

## **To Our Veterans: Thank you for Your Service**

Ortonville VFW Post 582 Commander, since 2014, and VFW Charter Member Dennis Hoffman has been instrumental in the process of designating Ortonville not only as a Purple Heart Trail, but also having M-15 within the village limits designated as a Purple Heart Highway. His service to our community and our country is honorable. We thank him and all veterans who have served our great country and we share Commander Hoffman's military history to honor those who sacrificed to serve and protect us:

Commander Hoffman was drafted to the Army in June 1968. Following boot camp at Fort Bragg, North Carolina and advanced infantry training at Ft. Polk, Louisiana, the USS Pueblo was seized by the North Koreans in international waters on January 23, 1968 and the crew held hostage.

Due to this new conflict, his battalion in October was split in half, some going to Vietnam and some, including Commander Hoffman, were sent to the DMZ (Korean Demilitarized Zone). "I was disappointed," says Hoffman. "I was trained for jungle warfare and I wanted to fight. I didn't fight the draft; I just felt it was part of my duty as a US Citizen."

He was shipped to the DMZ and read shortly thereafter in the *USA Times* that half of his battalion sent to Vietnam was killed in the first day of the Tet Offensive, a series of surprise attacks by the Vietcong and Chinese to annihilate the Americans. "It was rough, and my brother was a helicopter mechanic in Vietnam," Hoffman explains. "We were just trying to get through the time."

He patrolled the DMZ for 13 months and dealt with conflicts as people tried to sneak through the fence. There was a mile to the military demarcation line, and it was filled with bunkers and fox holes allowing Hoffman and his battalion to patrol the area.

He left the Army after his two-year draft period was complete. He flew into Fort Lewis, Washington in January 1970 and then was bussed to Oakland, California. For two days he sat in his uniform waiting for a flight home to Detroit, no flights were available, and he was called names. Finally, a gentleman said to him, "If you change into civilian clothes, you will get a flight." He did just that, immediately was boarded on the next flight and changed back into his uniform when he landed in Detroit.

He came back to a world with many changes – angry American citizens who wouldn't place him on a flight and with a lack of telecommunications, he found out his grandmother had passed away and his parents were divorced.

When the Ortonville VFW Post was chartered in 1984, he joined and continues to give to the 16 programs supported by the VFW – Honor Guard Rifle Team, Voice of Democracy Essay Contest, Oakland County Camp Out, Poppy Program, VFW National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids and local food banks and the list goes on....

Thank you, Commander Hoffman, for all you and your fellow VFW members do for our community!