

## Preserving Memories of Florida's Fallen Vietnam War Heroes

By John Thomstatter, Secretary VVA Chapter 1036

August 27, 2016

Fifty years ago our country called upon our young men and women to go to a place called Vietnam to fight Communism. During that long war, 58,270 Americans lost their lives and are memorialized on "The Wall" in Washington (D.C.). The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (care takers of "The Wall") established a Faces Never Forgotten Campaign in an effort to put a picture to every name inscribed on "The Wall." The photos will be displayed online ([www.vvmf.org/wall-of-faces](http://www.vvmf.org/wall-of-faces)) and at a new Education Center to be built between "The Wall" and the Lincoln Memorial.

The photo search campaign has been going on since 2009 but over 10,000 photos are still needed, including over 600 Florida soldiers' photos. Only Seventeen (17) states have found photos for all their fallen soldiers. (Alaska, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, New Mexico, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming)

February of this year the Florida Chapters of the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) took on the challenge to accelerate the search to find their state's missing photos. There are over 30 Florida VVA chapters working the search effort. The Florida Panhandle is a key search area and the table below shows the number of Florida soldiers lost to the Vietnam War and the number of missing photos still needed.

Florida County	Died in Vietnam	Missing Photos
Bay	23	<b>10</b>
Calhoun	4	None
Escambia	92	<b>32</b>
Franklin	4	<b>1</b>
Gadsden	9	<b>4</b>
Gulf	6	None
Holmes	7	<b>2</b>
Jackson	16	<b>2</b>
Jefferson	4	None
Leon	26	<b>12</b>
Liberty	None	None
Okaloosa	30	None
Santa Rosa	14	<b>2</b>
Wakulla	1	None
Walton	8	<b>1</b>
Washington	5	<b>1</b>

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County historical societies, public libraries, families and friends of the soldiers have been a valuable resource to locate the photos. Because many of the soldiers died at a very young age, the main source for photos is from high school yearbooks, military basic training graduation books, obituaries or family photos.

- The Washington County Historical found a photo and obituary of PFC James I Danford from Chipley, FL (<http://www.vvmf.org/Wall-of-Faces/11849/JAMES-I-DANFORD> ).
- CPL Larry E Martin's hometown listing was Niceville, FL but a grave location is Memorial Park in Dayton, OH. The Dayton Metro Library Genealogy Center was contacted and they found his photo and obituary. (<http://www.vvmf.org/Wall-of-Faces/32655/LARRY-E-MARTIN> )
- A University of Florida library (uflib.ufl.edu) contact was instrumental in finding soldier obituary photos for several different counties.

Anyone who has information on these soldiers or a photo is encouraged to submit the photo or respond by email as noted below:

### **If you want to submit a Soldier's Photo . . . .**

1. Search for the Soldier's name on [www.vvmf.org/wall-of-faces](http://www.vvmf.org/wall-of-faces)
2. Select the Submit Photos Icon (on the soldier's page), download the photo from your computer in JPEG format and complete the Additional Information fields. The picture will be online within a few days.
3. Have any information or questions? Please contact John Thomstatter at [john.thomstatter@vva1036.org](mailto:john.thomstatter@vva1036.org)

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Search Teams are working hard to find photos of their lost battlefield brothers to preserve the memory of these heroes and the ultimate sacrifice they made for their country. With the help of local communities we will find every soldier's photo.

NOTE: We are also looking for military Basic Training Graduation Books as a source for photos. If you have a Basic Training Graduation Book that you want to donate, please contact John Thomstatter at [john.thomstatter@vva1036.org](mailto:john.thomstatter@vva1036.org)