

THE POINT

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA, INC.

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The Event of a Lifetime.

40 Years Later, city native recalls Woodstock festival.....

Enrolled at Florida Atlantic University, Cumberland native Fred Herath knew in 1969 when he first heard that a concert/happening was being planned for a field in New York that it would be once-in-lifetime event. Herath, who considered himself an adventurer rather than a card carrying member of the counter-culture movement, knew that somehow he would attend what would become Woodstock so that he could hear Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Richie Havens, Ravi Shankar and others and get lost in the swirl of humanity, drugs and mud that would come to mark this monumental event. Little did he know....

Herath, a 1965 graduate of Fort Hill High School, remembers Woodstock and its crowd of a half million bodies as if it was 40 years ago, which it was. The four decade anniversary is this week-end. "I had an \$18.00 ticket and came back to Cumberland first," Herath said. He doesn't remember if he thumbed or drove. After some convincing that to miss Woodstock would be to miss the event of a lifetime, three other Cumberland area residents joined Herath. Woodstock was the appropriate icing on a decade-long cake that was layered with the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., man's first walk on the moon, inner-city riots, and yes, Vietnam. A year later, the Kent State campus shootings would become a part of the encyclopedia. Herath has been sober for a quarter of a century and even became an addictions counselor.

But Woodstock was 40 years ago. In his book in progress, "The Woodstock Chronicles", Herath writes, "The absolute last thing I want to communicate is that drug use is romantic or exciting. It's not. I suffered terrible from the effects of a psychedelic drug experience prior to Woodstock. In subsequent years, I came to know the horrors of alcoholism. That is, in part, why I have devoted my life to helping people find recovery from addiction." Herath remembers that he and the other "dropped acid" in Hagerstown near the beginning of their journey. "We didn't even take a sleeping bag and we had, I think, one jacket among us. Thousands of people were hitch-hiking in that direction. As we got farther from Cumberland and closer to New York there were more and more of them. Convenience stores along the way were sold out of everything. Though they had not picked up any hitchhikers, Herath said that for some reason they stopped for George. "He was sitting beside the road in a lotus position and he would kind of rock back and raise his thumb when a car would go by," Herath said. "It was the best thing that happened to us".

George was Puerto Rican and spoke Spanish. "The closest we could get to Woodstock was three exits away on the New York Thruway. We were 17 miles from the concert, so we started walking. Herath said that police were allowing no passage of motorized vehicles. "Then all of a sudden here came a car past us. A black 1955 Chevy. When the car got near it stopped because there was a lone female in our group and they assumed she was by herself. Herath learned that the car was allowed through because its occupants lived in the area. They were Puerto Ricans and soon were talking in Spanish with George. Bottom line, Herath's group got a ride. "But all of a sudden instead of being surrounded by thousands of people we take off across some field and there is nobody around. I'm thinking they are going to take us somewhere and shoot us except for the girl" Herath said. Not to worry. "As they drove onto this knoll and were coming to a stop, I jumped out the window, thinking I would be saving myself. When I landed I looked up and there was the stage. We were at ground zero of Woodstock." All of a sudden it was people again, Herath recalled. "I mean at one time I counted the number of people that were making physical contact with me and there were seven. You simply could not move. I kept thinking about the trampling's at soccer games and thought that this situation had the possibility of making those look tame." Herath said eventually, his group locked wrists and arms and managed to move away from the masses. "We ended up in a manicured lawn and there was a home. We were about 400 feet from the stage. For years, Herath has tried to identify the nearby home and just recently discovered by a way of a hand-drawn map that it is known as Miss Star's house. "She looked to be about 70" Herath said "Pretty soon a lot of other people were coming on to the lawn and sitting down.

The lady would come out of her house and use a broom to chase off people trying to steal from her wood pile, but of course she wasn't successful. Later that night it began to get chilly and somebody spotted and old barn she had." Herath said all night long you could hear pieces of the barn being torn off to be used as firewood and that when the sun rose Saturday, there was no more barn.

The musical lineup, Herath contends, was stacked on Friday with mellow folk singers such as Joan Baez, Tim Hardin and Arlo Guthrie to keep things as calm as possible. On Saturday, the tempo would rise with Santana, Country Joe McDonald and Sly & the Family Stone. And then there was Joplin..."The one act that stopped everything was Janis, Herath said. "Nobody was doing anything but listening and watching. Even Hell's Angels who were in charge of letting people move around shut down and enjoyed it." There was nothing to eat. It rained. It rained hard. Then it rained hard some more. "Wavy Gray (peace activist Hugh Nanton Romney) and some others were passing a Dixie cup filled with grain to each person.. They told us to eat it and drink water and would swell in our stomachs and we would feel full." At one point, a tall, naked man walked through the crowd asking for a hard boiled egg.

Amazingly, one of Herath's companions had been given some hard boiled egg by his mother before leaving on the trip. "he gave the guy the egg, and a photograph of this naked guy looking at the egg appeared in Look Magazine," Herath said. It is believed that a least three people died at Woodstock. My friend said 'Did you just see that tractor run over that guy?' Herath said "And I said 'Don't do that. I'm tripping', but he had just seen one of the fatalities at Woodstock. It was a guy in a sleeping bag that got run over".

In "The Woodstock Chronicles", Herath writes, "It's difficult to describe how close that event flirted with tragedy from beginning to end. It was an unprecedented number of people gathered in one place. The constant threat of mass disaster was obvious to everyone from the beginning. The fact that it didn't come apart, despite hunger, rain, cold and fatigue, is a testimony to the strength, dignity and heartfelt commitment to mutual well-being possessed by the people who were there." Herath said concerns that the concert would have political overtones were quickly shattered. "In fact, Abbie Hoffman got on the stage and started to make a political speech and Pete Townshend of *The Who* pushed him off the stage with a guitar and everybody went crazy applauding." Hoffman cofounded the Youth International Party (Yippies) and is perhaps most known for his confrontations with Chicago police during the 1968 Democratic National Convention. Herath's physical and mental journey to Woodstock was fueled, he believe, by the knowledge that he had a military draft lottery number of 17. (I was going into military service one way or the other," he remembered. Herath ended up being an Air Force Vietnam Veteran. "Two years ago I went to Seven Springs to the Hippie Fest; Joe McDonald was there. He wrote me a nice note, wishing me success with my book." Herath said, "Joe asked from the stage if anybody in the audience was a Vietnam veteran and I raised my hand. He asked if there were any friends of Bill Wilson (recovering Alcoholics) and I raised my hand again. And then I told him I had been at Woodstock". "Man," he said, "You've had an interesting life."

Footnote: This interview was written by Michael A. Sawyers, Times News staff, printed Saturday, August 15, 2009 Vol. 70-No.224

Election Time Once Again

It feels like we just did this a few days ago but, low and behold a year has passed and once again it's Chapter election time again. Elections will be conducted at the April 4th membership meeting. The elections will be the only Chapter business conducted at this meeting. As always the doors will be secured at 8:00PM so be here early. Nominations from the floor will be accepted at this time. Good luck to all the candidates and let's keep it cordial.

From the Desk of Barb and Sue



March Madness is here.....not only for basketball but at the Chapter. During the month of March, *take an extra 25% off all hats and tee shirts. And as a slam dunk, take another 25% off of Clearance.* Come in and check out the deals.



A Tip Of The Hat

This month, a thank you to Jim Combs for his generous donations of merchandise for the fundraising committee. Also let's not forget Geno at Coney Island - Curtis' for his weekly supply of ice that he donates.

From the Sky Pilot.....Peace and Joy

Romans 5:1-2 tells about being justified, it said "Therefore since we have been justified through faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God".

How are we justified? To be justified means to be made right. Paul's great question was "How is a sinful human being made right with a holy God? Even if we could follow the law and live perfectly, we would still not be right with God. Adam's sin involved the rest of humanity in condemnation and death. We do not start life with even the possibility of living it without sin; we begin it with sinful nature.

Yet God created us for a relationship with him. So he took the initiative to make the relationship right. In Jesus Christ, he does for us what we could never do for ourselves. Jesus lived a holy righteous life, a perfect life in line with the law, in total relationship with God, the Father.

Even more, in Jesus God took it upon himself all the punishment our disobedience deserves. At the cross he fulfilled all that righteousness demanded. His life given in exchange for ours; his blood paid the price for our justification.

The results of Jesus' sacrifice are personally available to us simply by faith. God has done everything required to justify us. All that remains is for us to receive the grace of God shown on the cross. We are justified when we stop trying to justify ourselves and depend completely on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

May God Bless you....Rodger Long, Chaplain

The Chapter Editorial Opinion

Chapter 172 continues to plod along. We are still the largest Chapter in the VVA, I am not sure what that gets us but we are big. Things have seemed to slow down, unless you are a member of the color guard, then you have been busy and will continue to be so, unfortunately. The Chapter as on the whole remains healthy and happy. We do have the occasional hissy fit usually about nothing important but, we continue on. First we entered the veteran's movement to get help for ourselves; this is something we still do. But we also have an obligation to help our newest generation of Vets. Senator Barbara Mikulski has administered the verbal head slap to the Baltimore VA office as the worst in the nation. I didn't hear anybody contradict her, where there's smoke... "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another" our founding principle that we stand by and hold sacred. Plod on!

Steve Parsons

A Thank You to Chapter Members

I would like to thank Chapter 172 and its members for the gift sent to the Adam's Family Funeral Home to help my son, Robert C. Lippold II's family pay for the funeral expenses. A card of thanks is appropriate but this is the only way that I am able to thank all the members. A card would only be seen by those who attend meetings. This then is the only way I can thank them not only for the gift but their service to our country, their support of the chapter and their support of all veterans and their families. Robert C. Lippold

Service Officer Reminder

Reminding all members that we have DAV Service Officers at the Chapter every second Thursday of each month to help any member with benefits or questions concerning benefits. They are here 9:30 -3:00. Any questions, please call the Chapter.

Bill Bowman