

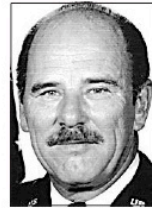
Thousands visit Vietnam display

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Producer Keith Famie videotapes interviews with vets for documentary

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ODELL

More than three decades after the end of the Vietnam War, former prisoner of war Donald "Digger" Odell still can't look at the dozen or so names of men he knew that are inscribed on a memorial listing the names.

With a half-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to his back on Sunday, the 76-year-old retired Air Force colonel from Harrison Township said it's too painful to read any of the 58,000-plus names on the memorial.

"I want to remember my friends the way they were, not as an etching on the wall. Some day, I hope to be able to look at it," said Odell, who was held captive by the North Vietnamese for five years.

"The important thing is the citizens of our country know

See WALL, Page 12A

WALL: Most-decorated vet interviewed

Continued from Page 1A

how many people sacrificed their lives and served our country."

Odell was the guest speaker for the closing ceremonies of the traveling Vietnam Wall That Heals, a smaller replica of the original granite memorial erected in Washington, D.C.

The traveling wall had been on display around the clock in Clinton Township's Civic Center since last Thursday. It will be dismantled this morning.

Organizers estimate between 10,000 and 12,000 people visited the memorial over the weekend. Even after the closing ceremonies Sunday, more than a dozen people were reading the names and visiting an accompanying museum.

"Everything went beautifully," said township Supervisor Robert Cannon, one of the finan-

cial sponsors of the display. "I think it looked very nice on our property and I think our community learned a little more about our veterans."

Producer Keith Famie, the Oakland County chef-turned-TV-personality, was on hand to videotape interviews with veterans for his upcoming documentary "Our Vietnam Generation," being developed in conjunction with Visionalist Entertainment Production.

Among those who will be in the documentary - expected to be done in early 2011 for PBS-TV - are Randy McConnell of Harrison Township, the most decorated Vietnam veteran in the United States, and Mark Spooner, a former Marine, also from Harrison Township, along with his daughter, Jennifer Spooner, an Operation Iraqi Freedom Marine veteran.

It's Famie's second war doc-

umentary, following his well-received last project, "Detroit: Our Greatest Generation" about World War II.

"We had some very good interviews," Famie said. "And we had 19 Life magazine covers from the Vietnam era and we had guys holding up each one. It is an amazing photo."

Patrick Daniels, the longtime president of the Roseville-based Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 154 and whose members stood guard over the display, said a number of "veterans from a distance" came forward over the weekend to join the group.

"A lot of guys are still dealing with the demons from Vietnam," Daniels said. "We can't change what happened 45 years ago. All we can do now is to make sure it doesn't happen again and deal positively with everything from here forward."