

Semper Fi for Hawaii vet buried in Arlington

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HONOLULU (HawaiiNewsNow) - Like many veterans who've served multiple tours, Captain Harris spent almost three years in Vietnam, and he was fluent in Vietnamese. Although many years had passed since he actually served, the military was never far away.

Ernie Harris was a decorated hero, awarded a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart for battle wounds at Khe Sanh in Vietnam.

Not only did Capt. Harris voluntarily subject himself to danger... he was an original, yet his story can be told many times over by veterans: a love of country. A bond with brothers. A call to serve. That common thread is how the captain wanted to be remembered.

"He was a patriot. I mean... sorry... He really believed duty, honor, country," Capt. Harris' wife Paula said.

Harris lived in Honolulu for more than 40 years. In death, his wish was to rest amongst servicemembers from around the country. This September, the 70 year old, who died of lung cancer, was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery in our nation's capital.

His wife, Paula, was most moved when the Marines folded the American flag and placed it in her arms.

"All of us need a shot of reality on being respectful of our country and the people who serve our country. It made you proud to be an American to watch them, they were saying in a very sublime way, "You know what? This is our flag. This is our country, and we are blessed to be here," Paula said.

Months later, Paula Harris has yet to unfold that flag, and today, she attended her first Veterans Day ceremony without her beloved Ernie. Friends at the Punchbowl Ceremony remember him as a leader.

"Ernie could bring people together. Ernie had love in his heart, a Marine at heart, at the same time, but a man of compassion," Harris' friend Gene Castagnetti said.

In life and death, it was Semper Fi... always faithful... to the end.



Ernie Harris



Harris' burial at Arlington National Cemetery



A Marine presents the U.S. flag to Paula Harris



Paula Harris



Gene Castagnetti

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