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VIETNAM WAR — 50 Years Later

Service & sacrifice



ROBERT MILLER/STAFF

More than 20 veterans were recognized on Wednesday, April 24 for their service during the Vietnam War. The Department of Defense recognizes those who served during the time period between Nov. 1, 1955 and May 15, 1975 as Vietnam veterans, regardless of location.

Local Vietnam veterans, family members honored with ceremony

By ROBERT MILLER
NEWS CLERK

AVON PARK — The National Defense Authorization Act was put into effect in 2008. This act empowers the Secretary of Defense to conduct a program on behalf of the nation that commemorates the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War. As part of this act, the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration was formed.

Congress set five objectives for the Commemoration, according to vietnamwar50th.com:

- To thank and honor veterans of the Vietnam War, including personnel who were held as prisoners of war, or listed as missing in action, for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States and to thank and honor the families of these veterans.
- To highlight the service of the Armed Forces during the Vietnam War and the contributions of federal agencies and



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The VFW Post 9853 in Avon Park hosted a ceremony honoring Vietnam veterans this past Wednesday. The event was organized and run by, from left: Charles Martin with Vietnam Veterans of America; John Harbaugh, president, Vietnam Veterans of America; retired U.S. Army Col. Mike Borders, president, South Central Florida Chapter of Military Officers Association of America; and Al Forbes with Vietnam Veterans of America.

governmental and non-governmental organizations that served with, or in support of, the Armed Forces.

- To pay tribute to the contributions made on the homefront by the people of the United States during the Vietnam War.



ROBERT MILLER/STAFF

The Vietnam War Veteran pin is given to recognize, thank and honor U.S. military veterans who served during the Vietnam War, between Nov. 1, 1955 and May 15, 1975.

- To highlight the advances in technology, science and medicine related to military research conducted during the

Vietnam War.

- To recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by the allies of the United States during the Vietnam War.

As part of recognizing those who served, the Commemoration established the Commemorative Partner Program. According to the program's website, "an organizationally-based, hometown-centric initiative" that is designed to assist the United States in honoring and thanking those who served in the Vietnam War as well as their families. As a part of this program, a Certificate of Honor was designed to honor and give special recognition to four categories of veterans and their families:

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1. Former, Living American Military POW

This specially designed lapel pin was created to be presented to living American military POWs of the Vietnam War. If the former POW is deceased, the pin is presented to the surviving spouse.

2. Unaccounted For

This pin is presented to the immediate family of American military personnel who have been listed as missing and unaccounted for by the Department of Defense from the Vietnam War.

3. In Memory Of

This certificate and pin are presented to immediate family members of those Vietnam veterans who are listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

4. Deceased Vietnam Veteran's Surviving Spouse

This fourth category is presented to "the surviving spouse at the time of death of a veteran who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces at any time during the period from Nov. 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975, regardless of location."

"Welcome home"

As part of this Commemoration, the VFW Post 9853 in Avon Park held a ceremony to honor Vietnam veterans Wednesday at VFW Post 9853, 75 N. Olivia Drive. On hand to present the pins were retired U.S. Army Col. Mike Borders, president of the South Central Florida Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA); Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) President John Harbaugh; and Charles Martin with VVA.

"We've been conducting joint ceremonies to welcome home veterans of the Vietnam War," Borders said. During this joint effort, the VVA and the MOAA have conducted six pinning ceremonies over the past 18 months.

Both organizations, independently, are official partners with the Department of Defense. They report to the Pentagon before and after each pinning ceremony.

"We wanted to bring some dignity and honor to those veterans who came home at a time that wasn't so great in America," Borders said.



ROBERT MILLER/STAFF

Catherine Wright-Wingate (left) was presented with a white rose, certificate and special pin by Karen Osgood, representative of the Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America (AVVA). Wright-Wingate had two husbands who each served during the Vietnam War. This pin commemorates their service.

"And recognize the service and sacrifice of all of them as well as their spouses."

During the ceremony, Borders talked about misconceptions concerning when the Vietnam War took place. He went on to say that organizations like the VFW, American Legion and even Wikipedia all have a set of dates for the Vietnam War, but none of them are the same.

"The Pentagon says," Borders said, "if you served in the U.S. military anywhere in the world between Nov. 1, 1955 and May 15, 1975 you are a veteran of the Vietnam War."

More than 20 veterans were recognized Wednesday and received the Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pin. The pin, about the size of a nickel, is adorned with an eagle's head on the front against a background of the American flag. Beside the eagle are six stars that represent the six allies who "served, sacrificed and fought alongside one another: Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and the United States."

Those who received the pin Wednesday include Charles Cobb, Richard Dudenhofer, Greg Goodall, Ron

Johnson, Glen Keefer, Robert Mitchell, Luis Nanze, Michael Orlando, Andrew Pietras, John Platt, Rondello Sanchez, Richard Sneed, Lyle Stark and Alfred Whithand. Several other Vietnam veterans were in attendance; they did not make the original list but were still honored and received a pin.

Alongside these veterans receiving their pins, Catherine Wright-Wingate was present to receive the Deceased Vietnam Veteran Surviving Spouse pin and certificate.

This gold pin is embossed with a blue star in the center on a gold background. Surrounding the star are the words "The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration" and a laurel wreath. An inner circle reads, "Service-Family-Sacrifice 50th Anniversary."

Wright-Wingate is the widow of two different Vietnam War veterans. She was presented the pin and certificate by members of the Associates of the Vietnam Veterans of America (AVVA).

If you are a Vietnam veteran or a surviving spouse wishing to be recognized and your name has not already been submitted through other organizations, contact Borders with MOAA at 703-795-8776 or Harbaugh with VVA at 419-560-0574, or visit vietnamwar50th.com.