

A Once-in-a-Lifetime Hunt

Four disabled veterans hunt on the Great Plains

Jan 22, 2020

Four Purple Heart recipients participated in the 37th annual VFW magazine-Donnan Gulch Outfitters Disabled Veterans Antelope Hunt this past October near Broadus, Mont.

Donnan Gulch Outfitters is owned and operated by Russ and Carol Greenwood. The couple started hosting the annual hunt in 1982 because they didn't like the way Vietnam War veterans were treated when they came home. Russ Greenwood also has a personal connection to Vietnam War veterans. His twin brother – Roger, a member of VFW Post 987 in Baraboo, Wis. – flew helicopters during the war.

While the hunt started as a way to honor veterans of the Vietnam War, it evolved into an event that included veterans of every generation.

Larry Haskett, VFW Post 6242 in Beloit, Kan.

Larry Haskett is a Vietnam War veteran who served in the Army with C Co., 1st Bn., 26th Inf. Regt., 1st Inf. Div. He arrived in Vietnam September 1966 and left March 1967.

“My family has always been in the military,” Haskett said. “From the Revolutionary War through all major wars, my family has served everywhere.”

Haskett said he was wounded during a firefight on Feb. 27, 1967, by a Viet Cong hand grenade.

Haskett, who was an infantryman, said two of his ribs were blown off and three-fourths of his intestines were hanging out of his body.

“When that happened, a medic came over and started working on me,” Haskett said. “Then, the Viet Cong threw another grenade at me. That one didn't go off.”

He was medevacked to Tay Ninh, where he stayed for two weeks, then transported to 106th General Hospital in Yokohama, Japan, where he stayed until May. Haskett spent the remaining four months of his time in the Army at Fort Carson, Colo.

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Barry Johns, VFW Post 3303 in Newcomerstown, Ohio

Barry Johns is a Vietnam War veteran who served in the Marine Corps with Charlie Co., 1st Bn., 5th Marines. He arrived in Vietnam October 1968 and left January 1969.

Johns said he was wounded during a firefight southwest of An Hoa Combat Base on Jan. 12, 1969.

“We were doing road security that day,” Johns said. “Some NVS crawled several hundred yards through some tall grass near us, and came up and started shooting at us from about 50 yards away.”

Johns said he received a gunshot wound to his spine, as well as wounds from shrapnel, during the fight. He left the country and spent three months on Guam, then to Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland. Johns left the Marine Corps in July 1969.

Johns said he has “no regrets” from serving in the Marine Corps.

“I’m very proud of my service, but I wouldn’t recommend it for my sons,” Johns said, while laughing. “It’s one of those things that I’m really glad I did, and I would do it again in a heartbeat if I was that young and stupid again.”

Edwin Ohmann, VFW Post 9433 in Rosemount, Minn.

Edwin Ohmann is a Vietnam War veteran who served in the Army with 3rd Bn., 187th Inf. Regt., 101st Abn. Div. He arrived in Vietnam in August 1970 and left in October.

As a platoon sergeant, Ohmann said he lost both of his legs to a booby trap on Oct. 17.

“It was really stressful when I realized that I lost my legs,” Ohmann said. “I had just had my 21st birthday the month before, and I had 17 men my age or younger under me. I felt responsible for them.”

All while having lost his legs, Ohmann said there was a “sense of relief” from his wounds.

“I thought, ‘I finally get to go home,’” Ohmann said. “It was like a weight had lifted off of me. Even though I was injured, I was, frankly, a little relieved.”

He spent 10 days in Quang Tri, then a night in Da Nang before leaving the country. After brief stays in Japan and Travis Air Force Base in California, Ohmann spent seven months recovering at Fitzsimmons Army Hospital in Aurora, Colo. He was discharged from the Army in June 1971.

Ohmann said he was thankful for the Greenwoods for hosting the antelope not just for him, but for all veterans who fought in war.

“They don’t do this out of guilt,” Ohmann said. “They seem like they are doing this because they simply want to help and honor veterans.”

David Thomas, VFW Post 1888 in Trenton, Mich.

David Thomas is a Vietnam War veteran who served in the Marine Corps with Golf Co., 2nd Bn., 5th Marines. He arrived in Vietnam March 1970 and left in July.

Thomas said he was wounded by a claymore mine blast on July 20 near An Hoa Combat Base, located about 8 miles southwest of Da Nang.

“We were setting up a defensive perimeter the night before,” Thomas said. “I set up a claymore. We heard movement through the night, and I wanted to set it off, but I was denied permission.”

Thomas said that his leadership wouldn’t allow him to do it because of recent “friendly fire” incidents within a six-week period. He said there was Marines at a listening post near the perimeter.

“In the morning, my squad sergeant told me to go out and get the claymore,” Thomas said. “I told him no, and that I wanted to set it off during the night, but permission was denied.”

Thomas said that his platoon sergeant then ordered him to go out and find the claymore.

“There was the right amount of authority and intimidation for me to do it,” Thomas said. “I went half way out and remember seeing a big white flash. I wound up on my back.”

He lost both legs and was unconscious for at least a week.

“I don’t remember much,” Thomas said. “I almost died twice. I know about one time because I remember it, but the other time I was told by someone else.”

After being transported to Yokosuka, Japan, Thomas was sent to Naval Hospital Philadelphia, where he spent months recovering. He was discharged from the Marine Corps in February 1971.

Thomas thanked the Greenwoods for their “hospitality” and dedication to veterans.

“A lot of people come up to veterans and say, ‘thank you for your service,’” Thomas said. “But with Russ and Carol, they are putting their money where their mouth is. They donate their time and space for us, and I couldn’t thank them enough for doing so.”