



## Honoring Vietnam Veterans in the Pennsylvania House

The United States involvement in Vietnam spanned more than 20 years and is often considered one of the country's most conflicted eras. More than two and half million Americans served, and over 58,000 soldiers lost their lives during the conflict. Several Members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives served in Vietnam – many earning awards and accolades for their courageous service to the country.

### Robert E. Belfanti, Jr.

(1981-2010, Columbia, Montour, Northumberland,  
and Schuylkill Counties)



Robert E. Belfanti, Jr. enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in 1967. Achieving the rank of sergeant, Belfanti served 13 months in Vietnam with Marine Air Groups 16 and 36, which supplied troops,

ammunition, and medical supplies. He was honorably discharged in 1971 and earned several accolades for his service, including two Bronze Stars with Valor, the Combat Action Ribbon, the Presidential Unit Citation, the Vietnam Campaign Medal, the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry, and the Vietnam Service Medal. In December 2017, Belfanti's legacy as a veteran and advocate for fellow veterans was honored when Act 73 of 2017 renamed a portion of State Routes 54 and 901 in Northumberland and Schuylkill Counties as the Honorable Robert E. Belfanti, Jr. Memorial Highway.

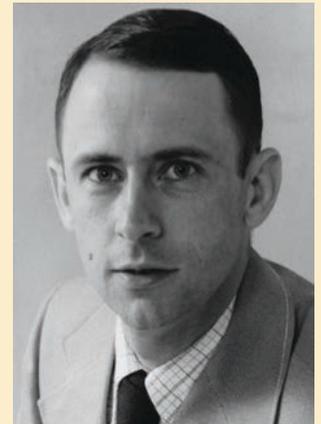
*Images of Representative Belfanti  
provided courtesy of his family.*



### Samuel E. Hayes, Jr.

(1971-1992, Blair, Centre, and Huntingdon  
Counties)

Samuel E. Hayes, Jr. served in the United States Army and was awarded a Bronze Star for his service in Vietnam. Hayes was also a member of the United States Army Reserve.



In an oral history interview with the Pennsylvania House Archives, Hayes

described his service in Vietnam: "Being a veteran in the Vietnam War, obviously that brings you face-to-face with persons who don't necessarily believe in our frame of governance – a representative democracy – and having been one of those many thousands that defended our frame of government and our way of life, yes, it has a searing effect upon a person. And as I served tenaciously in Vietnam, I tried to serve tenaciously to protect this way of life that we have – this political way of life, this frame of self-governance – here in Pennsylvania and America."

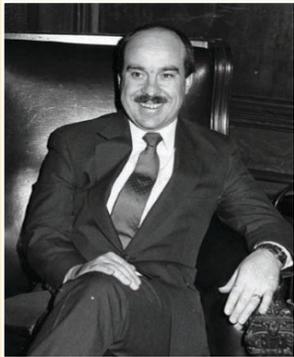
## **Russell H. Fairchild** (1989-2010, Snyder and Union Counties)

Russell H. Fairchild served in the United States Army from 1967 to 1969. For his service as an infantry platoon leader in Vietnam, Fairchild was awarded the Bronze Star. He is an honorary member of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, as well as a member of several veterans' groups. Fairchild was elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in 1988 and served 11 consecutive terms. During his time in office, he served as the chair of the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee.

*Fairchild pictured on the left with fellow Veteran "Doc" Witmer in front of a Howitzer artillery piece. Image courtesy of Mr. Fairchild.*



## **Thomas A. Michlovic** (1979-2002, Allegheny and Westmoreland Counties)



Thomas A. Michlovic served in the United States Army from 1967 to 1969. Michlovic was wounded during his tour of duty in Vietnam in May 1968. His service in Vietnam earned him a Purple Heart, Combat Infantry Badge, and Vietnam Service Medal. Following his service, Michlovic founded the Medal of Honor Scholarship, which began as an effort to honor Medal of Honor recipients Michael Estocin (Vietnam) and Leonard Funk (World War II), who were from his future legislative district. He also participated in a trip to Vietnam as part of the Friends of Da Nang Organization, which raises money for humanitarian efforts in the Vietnamese city of Da Nang.

## **Robert D. Robbins** (1985-1990, Crawford and Mercer Counties)

After graduating from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1966, Robert D. Robbins served as a captain in the United States Army from 1966 to 1971. Robbins served two tours of duty in Vietnam. During his first tour in Vietnam, he served as company commander with D Company, 1st Battalion, 501st Air Infantry/2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. During his second tour, he served as an advisor to a South Vietnamese infantry battalion. For his service in Vietnam, he earned the Soldier's Medal for Heroism, Army Commendation Medals for Valor, the Combat Infantry Badge, and a Bronze Star Medal for Valor. Following his House service, Robbins was elected to the Pennsylvania State Senate and served the 50th District.



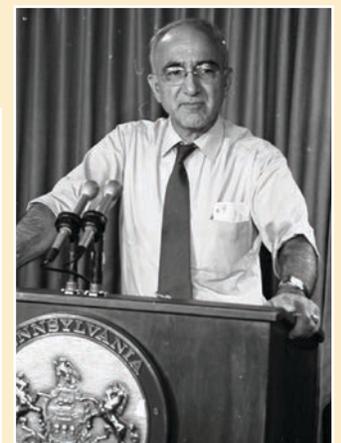
*Photos provided courtesy of the Robbins family.*

## **John H. Broujos** (1983-1992, Adams, Cumberland, and York Counties)

John H. Broujos was a veteran of both the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, achieving the rank of colonel. In Korea, he served as a rifle platoon commander, Dog Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, and he was awarded the Silver Star and Purple Heart medals. Broujos served in Vietnam from 1966 to 1967 as executive officer, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, G-2 of the 9th Brigade. In 1968, he was an instructor at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College and developed the curriculum for Riverine Warfare instruction.

In civilian life, John Broujos studied law at Dickinson Law School and was a practicing attorney for more than 50 years in addition to his House service.

*Photo provided courtesy of the Broujos family.*



# Honoring Pennsylvania Vietnam Veterans at the Capitol

The House Archives was honored to be included in preparing for the exhibition of *The Wall That Heals* which was sponsored by the General Assembly for display in Harrisburg, May 9-13, 2018. *The Wall That Heals*, a replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, honors the more than 3 million Americans that served in the Armed Forces during the Vietnam conflict. The House Archives contributed research on the Vietnam service of former and current House Members, as well as on Medal of Honor winners from Pennsylvania.

*Pictured: The House Archives created an exhibit in the Main Capitol Rotunda to highlight Pennsylvania Vietnam veterans. These uniforms belonged to Army Sgt. Jesse Long of Carlisle Springs and represent the attire many Vietnam veterans wore during their service. The exhibit will be on display until mid June 2018.*



*Military uniforms loaned courtesy of the Cumberland County Historical Society. Dress forms loaned courtesy of the Fashion Archives and Museum of Shippensburg University.*

## Archiving Tips: Caring for Textiles

Here in the House Archives, we mostly work to preserve and maintain paper-based records. However, we occasionally acquire an item that requires more specialized attention, such as the recent donation of a former staff member's softball uniform.

Caring for textiles – which includes items such as clothing, flags, quilts, and tapestries – can be a real challenge. Fabrics can be easily damaged by insects and mold, as well as by exposure to heat, light, and humidity. Here are just a few tips on how to safely preserve any special textiles in your home:

- Store items in a cool, dry place. An ideal climate has a temperature 65-70 degrees and a humidity level of 50 percent. Cooler storage of these items slows deterioration and wards off insects.
- Keep items in the dark. Light exposure causes the fading of

dyes and deterioration of fabric fibers.

- If possible, store textiles flat rather than hanging – especially if an item is heavy. Hanging may put stress on material causing it to stretch or rip over time. If you do decide to hang an item, pad the hanger using materials such as batting and cotton fabric.
- Consider storage in acid-free boxes for precious pieces, and pad any folds you make to the item with acid free tissue paper. Avoid storage in plastic or wood containers, as acid and fumes may damage fabrics.
- Fold large items such as quilts as few times as possible, and even consider storing them rolled if space allows.

- When handling textiles, make sure you wash your hands and remove any jewelry that could snag a delicate fabric.
- If an item needs to be cleaned, consider consulting a textile conservator before risking damage to a precious item.



*This uniform was donated by Dawn Reese, former Assistant Chief Clerk, who played on a bipartisan House softball team in the 1970s and 1980s. The team played in a fast pitch league against teams from the Harrisburg Area.*

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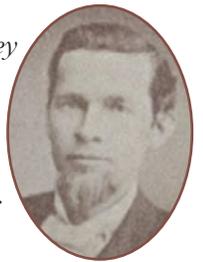
## Lending a Helping Hand in Uncovering History

One of the House Archives' most interesting ongoing projects is our research for the Biographical Directory. The directory, which you can access from the House Archive's website under the Collections tab, provides archival, biographical, and bibliographical information about Members of the Pennsylvania House of

Representatives. Currently, we are working on biographies for Members who served between 1875 and 1899. As we work backwards in time, finding information about the lives of some Members can be challenging. One specific challenge we can have is finding photographs or portraits of House Members from the 1800s. Rep. John Lawrence

finds, allowed us to scan a collage he found that included a small portrait of every House Member from the 1877-1878 session. With these scans we could update our database by adding nearly 200 images of Members of whom we previously did not have a picture!

*Rep. Wilton Monroe Lindsey (1877-1878, Warren County) was a teacher and Civil War veteran whose picture we have thanks to Rep. Lawrence.*



(R-Chester and Lancaster Counties), a history buff who has shared with the House Archives

his numerous historical

In addition to the portraits, Rep. Lawrence has shared some other interesting pieces relating to the history of the House and Capitol with the Archives: this collectable silver spoon features an etching of the Hills Capitol, which was destroyed by fire in 1897; these pins belonged to Members

J.P. Moran (1935-1960, Allegheny County), an unknown Member from 1927, and Paul V. Heffner (1927-1934, Huntingdon County).

*If you have any House memorabilia or historical items you would like to share with us, please feel free to reach out to us at: [records@pabmc.net](mailto:records@pabmc.net).*

### DID YOU KNOW?

In researching House Members who served in Vietnam, the House Archives uncovered information on the service of the following Members:

- Gibson E. Armstrong
- Russell H. Fairchild
- John P. Murtha
- Leonard E. Sweeney
- Stephen E. Barrar
- Samuel E. Hayes, Jr.
- Joseph R. Pitts
- Thomas M. Tighe
- Robert E. Belfanti, Jr.
- Russell P. Letterman
- Robert D. Robbins
- John H. Broujos
- Edward J. Lucyk
- Edmund J. Sieminski
- Gregg L. Cunningham
- Thomas A. Michlovic
- Gerald J. Spitz

While many efforts were made to find every Member who served in Vietnam, some may have been missed. Feel free to contact us to let us know details of any Member not on our list. Contact us at 717-783-3866 or [records@pabmc.net](mailto:records@pabmc.net).