

30 DAYS OF HONOR ★ *A Salute to Local Vets*



MEGAN MCCORMICK/GANNETT CENTRAL WISCONSIN MEDIA
Yvonne Freer of Junction City.

'I'll be taking my husband with me'

Army medic Yvonne Freer, widowed at 36, prepares for Honor Flight trip

By Dan Richter

For Gannett Central Wisconsin Media

JUNCTION CITY — Originally from Fort Wayne, Indiana and now living in Junction City, Yvonne Freer joined the U.S. Army when she was 21 years old.

"If you were under 21, you needed a parent's signature and my mother wouldn't sign for me, so I just waited. I was determined to serve," said Freer, 71. "I had a great uncle who served in World War I and an uncle by marriage who was in World War II. They were both in the Army and they're the two reasons I wanted in."

The Army is also where Freer met her husband, when both were stationed in Houston, Texas for medical training in 1964. The two married three months later.

Freer went on to work stateside as an Army medic. She now is preparing for her first Never Forgotten Honor Flight and is ready to take it both for herself and in memory of her late husband.

Question: What did you do in the service and where were you stationed?

Answer: After my initial training in Houston, I was stationed in Fort Benning, Georgia, where I worked in the hospital maternity ward. Later, I got a special order to move to the Fifth Army Headquarters in Chicago, where I worked in a clinic. They didn't allow women to be pregnant and serve back then so I eventually had to get out when I became pregnant with my first child.

Q: What is your most enduring memory from your time in the service?

A: I think about all the people that I got to meet and the camaraderie with the girls I was stationed with across the country. It was a time in my life when I got to see more of the United States than I ever had before.

Q: What do you most want people to know about the conflict in which you served?

A: There was a lot of indecision as to whether we should have been in Vietnam and all that, but I'm sure they had hurting people over there just like we had boys that came back here hurt. The Vietnamese lost people in that conflict, too. I just think about all the ones that got hurt on both sides.

Q: Tell us about your life after the service and how your time in the military affected your civilian life.

A: I had to leave the service once I got pregnant, and after my husband got back from serving in Vietnam we lived in Siren, Wisconsin. My husband drove a milk truck and I worked at a hospital in Grantsburg, Wisconsin, taking care of the elderly. Thankfully, the military gave me a career that I could use when I got out. My husband ended up taking sick and I became a widow at the age of 36 years old, with four kids to support. We moved to the Junction City area and have been here ever since.

Q: What do you hope going on an Honor Flight trip will do for you and why are you looking forward to it?

A: When I was a senior in high school, our class trip was to D.C. but all they really had back then was the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. I'd like to go back and see all of the memorials they have for veterans now. I get excited the closer it gets because in my heart I'll be taking my husband with me.

ABOUT YVONNE FREER

Name: Yvonne Freer
Age: 71
Residence: Junction City
Conflict involved in: Vietnam War
Military branch: United States Army
Years of service: 1964 to 1965
Rank upon discharge: Army medic



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Many pins adorn the service hat of Yvonne Freer service of Junction City.



A FLIGHT TO NEVER FORGET

» The Central Wisconsin chapter of Never Forgotten Honor Flight celebrates its fifth anniversary this spring. Since April 2011, the Honor Flight program has flown to Washington, D.C. with more than 800 local World War II veterans, as well as dozens more who served in Korea and Vietnam, to allow them to view the memorials built for those wars.

» 30 Days of Honor is a project of Gannett Central Wisconsin Media to profile veterans who have taken an Honor Flight, or are scheduled, and to encourage more veterans to do so. Profiles will appear each day April 26 through Memorial Day.

» Veterans may apply for a free Honor Flight (or loved ones may apply for them) by filling out an application. The only qualification for a veteran to take an Honor Flight is to have served in any branch of the U.S. military during the periods of World War II, the Korean War or Vietnam War. Veterans do not have to have been in combat. The applications and more information are available at <http://www.neverforgottenhonorflight.org>

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