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-John Martin

VETERANS HOME AT UNION GROVE THE MISSING PIECE TO ARMY VETERAN’S PUZZLE

John Martin’s mother was in for a surprise when she heard a knock on the door.

A letter carrier had arrived at her home to deliver an unfortunate piece of mail. It was a notification that her son was killed in action while serving during the Vietnam War.

Luckily for the Martins, the notice was a mistake. Instead, John was alive and well and he was there to greet the letter carrier at the doorstep.

“Thank God I got it instead of my mom!” Martin said of the letter. “I took it and stashed it, they straightened things out later. It was obviously a mistake...they found a set of dog tags (in Vietnam), so they figured I was KIA or MIA; it kind of freaked me out a bit.”

Martin, a member at the WDVA’s Veterans Home at Union Grove since 2015, was born and raised in Milwaukee and served in the United States Army’s Special Forces unit for a decade. He did two tours in Vietnam spanning about three years.

Following his separation from the military in 1974, a new challenge awaited Martin: Transitioning back to civilian life. The process was something that was difficult in the beginning, but was made easier after Martin found his niche: Putting things together.

“It was like getting a new start,” he said.

Martin went back to school to earn his welding degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. After working in a number of factories in the Milwaukee area, an unfortunate injury led him on a new career path. He worked at the VA Hospital in Milwaukee for a while until he decided to move up north and start work at a paper factory.

A series of freak injuries at multiple workplaces, including a paper factory and a lumber yard, ended with a collapsed lung.

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JOHN MARTIN, VIETNAM VETERAN AND MEMBER AT UNION GROVE

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A Perfect Place to Call ‘Home’

Martin’s health brought multiple hospital stays until he finally found his way to the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King. After a one month at King, Martin was transferred to the Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove, a facility that Martin calls a great place to stay.

“It feels like home,” Martin said. “I feel very comfortable here.”

Martin also found a new hobby in the process. More often than not, you can find him inside the facility’s recreation room putting together jigsaw puzzles.

Once complete, another member adds adhesive to the puzzle and frames it. During some of the events at Union Grove, Martin’s creations are sold and the money goes directly back to purchasing additional puzzles, frames and paints.

“I really enjoy doing this,” Martin said.