

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: VIETNAM WAR VETERAN WILLIAM KLOSS



Chris Bucher | April 5, 2018

Decades after his military service, William Kloss still fondly remembers the brothers he fought alongside during the Vietnam War. If it wasn't obvious by the countless military decorations hanging on the walls inside his room at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove, then the work he's performed to honor them should gauge his dedication.

A member at the WDVA's top-rated Union Grove home for more than a year, Kloss has certainly tried to make the most of things.

Kloss, a Veteran of the United States Army who served during the Vietnam War, spearheaded an effort last year to honor the many soldiers who went missing in action or were held as prisoners of war during the Vietnam War. He purchased and donated more than 100 memorial flags and also helped put together a program for a Missing Man Table and Honors Ceremony at the home.

"That's how strongly I feel about it," Kloss said. "It's something I'm always looking forward to, now."

In addition, Kloss helped start the Wisconsin chapter (Old Abe) of the 101st Airborne Division known as the "Screaming Eagles" and has been active in the military Veteran community. His passion for remembering those he served alongside and also those who didn't make it back home started in 1966 when he was drafted and entered

the United States Army. After training at Fort Campbell in Kentucky, Kloss volunteered to serve in Vietnam as a paratrooper for the 327th Infantry Regiment.

In his eight months of service, Kloss experienced several traumatic experiences that remain firmly etched into his memory.

"The things I saw, witnessed and did were quite extensive," he said. "It was at times quite traumatic and it took a long time before I could even talk about it. But now, it helps me, it's a means of therapy."

During his service, the helicopter Kloss was a passenger in was shot down twice, and he had many sleepless nights.

"It was the worst roller coaster ride ever times 10," he said of the second crash. "I was thrown out of the helicopter and I landed on my back. The wind was knocked out of me and I couldn't hear a thing. I thought to myself, 'This is what it's like to be dead.'"

In an instant, Kloss regained his hearing and realized what was going on around him. Remarkably, he survived.

"That was probably the most frightening thing I had gone through," Kloss said.

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In addition to those experiences, Kloss awoke to an explosion within just a few feet of where he was sleeping. That took place just days before he was scheduled to return home. Miraculously emerging out of Vietnam physically unscathed, Kloss remembered the toll things took on him mentally. He said that he slept for the entire plane ride back to the U.S. in Tacoma, Washington.

"It felt so good," Kloss said of returning back to U.S. soil. "But when I woke up to all the screaming and yelling, that scared the heck out of me."

Years later, Kloss is awaiting hip surgery while he lives at the WDVA's Veterans Home at Union Grove. He said that he enjoys the various activities taking place at the community every day. Above all, woodworking is his favorite.

"I enjoy myself here, I'm very glad I'm here," Kloss said of his first year at the Union Grove home. "They really take good care of me. I don't know what I'd be doing had I not have come here, I'd be out on the street just about."