

STATESMAN JOURNAL

MidValley



—★ HONORING ★— SALEM'S FALLEN

Salem man gathers memories for family of missing Vietnam pilot



FORWARD THIS
CAPI LYNN

Fred Thompson purchased a limited-edition print by aviation artist Joe Kline that depicts a UH-1 Huey helicopter making an extraction of a Special Forces team operating "over the fence" during the

Vietnam War.

Thompson had it signed and customized with hand-painted aircraft markings, a red diamond on the tail boom representing the 101st Airborne Division and the serial number 15255 on the vertical fin.

It was a gift for the family of Gerald Woods, a Salem pilot who was killed when his helicopter was shot down Feb. 18, 1971 near the Laos border.

"It's a very accurate description of what Gerald was doing that day," said Thompson, who served with Woods in A Company, 101st Aviation Battalion, an element of the 101st Airborne that supported highly classified operations throughout Southeast Asia. "When I look at this, I'd say that's about two minutes before he died."

Thompson was home on leave at the time, and Woods' body was never recovered from the crash site. If it had been and Thompson would



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Yvonne Sanders holds a chalk drawing of her brother Gerald Woods in her Silverton home on Thursday, May 21. Woods' remains were never returned to the family after his helicopter went down during the Vietnam War. (ABOVE) Vietnam veteran Fred Thompson collected medals earned by Army Warrant Officer Gerald Woods, a Salem native, before he died when his helicopter was shot down in 1971. Woods' body was never recovered. Thompson presented the medals and other memorabilia to Woods' family.

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