JOHN E. JACOBS LEGION POST 68 LELAND
MEDIA RELEASE

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Submitted by:

Eric Mens, Public Affairs Officer
American Legion Post 68 Leland
Cell Ph (703) 626-9104

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JOHN E. JACOBS MEMORIAL TRIBUTE
58 years after his death, a community pays tribute



On Saturday, October 3, more than 60 veterans and community members gathered at Leland's Founders Park to honor Private First Class John E. Jacobs, the only son of Leland, who was killed in action in Quang Tri Province, Republic of South Vietnam, on Tuesday, October 1, 1968.

Members of Jacobs' immediate and extended family attended, as did several local town officials. American Legion Post 68 members Tom Powers, Commander; John Hacker, 2nd Vice Commander; and Eric Mens, Public Affairs Officer, organized the event.

Commander Powers opened the ceremony, followed by Tom Campbell, Mayor Pro Tem of the Town of Leland, in Brenda Bozeman's absence. Chuck Bost, Mayor of Belville, a member of Post 68 and a Desert Storm veteran, then offered remarks and acknowledged the event's significance.



During the July 2026 reopening and dedication of Founders Park, Hacker and Mens viewed the Jacobs' Memorial Stone and realized they had both served in Quang Tri Province at the same time as Jacobs. Mens served in Vietnam as a combat medic with the 1st Cavalry Division from November 1967 to November 1968, while Hacker served as an infantry squad leader with the Americal Division.

Both men wholeheartedly agreed that Jacobs deserved formal recognition and a memorial service 58 years after his death. Originally founded in 1973, Post 68 had been reorganized in 2014 and renamed in honor of Jacobs in 2019. Mens recounted details of Jacobs' short life to the audience.

Born on December 4, 1947, John Edwin Jacobs was the second child and first son of seven children born to Mildred Hooper-Jacobs and John William Jacobs. His siblings include sisters Minnie, Martha, Ella, and Yvonne, and brothers Richard and Harvey Jacobs, several of whom were able to attend the memorial service. Minnie is the oldest; John was the second-born. Friends and family affectionately called him "Ed" and remember him fondly as a kind, gentle person who loved his family, especially his parents.

After graduating from Lincoln High School in Leland, John was drafted into the Army in March 1968, as the war in Vietnam was raging. Following Basic Combat Training, he trained as an 11B10 Infantryman and earned the rank of Private First Class (E-3).

When he arrived in Vietnam on August 8, 1968, John was assigned to the 11th Infantry, 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized). The entire Division had arrived in Quang Tri from the U.S. just three weeks earlier, on July 22, 1968. He was later assigned to the 3rd Platoon, B Co., 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade. During his time with the unit, Company B frequently conducted search-and-clear, cordon, and sweep operations in and around South Vietnam's Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

In his remarks to attendees, Mens described the conditions on the ground in Quang Tri Province. The province, immediately adjacent to the DMZ, was a crucial infiltration route for the North Vietnamese Army (NVA). U.S. forces frequently clashed with the NVA in and around the DMZ. At the start of the monsoon season in September and during October, frequent heavy monsoon rains and Typhoon Bess flooded the area and severely disrupted military operations.

Mens described the mud, heat, mosquitoes, and often-cold C-ration meals those on the ground endured. Hacker spoke about the bond among those who served together in an unpopular war, miles from loved ones and the importance of recognizing and remembering fallen comrades.

On Tuesday, October 1, 1968, after weather conditions improved sufficiently, the 1st Brigade launched a major operation against the NVA. Its mission was to interdict and disrupt NVA infiltration routes throughout Quang Tri. John was killed by enemy small-arms fire on the operation's first day. He had been in-country for less than two months and died just two months short of his 21st birthday. 1968 turned out to be the deadliest year of the war, with nearly 15,000 men and women killed by hostile actions.

Prior to the close of the ceremonies, Gary Bowers played Taps, followed by Charles 'Doc' Holliday, John Jacobs's nephew, who shared his recollections of his uncle with the audience and expressed his gratitude to Post 68. After the ceremony, Mens presented the family with a framed and restored photograph of John Jacobs—the only surviving photo of Jacobs in uniform.

