



James Dirsa displaying his Vietnam medals

Vietnam Medals Finally Awarded Steve Soreff, MD

Today, Thursday, September 8, 2022, at 10 AM in Conference Room 1 of the Community Center, Congressman Chris Pappas awarded James Dirsa his Vietnam medals. Dirsa served as a Navy Seal in combat in Vietnam from 1965 through 1967. He was honorably discharged in 1967. At that time, he was told, that because of his service in Vietnam, he would receive Vietnam service medals. That did not happen. As Dirsa puts it, “The military pushed million-dollar helicopters in the sea but never gave me my \$20 medals.” He remarked they said “they were going to do it and they did not”

After discharge, he worked as an operating engineer on such projects as the Big Dig in Boston. However, in terms of his health, the years since then have not been kind to him, He has a pacemaker, diabetes, and Parkinsonism. Moreover, his exposure to Agent Orange has taken its toll on him and he now receiving [benefits](#). He noted, “On beaches in New Hampshire things grow. On the sands of Vietnam, there are only dead trees because of Agent Orange”. Then in the winter of 2022, he was hospitalized with COVID-19. He and his wife Barbara realized that he may not have been getting all the Veterans Administration (VA) help and benefits nor had he received his Vietnam medals.

With the interventions of the VFW of Portsmouth and [Congressman Chris Pappas](#) and his office, these situations were addressed and rectified. This led to the moment when Congressman Chris Pappas presented James Dirsa with his Vietnam medals.



Congressman Chris Pappas presenting James Dirsa with his Vietnam medals

One of them was the [Vietnam Service Medal](#). Created by Executive Order 11213, July 8, 1965. It is awarded to all service members of the armed forces who between July 4, 1965 and March 28, 1973, served in the following areas of Southeast Asia; Vietnam and the contiguous waters and airspace; Thailand, Laos, or Cambodia; or the airspace thereof and in the direct support of military operations in Vietnam.

The second one was the [National Defense Service Medal](#). This medal was authorized by executive Order 10448, April 22, 1953, and amended by Executive Order 11256, Jan. 11, 1966. CRITERIA: It is awarded for honorable active military service as a member of the armed forces of the United States including the Coast Guard, during the following periods:-June 27, 1950 to July 27, 1954 - Korean War timeframe. -Jan. 1, 1961 to Aug. 14, 1974 - Vietnam War timeframe, -Aug. 2, 1990 to Nov. 30, 1995 - Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM timeframe.-Sept. 11, 2001 to a date to be determined - Terrorism attacks on the U.S./Global War on Terrorism. He also received a VA pin.

It was a moving ceremony. Thanks to the VFW and Pappas's office James Dirsa finally received his Vietnam medals and the nation said a proper thank you to him.

