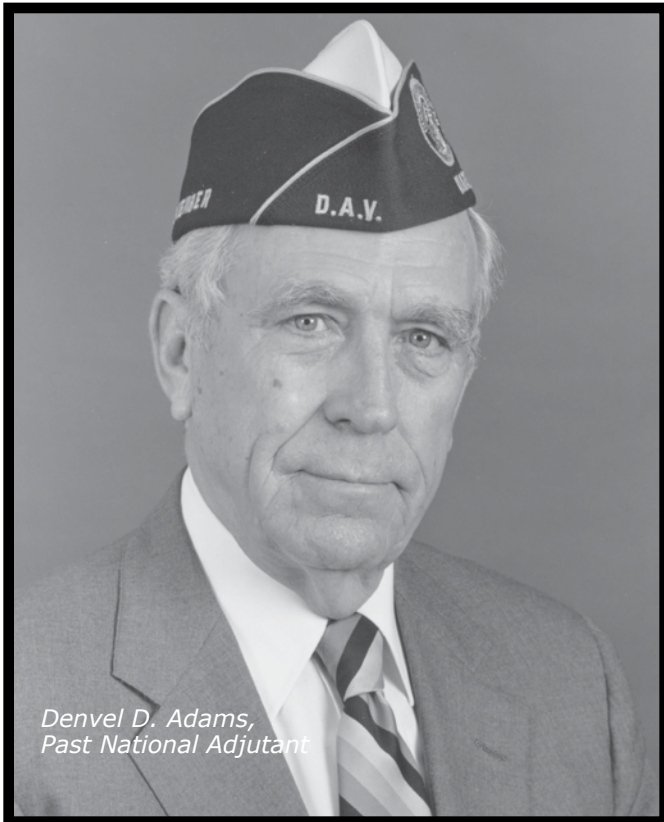




# Past National Adjutant Denvel D. Adams Dies



*Denvel D. Adams,  
Past National Adjutant*

**P**ast National Adjutant Denvel D. Adams, 88, died of natural causes in San Diego on Friday, July 9.

Adams served 26 consecutive years (1962-1988) as National Adjutant. He resumed that position in 1993 and was appointed Assistant National Adjutant in 1994. He served in that capacity until again retiring in September 1996.

Adams rose to epitomize the DAV, and his dedication was often recognized by others throughout the veterans' community.

During the renaming of the National Service and Legislative Headquarters in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 11, 1989, then-Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, G. V. "Sonny" Montgomery (D-Miss.) said, "Dale Adams stands as a symbol of strength and service to veterans. Not only has he served DAV members,

but his work has spilled over to all veterans and their dependents. Few people have really become what you could call a hero for veterans. Dale Adams deserves this title, and he deserves to have this building named for him."

Adams was both a visionary and a pragmatist who dedicated his life to serving disabled veterans and their families.

"Dale lived to build better lives for America's disabled veterans and their families, and he inspired and led others to do the same," National Adjutant Arthur H. Wilson said. "Under his leadership, the financially strapped DAV grew to become the premier veterans' service organization, second to none in service, advocacy and fiscal responsibility. When we referred to him as 'Mr. DAV,' it was with respect and honor for one of the most beloved and influential leaders in the history of our organization."

"Dale was also a friend and a tremendous mentor who lived and breathed the DAV with a sense of compassion, determination, common sense and toughness that moved others to champion our cause of service and hope for disabled veterans and their families. There is no part of the DAV that did not benefit from his wise counsel," Adjutant Wilson said.

A native of Clarkton, Mich., Adams was a service-connected disabled veteran of World War II. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1938. He served in the South Pacific during the war as a member of the 82nd Field Artillery, First Cavalry Division.

He joined Chapter 16 in Pontiac, Mich., as a life member immediately following his discharge from the Army in 1944 and served two years as Chapter Adjutant. But that was only the beginning for Adams. His next stop was the service officer training program at the American University in Washington, D.C., jointly sponsored by the DAV and the Veterans Administration. Following graduation in August 1945, he joined the professional staff of the DAV as a National Service Officer and re-

ceived additional training and experience while assigned to the national service offices in Detroit and Cincinnati.

Adams later headed west when he was promoted to Supervisor of the National Service Office in Albuquerque, N.M. Three years later he returned to the Detroit office, where he became assistant supervisor in 1958. Two years later he was appointed to National Service Director at DAV's Washington Headquarters.

During his report to the National Convention at St. Louis in 1961, Adams stated, "...although we have done much in this past year to improve our service program, we recognize the job is not fully accomplished and we must continue to strive toward greater improvement and greater efficiency."

A short time later Adams was on his way to National Headquarters in Cincinnati as Assistant National Adjutant.

John E. Feighner, who had served as National Adjutant since 1958, soon announced his retirement, and National Commander Francis R. Buono appointed Adams as National Adjutant in June 1962.

As Adams assumed the reins of the organization, a severe financial crisis threatened the DAV's future. With the organization unable to pay decent salaries, some of the best NSOs resigned. Staffing national service offices became more and more difficult, resulting in difficulty assisting the veterans those offices were created to serve.

Adams wasn't one to shy away from challenges. He was a phenomenal team builder and, like DAV's founder, Judge Robert S. Marx, he had the fortitude to build a great organization. He set to work hiring skilled professionals in finance, fund-raising, public relations and other areas in an effort to promote organizational

strength, growth and financial stability. As 1962 came to a close, the DAV was starting to grow. It continued to grow and, by the time Adams retired in 1988, membership increased five-fold surpassing one million members.

Under his leadership the DAV became one of the most financially sound nonprofit associations in the nation. Adams also instilled new confidence in the professional corps of National Service Officers and improved salaries and training as the ranks grew. He guided the organization to meet the needs of the nation's newest casualties from the Vietnam War. He saw Vietnam veterans as the future and offered them membership and camaraderie, and recruited a generation of NSOs from their ranks.

And when veterans and their families couldn't come to the DAV, Adams instituted the Field Service Unit program using specially equipped vans staffed by NSOs who traveled from community to community bringing DAV assistance to those who had earned and needed it.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) became prominent during the Vietnam War and by the mid-1970s was affecting a significant number of Vietnam veterans. Adams convinced the DAV to fund the Forgotten Warrior Project, which demonstrated the need for a service response. He then guided the organization to create an inner-city program in 70 towns to provide assistance. All of this was accomplished at a time when other organizations, the VA and Congress were doing little, if anything regarding assistance or outreach for PTSD victims. DAV's ground-breaking work would serve as an eventual model for the VA's Vet Center program.

At that time World War II and Korean War veterans were also starting to experience a wide range of age-related challenges, prompting Adams to direct the



*Left, National Adjutant Denvel D. Adams (left) and Harold E. Russell, Chairman of the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, share a lighter moment in 1967. Right, Denvel D. Adams as a young National Service Officer beginning his career with the DAV.*



formation of the Older Veterans Assistance Program. As this assistance moved to action, the VA seriously reduced or eliminated travel reimbursement that enabled many veterans to get to and from VA medical facilities for care. Adams immediately rallied the DAV to respond with the nationwide Transportation Network, which continues to provide vehicles and volunteer drivers to ensure sick and disabled veterans have a way to get to and from VA medical facilities for the needed care.

Dale Adams came out of retirement in 1993 to assist in an historic restructuring of the organization.

“From saving a Vietnam veterans memorial in New Mexico to advocating for modernization and construction of better DAV facilities, Dale made sure the pulse of the organization remained strong throughout his life,” Adjutant Wilson said. “In so doing he leaves a proud legacy for all disabled veterans.”

When Dale wrote his last article as National Adjutant for *DAV Magazine*, he said, “I leave my post as National Adjutant secure in the knowledge that America’s disabled veterans—today and in the future —will continue to have a best friend, a wise friend, a loyal friend. America’s disabled veterans will have the DAV.”

“With Dale’s death we lose a best friend, a wise friend and a loyal friend, but thanks to him we have a DAV that continues on a true course into the future,” Adjutant Wilson said. “We extend our condolences to Dale’s wife, Kaye, his children and loved ones. He will be deeply missed.”



Above, on hand to join Past National Adjutant Denvel D. Adams (seated, left) celebrate his 84th birthday at the 2005 National Convention in Las Vegas are, from left, Past National Commander Richard E. Marbes, retired National Service Director Kenneth Wolfe, retired National Headquarters Executive Director Fred R. Bristol and National Adjutant Arthur H. Wilson. Left, attending the rededication of National Service and Legislative Headquarters in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 11, 1989 are, from left, Chairman of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee, G. V. “Sonny” Montgomery(D-Miss.), Kaye Adams and Past National Adjutant Adams.



Kaye Adams, widow of retired National Adjutant Denvel D. Adams, is recognized at the 89th National Convention.