



AMVETS Tallahassee Post 1776 Cyber Newsletter

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Commander's Corner

November and December of 2023 is a couple of months to remember for Tallahassee veterans. The Air Force Assn, Bud West Chapter unveiled their beautiful monument at a dedication ceremony on November 7th at the Tallahassee National Cemetery. We had one of the best Veteran's Day Parades we have had on November 10th. On November 14th several of our members attended the Florida Veteran Hall of Fame to honor two more of our members, Commander Dennis Baker USN (ret) and CWO 5 Henry Lowery USMC (ret). Dennis and Henry were two of the twenty inducted in 2023. That makes a total of eight Florida Veteran Hall of Famers from our small post. There are only 160 plus in all of the State.

On the 14th several of our members attended an event at Astoria Park Elementary school, you will see an article about that in this month's cyber news. And on this same day, November 14th we lost one of our own, Major John L. Haynes USMC (ret). Please take a look at a piece I wrote, doing my best to honor Major Haynes.

(Continued on page 2)

AMVETS National was chartered in 1947 and the Tallahassee AMVETS Post 1776 was chartered in July 2009. AMVETS Post 1776 meets the first Thursday of the month at American Legion Post 13, 229 Lake Ella Drive, Tallahassee, Florida 32303. We invite honorably discharge veterans, including Guards and Reserve, from all branches to Join us. We are a small post doing big things

www.amvets1776.org

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(Commander's Corner Continued from page 1)

On December 4th, we attended a Wreaths Across America event at the Capital which was a prelude to the annual Wreaths Across America event held at our Tallahassee National Cemetery every year. This year the event was on December 16th. Both events were amazing, with our member David Wilson organizing the event at the Capital. We now have over 2,500 veterans interred in our National Cemetery and even in drizzling rain we had an estimated 400 plus attending and helping lay all the wreaths.

And in the middle of all this our Post joined hands with our member Lew Wilson to collect blankets and other items for Veterans in need. See Lew's article in this issue.

All of this and we have already begun the planning for our 14th Annual Golf Tournament. Put April 22nd on your calendar, we are looking for another great Tournament and Silent Auction which is our annual fundraiser for our Post.

As always, thank you all for all you do for veterans and your continuing service to our Country, our County and our Post.

Semper Fi,

Gordon

Chaplains Corner

Eric Smith, Chaplain AMVETS Post 1776

Prayer for Military, Veterans and Nation



Heavenly Father, thank you that you defend your people with your mighty hand. Please hear our prayer as we lift up our military and veterans before you now. They work tirelessly to defend our country.

Bless and protect us Lord and use AMVETS Tallahassee Post 1776 work as a veteran service organization for the good of our nation and your glory. May they know your presence with them at this time. May the grace of the Lord and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us always. In your name we pray,

Amen.

AMVETS

(American Veterans)

Is the nation's most inclusive congressionally-chartered Veterans Service Organization (VSO), representing the interests of 20 million veterans. AMVETS is open to and fighting for all who honorably served in the U.S military, including the Reserve and Guard. With more than 250,000 members nationwide, we are veterans serving veterans.



MAJOR MICHAEL DAVIS O'DONNELL IS AN AMERICAN HERO, HE IS NOT FORGOTTEN!!

Article by David Wilson

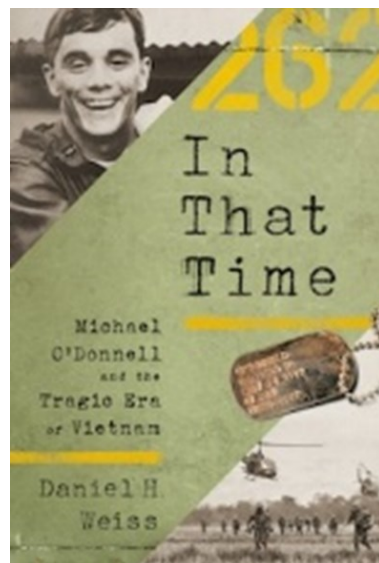
Major MICHAEL DAVIS O'DONNELL IS REMEMBERED as we honor his life. It's been over 52 years when he died as he lost his life trying to save others.
John 15:13 NO GREATER LOVE!!

"IN THAT TIME" is a wonderful book written by Daniel H. Weiss. About Michael O'Donnell and the Vietnam War. READ IT!! Major Michael Davis O'Donnell is an American Hero. Like so many that died in Vietnam, he was a great man who deserves to be remembered. Read the book!!

AND SAVE ONE BACKWARD GLANCE

Major Michael Davis O'Donnell was a helicopter pilot during the Vietnam War. He was from Illinois. He was also a poet and a musician. He wrote a poem that many of the Vietnam era identify with. He died on a mission in which he was attempting to rescue a Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP) in Cambodia. The LRRP was inserted into Cambodia to gather information on the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the NVA Army. The LRRP was discovered and were running for their lives. Opposing forces had brought in tracking dogs and they were being chased. They had been on the run and were low on ammunition and food. Major O'Donnell landed in a very dangerous area trying to rescue the men; he radioed and reported that all were on board, his helicopter lifted off and was in flight when shot down. All aboard died. His remains and the remains of the others on board were not found until years later. Major O'Donnell was engaged to be married; his fiancé lived in Tallahassee FL when he died.

Captain O'Donnell was a member of the 170th Helicopter Assault Company, 52nd Aviation Battalion, 17th Aviation Group, 1st Aviation Brigade. On March 24, 1970, he was the aircraft commander of a Bell Iroquois Utility Helicopter (UH-1H) with a mission of extracting a long-range reconnaissance patrol (LRRP) from Ratanokiri Province about 14 miles inside Cambodia. The aircraft picked up the team of eight and was ascending when it was hit by enemy fire, exploded and crashed in the jungle. His remains were recovered on April 12, 1995 and identified on June 20, 2001. His remains are buried in Arlington National Cemetery.



Book cover about Michael Davis O'Donnell, a tremendous book which I encourage all to read.

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(Major Michael Davis O'Donnell Continued)

Poem written by Major Michael Davis O'Donnell on 1 January 1970, Dak To, Vietnam. (It was featured in the 1980's movie "Hamburger Hill")

**If you are able,
save them a place
inside of you
and save one backward glance
when you are leaving
for the places they can
no longer go.
Be not ashamed to say
you loved them,
though you may
or may not have always.
Take what they have left
and what they have taught you
with their dying
and keep it with your own.
And in that time
when men decide and feel safe
to call the war insane,
take one moment to embrace
those gentle heroes
you left behind.**

Major Michael Davis O'Donnell



Buried in Arlington National Cemetery with others who died that day.



Major John L. Haynes, a Marines' Marine

Article by Gordon Lightfoot



I first got to know Major Haynes when he was the Commandant for the Marine Corps League, Arthur R. Meyer Jr., Detachment #472. I simply called him to ask where I could pay my dues for the Marine Corps League, and he simply said he needed some help and would I accept an appointment as the Adjutant for the Detachment. I am now a life member of the Detachment and I have been their Adjutant for over 4 years now.

It was hard to say no to Major Haynes. And in informal settings a lot of us just called him John, as he would answer to anything you wanted to call him. For brevities sake I will refer to him as John as I give you just a brief history of his life. I do mean brief as John's story covers 93 years with him joining the Marine Corps when he was just 15 years old. Not like many other young boys in the rural south. My Dad, coincidentally from rural north Florida (Cottondale) also joined when he was 15. In fact, as Earl Lightfoot joined the Marine Corps in 1943, little did he know he would be in the battle of Okinawa in less than two years. From there, after the bombs were dropped in Japan, he was sent to China to receive surrendering Japanese on horseback on the Great Wall. I told this story to John because he served in China after the bombs were dropped and he went to Okinawa to continue cleaning up the island of Okinawa. I am not sure their paths ever crossed but they were both Marines in their teens at one of the most momentous times in World War II. Earl got out of the Marines in 1946 and John stayed in for another 30 plus years.

John's storied career in the Marine Corps and beyond started there in China. I guess I have always had a special place in my heart for John as not only was he in China with my dad Earl, but he went on to serve in Korea and then on to Vietnam in the Quang Tri area where I was serving in 1967-68. Now that is more than a coincidence, I think it is quite a story. John as a 15-year-old went to war as a private at 15, rose through the enlisted ranks to a Gunnery Sergeant then on to Warrant Officer and ended his storied career 30 plus years later as a Major and then went on serving veterans for almost another 30 years. Then without knowing any of my background asked me to help him in his service to veterans here in Big Bend. John's career and the amazing collection of awards and commemorations below is where I got the title "A Marines' Marine".

Of course his military and civilian awards are too numerous to list, but some of his most recognizable ones as listed in his memorial brochure for his service are: The Purple Heart, The Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with Gold Star and Combat "V", Navy and Marine Corps Achievement medal, Marine Corps good Conduct Medal, 3 stars, 2 Presidential Unit Citations, 3 Awards of the Navy Unit Citation, Combat Action Ribbon, China Service Medal, Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal, Korean Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, World War II Victory Medal, Cross of Gallantry the Silver Star (Vietnam). He was one of the first six veterans inducted into the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame in 2013, received the Governor's Medal of Merit in 2017, was selected by Governor Scott to represent him in Washington DC for e signing of the "VA Mission Act of 2018", and he received the DAR Medal of Honor March of 2022.

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(Major Haynes Continued from page 5)

Major John L. Haynes, a Marines' Marine (Continued)

Major John L. Haynes passed away on November 14th, 2023, and was interred in the Tallahassee National Cemetery on December 11, 2023. He could have been buried in Arlington or Quantico but chose to be with what he called his troops here at the Tallahassee National Cemetery. John will be missed by me and many more veterans throughout our Big Bend area. But even more so, John was known Statewide and Nationally. He literally worked as a certified Service Officer, held many leadership roles and was called on at all levels to speak at Marine Corps Balls and many other veteran events.

And I must leave you with a thought about him from someone that had never met John as he graciously spoke as keynote at our AMVETS Bell Tower and Carillon dedication ceremony July 8, 2021. John gave another one of his inspirational speeches after which I received a letter from a couple of attendees with a brief note that was sent to me calling our ceremony a "very moving and inspirational ceremony." Then Ken and June Stivers said, "Major Haynes' address was amazing - wish everyone in this Country could have heard it!" And that just about says everything about Major John L. Haynes. He was inspirational and mentored so many of us veterans in the Big Bend, John will be missed by us all. Rest in peace John.

Written and submitted by AMVETS Tallahassee Post 1776 Commander Gordon Lightfoot

Major Haynes Dedication Ceremony



AMVETS AT ASTORIA PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Article by Gordon Lightfoot

From time-to-time members of AMVETS Post 1776 get invitations to speak at civic or other public forums. Usually, it is a call to have myself or a member of AMVETS to speak on behalf of veterans on various topics. Henry Lowery is honored quite often, speaking at the Marine Corps Ball a couple of years ago and more recently at a dedication/tribute for Clemon Alexandar a Marine veteran from Monticello that was killed in the Beriut bombings on October 23, 1983. As usual Henry gave a moving tribute because he was on active duty at the time and was assigned to go to Beirut right after the bombing. John Folsom is another member that wears a lot of hats and speaks as a chaplain at times and makes presentations to our ROTC and JRROTC UNITS throughout Leon County. John is most active with the American Legion Post #13 and not only speaks but does a lot of writing for them and us as well. He is also Chaplain for our VFW Post 3308. And we all volunteer when there is a need to fill a speakers spot when there is an event at the Tallahassee National Cemetery throughout the year.

But every now and then there is that special event like the invitation we got from Astoria Park Elementary School for a dinner and speaking engagement. Dr. Cassandra J. Poole the principal of that school puts on an annual dinner and calls it "An Attitude of Gratitude" and invites first responders and veterans to speak to her 1st through 5th graders on career opportunities in the military or as police officers, sheriff deputies or paramedics and more. As we found out, at least from our members the presentations and testimonials (in fact one of the first responders attended Astoria Park when he was in elementary school) from us and the first responders was a pep talk about listening to their teachers and read, read, read. At least that is what Johnnie Roberts, a member of our Post started out with. And Johnnie didn't go easy on them. We all followed suit after he spoke to a packed house of kids and their parents. I believe we got their attention, and a good time was had by all.

Dr. Poole thanked us all but especially thanked our group as we were able to bring four in "uniform" to the event. Johnnie wore his Army fatigues, Tom Carney wore his full Air Force uniform with medals, Ernie Reed wore his Navy uniform with medals and Henry dressed in his Marine Corps dress blues with medals. What a sight. Dr. Poole was impressed we were able to show up in uniform, much less representing four of our military branches. But most important the interaction with the children and some of their parents was the event. We should all do more of this. Thank you to our membership for participating and being there when you are called in helping educate our youth and standing up and sharing your stories. The photos below, I think, captures it all.



Magic and Warmth Provided for the Holidays

Article by Lew Wilson

For many of us, the holidays are the most wonderful time of the year. We rush to find the perfect Christmas tree, get the house decorated, purchase gifts for our loved ones, and celebrate the birth of our Lord. For many of our Veterans they highlight concerns such as increased stress with mental health, depression, and anxiety, and it is also a time for reflection, loneliness, and sadness. It also adds stress in dealing with relationships, finances, and the physical demands of everyday living such as homelessness and the transition to civilian life. Seeing that the holidays exacerbate these issues, this presents an opportunity to provide some extra special care and hope for our Veterans in need.

After contacting three Veteran communities in town, among the most requested items to help our Veterans are blankets, socks, jackets, and bathroom items to help make everyday living a little more comfortable. During the months of November and December 2023, the drive was on. Along with AMVETS Tallahassee Post 1776, local community members leading the charge was the 4th Quarter Bar and Grille staff and patrons, Danielle and Thomas Galvin, Todd Powers and several others who assisted in getting the word out and to help collecting the items needed.

All items were delivered to the 4th Quarter and to Lew Wilson who also staged everything in this home. Blankets came in many sizes, shapes, and thickness. Amvets donated heavy-duty thick wool-blend blankets known for durability, warmth and moisture wicking properties. Some folks donated special shoe boxes which housed an array of bathroom items, socks, and special treats. Warmth and blessings accompanied every donation along with smiles and hope, and a special ask, “what else do they need?” Social media was a buzz with posts everywhere along with hopes that St. Nicholas may add in some care. It was magical.

Tallahassee residents responded with 131 blankets, 184 pairs of socks, wool caps, winter jackets, toiletries and more in support of these local Veterans in need. Lew Wilson and Gordon Lightfoot loaded up their sleighs with the combined bags of donations and delivered them to all three places for distribution to our Veterans. Each Veteran community includes Veterans in transition, Veterans who have transferred from Homelessness into a safe apartment of their own, and homeless Veterans who have come in from the cold for a warm place to stay. The three places include Veterans Village, HomeFront Veterans Living and HomePlace at Balkin. The appreciation was formidable, “thank you, thank you, thank you,” along with a special thanks from Veterans who chimed in “thank you for not forgetting us.”

Our special thanks go out to everyone who helped to make this holiday season warm and bright for those who have served our country. And to all a Good Night.

Semper Fi. Lew Wilson

Magic and Warmth Provided for the Holidays



Tallahassee residents responded with 131 blankets, 184 pairs of socks, wool caps, winter jackets, toiletries and more



February 2024 Calendar for AMVETS Tallahassee Post 1776

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			Commanders' Meeting 1000 hrs VFW meeting evening	AMVETS Post 1 Meeting 1830- 1930 hrs Glory Days Res- taurant	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12 Lincoln's Birthday	13	14	15	16	17
18	19 Presidents' Day	20	21	22 Washington's Birthday	23	24
25	26	27	28	29		

Coming Soon!

Our 14th Annual "Veterans Helping Veterans"

Golf Tournament — April 22, 2024

Want More Information?

Contact: Gordon Lightfoot

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