

Tribute to Vietnam Veterans

As we all know, last Friday was National Vietnam Veterans Day. President Obama proclaimed March 29 as Vietnam Veterans Day in 2012 commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War. "The Vietnam War is a story of service members of different backgrounds, colors, and creeds who came together to complete a daunting mission. It is a story of Americans from every corner of our Nation who left the warmth of family to serve the country they loved. It is a story of patriots who braved the line of fire, who cast themselves into harm's way to save a friend, who fought hour after hour, day after day to preserve the liberties we hold dear. From Da Nang to Hue, they won every major battle of the war and upheld the highest traditions of our Armed Forces." In 2017 Congress passed the Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act which President Trump signed on March 28, 2017. Many places honored our Vietnam Veterans last week, including events in the Moorhead/Fargo area. Here in Green Valley, AZ, I decided to listen to some old songs popular during the war. The first was Scott McKenzie's "Going to San Francisco". It was the song we played in Japan when we became a 'short timer', getting ready to return to the US. My other favorite is the Bellamy Brothers' 'Old Hippie' and the words "He was sure back in the sixties that everyone was hip. Then they sent him off to Vietnam on his senior trip. And they force him to become a man while he was still a boy." This reminded me of some facts that my friend Larry distributed when we went to high schools and talked about the Cold War and Vietnam War, the ages of those who died during the war. So, as is my habit, I did some research and found out the following. The youngest soldier to die in Vietnam was only 15 years old, 5 were 16, 12 were 17, 3,103 were 18. As a matter of fact, 44 percent of those who lost their lives in the war were under the age of 21. Since the age for voting was 21 for nearly all of the war, 44 percent of the casualties were not eligible to vote! After this, I decided to research other wars and what I found was amazing. The youngest person to serve in the Korean War enlisted in the Army at 13. The youngest person to serve in the military in WWII was only 13 when he joined the Navy shortly after Pearl Harbor. The youngest US soldier to serve in WWI joined the Army at age 12, served in both WWI and WWII. Going back to the Revolutionary War, I found that when the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776, Marquis de Lafayette and James Monroe were only 18, "Light Horse" Henry Lee, Aaron Burr and John Marshall were 20.

All of my professional life, I worked with college age individuals and was and am constantly impressed with the attitude and willingness of our young to serve.