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One last Vietnam mission

Marine to revisit Hanoi for film

Trip with daughter, an Iraq war vet, will be part of local filmmaker's documentary

Candice Williams / The Detroit News

Harrison Township -- Marine Corps
Pfc. Mark Spooner doesn't hold fond memories of his time in Vietnam.

Spooner fought in the TET offensive during the Vietnam War, and hesitated to answer when he was asked to return for a documentary.

Spooner's visit will be recorded as part of the documentary "Our Vietnam Generation," by local

filmmaker Keith Famie. The yearlong project is expected to debut in December.

"I'm kind of anxious because of the unknown," said Spooner, 62, of Harrison Township.

"I put away a lot of those memories. I'll revisit some of those situations when I'm there. We lost a lot of friends. There were good times too."

With encouragement from his daughter, a Marine Corps vet who will [travel](#) with him, Spooner will make the trip next week to Hanoi, Vietnam.



Mark Spooner holds a picture of his daughter, Capt. Jennifer Spooner, right, who served in Iraq in 2005. On the left is a photo of Spooner fresh out of boot camp in 1967. The father and daughter veterans are going to Vietnam to visit young cancer patients. (Todd McInturf / The Detroit News)

Spooner and Marine Corps JAG Captain Jennifer Spooner, an Iraq vet of Reston, Va., will exchange letters and drawings between young cancer patients in Vietnam and Detroit Children's Hospital. They'll leave for Vietnam on Friday and return March 7.

Famie's previous film, "Detroit: Our Greatest Generation," on **World War II** vets, featured a father and son. This time it's a father with a veteran daughter.

Jennifer Spooner, 38, a lawyer, said her father needs this trip to see how things have changed.

"What he did in Vietnam was not wasted," she said.

"They are a developing country and a different way of life, but it's not as brutal as it was at one time."

Vietnam veterans didn't receive fanfare when returning home and many hid that they served in the war because of the stigma attached, Famie said. One lingering effect was from the **U.S. military's** use of Agent Orange, a herbicide contaminated with the chemical TCDD. Many still suffer the effects, including the cancer patients the Spooners will visit.

"They had no idea the impact of that," Famie said.

The \$400,000 film will feature veteran interviews and events, including the flight of two military helicopters over the Detroit River.

A film like this is long overdue, said Keith King, national public affairs chairman for the Vietnam Veterans of America and a volunteer consultant for Famie.

"I'm looking forward to an honest portrayal," King said. "We did what the military asked us to do. When we came home we helped contribute to society."

Famie said he wants to educate people and provide a sense of closure for vets through Spooner's journey.

"I would hope that when the Vietnam vets and their families walk away (from the film), they'll feel it's priceless," he said.

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