

Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution



Patriot of the Month

May 2016



Harley W. Funk

Sponsored by:

Margaret Miller Chapter



Harley Funk grew up on a farm at the edges of northern Monroe County and southern Shelby County in Missouri. On May 24, 1969, he married Charla Peak. Charla and Harley graduated in the same class at South Shelby High School and dated for two years. Charla and Harley were married for only 1 1/2 months when Harley was inducted into the U.S. Army in St. Louis, Missouri.

After completing basic training at Ft. Leonard Wood, Harley was sent immediately to Ft. Old, California, for advanced infantry training. Upon completion of training in November 1969, he was given twenty days of leave during which he spent time celebrating Thanksgiving at home with his wife and family.

On December 5, 1969, Charla and her younger brother went with Harley to the St. Louis International Airport. Harley was to fly to Oakland Air Force Base in California and then be deployed to fight in the war in South Vietnam. Harley recalls, "There seemed to be little time to say goodbye, and Charla was holding back her tears for my sake, hoping it would make my departure easier. As I boarded the plane, I glanced in the window and I could see that Charla was crying and being consoled by her brother, Learel. I believe that moment and the following months were the most difficult times Charla and I have had to endure."

After arriving in South Vietnam on December 8, Harley spent a few days in the Long Binh Replacement Center before he was sent north to Camp Enari located near Pleiku in the central highlands of Vietnam. He was to be assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, which was based there. He was part of an infantry scout platoon. Their jobs ranged from reconnaissance and night ambushes to search and destroy missions. His unit was engaged as part of the "official" incursion into Cambodia during May 1970. He also aided with the refugees coming out of Cambodia during the communist take over of Cambodia in June 1970.

Christmas 1969 found Harley in the central highlands thousands of miles from home and those he loved. Although the Army tried to make the day special by feeding the soldiers a traditional Christmas meal, it certainly did not seem like Christmas according to Harley. After being away from home that Christmas, holidays since then have had a greater importance to him.

Harley had several narrow escapes during his encounter with the enemy. He witnessed some of his buddies being wounded but fortunately he returned home without any injuries. Harley said, "God was certainly looking out for me." Harley's tour in Vietnam was to last until December 8, 1970, but his unit was deactivated on October 28, and he was sent home after serving eleven months. "Returning home to the United States and to my wife and loved ones proved to be the most incredible time of my life. Fortunately, I received a nice welcome home by most everyone in our area. Unfortunately, many Vietnam veterans were not treated kindly when they returned home."

Harley received several medals and awards while in the Army. However, he humbly states that he could never understand why the Army thought he was worthy of an award for valor, because during those events in which he won the awards, he was scared to death. He would bet that everyone in those same situations experience the same emotions.

After returning to the United States in October 1970, Harley was given thirty days leave. He had slightly over eight months of service time remaining so he was assigned to work in the AG Separations Department at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri. This time he brought his wife with him to live in St. Roberts near Ft. Leonard Wood. They lived near one of Harley's close buddies, Mark Hammer, from Vietnam. Harley, Mark, and their wives spent many weekends and evenings together. They see each other regularly even today.

Harley was discharged from the U.S. Army on July 7, 1971. After being honorably discharged, Harley served two years in the National Guard, and then resumed a career in home construction for over twenty years. He and Charla made Huntsville, Missouri, their home where they raised three children. Later, Charla and Harley were both employed by the U.S. Postal Service as rural letter carriers and both retired in 2008.

Harley says it is a privilege to have been able to serve our country. He thinks that things such as exposure to Agent Orange, being confronted with constant danger, and separation from loved ones, may have caused him to age before his time. The experiences were not always pleasant, and he would not want to relive many of the events. However, he would not trade his experience for anything. He made some very close friends in the Army, and they reunite every year which means a lot to all of them. They are as close as brothers and would do anything help each other when necessary. He believes he is a better man for having served, and if necessary, would like to believe he would do it again. May God continue to bless the U.S.A.

The Daughters of the Margaret Miller Chapter DAR are proud to nominate Harley W. Funk as Patriot of the Month and extend their gratitude for his patriotic service and commitment to our great nation.