



'Spring Awakening' at Fisher Theatre — 1B

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May 1 marks 35th anniversary of fall of Saigon

Americans and Vietnamese hold a remembrance each year on May 1 marking the fall of Saigon in 1975. This year's event will be the 35th year of remembering the lives lost, and is from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 9 headquarters at 2951 Woodward Avenue in Detroit.



Linda May

Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam, and its presidential palace were taken over on April 30, 1975, by the North Vietnamese army with heavy artillery. The assault

ended the Vietnam War, and reunified Vietnam. American diplomats evacuated, and some Vietnamese made it to Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines, or onto U.S. Navy ships off the coast of South Vietnam. Operation Babylift, which lost 154 passengers in the crash of one of its planes, moved perhaps as many as 4,000 Vietnamese children to the U.S. and Canada, Europe and Australia.

Chapter 9 vets are joined, for the third year of a joint remembrance, by the Vietnamese American Association of Michigan, the South Vietnamese Veterans and Former Civil Servants Association of Detroit, the Veteran Association of Vietnam Republic of Michigan, and the Thu Duc Military Academy Alumni of Michigan. Flag ceremonies salute the national anthems of the U.S. and the heritage flag of the Republic of South Vietnam.

"The South Vietnamese Heritage Flag of Freedom, as recognized by the state of Michigan, flies over our building alongside the Michigan and U.S. flags," Mike Sand, of Fraser, said. "A lot of people, millions, fought and died for that flag trying to earn freedoms."

Weather permitting, the ceremony with speakers and music will be in the lot adjoining Chapter 9's building. The vets hope that some day the property will become a public park that honors veterans from all conflicts. Numerous groups, like the Young Marines, will lay wreaths to pay their respects.

May 1 is Law Day, and Loyalty Day which counteracts Communist May Day, and veteran and ex-patriot organizers are calling for religious freedom for Vietnamese citizens.

"The Saigon Broadcasting Network will record the ceremony. The 'Our Vietnam Generation' film crew will be



Photo submitted by Pat Daniels

Volunteers Tim Clinton and Dave Lehman didn't think that the "Gone But Not Forgotten" plaque of deceased members of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 154 would fill up so fast with the names of their friends who are only middle-age. The plaque is at the Veterans Support Center at 16945 12 Mile Road in Roseville that offers free services to vets from any era, and their families.

filming during the event," Sand said.

Visionalist Entertainment Productions Executive Producer Keith Famie is working on a Vietnam documentary, scheduled to air at the end of this year. Its website is www.ourvietnam-generation.com.

A former U.S. Marine from Harrison Township, Mark Spooner, and his daughter Jennifer Spooner, an Operation Iraqi Freedom Marine veteran, appear in the film on a recent trip to where Mark Spooner served in Vietnam during the Tet Offensive in 1968.

Supporting the documentary

Three events are intended to raise money and awareness of the documentary.

One is a "special tribute evening" on May 2 at Andiamo Novi restaurant, 42705 Grand River Avenue. A meet-and-greet gathering with hors d'oeuvres and cash bar is from 5-6:30 p.m. At 7 p.m., Harrison Township resident Max Pellicano will present his stage performance, "Don't Be Cruel — The Life & Times of the King." Pellicano's Elvis Presley show is dedicated to the brother he lost in the Vietnam War, and to Presley's patriotism and service in the U.S. Army. Ticket donation for the May 2 event is \$100. Checks should be made payable to "Veterans

Memorial Park of Detroit" and mailed to Visionalist Entertainment Productions, 28345 Beck Road, Suite 404, Wixom MI 48393.

A second benefit for the documentary will be May 23 at Andiamo Warren restaurant at 7096 E. 14 Mile Road. The trailer for the Vietnam film will be at 6 p.m., and tickets are \$30, which include dinner. A short version of Famie's previous documentary, "Detroit Our Greatest Generation" about World War II veterans, will be shown, and there will be 1960s music. VVA Chapter 154 will display its Michigan Vietnam Veterans Traveling Memorial with the names of the Michigan casualties of the Vietnam War, accompanied by biographical books with photos. To order tickets for the May 23 event, call (248) 869-0096. Checks should be made payable to the "Veteran Support Foundation" and mailed to Visionalist Entertainment Productions in Wixom.

Another event associated with the documentary is a photo shoot at 9:30 a.m. on Belle Isle's West Point on July 11. Veterans are asked to contribute \$20 by writing a check to the "Veterans Memorial Park of Detroit" and reserve their spots on the island by June 15. (Mail checks to the Wixom address.) On July 11, vets should bring 8-inch-by-10-inch photos of themselves when they were on duty during the Vietnam War. Organizers are hoping

that a thousand veterans register. People may also sign up for the photo shoot at Chapter 9's remembrance event on May 1, and purchase a T-shirt to support the documentary.

Help needed

Pat Daniels, from VVA Chapter 154 that operates the Veterans Support Center in Roseville, supports the film. "What Keith Famie is trying to do is to capture the stories of our Vietnam vets," Daniels said. "The reality is that we are losing a great many Vietnam vets every day. We have several new names on our 'Gone But Not Forgotten' plaque in the Vet Center. It's almost half full already."

Daniels said that Famie is looking for both corporate and grassroots support for the Vietnam film.

One of the expenses includes flying two "Huey" helicopters down the Detroit River and over Belle Isle for the July 11 photo shoot.

Film footage includes up-close-and-personal stories of vets making contact with names of their comrades on the chapter's traveling memorial, and learning that medical problems like diabetes and ischemic heart disease are presumed to be caused by exposure to herbicides known as Agent Orange, and that the vets can get treated and receive compensation checks.

Famie filmed volunteers with food going in and out of the Macomb County Veterans Food Bank at the Roseville vet center.

"We actually don't want to talk about Vietnam. We want to talk about all the good things that are happening here at the Vet Center, and about what we are doing now," Daniels said.

"Vietnam vets can be the caregivers of the Korean and World War II vets, and mentors to the Gulf War and Iraq and Afghanistan war vets. I think we have an obligation to do that. Right now, there is a Gulf War Syndrome and nobody really knows for sure exactly what it is yet," Daniels said.

Luuu dinner/dance

The Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6782 men's auxiliary annual spring luau dinner dance is at 7 p.m. today. Tickets are \$33, and proceeds benefit the post veterans and community services. The hall is at 17645 East Nine Mile Road in Eastpointe. Call Ken Jozwiak at (586) 344-6071 for information.

Send service club and veterans news to: Linda May c/o The Macomb Daily, 100 Macomb Daily Drive, Mount Clemens MI 48046; or lindamay@ameritech.net. Phone/fax (586) 791-8116.