

## FAMILY SUPPORT



Sentinel Photo/JOSH JONES

U.S. Army Vietnam Veteran David Terhune, CENTER, was honored Saturday at Mount Vernon Outland Airport during a medal ceremony. Pictured with Terhune, FRONT ROW FROM LEFT, are Emily Fulwider (granddaughter), Katie Murphy (granddaughter), Terhune, Wanda Terhune (wife), Amy Fulwider (daughter), and Michelle Murphy (daughter). BACK ROW FROM LEFT are Jack Murphy (son-in-law) and Garrett Murphy (grandson).

# Vietnam Veteran honored with medal ceremony

*Congressman  
Mike Bost's office helped  
to coordinate the event*

BY JOSH JONES  
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

MOUNT VERNON — While he may have been drafted in error, for Vietnam Veteran David Terhune his time serving in the U.S. Army is something that he takes pride in.

A medal ceremony was held on Saturday at Mount Vernon Outland Airport. Former Mount Vernon Mayor and Community Leader David Keen said that they were at the airport to honor Terhune's service in the Vietnam War and present his special medals. Terhune served as Specialist Fourth Class in the U.S. Army in the Vietnam War from 1966 to 1968. Terhune is a Mount Vernon resident and a graduate of MVTHS.

"About four/five months ago David called me. We were out at Mount Vernon Memorial Cemetery, they

were going to do a presentation the next day, and he was wondering about getting his special medals re-issued to him," Keen said.

Keen then informed Terhune that Military and Veterans Liaison for U.S. House of Representatives Congressman Mike Bost and Veteran Steve Russel would be at Mount Vernon Memorial Gardens the next day. Russel was able to get the medals issued and was representing Bost since he could not be present for Saturday's ceremony.

"As a veteran and a combat veteran as well, there are a couple (of things) I just want to mention, one is thank you Mr. Terhune," Russel said. "Our Vietnam Veterans they were thrown into a fight that was different from any other fight that we had fought ever before. They had no training, no experience or anything, they had to learn on the fly and adjust, adapt and overcome numerous challenges from an enemy that completely surrounded them at times, to a difficult time

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**MEDAL CEREMONY** — Colonel Troy Poorman, LEFT, and Veterans Liaison for U.S. House of Representatives Congressman Mike Bost and Veteran Steve Russel, RIGHT, present U.S. Army Veteran David Terhune with his medals during a ceremony Saturday at Mount Vernon Outland Airport.

# Ceremony:

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when they came home to a local population that wasn't necessarily very grateful of the service that they performed for their nation."

Russel said that everything those veterans learned in Vietnam carried over to future wars such as Afghanistan and Iraq.

"My generation, we stand on the shoulders of giants. Because if it wasn't for the hard lessons you learned we would have had to learn those lessons again and it would have resulted in a lot more casualties in Iraq," Russel said.

Though Bost couldn't be present on Saturday, he sent a video for Terhune and those in attendance. In the video, Bost told Terhune he was sorry he could not be present, but was busy traveling around the country meeting on issues important to veterans.

"But I wanted to take the time to make sure I did this video to say thank you, thank you for your service in Vietnam," Bost said, later adding, "Your service means so much to us and so many people came back from Vietnam (and) did not get the recognition that they needed. I thank you for your service."

At the end of the video, Terhune was presented with his medals that included the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Ribbon with 1960 Device, and the Marksmanship Badge with Rifle Bar. Colonel Troy Poorman thanked Terhune for his service.

"Like Steve was saying, counterinsurgency was learned in Vietnam and we re-learned that in the wars (of) Iraq and Afghanistan," Poorman said. "We dusted off the old manuals and started reading those and the guys before learned the hard way."

After being presented with his medals, Terhune said that the Medal Ceremony has been a long journey for him. Terhune explained that he had spoken with family before going to an Oak Ridge Boys concert about getting his medals issued and while he knew Keen would be able to help with that, he didn't

know how to get a hold of him.

"Anyway we got to the Oak Ridge Boys concert waiting for the doors to open and along walked David Keen," Terhune said.

Terhune then explained to Keen that he needed help getting his medals when he should have received them in 1968. The two would exchange contact information and after some encouragement from his wife Wanda, Terhune called Keen who at the time was at Mount Vernon Memorial Gardens preparing for a ceremony and put him in contact with Russel the next day.

After months of waiting for the medals to be delivered and then for schedules to align, Terhune said that receiving the medals means a lot to him.

"To me it makes my military complete, you might say, even though it has been 55 years and three days it still makes it more complete," Terhune said.

Terhune next recounted several incidents he experienced while serving in Vietnam. He noted that one day in February of 1968 after finishing a 12 hour guard shift he was called to see the Colonel. Terhune noted that he had spoken with the Colonel before who had always warned him about saluting as that was a way enemy soldiers could identify commanding officers. When Terhune arrived at the Colonel's bunker he once again saluted, but after being reminded about the rules, Terhune was given some big news.

"Anyway he said blank blank Terhune you are in trouble, and I said what did I do sir. He said blank blank there is a congressional out on you. And I said what in the world is a congressional," Terhune said. "He said they want you to come home, you are not supposed to be here. You got drafted 4A and 4A means if you are the sole surviving son that can carry on the family you are not supposed to be in the service, you are not supposed to be in active war."

At that point the Colonel offered Terhune two options. He could sign his discharge papers immediately where Terhune would have to give up his military protective gear and rifle and would have to travel without a guarantee that he could get on an airplane.

"He said the bad thing about this is it is during the Tet Offensive and there is a major war going on right now, more than what there has been before. He said the airports are being bombed, the airports are being raided overnight there and there are craters in the airport runway," Terhune said. "He said that I could get you from here to Ong Ha, but I don't know if I can get you on the plane or not because you are the only person. He said if we had 80 or 90 people going that would be easy."

If Terhune accepted that offer he would have to then go by flight from Ong Ha to Da Nang Air Base, if the plane could even land. At this point Terhune was a month away from being discharged.

"I said well you didn't leave me much choice, I think instead of me signing my papers to go home I will just stay. He said I was hoping you would say that, OK you are dismissed," Terhune said.

Terhune recalled the importance of God in his life and during the service. He said on Feb. 12, 1967, he was ordered to check the communication line between A and B Battery, which included one telephone pole with the rest of the wire running six to eight inches underground. Terhune said they would go along the communication line to look for any breaks and splice them together in the dark. He said everything was going well when they arrived at A Battery where the telephone pole was located.

"We got inside A Battery's bunker and everything was good, had a little lightbulb and that is all we went by. We had to sign in when we got there saying B Battery so they wouldn't shoot you," Terhune said. "We sat down there with 12 other guys and (the sergeant) and about that time a rocket hit, maybe about 50-70 yards out and boom, sawdust and sandbags were falling a little bit. All of a sudden boom, boom they hit again and all of a sudden the lightbulb went out, the communication line went out."

Terhune said when that happened the sergeant ordered him to climb and fix the telephone pole. He asked the sergeant if he had to go right then and he was told "You better."

"I got to the opening of the door and I could see outside and the flares were going off and I said I don't think I am



Sentinel Photo/JOSH JONES

**SERVING ONE'S COUNTRY** — David Terhune served as Specialist Fourth Class in the United States Army in the Vietnam War from 1966 to 1968.

going. He said what do you mean you don't think you are going. I said I don't think I am going, the good Lord told me not to. He said, blank, blank, blank what does the good Lord got to do with this," Terhune said. "I said if you don't understand that, you understand nothing, I said the good Lord told me I shouldn't go out there because something is going to happen."

Terhune said the sergeant told him he didn't believe that and that he would have to write him up for not following a direct order which Terhune accepted.

"Eight minutes later, I mean the biggest sound you have ever heard and something fell on the bunker. Sand was everywhere, the bunker was falling in," Terhune said. "One of the guys stuck his head out the door and he said (Sergeant) he said I hate to tell you this, but he said the telephone pole just fell down and I said thank you Lord. And I said (Sergeant) what do you think now... That was probably one of the scariest moments I had."

Terhune explained another scary moment while he was on guard duty. He said he was in a bunker on guard duty with two Marines on the north side of the perimeter. Terhune said during the

night he saw some movement towards him and had it radioed in. He was reading his rifle and asked for identification twice with no response. While they are only supposed to ask twice before they could fire, Terhune decided to ask one more time.

"I said halt who goes there and this time he was probably 50 yards and he kind of mumbled something and I said I am going to give you one more chance who goes there and he said, I think his name was Adams. He said Colonel Adams A Battery 94th Artillery," Terhune said. "He walked up to the bunker and shined it in my eyes and said who are you. I said I am Terhune B Battery. He said you could have shot me a while ago, why didn't you shoot me, and I said would you like to be dead. He said no, but you didn't follow orders and I said yes I did, you are still alive and I am not in prison."

Terhune said that he was thankful for everyone in attendance. Daughter Michelle Murphy spoke on the ceremony and explained that many of the stories were things that his family had just learned.

"I am just very proud of this day. Like he said it is a long time coming and some of

the stories he shared as family we didn't even know, because he for the most part has kept everything inside and not shared a whole lot," Murphy said. "The stories that he shared are new to us, so it is very special."

Daughter Amy Fulwider spoke on hearing her father's stories.

"We just love him a lot," Fulwider said.

Wife Wanda Terhune spoke on her husband.

"I am just very blessed he made it home," Wanda said.

Airport Director Chris Collins also commented on being able to host the event.

"Any time we get a chance to serve in a role like this, we sure want to do it," Collins said. "I have known Dave for probably 35 years, maybe even longer than that. He is a great man and a great ambassador for Mount Vernon."

After the ceremony, Terhune said that he appreciates everyone's help and that he doesn't want people to think he is a war hero.

"I was just a young kid who served my country, tried to do a good job and it all worked out," Terhune said.

If a veteran needs assistance with their medals, they are encouraged to contact Bost's office.

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