



# Convention Highlights

Tuesday, July 25, 2017  
Business Session

## Retired Marine General Touts VFW's Vietnam War Book

Retired Marine Corps Gen. James E. Livingston addressed delegates today. The Medal of Honor recipient discussed the Vietnam War 50th Commemoration program, which began in 2014. Calling the Vietnam War the “most misunderstood and misinterpreted conflict apart from the Korean War,” Livingston corrected multiple myths about the war in Southeast Asia, including how most who served were drafted. “Draftees accounted for only 32% of all combat deaths,” the life member of Post 10624 in Mount Pleasant, S.C., said. “Another myth was that most of those killed in action were under the age of 20, when in reality, more men over age 30 died.”

Saying there has been a “renewed interest” in the Vietnam War, Livingston said it’s important to remember those who did not return from the war. To that end, he encouraged members to purchase a copy of *VFW's Brutal Battles of Vietnam: America's Deadliest Days, 1965-1972*, calling it “an honest historical preservation” of the Vietnam War. Livingston participated in the May 1968 Battle of Dai Do, which is featured in the book. Serving as the commanding officer of Echo Co., 2nd Bn., 4th Marine Regt., Livingston earned the MOH for his actions on May 2. “This battle is less known, yet was critical to saving the entire province,” he said. “Failure would have been a disaster for our nation, and it could have ended the war later that year or even the next with a North Vietnamese military victory.”

Rocky Bleier, a former NFL football player and member of VFW Post 5756 in Sewickley, Pa., wrote the forward to *Brutal Battles* and sent a videotaped message praising the book that was shown during the business session. “This work is a permanent keepsake that every Vietnam vet should possess to share with family and friends,” he said from his home in Pittsburgh.

### VFW Award Recipients and Speakers

VFW presented its *News Media Award* to the *Billings (Mont.) Gazette* for its efforts in recognizing local Vietnam veterans through its “Vietnam Voices” weekly column. Editor Darrell Ehrlick accepted the award.

Comedian Bobby Henline received the *Hall of Fame Award*, for entertaining troops, especially the wounded at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas. Henline, who served in 1991’s Persian Gulf War, was severely burned in 2007 while serving in Iraq with D Trp., 5th Bn., 73rd Inf. Regt., 82nd Abn. Div.

Navy Capt. Christopher Cassidy, an Afghanistan veteran, accepted the *Aeronautics & Aerospace Award*. A life member of Post 1 in Denver, Cassidy is the 500th person to fly into space, having been on two space flights and six space walks. Before becoming an astronaut, Cassidy served 10 years as a Navy SEAL.

Bonnie Carroll, founder and president of TAPS (Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors), received the *James E. Van Zandt Citizenship Award*. TAPS provides compassionate care, casework assistance and emotional support for those who have lost a loved one serving in the military.

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**NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.**

Theresa Early of Laurel Ridge Elementary in Fairfax, Va., Jeffrey Benes of Antioch Middle School in Gladstone, Mo., and Steve Johnson of Churchill County High School in Fallon, Nev., each received the *Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award* for working to instill patriotism in their students.

Department of Rhode Island Service Officer Raymond Denisewich received VFW's *Accredited Service Representative of the Year Award* for his work to secure a \$30,000 grant from the state of Rhode Island's veterans affairs office to increase his capabilities to assist veterans.

Vietnam vet and Burger King franchisee Larry Kohler received a *Certificate of Appreciation*, for donating more than \$200,000 over the years on behalf of his customers to VFW's *Unmet Needs* program and for recruiting other Burger King franchise owners to participate in the *Unmet Needs* campaign.

Edwin Fountain with the WWI Centennial Commission updated members on commemoration events, including the 100 Cities/100 Memorials campaign, which aims to clean up or refurbish 100 WWI memorials throughout the country. Fountain said 22 VFW Posts have participated in the matching grant fund to refurbish WWI memorials.

Jared Lyon, president and CEO of Student Veterans of America (SVA), thanked VFW for its partnership with SVA. The member of Post 3308 in Tallahassee, Fla., said SVA counts 600,000 veterans in its 1,400 chapters. He encouraged members to serve as mentors to student veterans.

Retired Air Force colonel and member of Post 1380 in Lancaster, Ohio, Tom Moe updated members on the status of the National Veterans Memorial and Museum currently under construction in Columbus, Ohio.

Michael Young of the National Desert Storm Veterans War Memorial said his group is planning to break ground on the memorial in 2020. He encouraged VFW Posts to "give within their means," to help raise the \$25 million needed.

The following VFW retirees received VFW's *Distinguished Service Medal and Citation*: John Hamilton for his service to VFW as commander-in-chief and adjutant general; Bob Crider for 26 years of service in various positions at VFW National Headquarters; Jerry Manar for his 12 years with VFW's National Veterans Service; Jerry Newberry for his 15 years of service at National Headquarters, including serving as assistant adjutant general; and immediate past VFW Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki.

The Howard E. Vander Clute Memorial Ride brought in \$28,500 for the VFW Programs Department. The total included \$15,000 raised by the Department of Virginia. Representatives from the VFW National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Mich., spoke and introduced 2017 Buddy Poppy Child Isabel Marvin. Post 1503 in Dale City, Va., presented Patrice Greene, the home's executive director, with a \$2,600 check.

**-The End-**