

# SONS AND DAUGHTERS IN TOUCH

*"They Were Our Fathers..."*

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## **SONS AND DAUGHTERS IN TOUCH HONORS THEIR FATHERS ON MEMORIAL DAY** *Gold Star children from the Vietnam War will attend White House Breakfast*

**WASHINGTON, D.C. — Sons and Daughters In Touch (SDIT)**, America's Gold Star children from the Vietnam War will play an integral role in several Memorial Day weekend activities, honoring their fathers who were lost on the battlefields of Southeast Asia nearly many decades ago.

A half-century after America became involved in the Vietnam War, the Department of Defense will host the annual Memorial Day ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in the nation's capital to launch a multi-year commemoration of the conflict that claimed 58,282 servicemen and women.

On Memorial Day morning (May 28), a delegation of SDIT representatives will attend the Gold Star Families breakfast hosted by President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House. The SDIT delegation will include Elaine Roach (Yorba Linda, CA); who lost her father in Vietnam and her son in Iraq; Colleen Shine (Alexandria, VA) and Wende Ruffin-Lowry (Montclair, VA) whose fathers were both listed as MIA for several years; Mitty Griffis-Mirrer who recently produced 'Gold Star Children' - a documentary about the plight of children who have lost a parent to war, and Tony Cordero who helped establish SDIT more than 20 years ago.

Throughout the weekend, these Gold Star sons and daughters – many of whom are the same age as the President and lost their fathers almost 50 years ago – will also participate in other Memorial

Day-related activities. Following the White House Breakfast on May 28, 2012, SDIT members will join President Obama and other dignitaries for the National Memorial Day Ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the National Mall.

Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta will host the ceremony to thank and honor America's Vietnam Veterans on behalf of a grateful nation. The ceremony, which begins at 1 p.m. EDT, marks the beginning of the national commemoration of the Vietnam War's 50th anniversary program and is a joint effort between the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, the National Park Service and the Department of Defense. Invited guests include thousands of Vietnam Veterans, their loved ones, Gold Star families and leadership from the military services, Cabinet and Congress. In addition to President Obama; Gen. Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Defense Secretary Panetta; and former Nebraska Senator Chuck Hagel, a Vietnam Veteran; and other dignitaries are scheduled to speak.

SDIT members will also participate in the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Rolling Thunder motorcycle rally (May 27, 2012) bringing attention to the plight of America's missing servicemen from Vietnam and all other wars; and the annual Memorial Day Concert (May 27, 2012) near the U.S. Capitol.

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**About Sons and Daughters In Touch:**

SDIT was established more than 20 years ago to locate, unite and support the children of American servicemen lost, or who remain missing, as a result of the Vietnam War. SDIT has held national Father's Day ceremonies at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, led an historic delegation to Vietnam, and provides emotional support to Gold Star families that have lost a parent since September 11, 2001.

**SDIT Members attending the White House Gold Star breakfast:**

- Tony Cordero of Yorba Linda & Los Angeles, CA: son of USAF Maj. William E. Cordero who became MIA on June 22, 1965. His remains were later recovered; he is listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Panel 2 East, Row 15
- Terry McGregor of La Palma, CA: son of Army Capt. Donald V. McGregor who was killed on August 13, 1963. He is listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Panel 1 East, Row 26.

- Mitty Griffis-Mirrer of Providence, RI: daughter of Marine Capt. William A. Griffis who was killed on January 24, 1970. He is listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Panel 14 West, Row 62.
- Denise Reed of Washington, DC: daughter of Army Sgt. Harold B. Reed who was lost on July 3, 1966. He is listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Panel 8 East, Row 128.
- Kelly Coleman-Rihn of Glenshaw, PA: daughter of Army Sp4 Joel D. Coleman who was killed on May 5, 1966. He is listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Panel 7 East, Row 29.
- Elaine Roach of Yorba Linda, CA: daughter of Navy Lt. Harold Roach who was lost on October 2, 1964. She is also the mother of Army PFC Joel Brattain who was killed in Iraq on March 13, 2004.
- Wanda Ruffin of Woodbridge, VA: widow of Navy LCdr. James T. Ruffin who became MIA on Feb 18, 1966. His remains were later recovered; he is listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Panel 5 East, Row 49.
- Wende Ruffin-Lowry of Montclair, VA: daughter of Navy LCdr. James T. Ruffin who became MIA on Feb 18, 1966. His remains were later recovered; he is listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Panel 5 East, Row 49.
- Dennis Shine of Washington, DC: son of Army Cpl. Dennis F. Shine who was killed on August 19, 1969. He is listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Panel 19 West, Row 73.
- Cindy Smith of Lynchburg, OH: daughter of Army Cpl. Richard L. Sanders who was killed on November 24, 1967. He is listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Panel 30 East, Row 81.
- Colleen Shine of Alexandria, VA: daughter of Air Force LTC Anthony C. Shine who became MIA on December 2, 1972. His remains were later recovered; he is listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Panel 1 West, Row 93.

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