

06-11-2019

Representatives Green, McClain, and Sheehy

House Transportation and Public Safety Committee

Ohio House of Representatives

Ohio Statehouse

Columbus, Ohio 43215

re: Letter of support for House Bill 259 “Designate Sgt David S. Harris Memorial Highway”

Honored Representatives:

I am privileged to have been asked to share my thoughts about the person, David Stanley Harris. The last time I remember being a football teammate with David and other Spartans, we were playing our last game of 1965 against our arch rivals, the Elgin Comets! David, a new student at PHS, and I met for the first time as biology class partners. We hit it off instantly and for the next 4 years became the best of friends. As seniors, our football lockers were adjacent and we initiated a good luck habit of cinching up each other’s girdle pads before each game. We were also on the track team and, along with two underclassmates, Gary Mauk and Tim Goyer, made it to the Ohio track and field championship at OSU our senior year as members of a relay team. Dave also qualified in the shot put and set a new school and conference record. Dave’s football jersey #48 has been retired as a result of his 3000 yards rushing in three, nine-game seasons.

In high school, Dave was a friend to everyone and everyone respected him as an unpretentious leader and gridiron hero. During our high school years we were inseparable, sharing thoughts about our present and future activities. Dave received a football scholarship to Nebraska and I was elated. However, Dave worried that he might not be prepared academically. I tried to convince him that he would be fine, but after arriving in Lincoln and beginning school, he and his coaches realized that he needed to spend time at a junior college to get his grades in better shape. They would hold his scholarship. It was during this break in school that he was drafted into the army. He called to inform me and to suggest that it might be the best thing for him at this time. I had a 2-S educational deferment and was in college when he called me one day while on leave wanting to get together. I remember that day as though it were yesterday. He informed me that he was leaving for Vietnam. I pleaded with him not to; that as an only child, he could certainly avoid this. He smiled and said he felt obligated to do his part as a leader. That was Dave and that was the last time I saw him face-to-face. The next time was to pay tribute to him as one of the pal-bearers at his funeral. Because of his leadership skills, he had been placed on a fast track to sergeant in 1968. In Vietnam he reported to A Company, 6th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 9th Infantry Division in February, 1969. A month later, on Monday, 24 March he was one of three men of that company killed in action in Kien Phong Province, South Vietnam: His actions during that battle saved many

lives and earned him in addition to the usual medals of that era, the Purple Heart, Bronze Star and Silver Star for valor, all posthumously.

This began a struggle for me. I got married in June 1969 but without my “best man” present. I completed college in 1970 and was also drafted into the army where I spent the next 4 years. This was a very long and painful journey wishing it had been me instead of David. David should have had the opportunity to get an education and play football that he loved so much. We had two more children and our son was born in a military hospital in 1974 just before I left active service. His middle name is Harris. He and I had an opportunity a few years ago to visit the Vietnam War Memorial where I shared with him my struggles and how we came to choose his middle name. Although the periods of overwhelming feelings of guilt, remorse and loss have subsided over the years, I still intentionally take time each March and September 24th as well as Memorial Day and Veterans Day to thank God for having had, if only briefly, the opportunity to know David Stanley Harris.

Respectfully:

Willard Goff, schoolmate, Pleasant High School

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