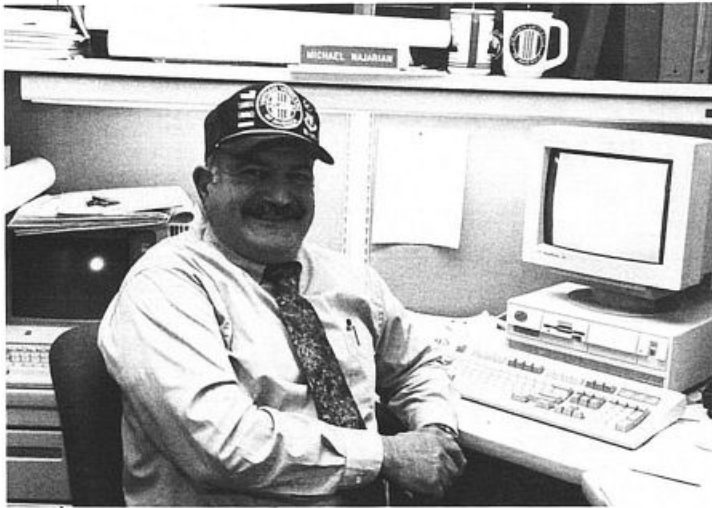


# A Veteran Volunteer



Systems & Engineering Computer Operations supervisor **MICHAEL NAJARIAN** displays some campaign ribbons on his Vietnam Veterans of America hat.

*"...to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan."*  
**Abraham Lincoln**  
**March 4, 1865**  
**Second Inaugural Address**



**E**ach Veterans' Day, **MICHAEL NAJARIAN** is poignantly reminded of his good fortune to be alive. Najarian, said, "My name is on the Wall. While I was in Vietnam, another Michael Najarian was killed in action. His birthday and mine were one day apart. My family was actually notified that I had been killed. Our middle names weren't the same but the mistake was made."

Perhaps that's why he is so dedicated to not only honoring those who didn't come back but also helping veterans who couldn't adjust to civilian life when they did come back.

Najarian, computer operations supervisor in Systems & Engineering, is vice president of Montgomery County Chapter 641 of the Vietnam Veterans of America. Volunteering is a year-round commitment for Najarian but coaxing him to talk about it was like pulling teeth. And, typically, Najarian downplayed his involvement. He said, "We get around... But it's not just me, it's the whole group. All of us are involved."

While mentioning some planned Veterans' Day activities, he said, "I was in prison this week, too." Why? "I was invited." Najarian went to prison to attend a program discussing "what incarcerated veterans could do to benefit the community once they get out of prison, or even while they are in there." He said, "They ranged in age from World War II veterans to 23-year-olds from Desert Storm, and had sentences anywhere from two years to life. Despite what they did to get incarcerated, they served, too; they made sacrifices, too." Najarian continued, "They are paying their debt and are sincere about what they are trying to achieve. We visit to give them some encouragement to improve themselves."

In addition to helping veterans, Najarian said "We heard about a woman from North Carolina whose husband was killed in an Army helicopter crash and whose daughter was undergoing cancer treatment

at Walter Reed [Army Medical Center]. She wanted to stay up here with her daughter but was having a difficult time financially. We took wind of it, spread the word, and within a month raised over \$2,500."

Najarian's volunteer activities never seem to slow down. He and his brother—in-law did a 15-second PSA on The Learning Channel for Veterans' Day. He contributes articles to the VVA monthly newsletter. At the Vietnam War Memorial, he does rubbings of names, places flowers, and participates in fund-raising activities such as last Sunday's 10K run. On top of all that, he's a tireless volunteer for events sponsored by The Post.

Last year, the VVA "adopted" a homeless veteran, reunited him with his family and helped him find housing and a job. Now VVA is searching for someone else to help. "Right now," Najarian said, "We know there are some homeless veterans in Montgomery County living under the railroad tracks. We're going to have some members find them. Some don't want to be in contact with the outside world but we do what we can to help."

What next? On Thanksgiving, he'll be taking food to homeless vets and on Christmas Day, "most likely, I'll be visiting at the Veterans' Hospital."