



As Ray Kadrmas of Middleton admired the images of troops on the Korean Memorial wall in Washington D.C., it brought back memories of serving in the Korean War from 1950-1955 as an electronic technician.

## A trip of a lifetime

### Veterans take Badger Honor Flight with support of the Sauk Prairie community

by ERIN VANDER WEELE  
Editor

During his year of service in the Vietnam War, veteran John Hughbanks of Sauk City says he was never at ease.

Hughbanks, 65, describes his time in Vietnam as a “scary” experience and, serving at the edge of combat, he would often wonder if he would make it back home.

“You were always keeping an eye open,” Hughbanks recalled. “I have a lot of nightmares still.”

When he did arrive back in the U.S. during January of 1971, Hughbanks, like many of Vietnam servicemen, did not receive a warm welcome home with the general public’s negative perception of the war at that time.

Upon his return, Hughbanks wanted to put the experience behind him, but there was a lot about the war he would never forget. He moved forward with marriage, raising two daughters and working in construction, but has continued to struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder throughout his life.

“You just have to try to deal with it the best you can and keep going,” he stated.

On Sept. 24, Hughbanks was one of 85 veterans who boarded the Sauk Prairie Badger Honor Flight to visit the Washington D.C. memorials built in honor of those who served our country. It was an emotional and memorable day-long trip for the veterans as they visited the Arlington National Cemetery, The Marine Memorial, the WWII, Korean War and Vietnam War Memorials, as well as the US Air Force Memorial.

At the end of the day after touring the memorials, as Hughbanks was in line to board the plane home, he said the Badger Honor Flight trip helped bring him some closure.

“It almost makes me want to cry,” he said.

And when Hughbanks and all the veterans returned to the Dane County Regional Airport, they received a well-deserved, heartwarming welcome home with hundreds of people lined up to greet the veterans and

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Vietnam War veteran John Hughbanks of Sauk City is welcomed home from the Honor Flight trip during the homecoming ceremony at the Dane County Regional airport.

PHOTOS BY ERIN VANDER WEELE



## Great Sauk Trail cooperative plan approved

by JEFF SEERING  
County Correspondent

A cooperative plan for the Great Sauk Trail was approved, a new supervisor was seated, a placemaking initiative was started and the county’s shoreline protection ordinance was revised when the Sauk County board met last week in Baraboo.

The board approved a cooperative plan for the Sauk Prairie segment of the Great Sauk Trail. It formally establishes the county as the lead partner in cooperation with the Villages of Prairie du Sac and Sauk City and the Towns of Prairie du Sac and Merrimac in efforts to build the recreational trail that eventually will run from Dane County through Sauk City and

Prairie du Sac to Devil’s Lake State Park.

The board’s action will allow the trail to be put on the DNR board agenda in December, said county board chairman Marty Krueger. The DNR asked for the plan to be adopted as an indication the county is committed to continued trail planning, construction and maintenance. The first segment to be built runs along the old railroad right-of-way in Sauk City and Prairie du Sac up to the southern boundary of the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area, the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant. The plan was put together by the Great Sauk Trail Commission.

Sauk Prairie area supervisor Donna Stehling said about the step forward for the trail, “I

think it’s a wonderful idea and I’ve been waiting for 20 years.”

### Braunschweig joins board

Craig Braunschweig was appointed to replace Carol Held, who recently resigned due to health reasons, as the District 7 supervisor, representing the western part of the City of Reedsburg. Braunschweig has been active in community affairs, serving as president of the Reedsburg Area Historical Society and as program director for the Reedsburg Bar Buddies safe ride home program. He is the library director in Rock Springs.

Braunschweig’s appointment will be for the remainder of Held’s term. He was the only person to apply for the board seat, Krueger said. Unlike it did with the vacancy in District 11

in August, the board voted against holding a special election in April to fill out the remaining year in the term to which Braunschweig was appointed. Action made to hold a special election failed on a 15-15 tie vote. Those supporting holding the special election argued voters should be offered a choice. Those arguing against it noted that unlike the District 11 seat for which six people applied, only one applied this time and it was within the purview of board rules for the chairperson to make the appointment, something that has been done for many years.

Mike Flint, who was appointed to the District 11 seat last month, said if he had known — SEE COUNTY, PAGE 6

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# Memories of the Sauk Prairie Badger Honor Flight



Veterans received a warm welcome when arriving at the airport in Washington D.C.



Above, the veterans watch the Changing of the Guard at the the Arlington National Cemetery. Right, a veteran and his guardian take a seat at the WWII Memorial to talk while admiring the stunning view.



PHOTOS BY ERIN VANDER WEELE

## FLIGHT

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thank them for their service. The airport filled with excitement, tears and joy as veterans walked through a path formed by people gathered around for their chance to hug the heroes and shake their hands.

### Honoring those who served

This special flight was made possible through the overwhelming generosity of the Sauk Prairie community and the continuous efforts of the Sauk Prairie Heroes for Honor committee.

In Dec. 1, 2015, the committee announced the Operation Eagles' Wings campaign with a goal for the community to raise \$100,000 by Labor Day weekend to sponsor the Sept. 24 Badger Honor Flight. That goal was met in less than six months, and with a full sale of events scheduled for summer, the committee set out on another mission to raise an additional \$100,000 for a second Badger Honor Flight to take off in spring, 2017.

This past Labor Day weekend, the committee announced the Sauk Prairie community raised \$208,000 total for the two flights. By accomplishing the

mission, Sauk Prairie became the first community known within the Honor Flight Network to accomplish this fundraising goal in the time completed. The Heroes for Honor committee of volunteers was recently awarded the Jefferson Award for Public Service.

"For what they took on and what they've accomplished, I'm just so floored by," said Badger Honor Flight president Brian Ziegler during the flight send-off ceremony on Sept. 24.

The ceremony started the day of special recognition for the veterans boarding the flight: 49 Korean War veterans, 24 Vietnam, 10 World War II, and two who served in Korean and Vietnam. A guardian joined each veteran on the trip. There were 26 veterans from the Sauk Prairie community who took the trip.

"Today it is your flight," Bob Kelter of the Heroes for Honor committee told the veterans in the ceremony.

"I can assure you this flight will be life altering in a very good way," he added.

Generosity also comes from the dedicated volunteers who devote their time to make the

trip a safe and memorable one for the veterans of each Badger Honor Flight. Bus captain volunteer Jim Bublitz, a Vietnam veteran, has been volunteering for the organization for several years.

"It means to me that we have to take care of each other," Bublitz said. "It's very important that the veterans are served for what they've done. I was not a combat veteran, but yet, I want to make sure that all my comrades are taken care of." He feels honored to be a part of bringing the veterans to Washington D.C. and shared the story of his most memorable experience when a veteran father opened up to his son about the war for the first time on the day of his Honor Flight.

"It was so nice to know that we accomplished something," Bublitz said with tears in his eyes.

### Beginning a trip of a lifetime

For Korean War veteran Bob Holum of Merrimac, the experience means a lot to him. He was joyfully overwhelmed by the welcome to Washington D.C. that morning at the Ronald Reagan Washington National Air-

port with Honor Flight volunteers who came to thank the veterans for their service, along with local uniformed service members, and an orchestra playing patriotic music. "It just has to move you from the core," Holum said.

Following the visit to the Arlington National Cemetery, where the group of veterans watched the Changing of the Guard, they gathered at the Marine Memorial in Washington D.C. for lunch. During the meal, some veterans exchanged stories and shared about their service with their guardians.

### Memorable visits to the memorials

The veterans then headed to the WWII Memorial, honoring the 16 million men and women who served – more than 400,000 who have fallen. The memorial is located on the former Rainbow Pool at the eastern end of the reflecting pond in front of the Lincoln Memorial. The veterans, with their guardians, walked around the memorial and took a moment to admire the striking stone architecture and bronze sculptures.

The next stops were the Ko-

rean War and Vietnam War Memorials, as well as the US Air Force Memorial. As Ray Kadrmass of Middleton admired the powerful images of troops on the Korean Memorial wall, it brought back memories of his time serving in the Korean War from 1950-1955 as an electronic technician.

"This is amazing; today is just great," Kadrmass said. "It brings back some sad things, things that happened to friends. And some happiness experienced."

While he was sharing his experience, a woman walking by stopped to thank him for his service with tears in her eyes, and told Kadrmass her son is currently serving in the military.

For Dennis Shaw of Prairie du Sac, who is a Vietnam War veteran, he appreciated the company of his guardian Dennis Fisher of Sauk City, as he took time to say his farewell to his fellow comrades at the Vietnam Memorial wall.

"I felt a lot of regret," Shaw said. "He was a lot of support."

As WWII Army Air Corps veteran Arnold Willis of Madison took a moment to view the US Air Force Memorial, the last

stop before heading back to the airport, he described the day as "uplifting and surprising." Willis was a tail gunner on a B17 in the air corps with 14 planes in his squadron.

"By the time we left, we lost half of the guys who went in with us," Willis recalled. The last member of his bomb crew passed away recently, but Willis still keeps in touch with his fallen comrades' families. He said it was nice to share stories with the veterans of other wars during the Sept. 24 trip.

His son and guardian for the flight, David Willis, said the experience of seeing support of veterans impressed him the most about the trip, with people who were visiting the memorials stopping to thank the Badger Honor Flight veterans for their service.

"It shows you there is a community at large," he said. "I've been around a few years and a lot of different places and I never experienced that, ever."

*Sauk Prairie Star editor Erin Vander Weele had the honor of joining the veterans on the Honor Flight Sept. 24.*



Above, veteran Bob Holum of Merrimac and his guardian Daniel Holum are welcomed by a crowd as they enter the WWII Memorial. Left, Vietnam War veteran John Hasheider of Prairie du Sac and his flight guardian take a moment to honor the veterans whose names are on the Vietnam Memorial wall.



Left, Raymond Bolton of Prairie du Sac joins in dancing to the music at the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport before the veterans board the flight to head back home.

On the flight back home, the veterans received mail call in which the Badger Honor Flight organization gathered letters from friends and family for the veterans to open at the end of the trip. Howard Lenerz of Prairie du Sac is shown above reading the letters written by his mom and wife in 1969 while he was serving in the Vietnam War. His son Steven Lenerz, who was also his guardian on the flight, was born while he was in service and Howard would eagerly await mail call each day to hear about his son. "It definitely brought back memories," he said.

PHOTOS BY ERIN VANDER WEELE



Veterans were welcomed home with hugs, handshakes and cheers at the Dane County Regional Airport, which was filled with lines people when the veterans returned from the trip on Saturday evening.