

Marines' Memorial Salutes

VIETNAM VETERANS



A CROWD GATHERED ON THE evening of 22 May in the Commandants Room at the Club to salute Vietnam Veterans. It was one of our best events ever. After a reception, we sat down for dinner and then listened to Irish folk singer Liam Tiernan sing a ballad from the World War I era about the battle for Gallipoli. The song is titled “The Band Played Waltzing Matilda” and it created just the right mood for our first speaker, Joe Galloway.

Joe Galloway is well known to the Marines' Memorial audience. Joe was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for heroism for rescuing soldiers under fire. His is the only such medal of valor awarded to a civilian by the Army during the Vietnam War. With LtGen Hal Moore, Joe co-wrote the book *We Were Soldiers Once...and Young* about the Nov 1965 battle for

Ia Drang Valley. In the movie adaptation of the book, entitled “*We Were Soldiers*,” Mel Gibson portrayed then-LtCol Hal Moore and Barry Pepper portrayed a young Joe Galloway. Joe just completed the sequel to his book, called *We Are Soldiers, Still*, which will be released in August. He spoke from the heart, pledging not to let today's Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan be neglected as the Vietnam Veterans were.

Following Joe's talk, we introduced Jim Salestrom to sing. Jim is a well-known singer who has performed for five presidents. He sang the song he performed at the Vietnam Wall in 1993 about that war, titled “*After the War*”. The song tells the story of two soldiers who entered the army together,

went to Vietnam, but then served in different units. One soldier doesn't come home and the other doesn't realize it until he sees his name on the Vietnam Memorial Wall years later.

Then we introduced General Tony Zinni to speak. From 1997 to 2000, Gen Zinni was the Commander in Chief of the US Central Command. He served two tours in Vietnam, where he was wounded and recognized for his valor, receiving two Bronze Stars with Combat V. Gen Zinni talked about the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, DC — what it is today, and what it will be in the future. He described the expansion of the Memorial such that it will be a place to honor those who died and all who served, a place where the names on the



wall become visible, where the warrior is regarded separately from the war, and where visitors leave yearning to learn more. It will be inspirational, educational and uplifting, a place for healing and reflection.

Gen Zinni then told us about his being asked by a young lad how he thought the Vietnam Veterans want to be remembered. His answer was profound. He said that the Vietnam Veterans want to be remembered as follows:

- We answered the call to duty
- We won the battles we were asked to fight
- We never lost respect for our country, our flag, and for each other
- We will never forget our brothers who died in our arms or fighting by our side
- We have a bond of brotherhood that is strong and that is ours alone
- We are proud of our service and would do it again.
- We fought, when all other reasons were stripped away, for our unit, our honor, and for each other
- We will let others judge the politics of the war, but only we can pass judgment on our proud service on the battlefield
- We returned home, like all Veterans, older, wiser, and less innocent; but we returned as proud patriots and warriors

What great answers!

continues



The Salute to Vietnam Veterans was a very special event, with presentations by songwriter Jim Salestrom (left), author Joe Galloway (top right), and Gen Tony Zinni (middle right). At top left (opposite page) is a commemorative stamp which was presented, framed, to each Vietnam Veteran in attendance.

Vietnam Veterans, continued

To close our program, a group of wonderful musicians came together for one night to perform as the “Salute to Vietnam Veterans Band”. They donated their time and played some wonderful music from the Vietnam era, including the Animals’ “We’ve Gotta Get Out of this Place”. The crowd got up and danced! It was a wonderful evening and the Salute was way overdue.

You can enjoy the evening with us as well by going to www.marineclub.com for a video of the entire event.

