

# Former VA Chief Mansfield Passes

With heavy hearts, DAV salutes the Honorable Gordon H. Mansfield, who passed away Jan. 29 at the Veterans Affairs medical center in Washington, D.C. He served as Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs from January of 2004 to January of 2009. He was Acting Secretary of the VA from Oct. 1, 2007 to Dec. 20, 2007.

"America's veterans have lost a true friend and resolute advocate with the passing of Gordon Mansfield," said National Commander Larry A. Polzin. "He was a role model for many veterans with disabilities, an outstanding leader, and a true American hero."

Mr. Mansfield was honored as DAV's 2006 Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year, and was inducted into the Spinal Cord Injury Hall of Fame in October 2006. He is a recipient of the Presidential Distinguished Service Award and the Villanova University Alumni Human Relations Medal.

Mr. Mansfield was involved in forming a DAV Chapter in Marion County, Fla., and was a life member of the DAV.

"He was among the all-time great warriors fighting for his fellow injured and ill veterans," said National Adjutant Arthur H. Wilson. "The word hero can be used too freely at times, but it is perfectly fitting when speaking of Gordon. I will be eternally grateful for having him as a friend."

He entered the Army in 1964 and served two tours of duty in Vietnam. While company commander with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) during his second tour, he was wounded during the Tet Offensive of 1968 and sustained a spinal cord injury. In spite of his injuries he remained with his troops and ensured their safety and the evacuation of the injured

before he permitted his own evacuation to a nearby Navy hospital. He was later transferred to the U.S. Army hospital at Camp Zama, Japan, and then to the Valley Forge Army Hospital in Pennsylvania where he began the long physical rehabilitation process. The road to rehabilitation took him to the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the VA medical center in Washington, D.C., where his treatment and therapy continued for the next five years. While there he began his legal studies at American University Law School and earned his law degree under the VA vocational rehabilitation program at the University of Miami School of Law.

Shortly after graduation, Mr. Mansfield was back in the VA medical center for a second major operation on his spine and for another rehabilitation program. It was after his recovery that he began practicing law, serving as counsel in a legal aid program providing assistance to his fellow veterans.

For his actions while his unit was under fire, Mr. Mansfield was decorated with the Distinguished Service Cross. He was medically retired by the U.S. Army at the grade of captain. His other combat decorations include the Bronze Star, two Purple Hearts, the Combat Infantryman's Badge and the Presidential Unit Citation. He was inducted into the U.S. Army Rangers Hall of Fame in 2007 and the U.S. Army Officer Candidate School Hall of Fame in 1997.