



Battlefield Heroics Revealed 45 Years Later



Pvt. Tubbs brother, Russell Tubbs (far right), and his sister, Laura Hemphill (fourth from right) were among family members attending. (Photo by Curt Weinhold)

Eddie Tubbs' battlefield heroics weren't widely known until his family, friends and community members gathered in early December to name a Coudersport bridge in his memory.

Emotions ran high as his cousin, Roy Baker of Tioga County, a Vietnam War combat veteran himself, quietly revealed some details of Tubbs' final minutes in the jungles

of South Vietnam. Published reports noted that the 19-year-old Army private died due to small-arms fire after laying down his rifle to help a fallen comrade. "That's not the whole story," Baker told a hushed audience assembled in the Calvary Baptist Church Activity Center, next to what is now the Private Edwin Tubbs Memorial Bridge. "Three soldiers who with Eddie had all taken small-arms fire," Baker explained. "Eddie risked his own life to help get them to safety. They were two enlisted men and his lieutenant. He had just helped his lieutenant to a safe location and was trying to get back under cover himself when they got him."

Another emotional moment came when three representatives of the Vietnam Veterans Legacy Motorcycle Club came forward to present a flag and plaque to Private Tubbs' sister, Laura Hemphill. Two of them spoke of the difficulties they had coping with the tense political climate when they returned to the U.S. after serving their own stints in the Vietnam War. "We owe it to people like Private Tubbs to never forget and to never take our freedom for granted," said club member Vic Corneliusen.



Pvt. Edwin F. Tubbs

(story continued on page 2)

Continued from page 1...

Potter County Commissioner Paul Heimel, who serves on the National Veterans and Military Services Committee, shared some memories of the Tubbs family from his childhood. "When the local newspaper came out that Wednesday in January 1969 and carried a front-page picture of Eddie, telling of his death, that's the day the war came home for many of us in Coudersport," Heimel said. "He was only 19. He never had a chance."

State Senator Joe Scarnati and State Representative Martin Causer, both of whom shepherded the bill to rename the bridge through the legislature, each attended Tuesday's ceremony. "This young man put his country and his fellow soldiers above himself," said Causer. "Even if they don't know anything else about him, anyone who crosses this bridge will know he gave his life for his family, his friends and for them."

Also on Tuesday, U.S. Representative Glenn Thompson was on the floor of the House delivering a tribute to Private Tubbs that will be entered into the Congressional Record. U. S. Senator Pat Toomey sent a letter of gratitude that was read aloud at Tuesday's dedication ceremony. Also participating were Potter County Veterans Affairs Director Will Worthington and the Rev. Janis Yskamp of Christ Episcopal Church in Coudersport. Members of the Potter County Honor Guard held the colors and a bugler sounded "Taps" to conclude the program, after which attendees assembled at the bridge for the unveiling of the memorial plaques. ■

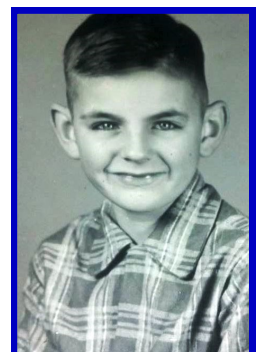


Roy Baker, cousin of Private Edwin Tubbs, revealed details of the late soldier's heroics in Vietnam during the bridge dedication. Rep. Martin Causer (right) also spoke. Photo by Curt Weinhold

Specialist Donald Stiles Bridge Approved

A young man from Coudersport who lost his life in the Vietnam War will have a local bridge named in his honor sometime in early 2015. Members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly unanimously approved legislation renaming the Rt. 872 bridge near American Legion Post 192 as the Specialist Donald Stiles Memorial Bridge.

"This is excellent news for members of the Stiles family and their many friends and supporters," said Will Worthington, director of veterans affairs for Potter County. "Once we hold the dedication ceremony in the spring, it will mean that all of the Vietnam War casualties from Potter County have been memorialized with a bridge named in their honor."



Childhood photo of 'Donny' Stiles

A native of the Rubbertown section of north Coudersport, U.S. Army Specialist Donald L. Stiles was the community's first fatality in Vietnam. Spc. Stiles was raised by his grandparents, Edward and Belle Austin Stiles, after his mother Vivian Stiles died when "Donny" was less than two years old. He enlisted in the Army at age 17. He was deployed on Feb. 28, 1967, as an atomic demolition munitions specialist, serving with A Battery, 1st Battalion, 7th Artillery, 1st Infantry Division. Spc. Stiles was killed in action in Binh Duong Province, South Vietnam, on April 2, 1968, after taking another soldier's place on a mission and being hit by bomb fragments from a land mine. ■



‘Call To Arms’ On Behalf of Veterans



Veterans representing the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard and Civil Air Patrol circled the symbolic empty table in recognition of prisoners of war and those missing in action. The ceremony was part of the Veterans Day dinner at American Legion Post 192.

Solemn ceremonies and a call for public support of those who have served in the military highlighted the annual Veterans Day Dinner at American Legion Post 192 in Coudersport. Keynote speaker was Potter County Commissioner Paul Heimel, who called on county residents to recognize the sacrifice local military veterans have made and look for opportunities to express their appreciation and support.

“It is only through a greater understanding of what you’ve been through and what challenges you are facing today that we, on the civilian side, can at least try to pay you back,” Heimel said. “I know that a simple ‘thank you for your service’ is always appreciated, but people also need to realize that it’s not always enough.” Veterans may need help with employment, basic needs, or access to medical care and other services, he pointed out. Many of them may be able to find help from Potter County Veterans Affairs Director Will

Worthington, whose office is located at the Gunzburger Building in Coudersport. “If you are a veteran, or a family member of a veteran, or if you know a veteran who might be missing out on benefits or services, the first place to start is with Director Worthington,” Heimel said. “Just three in 10 are taking advantage of the benefits they’re entitled to.”

Commissioner Heimel also outlined some of the initiatives he has been pursuing on Potter County’s behalf as vice chairman of two advocacy organizations at the state and national levels. These range from lobbying Congress for improved health care access through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), to a crackdown on criminals who fraudulently solicit on behalf of veterans. He dedicated his speech to his father, the late Joseph P. Heimel, who was a B-17 tailgunner on dozens of bombing missions during World War II.

The dinner was preceded by an emotional empty-chair ceremony in recognition of prisoners of war and military service members who are missing in action. Ceremonies concluded with the sounding of a bell in memory of Legionnaires who have passed away over the past year. ■

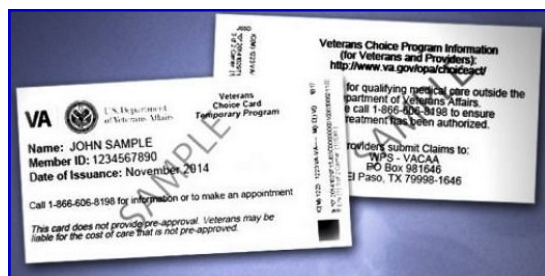
Military veterans from Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Texas and California took part in an assisted deer hunt at the LEEK Hunting and Mountain Preserve in Oswayo. The non-profit organization provides wounded service members a way to enjoy therapeutic outdoor recreational experiences and activities. Many volunteers pitch in to help. Among participants were (from left) LEEK volunteer guides Ken Martin and Vic Taylor, and veterans Dennis Leonard (seated), Bill Staley and Danny McDaniel. Veteran Brett Borges is shown with the seven-point buck he harvested. ■



What Is The Veterans Choice Card?

Many military veterans in Potter County have received the "Veterans Choice Card" from the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA). These cards have generated many inquiries to Veterans Affairs Director Will Worthington. This article is designed to answer some of the most frequently asked questions.

The Choice Card is being distributed to all veterans enrolled for care at VA. It was developed to provide "back-up" care if a veteran cannot be seen by VA in 30 days or if VA's closest medical facility is challenging to access. In situations like this, veterans may be eligible to receive care outside VA. Each card that's mailed by the VA is accompanied by a letter containing information about eligibility. The cards were first mailed to those who VA believes are in immediate need and meet the eligibility requirements. You may have recently received your Choice Card. If you have not received it yet, there is no need to do anything. Due to the substantial number of cards being mailed, they are being sent over a period of approximately 90 days.



The Choice Card cannot be used unless eligibility circumstances apply regarding VA wait times or facility accessibility. Veterans should first determine their eligibility given the criteria. If you believe the eligibility circumstances apply to you and you are currently in need of medical services, please call 1-866-606-8198 to verify your eligibility and get assistance accessing care. If you do not seek or receive approval by calling this number, you

may be responsible for some or all of the costs of any non-VA treatment you receive. Potter County Veterans Affairs Director Will Worthington is also available to assist. His office is in the Gunzburger Building (first floor) and appointments can be made by calling 814-274-8290, extension 210. His email address is wworthington@pottercountypa.net.

The Choice Card augments other treatment options already available at the VA and is designed to improve wait times and access. It does not affect existing VA health care or any other VA benefit – it just offers other options for care when VA can't meet a veteran's needs. ■

Local VA Clinic Secured Through 2018

The Potter County Commissioners have renewed a contract with the Bath (N.Y.) VA Medical Center for operation of a VA medical clinic located at Mapleview, just off Rt. 872 in east Coudersport. The contract now extends to June 30, 2018.



The center is staffed by personnel trained to process new enrollments, update patient information, conduct screenings and deliver primary care and/or referrals, depending on each veteran's needs. Many of the services that have only been available to veterans at larger VA medical centers in Bath are provided at the Potter County facility. Eligible veterans who have not enrolled for medical care through the VA are encouraged to contact Potter County Veterans Affairs Director Will Worthington at 814-274-8290, extension 210.



Operating hours for primary care are Thursdays from 8 am to 4 pm, provided by a nurse practitioner, a registered nurse and a licensed practical nurse. Personnel are also on duty Mondays from 8 am to 4 pm, offering more limited services that include medication and prescription renewals and lab work. Veterans interested in being seen at the Coudersport office should call 814-260-9342. Specialty services beyond primary care are available through the Bath center. ■

TU 'Healing Waters' Event To Honor Vietnam Veterans



Last year's Project Healing Waters included Dorothy Smith from Erie, the first woman veteran to participate. She was assisted by TU member Chase Howard.

God's Country Chapter of Trout Unlimited will host its eighth annual Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing event May 19-22. Members are working with community partners and other volunteers to make this year's event a truly special occasion, in honor of all veterans of the Vietnam War. It recognizes the 40th anniversary of the war's conclusion.

Vietnam veterans as well as members of the public will be invited to participate in a 40-mile procession through Potter County and other activities to be announced.



U.S. Army Sgt.
Gary Beikirch

Special guest this year will be Sgt. Gary Beikirch, Medal of Honor recipient and Army special forces medic from the Vietnam War. A recently retired school counselor, Beikirch formerly directed a veterans outreach center in Rochester, N.Y., and serves as chaplain of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society. Details are being worked out by TU volunteers David Saulter (saulterdq@yahoo.com) and Pete Ryan (drflyfish@yahoo.com).



God's Country TU volunteer Carl Sprouse (left) helped veteran Tom Hogan pull his trophy trout from the waters.

Portions of this year's Project Healing Waters event will be hosted by Big Moore's Run Fish and Game Preserve. TU volunteers will provide fly-fishing instruction, equipment and guide services for about 15 disabled veterans. About half of them will be Vietnam veterans from across the country. The others will come from the VA medical centers in Erie, Bath, Pittsburgh and Buffalo. Tax-deductible donations to help offset the costs are being accepted at: God's Country Chapter TU, Project Healing Waters, Box 702, Coudersport PA 16915. ■



Potter County employees and other community members welcomed the 2014 Project Healing Waters veterans during a motorcade through Coudersport.

Tax Exemption For Disabled Veterans



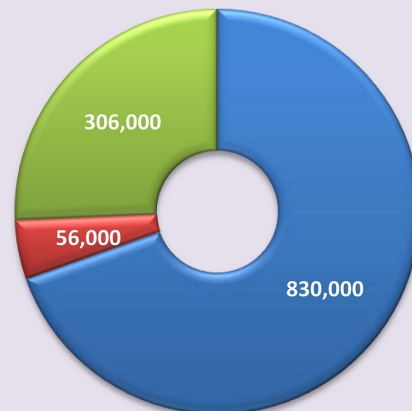
Recent media reports have generated confusion about Pennsylvania's real estate tax exemption for disabled veterans. To receive the exemption, a Pennsylvania vet must have a 100 percent service-connected disability, must have served in the military honorably, and must not exceed income limits. He or she must have served during established war service dates as determined by the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs and must occupy the real estate as his/her principal dwelling. Those veterans who believe they meet the requirements should contact their county director of veterans affairs. ■

PTSD Ruling For Vietnam Vets

Under a new Department of Defense directive, military boards responsible for correcting or upgrading discharge status must give “liberal consideration” to petitions from veterans who received a less-than-honorable discharge due to behavior resulting from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Discharge upgrades could lead to the award of previously denied benefits, such as disability pay, separation pay, GI Bill eligibility and VA benefits. The rule applies to all veterans with discharges prior to the formal recognition of PTSD in 1980, which resulted in government agencies denying disability claims, discharge upgrades and VA benefits. A veteran seeking a revised discharge will have to prove three elements: that he or she suffered from PTSD at the time of service, that the cause was related to military service, and that the symptoms were a factor in the misconduct underlying the less-than-honorable discharge. ▪

Veterans with Service-Related PTSD

■ Vietnam (Initial est.) ■ Gulf War ■ Iraq/Afghanistan (est. thru 2009)



source: US Dept of Veterans Affairs

Pa. Veterans Trust Fund Off & Running

Pa. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs has distributed hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants from the Pennsylvania Veterans' Trust Fund (VTF). The fund's balance has grown significantly thanks to Pennsylvanians who have voluntarily made a \$3.00 donation when applying for a license or photo ID and renewing a motor vehicle registration, as well as proceeds from the sale of the Honoring Our Veterans license plate. Grants support programs and projects to support Pennsylvania veterans and their families. The program was established in 2012. Tax-deductible donations can be made to: Pa. Veterans' Trust Fund, Bldg. 0-47 Fort Indiantown Gap, Annville, PA 17003. Fifteen dollars from each “Honoring Our Veterans” license plate sale goes to the Veterans Trust Fund. The plate features an American flag and an eagle with the words “Honoring Our Veterans.” Cost is \$35. ▪



Veterans For Common Sense

Veterans for Common Sense is an organization that advocates for military veterans' causes through political activity, public relations and other activities. Members work with legislators, other decision-makers and stakeholder groups to improve and safeguard veterans' benefits and rights. They also support policies to improve America's security and prosperity in the long term, ranging from energy independence to condemnation of torture and the appropriate use of smart power to further America's interests. More information is available on the website, veteransforcommonsense.org. ▪



Potter County Veterans News is a publication of the Potter County Veterans Affairs Department. Copies are available for download from the county's website, pottercountypa.net. For more information, contact Paul Heimel at 814.274.8290, Ext. 203.