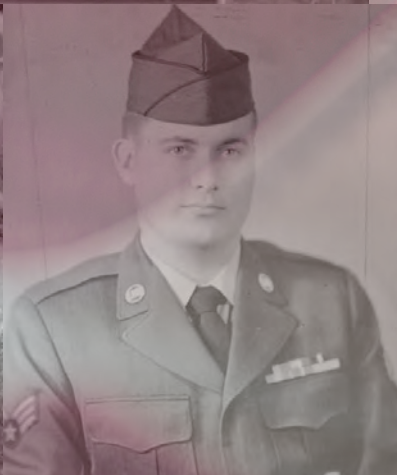


SALUTE TO VETERANS

VETERANS DAY IS NOVEMBER 11





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Center helps military centered students navigate higher education

Mississippi State's Center for America's Veterans located in Nusz Hall

By Nicole Bowman-Layton
nlayton@cdspatch.com

Since 2006, Mississippi State University's Gillespie V. "Sonny" Montgomery Center for America's Veterans has been helping military connected students.

Located in Nusz Hall, the center helps students navigate paperwork related to their educational benefits, offers transitional support and hosts activities that promote learning, well-being and success, according to Brian Locke, director of veteran and military affairs at the center.

During MSU's current fall semester, 3,100 students have a connection to the military, about 14 percent of the total student body population. They include relatives of military veterans, National Guard and Reserve members, those on active duty and veterans, said Locke, a retired veteran of the US Army.

"Really, we kind of like to think of ourselves as a one-stop shop here at Mississippi State for any and all things military," Locke said.

Outreach programs

The center's outreach program hosts social and physical activities. Locke said some programs are specific to the university, such as Vet Fit, a fitness program that meets twice a week.

The center also has what Locke said he thinks may be the only veterans horsemanship program on a university campus in the nation.

"We've been running that program for about four years now," he said. "It has been a tremendous program with huge benefits."

Veterans Week is Nov. 8-12. The center will host a golf tournament and several other events.

A ceremony will be held at 2 p.m. Thursday at MSU's Drill Field. It is free and open to the public.

Need caused center's creation

The center was established about 2006, Locke said.



Nicole Bowman-Layton/Dispatch Staff

Mississippi State University's Nusz Hall includes a student lounge area for military centered students. The lounge includes a kitchenette and sitting area.

Around that time, universities throughout the United States began to create agencies like MSU's center to address the needs of a growing military-centered student population.

"After the events of September 11th, you had so many more people joining the military and serving in the military, even up to now — 20 years after September 11th," Locke said. "So many of those people went in and served for a few years and obviously earned those educational benefits. They were coming back to colleges and universities."

Before then, colleges usually had one person who helped military centered students out with their GI bill benefits and with other college-related paperwork, Locke said.

"I think a lot of universities, like Mississippi State, saw the need," he said. "So many more of those student veterans were coming back to campus and Mississippi State needed a way to provide services and assistance to them."

Locke said his staff helps certify more than 900 students a semester so they can use their GI bill benefits. Two members of his staff are tasked with only working on certifications.

"It is somewhat of a very difficult process to work through," he said.

The center also helps students make the transition from military to civilian life.

"The transition out of the military

into college is very difficult for folks, so we do a lot of assistance in helping them transition from the military into higher education," he said.

Alumni, donor support

The center also needs help to complete its mission of helping students. As of this past fall, the center had 16 endowed scholarships, Locke said. It awarded a total of \$92,000 in scholarships to 48 students this fall semester.

The center is also working on a fundraiser to help build monuments honoring those who died during World War II, the Korean conflict and the global war on terrorism.

There is currently a World War I monument near Lee Hall and a Vietnam War monument behind Nusz Hall.

MSU alumni often participate in the center's activities, as its Student Veterans Association organizes tailgates and other events.

"We have lots of alumni who are veterans who stopped by quite a bit," he said. "We partner with our local American Legions and VFWs. Even though they may not be alumni of Mississippi State, they have that veteran connection with folks. They always help out quite a bit."

Small things make big differences

The center is always looking for the next thing to help the student veteran population.



Nicole Bowman-Layton/Dispatch Staff

Mississippi State University's G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery Center for America's Veterans is housed in Nusz Hall. MSU created the center around 2006, and the facility was completed in 2016, said Brian Locke, director of Veterans Military Affairs.

Center for America's Veterans

Location: 250 Bailey Howell Drive, Mississippi State

Hours of operation: Staff works from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Nusz Hall is open from 8 a.m.-8 p.m.

Phone: (662) 325-6719

Website: veterans.msstate.edu

"Sometimes it's just small things that pop up, that we're able to kind of help out with," Locke said. "This past semester we partnered with parking services. If you're a purple heart veteran or if you have any certain valor awards, they give you a free parking pass to Mississippi State."

The center also partners with other organizations across the campus to assist students. For example, the university came up with a military withdrawal policy a few years ago.

"A number of our national guard service members were being called up for deployments and they were mid-semester," Locke said. "We were coming up with procedures of how we can help them either earn the credit for that class if they've reached a certain point in the class or, or they can test out of some things."

"So we're always really kind of seeing what we can do to work with other organizations across campus."

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Former Lowndes veterans services officer reflects on time helping veterans

Richardson honored on field at MSU game for his contributions

BY TYLER B. JONES
tjones@cdispatch.com

The year was 1963, and Capt. James Richardson was stationed as a hospital executive officer in the Netherlands.

Two days before he was to head back to the United States after spending a few years overseas, he went to the Officers Club, a small house on his base. While spending time there with his friends, he heard a loud crash outside.

Richardson instantly ran to help a young airman who had crashed his motorcycle into a tree, doing what he could to try to keep him alive until the ambulance arrived.

"I was told later that I told the colonel that was there to take all the damn pictures he wanted to, but I was going to try to keep this guy alive," Richardson said.

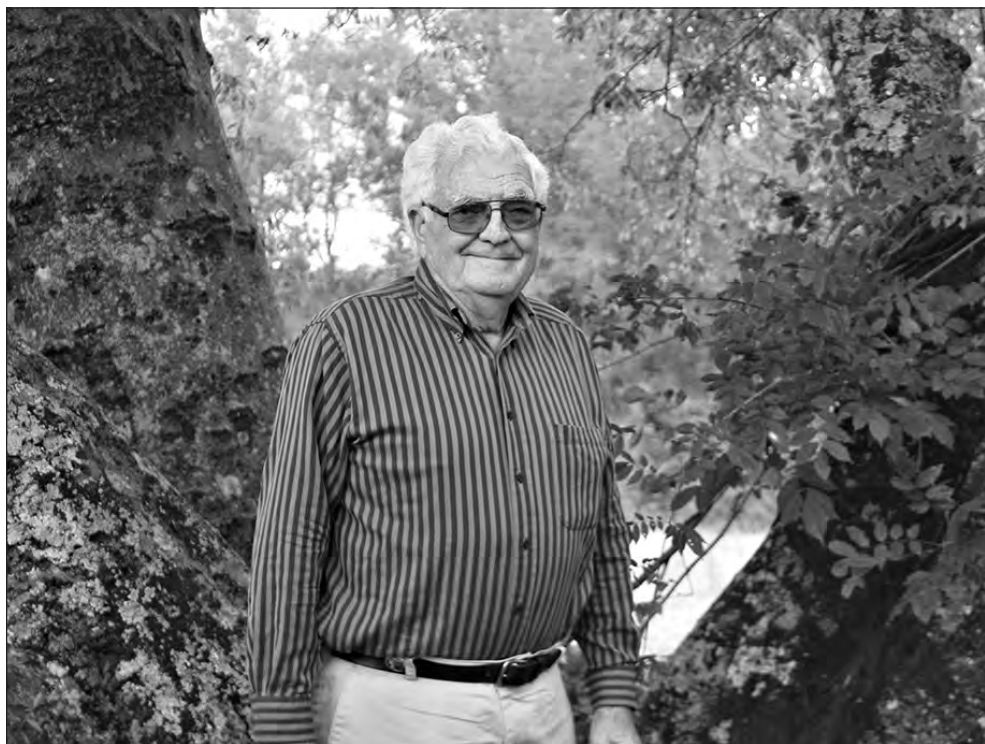
Richardson returned stateside and pursued a master of education at the University of Minnesota through the Air Force. Soon after being there, he was called to meet his commander with the Reserve Officer Training Corps.

"He said, 'Meet me at 1 p.m. tomorrow in uniform,'" Richardson said. "I said, 'What's up?' and he said, 'I'll tell you when you get here.' So, when I got there, he presented me with an accommodation medal, and I said, 'Why is this?' and he said, 'Evidently, you were involved in keeping a young airman alive. He didn't make it, but the colonel that was there was his commander, and he's the one that put this through.'"

Richardson grew up on a cotton farm in New Hope. After he graduated from Mississippi State University in 1957 with a degree in airport administration, he volunteered for the Air Force Medical Services Corps.

"I couldn't pass the physical for flying, so I knew I had to do something," Richardson said. "Medical Service Corps was the next in line."

After basic training in medical administration, Richardson served in var-



Tyler B. Jones/Dispatch Staff

James "Jim" Richardson served many years in the United States Air Force as a medical service officer. Later in life, he served Lowndes County as the county veterans officer, helping veterans obtain compensation and pension benefits.

ious countries. For nearly six months, he traveled almost every weekend to somewhere new, all across Europe to places such as Switzerland, Austria, Germany and France.

When he finished his master's degree, Richardson worked in health care administration at hospitals all across the country, helping those coming back from the Vietnam War. He moved back home to Columbus in 1987 to take care of his father and be with his family and began working in insurance.

Soon after moving back, he began helping a double-amputee veteran who needed assistance with home repairs, but the Department of Veterans Affairs was not being supportive or cooperative, sparking Richardson's passion for helping veterans. When the Lowndes County Veterans Services officer position opened up, Richardson applied and got the job because he wanted to serve veterans in situations such as this.

"The best job I've ever had was working with veterans, assisting them and getting them benefits," Richardson said. "When I started working, the county was receiving about \$5,000 in compensation and pension benefits

for the veterans that we had. When I retired, we had about \$33 million."

Richardson said the best feeling was when he could help veterans finally receive the benefits they deserved because the VA at times was not always the most helpful. Still to this day, even after retirement, Richardson drives an amputee veteran back and forth to his doctor's appointments in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Richardson's daughter Jean Ann Evans said she has great pride in her father's willingness and kindness to serve others. She said no one could have performed the job as well as him because no one has as much knowledge or background as her father.

"He was so relentless in helping veterans of Lowndes County," Evans said. "He went into these places knowing they were going to turn him down the first time. ... He ended up helping so many veterans and their spouses receive money that they've deserved for so long. Anyone else would have quit because there's so much paperwork, and it's so tedious, but he continued on until he got them what they deserved."



Courtesy photo

James Richardson of New Hope was honored as the Veteran of the Game Oct. 16 in Starkville. Richardson served 11 years as a hospital administrator for the Air Force and has worked for the past 22 years as veterans service officer in Lowndes County, helping thousands of local veterans. He was nominated for the honor by his daughter Jeananne Evans of Columbus.

Every home football game, MSU honors a veteran, and Richardson was chosen as the honoree at the MSU vs. Alabama game for his time served in the military and as a county veterans services officer. Nominated by his son-in-law, Richardson said it was an exciting moment getting to walk out on the field.

"They rolled out the red carpet for me and asked me to walk out with my son and daughter and ring the bell," Richardson said. "I looked up at the jumbotron, and my name was up there. I was getting handshakes right and left when I was going back up to my seat."

At nearly 87 years old, Richardson now spends his free time planting flowers and gardening. He said he is thankful for all of the experiences life has given him and could not do it without the love of his family.

"I'm just thankful to have good family support here," Richardson said. "My number one job now is to take care of my wife."

VETERANS DAY

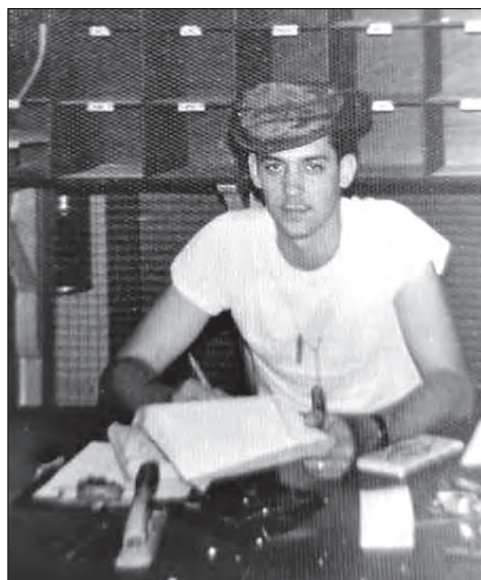
HONORING ALL WHO SERVED

The following veteran profiles were submitted by readers who used a form printed in The Dispatch.



Manuel (Don) Biadog, Jr.
U.S. Navy

Commander Manuel (Don) Biadog, Jr., 64, of San Diego, California, served as a chaplain in the U.S. Navy from 1990-2019, during which he served foreign tours in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Okinawa (3 tours), Iraq (Combat Tour) and Naples, Italy. His combat experience was during Operation Iraqi Freedom II. He joined the military to serve our men and women in uniform and to defend our freedom. Cdr. Biadog remembers his hardest ministry was at the aftermath of 9/11 when he served at Ground Zero in September-October 2001 in NYC. The scariest seven months was when he was traveling and serving in Iraq during OIF-II in 2004-2005. He feels honored to have been given the opportunity to serve the greatest military in the world. He continues to serve as Chaplain for VFW Post 7907, a group of freedom-loving combat veterans.



Bert Damron
U.S. Air Force

Master Sergeant Bert Damron, 78, of Caledonia, served 22½ years in the U.S. Air Force, during which he served four foreign tours. He gained combat experience in Vietnam in 1963 and 1970. He joined the military to serve his country and get a good job. MSgt. Damron enjoyed all of his service time. His four year tour in London, England was really nice. Believe it or not, he enjoyed his Vietnam tours. He learned a lot about life and got to fly a lot in the country on his second tour. However, he lost his younger brother in combat in November 1968.



McArthur Harris
U.S. Army

Sergeant McArthur Harris, 74, of Columbus, served six years in the U.S. Army, during which he served two tours in Vietnam. His combat experience includes the 1968 Vietnam TET Offensive. He was drafted for two years, then voluntarily enlisted for four more years. Sgt. Harris thanks all the veterans for their services and offers a special thanks to the Vietnam veterans. "We were the best America had. We fought without American support and we returned without America's welcome. We are the veterans who will always be the best America had."



Annie Hines
U.S. Army

Annie Hines, 57, of Columbus, served 27 years in the U.S. Army as an E-7, during which she had foreign tours in Germany, Korea and Italy. Her combat experience includes being a trained soldier to lead. She joined the military to travel and to serve her country. Hines is a proud retiree and proud veteran, from private to sergeant first class, basic training to acting first sergeant, drill sergeant, airborne instructor, recruiter, platoon sergeant and retired acting first sergeant.



VETERANS DAY | HONORING ALL WHO SERVED



Mark Horning
U.S. Marine Corps

Sergeant Major Mark Horning, 75, of Columbus, served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1964-1993, during which he had foreign tours in the Republic of Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Okinawa and the United Kingdom. He gained combat experience during two tours in Vietnam in 1964-1965 and 1968-1969, and Operation Desert Storm in 1991. He joined the military for the patriotic experience, education opportunities and there were few career opportunities in rural Idaho. Sgt. Major Horning's memories include making lifetime friends, leadership and work experience for follow on career, memories of countries he would not have seen and a proud patriotic feeling.

David E. Jones, Sr.
U.S. Coast Guard

STD First Class David E. Jones, Sr., 96, of Columbus, served two years, four months, in the U.S. Coast Guard and served a foreign tour during the European Theater. His combat experience includes enemy submarines and aircraft in the Mediterranean Sea area. He was drafted July 23, 1943, during World War II. STD First Class Jones remembers his duties in the North Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, when the water was rough with

high waves. He was stationed aboard the USS Mosley DE 321, a destroyer escort vessel.



Starling Jones
U.S. Air Force

Technical Sergeant Starling Jones, 76, of Columbus, served 22 years in the U.S. Air Force. He joined the Air Force to make a better life for himself. He was supposed to go to Jackson State University on a football scholarship and had made plans to start college. During the summer, his cousin, who was in the Air Force, came home on leave. As they talked, Jones told his cousin his desire to be an automobile mechanic. His cousin informed him that he could join the Air Force, get mechanical knowledge, earn college credits and earn an income at the same time. He didn't tell Jones not to attend college, he just gave him some information. Jones decided to join the Air Force, which gave him the opportunity to travel the world. He lived in Germany 2½ years and 2 years in Okinawa with his family. He was assigned in Thailand for a year and Korea twice on remote tours. He had tours in Hawaii, Holland, Paris, Azores, Philippines and Japan. He also lived in Illinois, California, Nevada, Texas, Louisiana and Alabama. He really enjoyed his time in the Air Force. He worked some long

days during his service but said it was a joy to serve in this great country.



Virgil Kimbrell
U.S. Navy Reserve

Virgil Kimbrell, 70 (deceased), of Columbus, served 19 years in the U.S. Navy Reserves, which included a tour to Iraq. Kimbrell loved serving his country, he was thankful that God allowed him to serve.



Bob Lovelace
U.S. Air Force

Technical Sergeant Bob Lovelace,

67, of Maben, served in the U.S. Air Force from 1973-1993, during which he served foreign tours in Korea, Germany and Alaska. His combat experience includes support of Desert Storm. He joined the military because he was bored. His high school buddy, Mike Stanley, had joined and said his recruiter told Mike the Air Force had what was called the buddy system and Mike should get his buddy to join. Under the buddy system the two recruits would serve together, so that's what they did. They went to boot camp together and that was the last time they served together during their military careers. Mike became an air traffic controller and Bob became a ground communications/cryptographic specialist/technician. TSgt. Lovelace wants to thank God, his wife of 40 years, Dee, his family and the Golden Triangle community for their support during his military service and afterwards as a veteran. The military was an excellent process of providing outstanding training and offering college credits through the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) for the career/technical skills training. That workforce training in the military have him the ability after 20 years of service with the USAF to retire and start training citizens of the Golden Triangle community in the field of electronics/electricity/automation control for the next 20 years at East Mississippi Community College. Individuals, including service men and women learn to appreciate the freedoms Americans have in the USA after living in other countries. God Bless America.





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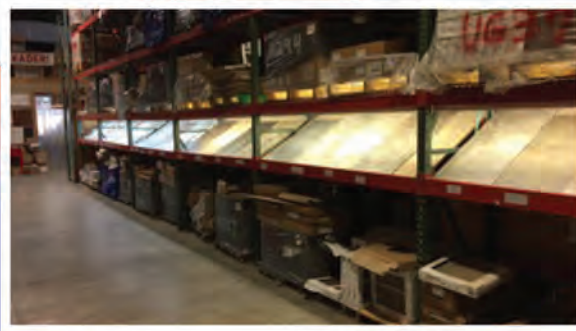


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VETERANS DAY | HONORING ALL WHO SERVED



Herbert Clyde Miller, Jr.
U.S. Army

Sergeant First Class Herbert Clyde Miller Jr., 74, of Millport, Alabama, served in the U.S. Army from 1967-1970. He joined the military for his country. SFC Miller recalls parachuting rappelling jump school for three weeks in Fort Benning, Georgia, Special Forces Training in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and volunteering for U.S. Army paratroops school, special forces training, Vietnam.



Clyde Moore
U.S. Air Force

Master Sergeant Clyde Moore, 82, of Columbus, served 24 years in the U.S. Air Force, during which he served seven foreign tours. His combat experience includes three separate tours of duty in Vietnam. He joined the military to help provide for the family. MSgt. Moore doesn't talk much about his military experiences, but he was involved in the Battle of Pleiku in 1965, when the Viet Cong forces attacked Americans at Camp Holloway. He had been on guard duty at a camp about six miles from Camp Holloway before the battle began. The man who relived him was killed in the attack. He still suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder due to the war's effects. His 24-year career took him all over the country but the last place he was stationed, Denver, Colorado, was his favorite. He retired from the Air Force and became a car salesman for Honda. His proudest accomplishment is being the top salesman in the country for Honda in 1986. He's had a full and sometimes exciting life, and he doesn't have many regrets, "I did what I had to do," he said. "That's the way I felt about it. And I'm proud of it."



Leavern Pate
U.S. Army

Specialist Leavern Pate, 79, of Alabama, served in the U.S. Army from 1962-1964, during which he served a foreign tour in Germany where he patrolled the East Germany border during the Cold War. He was drafted into the military in 1962. Pate feels it should be mandatory that the youth of today should serve in the military.



Randall Robles
U.S. Air National Guard
Staff Sergeant Randall Robles, 61,

of Caledonia, served 22 years in the U.S. Air National Guard, during which he served foreign tours in Afghanistan, Italy, Turkey, Spain and England. His combat experience includes Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. He joined the military to serve his country. When he joined, he was 17 and had no idea what he was in for. All he knew what he wanted to serve in the military. He served with some of the bravest men. His first duty station was in Italy and he traveled all of Europe doing mission. The military is the greatest adventure going. He served in "Operation Enduring Freedom" with several NATO Forces in Afghanistan. Although was not the best part of his tour it was necessary for the freedoms of our nation. No regrets.





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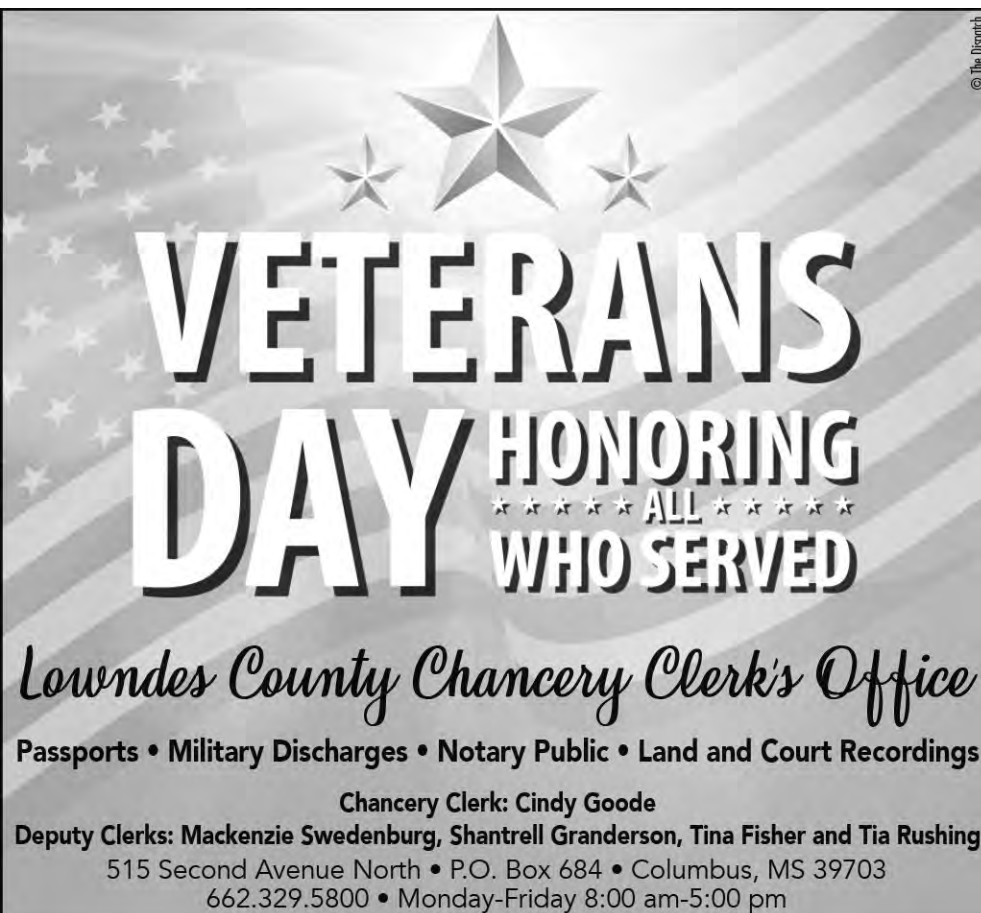
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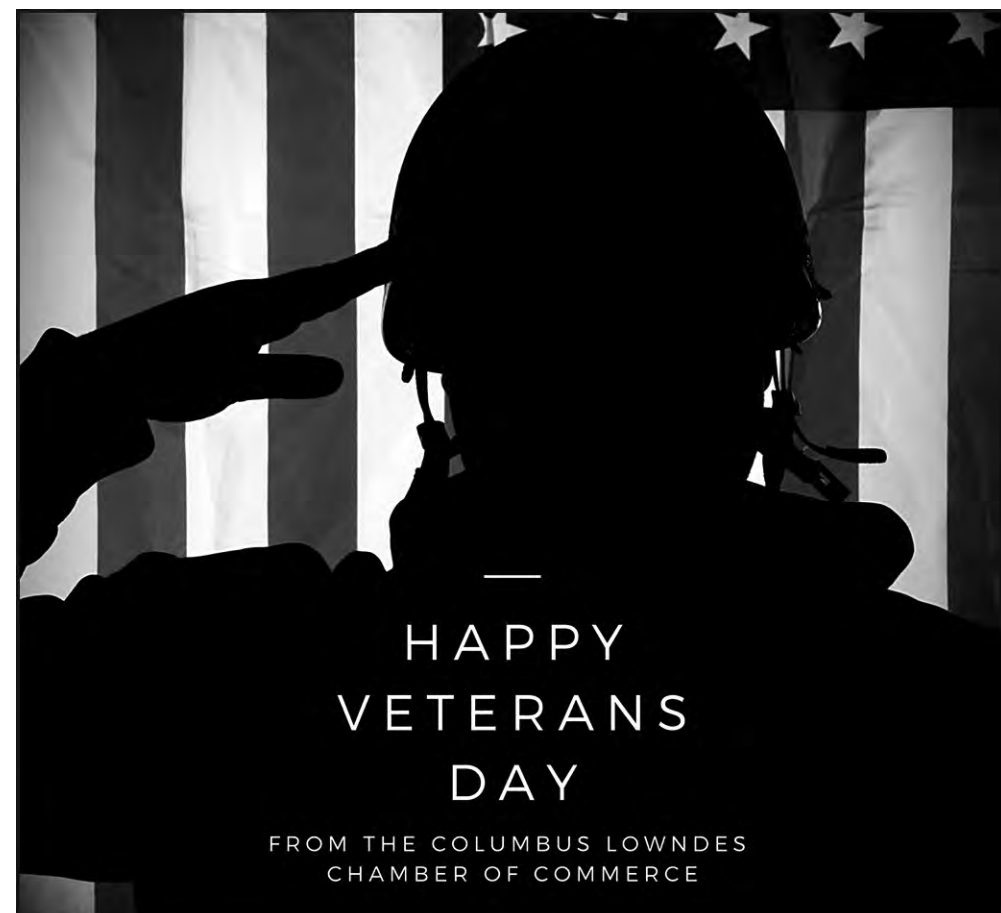


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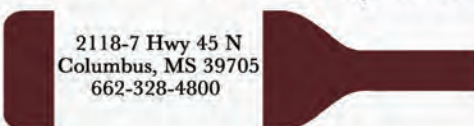
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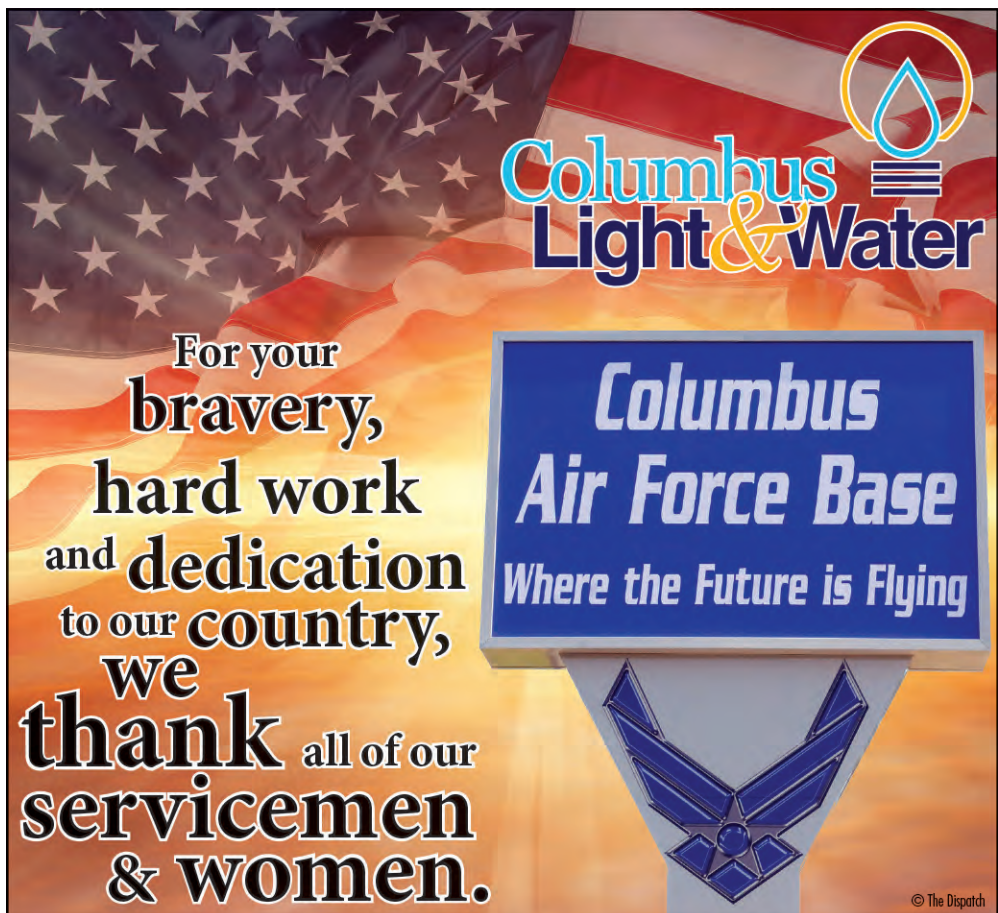
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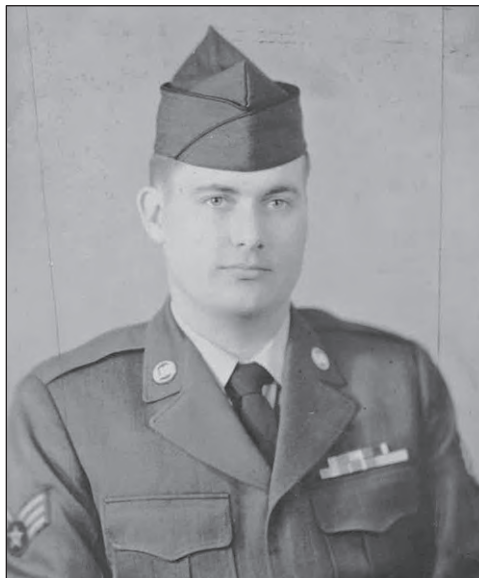


Scott Shuttleworth

U.S. Air Force

Scott Shuttleworth, 54, of Caledonia, served in the U.S. Air Force 26 years from 1985-2011, as a Staff Sergeant (Enlisted) and Lieutenant Colonel (Officer). His foreign tours include Operation Just Cause, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) and Operation Provide Comfort. He has combat experience in Afghanistan, along with other locations. He joined the military to be part of something bigger than himself. For him it was an obligation to give back to the country that gives him so much. It evolved over time, and he continued to serve because he wanted to keep the fight on their ground not ours. He also remembers his grandfather who served in WWII shedding tears over seeing his flag burned by people on the TV... he never said a word but Shuttleworth could see that it hurt his grandfather deeply to see the very symbol of our nation that he and countless others fought and died for be treated with such disrespect. He knew then what it meant to serve with your whole heart, soul, and mind and be all in sacrificing many things for a cause greater than you. Shuttleworth made so many friends and comrades in arms over the years. It is a brotherhood that cannot be explained unless you have experienced it for yourself. The times in

garrison and the times deployed were and are still vibrant and wonderful memories for him. Serving alongside the best of the best our nation has to offer makes you better and having served with them made him a better man, person, follower, and leader. He and his family talk often of lifelong friends they made at various places and are still in touch with. He also has the memories of knowing he did my part in securing our nation and keeping his family and friends safe and protecting the freedoms that we all routinely take for granted...those are the memories he takes with him.



Dan A. Sibley

U.S. Air Force

Sergeant Dan A. Sibley, 90, of Columbus, served four years in the U.S. Air Force, where he served a foreign tour in Japan. He was 19 years old and due to be drafted in the Army. Sgt. Sibley spent four of the best years of his life in the Air Force. He got to travel and see and do things he would not have ever done otherwise. He loves the U.S. Air Force.



Robert Lee Ward

U.S. Navy

Seaman First Class Robert Lee Ward, 83 (deceased), of Columbus, served in

the U.S. Navy from 1944-1946, during which he served a foreign tour in Guam and gained combat experience in Okinawa. It was a great experience for an 18-year-old from Chicago. He watched them bomb Pearl Harbor and the next days raise that U.S. flag. He always talked about that and how proud he was to be a part of it.



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