

http://www.thenewsenterprise.com/features/mondays_man/lowe-gets-high-marks-for-service/article_16a18ee9-f8f6-5eaf-80de-155fe9f9792a.html

Lowe gets high marks for service

ANDREW CRITCHELOW The News-Enterprise 8 hrs ago



Greg Lowe helps clean the replica Vietnam Memorial Wall at the Elizabethtown Nature Park Wednesday morning. Lowe is a member of the local Vietnam Veterans of America chapter's Veterans Tribute Group, which originally spearheaded the construction of the wall.

ANDREW CRITCHELOW/The News-Enterprise

Retired U.S. Army Col. Greg Lowe spent a Wednesday morning scrubbing the replica Vietnam Memorial Wall at the Elizabethtown Nature Park with a group of volunteers, making sure the tribute to fallen service members was in pristine condition for visitors who wish to pay their respects.

This is an important endeavor for Lowe, as the wall pays tribute about 58,000 of his fallen brothers and sisters in arms who also served in the Vietnam conflict.

For Lowe, one name on the wall is especially significant: Charles F. Thomas IV. Lowe knows by memory where to find it when he visits: Panel W4, Line 113.

Thomas, who was serving as a field artillery unit commander in Vietnam when he was killed by a mortar attack in April 1971, was previously Lowe's college roommate and fraternity brother.

Thomas' father, a retired lieutenant colonel, requested Lowe serve as the escort in returning his son's remains home.

"That was the hardest thing the Army ever asked me to do in 30 years, but I wouldn't have had it any other way," Lowe said. "It was also the highest honor."

A member of the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1051, Lowe was among the local veterans who spearheaded construction of the replica memorial. A subgroup of the VVA chapter, called the Veterans Tribute Group, underwent fundraising and helped with construction efforts for the wall.

The groundwork for the wall began in late 2017 and it was finished in April 2018.

The group worked with Elizabethtown city government and regional personnel from the United Automobile Workers labor union to create the wall. Funds were raised through donation drives and through contributions from local businesses and organizations. They worked a total of about 40 days on the construction and installation, Lowe said.

"They had the construction expertise and together we got it going," Lowe said. "You would have thought that those UAW guys were all Vietnam veterans because after about a week, they bought into it. They owned the wall for all intents and purposes and worked with us in the rain, snow and mud."

Through his involvement in the local VVA chapter, Lowe also helps organize town hall events across the state, educating attendees on the effects of Agent Orange, a chemical defoliant commonly used during the war. VVA participants provide attendees with information on the chemical and resources for those who may be affected.

Lowe's work with local veterans also extends to his role as co-chairman on the Hooray for Heroes committee, which organizes the annual Radcliff event honoring active and retired military personnel, first responders and their families.

VVA Chapter 1051 President David Cowherd said Lowe is dedicated to his fellow veterans.

"When Greg sees a need, he steps up to fill those empty spots," he said.

A native of Charleston, West Virginia, Lowe joined the Army in 1968 after earning a bachelor's degree in psychology from Western Kentucky University and taking part in the college's ROTC program.

"I graduated Friday night and reported to Fort Knox Saturday morning," Lowe said.

In 1976, he earned a master's degree in justice administration from Golden Gate University in San Francisco, California.

Lowe served in Vietnam from 1970 to 1971, commanding a military police company of about 150 soldiers and later served as a deputy provost marshal.

Following his time in Vietnam, Lowe said one of his most interesting positions in the Army was when he commanded a battalion of military police who served as guards for the United States Disciplinary Barracks in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, a correctional facility for service members. He later served as commandant for the barracks, handling about 1,500 inmates with a staff of about 700. He worked with the facility from 1988 to 1990 and 1992 to 1994.

"We had inmates from all services and we had everyone from privates through officer inmates," he said.

Lowe retired from the Army in 1998 while serving again at Fort Knox. After years of moving around, Lowe said he was happy to settle down in Hardin County with his family. He now lives in Cecilia.

“We always said we would retire in Kentucky or Tennessee and the Army, thank goodness, brought us back to Fort Knox,” he said. “This is home now.”

Following his retirement from the Army, Lowe worked for Armed Forces Bank at Fort Knox for eight and a half years and later worked for the Hardin County Sheriff’s Office as an executive officer from 2007 to 2013.

Lowe’s work with the county continues today through his role as the vice chairman for the Hardin County Planning and Development Commission. Members are appointed by the Hardin County judge-executive and confirmed by Hardin Fiscal Court. The commission’s functions include assisting in the implementation of a Comprehensive Plan for unincorporated Hardin County; adoption and implementation of the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations; and consideration and action on public hearings regarding zoning changes, road closures and public facilities and utilities.

Although he’s been retired from active duty status for over two decades, Lowe still puts himself in danger for his community through his work with the Ky. 86 Fire Department in Cecilia, where he serves as deputy chief.

Lowe began volunteering with the department while still on active duty. He said he joined out of a desire to give back to the people of Cecilia.

“I’d drive from Fort Knox to Cecilia every day and I’d pass the firehouse going to work and coming back home,” he said. “After three months, I thought, ‘I need to do something here in the community.’”

Lowe’s work for the community of Cecilia also extends to his role in the Cecilia Ruritan Club, where he currently serves as treasurer. The club organizes the annual Cecilia Days festival, which recently celebrated its 49th year. Proceeds from the festival go toward community scholarships and utility costs in the unincorporated community.

If helping veterans wasn't already enough, Lowe also makes continuous efforts to help the soldiers of tomorrow through his role as co-chairman on the advisory board for Western Kentucky University's College of Education and Behavioral Sciences.

"I'm a product of their ROTC program and I'm still very much interested in it," he said.

Through WKU, Lowe helped establish the Captain Charles F. Thomas IV Scholarship Fund, which provides a yearly scholarship to a full-time WKU student majoring in military science.

"I wanted to do something that would keep his memory alive," Lowe said of his late friend.

"We've been able to help a bunch of good kids."

Andrew Critchelow can be reached at 270-505-1746 or acritchelow@thenewsenterprise.com.

Learning more about Greg Lowe

Family: He and his wife, Brenda, have two children and five grandchildren.

Pets: An Irish Setter and a Golden Retriever.

Favorite music: '60s music.

Favorite films: "We

Were Soldiers" and "Animal House."

Favorite books: John Grisham novels and historical books.

Favorite food: German.

Hobbies: Refinishing