

'He Loved Those Soldiers'

VFW chief honored with the Order of Saint Maurice

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The Order of Saint Maurice, established in 1996, has been awarded to hundreds of those who have made a lasting impact on the NIA (National Infantry Association). VFW Commander-in-Chief Al Lipphardt received the award on May 2 after being nominated by a VFW member who wanted to honor the brigade his father had been a part of.

After reading a story about Lipphardt in VFW magazine, Edwin Kennedy Jr., an at-large VFW member and Army historian, learned that Lipphardt served in the same unit as his father, Army Brig. Gen. Edwin Kennedy Sr.

Kennedy Sr., having served in WWII, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, had commanded the 196th Light Infantry Brigade while on tour in Vietnam. Although Lipphardt and Kennedy Sr.'s tours did not overlap and the two never met, Kennedy Sr. had a deep connection with the 196th.

“(My dad) wanted to recognize people who were in the 196th Brigade,” said Kennedy Jr. “He loved those soldiers. He always bragged that those were the best guys he ever served with.”

The Order of Saint Maurice is awarded to those within the NIA and those associated with or who have supported it. The award has six tiers, with each tier corresponding to the level of contribution and association with the NIA: Primicerius, Centurion, Legionnaire, Civis, Peregrinus and Cohort. Lipphardt was awarded the “Legionnaire” tier— exclusive only to infantrymen who provided an outstanding contribution to the infantry.

Lipphardt was invited to Fort Benning in Georgia to be recognized for the honor. He accepted the award in front of a replica of the Vietnam Memorial Wall.

This article is featured in the 2025 June issue of Checkpoint. If you're a VFW member and don't currently receive the VFW Checkpoint, please contact VFW magazine at magazine@vfw.org.

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