



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA VIETNAM WAR COMMEMORATION

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Events requests are made by filling out and submitting this form to the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration Events Team, with as many details as possible, a minimum of 90 days in advance of the event start date. Please be sure all fields are properly filled in. If you do not have information for a field enter "none". The use of any symbols will not allow for accurate submission.

[INSTRUCTIONS](#)

For Each Event, Please Supply The Following

1. *NAME OF ORGANIZATION:

The EC-47 History Site

2. *NAME OF EVENT :

Tribute to Veterans at The Wall Th

3. ADDRESS OF ORGANIZATION:

a. *STREET ADDRESS:

4213 Green Meadow Drive

b. *CITY:

San Angelo

c. *STATE:

Texas

d. *ZIP CODE

76904

e. *COUNTRY

United States

4. LOCATION OF EVENT

a. *SITE NAME (e.g., The Pentagon):

Historic Fort Concho Parade Grou

b. *STREET ADDRESS:

630 South Oakes Street

c. *CITY:

San Angelo

d. *STATE:

Texas

e. *ZIP CODE

76904

f. *COUNTRY

USA

5. *START DATE
(MM/DD/YYYY):

11/18/2017



6. *END DATE
(MM/DD/YYYY):

11/18/2017



7. ACTUAL ATTENDANCE
(Numeric Entries Only)

510

8. HOW MANY VIETNAM VETERANS
WERE PRESENT?

81

9. HOW MANY VIETNAM VETERANS FAMILY
MEMBERS WERE PRESENT?

120

10. DID YOU COLLABORATE WITH ANY OTHER COMMEMORATIVE PARTNERS? : (If so, list the commemorative partners you collaborated with for the event.)

No



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11. ANY MEDIA COVERAGE?:



Yes. Local TV and newspaper coverage.

<http://www.conchovalleyhomepage.com/news/local-news/the-wall-that-heals-vietnam-veterans-exhibit-makes-a-stop-at-historic-fort-concho/858187296>

<http://www.conchovalleyhomepage.com/news/local-news/pinning-ceremony-at-historic-fort-concho-honors-vietnam-era-veterans/859979872>

<http://www.goodfellow.af.mil/News/Video/videoid/567527/>

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12. *SUMMARY: (Include the following information and anything else you would want other Commemorative Partners to know, such as: Was your event a success? How were your objectives fulfilled? Were there any issues that came up? List any helpful suggestions or changes for future and lessons learned. Attach additional pages as necessary. If unrepresented lapel pins need to be returned to the program office, please indicate and we will send you a shipping label.)

The EC-47 History Site Commemorative Partner Program (CPP) Committee chairman worked closely with The Heritage Chapter - Freedom Through Vigilance Association (FTVA) and the Historic Fort Concho Museum Board to bring the half-size replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, The Wall That Heals (TWH), to San Angelo, Texas, Nov. 16-19, 2017. With TWH as the backdrop, the CPP Committee organized a special Welcome Home for Vietnam War veterans and In Memory Of (Gold Star) and Surviving Spouse (Blue Star) Certificate of Honor and lapel pin recognition ceremony on the Fort Concho parade ground on Nov. 18.

CPP Committee representatives from the EC-47 History Site, Heritage Chapter-FTVA, VFW, Lions Clubs, Goodfellow AFB, American Legion, Association of Asian-American Women, Fleet Reserve, Texas Veterans Commission, Fort Concho, and West Texas Counseling and Guidance assisted with publicity, registration, a public-address system and chairs, and outdoor set up and tear down. More than 500 people attended the ceremony, which featured several guest speakers: Col. Ricky Mills, GAFB Wing Commander; Gold Star daughter Debra Tijerina Brown; author Aryn Lockhart, who was saved from a Saigon orphanage as part of Operation Babylift in 1975; San Angelo Mayor Brenda Gunter; and Tom Nurre, Sr., CPP Committee chairman.

Eighty-one Vietnam veterans were each honored with a Welcome Home handshake, commemorative lapel pin, mayoral proclamation, Heritage Chapter-FTVA Certificate of Honor, and Thank You goodie bag of commemoration materials. A medley of service songs was also played so veterans of each service could stand and be recognized during their respective songs. Additionally, 16 Gold Star and 15 Blue Star family members were each presented with a Certificate of Honor and commemorative lapel pin. CPP Committee volunteers from Angelo State University, Texas Veterans Commission, Fort Concho, East Side Lions Club, Chamber of Commerce, the "Doggers" Vietnamese linguists group, GAFB and Heritage Chapter-FTVA handled the presentations.

Following the ceremony, a catered reception for about 250 veterans, Gold/Blue Star family members and CCP Committee volunteers was held at ASU's LeGrand Alumni and Visitors Center. In addition to a buffet of Asian and Texas-style hors d'oeuvres, the reception featured displays and exhibits by the ASU West Texas Collection and History Department, Association of Asian-American Women, EC-47 History Site and ARDF History Exhibit, U.S. Border Patrol, and authors Aryn Lockhart (Operation Babylift) and Mitty Griffis Mirrer (Gold Star Children).

Photo coverage was provided by Faith in a Flash photographer Carl Bradley; the San Angelo Fire Department provided on-site medical services; Tom Nurre, Jr., from the ASU Office of Communications and Marketing emceed the ceremony; and the Conch Pearl restaurant catered the reception. It was a well-attended, successful commemoration event.

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13. MATERIALS ACTUALLY USED: (For each category of materials below, subtract the amount remaining from what was sent to you.)

(1) ITEM NOMENCLATURE	(2) QUANTITY REQUESTED
Brochures	200
Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pins	81
Surviving Spouse Lapel Pin	16
Tin Pin: Family Member	150
Tin Pin: Lone Soldier	50
Bumper Sticker: I served	50

Bumper Sticker: Join The Nation	150
Bumper Sticker: We Heart	150
Presidential Proclamations	50
Other <input type="text" value="Cert. of Honor Fact Sheet"/>	100

Image 50th Vietnam War V...7 (27 of 277).jpg
1 Optimal Image Size: 600 x 400



*Caption:

November 18, 2017: The EC-47 History Site Commemorative Partner Program (CPP) wreath honoring Vietnam veterans and Gold & Blue Star family members is on display during the Welcome Home ceremony held on the Historic Fort Concho parade ground in San Angelo, Texas. The commemorative wreath was made and donated by the EC-47 History Site CPP chairman, retired Vietnam veteran USAF CMSgt Tom Nurre and his wife, Kitty. More than 500 veterans, family members, their guests and community dignitaries participated in the ceremony. Photo by Carl Bradley, Faith in a Flash Photography, San Angelo, Texas.

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Image 50th Vietnam War V...7 (61 of 277).jpg
2 Optimal Image Size: 600 x 400



*Caption:

November 18, 2017, San Angelo, Texas: the Lake View High School Trumpets, led by band director Cyndi Costello (far right), play the national anthem to open the EC-47 History Site 50th Vietnam War Commemorative Partner Program Welcome Home ceremony attended by more than 500 Vietnam veterans, family members, city leaders and public guests. The ceremony was held on the Historic Fort Concho parade ground. Photo by: Carl Bradley, Faith in a Flash Photography, San Angelo, Texas.

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Image 50th Vietnam War V... (102 of 277).jpg
3 Optimal Image Size: 600 x 400



*Caption:

November 18, 2017: The EC-47 History Site 50th Vietnam War Commemorative Partner Program committee hosted a ceremony recognizing and honoring Vietnam veterans and family members on the San Angelo, Texas, Fort Concho parade ground. (L-R) Goodfellow AFB Wing Commander, Colonel Ricky Mills; Mrs. Sally Griffis; San Angelo Mayor Brenda Gunter; Mrs. Mitty Griffis Mirrer and USMC Vietnam veteran Don Griffis. Sally (widow), Mitty (daughter) and Don (brother) accepted an IN MEMORY OF Certificate of Honor and Gold Star commemorative lapel pin in tribute to USMC Captain Bill Griffis who was killed in action in Vietnam on January 24, 1970. Photo by: Carl Bradley, Faith in a Flash Photography, San Angelo, Texas.

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November 18, 2017: In a tribute to Vietnam War allied countries, Association of Asian-American Women Texas representatives Rose Ng (left) and Rita Ellichman (right) pose with Vietnam veteran Carlos Flores during the EC-47 History Site Commemorative Partner Program sponsored Welcome Home ceremony held on the Historic Fort Concho parade ground in San Angelo, Texas. Photo by Carl Bradley, Faith in a Flash Photography, San Angelo, Texas.



November 18, 2017: Debra Tijerina Brown, daughter of Captain Albert Tijerina who was killed in action in the Vietnam War on March 1, 1971, holds a photo of her father playing King Kong when she was 3-years old. Mrs. Brown was a guest speaker during the EC-47 History Site 50th Vietnam War Commemorative Partner Program Welcome Home ceremony held on the Fort Concho parade ground, San Angelo, Texas. She was presented the IN MEMORY OF Certificate of Honor and Gold Star commemorative lapel pin later in the ceremony. Photo by: Carl Bradley, Faith in a Flash Photography, San Angelo, Texas.



November 18, 2017: Representing Historic Fort Concho in San Angelo, Texas, Buffalo Soldier Sergeant Paul Cook greeted Vietnam veterans and families to the EC-47 History Site 50th Vietnam War Commemorative Partner Program Welcome Home ceremony conducted on the fort parade ground. Sergeant Cook also participated in presenting commemorative lapel pins to more than 80 Vietnam veterans during the ceremony. Photo by: Carl Bradley, Faith in a Flash Photography, San Angelo, Texas.



November 18, 2017, San Angelo, Texas: the Lake View High School Trumpets, led by band director Cyndi Costello (far right), play the national anthem to open the EC-47 History Site 50th Vietnam War Commemorative Partner Program Welcome Home ceremony attended by more than 500 Vietnam veterans, family members, city leaders and public guests. The ceremony was held on the Historic Fort Concho parade ground. Photo by: Carl Bradley, Faith in a Flash Photography, San Angelo, Texas.



November 18, 2017: The EC-47 History Site 50th Vietnam War Commemorative Partner Program committee hosted a ceremony recognizing and honoring Vietnam veterans and family members on the San Angelo, Texas, Fort Concho parade ground. (L-R) Goodfellow AFB Wing Commander, Colonel Ricky Mills; Mrs. Sally Griffis; San Angelo Mayor Brenda Gunter; Mrs. Mitty Griffis Mirrer and USMC Vietnam veteran Don Griffis. Sally (widow), Mitty (daughter) and Don (brother) accepted an IN MEMORY OF Certificate of Honor and Gold Star commemorative lapel pin in tribute to USMC Captain Bill Griffis who was killed in action in Vietnam on January 24, 1970. Photo by: Carl Bradley, Faith in a Flash Photography, San Angelo, Texas.



November 18, 2017: The EC-47 History Site 50th Vietnam War Commemorative Partner Program committee conducted a Welcome Home ceremony on the San Angelo, Texas, Fort Concho parade ground in honor of Vietnam veterans and family members. Brady Moore (right), 15-year old student from Haslet, Texas, presents the Vietnam veteran commemorative lapel pin to one of eighty-one veterans participating in the ceremony adjacent to The Wall That Heals replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on display at Fort Concho 16-19 November 2017. Photo by: Carl Bradley, Faith in a Flash Photography, San Angelo, Texas.



November 18, 2017: The EC-47 History Site 50th Vietnam War Commemorative Partner Program committee conducted a Welcome Home ceremony on the San Angelo, Texas, Fort Concho parade ground in honor of Vietnam veterans and family members. U.S. Navy Vietnam veteran William O'Ferrall (left) is presented a commemorative lapel pin by Angelo State University President, Brian May. Photo by: Carl Bradley, Faith in a Flash Photography, San Angelo, Texas.



November 18, 2017: (L-R): Gold Star sister Sylvia Tijerina touches the name of Capt. Albert Tijerina on The Wall That Heals display in San Angelo, Texas, following the EC-47 History Site 50th Vietnam War Commemorative Partner Program tribute to veterans and their families ceremony held on the Fort Concho parade ground on November 18, 2017. Sylvia was one of 16 family members presented the commemoration Certificate of Honor and Gold Star lapel pin. Photo by: Carl Bradley, Faith in a Flash Photography,



November 18, 2017: Vietnam veteran surviving spouse Tillie Lowery enjoys hors d'oeuvres at the EC-47 History Site 50th Vietnam War Commemorative Partner Program reception for veterans and their families held at the Angelo State University LeGrand Alumni & Visitors Center, San Angelo, Texas. Mrs. Lowery is the widow of Vietnam veteran Jack Lowery and was presented a commemoration SURVIVING SPOUSE Certificate of Honor and lapel pin (Blue Star) at the outdoor ceremony held earlier in the day at the Fort Concho parade ground. She is one of 16 surviving spouses that registered for the program tribute. Photo by: Carl Bradley, Faith in a Flash Photography, San Angelo, Texas.

An open letter to Vietnam veterans

By Aryn Lockhart, 17th Training Wing Public Affairs / Published November 21, 2017

SAN ANGELO, Texas –

Dear Vietnam Veterans,

I feel a deep connection to all of you. I am a Vietnamese adoptee, born in Vinh Long, Vietnam. In 1975, with the fall of Saigon imminent, President Gerald Ford sanctioned a humanitarian effort to mass evacuate thousands of orphans to their adoptive families throughout the world. This historical operation was known as Operation Babylift, and I am one of those orphans.

The initial flight was an Air Force mission using the massive Galaxy C-5A cargo plane. In a cruel twist of fate, the inaugural flight ended in tragedy. Fifteen minutes into the flight, the cargo door blew off causing a rapid decompression and forcing the pilots to return to Tan San Nhut Airbase. With no hydraulics to control the plane, the pilots instinctively maneuvered the aircraft. Despite their valiant efforts, they fell short of the runway by two miles. The airplane, the size of a football field, crashed into fiery pieces spread across the rice field. 135 lives were lost; children, escorts, humanitarians, and military members died April 4, 1975. Eleven Airmen are on the Wall amongst the brothers and sisters you served with. It was the remarkable skills of Air Force pilots Capt. Bud Traynor and Capt. Tilford Harp that ensured 178 people survived that tragic crash. My adoptive parents have always believed I am a survivor of that fateful flight.

On Nov. 18 I spoke and participated in a pinning ceremony for the 50th commemoration of the Vietnam War at Fort Concho in San Angelo, Texas. The Wall That Heals was on display, and it was the perfect backdrop for the ceremony. This half-scale replica of the Vietnam War Memorial was powerful and majestic as it spread 250 feet across the Fort Concho parade ground.

Braving the West Texas winds, this day was to honor the families of fallen veterans and to celebrate living Vietnam veterans. As the crowd began to fill to capacity, my nerves started to grow in magnitude - never had a speaking engagement been so important to me. Before the ceremony, I stood before the 1975 panel on The Wall That Heals. As I saw my reflection staring at me through the names of the C-5A crew members, I felt the pressure and the weight to convey my appreciation. Looking up beyond the individual panel, I was washed into the sea of 58,318 names surrounding me. How could I possibly find the right words to honor these men and women?

As I took my place at the speaker podium, my words and my pace were rushed. I had placed such a monumental weight upon myself to find the right words, the best words to convey my thoughts. With the Wall That Heals behind us, I glanced up and looked into the crowd. I felt the wind whip around me. I took a deep breath and slowed down. Each name on The Wall That Heals provided me with strength. I focused on my one solitary intention – to tell my story and convey my gratitude.

While many of you fought on the grounds of my homeland long before I was born, it does not diminish the importance you play in my life. You were called halfway around the world to serve. I will never fully comprehend the sacrifices you endured during the war. I will never know the tremendous amounts of loss you felt for your fallen brothers and sisters in arms. I will never know what it meant to return to an ungrateful nation that spat on you and turned its back on your service.

I want you to know, I was brought to America where I have led an amazing life of endless opportunities and blessings. I graduated from Virginia Tech with a major in Communication Studies and minors in Psychology and English. I continued my education with Webster University and received my master's degree in Business. I have worked for the Department of Defense for the past 23 years, and I now work for the same Air Force that initiated Operation Babylift.

Twenty years ago, I met Regina Aune, the medical crew director and survivor of the C-5A crash. As a young lieutenant, she withstood her injuries suffered from the crash and waded through the mud of the rice fields to help survivors to safety. Retiring as an Air Force colonel, she continued to influence Airmen throughout her career. Together Regina and I forged a lifelong connection and bond that helped us both heal from the tragedy of the C-5A crash.

With these opportunities, I met other adoptees and surviving crew members. In addition to Regina, I met retired Chief Master Sgt. Ray Snedegar who was the loadmaster on the C-5A. The three of us travelled back to Vietnam to pay our respects and honor the lives lost in the tragic accident. During our trip we visited young orphans. As we played with these children, laughed and interacted with them, Ray and I forged a heartfelt bond.

I met soldiers who were stationed hundreds of feet away from my orphanage. I travelled the world to meet nuns who helped take care of me in Vinh Long. I even travelled to Malaysia to pay my respects to the nun who chose me for my adoptive parents and died in the C-5A crash.

During this 50th Commemoration of the Vietnam War, I met a Gold Star Daughter for the first time. Her father was killed in action when she was just 3 years old. Her mother persevered through unimaginable loss and resiliently raised three children on her own. My gratitude instantly extended to the family members who were left behind.

As I concluded my speech, my hope was that I honored the names on the wall behind us. I then participated in the pinning ceremony for the Vietnam War Commemoration. These ceremonies recognize, thank and honor the United States military veterans who served during the Vietnam War. It was an emotional moment to place the commemorative pin on Regina. This was a simple gesture and I firmly embraced her. I wanted her to feel the deepest levels of my love for her role in my life. Where words might fail me, I hoped my embrace would speak for itself.

I am writing this letter to thank you. I want you to know there is not a single day I am not grateful for my life. And I am not the only one. There are thousands of Vietnamese adoptees who have flourished with the opportunities we were given and deeply appreciative for the sacrifices so many made for us. Until my final days, I will tell this story to anyone willing to listen and I will live my life in humble gratitude to honor you.

With my lifelong appreciation,

Aryn Lockhart



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U.S. Air Force Col. Ricky Mills, 17th Training Wing commander, speaks during the 50th Vietnam War Commemoration at the Fort Concho parade ground in San Angelo, Texas, Nov. 18, 2017. Mills made note of the 11 buildings on Goodfellow that are named in recognition of Vietnam veterans, including Albert Tijerina. (U.S. photo by Airman 1st Class Randall Moose/released)



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U.S. Air Force retired Col. Regina Aune receives a Vietnam veteran lapel pin from Aryn Lockhart, 17th Training Wing Public Affairs visual information specialist, during the 50th Vietnam War Commemoration at the Fort Concho parade ground in San Angelo, Texas, Nov. 18, 2017. Lockhart and Aune were both part of the humanitarian mission to evacuate orphans to their adoptive families known as Operation Babylift (U.S. photo by Airman 1st Class Randall Moose/released)



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Debra Tijerina Brown, Gold Star Daughter, speaks during the 50th Vietnam War Commemoration at the Fort Concho parade ground in San Angelo, Texas, Nov. 18, 2017. Brown received the Gold Star in recognition of her father, Albert Tijerina, who died in 1971 when Brown was three years old. (U.S. photo by Airman 1st Class Randall Moose/released)



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Gary Jenkins, 17th Training Wing Public Affairs audio visual production specialist, receives a Vietnam veteran lapel pin from Aryn Lockhart, 17TRW/PA visual information specialist, during the 50th Vietnam War Commemoration at the Fort Concho parade ground in San Angelo, Texas, Nov. 18, 2017. The purpose of the pin is to recognize, thank and honor United States military veterans who served during the Vietnam War. (U.S. photo by Airman 1st Class Randall Moose/released)



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A child studies The Wall That Heals, a half-scale replica of the Vietnam War memorial, during the 50th Vietnam War Commemoration at the Fort Concho parade ground in San Angelo, Texas, Nov. 18, 2017. The wall is approximately 250 feet in length, constructed of powder-coated aluminum, supported by an aluminum frame, and is made up of 24 individual panels. (U.S. photo by Airman 1st Class Randall Moose/released



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Veterans stand in recognition of their branches' song during the 50th Vietnam War Commemoration at the Fort Concho parade ground in San Angelo, Texas, Nov. 18, 2017. The event recognized, thanked and honored United States military veterans and the families of those who died during the Vietnam War. (U.S. photo by Airman 1st Class Randall Moose/released)



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The U.S. Air Force Galaxy C-5A crash site located just outside of the Tan San Nhut Airfield in Saigon, Vietnam, April 4, 1975, resulting in 135 fatalities and 178 survivors. This was the inaugural flight of President Gerald Ford's humanitarian mission to mass evacuate orphans to their adoptive families known as Operation Babylift. (Courtesy photo from U.S. Air Force retired Col. Bud Traynor/Released)



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U.S. Air Force retired Col. Regina Aune, Aryn Lockhart, 17th Training Wing Public Affairs visual information specialist and retired Chief Master Sgt. Ray Snedegar stand at the Galaxy C-5A shrine in Saigon, Vietnam November 2014. Together they returned to Vietnam to pay their respects and honor the lives lost in the tragic accident that occurred on the inaugural flight of Operation Babylift April 4, 1975. (Courtesy photo from Aryn Lockhart/Released