

Veteran's Last Patrol

John Shoemaker

This is a story of a hero, a tank commander, a trainer, and humanitarian.

Growing up in New Jersey and South Carolina, Claude Schmid went to the small Wofford College in South Carolina. He had studied government and economics and was a ROTC graduate.

Joining the Army as an officer, he was assigned to an Armor unit in Germany responsible as a tank commander for a platoon of M-60 A3 main battle tanks. His mission at that time in the 80's was to ensure combat readiness, given the Russian threat to Europe.

During his 31-year career in the Army, he progressed to the rank of full Colonel. Some of his assignments included being the Commander of the Infrastructure Security Force to protect the oil fields and equipment in northern Iraq from ISIS, Al Qaeda and other enemy forces. Claude was also the Commandant responsible for training the new Iraq Army. This involved overseeing 17 schools for army training throughout the country.

In his last assignment, Claude was given charge of the "Wounded Warrior Flight Evacuation Program". This is when he got very close to the problems and needs of severely wounded soldiers coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan. The effect of war on the human body is both emotionally and physically traumatic.

Upon retirement, Claude was inspired to create a non-profit organization, "Veteran's Last Patrol", to provide services in conjunction with hospice for our heroes who are suffering their last days.

Claude said it best,

"When America's veterans go into hospice care they often lose contact with family, friends, and with the military community. Some are alone. Some sit quietly in nursing homes. Many families are loving and attentive to their hospice patient, but appreciate getting the support, connection, and information that a friend from the military community can provide. Last Patrol helps provide that support."

The "Veteran's Last Patrol" relies on private donations and are staffed with volunteers who can relate to a fellow brother or sister from their military experience. They work with medical providers of hospice care to connect volunteers to the patients so that their last patrol is not alone. Claude says that it is hard to underestimate the importance of friendship during end-of-life care.

"Last Patrol brings new friendships when friendship matters most."

Claude explained that they have several ways to meet this new mission requirement to support these friendships. Specially created quilts are given along with certificates to honor these veterans in their homes, nursing homes, long term care facilities, and elsewhere, along with hand-written notes thanking them for their service to our country. Group of veterans get together and perform honor ceremonies for fellow veterans on their "last patrol." In addition, they coordinate "Honor Rides" with motorcycle clubs and car clubs to visit and recognize them with tribute.

The need is great. There are about 1.5 Million people in hospice each year and about 5-7% are veterans. They all have stories to tell. Most veterans will admit that while they may have led a full life, the most consequential time of their lives was during their time in the military.

Claude feels how we care for veterans is not only important to those who served in the past or are serving today, but for those who will serve in the future. This will demonstrate our sincere concern and care for our veterans; that we prove it with veterans taking care of veterans. It is all part of the importance of military service.

Today, Claude is a hero of Highland Beach and has made the Carron House at Boca Highland their home for the past two years. He is married to Ludmila. He has 2 sons in their twenties.

Spending half his time managing "Veteran's Last Patrol", he also works his family business which provides special machinery for manufacturing all types of filters for HVAC, water filters and the like.

The Schmids selected Highland Beach to live because they were attracted to South Florida's Atlantic Ocean, vibrant surroundings, and friendly community.

It can be said that Claude is a hero as a former Colonel in the U.S. Army, but now is a hero taking care of heroes by bringing new friends to veterans in hospice.

Visit their web site at www.veteranslastpatrol.org





Veteran's Last Patrol



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MISSION STATEMENT:

"Last Patrol" --- serving veterans by bringing new friends to veterans in hospice.

PURPOSE:

Our veterans served America. They protected us and our way of life. We must stand by them.

Our veterans know about patrolling land, sea, and air. Veterans in hospice are in their final fight and on their last patrol. Whether it goes by the name "battle buddy" or "shipmate" or "wingman" --- all veterans understand that tough assignments are best faced together.

EXECUTION:

Last Patrol connects veteran volunteers to veterans in hospice. We cooperate with medical providers of hospice care to connect volunteers to the patients so that their last patrol isn't alone. It's hard to underestimate the importance of friendship during end-of-life care. Last Patrol brings new friendships when friendship matters most.



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Some stories are only shared between veterans. The exceptionality of military experience is such that a special bond of service results. Many veterans describe their military service as a singularly unique period of their lives. As many veterans approach death, meeting a new supportive friend, sharing stories, and reawaking memories of "patrolling" with their buddies can be richly rewarding for both the patient and their families, as well as veteran volunteers. Last Patrol brings that service.



HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- Volunteer to be a friend to a veteran in hospice
- Tell us about a patient in need
- Provide financial support to make this Last Patrol possible for America's veterans

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