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of two options in the way of jobs: either leave home or join the military.

“Growing up during the period of the Selective Service Draft, I think it was assumed by most young men that they would someday serve in the Armed Forces,” said Wallace. “I certainly felt that way.

“Union County has always been a very patriotic area of the country, and serving in the military was, in many cases, just part of growing up.”

Prompted by the death of a Suches local named John Woody during the Vietnam War, Wallace decided to enlist rather than wait for the draft. While he felt it was his civic obligation to serve, the sudden death of someone so similar to himself hit a nerve, and the call of duty became too strong to ignore.

Before joining the ranks of battle, Wallace was working in Chamblee at the same time of the completion of the Blairsville Municipal Airport. Like most young men at the time, Wallace found himself captivated by the idea of flying. Lucky for him, classes were being offered at the new airport, and Wallace seized his chance to soar.

“Neal Collins had bought a Cessna 140 and started instructing,” said Wallace. “I started taking flying lessons and was the first student to solo at the new airport. I started checking into the possibility of flying in the military.

“It required that applicants pass the standard Army proficiency test, the Army Rotary Wing Aptitude Proficiency Test. It was necessary to pass an interview by the Board of Officers and it was a requirement that an Army First Class Flight Physical be successfully completed.”

Wallace joined, passed all his exams during basic, and never looked back. From basic training, he was sent to Fort Wolters, Texas, for Primary Flight Training, and then to Fort Rucker, Alabama, for advanced training.

He received his first assignment as a member of the Assault Helicopter Company, where he flew re-supply, troop transport and combat assaults, among many other things. With all training completed, it was time for Wallace to face his first tour in Vietnam.

“I remember one mission, shortly after arriving in Vietnam,” said Wallace. “We were involved in a large combat assault northwest of Duc Pho. After dropping off our troops, we flew back to the staging area to await instructions.

“We had been on the ground for no more than 30 minutes when a runner came and told us that they needed a helicopter back at the same landing zone we had earlier inserted the ground troops.

“As soon as we touched down, they started loading bodies. They had already had seven soldiers killed in a period of no more than half an hour. I remember thinking as we headed back to the staging area that we were hauling back a load of heartache.”

During that first deployment in Vietnam, Wallace found himself injured at Walter Reed Army Hospital, where he spent four months recuperating before rejoining his battalion in Vietnam.

This time around, Wallace flew gunships, experiencing the full force of war, being shot at more times than he can count, and even surviving a crash from such gunfire.

For a brief period of time, Wallace became an instructor at the Army Primary Helicopter School in Fort Wolters training in the Hiller OH-23. Later, he was sent back to Fort Rucker for Instrument Training in the UH-1 before being sent for his third and final tour of Vietnam.

Wallace’s final deployment was spent as a pilot for Brig. Gen. Joseph C. McDonough of the 196th Infantry Brigade for 11 months. From weekly trips to the China Beach hospital to

Southeast Asia.

While three of the Poteete brothers moved on to civilian lives unrelated to their service after finishing up in the Army, Wallace carried his military work with him, making a career out of the one thing he had always loved doing – flying.

After his time in the Army, Wallace took his love for flying to the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, where he worked until retirement.

He eventually made his home in the beautiful city of Las Vegas, Nevada, where he resides to this day.

Billy Poteete retired from retail and now lives in Dooley.

Bobby Poteete, living in

Blairsville, has since retired as a builder.

Jimmy Poteete retired from Duke Energy and lives in Houston, Texas.

“I applaud the Vietnam Veterans of America, and everyone who had a hand in it, for bringing the Moving Wall to Blairsville,” said Wallace. “It is always touching to see it. I have 17 friends whose names are on the Wall. It does help us to remember and to honor those who died.

“They also had families and the same dreams and hopes we all have. They went when their country called and did what was asked of them.

“They were just like us.”

## “Save the Date” for upcoming Veterans Day Luncheon

This year Union County’s Veterans Day Luncheon will be on Friday, November 11, 2016 at 11 a.m. at First United Methodist Church on 515 in Blairsville.

Mark your calendar to celebrate our veterans. Tickets will be sold at the Book Cellar

Used Book Store on Wellborn Street in Blairsville beginning October 24th. Tickets will also be available at the door the day of the Luncheon. RSVPs are encouraged if paying at the door. Call Caroline at 706-835-9534 to reserve your tickets at \$6 each.

## Lions Trash & Treasure Sale



Union County Lions Pre-Christmas Trash and Treasure Sale will be held on Saturday, November 26th, 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. Call 706-897-5467 to reserve a booth. N(Oct26,22)CA