

2009 HONOREES TO BE HONORED AT THE MERCER MEMORIAL DAY 500

MAURICE GARRETT JR., U.S. ARMY CPT. Maurice was first a paratrooper, then commander of a helicopter squadron, 101st Airborne Division, during his 2 tours of duty in Vietnam and the only serviceman declared Missing In Action from Mercer County he was one of the County's most decorated Vietnam servicemen receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross, 3 Purple Hearts, 2 Silver Stars, and 2 Bronze Stars with valor device & Oakleaf Clusters. He was grounded from flight due to high frequency hearing loss 14 days before his tour of duty was to end, but volunteered to fill in for another pilot who was unable to fly a mission that, in turn, ended Maurice's life. On October 22, 1971 he took off with his team from Quang Tri aboard an AH1G Cobra Gunship Helicopter for an armed visual reconnaissance mission. He instructed the others to hold on the eastern side of a ridgeline while he continued westward into a valley to check weather conditions. About 5 minutes later he gave instructions to the team to stay clear of his intended path in the clouds. His helicopter struck trees, impacted & exploded. His citations spoke of his utmost bravery & heroism, risking his life in the line of duty. His family believes honoring those who died and those who served in any war in turn honors our great country. Never will we forget them. He said "We are Americans and, if we try harder, we shall reach the goal of mankind...peace".



RODGER KLENOVICH, U.S. AIR FORCE (RET) SGT. Rodger flew over 100 combat rescue missions during 2 tours of duty in DaNang, Republic of Vietnam. There have only been 2500 Pararescuemen in the history of the U.S.A.F. He is proud to have been one because it put him in a position to rescue 14 soldiers, marines and airmen. Their motto is "These things we do that others may live". His position with the Pararescue Team required him to parachute out of aircraft in full scuba diving gear and medical kit into the open sea at night. He was awarded the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross and 10 Air Medals for the service he performed for his country. Rodger feels if you lose your freedom you will 'not ever' take it for granted again. To the fighting man freedom has a flavor the protected may never savor. To today's servicemen, he believes there is wisdom in the saying "Discretion is the better part of valor".



ERIC KNAUF, U.S. ARMY (RET), CW3. Eric was a helicopter pilot 7th Armored Squadron, 1st Air Cavalry in the Delta-Uman Forest, Cambodia, flying out of KheSan into Laos and all along the DMZ receiving 3 Distinguished Flying Crosses & 4 Air Medals with Valor Device for heroism. Near Che Lang he delivered troops to rescue Allied personnel that were overrun by a large enemy force, surviving high winds, smoke and intense enemy fire. On another occasion, realizing that a gunship sent out to take strategic aerial photos could not fly safely without a chase ship he volunteered for the position knowing that anti-aircraft weapons would be, and were, used against them. More than 15 rounds of heavy anti-aircraft fire exploded near his aircraft but he fearlessly remained on station to complete his mission. He volunteered for another mission that other pilots were unable to complete, evacuating 11 wounded with cool determination & exceptional skill, making a 100' vertical descent through a tiny hover hole in the triple canopy jungle. He is most proud of being able to save lives. He feels most Americans think that it is someone else's responsibility to keep them safe, and finds they fail to take time to recognize those who have done so.



JIM STOKELY, U.S. ARMY (RET), SGT. E5 served America as a member of the 12th Cavalry, Co. B, and was awarded the Bronze Star for Meritorious Service, Air Medal, Vietnam Campaign and Service medals, and the coveted Combat Infantry Badge in Vietnam. He was stationed between Saigon and the Cambodian Border (Tay Ninh, Quanloi & Song Be). Jim was an RTO operator and Company Clerk during his tour of duty and, as a result, was exposed to a wide and varied view of how the Vietnam War unfolded. Jim is proud of doing the best possible job he could during trying times, both in theater down range and hostility servicemen faced here at home. He feels freedom is precious and must be fought for. His advice to soldiers today is to remember that "most Americans are proud of you". Since Jim's discharge he has served in many military associations including President and other positions for the 1st Cavalry Division Association, being recognized for his involvement by the Secretary of the Army.

