similar unit in Can Tho, Vietnam.

Given neither personnel nor equipment, he rebuilt the unit from scratch, relying heavily on a resourceful First Sergeant and WWII veteran.

During the first Tet Offensive, Viet Cong forces repeatedly attacked his position. While leading his men on the front line, Hale was wounded in the neck by shrapnel. Surgeons later removed the fragment, and he was awarded the Purple Heart.

Discharged shortly afterward, he reflected simply, "I was a soldier, and that was my job."

DANIEL JACKSON

U.S. Air Force, 1968-71, Vietnam

Daniel Jackson was 17 when he signed up and left home at 18. One half brother was in the U.S. Marines and the other was in the U.S. Navy.

Jackson was a power production specialist, otherwise known as a civil engineer, for the first year and a half. They offered to let him stay at Travis Air Force Base, California, but he didn't want to. So he went to Takhli Royal Thai AFB in Southeast Asia as part of the Tet offensive and witnessed the replacement of the FB 111 bombers to the B 52's. This was supposed to be top secret but ended up being in the local newspaper and had a parade and float showcasing it.

Jackson found out he had no orders to come back from Thailand and had to stay 20 days until they were received. It was a long 20 days of waiting.

BRUCE JARVIS

U.S. Army, 1971-73, Vietnam

Bruce Jarvis received his draft notice while attending Clinton Community College. With lottery number two, he knew his call to service was coming.

During basic training, the "kid from Keeseville" earned a squad leader position, overseeing 15 soldiers.

After training as a Chaparral Crewman on an early air defense missile system, Jarvis was assigned to the 2nd Infantry Division in South Korea. His typing skills led to a reassignment as a clerk, where he spent his 14-month tour supporting Army operations.

He later worked in the general's office, assisting with pre-inspector general audits.

Jarvis traveled throughout Korea, enjoyed Seoul and the countryside, and participated in field exercises near the demilitarized zone where North Korean propaganda was often discovered after nighttime drops.

One memorable event occurred on Easter Sunday 1972, when he underwent an emergency appendectomy at a mobile Army surgical hospital unit in Korea with his doctor looking exactly like Dr. Winchester from the TV series.

Returning home, Jarvis completed his service with the U.S. Army Reserve Medical Unit in Plattsburgh no longer "just a kid from Keeseville," but a proud soldier.

KENNETH LAFAVE

U.S. Navy, 1960-64, Vietnam

Kenneth LaFave graduated high school at 16 and wanted to become a state trooper. Since he was too young, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy with a friend from Churubusco. They went their separate ways after joining and didn't see each other again until both had completed their service.

LaFave first attended signalman school where sailors communicated with flashing light signals. He could send the signals but struggled to read them, so he failed the test. He returned to the fleet and became a gunner's mate.

Assigned to the USS Hammerberg, LaFave was part of the ship's "kiddie cruise" group because of his age. The ship made three trips to South America each year.

When his discharge date arrived, he was still five days from port, so the Navy paid him for those extra days.

LaFave said he had the best of both worlds: He served his country and played basketball nearly everywhere the ship traveled.

At a reunion five years ago, he reconnected with a former teammate from the ship's basketball team.

WALTER LAFAVE

U.S. Army, 1975-78, Vietnam

Walter Lafave entered the Delayed Entry Program and became the first member of his family to serve in the military. Arriving at boot camp at Fort Dix, New Jersey, he was greeted by a four-foot corporal shouting at him and immediately wondered if enlisting had been the wildest thing he'd ever done.

He spent about six months at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, working in the motor pool as a parts clerk before qualifying for parachute training.

Determined to earn his wings, he attended jump school, a demanding 21-day course held Sunday to Sunday. Of the 400 soldiers who started, only 75 completed it.

While stationed at Fort Bragg, Lafave watched massive airborne demonstrations involving 800 parachutists and 23 crisscrossing aircraft. During one jump, a friend missed the drop zone and landed in a tree. Lafave eventually found him, and they rejoined the group.

He called the Army a tremendous learning experience and said he would gladly do it again.

SAMUEL MAROTTA

U.S. Air Force, 1974-94, Cold War and Vietnam

Without his parents knowing, Samuel Marotta went to the U.S. Navy recruiter, but they didn't have the job he wanted. So he went to the U.S. Air Force recruiter, and they guaranteed his job as a firefighter.

In 1975, he got married and was sent to Hawaii for three years, kind of a three year honeymoon. There were many bad fire calls and a major fuel spill.

After Hawaii, he was sent to Texas where there was an explosion in the fire station, losing two firefighters.

Fifteen months later, he was sent to a remote assignment in Alaska. Marotta was on the rescue crew where there was an aircraft crash with 24 people on board. They lost six that day.

Marotta was sent back to Plattsburgh, off to California and then Alaska again. He eventually came back to Plattsburgh Air Force Base and retired there. He had numerous temporary duty assignments, including one to Greece, which was his favorite.

He enjoyed the travel and the friendships he made while in the Air Force.

Marotta was accompanied Saturday by his best friend, Kevin Leblanc, also a U.S. Air Force veteran.

JAMES MAZZOTTE

U.S. Navy, 1964-67, Vietnam

Janes Mazzotte attended electronics school during basic training at Great Lakes Naval Station, Illinois, before serving three years on active duty in the U.S. Navy, three years in the Navy Reserve and 10 years in the Army Reserve.

Assigned to USS Richard E. Byrd, "Bird Dog," he helped screen carriers, including the USS America, Saratoga and Independence during North Atlantic and Mediterranean patrols.

In June 1967, Soviet submarines and torpedo boats shadowed the fleet as Bird Dog maneuvered to protect the carriers.

Then came word that USS Liberty had been attacked. Believed at first to be a Soviet strike, the attack left 34 dead and 171 wounded. Bird Dog reached Liberty the next day. Sailors and corpsmen treated the injured, recovered the fallen and helped escort the damaged ship to Malta.

A month later, Mazzotte's enlistment ended. He left the only way he could: lifted by helicopter into the sky, then flown off the carrier the next morning.

Just like that, his war was over.

RICHARD PEPIN

U.S. Navy, 1952-56, Korea

Richard Pepin wanted to join the Navy at 16, but they made him wait until he turned 17 in 1952.

Pepin's adventures started on the destroyer USS Conway, traveling to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, St. Thomas and Puerto Rico. Later, they would travel to Greenland, Iceland, then through the Straight of Gibraltar into the Mediterranean.

The USS Conway brought him to Sicily, Sardinia, Pisa, Naples and his favorite, Cannes, France, where he saw Marilyn Monroe.

After hitting an iceberg in Greenland on their way home, they headed to the dry dock at the Brooklyn Naval Yard. Pepin ended up in New Bedford, Massachusetts, where he would acquire a fake ID, since he was only 20.

Pepin laughs about getting caught. He lost two stripes, was busted from Seaman 3rd class to seaman and was also thrown in the brig.

Pepin says he would do it all over again; he wants his two stripes back!

RICHARD PEREZ

U.S. Army Airborne, 1963-65, Vietnam

Richard Perez's cousin told him that by enlisting, he could serve two years instead of four. Three months before his 19th birthday, he entered military processing.

Trained in light infantry, Perez learned to operate 82mm mortars, M-14 rifles and jeep-mounted 106mm recoilless rifles.

After completing jump school, he received his assignment. Vietnam was not an option at the time, so he was sent to the Panama Canal Zone, a region known for its rugged mountains, dense jungle and diverse population.

Stationed primarily at Fort Kobbe beside Howard Air Force Base, he completed numerous parachute jumps and field exercises.

Perez vividly recalls night guard duty, listening to screeching rhesus monkeys and spotting anteaters nearby. Training often involved five-day treks from the Pacific to the Atlantic, with soldiers hiking deep into the jungle and constructing small bamboo shelters.

Looking back, Perez considers his two years of service a rewarding adventure. He remains especially grateful for the GI Bill, which helped him attend college, and for discovering a lifelong passion for skydiving.

MICHAEL REIL

U.S. Army, 1968-73, Vietnam

Michael Reil's father served in the Army during the Korean War, inspiring Reil to enlist shortly after high school, following a friend who had joined before him.

When he arrived at Fort Dix, New Jersey, for basic training, he remembered seeing a sign and thinking, "What the hell did you just do?"

He attended military police school and was stationed in Germany guarding a missile battery. During his service, he re-enlisted and attended computer repair school at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, where he also got married.

Reil spent his final two years in Germany at a communication switching station, relaying messages between countries while holding Top Secret clearance.

After his discharge, he was told, "Don't wear your uniform home."

Reil values the friendships, structure and life lessons he gained through military service, perhaps one reason he and his wife have now been married for 55 years.

RANEY ROCK

U.S. Army, 1976-79, Cold War

Raney Rock comes from a family of veterans; all his brothers served in different branches, and his uncle was a U.S. Marine frogman.

His first assignment was at Fort Ord, California, attached to 7th Infantry Division Military Police, where he patrolled grounds. His first call was a crib death, a memory that stayed with him.

In 1978, he joined Operation Brave Shield with the Marines at 29 Palms, taking part in black fire exercises and witnessing roadrunners running over 26 mph as his sergeant attempted to shoot them.

At Fort Lee, watching aircraft and fishing for flounder, he was stung by a jellyfish, requiring IV treatment after the "urine remedy" briefly helped.

Between 1977–78, he lived with his Vietnam-veteran brother Bob, who was at Saturday's fight as Raney's guardian. Bob didn't recall it due to severe trauma.

Raney loved the service and isn't sure why he left.

ROBERT ROCK

U.S. Army, 1971-79, Vietnam

Robert Rock graduated from Beekmantown Central School in June 1971 and entered the U.S. Army the following month.

After completing training, he was deployed to Vietnam in November 1971 at age 19, serving as an infantryman, "grunt," with General Custer's famed 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Air Mobile Division.

While serving in Vietnam, he earned numerous honors, including the Bronze Star, Army Commendation Medal for Valor, Air Medal and Combat Infantry Badge.

Throughout his military career, Rock served in finance, military police and public affairs assignments. He completed eight years of active duty, traveling extensively throughout the Pacific region and Europe.

He later joined the Army Reserve and retired with 22 years of service.

Rock lived in Hawaii for 38 years, where he met his wife. The military paid for two college degrees, helped purchase homes, and most important, he would not be sitting here at Saturday's ceremony if it wasn't for his military service.

ALLEN RULE

U.S. Navy, 1968-70, Vietnam

Three of Allen Rule's brothers joined the Marines, but Rule "had to be different," enlisting in the Navy through the Buddy Program. He quickly learned that once you signed up, "you belonged to them."

Rule spent his entire two-year enlistment in Key West, Florida. His captain, a laid-back redhead with a matching beard, allowed sailors to grow their hair to shoulder length — if they first grew facial hair.

At one point, the captain joked that he wasn't getting out unless he went AWOL.

Rule worked with explosives and weapons aboard a 46-foot sounding boat and occasionally enjoyed fishing trips with his buddies.

Their orders were simple: Any food and booze had to be gone before Monday. He later revealed that only the admiral and captain knew they were also making booze runs for other officers.

Rule enjoyed the Navy. He made lifelong friends and brought home a discarded piece of mortar from Vietnam as a war souvenir.

FLIGHT 72

DENNIS BARDELCIK

US Air Force, 1969–1976, Vietnam Era

Bardelcik began his United States Air Force service at the age of 19. Inspired by his older brother, Bardelcik chose the Air Force and trained as a navigation and bombing trainer specialist, working with advanced flight simulator technology.

During his military career, Bardelcik worked with F-4 Phantom flight simulators and later served at RAF Upper Heyford in England. His work with classified simulator technology played an important role in preparing aircrews for combat missions.

After leaving active duty, Dennis continued his career in flight simulation with Singer Link, eventually relocating to the Plattsburgh area. He worked on F-111 simulators at the former Plattsburgh Air Force Base and witnessed remarkable advances in aviation technology throughout his career.

JOHN BUTTOLPH III

US Army, 1964–1967, Cold War

Buttolph served in the United States Army from 1964 to 1967 during the Vietnam War era and the height of the Cold War. After completing two years of Army ROTC at Hillyer College, Buttolph chose to enlist rather than wait to be drafted.

Following basic training, John received specialized training in military intelligence at Fort Holabird. He was then assigned to the 513th Military Intelligence Group, Berlin Station, where he spent approximately two and a half years serving in West Berlin.

The 513th conducted Cold War intelligence operations, including espionage, counterintelligence, and signal and human intelligence collection and technical support throughout Europe.

Stationed near the famous Checkpoint Charlie, Buttolph experienced life in a city divided between East and West during one of the tensest periods of the Cold War. He remembers his time in Berlin as exciting, unique, and unlike anything else he could have experienced.

MICHAEL MCCOLE

US Coast Guard, 1965-2000, Vietnam Era

McCole enlisted in the United States Coast Guard in June 1965, just days after graduating from high school at the age of 17. After basic training at Cape May, New Jersey, he served aboard the USCGC Cuyahoga, eventually becoming a Gunner's Mate.

McCole deployed to Vietnam in support of Operation Market Time, helping prevent the movement of enemy supplies along the Vietnamese coastline. As a Gunner's Mate Second Class, he served in the ship's five-inch gun mount during combat operations.

After active duty, McCole returned to civilian life before reenlisting in the Coast Guard Reserve. He continued serving for another 28 years, ultimately retiring as a Master Chief Gunner's Mate with more than 33 years of total service.

Throughout his reserve career, Michael also became a certified small arms and marksmanship instructor, spending nearly two decades training Coast Guard personnel in firearms safety and qualification.

PAUL GAINER

US Army, 1966–1972, Vietnam

Gainer was drafted into the United States Army in January 1966 at the age of 19. After basic training at Fort Dix, New Jersey, he trained in the Signal Corps as a pole lineman before preparing for deployment to Vietnam.

Once deployed, Gainer spent 21 days traveling by ship from California to Vietnam, crossing the International Date Line along the way. Once there, he was assigned to the Bearcat area, where he worked in communications, repairing radios, climbing poles, and performing guard duty.

Later, Gainer transferred to an ammunition depot near Pleiku, where he drove a two-and-a-half-ton "deuce and a half" truck transporting ammunition and ordnance.

After about a year in Vietnam, Gainer returned home aboard a C-130. Coming home was difficult, as he witnessed firsthand the poor treatment many Vietnam veterans received. Despite those challenges, Gainer proudly served his country and carried the experiences of his service with him throughout his life.

RICHARD HARWOOD

US Marine Corps, 1975–1995, Vietnam Era/Cold War

Harwood began his United States Marine Corps journey at just 17 years old, enlisting with his mother's hesitant permission. He entered Marine Corps recruit training, where he excelled as a rifleman and was meritoriously promoted as the highest shooter in his platoon.

Harwood went on to train as a combat engineer and heavy equipment operator before serving at Camp Pendleton and later in Okinawa, Japan. During his time overseas, he supported Marines throughout Asia, traveling to the Philippines, Korea, and Taiwan while delivering critical parts and supplies to field units.

Harwood later began a long and successful career in Marine Corps recruiting, serving in Oswego, Syracuse, Albany, and eventually Plattsburgh. While in Plattsburgh, he rebuilt the recruiting station

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into one of the top-performing stations in the district, earning Station of the Year.

Harwood retired from the Marine Corps in 1995 as a Gunnery Sergeant after 20 years of dedicated service.

DENNIS HATCH

US Navy, 1976–1982, Cold War

Hatch proudly served during the Cold War era aboard the USS Piedmont. Hatch originally hoped to become an electrician in the Navy. During his testing, he was given what he was told were six numbers and asked to identify them. Unable to see the numbers, he thought the tester was joking with him. He soon learned that he was color blind, which prevented him from pursuing electrical work. Instead, he was assigned as a Navy patternmaker.

Aboard the USS Piedmont, Hatch worked in the ship's foundry, creating detailed patterns from wood and plastic that were used to cast replacement metal parts. His work required precision and craftsmanship and helped keep the ship's equipment and systems operating.

One of Hatch's favorite memories came while carving a chess piece. An officer noticed his work and reminded him he was using Navy materials. Later, the chief in charge discovered the piece and, rather than disciplining Dennis, quietly asked him to make two chess sets—one for the chief and one for Hatch. Hatch still has his chess set today, a lasting reminder of his service.

RON LEBLANC

US Army, 1970–2005, Vietnam Era/Cold War/Global War on Terror Era

LeBlanc began his military career at age 22 when he joined the U.S. Army Reserves. What he expected to be a short commitment became a 35-year career in the Army Reserve and National Guard.

LeBlanc joined during the Vietnam War era, knowing he could potentially be drafted. Encouraged by his father, who had served in the Plattsburgh Army Reserve, LeBlanc chose to serve voluntarily.

Throughout his career, LeBlanc served with units in New York, Vermont, and Massachusetts, beginning as a clerk typist before moving into computer operations, network security, and computer warfare training.

One of the highlights of LeBlanc's career was teaching at Norwich University, where he trained soldiers from around the world, including many from South America, in emerging military technologies. He valued the opportunity to work with people from different backgrounds and cultures while preparing the next generation of military professionals.

LAURENT L'ESPERANCE

US Navy/Vermont Army National Guard, 1964–2002, Vietnam

L'Esperance comes from a long family tradition of military service and went on to dedicate more than three decades of his own life to serving his country.

L'Esperance enlisted in the U.S. Navy at about 20 years old, with the goal of pursuing medical training. After becoming a Navy corpsman, he was assigned to the Marine Corps at Camp Lejeune before deploying to Vietnam.

During his year in Vietnam, L'Esperance served as a combat corpsman with the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, providing medical care to Marines on the ground in areas including Chu Lai and Phu Bai. He witnessed the devastating realities of combat and cared for wounded service members during some of the most difficult moments of the war, including the Tet Offensive. For his actions and service, L'Esperance was awarded the Bronze Star.

After leaving active duty in 1968, L'Esperance continued serving in the Vermont Army National Guard for another 32 years, eventually rising to the rank of First Sergeant with a medical company.

L'Esperance travelled on the flight with his son-in-law Paul, a US Air Force Veteran who served in Iraq.

EDWARD LYNCH

US Navy, 1969–1970, Vietnam Era

Lynch was 18 years old when he enlisted in the United States Navy, following a strong family tradition of military service. His grandfather served in the Army during World War II, while his father was a Marine who served in the South Pacific. Growing up on Lake Champlain, Lynch also had a natural love of the water, making the Navy a fitting choice.

Lynch attended gunnery training at Great Lakes, Illinois, His training focused on naval weapons, including the operation, maintenance, and servicing of machine guns and shipboard guns. He then served at Naval Station Great Lakes. His assignments included working at the base marina, where he helped maintain boats used for training and operations.

Lynch served during the turbulent Vietnam era. Following the unrest and anti-war demonstrations surrounding the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, he remembers the base being secured with razor wire and machine-gun positions. He witnessed demonstrations and the hostility sometimes directed toward servicemen.

WILLIAM CLARK MASON

US Air Force, 1961-1965, Vietnam

Clark Mason was 17, right out of high school and unable to afford college, signed up for the US Air Force before he would be drafted. He wanted to find a way to work, and the US Air Force gave him that opportunity.

When he was at boot camp at Lackland Air Force Base, his superior said he looked like a good person and assigned him as a road guard.

Clark Mason did electronics training for 22 weeks at Keesler Air Force Base. He was working on a specific type of electronics machinery with the Ground Electronics Engineering Installation Agency that was on all the planes. It other words, it was the radar that directed the planes.

He traveled around to various areas to help those having difficulty with radar equipment and to protect the northern borders. While on one trip here to the North Country in 1964, he met his wife, Linda. That same year he and three other personnel received a letter of commendation recognizing their outstanding performance installing C&E equipment at a facility at the US Naval Air Station in Key West, Florida.

Clark Mason says without his service he never would've grown up. He and his wife, Linda, celebrated their 61st anniversary Friday and Clark Mason credits Linda for helping him come out of his shell and to be a better person.

WILLIAM POUPORE

US Army, 1967–1969, Vietnam

Poupore was drafted into the United States Army at the age of 19. A lifelong resident of Churubusco, New York, Poupore grew up on his family's dairy farm before answering the call to serve his country.

After completing his training, Poupore was deployed to Vietnam with the 4th Infantry Division. He spent a year serving in the Central Highlands near Pleiku, close to the Cambodian border. As an infantryman, he spent nearly ten and a half months in the field, facing intense rain, thick jungle, steep mountains, and difficult terrain.

During his final six months in Vietnam, Poupore volunteered for reconnaissance duty with Echo Company, serving as a scout in small teams moving through the jungle ahead of larger units.

After returning home, Poupore continued his military service with the U.S. Army Reserve in Plattsburgh, eventually reaching the rank of Sergeant.

STEPHEN RIVERS

US Navy, 1966–1972, Vietnam

Rivers joined the United States Navy Reserve while still in high school. At just 18 years old, he completed boot camp in Rhode Island and earned the rank of E-3 before reporting for active duty.

Rivers served aboard the USS Inflict, a wooden ocean minesweeper operating in the Western Pacific during the Vietnam War. After crossing the Pacific on the small ship through rough seas, he volunteered to become a Radarman. Through on-the-job training, he worked in the Combat Information Center, monitoring radar during minesweeping missions off the coast of Vietnam.

Rivers quickly earned the rank of Petty Officer Third Class. His commanding officer even wrote to his parents, noting that Rivers was believed to be one of the youngest petty officers serving in the Western Pacific at the time.

When Rivers returned home via California, he remembers being met by anti-war protesters rather than the appreciation veterans deserved.

After completing his active-duty service, Rivers fulfilled the re-





mainder of his six-year commitment in the Naval Reserve, where he briefly taught radar training.

DAVID SWARTS

US Army, 1965-1967, Vietnam

Swarts was drafted into the United States Army and began his military training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, followed by Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Swarts' ability to type quickly became an unexpected asset during his service, leading him to administrative duties. He was responsible for morning reports, personnel records, promotions, transfers, and official correspondence. His attention to detail and dedication earned him an impressive four promotions in just two years.

Swarts spent approximately 19-and-a-half months serving in Germany, where his behind-the-scenes work helped keep his unit running smoothly. He took great pride in knowing that his efforts supported his fellow soldiers and helped ensure important personnel matters were handled correctly.

Military service was a family tradition for Swarts. Five of his six brothers also served, including one brother who made the ultimate sacrifice, losing his life during World War II before Swarts was born. Swarts was accompanied on the flight by his daughter, Autumn, a US Navy veteran.

ANTHONY TROMBLEY

US Navy, 1963–1971, Vietnam Era

Trombley served eight years in the United States Navy during the Vietnam era, spending most of his career aboard a nuclear-powered submarine.

After boot camp at Great Lakes, Trombley volunteered for the Navy's nuclear power program. He completed specialized training in Machinist's Mate operations, nuclear power, prototype systems, and submarine school in Groton, Connecticut.

Trombley was assigned to the USS Paddle, where he served as a machinist responsible for the mechanical systems supporting the submarine's nuclear reactor plant, including turbines and pumps. He also completed specialized emergency welding training, preparing him to make critical repairs while at sea.

During his service, Trombley spent extended periods underwater, including an 84-day patrol. His work required tremendous technical skill, discipline, and responsibility while serving aboard a submarine with a crew of approximately 100 sailors.

KARL "KIT" TWETAN JR.

US Navy, 1969-1974, Cold War

After graduating from Canton College with an engineering degree, Twetan enlisted in the Navy and trained as an electrician.

Twetan spent his first two years serving aboard tugboats in Norfolk, Virginia, supporting ships throughout the harbor. He remembers the tugboats as some of the best duty he could have asked for. The small fleet handled just about everything in the harbor.

He later served aboard the USS El Paso, an amphibious troop transport carrying Marines throughout the Caribbean. As an electrician, Twetan was responsible for the ship's cranes and landing craft, making sure the equipment was ready whenever Marines needed to go ashore. They visited islands throughout the Caribbean, Panama, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

One of the most remarkable moments of his service came when he spotted a World War II destroyer being towed through the harbor. The ship's name looked familiar, and he realized it was the very ship his father had served aboard during World War II. A remarkable connection between two generations of Navy service.

Looking back, Twetan considers his Navy years a rewarding experience filled with good friends, great memories, and a deep sense of pride in having served his country.

FLIGHT 73

SEVIT MURAT ALDAS

US Army, 1970-1971, Vietnam

Aldas was #13 in the draft, and he said this is all he won. He joined the Army as an 11 Bravo Infantryman. He attended boot camp and AIT at Fort Jackson South Carolina.

Aldas was assigned to the 101st Airborne Charlie Company 2nd Battalion 506th Infantry, sent to Vietnam by way of Fort Ord California. He arrived in Phu Bai within the City of Hue. This was in Central Vietnam approximately 30 clicks outside the DMZ. He was involved in the Battle of Ripcord from July 1 to July 23, 1970, in the A Shau Valley.

One notable story he shared was about receiving intel regarding the VC utilizing underground tunnels and that they may be held up in these tunnels. One day smoke was observed coming from the ground, so several soldiers hit the area with grenades, only to later find out that it was in fact a hot spring. The soldiers laughingly referred to it as the "Battle of Hot Spring." They did enjoy a bath and a shave in it.

Among his accolades, Aldas received the Bronze Star for his service. Aldas also served from 1978-1985 in the Reserves.

DONALD JOSEPH AUCLAIR

US Air Force, 1957-1961, Cold War

Auclair joined the US Air Force along with 13 classmates from Tupper Lake High School under the buddy system.

He attended basic training and AIT at Lackland Air Force Base to become an Admin Clerk. He was later assigned to Long Island Air Base as a part of Air Defense Command. He was later stationed at Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota. Auclair recalled it being a very cold place with temperatures of -40 degrees fahrenheit where soldiers received an extra $11 per month for their troubles. He joked that Minot received its name because of all the patches in the fence, Airmen would refer to them as, "Hey that's my knot."

Auclair was assigned to pack KC135s when he met a Lt. Colonel who took him on as his right-hand man. He indicated it became easy work and everyone bowed to him because of his connection. Auclair said at 17 years old, he grew up pretty fast at Lackland Air Force Base.

RAYMOND BIGROW

US Army, 1972-1973, Vietnam

Bigrow joined the United States Army on a promise by his recruiter that he could run track on the Army team, though he later learned that was not the case.

He attended basic training at Fort Dix as well as AIT. Bigrow was assigned to Fort Campbell Kentucky as a Personnel Specialist. Though the Army did not provide the opportunity Bigrow initially entered for, he explained that he is a very proud Veteran.

Bigrow is actively involved in the American Legion and is commander of the Honor Guard and has also participated in over 250 funerals for Veterans as a member of the Honor Guard.

PATRICK GEORGE BLINN

US Army, 1969-1972, Vietnam

Blinn joined the US Army and attended basic training at Fort Dix. He later attended AIT at Fort Belvoir Virginia to be a diesel mechanic.

Blinn was sent to Quang Tri in Vietnam, a historic town which served as the frontline near the DMZ. Blinn later spent time in Hanover Germany, mostly ordering parts.

Blinn recalled one story where he had to hitchhike from his base to the next base to fly home and he got picked up by an ammo truck. A child ran and jumped on the side of the truck and another soldier kicked the door open sending the child down an embankment into the river.

After three years of service in the US Army, Blinn returned home carrying with him the experiences and memories of his time serving in Vietnam and Germany. His service was an important chapter in his life and a lasting part of his story as a US Army veteran.

WILLIAM ROBERT BURNS JR.

US Navy, 1967-1997, Vietnam

Burns' 30-year U.S. Navy career began with four years at the U.S. Naval Academy, where he was a four-year varsity tennis player and co-captain, followed by an all expense paid "tour" of Vietnam aboard the gunboat USS Gallup.

After earning a Master of Public Administration from Harvard's Kennedy School, Burns returned to sea, serving in increasingly responsible operational, engineering, and command positions. The highlight of Burns' Navy career was commanding three ships, including the frigate USS Bagley, the ocean-going tug USS Ute, and, ultimately, the nuclear-powered cruiser USS Long Beach.

Two memorable deployments stand out: Commanding the USS Bagley during Operation El Dorado Canyon in the Mediterranean and again as commanding officer of Long Beach, participating in Operation Fiery Vigil, helping evacuate military families and their pets following the catastrophic eruption of Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines.

As important as these patrols were, the lasting memory Burns has of that deployment was the moment he knelt on a sandy beach in Nice, France and asked his wife, Catherine, to marry him. She said yes and they will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary this coming December.

In retirement, Burns worked on a study commissioned by Congress and devoted much of his time to volunteer work, church, family, and community service. He has enjoyed life with his wife, children, grandchildren, and their dogs, while reflecting on how richly God has blessed him.

GEORGE DESOTELLE JR.

US Navy, 1965-1969, Vietnam

Desotelle joined the Navy with little hope of attending college, as he came from a family with one working parent and seven siblings. With several relatives who had served in the Navy, Desotelle was familiar with military life and found the Navy appealing.

Desotelle attended boot camp in Great Lakes Illinois where he reported a very cold six weeks. He was then stationed on the USS Orion and sent to Naval Air Station Pensacola for additional schooling as a radio operator.

Desotelle spent time in Winter Harbor, Maine, in Acadia National Park doing Communications and then completed his career aboard the USS Georgetown. Desotelle reported sailing into the Indian Ocean before having to turn back stateside due to mechanical issues.

DENNIS RAYMOND DOYLE

US Navy, 1962-1964, Vietnam

Doyle joined the Navy for the opportunity to see the world. He entered Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island, but later left the program and continued training at Great Lakes, Illinois.

He was sent to Norfolk, Virginia, where he waited about a month for orders to the USS Enterprise. Doyle recalled a 26-hour flight from Norfolk to Port Lyautey, Africa, followed by another five- to six-hour flight to Rhodes, Greece, where he boarded the Enterprise.

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Assigned to the Executive Division, Doyle specialized in Journalism and Communications. He described the Enterprise as a "show ship," where celebrities such as John Wayne and Bing Crosby came aboard. He served aboard for 22 months.

Doyle recalled going to the Officers Club in plain clothes with others. An officer he had interviewed recognized him but did not discipline him, later telling Doyle he could have ended up in the brig.

After 30 years with SUNY and 13 years with PARC, it is fitting that this ceremony takes place outside his former office.

KENNETH PAUL ELLIS

US Army, 1969-1970 & 1991, Vietnam/Desert Storm

Ellis was drafted into the US Army and attended basic training at Fort Dix. He then was sent to Fort Sam Houston to become, as he called it, "a grunt medic."

Ellis was then sent to Korat, a base on the Cambodia/Thailand border which now serves as a base for the Royal Thai Air Force. At the time, this was a combat wing hub and Ellis was sent there for close air support. Ellis spent one month there, and this was designated a Hardship Tour Area. Ellis received a five-month early out and was discharged at Oakland Army Air Base.

Ellis later received an OCS Commission in 1991 after a Presidential Proclamation ordering him back to Active Duty during Desert Storm. Ellis reported being on standby the whole time and serving approximately two-and-a-half months.

When asked about any particularly humorous stories of his service, he simply replied, "Snakes & Monkeys."

JOHN ADRIAN GIROUARD

US Air Force, 1970-1974, Vietnam

Girouard joined the US Air Force with a friend on the buddy system after receiving a draft notice. Unfortunately, Girouard's friend would pass in a car accident before they entered.

Girouard attended basic training at Lackland Air Force Base and received additional training at Lowry Air Base in Colorado to be a Material Facilities Specialist. Girouard was then assigned to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware where he spent his time working in the warehouse.

Girouard shared that one of the most difficult aspects of his service was being stationed at Dover, Delaware, home of the official Dignified Transfer location for the U.S. Armed Forces. He recalled witnessing the solemn arrival of metal transfer cases containing the remains of fallen service members—a deeply painful experience that left a lasting impression on him and continues to affect him to this day.

ROBERT PAUL LEWIS

US Army, 1967-1969, Cold War

Lewis was drafted into the US Army right out of High School. He attended Basic Training at Fort Dix and then onto AIT at Fort Belvoir Virginia to train to become a Generator Operator and Mechanic.

Lewis was assigned to Weisbaden Air Base in Germany from January 1968 to June 1969.

Lewis recalled fondly the good friends he made during his service. He especially remembered the "southern boys." Lewis also recalled chasing rats with the M151 and, one time when he was using the outhouse, a huge rat the size of a housecat came under the door. The unexpected encounter left Lewis with a story he would never forget.

Lewis went on to use the skills he learned during his service as a diesel bus mechanic for 21 years. He is also proud of his service as the Chaplain for the Keene Valley Legion for 20 years.

JOHN WAYNE PATNODE

US Marines, 1969-1971, Vietnam

Patnode joined the Marine Corps on the buddy system with a close friend. He attended boot camp at Parris Island and ITR at Camp Lejeune. Patnode then attended pole climbing school at Camp Pendleton finally returning to Camp Lejeune for line training and running switchboard.

Patnode was sent to Vietnam in September 1970 outside Da Nang Hill until July 1971. Patnode served as a door gunner on a medivac chopper for one month. He also served with the 1st Battalion 5th Marines as an MP for a while.

Patnode recalled a time where guys were out lifting weights and decided to lift a Commander's Jeep between 2 stones. He said the Commander was good about it and gave them 20 minutes to get it put back.

Patnode credits the Marine Corps for teaching him discipline and unconditional respect for everyone.

JOHN POULIN

US Army, 1953-1961, Korea

Poulin volunteered to serve, and he said that they chose the Army for him. He completed his basic training at Fort Dix and then finished cook school at the same location.

Poulin was sent to Suwon, Korea, where he spent approximately one year there cooking for soldiers.

Poulin recalled one time finding a young Korean boy inside a trash can searching for food. He stated the boy had leprosy and it was hard seeing him like that. Poulin also reported enjoying his trip to Korea, especially the train ride to Suwon.

Poulin returned to Fort Dix where he assisted with construction of new housing. Poulin also served as the Colonel's orderly on weekends. One time a new 2nd Lieutenant once told Poulin he needed to early morning PT with the other soldiers, but the Colonel stepped in and fixed it for him.

BRIAN ROBERT STORK

US Marines, 1970-1974, Vietnam

Stork was drafted into the Army but decided he would go explore other opportunities at the recruitment office in Plattsburgh. He recalled hearing that the Air Force and Navy had delayed entry programs, but they were too far out. He remembers looking down the hallway and the Marine recruiter said, "Wanna go tomorrow?"

Stork attended boot camp at Parris Island and ITR at Camp Lejeune to be an Avionics Technician. Stork saw several different assignments throughout his career, including Memphis TN Naval Air Station, Cherry Point NC, Lwakuni Japan, and Subic Bay Naval Air Station in Luzon Philippines.

Stork recalled how the Philippines has Martial Law from 11 p.m. to 4 a.m. and he had to catch an early flight, so he ran through town to get back to base with getting caught by the Philippines Police. Stork also recounted a time in Lwakuni where he had a few beverages the night before and then had the best time he ever ran on his PFT the next day.

Stork reflected how in his entire time in the Marines, he never touched a plane. He thinks one time he leaned against an A4 while sweeping the hangar but spent most of his time working on equipment for planes and component repair.

Stork also served in the NY Army National Guard from 1982-1983 and then the Vermont Air National Guard from 1984-2001.

GARY EARL TAYLOR

US Navy, 1972-1976, Vietnam

Taylor researched every military branch before choosing the Navy, following in his older brother's footsteps—though his wife jokes he only picked it to impress her mother and win approval to marry her.

Taylor attended Boot Camp at Great Lakes Illinois and his Class A School also there where he went from an E1 to E3.

Taylor was assigned to the USS Simon Lake, hull number AS 33, and was responsible for the emergency diesel generator. He later worked in the boat shop where he took care of the Captain's Boat and recreational boats.

Taylor reflected on his service years as a good time. He stated that he didn't have to live on the ship and instead lived on the beach with his wife. He said their house was the party house and they had good times every weekend with guitars and country music.

Taylor said they did a lot of camping and saw bull fights and the running of the bulls.

Taylor received a commendation for repair to a hydraulic crane after working 2 weeks straight of 12 hours on and 12 hours off.

FLIGHT 74

WILLIAM BOWEN JR.

US Air Force, 1972-1976, Vietnam

Issued a draft number of 38, William would choose not to be drafted and enlisted in the Air Force. Here he was guaranteed his chosen career field. Scheduled to leave in September, he would be called to depart in early July, arriving in San Antonio Texas to 120° temperatures. He would go on to 4 months of training as a Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Specialist.

Bowen's assignment would take him to Cheyenne, Wyoming, to Warren Missile Base, here he would put his training to work. His main focus was to maintain temperature and humidity levels for computer equipment and to missile control located 200 feet below ground. Additional time would be spent serving housing, NCO, and other base facilities. In his last year, a new managing Master Sergeant would have him perform training, introducing and arranging of work equipment.

William will pay respect to two close friends at the Vietnam Wall today.

DANIEL CONNELL

US Navy, 1963-1967, Vietnam

Daniel chose the Navy to explore the world, but the North Country remained his constant companion. Everywhere he went, he encountered someone from Keeseville or AuSable Forks.

His first morning at 4 a.m. at Great Lakes, the temperature was 45 degrees and raining, but it felt like -35 degrees. He recalls wondering, "What am I doing here?"

He received Naval base assignments in Jacksonville, Norfolk, Boca Chica, and Quonset Point. As an Aviation Ordnance specialist, he managed munitions and weapons systems on naval aircraft, ensuring readiness for flight. Receiving an aircrew assignment would involve anti-submarine warfare, operating detection gear for two-engine prop planes. In Daniel's Naval assignments, he recalls teamwork was always paramount over rank.

LAWRENCE DORSEY

US Air Force, 1956-1980, Vietnam

Lawrence's mother signed for him to enter the Air Force at the age of 17, giving him the best possible direction and career opportunities.

He would be in one of the last groups to complete basic at Sampson AFB; pulling guard duty to an empty barracks.

In 24 years, Lawrence would rise to Master Sergeant, receiving numerous commendations, and serving as a security superintendent. His assignments would take him to Tampa, Nova Scotia, Newburgh, Niagara Falls, Vietnam, Germany, and Plattsburgh.

His memorable experiences include stomping on cables to scare snakes, meeting his wife in Nova Scotia, rushing from Newburgh to West Point for their daughter's birth, working the main gate during a visit from President Kennedy, and deciding against ponchos in Vietnam after cutting his eye. He also said the warm rain was better than a cold shower.

JOSEPH GENTLES

US Coast Guard, 1968, Vietnam Era

After losing a close friend, Joseph was determined to serve his country. He would manage to be accepted into the Coast Guard.

He would arrive at Wildwood, at Cape May County, New Jersey for training. In November, pulling beach guard duty would not be a pleasant walk on the beach.

Joe's time would be unexpectantly cut short when the Coast Guard would decide to medically discharge him, due to eight knee operations prior to enlistment. Sending him home the day after Thanksgiving, he would be called out upon exit for having his collar up. He would later be sent a draft notice, and when he showed up, they would again send him home.

His son, Glenn, an Army veteran, proudly joins him today as his guardian.

THOMAS HIGHERS

US Air Force, 1976-1994 Cold War, Desert Storm

Planning to join the Army, the Air Force recruiter presented Tom with opportunities unmatched by any other branch.

This decision led him to 21 years of service, transforming his life. His initial assignment took him to Griffith AFB, where he worked on SRAM missile systems. A Saturday morning generation practice was abruptly halted when a gas spill ignited a flight line fire, catching a KC135 on fire.

Tom was also assigned to Bagotville, a Canadian Forces Base, and Dyess AFB in Texas. His time in Texas taught him never to complain about the cold again. He then moved on to a one-year assignment in Turkey, followed by six years at Plattsburgh AFB. He would complete his career at Grand Forks AFB in North Dakota, where he served as the least senior Master Sergeant. His final service years would be dedicated to supporting Operations Shield and Storm.

LAWRENCE HOUSTON

US Navy, 1955-1959, Cold War

Lawrence's life passion is music, specifically the alto saxophone and the piano. He would have to put these aside at the age of 20 to join the Navy. Although, if he could go back and start again, he believes the Air Force would likely be his first choice.

Much of his time with the Navy would be spent on the east coast, including Lakehurst Naval Base, Atlantic City Naval Air Station, and Naval Stations in Rhode Island and Maine. He recalls packing parachutes, and his time aboard the USS Randolph, as an operational specialist. This assignment would have him track and monitor aircraft landings aboard ship. His service would also have him travel the Mediterranean and take him to European ports.

While on the east coast, Lawrence would have the extraordinary opportunity to attend performances by Sonny Stitt, the American jazz saxophonist, and Sarah Vaughan, the American jazz and classical singer.

LUCILLE MALANEY

US Air Force, 1968-1969, Vietnam

Lucille, aspiring to be a world traveler, would join the Air Force. As a leader in boot camp, she would struggle to keep up with giving out marching commands, leading her group through a large puddle. This would not go unnoticed by her superior.

While at Sheppard on bivouac she would be rushed to the hospital for heat stroke. Now ready for her first assignment, Lucille hoped for anything but medical. She would be sent to Travis AFB in California, assigned to David Grant Memorial Hospital, filming in the X-ray Department.

Excited to receive orders for the Philippines, Lucille was ready to go. However, a message from home changed everything. Her father unexpectedly passed away from a heart attack, cancelling her orders. Her mother never recovered from the sudden loss; unable to provide proper care for herself and Lucille's siblings. Lucille would be released from her remaining service commitment due to hardship.

THOMAS PATRICK MILLEA

US Navy, 1967-1970, Vietnam

Tom came out of Cooperstown High School as a decorated athlete in 1967 and immediately went into the US Navy.

Tom became part of the Navy CBs as a construction electrician. Somehow, a Navy CB would become attached and embedded with a Marine Corps mortar crew setting lights and wires near the DMZ in Quang Tre Province. Of his 3 years in service, Tom was overseas for 2 years and 7 months!

Tom is from a family of 9 kids, 6 of the brothers served their country, including his brother and guardian, Denis, who would also serve in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot.

Tom's father was an LST pilot for the US Navy and was at Normandy on D-Day.

STEVEN MORROW

US Navy, 1971-1977, Vietnam

Steven enlisted in the service at the age of 19. His service would provide him with maturity, confidence, self-worth, and proof of his intellectual capabilities.

During his first year in San Diego, Steven underwent training as an electrician's mate, attending both A and B schools. After completing his training, Steven was assigned to the USS Juneau LPD-10 for two years. The Juneau participated in multiple trips into Vietnamese waters and actively engaged in the Vietnam War, helping ground forces and conducting operations along the coast of Vietnam. Subsequently, he was transferred to a ship in Seattle, Washington, for six months, followed by two years aboard the USS Bainbridge.

He then spent two additional years in the naval reserves, where he was responsible for a reserve crew. Additionally, Steven underwent cross-training as a Mineman, a challenging process that involved reconstructing bombs and reassembling them into mines.

Steven continued his service for an additional 20 years in the Navy Retired Reserves until 2012.

STEPHEN PINELLO JR.

US Army, 1966-1968, Vietnam

Stephen, with his artistic background, would have been better suited for engineering or photography. However, the Army would place him in military police. The required training would involve firing a 45, M16, and grenade. Stephen believes his aim would have been more accurate if he had thrown his pistol.

Ninety-five percent of his class would be sent to Vietnam. After a 30-day leave, he would take a commercial flight into Vietnam, where he would spend the next year of his service. Stephen would oversee quarters and perform patrols in the city of Bien Hoa.

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FLIGHT 74

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The sight of a nearby ammo dump exploding during the Tet Offensive would light up the sky, creating a mushroom cloud, forcing them to take cover behind sandbags.

During his enlistment, Stephen would experience some of the best medical care he had ever had. When things were quiet, he would have the opportunity to appreciate the beauty of the Saigon Cathedral.

CURTIS PROVOST SR.

US Navy, 1970-1972, Vietnam

Curtis would receive his draft notice at the age of 17. Shortly thereafter, he would board the USS Caliente A0-53, bound for Vietnam. During their journey, they encountered a hurricane head-on. Fortunately, Curtis was saved from going overboard by a vent pipe when a wave swept over him.

With nearly 200 crew members, their primary responsibility was to transport fuel and supplies to combat vessels. Their refueling missions made them not only an enemy target loaded with fuel, but it was also a dangerous refueling process, as ships passed specialized hoses while side-by-side, pumping fuel to other ships while at sea.

While undergoing repairs to address boiler issues, Curtis reached the end of his enlistment. Having witnessed enough during his service time, he made the decision not to reenlist. He boarded a commercial 747 flight home, accompanied by fellow servicemen who eagerly celebrated their anticipated return home.

VINCENT PULIAFICO

US Air Force, 1973-1978, Vietnam

Eligible for the draft with a lottery number of 7, Vincent would be deferred as he was still in high school. A year later, with a new higher draft number, Vietnam would be winding down. Only a few months after graduation, he would head into the Air Force.

Vincent would complete his technical training at Chanute AFB in Navigation/Bombing Tactics Training Devices (also known as Flight Simulators). His first assignment would take him to Plattsburgh AFB for a year, attached to the 380th Bomb Wing.

Experience in electronics repair would help him excel in maintaining the FB-111 simulators. He would then transfer to the 50th Tactical Fighter Wing at Hahn AFB in Germany. Upon arrival, he would unknowingly step into an alert exercise. After numerous alert alarms, he would witness 30-40 security police armed with M-16 rifles and gas masks, assault vehicles, and all necessary gear to defend the base.

In Vincent's Air Force "dream job" he would have the opportunity to meet astronauts, Generals, and work with hundreds of pilots and navigators.

ROGER SHERMAN

US Navy, 1957, Cold War

At the age of 19, Roger would leave for Navy service. He reported to the Naval Training Center Bainbridge, where he met Johnny Podres, who had just arrived for boot camp after pitching a shutout in game 7 of the World Series.

Roger was assigned to the USS Lloyd APD-63, an amphibious destroyer. Throughout his enlistment, he served as a boat duty engineer. While aboard ship they would mostly travel the east coast, and the southern islands, transporting Marines, participating in training exercises, and ensuring the distillation and generation of freshwater.

Despite his desire to share humorous stories from his service, Roger cannot remember any. Nevertheless, he cherished his time in the Navy, as it provided him with the opportunity to travel.

STEPHEN SILVER

US Marine Corps, 1977-1981, Cold War

Stephen, at 18, would stop at the recruiters, the first door he walked through was the Marine Corps; he would sign up that day.

After completion of physical training at Parris Island, Stephen would complete a heavy vehicle operators' course and a special defense course at Camp LeJeune. As he was learning to operate equipment, he would back into a truck and trailer.

His orders would take him to Okinawa for nearly a year. A transfer would take him to Korea for a month, where he would be accompanied by the Gunnery Sergeant on the road to the DMZ to make deliveries.

Stephen appreciated his opportunity to travel and enjoyed the brotherhood of his fellow Marines.

PETER TRIPI SR.

US Air Force, 1971-1991 Vietnam, Desert Storm

Peter would separate from the Air Force with 20-years of service. Over those years he would complete many demanding physical training programs and demanding course work.

His assignments would send him to serve in locations across the United States, Thailand, a month long TDY in Vietnam, and serve in support of Operation Desert Storm/Shield.

His first three-and-a-half years would be spent as a security specialist. He would change specialty and serve as an in-flight refueling Operator Technician for the KC 135 in the 380th Air Refueling Squadron.

Peter achieved the rank of Tech Sergeant before retirement, and earned a long list of decorations, medals, and citation for his service. He wants to let all veterans know if you have an opportunity to attend a tank reunion, they are a lot of fun.

FLIGHT 75

GILLES BRUNET

US Army, 1969-1972, Vietnam

Raised on a rural dairy farm, at the age of 17, Gilles's father would sign his paperwork to enlist in the Army. Influenced by his next-door neighbor, Gilles would also choose to go into the Army.

After receiving training as a heavy equipment operator, his first assignment would take him to Germany. While there, he was sent for two weeks of war games in Turkey. Gilles request to be reassigned to Vietnam would have him transferred to a Camp Eagle in central Vietnam near Phu Bai. An error in his orders placed him as a demolition specialist, resulting in a mine sweeping assignment. His orders would eventually be corrected.

After eight months of service in Vietnam, a downsizing order returned him stateside, where he would exit the Army. During his service, Gilles gained valuable experience. He combined his military training and experience with his passion for driving, leading him a 43-year career behind the wheel.

STEVEN CIARDELLI

US Army, 1966-1968, Vietnam Era

Graduating from UVM in 1966 with a ROTC Commission, Steve was ordered to Artillery School at Fort Sill. After completing training, he was ordered to the Fort Benning Army Training Center where he spent a year as a Training Officer in a basic training company. As a young Second Lieutenant, he learned the hard way to never ever sign for a supply inventory without counting. He was thankful for an understanding Sergeant Major and First Sergeant who took pity on him.

Ordered to Korea, he was assigned to Division G2. Here he ran a shift at the Division Tactical Operations Center and served as a briefing officer to the Division Commander. The first day on duty he was told: "Lieutenant, I want to know everything that goes on in my division, and I want I-Corps to know nothing. If anything happens, I want you to be able to tell them I told you, but they failed to recognize the importance of the report."

From 1967 through 1968 significant military action would occur during Steve's time in Korea. During one of his duty assignments the division's radio net had interference, he could hear the Vietnam Field Operator trying to call in a fire mission. Unable to contact his battery due to radio skip, Steve could hear both the Field Operator and his battery. In Korea, 1,900 miles away, Steve was able to relay the fire mission information. It would be the only time while in the Army Steve used his artillery training.

MICHAEL CLARK

US Air Force, 1971-1975, Vietnam

Michael's interest in planes led him to join the Air Force. As a 21-year-old, he would complete specialized training at Chanute AFB in Rantoul, Illinois, in Aircraft Structural Repair.

He would use his training in various assignments within Air Training, Tech, and SAC commands. These assignments took him to locations, including Las Vegas, Okinawa, Korea, Taiwan, and North Dakota. Throughout his enlistment period, he would complete repair work on numerous aircraft, including the Thunderbird F-111, the B-52, and the F-4 Phantom.

Michael takes immense pride in his service to his country and his faith. He has no regrets, except for the exposure he had to agent orange while stationed in Okinawa. Despite this, he would gladly repeat his service.

JAMES CROSS

US Army, 1968-1971, Vietnam

James, like his father before him, would choose to serve in the military. He would enjoy the physical challenges of boot camp, quickly shedding 65 pounds. Moving on to advanced training he would train as a stock control and accounting specialist, in warehousing and aircraft repair parts.

Upon completion of training, Jim received orders to Vietnam. Here he was assigned to food distribution. Arriving at Camp Davies in Saigon, he spent the next three months mostly working with Vietnamese, rarely interacting with other U.S. soldiers. Limited promotions would have him compete with nearly 105 other soldiers to earn a sole E-5 open slot.

Jim recalls his time in Vietnam as emotionally numbing. His Captain made him take a three-day leave when he had no reaction to the news that his aunt and uncle, whom he was very close to, had been killed in a hit-and-run accident.

While Jim felt fortunate that the service provided him with career options and travel opportunities, he was also saddened to witness the continued existence of prejudice.

JAMES GOKEY

US Air Force, 1957-1961, Vietnam

Jim enlisted in the service at the age of 17, entering on the buddy system that would last through basic training in San Antonio, Texas. He would go on to complete navigator intelligence school with a specialization in photo intelligence.

Following his training, Jim was assigned to SAC 8th Recognition Technical Squadron at Westover AFB in Springfield, Massachu-

setts, where he would serve for the entirety of his enlistment. His primary responsibilities included interpreting classified images and drafting.

Jim is grateful for the privilege to serve his country. He enjoyed his service years, which included playing golf for the Air Force for 2 years. He later wished he had reenlisted and made the service a career choice.

LARRY GREENE

US Army, 1967-1969, Vietnam

Larry would quit high school at 17 and head to the Army with his father's blessing. At only 120 pounds he would be selected as drill corporal, assisting with recruit training.

Refusing a placement in Germany, he would volunteer for Vietnam. Larry would serve with the 102nd as a proud combat engineer, and the 82nd Airbourne troops. As a member of an all-volunteer infantry group, they would fly in and get in front of the booby traps and land mines, performing search missions. This was a highly dangerous assignment, as the highest rate of causalities and injuries came from these devices.

Wounded, Larry would exit Vietnam on leave to spend time in Hawaii with a friend. While there they would take his 64 Mustang to party with Carlos Santana.

Larry would return to Vietnam to finish his service commitment. He rarely speaks of his 19 months in country but stands tall to honor those who have served. He would receive numerous commendations for his service, one would be awarded 50 years later.

DANIEL JOHNSTON

US Marine Corps, 1973-1975, Vietnam

Dan would grow up fast, and learn to follow orders during his time in the Marine Corps. Arriving at the Parris Island at 18, for platoon motivation he would be crawling through the swamp mud, fighting mosquitos at 3 a.m. Then shipped to California, he would complete 6 months of infantry training.

Dan's assignments would take him to Okinawa, Cambodia, and Thailand. He would be present when the U.S. embassy fell in Saigon. He would spend 38 days aboard the USS Fisher without seeing land; they would keep him busy pulling kitchen duty.

BRUCE KING

US Marine Corps, 1968-1970, Vietnam

Bruce always wanted to be a Marine, entering at 17, he would be the youngest in his unit. Stepping onto the yellow steps would have him grow up quickly. After infantry training, he would head to Vietnam as a combat engineer.

Bruce would spend 19 months in Vietnam. Retuning stateside after the first 6-months, he would marry and get to spend seven days with his new wife before returning to Vietnam. His greatest worry would be that he would become a father to a child he would never see.

Back in Vietnam, he would be assigned on search and clear combat missions including Hill 10, 34, and 55. On mission, his group of three Army and three Marines would find themselves under heavy attack. Operating the company bulldozer, Bruce would be left to bury enemy soldiers.

Bruce would receive many commendations for his service while in Vietnam. He is proud be a U.S. Marine and his service to his country.

CHARLES LANGLOIS

US Army, 1964-1970, Vietnam

A qualifying exam would place Charles in the field of teletype repair. He would learn equipment build to function. After six months of training, he would receive a duty assignment to a communications center in Germany. The equipment there would be old and outdated. It was from this old teletype equipment that a fellow soldier would notify him of his assignment to Vietnam.

Having no knowledge of the Vietnam environment, Charles can still feel the intense heat as the transport door opened. The Tan Son Nhute AFB would be under attack when he arrived. He would receive his duty assignment the next day at the American Embassy. Sent to the Westmoreland Compound in Saigon, he would work with all military branches at the Vietnam Military Assistance Command headquarters. In one year, he would go from a Private First Class to an E-5.

Charles has great pride in his service to the country and is grateful for the bonds of brotherhood that enriched his life and his service years.

ROBERT JOSEPH LAVALLEY

US Army, 1957-1959, Cold War

Bob was assigned to the 25th Signal Corps as a Spec 4 in Karlsruhe, Germany. Changing transformers and running wire above the autobahn with cars going over 100 mph below you was NOT Bob's favorite place.

Bob was fortunate to be picked to be a temporary driver for his Lieutenant, a position that became permanent once the Lieutenant took a liking to him. His driving ability, learned in North Country winters, became an asset in the muddy fields of Post WWII Germany.

One time, at night, the Lieutenant told Bob to look for a left hand turn in the middle of nowhere. The Lieutenant saw the road coming up, yelled, and pointed "Turn right here!" Bob thought this was a great opportunity to teach the Lieutenant some North Country humor, so he did exactly as he said and took a right.

STEVEN O'BRIEN

US Navy-Marine Corps, 1967-1971, Vietnam

Steven had a strong call to military service, as his father before him. His path to fulfilling his service was as a Marine in Vietnam as a Navy Corpsman.

After basic, his orders would send him for Corpsman training at A school. Next, he requested transfer to Camp Lejeune for Fleet Marine School. Here he would become a Marine, fully prepared for combat, earning acceptance and the respected title of "Doc."

In Da Nang he joined the 1st Marine Division. Despite being told he couldn't go on patrols, he would remove his collar devices, gear up, and head out. Often, he would take point, ensuring that newly assigned Marines didn't have to.

Assigned to CAP 2-4-5 he would serve a major village. He provided medical care to his fellow Marines, and the people of the village. Their unit would control the day, but the enemy controlled the night, nothing was safe, anything could and was set as a booby trap or ambush.

Some of Steven's service commendations include: two purple hearts, the Navy Commendation Medal with V Device, the Combat Action Medal, the Navy Presidential Citation Ribbon, Vietnam Service Medal with Star and Marine Device, the Republic of Vietnam Civil Action 2nd Class Medal, and the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm Medal.

DALE PERRY

US Navy, 1966-1972, Vietnam

One of Dale's first memories is that of heading into the "Susie" gas chamber without taking out his contact lens, while singing the Navy hymn. In advanced training he would have a choice between becoming a Torpedo man or Mineman.

The selection of Mineman, a classified specialty, would send him to A school for 19 weeks, then on to the Philippines. Dale would be assigned to maintain, inspect, and configure and perform pyrotechnics tests. He would learn to do build land mines, but sea mines would be his focus. An assignment in Scotland would have him driving tractor trailer loaded with 5 tons of mines through areas that were no more than tractor paths.

Being good with electronics and patience would make him good at his assignment, but it would also allow him to fulfill his lifelong passion as a gear head, working on engines and other equipment. The Navy would allow him to both work hard and play hard.

WARREN PLUMADORE

US Marine Corps, 1967-1973, Vietnam

Warren, wanting a challenge, along with three school friends, would enlist in the Marines. It wouldn't be long before he would see combat action.

Sent to Vietnam, he would learn fast. Pick someone if they hit ground so did you. He would engage in search and destroy missions during both Tet Offensives, on Hill 689, 651, and 950, LZ STUD, and Signal Hill. As a Marine in combat, he would be front and center for 13 months of military action.

Warren returned stateside as a combat veteran carrying many heavy memories. He would achieve the rank of E5 Sergeant and is proud to have served his country as a U.S. Marine.

MICHAEL SMITH

US Army, 1967-2007, Vietnam Era, OEF-OIF

Michael's decades long service span had him called to duty for many Title 32 calls. These deployments would activate him for service needs at state, federal and placements abroad.

In 1967, he would be sent to Germany for 6 months to repair roads and backing up units being deployed to Vietnam. He would report to Camp Johnson during 9/11 to provide homeland defense. Called back again, he would be placed in charge of operations and securing all equipment. His unit would be tasked with mobilization for deployment for both Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. On assignment they would provide road security in Iraq and Bagdad airport. The loss of a 21-year-old member of his unit, who never got to see his newborn, would take a tremendous toll on his interest in re-enlistment.

Michael would leave the military as a highly decorated, E9 Sergeant Major. He takes great pride in a family service history that has spanned from the Revolutionary War with the Green Mountain Boys to present day.

RICHARD SOMERSET

US Air Force, 1961-1965, Vietnam; National Guard, 1974-1995, Desert Storm

Richard would enter the Air Force with top test scores, looking to further his future education possibilities. He would be sent to Sheppard AFB for 6 months of Flight Control training for the Landing Ship Dock and Landing Ship Tank, and later return for another 24 weeks for silo and missile systems training. His duty assignments would take him to Strategic Missile Squadrons at Dyess AFB, Vandenberg AFB, and two assignments to Plattsburgh.

After exiting the Air Force at Plattsburgh in 1965, Richard would join the VT Air Guard in 1974, and head to Lowry AFB. From 1992-1995 he would join the Guard Bureau at Andrews AFB, here they would prepare ready team reports, evaluate AFB for new aircraft, and make recommendations. Richard would be placed in responsibility levels beyond his rank. He recalls the General not being happy to have him present for consult at his rank level.

Veteran named honorary Cadyville Firefighter

BY LUCA GROSS
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PLATTSBURGH — Cadyville Fire Department made one veteran's come true for the final Honor Flight of the year in October.

Members of the Cadyville Fire Department took Vietnam War-era veteran Dale Perry on a ride in one of their fire engines to the Honor Flight #75 which took place on Saturday, Oct. 3.

Perry, a U.S. Navy Vietnam Era Veteran, had made a special request to ride in a fire truck. Flight Leader Mike Parsons reached out to his friends with the Cadyville Fire Department, an active participant in the Honor Flight activities.

Chief Jeremy Favaro made all the arrangements including an extra string hooked to the air horn lanyard so Dale could blow the air horn during the trip to the airport.

"Well, it was certainly a surprise of my life to be able to do that," Perry said.

Perry had never ridden in a firetruck before and wanted to see what it was like for fire fighters responding to a call.

"Just to know how the firemen actually operate inside that vehicle and make their way to a dangerous situation in a hurry," Perry said.

Perry asked how much he could blow the siren, according to Assistant Chief Jeff Favaro, driver Jeremy Favaro told him not to stop.

Perry said the whole ceremony at The Oval was a surprise.

"It was a surprise as far as what they were doing," he said, "What they were saying about all of us guys that were there for the honor flight. I don't know how to explain it. It's certainly a very special thing."

Perry said it was an emotional experience.

Jeff Favaro said he was proud to escort Perry to the Oval, while making his dream come true.

"When Mike Parsons asked if we could do it, it was a big yes," he said. "To see the smile on his face driving down there was awesome. He kept saying 'I can't believe you guys are doing this for me.' His appreciation was huge."

Perry rode with Chief Jeremy Favaro, Assistant Chief Jeff Favaro, and firefighters Jamie Gilmore and Zane Vaughn.

"Our smiles were just as big as his. To see these Veterans big smiles is worth it all. Myself and Chief Favaro have made the trip to Washington as EMTs for the flight. There is no words that can describe this," Jeff Favaro said.

During the October meeting of the Cadyville Fire Department, a unanimous vote was made to make Perry an Honorary Member of the department.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Members of the Cadyville Fire Department pose with Vietnam war era veteran Dale Perry (front right) and his son Doug Perry (front left) after riding in the fire engine to the last Honor Flight of the year. Standing behind Perry from left to right is Chief Jeremy Favaro, Assistant Chief Jeff Favaro, Jamie Gilmore and Zane Vaughn.

Jeff Favaro and Cadyville Fire Department members Jamie Favaro and Glimore met with Flight Leader Parsons in Fort Edward where they presented Perry with a flag and his Honorary Membership Certificate along with a fire department coat and hat.

"When we went to present Dales Flag and Fire Dept hat coat and certificate with Flight Leaders Mike and Laurie Parsons the smile on his face and tears in his eyes said it all," Jeff Favaro said. "Again he said the same thing, 'I can't believe you guys came all the way down here to see me.'""

Jeremy Favaro emphasized the importance of thanking Veterans.

"The smile on Mr. Perry's face says it all, people don't understand how much a simple "thank you for your service" means to the men and women who have served and are currently serving our country." Being able to do a little extra for Mr. Perry made our morning that much more special." he said

Honor Flight Executive Officer Jerika Manning said no two veterans' experiences on North Country Honor Flight are the same.

"Our goal is to make every flight the trip of a lifetime," she said. "Thanks to the flight leaders and the Cadyville Fire Department for making Dale Perry's special request to ride in a fire truck to the Honor Flight ceremony a reality! Community support makes these unforgettable moments possible."

The trip to Washington D.C. with the Honor Flight was surreal according to Perry, who said, "I had never seen anything like it. I don't know how they do what they do."

Perry said witnessing the changing of the guard for the unknown soldier was a very special moment.

"That's something I'll never live down. That's just something I'll always remember. It was very special, and all the people that were there helping, the bus drivers, the ones who were taking care of us veterans. They were just very, very special and unique," Perry said.

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Is proud to Honor All Local Veterans and Supporting this Special Limited Commemorative Guide that will be a keepsake for years to come... and have for information on flight, a listing of the Veterans on the flights and Veteran Biography... Be Proud & Honor them!!!



HONORING OUR VETERANS

We honor the courage, sacrifice and service of our nation's veterans today and every day.

Thank you to all who have served, and to North Country Honor Flight for preserving and celebrating their legacy.

With gratitude and respect,
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