

Special Veterans Parade set for Monday (November 2018)

By Kate Cook

Monday, Putnam County will celebrate veterans with its annual service and parade.

The service will begin at 11 a.m. at the Putnam Courthouse, according to Putnam County Veterans Benefits Representative Michael Glass, one of the event's organizers.

After the service, the annual parade will begin, but this year's grand marshals are extra special.



John Clay Buck and Jimmy Loftis will be grand marshals of the parade. Both men served with honor during the Vietnam War. Both are also the descendants of men who served in World War I.

Buck is riding to honor Dennis Haskell Williams, who served in World War I. He was wounded during his service, and died in 1958.

Buck said his reason for accepting the grand marshal position was simple.

(Pictured: Dennis "Denny" Haskell Williams during his deployment in WWI)

"I'm doing it to honor Uncle Denny," he said.

Buck said he had fond memories of his uncle, who had been a small farmer and livestock trader.

"He went from being a scared kid from the rural setting in Overton County to seeing Paris," Buck said of his ancestor. "I want people to recognize what an amazing thing that is."

Buck remembers his Uncle Denny as a man with a great sense of humor and a practical streak a mile long.

"Uncle Denny got to come home with his uniform and everything except his rifle, because it was the 'war to end all wars,'" he said. "He turned his helmet upside down to water the chickens. He was such a jolly man and great with the kids."

Buck said he's never served as grand marshal in a parade before, but he thinks it'll be fun to see folks coming out to honor all branches of the military, those who are here and those that are long gone.

Just like Buck, Loftis is serving as grand marshal to honor his uncle, Marion Cooper Loftis.

Cooper Loftis served in the Navy in World War I and died on July 4, 1960, in his first year as mayor of Cookeville. His picture is on the wall of former mayors in the municipal building on Broad Street.



Jimmy Loftis said he was in high school when Cooper died.

(Pictured: Marion Cooper Loftis, graduated from Cookeville High School in 1916. This is his senior picture).

"I knew him as friendly and outgoing, someone I looked up to," Jimmy Loftis said. "I can't say I knew him well, but I did know who he was."

Jimmy Loftis is commander of VFW Post 6296 and a member of Vietnam Vets of America 127.

Glass said this year is the 100th anniversary of the Armistice, the end of World War I, and the 50th anniversary of many events of the Vietnam War, like the Tet Offensive, which took place in 1968.

Because of the anniversaries, area veterans groups are going all out for this year's parade.

There will be a special float with families of World War I veterans. Glass said the Army National Guard Band will lead off the parade.

The grand marshals will also be at the end of the parade so they can view most of it.

This year, the parade route will begin at the courthouse and continue down North Washington Avenue and Broad Street, ending at the Cookeville Depot.

Glass said the area veterans groups are looking forward to another successful parade.

"Veterans are an unusual group of people," he said. "They love to be recognized, but they don't go seeking recognition."

This year's parade will also be streamed live on Putnam County's Facebook page, Glass said.

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