

Sir Knight Colonel Gerald P. “Jerry” Krueger, US Army retired delivered these introductory remarks at the K of C Potomac Assembly #2204 & VFW Post 609-Alexandria sponsored

Celebrate Vietnam War Era Veterans dinner party. March 29th 2025

Background:

In the decade of 2010-2020, in the midst of new lengthy Middle East wars in **Iraq** and **Afghanistan**, **Vietnam War memories** again were taking on uncomfortable connotations. Americans asked: **Didn’t we learn our lessons** almost 50 years ago? Vietnam Veterans, represented a whopping 10% of their generation, and the country, with painful experiences in that unpopular war, treated returning veterans badly. Vietnam Veterans never had a victory parade. They became pretty vocal, advocating for respect for those who continue to serve our country, espousing the saying: **“Never Again, Will One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another.”**

On Memorial Day in 2012, **President Barack Obama**, addressing Vietnam Veterans gathered at the Vietnam War Veterans Wall in DC, said: **“You were often blamed for a war you did not start, when you should have been commended for serving your country with valor. You came home and sometimes were denigrated when you should have been celebrated.”**

As the war in Afghanistan continued, the War in Vietnam eventually became known as the “other 20-year war.”

March 29th is National Commemorate Vietnam Veterans Day.

In 2017, March 29th was designated to be our country’s **National Vietnam War Veterans Day** – a day of **OBSERVANCE**, set aside in perpetuity for **our nation to thank and honor** all Vietnam Veterans. A Department of Defense **Commemoration Commission** was formed to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the war – a years’-long recognition of the “beginning of the end” of the contentious war - what became almost a decade of hundreds of parades and ceremonies to provide Americans an opportunity to celebrate Vietnam Veterans and their families; and to thank them for their service and their sacrifices.

Among the hundreds of Commission-supported commemorative events celebrating Vietnam vets, a heraldic commemorative Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pin was also

created and was issued to Vietnam Veterans as a "*Lasting memento of the Nation's thanks.*"

Eventually in a broadening of the initial celebration of those Vietnam Vets, who served in-country, the **commission expanded** the offer of a lapel pin to **all those who served on active duty, no matter the location, at any time between November 1, 1955 and May 15, 1975.**

Why March 29th ?

Why was march 29th designated as Vietnam Veterans Day? In short, it was on this day in 1975 that the United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, called MAC-V, was disestablished. It also is when the last U.S. Combat troops departed Vietnam. And finally, it is the day when the last of our POWs were released by Hanoi.

So, in honor of all our Veterans who served during the Vietnam War, as well as the more than 58,300 men and women whose names appear on The Wall, we offer our nation's gratitude for your service. Your example of service during a trying time in our nation's history is inspiring.

May we hold a moment of silence for those who served but are no longer with us.

Now, on with the program. We offer many thanks to COL Richard Dunbar, US Army retired, and Past Navigator and Past Admiral of our Potomac Assembly #2204 for his superb efforts in assembling for us the continuously-running PowerPoint slide show highlighting many of our Vietnam War Era Veterans here with us to celebrate them and all of you tonight.

Thank You

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