

# AVEL VIETNAM

Newsletter - December 2016



**MERRY  
CHRISTMAS**

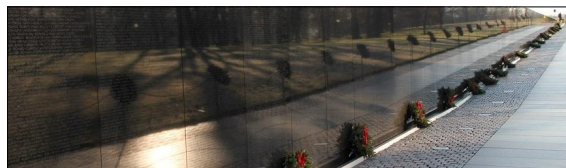
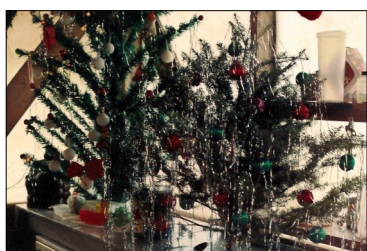
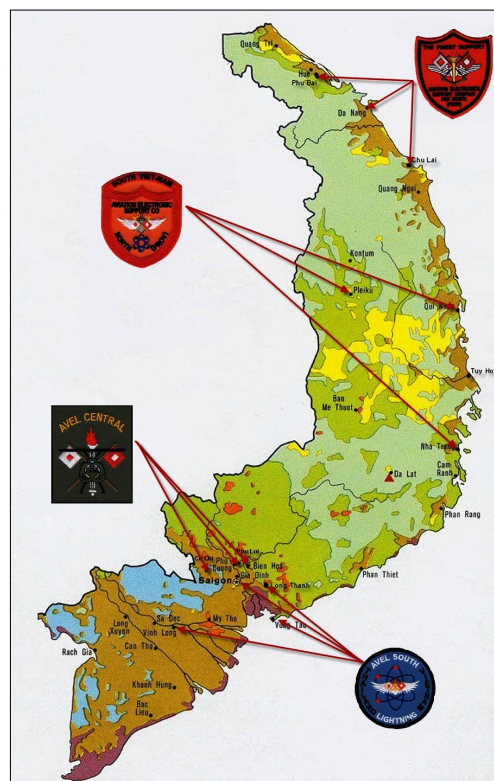


As the year comes to a close and we approach another Christmas it is important to remember what the season is all about. With all the turmoil in the world today it is easy to forget the reason for the season. It isn't about eating, drinking or partying too much.

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill towards men."

**"This is what Christmas is all about"**

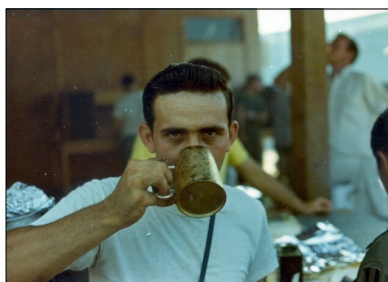
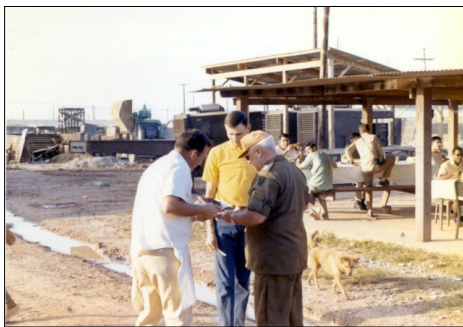
We all spent at least one Christmas in Vietnam. Some spent several. Take a look back at some photos of those Christmas' so long ago.



Don't forget to join us on Facebook. Search for the group: AVEL Vietnam.









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## NEW AVEL, AVIONICS AND VIETNAM VETERANS REGISTERED

**Martin, Richard S. (SP/4)**  
3258 SW Crumpacker St.  
Port Saint Lucie FL. 34953  
816-377-0929

*317th Maintenance Co. (LEM): June 1971-May 1972*

[martin.richard47@yahoo.com](mailto:martin.richard47@yahoo.com)

MOS: 72C20

I was med-evaced due to a jeep accident. TBI, 100% disabled  
**AGENT ORANGE**

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## TAPS

None Submitted

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## PHOTOS

Photos from the 2016 Reunion have been posted on the website: [www.avelvietnam.com](http://www.avelvietnam.com)

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### Maya Lin Presented the Medal of Freedom

Maya Lin is a 2016 recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor. She was awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Barack Obama on Tuesday, Nov. 22.

In 1981, Maya rose to fame when she was chosen as the designer of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., now known as The Wall.

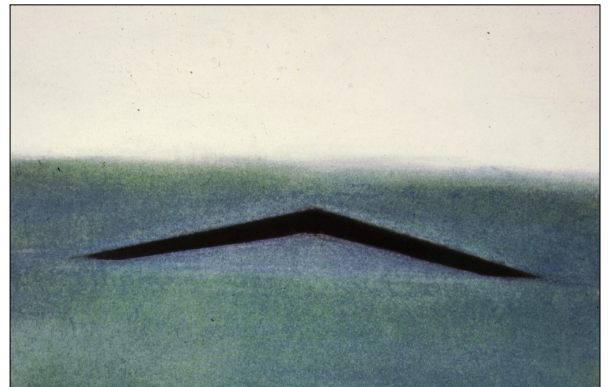
The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is composed of two walls spanning 246 feet in length that stand as a testament to human sacrifice. Inscribed upon it are the names of the more than 58,000 men and women who died or remain unaccounted for from the Vietnam War. It is one of the most poignant memorials in America.

At the time, the Vietnam War was the nation's longest war and one of the most divisive. America was in search of healing and reconciliation. In 1979, Jan Scruggs founded the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) and spearheaded the effort to build a national memorial. In 1980, a national design competition was launched. 1,421 entries were submitted and the judges unanimously chose entry #1026. The winner was an unknown Maya Lin, a 21-year-old undergraduate student from Yale University. The design would be "a long, polished, black stone wall, emerging from and receding into the earth."

Like the war itself, the results of the contest proved to be controversial.

After Maya Lin's design was chosen, outrage ensued. Many were offended by its nontraditional design. Its color, black, was detested for its "sad" and "negative" connotation. It was referred to as a "black gash of shame" and a "degrading ditch." Many also felt that an Asian-American should not be the designer. It wasn't until after the memorial was dedicated in November of 1982 that it became a national treasure. Her design was revered.

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Maya Lin's Original Drawing

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Today, The Wall is one of the most beloved memorials in America welcoming 5.6 million visitors each year.

Jim Knotts, CEO of VVMF released a statement on Lin's Presidential Medal of Freedom: "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund will be forever grateful for Maya's artistry. Her design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was controversial when it was first introduced to the public, but 35 years later, her design has proven to be a remarkable piece of art that has changed the way a nation mourns. We continue to see Vietnam veterans start or continue their healing process when they stand in front of The Wall. And younger generations continue to be awed by the scope of the sacrifice as they walk the long walls and realize every name is a life cut short. They begin to learn what it means to serve our country. The Wall, through its simple but brilliant design, helped to heal a generation and our nation. The Wall began a body of work in both art and architecture that will continue to impact our country for generations to come. It is wholly appropriate that we recognize Maya Lin for her contributions with our nation's highest civilian honor."

In its uniqueness, this design proved to be groundbreaking. It became a place for personal reckoning where those who visit can come to grips with loss.

Maya's pieces have changed America's landscape but none so profound as the tribute to the "Americans who fell in Vietnam." Her design brought about a sacred place of healing.

Since designing The Wall, Maya Lin has pursued a celebrated career in art and architecture.



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## CHANGES OF ADDRESS AND EMAIL

**Rudy Leon-Guerrero:** New email: leonguerrorudolfo@gmail.com

**Joe Matos:** New address: 7408 Spring Village Drive #405  
Springfield, VA 22150

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## VFW Post 3006 Salisbury, NC

On the way to the VA Hospital at Salisbury I noticed a Huey outside the VFW. This was just a block away from the VA and I had to stop and check it out.

It is in need of repair but it was good seeing it. Like an old friend.





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## Celebrity Vietnam Vets

### Wes Studi

Wes was born in 1947 in Nofire Hollow, in Northeastern Oklahoma, the eldest son of a ranch hand. He spoke only his native Cherokee until he was 5, when he was enrolled in the Murrell Home to attend public school. He later attended the Chilocco Indian Boarding School in Northern Oklahoma, where he remained through high school graduation. Yet, unlike many fellow Native American students, he never forgot his language.

In 1967, Studi was drafted into the Army and was trained as an infantryman. After training he served at Fort Benning where he volunteered to go to Vietnam. When he arrived in Vietnam he was assigned to the 9th Infantry Division in the Mekong Delta.



After an honorable military discharge, Wes returned home and became seriously involved with Native American politics. He joined the American Indian Movement (AIM) and participated in the Trail of Broken Treaties protest march in 1972, where hundreds of Native American activists marched on Washington. He was one of the protesters who briefly occupied the Bureau of Indian Affairs Building there. In 1973, Wes participated in the occupation at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, for which he was arrested.

Wes now sees his political activism as a form of post-Vietnam catharsis. “I began to purge the bad feelings within myself,” he says, adding that he joined the resisters because “I wanted to make myself a viable part of the machinery that affected my people.”

Recognizing his current path could lead to self-destruction, Wes changed course and channeled his feelings toward positive change. Shortly after Wounded Knee, Wes moved to the Tahlequah, Oklahoma, where he worked for the Cherokee Nation, and helped start the Cherokee Phoenix, a bilingual newspaper still in publication today. During that time Wes put his linguistic skills to work and began teaching the Cherokee language in the community. Later attending Northeastern University in Tahlequah, he made further attempts at positive influence in his work with his people.

After college, Wes shifted his attention to running his own horse ranch and became a professional horse trainer. It was during this era that he began acting at The American Indian Theatre Company in Tulsa in 1983, where he found both the adrenaline rush he craved and the cathartic release he needed. “When you’re able to release those feelings in an acting form, it’s healthier than leaving them inside,” he says of discovering acting.

Wes first took the professional stage in 1984 with “Black Elk Speaks” and has never looked back. As his success grew on stage, he expanded to productions for Nebraska Public Television in the summer of 1985. Not long after, he moved to Los Angeles, landing his first film role in “Powwow Highway” and making his TV debut in a small role in the ABC TV-movie “Longarm” in 1988. In 1990, Wes portrayed a terrifyingly memorable Pawnee warrior in “Dances with Wolves.” Two years later he landed the role of Magua in Michael Mann’s “The Last of the Mohicans,” the performance that put him on the map.

Wes drew on his own combat training, anger and sense of enforced isolation for his riveting depiction of the vengeful Magua. He soon became known for his film roles portraying strong Native American characters as he strove to portray them with poignancy and authenticity.

Wes went on to play the title character in the Walter Hill-directed film “Geronimo: An American Legend” (1993) alongside veteran actors Gene Hackman and Robert Duvall, for which he won a Western Heritage Award. He also made memorable appearances in such films as “Heat” (1995) as Al Pacino’s partner, “Deep Rising” (1998) and “Mystery Men” (1999). In 2002, he brought legendary character Lt. Joe Leaphorn to life for a series of PBS movies produced by Robert Redford and based on Tony Hillerman’s books “Skinwalkers,” “Coyote Waits,” and “A Thief of Time.”

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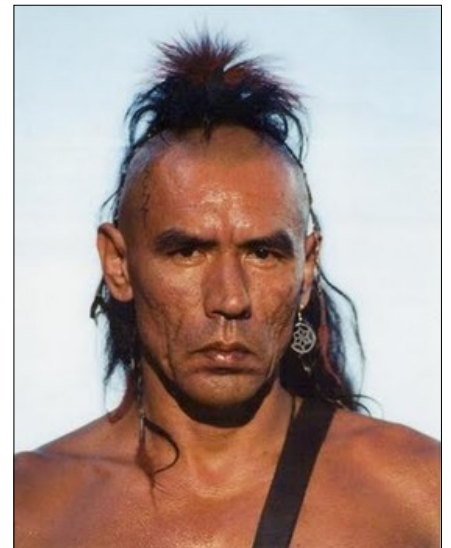
Wes' other notable film credits include: "The Only Good Indian," which he also produced, "The New World," "Street Fighter," "Seraphim Falls," "Three Priests," and such prestigious television movies as "Crazy Horse," "Comanche Moon," "Streets of Laredo," "Broken Chain," and "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee." His television credits include "The Mentalist," "Hell on Wheels," and General Abner in "Kings."

At home, Wes' artistic talent extends well beyond acting. He's a skilled stone carver, working primarily in soapstone and other soft stones. He's also an accomplished musician. Playing bass and guitar he fronts the band Firecat of Discord with his wife, singer Maura Dhu, primarily performing original music. Firecat released their first self-titled CD in 1998, touring the U.S. in 2000. Their music was also featured in the short film Bonnie Looksaway's "Iron Art Wagon," which Wes directed.

Additionally, Wes wrote two children's books, "The Adventures of Billy Bean" and "More Adventures of Billy Bean" for the Cherokee Bilingual/Cross Cultural Education Center. In 2006, Wes was honored with the Golden Boot Award.

Wes remains a passionate activist and academic. He's taken a national leadership role in the promotion and preservation of indigenous languages, acting as the spokesperson for the Santa Fe-based Indigenous Language Institute, and working as a language consultant on several films, including "Avatar" and the PBS documentary "We Shall Remain." He's also active in encouraging the next generation of film makers and performers, providing mentorship and participating in apprenticeship programs.

## Welcome Home Wes!



### IN-COUNTRY



**MPC...MOUNTAINOUS POCKET CHANGE!**

### IN-COUNTRY



**TET 1968:  
WHEN NEARLY EVERYONE WAS IN THE INFANTRY!**

# What makes Vietnam Veterans different from veterans of any other war?

Anyone fighting in a War it is always horrible, dangerous and many are killed.  
But the Vietnam Veterans never received a Welcome Home.  
They were also spit on in the streets and in the airports, called all kinds of names.  
They were called up or either signed up.  
Some even fled the Country to keep from going.  
They were all called baby killers, and other horrible names. Uncalled for.  
This is one of the reasons the war was different:  
The Home Coming!

*Marilyn Rose*



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