

# April parade planned for Vietnam vets

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"The Parade That Never Was," a belated welcome home to the area's Vietnam veterans, is being planned here April 28, a decade after the U.S. pullout.

Stigmatized by the unpopular war, many military veterans of Southeast Asia were not greeted with open arms, said Tom and Janice Emig of 2488 Spartan, who came up with the parade idea.

"It's not a political thing," Emig said. "We're just welcoming them back home."

"I think it's something that needs to be done," said Jerry DeRyke, vice president of the Kalamazoo chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America, who joined the Emigs in planning for the parade.

VVA members from Kalamazoo, Muskegon, Lansing, Jackson and Holland are planning to participate, said DeRyke, who was a door gunner and crew chief on a gunship in Vietnam in 1967 and 1968. He now works in the shipping department of a local firm.

The Shriners, Disabled American Veterans, Boy Scouts, Veterans of Foreign Wars, several high school bands and ROTC students from Western Michigan University are also expected to join.

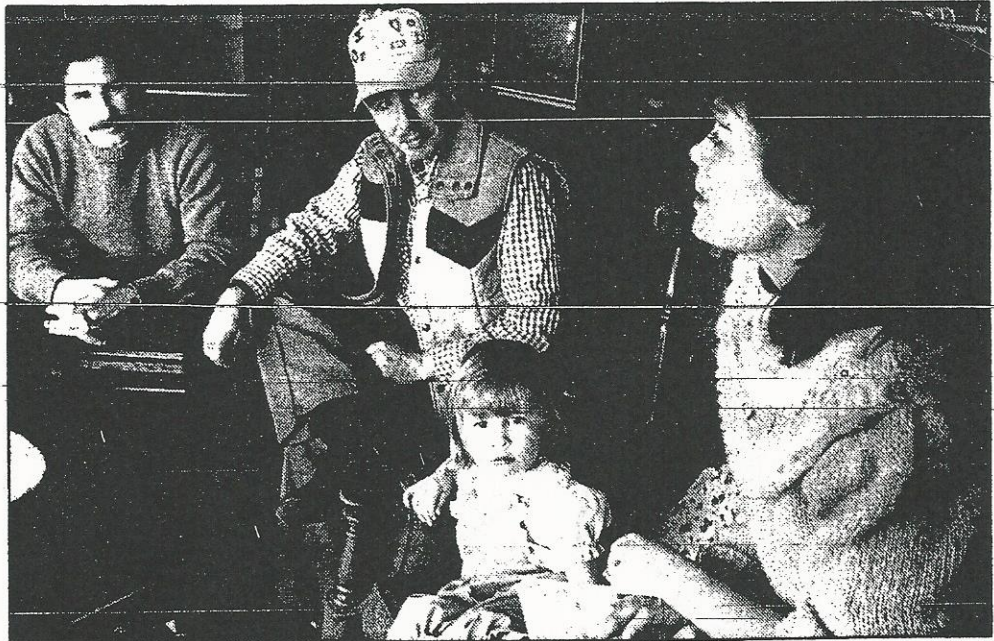
There will also be a place for any former GI who wants to march in the parade, dressed in whatever is comfortable — civilian clothes or military garb.

"I hope every Vietnam veteran or anyone from any war would come join us please," DeRyke said.

Mrs. Emig said she hopes to arrange a fly-by of military aircraft.

The parade is to begin at 2 p.m. Sunday, April 28, at Portage and Lovell streets in downtown Kalamazoo, head west on Lovell and end at Bronson Park, where there will be guest speakers, bands and food.

The date was picked because it comes on a weekend



GAZETTE PHOTO / CARL BENNETT

Parade organizers, from left, are Tom Emig, Jerry DeRyke and Janice Emig, with daughter Heather.

just two days before the 10th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam war.

The Emigs, who said they were not directly involved in Vietnam, said the parade idea occurred to them about a month ago as they discussed friends who fought for their country, but still were not welcomed home.

Also, Vietnam veterans have been unfairly stereotyped as "baby killers" and psychos in movies and television, they said.

Mrs. Emig, 29, a homemaker, said an uncle was physically disabled in Vietnam. Emig, 34, deals in air and ocean freight sales for F.X. Coughlin. They have a daughter, Heather, 2.

Mrs. Emig began calling people, including DeRyke and Kalamazoo City Hall and the Kalamazoo Depart-

ment of Public Safety to make arrangements for a parade permit. The Kalamazoo City Commission is expected to act Monday on the Emigs' request.

The response thus far has been great, but the Emigs are still looking for a few more volunteers as well as additional parade participants.

"We need the people to get involved," Mrs. Emig said.

"It's been so heartening to hear these people say, 'Gosh, this is great.' It's such a great feeling."

Asked if they are patriotic people, Mrs. Emig said, "We believe in our country, but we don't believe in everything they do. We don't belong to any organizations or anything like that."