

Texan Elected to Head Nation's Largest Organization of Combat Veterans

Aug 20, 2008

ORLANDO, Fla. — America's largest organization of combat veterans has elected a Vietnam War veteran to head the 1.6 million-member Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Glen Gardner, a resident of Round Rock, Texas, was elected national commander August 21 during the VFW's national convention, held August 16-21 in Orlando, Fla. Gardner is the fourth Texan to head the 109-year-old veterans' service organization.

In his acceptance speech, [link to speech below] Gardner, who served in the Marine Corps from 1966-1970, reminded the mostly Vietnam-era audience that to remain a vibrant organization, the VFW must be attractive to today's generation of military service men and women, so they can assume more leadership roles within the organization at the local level.

"We can't hold onto the concepts of another era and expect to survive," he said, "Young veterans are not looking for a social club to belong to-- they want to belong to an organization that provides services to active-duty military, veterans and their families." Gardner added that he would like to add 175,000 new members to the membership rolls during his leadership year, as well as increase post participation in the VFW's core programs: Voice of Democracy, Patriots Pen and Teachers Award.

Recognizing the need for help and assistance to active-duty military and their families, Gardner, who has chosen as his theme, "Honor Sacrifice and Service," said he plans on visiting more stateside military bases to better gauge what services military units need and how VFW can enhance its traditional military services programs such as Unmet Needs, Operation Uplink and military assistance programs.

"We will do what our active military need to make their service better, as well as work with the individual service Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) departments, to enhance our services to the active-duty military," he said.

During the Vietnam War, Gardner was an aircraft mechanic with the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, Marine Aircraft Group 12 in Chu Lai, Vietnam. His military awards include the

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Combat Action Ribbon, Vietnam Service Medal, Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal with device and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry.

In 1969, he joined VFW Post 2993 in Olathe, Kansas, later joining Post 3359 in Garland, Texas, where he maintains his life membership. He was elected Post Commander in 1977 and again in 1983, and served as Post Quartermaster for five terms. He earned the title of All-American District Commander in 1981-1982 and was the Adjutant/Quartermaster for the Department of Texas for more than 20 years.

The Texas veteran also was instrumental in forming the Texas Coalition of Veterans Organizations, chairing the 600,000-member group for 15 years.

Gardner is a member of Military Order of the Cootie, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans and National Association of Uniformed Services. His hobbies include golfing and antiques.

During his yearlong term, Gardner will log thousands of miles to promote the VFW, veterans' issues and quality of life initiatives for active-duty, Reserve and Guard members. By the time the commander's term ends, he will have visited every state and numerous overseas areas.

Also elected were Thomas Tradewell, senior vice commander-in-chief, of Sussex, Wis., and Richard L. Eubank, junior vice commander-in-chief, of Eugene, Oregon.