

**McLean County Museum of History**

**Ploense, Gary Collection**

Processed by  
Kathryn Kerr  
April - May 2025

**Collection Information**

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 Box
COLLECTION DATES:	1970s – 1990s
RESTRICTIONS:	None
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History
ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
LOCATION:	Archives
NOTES:	None

## **Brief History**

Gary Ploense served two tours in the Marine Corps in Vietnam, 1967-1968. In 1988, he organized a VietNow Convention in Bloomington. He served as a jail superintendent, a police officer at Illinois State University, and a sheriff's deputy in McLean County. He ran unsuccessfully for Sheriff in 1994.

## **Scope**

The collection is mostly materials related to the Third Annual VietNow National Convention, held in Bloomington, May 20-22, 1988, and the Debt of Honor parade and ceremony, May 23, 1987. The collection includes publicity materials, organizational papers, correspondence, and photographs. There is also material from Ploense's campaign for Sheriff in 1994.

## **Box and Folder Inventory**

### **Folder 1: General**

- 1.1 Gift Agreement, December 19, 2024.
- 1.2 Note on binders that held the materials when donated.

### **Folder 2: VietNow Correspondence and Convention**

- 2.1 Third National Convention Report Cover, Book 1, 1988.
- 2.2 Keppler Associates, Inc. Agreement for speaker, Sen. Jeremiah Denton, for Convention, Feb. 10, 1988.
- 2.3 Publicity for Jeremiah Denton with letter of information to Keppler Associates, February 24, 1988.
- 2.4 Letter, Gary Ploense to All Chapter Presidents with details of the Convention, January 29, 1988.
- 2.5 Ten letters from Ploense regarding preparations for the Convention, February 1988.
- 2.6 Three letters from Ploense on behalf of James F. Bell, a Vietnam veteran and 7-year POW. Mr. Bell had been denied an application to the Small Business Administration, February 18, 1988.
- 2.7 Letter to All Chapter Presidents regarding ticket sales and Convention plans with attached National Convention rules, (two copies) February 23, 1988.
- 2.8 Letter to Jesse Smart, mayor of Bloomington, inviting him to the Convention, March 9, 1988.
- 2.9 VietNow 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Convention program, May 20 -22, 1988, two copies, one copy with cover letter.
- 2.10 Welcome to the Convention, for participants from Ploense.
- 2.11 Group of letters regarding materials for the Conference, February – May, 1988.
- 2.12 Poem, "Vietnam Memorial" by "veteran" Thanksgiving 1988.
- 2.13 Newspaper clipping of letter by Ploense, no date.

- 2.14 Pantagraph clipping, photo by Lori Ann Cook of the monument for Korea and VietNam veterans.
- 2.15 Two POW-MIA stickers.

**Folder 3: VietNow Conference, Rules, Agenda, By-Laws, etc.**

- 3.1. 1988 3rd Annual VietNow National Convention Report
- 3.2. VietNow 3rd Annual Convention Agenda
- 3.3. Convention Committee and Organization
- 3.4. Proposed changes to by-laws, in several versions, April 1988.
- 3.5. Resolutions of the Convention, many versions, April 1988.

**Folder 4: Personal Conference Correspondence**

Correspondence, mostly invitations, with some acceptances, from Gary Ploense inviting persons to the Third Annual VietNow Conference. Letters of note include responses from Illinois State Senator, John W. Maitland, Lieutenant Governor George Ryan, Governor James R. Thompson, U.S. Representative Edward Madigan, U.S. Senator Alan Dixon, U.S. Senator Paul Simon, General W.C. Westmoreland, and Ed Bradley of 60 Minutes, November 1987 – June 1988.

**Folder 5: Conference Correspondence, Mailings, Contracts**

- 5.1 Notebook cover page
- 5.2 Assorted handwritten notes and memos [1988].
- 5.3 Convention list of various duties and person in charge.
- 5.4 Letters to all National Officers and Board Members with convention information, January 28, 1988.
- 5.5 Letter to all Chapter presidents about the dedication of a Vietnam Memorial, February 19, 1988.
- 5.6 Letter to Ed Rodger, National President, with attached contracts for Ramada Inn and for the band "Junction", January 4, 1988.
- 5.7 Business card for Ramada Inn Sales Coordinator.

**Folder 6: Convention Registration, Publicity, Financial Report, etc.**

- 6.1 Folder for attendees of Third National Convention, May 20 – 22, 1988.
- 6.2 Welcome page with Convention information.
- 6.3 Convention Registration, description of procedures.
- 6.4 Convention Publicity, description, press releases, clippings.
- 6.5 Convention Delegates, rules and registration form.
- 6.6 Family Fun Night, description of games and tickets and list of chapters that contributed.
- 6.7 Banquet program and description.
- 6.8 Jeremiah Denton publicity information.
- 6.9 Dance, description of venue, problems and assets along with Junction publicity.
- 6.10 Ticket Sales, description of procedures and results.
- 6.11 Financial Report.
- 6.12 Receipt, Keppler Associates, for Jeremiah Denton June 2, 1988.
- 6.13 Champion Federal savings account booklet for VietNow, April – May 1988.

- 6.14 Four poems mounted on card stock.
- 6.15 VietNow raffle tickets.
- 6.16 VietNow ribbons for attendees and business card for Don Perdue & Company, providers of publicity materials.
- 6.17 VietNow metal badge and banquet ticket.
- 6.18 Printed pencil and “dog tag” for convention.
- 6.19 Dance tickets.

### **Folder 7: Directories**

Copies of the membership directories of chapters of VietNow Chapters.

### **Folder 8: Sheriff Campaign**

- 8.1 Tri-fold brochure “Elect Gary Ploense” [1994], 2 copies.
- 8.2 Door hanger “Elect Gary Ploense” [1994].
- 8.3 “Vote Democratic” flier [1994].
- 8.4 Flier for Gary Ploense, Sheriff candidate, 1994.
- 8.5 Flier for fundraiser for Gary Ploense for Sheriff, 1994.
- 8.6 *Pantagraph* advertising agreement, October 1, 1994.
- 8.7 McLean County precincts totals for election, November 8, 1994.
- 8.8 Sheriffs Department chart showing counties, population, and officers per 1000 population.
- 8.9 Clippings, ads for Ploense and Brienens, and an article of comparison (*Pantagraph*, 1994).

### **Folder 9: Debt of Honor/Welcome Home**

- 9.1 Letter of introduction for Dave Hoover, Hoover’s Manufacturing, from Gary Ploense, April 27, 1987.
- 9.2 Debt of Honor Ceremony Program, May 23, 1987, two copies.
- 9.3 Copy of scrapbook gift signatures, two pages. May 23, 1987.
- 9.4 Thirty-nine photographs of the Welcome Home parade, December 24, 2023.