



**December 2023**  
**Stratford Veterans Museum**  
**VETERAN OF THE MONTH**  
**WILLIAM O'BRIEN JR.**



**Sergeant E-5 - National Defense Service Medal - Vietnam Medal w/1\* - Vietnam Campaign Medal - Meritorious Mast - Good Conduct Medal - Group Achievement Award - Presidential Unit Citation**

Bill Jr. graduated in 1964 from Fairfield Prep. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1965, entering boot camp at Parris Island, SC, two days after Christmas. Following basic training Bill received orders to attend electronics training at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego. After nine months of school and many enjoyable days at the California beaches during free time, he was ordered to Chu Lai, Vietnam for a thirteen-month tour. A mortar attack during his first week "in country" was followed by a very peaceful nine months at this secure air base located alongside the South China Sea. Another beautiful beach provided Bill and his fellow Marines with an enjoyable retreat during free time. On January 30, 1968, the TET Offensive began and Chu Lai was attacked with twenty-one rockets, fired from the hills to the East. The final rocket hit the bomb dump causing a tremendous explosion that continued throughout the day. Bill's Unit received a Presidential Unit Citation for their work during the dangerous situation.

Returning to the states in April, Bill spent time assigned to Camp Lejeune, NC, then Fallbrook, CA at a small base that connected to Camp Pendleton. In the fall of 1968, he received orders for sea duty and returned to MCRD in San Diego for Sea School. Reporting to the Marine Detachment on the Navy carrier the USS Yorktown in San Diego, Bill found his ship camouflaged as a Japanese vessel for filming of the movie Tora, Tora, Tora. The Japanese planes on board were then delivered to Hawaii.

The Yorktown then headed out to the Pacific to await the splashdown of the Apollo 8 spacecraft and astronauts Anders, Borman & Lovell. Following this exciting and memorable event, Bill and the crew celebrated New Years Eve in Honolulu. Upon the return to their home port in Long Beach, CA the ship received orders transferring it to Norfolk, VA. The route taken was another memorable experience traveling around South America with a stop in Valpariso, Chile, crossing the equator with the requisite Pollywog treatment to become Shellbacks, and then stopping in Rio de Janeiro, just in time for the Carnival Festival. The arrival in Norfolk was a welcome that made us feel special.

The Yorktown visited St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba as Bill's sea duty wound down. He received an early discharge to attend college, having been accepted at New Haven College. Discharged as a Sergeant E-5, his awards included National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal w/1\*, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Meritorious Mast, Good Conduct Medal, Group Achievement Award, Presidential Unit Citation, and Rifle Marksmanship Badge.

Bill graduated from what became the University of New Haven with a dual degree in Business/Public Administration. He has three adult children, Seth, Sarah & Brett and four grandchildren. Retired from Sterling House Community Center after a combined 40 years of volunteerism and employment, Bill is a proud founding member of the Stratford Veterans Museum, serving with a great committee that includes his partner of more than 30 years, Tish Morrissey. Bill's legacy is his lifetime of volunteering topped off by six years as a Town Councilman and now about to be sworn in as an elected member of the Stratford Board of Education.