

World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War veterans board Austin's first Purple Heart honor flight



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A special group of veterans gathered at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport Friday morning.

They boarded Austin's first honor flight for Purple Heart recipients. The flight was for veterans injured in World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

It's a friendship that traces back all the way to the battlefield.

"When I lived in San Antonio and, at the time the department of veterans affairs was having combat support groups, and that's where I met Carlos," said Alvarado, Vietnam Purple Heart veteran.

Since then, Simon and Carlos have been inseparable.

"I think that the friendship became stronger because we all went through the same thing in Vietnam," said Lopez, Vietnam Purple Heart veteran.

The duo, along with 42 others are boarding the nation's first Purple Heart honor flight for veterans of Vietnam, Korea, and World War II combined.

It's a trip the very few World War II veterans remaining like Telford Zoch can appreciate.

Zoch was shot while battling for control of Okinawa on Memorial Day, 1945. It was a day, unlike many, he would live through to tell the tale.

It went through my hand and through the right side of my body and hit my ammunition belt. It exploded one of my shells in my cartridge belt and tore my side open," said Zoch, World War II Purple Heart veteran.

For the majority of Vietnam and Korean War veterans, it's recognition, long overdue.

"I think Vietnam veterans have been forgotten, and so it's nice for someone to remember us, that we're still here, we're still alive, and we're still kicking," said Alvarado.

The group is heading to Washington D.C., where they will be greeted and given a ceremony to honor their efforts, and the sacrifices made for America. The trip will be pretty quick. The veterans will return to Austin tomorrow night at 8:00.

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