

Illinois Post Remembers KIA 50 Years Later

The special ceremony brought the community together

Oct 10, 2016

In an effort to “honor the dead,” members of Post 1307 in Elgin, Ill., hosted a ceremony memorializing a local soldier who was killed in action in Vietnam 50 years ago.

Bob Getz, a member of the Post and Vietnam veteran, was inspired to organize the gathering after attending a similar ceremony for someone from his former unit last



year.

“I thought, ‘You shouldn’t have to have a Medal of Honor to get a ceremony like that,’” Getz said.

So he and a few other Post members researched people from Elgin who were killed in action. After reaching out to living family members, the Post decided to honor PFC Florentino “Tino” John Santana, who served in Vietnam with D Co., 1st Bn., 26th Marines, 3rd Marine Div. He was killed in action as a result of a missile wound on Sept. 18, 1966, in Quang Tri Province.

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Some 150 community members attended the event, held Sept. 18, including his wife, Donna, and daughter, Kate. The family received Gold Stars during the ceremony, which included a three-volley salute by A Btry., 2nd Bn., 122nd Field Arty.

To further honor those who were killed in action, the Post provided a whiteboard for attendees to write the names of the fallen. According to Getz, names spanned all eras, but most were from the Vietnam War or Post-9/11 wars.

For Getz, and many who attended, what was important about the event was to come together as a community.

“We aren’t always going to remember,” Getz said. “Sometimes you need something that jars your memory to remind you that you promised to remember. The ceremony was not just for Santana, but for the folks who attended to go home and maybe say a little prayer for someone they know.”

[Watch a video of the event.](#)

Photo caption: Members of Post 1307 gather to honor PFC Florentino “Tino” John Santana, who was killed in action in Vietnam on Sept. 18, 1966. Santana’s surviving family attended the community event, which occurred exactly 50 years after Santana’s death.

By [Kelly Gibson](#), senior writer, *VFW* magazine