

MOBILE BAY AREA VETERAN OF THE YEAR

William H. Atkeison, USA (Vet)



The 2019 Veteran of the Year is William H. Atkeison. Born in 1947 in Fredericksburg, Virginia, the family moved frequently during his childhood due to his father being a preacher and missionary. They would live in Alabama, Indiana, Texas, Mississippi, Virginia and Mexico.

After graduating from high school and completing two years of technical school, Atkeison would enlist in the U. S. Army and graduate from Basic Training at Ft. Bragg, NC in December, 1967. He

then completed AIT at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland qualifying as a Wheel and Track Vehicle Engine and Powertrain Mechanic.

Assigned to Pacific Area Command Exchange (PACEX), Qui Nhon, Atkeison arrived in Vietnam April 1968 where he was NCOIC of the motor pool maintaining and repairing 75 vehicles used in warehousing and transferring of goods to the PXs in II Corps. On October 28, 1968, he was one of eleven soldiers who erected what is thought to be the first Vietnam Veterans Memorial. These men raised this memorial in the Cha Rang Valley, in II Corps, South Vietnam. Placed on the vertical piece was a brass plaque attesting to the fact that this memorial was "in honor of the US Servicemen" who had fought in Vietnam.



After returning statewide in April, 1969 and service with the Armor School at Ft. Knox, he was assigned to Germany and the 543rd Heavy Equipment Maintenance Company. This unit provided support for units of the 2nd Armored Division. Serving as NCOIC, Track Repair Section, Sergeant Atkeison continued this posting until his discharge in September 1973.

Returning to his native state, he joined Virginia National Guard serving as the Assistant Maintenance Platoon Sergeant; C Troop, 183rd Cavalry (Armored), 116th Infantry Brigade until his discharge from military service in 1986.

Relocating to Mobile, he became active in veterans organizations. In the early 1990s, Bill was one of six or seven individuals who met to discuss the status of communication among various Veterans Service Organizations. This led to establishment of the South Alabama Veterans Council which he served as president in 2000-02 and since 2006 as secretary and newsletter editor. He was a charter member of Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc, Chapter 701 (Mobile) serving as Chapter President in 1997-98 and organized and led the Vietnam Veterans Color Guard 1995-2001.

Early in 1997, Bill and fellow Vietnam veteran Richard Arnold began planning for a local memorial for Vietnam Veterans. Within a few months the design was developed and permission was granted to erect the memorial at the USS Alabama Battleship Park. Ground was broken on June 6, 1998 and the Lower Alabama Vietnam Veterans Memorial was completed in November 1999. Not resting on his laurels, by September 2002 Atkeison had designed and arranged for construction and installation of a memorial for American former Prisoners of Wars at Battleship Park.

