

October 6, 2022

San Antonio's Vietnam Army Grunt Museum honors those who did the thankless work of war

[Richard A. Marini](#), Staff writer

Oct. 6, 2022 Updated: Oct. 6, 2022 2:04 p.m.



Vietnam War veteran Michael Lynd said he felt the sting of having participated in what at the time was an unpopular war among many Americans. He was an infantry officer 1968 and 1969.

Billy Calzada/Staff photographer

Michael Lynd heard the stories of Vietnam War veterans being spit on — literally — when they returned from their tours of duty. It never happened to him when

he came home from the war in November 1969, but he still felt the sting of having participated in what at the time was an unpopular war among many Americans.

“Back then, you didn’t want to put that you were veteran on your job resume because people wouldn’t interview you,” said Lynd, 78. “That’s how bad it was.”

So when he had the opportunity to do something to honor his fellow veterans, he jumped at the chance, opening a museum dedicated to the war and those who fought in it.

The Vietnam Army Grunt Museum, open since right before the pandemic, is located on the ground floor of the Lynd Group’s corporate headquarters near Loop 1604 and N.W Military Highway. It’s free and open to the public Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Michael Lynd, right, and son A. David Lynd operate the Vietnam Army Grunt Museum in the ground floor of their North Side company headquarters. Michael Lynd was an infantry officer in Vietnam in 1968 and 1969.

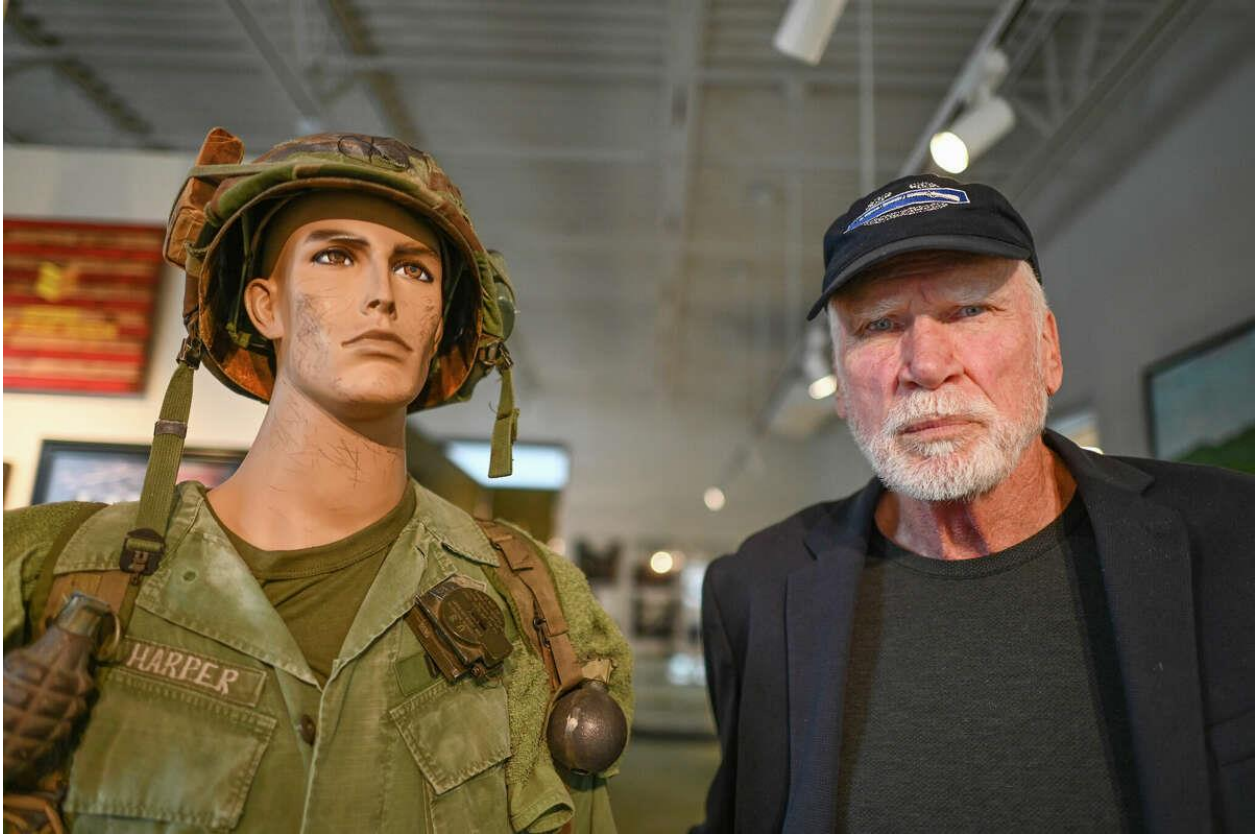
Billy Calzada/Staff photographer

Founded by Michael Lynd in 1980, the San Antonio-based Lynd Group acquires, manages and develops commercial and residential real estate, operating approximately 20,000 apartment units in 13 states. Lynd is now “semi-retired” and his son A. David serves as chief executive officer of the company.



1of9

Actor Matthew Modine poses with A. David Lynd, CEO of the Lynd Group during a recent fundraiser for the Vietnam Army Grunt Museum. Modine donated a series of photos he took on the set of the film "Full Metal Jacket."



David Lynd

Founded by Michael Lynd in 1980, the San Antonio-based Lynd Group acquires, manages and develops commercial and residential real estate, operating approximately 20,000 apartment units in 13 states. Lynd is now “semi-retired” and his son A. David serves as chief executive officer of the company.

While some of the 500 or so items on exhibit were Lynd’s, most has been donated by other grunts who wanted to contribute to the effort.

“It’s gotten to the point where we’ve got so much, I have to limit what I take,” said Lynd, who served as an infantry officer in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969. “I even have family members who were in the war who wanted to give me stuff and I had to say no.”

The museum is dedicated to the U.S. soldiers affectionately known as grunts. According to Lynd, they’re the ones who do the thankless, one-the-ground dirty work of war, whose job is described by Charlie Sheen in the film “Platoon”: “We get up at 5 a.m.,” he says, “hump all day, camp around 4 or 5, dig a foxhole then put out an all-night ambush or a three-man listening post in the jungle.”

And while the elder Lynd served in the Army, he concedes that he has let in a bit of memorabilia from the other military.

"I sneak in a little of the Marines, the Air Force and the Navy in, too," he said.



Visitors to the 1,000-square-foot museum are met by a mannequin decked out in typical grunt style while in the country.

IF YOU GO

Vietnam Army Grunt Museum
4499 Pond Hill Road

210-798-8134, vietnamgrunts.org
Open: Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.



The Vietnam Army Grunt Museum, open since right before the pandemic, is located on the ground floor of the Lynd Group's corporate headquarters near Loop 1604 and N.W Military Highway.
Billy Calzada/Staff photographer

"This is what we wore in the field," the elder Lynd said. "The gear was donated by Larry Harper, who came to my unit when I was executive officer. He won four bronze stars while he was over there."

Each item on display has a story, some tragic and some humorous.

Lynd gleefully recounted the story of Harper's ruck sack, which is part of the mannequin's equipment and should have been turned in when he mustered out of the Army.

"Larry told me, 'I tried to give it back. I went to the supply sergeant and was ready to give it to him and he said, wait a second, I gotta go somewhere.' But

Larry had a plane to catch to get the heck home, so he put the ruck sack in his duffle bag and, when he got home, threw it in the barn where it sat for 50 years.”

As the two old friends were going through the ruck sack, they found a small, 1960s-era transistor radio that still worked when they put in fresh batteries.

The rest of the museum includes plenty of military equipment, personal gear, cultural and historical documents, photos, maps, interactive displays and other memorabilia. They are organized roughly by topic, such as soldiers’ mail and diaries, military specialties such as snipers and nurses, R&R (rest and relaxation) destinations, the joy of coming home, even the K9 corps.

A U.S. map is quickly becoming filled with colored pins indicating where visitors came from and there’s a wall where they can sign their names, rank and where they served, or write short notes.



One of a series of black-and-white photos taken by actor Matthew Modine on the set of the Vietnam War movie “Full Metal Jacket” hangs outside the entrance of the Vietnam War Grunt Museum.

Billy Calzada/Staff photographer

New on display is a collection of about 10 black-and-white photos taken by actor Matthew Modine on the set of the Vietnam War movie “Full Metal Jacket,” which

was filmed in the mid-'80s. The images include director Stanley Kubrick as well as the other actor in the film.

Modine, currently starring in the Netflix hit "Stranger Things," recently appeared at a fundraiser for the museum during which he presented the Lynds with the photos.

In a statement provided to the Express-News, Modine said of the museum, "What the Lynd family has created and what they're providing is a space for veterans to meet again. To bring family members to a honorable space where they can open up and talk about the war and purge themselves of the burden of their past. It's a beautiful thing the Lynds have created."

Perhaps the most moving exhibit in the museum is the recorded videos that play on a screen showing dozens of veterans recounting their experiences in the war.

"This display is for the veterans who can't travel to San Antonio," said A. David Lynd. "We can send a guy to them to record their story to put on here."

With the pandemic easing, he said he also hopes to attract more school groups to the gallery to raise awareness about the war.

"We want them learn about Vietnam and the men and women who fought the war," he said.

But it's these veterans that touch Lynd's heart the most.

The museum's location in a nondescript office building limits the number of visitors who come. Still, they trickle in, averaging about four or five veterans, often with their families a week. When they do, the elder Lynd will be alerted and he'll often come downstairs to serve as an unofficial tour guide.

"If I didn't do anything more than just have veterans come in to this museum, that would be enough," he said. "Because veterans don't talk about their war experiences. Very few. I never talk to my sons about mine. But when they come in here and their among others, you can't shut 'em up about it.