



Democratic Veterans Caucus of Florida

Newsletter

April - June 2018

The DVCF Commemorates the Life of Walt Dartland

By Reuben Sparks



Walt Dartland is on the far right of the four Democratic Veterans that ran for Florida Congressional Districts 1-4 in November 2016.

The Democratic Veterans Caucus of Florida would like to commemorate the life of Walt Dartland. Walt died in his Tallahassee home on March 1 after fighting a battle against lymphoma at the age of 83. He was one of Florida's best ever advocates for consumers and tax payers. In the 1980's, he was the official Consumer Advocate for the Miami-Dade County government. He was the guiding force behind Florida's now decades-old landmark 'Lemon Law.' Several years ago Walt worked on behalf of a neighborhood of poor black residents of Port St. Joe. Their homes were deteriorating because of major flaws in the homesites and construction. He ultimately helped win a settlement for the homeowners to be compensated and the problems corrected.

Diana, Walt's wife of 36 years said he had been diagnosed with lymphoma 4 months before his death.

Dartland got his degree in Mechanical Engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and earned his law degree at the University of Michigan. In addition to his work as a Special Counsel to Attorney General Bob Butterworth, he was an adjunct professor at Florida A&M, Florida Atlantic and the University of Miami Law School.

At the age of 80, Walt ran for Congress as a lifelong Democrat in a largely Republican area. Walt, a former Marine ran for the Congressional District 2 seat, losing to Neal Dunn. Walt spoke to the Bay County Democratic Veterans Caucus during his run for Congress. His success as an advocate and his enthusiasm impressed everyone. We also marveled at him riding around in his antique car. We are proud to have known Walt Dartland and extend sympathy to his family.

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Call to Arms for Human Rights

By Carlton Cartwright

Palm Beach County - After the November 2016 disappointing devastating Democratic Presidential candidate loss, I took it upon myself to get out and do something. I had a parental issue that needed my attention for the entire election year. As the election grew near, the issue was being resolved. I tried to set an example of unity because of my lack of participation on the political stage for the year. I immediately started attending and/or joining the following clubs and caucuses, meetings/organizations in Palm Beach County:

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| Rusty Gordon LGBTA | Young Dems |
| Democratic Seniors | West Palm Beach Dems |
| American Legion Post 199 | Democratic Legislative Committee |
| Greater Boynton Dems | Democratic Hispanic Caucus |
| DEC in Palm Beach and Martin County | |

I attended the meetings of the local Service Employee's International Union (SEIU). SEIU has become a host for the Restoration of Rights Issue. I originally visited them because I discovered they were dealing with the immigration issues faced by minorities. These meetings led me to bond with the Guatemalan-Maya Center and For The Children First both located in Lake Worth, where I have been assisting them in the creation of a film program as part for their afterschool program for K-12. I ran afterschool programs comprised of arts and education programs, similar to those for underserved populations. I had done this previously for 16 years. I would like to point out that both of these programs deal with Latino and Haitian immigration issues.

I was appointed Media Chair of the Democratic Veterans Caucus of Florida (DVCF) Board of Directors where I was a member. I am working through the DVCF to collect interviews for the Library of Congress for the Veterans History Project, at the same time trying to promote the implementation of Democratic Veterans Caucus chapters throughout Florida.

It is my view that now is not the time to stay in our own lane, now is the time to join the community and bond wherever we can. Healing will be needed. All clubs and caucuses should remain in existence. In this political climate we all need to be concerned about all the issues.

The Term Human Rights Says It All: We need to take it upon ourselves to be involved and pay attention to this attack on the entire human race. The leadership in the White House is strategically bobbing and weaving from one area to another; from Planned Parenthood to immigration to affordable healthcare; to women's reproductive rights to cutting funding for education to racial justice, to alternative lifestyles to defending the country to environmental protection to increasing support for police brutality, etc. By attacking these issues separately, the White House is successfully keeping us off balance.

My grandfather was born in the Bahamas and my father was born there in 1919. My mother was born in North Carolina. They both served in the Army in the European theater in WWII. My parents always taught me to consider myself as a human being. However, rearing me in the abusive racist environment of this country, they allowed me to make up my own mind about this world and country we live in without teaching me how to hate anyone.

We need to be unified on all human rights issues, as we are not. Veterans for instance take an oath to protect the entire country. We swear our lives to that end, contractually, upon acceptance into the military. Where are we supposed to draw the line on that? When our female, gay, white, Hispanic, Asian, Haitian, lesbian, Chinese, Australian, English, South American, Muslim, Jamaican friends are in trouble; am I a fair-weather friend or what? When we are both in trouble, it is both of our business. Why are we drawing lines and staying in lanes when these people in the White House are relentlessly attacking us on a day by day, hour by hour basis? Why aren't we uniting across all lines and addressing and responding to these barrages in a unified front?

When we are in peacetime, we can go back to our individual camps. But this is war. A war that many of us never thought we would see again or have to fight in the first place. Nevertheless, it is here and instead of bonding together and ignoring the individual attacks, we need to bond with our children, Indian, Italian, Bolivian, Bahamian, Canadian, Korean, Central-American, Mexican friends and fight the hell out of this sludge and quagmire bog the people in the White House

are slinging on us on a minute-by-minute basis. As a veteran, woman, gay or lesbian or teenager or whatever type and kind of human being I am; how can I mind my business or stay in my lane when my conscience and spirit and GOD calls out to me and tells me that I must protect my senior citizens or those that are disabled and too weak to fight for themselves and left defenseless? How can I sleep at night when my immigrant friends might disappear and leave their children that my children play and go to school with - homeless tomorrow and at the mercy of an already overwhelmed and incompetent foster care system? How can I look myself in the mirror and live with myself? And stay in my lane?

HUMAN RIGHTS & SOCIAL JUSTICE;
HOMELESSNESS; ADDICTION

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Democratic Veterans Caucus of Florida - DVCF



A before and after picture of a veteran's home done by Glenwood Community PRIDE.

Glenwood Community PRIDE

By Reuben Sparks

Bay County Florida - Glenwood is a predominantly African-American community within Panama City. Many houses have gone overlooked in recent years but one program has helped this impoverished community. The Glenwood Community PRIDE program helps senior citizens, disabled or those on a fixed income having difficulty keeping up with the demands of home ownership. PRIDE is of no cost to the homeowner. PRIDE stands for Paint It, Repair It, Improve It, Deliver Solutions, and Eliminate Blight. The PRIDE Project offers help with home maintenance and preservation. The goal of the PRIDE Project is to beautify the Glenwood community, prevent slum and blight and help people stay in their homes by keeping homes safe, habitable and affordable. The PRIDE Project offers services by AmeriCorps members and volunteers. PRIDE services do not require a license or permit. At this time, PRIDE volunteers work exclusively on the exterior of homes. The PRIDE Project is managed by AmeriCorps Goodwill Goodworks! And is sponsored by Goodwill Industries Big Bend, Inc.

Bay County Democratic Veterans Caucus members Ardella and Pat Moran have worked on several houses with the project. Other members of the caucus have volunteered also. The PRIDE Project completed its 18th home in the Glenwood Community in June 2018. During this past spring members from the Airmen's Leadership Program at Tyndall Air Force Base volunteered as workers.

The PRIDE Project normally takes a break during the stifling summer months in Florida. This fall the project is starting back and has been granted another \$10,000

grant from Panama City's Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) to pay for materials. The Bay County Democratic Veterans Caucus plans for a continued association with the project in the future. As of the summer of 2018 the Glenwood Community PRIDE Program has finished 20 houses.

Sims State Nursing Home

By Reuben Sparks

Bay County Florida - The Bay County Democratic Veterans Caucus presented two pictures to the Clifford Chester Sims State Veterans Nursing Home. The pictures are "Once a Soldier, Always a Soldier." The picture shows a bent elderly man at a memorial wall, he is dressed in civilian clothes and walks with a cane. His shadow as a combat fighting soldier in full gear with weapon is depicted on the wall. The two pictures were posted on separate wings of the facility. The Clifford Chester Sims State Veterans Nursing Home is a retirement and assisted living facility nursing home located in Panama City. This excellent rated facility opened in 2003 and has a capacity of 120 beds.

Clifford Chester Sims, the man for whom the facility is named was a remarkable person. After being orphaned as a young boy, he lived briefly in an abandoned Panama City school bus. As a teenager he was adopted by Port St. Joe residents James and Irene Sims. Shortly after graduating from high school he enlisted in the US Army. In August 1967 Sims joined D Company, 2nd Battalion, 501st Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, which was nicknamed the "Delta Raiders." Sims and his comrades deployed to Vietnam in December 1967. In February 1968 Company D attacked a North Vietnamese stronghold 4.5 Kilometers west of Hue. Small arms fire destroyed the company's radio connection. The 1st Lieutenant in charge was forced to make personal contact with the platoons. Sims and his men were instructed to cover the others as they traversed the fields. Sims' squad was directed to link up with the 63rd Platoon. Just as they began this mission, three North Vietnamese soldiers attacked the squad but were killed by Sims and his men. Sims had his men maneuver around a hut filled with ammunition that exploded. Two of his men were hurt from the shrapnel. Not long after setting out again, the squad approached a bunker. As Sims moved in for a closer inspection, he tripped a well-concealed booby trap. He yelled for the other squad members to get back. Sims then hurled himself on top of the device, absorbing the shock of the blast. Sims never took cover the entire day of February 21, 1968. His actions were visible to 13 fellow soldiers who submitted sworn, eyewitness testimony to the US Secretary of Defense. For sacrificing his own life to save his fellow soldiers, Sims was posthumously awarded the military's highest accolade, the Congressional Medal of Honor. Sims' wife Mary and her niece Gina Sims accepted the medal in a White House ceremony led by Vice President Spiro Agnew. Mary Sims and Sims' commanding officer, Retired Major Cleo Hogan attended the dedication of the Sims State Veterans Nursing Home in 2003.



On left and right Reuben Sparks and Paul White of the Bay County Democratic Veterans Caucus present two pictures of "Once a Soldier, Always a Soldier" to Virginia (Ginny) O'Hare, the Activities Director of the Clifford Sims State Veterans Nursing Home in Panama City.

Upcoming Events

Leadership Blue
June 29 - July 1, 2018
Diplomat Resort
Hollywood, FL

Primary Election
August 28, 2018

November 6, 2018
National Mid-Term Election Day

New Law Authorizes Veterans' Salutes during National Anthem

(Reprint of an article from October 30, 2008)

WASHINGTON -- Veterans and active-duty military not in uniform can now render the military-style hand salute during the playing of the national anthem, thanks to changes in federal law that took effect this month. "The military salute is a unique gesture of respect that marks those who have served in our nation's armed forces," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "This provision allows the application of that honor in all events involving our nation's flag." The new provision improves upon a little known change in federal law last year that authorized veterans to render the military-style hand salute during the raising, lowering or passing of the flag, but it did not address salutes during the national anthem. Last year's provision also applied to members of the armed forces while not in uniform.

Traditionally, members of the nation's veteran's service organizations have rendered the hand-salute during the national anthem and at events involving the national flag while wearing their organization's official head-gear. The most recent change, authorizing hand-salutes during the national anthem by veterans and out-of-uniform military personnel, was sponsored by Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, an Army veteran. It was included in the Defense Authorization Act of 2009, which President Bush signed on Oct. 14. The earlier provision authorizing hand-salutes for veterans and out-of-uniform military personnel during the raising, lowering or passing of the flag, was contained in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008, which took effect January 28, 2008.

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