



*Norman R. Wolfinger, a combat wounded disabled veteran of the Vietnam War, serves as State Attorney for Florida's 18th Judicial Court. Below, Wolfinger was severely wounded in the leg and back during a mortar and rocket attack on his base camp near Tai Ninh.*

## For Community Service, Veterans' Advocacy

**F**or a long time, Norman R. Wolfinger didn't even talk about Vietnam.

It was there on guard duty that his life had changed forever. Serving with the Army's A Battery, 6/27th Artillery, attached to the 1st Air Cavalry Division at Quan Loi, at midnight on May 13, 1969, he and his fellow soldiers came under a fierce enemy barrage. Moments after the start of a mortar and rocket attack, fragments had cut deep into Wolfinger's thigh, hip and buttocks. The scars remain, crossing from his leg and slithering up 10 inches of his lower back, where it permanently damaged his sciatic nerve.

The long and painful road to partial recovery only strengthened Wolfinger's resolve. He would let his actions overshadow any limitations his injury had caused.

Around the time that Wolfinger was medically retired from the Army, he came into contact with a DAV National Service Officer who educated him about his benefits.

Through this guidance, Wolfinger took advantage of the VA's vocational rehabilitation program. He attended the University of Florida College of Law, earning his Juris Doctor degree and then moved to Florida's Space Coast and

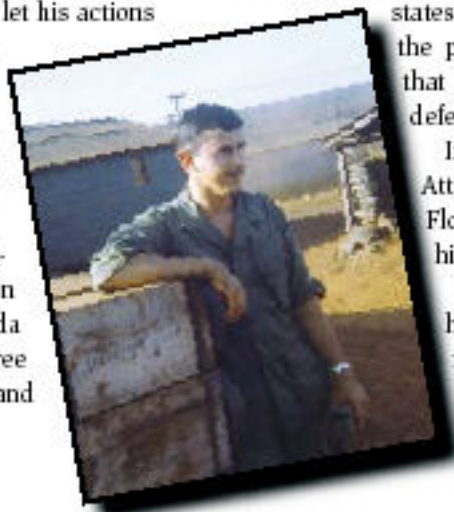
went to work as an assistant states attorney.

"I was raised in the very patriotic community of Easton, Pennsylvania. It was a very strong, working class neighborhood where people believed in looking out for each other. There was a sense of duty, and that's stayed with me all my life," recalls Wolfinger. "My Mom and Dad always instilled in me pride in country, so when I finished law school, although there were a lot of opportunities, I felt I had a responsibility to give back—to serve a greater purpose."

Like many who had known the devastation of war, Wolfinger sought to bring peace to his community and serve victims of violence and crime. He was hired as an assistant states attorney out of school and served the public for eight years. He followed that experience by working as a public defender for three years.

In 1984, Wolfinger was elected States Attorney for the 18th Judicial Court in Florida, where he continues to serve in his sixth consecutive four-year term.

He was catapulted to his office by his early, evolved stance on victim's rights and advocacy. Still today, Wolfinger maintains relationships



with the surviving relatives of murder victims and other serious cases he prosecuted in his career as an assistant states attorney over nearly 30 years ago.

His staff includes more than 300 employees—118 of which are attorneys. Wolfinger is prouder still that 26 are veterans.

In addition to serving as lead prosecutor for an area encompassing nearly one million residents, he's initiated and supported a wide variety of programs aimed at preventing crime. His Neighborhood States Attorney's initiative sends prosecutors door-to-door to communicate with people in areas where crime occurs.

He is a founding member of Brevard County's Children's Advocacy Center, and since its beginning in 1999 has chaired Brevard School's Take Stock in Children Leadership Council, a nationally recognized mentoring program. He was appointed by Florida's then Gov. Jeb Bush to serve on the state's Violent Crime Council.

In 2006, U. S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales recognized Wolfinger and his staff as the nation's Outstanding Local Prosecutor's Office for the team's work prosecuting and preventing gun violence. He was also selected the 2007 National Association of Social Workers Elected Official of the Year for Florida.

Add to those honors the National Commander's Award as the Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year for 2007.

For Wolfinger, a life member of Chapter 109 in Titusville, Fla., the award is humbling.

"I know there are a great many people who came back with more severe injuries than mine. I'm humbled to be honored by my fellow veterans who have sacrificed so much for our nation," said Wolfinger. "This is one of the most important things to ever happen to me and I hope in the years ahead to do even more to make life better for all veterans."

All the same, DAV officials say Wolfinger's dedication to

his community and service towards veterans made him an outstanding candidate among several deserving finalists.

Wolfinger is a longtime advocate of his fellow veterans. He regularly attends and supports homeless stand-downs where he provides free legal services to veterans in need. He works with law enforcement and veterans organizations—often through Chapter 109 and the Department of Florida—to keep veterans out of the legal system and connect them with the resources they need to build meaningful lives.

He also works with active duty military members in his community who have been victims of abuse. He is well-known among military leaders at Patrick Air Force Base and Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, where he serves military members and acts as a community liaison.

Immediately following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Wolfinger traveled to Ground Zero in New York as a nationally certified crisis responder with a team of 120 volunteers.

"Several years after the war that I found myself thinking more and more about the friends I'd left behind, and what my service meant, and what it meant to be an American in a broader sense," Wolfinger said. "My generation, the Vietnam generation, is inheriting a great responsibility as we assume greater leadership in the DAV and as leaders of the nation. There is much more I know we will do to accept this important responsibility and I look forward to a time when I have even more resources to give to maintain and build the legacy of service that we have enjoyed."

Wolfinger and his wife Jane met and married shortly after his return from Vietnam. They have two children and a grandson. His son Rob and his wife, Jen, work for NASA. They have one son, 1 ½ year old Owen. Wolfinger's daughter Amy this year will follow her father to his undergrad alma mater, Florida Southern College.

"I believe one of the greatest things we can do to honor our country and its veterans is to instill patriotism and a passion for freedom in the generations to come. It is comforting to know that Rob and Amy will gladly carry the torch of freedom to future generations," said Wolfinger.

"Norman Wolfinger is a truly great American who has dedicated his entire life to his community and to serving his fellow veterans. With humility and grace, he's overcome tremendous adversity and given selflessly of himself to improve people's lives," said Arthur H. Wilson, National Adjutant. "Norm's leadership has made him an amazing leader within our organization and we look forward to presenting him with his award at the National Convention in New Orleans."



*Wolfinger gives district residents a flier and talks to them about a recent incident of crime, as part of an initiative to reduce crimes in neighborhoods.*





*The Wolfinger family. Standing, from left, daughter Amy, son Rob, and his wife Jennifer. Seated, from left, wife Jane, Norm, and grandson Owen.*