

## Terry McWilliams, Vietnam Veteran honored tonight

Tonight family and friends gathered at the Tipton County Museum to honor Vietnam Veteran Terry Wayne McWilliams and thank him for his service to our country. The Girl Scouts provided refreshments. Our Veteran of the Month Sponsors were also present: VFW Post 4840, DAVA Auxiliary Unit 116, and now Neil Bringle of Woodmen Life. Thank you, Terry, for your service to our country

Terry Wayne McWilliams was living in Halls, Tennessee, when he joined the U.S. Navy at the age of 18 on September 28, 1963. After completing boot camp in San Diego, California, his first orders were to report to the USS Isle Royale (AD-29), a repair ship homeported in Long Beach, just up the coast from San Diego. While onboard, he enjoyed deployments to Hawaii, Japan, Hong Kong, and Subic Bay.

His next deployment was destined to be very different. In 1967, his ship received orders to Chu Lai, Vietnam, to assist in salvage operations of two Landing Ship, Tanks (LSTs) that had run aground. His ship arrived in Vietnam during monsoon season. Unable to wait for clear weather, they unloaded supplies in 30 mph winds and sheets of pouring rain. As the sole Cargo Boom Operator, Terry worked without relief from beginning to end of the operation. Needless to say, it took many long hours to remove all the cargo from the grounded vessels; and both the crew and cargo were equally soaked!

Once that task was successfully completed, Terry was assigned to an LST to ferry supplies from ship to shore. Often he and the crew spent nights ashore in make shift houses that let all the rain in, sleeping on soaking wet bedding. During one run, their LST's engine stopped running, leaving them adrift in the channel and sitting ducks for the enemy. It took an inordinate amount of time for help to arrive to tow them back to the USS Isle Royal (AD-29). They soon learned that the man who last serviced the LST had changed the oil but had failed to put oil back in the engine! A rookie mistake that could have cost them their lives, but thankfully didn't.

After four years of service, Seaman Terry Wayne McWilliams was honorably discharged on September 27, 1967, and returned home to Halls. He later learned that his brother Ronnie (now deceased) was serving in Vietnam in the U.S. Army at the same time that Terry was there. Unbeknownst to them, they were only about 30 to 40 miles apart.

For his service to our country, Terry was awarded the Vietnam Service Medal with Bronze Star and the National Defense Service Medal.

Terry moved to Covington many years ago and loves his life here. He is a life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Terry believes that it's important not to forget those who served in Vietnam, especially those who didn't return. He and his wife Brenda are members of First United Pentecostal Church in Covington. He is proud of his children, stepchildren, and his grandchildren. His grandchildren are Anthony, Breleen, Madison, and Josh, who served in the U.S. Navy. Terry was nominated for Veteran of the Month by his step daughter, Jackie King. Please join us for a reception in his honor on Tuesday, September 12 at 6:30 p.m. Refreshments will be served and everyone is invited.