



Vietnam Veterans of America Sammy L. Davis Chapter 295



June 2016 Newsletter

June 8th Meeting

- 6:00pm** Cookout & Pitch-in, please bring a dish to share.
- 6:30pm** Board Meeting
- 7:00pm** Membership Meeting.



FLAG DAY— June 14

President Woodrow Wilson made a Proclamation on May 30, 1916 officially established Flag Day—the anniversary of the Flag Resolution of 1777. While Flag Day was celebrated in various communities for years before and after Wilson’s proclamation, it was not until August 3, 1949 that President Truman signed an Act of Congress designating June 14th of each year as National Flag Day.

The U.S. flag is a strong symbol of American identity and national pride. Stars are a symbol of the heavens and the goals to which humankind aspires; stripes are symbolic of rays of light from the sun. Thirteen

stripes represent the original thirteen colonies that declared independence from England; fifty stars symbolize the current 50 United States. White signifies purity and innocence, red signifies valor and bravery; and blue signifies vigilance, perseverance, and justice.

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Meetings are the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm; Board Meeting 6:30

Newsletter Editor: Holly Tookolo If you have any information for the newsletter, please send it to my email: htookolo@indy.rr.com

Important Dates

- June 8 VVA & AVVA Meeting; Cookout 6pm; Board Meeting 6:30pm; Regular meeting 7pm
- June 10 & 11 Sandbox Reunion at Howard County Vietnam Veterans property. Opening ceremony is Friday, June 10 at 11:30am. Hog roast served after opening ceremony. Music both night 7:30-11:30pm
- June 17 & 18 WarBird Expo 2016; go to <http://www.warbirdexpo.com/> Friday 8am-9pm; Sat 9am-6pm, at Mount Comfort, IN at Indianapolis Regional Airport.
- June 22 Indiana Dept of Veterans Affairs Veterans Outreach at 38th Division Armory, Indy
- June 26 Wanamaker Old Settler's Days Street Fair 9am-4pm
- June 29-July 4 American Veterans Traveling Tribute in Kokomo, sponsored by VFW Post 1152, on display at IU-Kokomo, during this time is Haynes Apperson Festival; starts at 3pm on June 29 & closes at 3pm July 4. For more info or to volunteer, contact John Meeks 765-452-1521 with VFW Post 1152.
- July 19-23 VVA & AVVA Leadership Conference; <https://vva.org/events/leadership-conference/> in Tucson, AZ at HILTON EL CONQUISTADOR.
- July 27-31 American Veterans Traveling Tribute in Berne during their Swiss Days Festival
- August 4-7 The Wall that Heals in Flora at Carroll County Fairgrounds sponsored by Carroll County Veteran Remembrance Committee
- August 12-14 Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall in Crawfordsville at Lane Place, 212 S. Water St., sponsored by Byron Cox American Legion Post 72, Sammy Davis, CMH will speak at 1pm on Aug 13. Opening ceremony is 11am on Aug 12.
- Sept 14-18 34th Annual Vietnam Veterans & All Veterans Reunion, at Howard County Vietnam Veterans property;
- Sept 21-25 American Veterans Traveling Tribute Wall in Mitchell, Indiana, Persimmon Festival
- Sept 22-25 The Wall that Heals in Richmond, Veterans Memorial Park, hosted by Wayne County Veterans, American Huey 369; Sammy Davis, CMH is guest speaker 9/24.

Food Drive for HVAF

Bring non-perishable food to the next meeting for HVAF (Hoosier Veterans Assistance Foundation) for the Veterans they are helping. What they need the most is canned meats, pasta and noodles. You can visit their website to see what they do. <http://www.hvafindiana.org/>

HVAF needs volunteers. Volunteers help sort and stock donations that come to HVAF. They provide essential services to Veterans to help promote them towards self-sufficiency. Volunteers also beautify housing properties by raking leaves, painting and landscaping. Contact Robin Close at 317-951-0688 or rclose@hvaf.org

A War Hero is Going Back to Nam & Wants to Talk

Story by Will Higgins, Indy Star May 28, 2016

The eventful life of Sammy Lee Davis takes yet another interesting turn next month when he does what tens of thousands of other Vietnam veterans have done: He will return to Vietnam. "June 12," Davis said, "will be the first time I've been there since '68." Davis' specific destination is Cai Lay, in the southern end of the country. There, on Nov. 18, 1967, he did something for which he received praise and glory, but for which he also endured years of nightmares and inner turmoil. "I don't know if 'closure' is the right word for it," said Davis, 69. "I've learned you're not supposed to forget. You're supposed to remember. Your memories are like tools. You can use them to fix your life."

He had not been drafted into the Army. He had enlisted. Eighteen months after graduating from Mooresville High he signed up. In Battery C of the 2nd Battalion, 4th Artillery, 9th Infantry, the private was sent into the Mekong Delta to repel a North Vietnamese offensive. He and 41 other American soldiers camped on a strip of dry land next to a small river surrounded by wetlands. It was the middle of the night. Davis couldn't sleep for the mosquitoes. The enemy attacked at 2 a.m., 1,500 North Vietnamese troops. An artillery shell landed nearby, injuring Davis. Then, as the enemy swarmed near, he was hit with friendly fire. He looked up across the river and saw this: hundreds more North Vietnamese soldiers swimming toward him. He peppered them with his M-16 rifle. The experience felt like a game, he said in a 1998 interview with Indy Star. "My dad used to take me to the carnival, and you'd shoot the little ducks that floated by," he said. "That's what I related it to. It wasn't like shooting people, but little ducks in the carnival."

He ran out of ammunition, discarded the M-16, grabbed a nearby machine gun and some ammunition and fired hundreds more rounds. He loaded his squad's howitzer with a "beehive" round, making the large piece of field artillery a shotgun of sorts. He fired the howitzer again and again. Eight times total. Others fired their howitzers with beehive rounds, too. The Viet Cong dead piled up in front of the gun five deep. He noticed that some of their eyes were open. Davis, who by then had been shot in the leg, struck by shrapnel and hurt by a break in his back, heard an American soldier calling out from across the river. Davis, who did not know how to swim, found an air mattress and paddled to the opposite bank. He found three wounded comrades, picked them up and toted them back across the river to safety. Then he refused medical attention and instead joined another cannon crew. He stayed in the fight, which lasted six hours. The North Vietnamese had sustained heavy casualties and had not dislodged the Americans.

His actions did not go unnoticed. On Nov. 19, 1968, Davis received the Medal of Honor from President Lyndon Johnson. The Medal of Honor, established during the Civil War, is the highest honor available to a soldier. In the movie "Forrest Gump," the filmmakers doctored Davis' medal ceremony to make it look like Gump, played by Tom Hanks, was getting the medal. Davis finds that twist delightful. "Forrest Gump" is his favorite Vietnam movie.

Soon after the president proclaimed Davis a hero, he received counseling at a Veterans Affairs facility in Illinois where he was living. But he got bad advice. "The V.A. told me to forget about it," Davis said. "They told me it happened but it's over and to forget." But he could not forget. And his life was not improving.

U.S. troops entered Vietnam in 1965 and by 1969, 500,000 U.S. soldiers were there. By the time President Richard Nixon withdrew U.S. forces in 1973, more than 58,000 American soldiers had been killed. About 270,000 Vietnam veterans would later suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, according to a 2015 study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association. Davis was among them. "I did crazy things," he said, declining to elaborate. Said his wife, Dixie: "Sammy still has moments."

In 1981 Davis traveled to Hawaii for an annual meeting of Medal of Honor recipients. There he met John William Finn, who had been awarded the medal for trying to repel the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Fifteen other American servicemen at Pearl Harbor received the medal, 10 of whom died in the attack.

Davis was in his 30s. Finn was in his 70s. As part of the ceremonies, Finn tossed 15 roses into the harbor, one for each of the medal recipients.

Davis and some of the other Vietnam veterans watched Finn honor the World War II soldiers. "John Finn said each man's name and his wife's name every time he put the rose in the water," Davis said. "He remembered every name. That blew us away."

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VVA 295 participated in the Crown Hill Memorial Day Services along with Maj. General Corey Carr and Senator Dan Coates

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"The Vietnam vets asked John, 'How could you remember everyone's name?' And John Finn said, 'How could you forget?' He said, 'By remembering, you take it from in front of you and put it beside you, beside not behind.'" Beside, not behind.

Today the Davises, who married in 2005, live in Freedom, a small burg in the hills of Owen County. He gives frequent speeches to schools and community groups about patriotism and sacrifice. He recently wrote his first book, the autobiographical "You Don't Lose 'Til You Quit Trying: Lessons on Adversity and Victory from a Vietnam Veteran and Medal of Honor Recipient." She has a book out, too, about their relationship, called "Endless Love: Second Chances."

In preparing for his return trip next month, Davis looked up Cai Lay on satellite imagery on Google Earth and said it looks very different than it did in 1968. It was rural then, "a swampy jungle," Davis said. It was like being in the Everglades. Today there's a town there. Davis said he hopes to find the exact hot spot from November 1968, which may be impossible with all the improvements. More importantly, Davis said, he wants to find some of the exact people who were trying to kill him and whom he was trying to kill. "I don't think we hated each other," Davis said. "I never hated them. I hope to talk to them. "What would I say? I don't know yet."

Roudebush VA Medical Center is needing volunteer drivers. Veterans Transportation Service provides Veterans a ride to their medical center or outlying clinic. This is a great way to help Veterans. To volunteer, visit or call Volunteer Services, 317-988-2734.