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# Congressman Smith's Capitol Report - Missouri Heroes

MAY 31ST 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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## **Congressman Smith Capitol Report**

### **Missouri Heroes**

**May 26, 2017**

Time at the lake or on the river, barbeques and kicking off summer with family and friends – Memorial Day is a time where we celebrate our freedom, but we must stop to remember the cost. It is a day for us to remember those who died fighting for our country and protecting our way of life. Before you set off to enjoy summer, I ask that you pause to remember and honor Memorial Day with me.

I visited the local VFW in Cape Girardeau recently which is named after three Missouri heroes. Lloyd Dale Clippard, Richard Gene Wilson and Robert Lee Taylor, Jr. Clippard was a member of the U.S. Navy and just 19 years old when he became Cape Girardeau's first WWII casualty. He had been on duty for three short months when he and his fellow sailors were attacked by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor. His remains were never recovered and are entombed in the hull of the USS Utah. Wilson was a combat medic for the U.S. Army in the Korean War. He died trying to rescue a wounded soldier at the Battle of Yongju. Taylor was an Army Infantryman in Vietnam. He died in combat in the Dinh Tuong Province, fighting against the threat of Communism, and was awarded the Purple Heart and Bronze Star.

This week, I heard stories from Forest O'Neill of Rolla who recalled many of his fellow Marines that were lost in battle against North Korea. It was December of 1950, Forest and his fellow Marines were fighting their way out of the Chosin Reservoir in temperatures that were 20 and 30 degrees below zero. Sadly, not everyone made it out alive, but Forest and his fellow Marines made sure everyone, dead or alive, made it home.

During the Vietnam War, Missouri lost 1,422 brave soldiers. Earl Wayne Ellis, Dennis Edward Isgrig, Charles Wayne Buntion, Warren Paul Seawel, Frederick John Shuh and Larry Lee Thomure along with too many others are honored on the Vietnam Memorial Wall in D.C. If you aren't able to pay tribute in person, I encourage you to visit [VirtualWall.org](http://VirtualWall.org) and learn more about those from Missouri who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

Today we fight a new war, the Global War on Terror. This war has presented new challenges but the bravery, heroism and sacrifice of Missourians has remained unchanged. Army Sergeant Robert Gene Davis from Jackson, Missouri gave his life for freedom in Afghanistan. As Davis' convoy charged forward, an improvised explosive device detonated underneath his Humvee. Army Specialist James R. Burnett, Jr. from Stoddard County was killed in action by an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan as well. Staff Sergeant Bradley Joe Skelton of Gordonville volunteered to come out of retirement and go on another tour of duty with the Missouri National Guard. It was during this second tour when he was killed by a roadside bomb in Baghdad.

As we pause to remember those we've lost, I am inspired by Korean War Veteran Forest O'Neill who said "Don't give up. Never quit." It's difficult to put my depth of gratitude into words. Thank you feels insufficient compared to what these families have endured. From World War II, The Korean War and Vietnam to the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Missourians have fought bravely and died valiantly. Their families have sacrificed dearly, but as we celebrate our freedoms this weekend, we know their sacrifices are not in vain.

LAST UPDATED ON MAY 31ST 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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