

Rick Skindrud



This is the eighteenth in a series of articles that we hope to publish for years to come. With this series we want to honor Service Members that served our great Nation. As I mentioned in the last article, we need your help to honor these fine Americans. If you have someone you would like us to include, please help us research and develop articles. Our email address is mhamlegionpost113@gmail.com

This article is about Rick Skindrud. Rick was born September 15th, 1944 to Jerome and Alma (Martinson) Skindrud. He was raised on Skindrud farm, which is now the Early Autumn Farm on Highway S just outside of town. When he was in the 3rd grade they moved to a small farm on the outskirts of Mount Horeb. As a child Rick can remember making hay on the fields that are now Nordic Hills. Rick had a lot of good friends in town, they had a lot of fun through school. During the summer he worked for local farmers and in the winter, he had paper routes.

In 1965 Rick received a personal letter from the President of the United States inviting him to join the US Army (he was drafted). Rick left Mount Horeb for Basic Training at Fort Leonardwood, Missouri, and then on to Fort Eustis Virginia for advanced training as a single engine, single rotor, helicopter mechanic. From there, Rick went to Fort Lewis Washington where the 4th Infantry Division was preparing to go to Vietnam. Rick was assigned to a special cavalry unit within the 4th ID, for a while he sat behind a typewriter, which was a skill he had learned here in the Mount Horeb Schools. After a short time however, Rick was assigned to maintenance where he worked on helicopters.

After working on the helicopters, he moved on to the flight line and became a crew chief. Simply put, Rick would work as a mechanic while they were on the ground and once the chopper took off, he became a gunner. Rick flew 148 combat missions on a gunship. The chopper carried 28 rockets, six machine guns, and 7000 rounds of ammunition. Their job was to prep the landing zones (LZs), fly cover for helicopters carrying troops when they would transport the troops to battle or to bases. The

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gunships were there to assist any way they could especially when the troops on the ground were in a firefight. Gunships like Rick's saved lives by providing overhead firepower that could take out the enemy.

There were good times and bad, but what Rick remembers the most is the lifelong friendships that he made. He mentioned that those serving in combat are truly a band of brothers, something you really can't explain unless you've been there.

After Rick came home, he drove redi-mix truck for Wingra for a few years then married Ronni. Rick and Ronni took over the family farm, and they milked cows for 25 years. While they were farming they also raised three great kids, Marny, Dagny, and Leif. Marny and Leif are both still serving in the United State Military.

Rick ran for and spent ten years as a state representative from this area in the Wisconsin State Assembly. He wasn't done serving so for the next six years he served in the Assembly as the Sergeant at Arms.

Life has come full circle for Rick, for the last 11 years he's been driving truck part time for Finks paving. He said one of these days he plans on taking it easy, mowing his lawn, planting the garden, helping the kids, or working in his shop.

Rick continues to serve our community, and our Veterans. He is and has been an active member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9511, Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter IV, and the Mount Horeb American Legion.

Let us Never Forget that Freedom is NOT Free

Written by Jerry Hook with input from Rick Skindrud