

VVA Chapter 1069 members, **Billy Orsak** & **Bob Supak**, take a 780 mile road trip to attend the Honorary Air Assault Badge Ceremony at Fort Campbell, Kentucky (near Clarksville TN). The event was hosted by the 101st Airborne Division Association on Thursday, June 24, 2021, on post, at the 101st Sabalauski Air Assault school.



What is the “Honorary Air Assault Badge”?

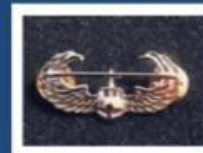


The Screaming Eagle

⚡ e-letter


November, 2020

On Veterans Day, in November of 2020, the 101st Airborne Division Association, residing on Fort Campbell, Kentucky, announced in their electronic Newsletter, a new project for Vietnam Veterans, whereby the Association would recognize the legacy of the Vietnam Veteran. **The Commanding General of Fort Campbell had been authorized by the Department of the Army G-1, to offer to those Vietnam Veterans who qualify, the award of “Honorary Air Assault Wings” – i.e. The Air Assault Badge.**



Today’s soldiers are awarded the Air Assault Badge after having successfully completed the physically demanding and mentally challenging 10-day long, Air Assault School. However, during the Vietnam War, there was no formal school to teach air assault skills. Never the less, the soldiers who served in the **101st Airborne Division (Air Mobile), 101st Air Cavalry Division & 1st Cavalry Division, (1965-1972),** acquired many of the skills required of air mobility operations, through basic combat operations, by picked-up skills as a matter of OJT (On the Job Training). 😊

An Application & Certification Process was Required by the 101st Airborne Association



101st Airborne Association
Application for Honorary Air Assault Badge
Must Meet All Criteria Listed on Application Form

Part 1 - Personal Information
Type or Print Legibly

Name
 Last: _____ First: _____ Middle: _____

Mailing Address
 Street: _____ City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Telephone/email
 Land Line: _____ Cell: _____ email: _____

Part 2 - Vietnam War Combat Service
Assigned or Attached to 101st Airborne Division (Armable)

From: _____ To: _____ Rank: _____

Company/Battery/Troop: _____ Battalion/Squadron: _____ Regiment: _____ Brigade: _____

Duty MOS (check appropriate box)
 Infantry Combat Medic Field Artillery Cavalry Other _____

Formal Armable Training (check all that apply - insert location and dates of training)

Type of Training	Location	Dates
<input type="checkbox"/> AIT		
<input type="checkbox"/> NCOCC, CLC		
<input type="checkbox"/> OCS, IOBC		
<input type="checkbox"/> SERTS		
<input type="checkbox"/> RECONDO		
<input type="checkbox"/> Unit Training/OT		

Combat Awards (check all that apply)
 Combat Infantry Badge Combat Medic Badge ARCOM w/V Bronze Star Air Medal
 Legion of Merit Silver Star Distinguished Service Cross Medal of Honor

Combat Experience (check all that apply)
 Combat Air Assault Dust-OR/MEDEVAC Helicopter Troop Extraction Call for Gunship Fire Support
 Select/Prep/Secure LZ/PZ Conduct Air Assault Advanced Tactics (appel, para-drop, equipment sling load)

Part 3 - Certification

The application included a set of qualification criteria, all of which had to be mailed to the 101st Airborne Division Association, for certification and acceptance

- Assigned or attached to a combat unit in the 101st Airborne Division, 101st Air Cavalry Division or 101st Airborne Division (Air Mobile) in Vietnam during the period from 1965 through 1972; **AND**
- Served in direct combat in a Combat Arms duty MOS (Infantry, Combat Medic, Cavalry, Engineers, Field Artillery) with the 101st Airborne in Vietnam;
OR was a Combat Support MOS assigned to a 101st combat unit in Vietnam; **AND**
- Awarded the CIB, CMB, Air Medal, ARCOM with V, Bronze Star, Legion of Merit, Silver Star, Distinguished Service Cross or Medal of Honor
OR Conducted 25 or more Combat Helicopter Assaults or a lesser number of "hot" LZs; **AND**
- Graduated from Infantry AIT, NCOCC, OCS, IOBC, SERTS, CLC or RECONDO during the period of the Vietnam War; **AND**
- Provided a copy of form DD-214 (social security number blocked out)

Note that this is an Honorarium Award

Veterans who have provided the required criteria and who have been certified by the 101st Airborne Division

(Air Assault) will be officially authorized to purchase and wear (or display) the Air Assault Badge. The Air Assault Badge may then be worn on civilian caps/clothing but is not authorized for wear on a uniform. It is also important to understand that this honorary recognition does not entitle the veteran to have the Air Assault Badge added to his official military personnel record.

(statement above by the 101st Airborne Division Association)



***101st Airborne Association
Hosts Honorary Air
Assault Badge
Ceremony, held at
Fort Campbell,
Kentucky, June 24, 2021, for
Vietnam Veterans.***



Why is the 101st Airborne Division Association Awarding an Honorary Air Assault Badge to Vietnam Veterans?



- **Association Statement:** In honor of our veterans this Veteran's Day, 2020, the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) is planning on recognizing our Vietnam veterans during the Week of the Eagles (June 21 -25, 2021). We would like to personally recognize the men and women that served in Vietnam with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) with the Honorary Air Assault Badge due to their contributions and execution of air assault missions during the Vietnam campaign. **To qualify, a Vietnam Veteran must have been awarded an Air Medal for having participated in 25 or more Helicopter Air Assault missions.**

Just to review some history, if a soldier leaving Vietnam had completed 25 or more Helicopter Air Assault missions, he would receive an "Air Medal" – photo at right. And a soldier could receive more than one Air Medal, if he had flown enough assault missions to qualify for another medal.

However, during the time of the Vietnam War, there was no such thing as an "Air Assault Badge". This type of badge did not come into existence until the later 1970s. And to qualify for an Air Assault Badge, one had to go to and graduate from Air Assault school.

Thus the reason for the 101st Airborne Division Association coming up with the idea of awarding an Honorary Air Assault Badge to those Vietnam veterans that qualified for one. The qualification being mostly that the veteran received his training by OJT – ON-the-JOB-TRAINING.



Association Statement Continued: *The legacy of the soldiers who served with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Mobile) in Vietnam was the foundation of what has evolved into the air assault techniques and tactics of today. The soldiers of the current 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) earnestly desire to recognize the heritage of those soldiers who proved the concept of air mobility/air assault operations by awarding those who meet certain strict criteria, honorary air assault wings.*



Note that this is an Honorarium Award. *Veterans who have provided the required criteria and who have been certified by the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) will be officially authorized to purchase and wear (or display) the Air Assault Badge. The Air Assault Badge may then be worn on civilian caps/clothing but is not authorized for wear on a uniform. It is also important to understand that this honorary recognition does not entitle the veteran to have the Air Assault Badge added to his official military personnel record.*

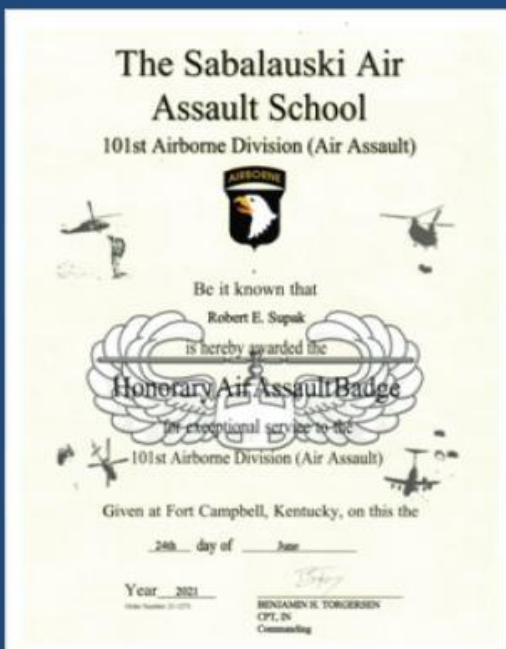
We arrived early on June 24. The ceremony (big tent) was scheduled to start at 12:00 noon, but was pushed back to 1:00 pm, because of long line of Vietnam Veterans waiting in line to register (pickup their medal & certificate) for the event.



All arriving veterans had to first pickup their Honorary Air Assault badge and Official Certificate at check-in tent . All Veterans that had been certified via the application process, were also required to register online to attend the event.



Photo below shows the certificate that each Veteran received at the entrance area to the ceremony, along with 2 Air Assault Badges/Pins. Again, this was presented from the 101st Airborne Division Association that resides on Fort Campbell.



*The Air Assault School on Fort Campbell, is named after **Walter J. Sabalauski**. Note the huge tent below – that is where the ceremony was held.*



*The Sabalauski Air Assault School at Fort Campbell is named for CSM **Walter J. Sabalauski**, who served two tours of duty with the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment. On his first tour with the 2/502 in Vietnam, as First Sergeant of Charlie Company, **he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the Silver Star for extraordinary heroism**. CSM Sabalauski retired from the Army in 1972. He died in 1993 and was buried with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery. The Fort Campbell Air Assault School was renamed for him in 1994.*



And to the left of the big tent, two other huge tents were setup, where all attending veterans and family members were invited for a BBQ dinner after the ceremony concluded.



The Sabalauski Air Assault school is a rigorous 10-day course. 55% of first-time recruits wash out! You can Google "Walter J. Sabalauski" to find out why the school bares his name.



The main tent was huge! We heard that 1500 Vietnam Veterans had applied for the Honorary Air Assault Badge project. This was one of many events taking place on Fort Campbell during an annual celebration called "Eagle Week"



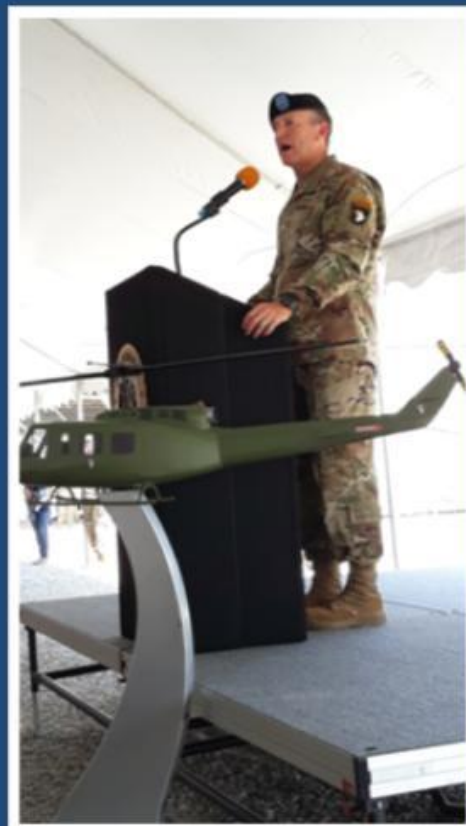
The photo below shows the tent starting fill up. You can also see Billy talking to another Vietnam Veteran, a Cobra pilot who also worked in the Camp Eagle & Evans areas during the time Billy & Bob were in Vietnam – what great stories he had!



Ok, the tent is getting full and getting close to ceremony start time. Billy & Bob are sitting behind the man walking with the black shirt. 😊 In the right lower corner is Major General JP McGee Commanding General 101st Airborne Division and Fort Campbell. They said they were expecting 300 Veterans to show up – **450 actually attended along with spouses & family!**



**Major General JP McGee
Commanding General, 101st
Airborne Division (Air Assault) and
Fort Campbell, served as Master of
Ceremonies. He started out by
saying the event was “Catastrophic
Success!”. 😊 He then said: “Today
we’re going to pay tribute and
recognize our Screaming Eagle Air
Assault culture and excellence that
has come before us. This is
probably the largest awarding of
Air Assault Badges in the history of
the badge. 101st Screaming Eagles
& 1st Cavalry Vietnam Veterans
laid the foundation for modern-
day Air Assault operations.”
(Note the great looking Huey model)**



Below, Billy's Vietnam buddy, Wally, gets pinned with an Honorary Air Assault badge. Originally, GM McGee was supposed to call each veteran up to the podium and pin him, but due to the large attendance, instead many Air Assault officers walked down the rows and pinned us in mass.



Photo below shows Billy getting his Air Assault pin.



Photo below shows Bob getting his Air Assault pin.



As each Vietnam Veteran received his Air Assault pin from the officer, the officer then passed a commemorative "Week of the Eagles" coin in his palm to the Veteran while shaking hands. Photo below.



Photo below shows Billy & Bob after receiving their Air Assault badges/pins. On the far left is Wally, Billy's Vietnam buddy.



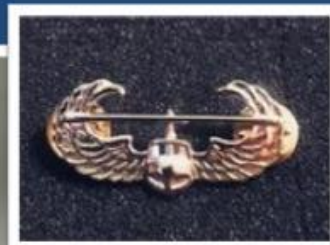
Photo below shows several of Billy's buddies from Vietnam, also attending the ceremony. Billy drives to Fort Campbell every year for their 101st Airborne, 506th Infantry reunion



Image below shows the Air Assault badge/pin that was awarded



We hope you enjoyed our little show & tell. Our intent was not to brag about our receiving the honorary Air Assault badges, but to just share our experience with our chapter family of fellow Vietnam veterans. The real thrill of attending the ceremony, was to be in a single congregation of 450 Vietnam Veterans, and to meet and talk with a few of them. In all, we had a darn good time with plenty of camaraderie to go around.



Do you have a story you would like to share with the chapter membership?

The Officers and BOD members of our chapter would like to encourage all members to think about sharing some interesting story or event you may have. Subject matter could be about some Vietnam era event, your time in Vietnam, your time in the military, a visit to some Veteran memorial, a visit to a Vietnam buddy in the hospital, some special Veterans event, a visit or connection with a long lost Vietnam buddy, your participation in some special Veterans project or organization – fishing or hunting trips, Some school project you participated in, etc. Our new President, Joe McCreary, wants to promote more of this type story sharing for chapter meetings in order to continue the great camaraderie in the chapter. If you'd like to schedule and plan some sort of presentation, please see Joe or Larry, then get together with Bob Supak to help you with the presentation.

