

# Welcome Home

March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Remarks by Master of Ceremony

RADM Brian McCarthy SC, USN





## Welcome Home, Southwest Florida

*Celebration of  
Vietnam Veterans*

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9:30 a.m.  
Thursday, March 29  
Patriot Plaza, Sarasota National Cemetery

Guest speaker:  
General Hugh Shelton, (USA) Retired  
Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Presenting Partner

   

Music provided by  
*The First Brass*  
First Brass of Sarasota

Please RSVP for this FREE event to:  
[WelcomeHomeSouthwestFlorida@gmail.com](mailto:WelcomeHomeSouthwestFlorida@gmail.com)

With in-kind support from Vietnam Brotherhood Alpha Co and Military Officers of America, Sarasota Chapter

**Picture a man** going on a journey beyond site and sound – he’s entered the demilitarized zone...

- **Good Morning Vietnam**

That iconic opening was introduced by **Adrian Cronaour** in 1965. The radio show was passed to **Creamer Hass** and then to **Don Fox** who was chief announcer for the network until Pat Sadjak, of “Wheel of Fortune fame, took over. **Don Fox is in our audience today** – Don please stand up and be recognized as a representative of all who served at our radio and television stations throughout Vietnam.

I am Rear Admiral Brian McCarthy, USNR(Retired) President of the Military Officer Association of America's - Sarasota Chapter and Executive Director of the Sarasota Military Officers Scholarship Fund. It is my honor to be your master of ceremony today on behalf of our ***Welcome Home Southwest Florida*** hosts - **Tidewell Hospice**, the **Community Foundation of Sarasota County** and the **Manatee Community Foundation**.

I served in Vietnam as a Lieutenant junior grade in the blue water navy aboard the USS Buck [DD-761] as a surface warfare officer and in the brown water navy on PBRs in the Mekong Delta as part of Task Force 116. My service extended from Vietnam to Desert Storm.

**We are here today to welcome our brothers and sisters from the Vietnam era home.** I returned from Vietnam in 1969. Deployment exhaustion quickly dissipated as we pulled into San Diego in our destroyer, exhilarated by the prospect of seeing family and friends. It is difficult for any of us to describe – unless experienced. However, the welcome home was short lived. Some who opposed American involvement in the Vietnam War treated veterans poorly. They tended to blame American troops for the tragic situation in Vietnam. Some protesters simply did not make a clear distinction between the war and those who fought it.

Rather than being greeted with anger and hostility, however, most Vietnam veterans received very little reaction when they returned home. They mainly noticed that people seemed uncomfortable around us and did not appear interested in hearing about our wartime experiences and few of us wanted to share them. Society as a whole was certainly unable and unwilling to receive us with the support and understanding that was needed. The most common experiences of rejection were not explicit acts of hostility but quieter, sometimes more devastating forms of withdrawal, suspicion, and indifference. **Today that ends.**

Today marks the third anniversary of the United States Department of State official "*Coming Home*" celebration for Vietnam Veterans. This date corresponds with the official 50th anniversary of the heaviest fighting during the Vietnam War. **This is our opportunity today to recognize and celebrate our military service with our families.**

**Our Guest Speaker**

**General Hugh Shelton**

A native of Tarboro, North Carolina, and a graduate of North Carolina State University, General Hugh Shelton was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the infantry through the Reserve Officer Training Corps. Spending the next 38 years serving his country in a variety of command and staff positions, Shelton served two combat tours in Vietnam with the 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group and the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade, was the Assistant Division Commander for the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division during Desert Storm and led the US Joint Task Force that restored democracy in Haiti.

Among his many awards, he has been honored with the Congressional Gold Medal—the highest honor the United States Congress can bestow—for his distinguished achievements and contributions to his nation, and the world. He has also received four Defense Distinguished Service Medals; two Army Distinguished Service Medals; the Legion of Merit; the Bronze Star Medal for Valor; and the Purple Heart, not to mention decorations from 15 foreign governments. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 2001. Highlights of his civilian awards include North Carolina's highest award for public service; the Eisenhower Award from the Business Executives for National Security; the American Academy of Achievement's Golden Plate Award; the Intrepid Freedom Award; and recognition as a National Father of the Year, among others.

As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Shelton served as the Principal Military Advisor to Presidents Clinton and Bush. He has recently embarked on a more personal journey to promote freedom, justice, and action by communicating the threats to America's National Security, which include the international war against terrorism, as well speaking frequently on values-based leadership.

He is the author of two books, *Secrets of Success* and *Without Hesitation*, an autobiography

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming General Hugh Shelton.

**In conclusion** - As we observe the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, we reflect with solemn reverence upon the valor of a generation that served with honor. We pay tribute to the more than 3 million servicemen and women who left their families to serve bravely, a world away from everything they knew and everyone they loved. From “I”a Drang Valley to “K”he Sanh, from Hue to Saigon and countless villages in between, they pushed through jungles and rice paddies, heat and monsoon,

fighting heroically to protect the ideals we hold dear as Americans. Through more than a decade of combat, over air, land, and sea, these proud Americans upheld the highest traditions of our Armed Forces.

As a grateful Nation, we honor more than 58,000 patriots-their names etched in black granite-who sacrificed all they had and all they would ever know. We draw inspiration from the heroes who suffered unspeakably as prisoners of war, yet who returned home with their heads held high. We pledge to keep faith with those who were wounded and still carry the scars of war, seen and unseen. With more than 1,600 of our service members still among the missing, we pledge as a Nation to do everything in our power to bring these patriots home. In the reflection of The Wall, we see the military family members and veterans who carry a pain that may never fade. May they find peace in knowing their loved ones endure, not only in medals and memories, but in the hearts of all Americans, who are forever grateful for their service, valor, and sacrifice.

In recognition of a chapter in our Nation's history that must never be forgotten, let us renew our sacred commitment to those 9 million Americans who served on active duty in the US Armed Forces during the Vietnam War, approximately 7 million of which are living today. And let us all recognize the families who awaited the safe return of those deployed and the contribution made on the home front by our families during the Vietnam era.

I want to thank Tidewell Hospice, the Community Foundation of Sarasota County and the Manatee Community Foundation for this inspiring *Welcome Home*. Let's conclude our program today with the singing of God Bless America led by Sharon Scott.

I wish everyone *Fair winds and following seas*.