

November 2022

Horizons

A Golden West Customer Newsletter

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ABOVE AND BEYOND

Medal of Honor Hero
Calls *Hartford* Home

 **Golden West**
We're everywhere people connect.

Michael and Patty Fitzmaurice have lived in Hartford for 35 years. The couple chose the community, because there was a house available to rent there when Michael began working in the maintenance department of the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System. They eventually bought a home, raised their children, and retired there.

"We're small-town people," Michael says. "We liked that Hartford was close to work."

Fitzmaurice is South Dakota's lone surviving Congressional Medal of Honor recipient. It is the highest award for valor in action against an enemy force. Fitzmaurice was honored for his personal bravery and self-sacrifice serving in the U.S. Army in Vietnam.

Story reprinted with permission from a July 3, 2021 story in the Rapid City Journal. Edited slightly due to space constraints.

Read the full article online at theexchangesd.com/medal.



Medal of Honor Hero Calls *Hartford* Home

By all accounts, Michael Fitzmaurice is a military hero, but he doesn't think so.

"I was just lucky and did my job," Fitzmaurice told the Rapid City Journal.

That response is a humbling characteristic of South Dakota's lone surviving Congressional Medal of Honor winner and the person whose name graces the

Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home in Hot Springs.

Signing Up to Serve

Fitzmaurice was born March 9, 1950, in Jamestown, North Dakota. He grew up in Cavour and graduated in 1969 from Iroquois High School. His family had served in the military, so the decision to serve was an easy one.

"Me and three buddies came down to Sioux Falls, and we all signed up. I went to the Army and there were two Marines and one Navy. So, we all went different, but the important thing, I guess, is that we chose to do it," Fitzmaurice said.

Fitzmaurice enlisted with the U.S. Army and went to Basic Training at Fort Lewis,



Michael J. Fitzmaurice pictured second from left.

Phil and Fitzmaurice had to move to another bunker, and Fitzmaurice credits Phil for saving his life.

"I wouldn't even be here if Phil hadn't shot a bunch as we came out," he said. "We come running and they blew the main bunker. The other guys got buried, but Phil and I got into the fighting position and headed to another bunker."

Washington, on October 31, 1969. He went to Advanced Individual Training at Fort Knox, Kentucky, specializing in armored reconnaissance. By March 1970, Fitzmaurice was in the war zone. He was the only one of his group of friends to go to Vietnam.

Fitzmaurice was assigned to the Second Squadron, 17th Cavalry, 101st Airborne Division – a helicopter-borne unit. They would be deployed to places where combat was already going on if another outfit needed help.

"I went out on the line and when it was over, I was going to go back to bed. Well, we no more got into our bunker than they started putting in the rockets and stuff again," he said. "I had two really good buddies, Phil and Bill, so, Phil and I went out to get into the fighting position and there was one of our guys who had been [shot and killed] laying there on the ground. Phil and I got into our hole. From there, they just started hammering us."

Firefight Escalates

While at the new bunker, he and Phil joined at least one other soldier as the firefight against the Viet Cong continued to escalate. The enemy troops launched three hand grenades towards the Americans.

Fitzmaurice was able to throw two of the grenades back, but one remained. It was a literal ticking time bomb. He quickly covered the grenade with his flack jacket to protect his friends from the imminent blast.

Continued on page 4

'We Were Attacked'

After two months in Vietnam, Fitzmaurice's unit was called into action to Khe Sanh, an active battle front that had seen numerous conflicts with the Viet Cong since early 1968. Fitzmaurice's unit was assigned to guard the recently reopened airstrip. On March 23, 1971, a violent battle flared up there again.

"We were attacked. They came and blew us up," Fitzmaurice bluntly said.

As he recalls, the battle with the North Vietnamese began two or three days earlier with rocket and mortar attacks. On the evening of March 23, Fitzmaurice was on guard duty.



Michael and Patty Fitzmaurice stand outside their home in Hartford.

Medal of Honor

Continued from page 3

"There was no place to go, so it was just lucky," he said.

Fitzmaurice was seriously wounded and partially blinded by the blast. But he continued to fight, refusing medical treatment. When his rifle was damaged, he grabbed another rifle from an enemy soldier.

When the fighting finally subsided at daybreak, Fitzmaurice consented to medical treatment. Because of the severity of his injuries, he received as much treatment as possible in the fields of Vietnam before coming back to the United States.

After 13 months of surgeries and hospitalization at Fitzsimons Army Medical Center in Aurora, Colorado, Fitzmaurice was honorably discharged in April 1972. He came home to South Dakota and worked at a pig processing plant near Huron. He and his wife Patty, whom he married on March 7, 1973, had begun raising a family when he received a phone call from The White House.

"They told me I was going to be receiving the Medal of Honor," Fitzmaurice said. "I didn't even know I was put in for that. I couldn't tell anyone until they put out a press release."

Surprised by Medal of Honor

Fitzmaurice said the announcement took him by surprise. President Richard Nixon presented the Medal of Honor to Fitzmaurice at a White House ceremony on October 15, 1973. While in Washington, D.C., he and his family were treated like movie stars, with a huge hotel suite, fine dining and even a few beverages for his brother.



***A Heartfelt Thank You
to All Veterans
for serving our country
and protecting our
freedoms. Today and
everyday we are grateful
for your sacrifices.***



Michael J. Fitzmaurice receives the Congressional Medal of Honor from President Richard Nixon at an October 1973 ceremony at The White House in Washington, D.C.

"It was magical and fun, I have to say, but at the same time, I didn't understand what was so special about what had happened in Vietnam," Fitzmaurice said.

Fitzmaurice started working for the VA not long after the ceremony. He also served many years with the South Dakota Army National Guard and Air National Guard. In 1998, Gov. Bill Janklow named the South Dakota State Veterans Home in Hot Springs after Fitzmaurice in appreciation for his service.

Neither the medal nor the naming recognition impacted the person that Fitzmaurice is.

"I was just doing what I was trained to do, and I was just lucky," he said.

A true hero, indeed.



Broadband, Internet, & Wi-Fi ... Oh My!

Golden West provides its members with a **broadband** connection to the **internet**. The cooperative also offers and supports a **router** for convenient **Wi-Fi** access for the growing number of devices online today. But what does that all mean?

What is Broadband?

In telecommunications, broadband refers to a connection that's capable of sending and receiving a lot of data from multiple signals at once. Simply put, broadband refers to high-speed internet access that is always on.

The Federal Communications Commission currently sets a speed threshold for broadband classification of download speeds of at least 25 megabits per second (Mbps) and upload speeds of at least 3 Mbps.

What is Internet?

The internet is a decentralized, worldwide network of billions of computers and other electronic devices that communicate with one another. Applications such as email and the world wide web, which respectively enable the distribution of messages and image-rich content and information, exist on the internet and communicate via the Internet Protocol language.

What is a Router?

A router is a networking appliance that directs traffic on the internet and generally serves as the on ramp to the web. The router communicates between the internet and the devices in your home that connect online. The router takes its hard-wired connection to the internet and shares its access over a local wireless network known as Wi-Fi.

What is Wi-Fi?

Wi-Fi is a wireless network that connects nearby devices with each other; it also generally allows these devices to access the internet. The router transmits internet data using Wi-Fi signals or radio waves between it and your wireless devices. Some say Wi-Fi is short for wireless fidelity; others claim an advertising agency developed the name. One thing is for sure: Wi-Fi and broadband are different things that work together to connect you to the internet via your router.



Understanding the world of technology and the internet can be confusing, especially with all the technical language. Golden West has compiled a glossary of terms that can be browsed online anytime at [thexchangesd.com/glossary](https://www.thexchangesd.com/glossary).



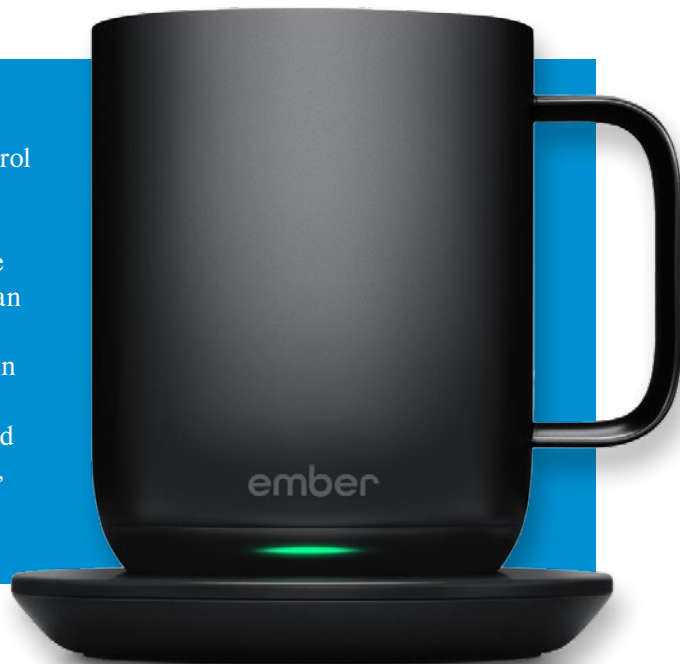
Visit theexchangesd.com/gifts for a couple of bonus ideas.

Give 'SMART' Gifts for the Holidays with These Tech-Enhanced Gadgets

Smart watch. Wireless earbuds. Cell phone. Laptop or tablet. Your household may already be equipped with these everyday tech essentials. But you can raise the bar for your Christmas gift giving with several ultra-cool (and useful) tech-enhanced goodies.

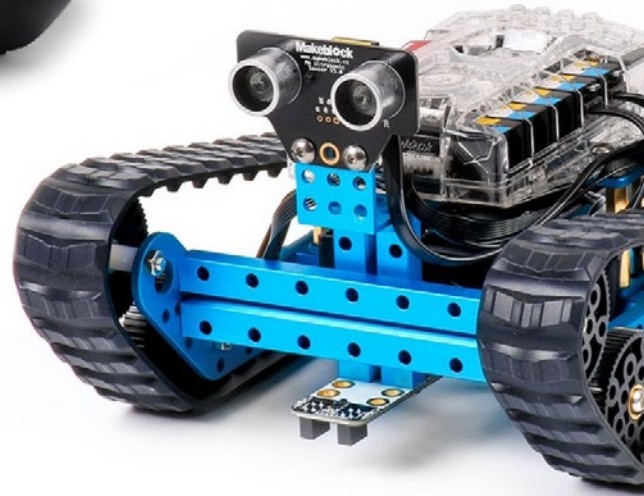
For the Coffee Lover ▶

The Ember Temperature Control Smart Mug 2 keeps coffee at the desired temperature set by the user. That's right. With the Ember app, a coffee drinker can tinker with the degrees to suit their preferred temperature. An LED display on this "smart" mug indicates when the desired temperature has been reached, and the mug will maintain it.



For the Techy Toy-Lover ▼

The mBot Robot from Makeblock is a programmable playmate designed to help kids develop their interest in coding skills in a fun way. This small robot can be built in less than an hour and comes with step-by-step instructions. Kids can also start coding in Scratch, a graphic programming language, with free software included. There's also an app with 60 game-based tasks to challenge kids and help them advance their skills.



◀ For the Person Who Can Never Find Their Keys (or other items)

We all know someone who is constantly searching for their keys, wallet, or glasses. Bluetooth-enabled trackers are the perfect gift to help solve this problem. Tile Mate Essentials or Apple Air Tags can easily be attached to personal items and tracked with an app to locate the object when it is missing. Both are available in four packs.



Golden West does not endorse any product or service that it does not sell. Sources: PopularMechanics.com, GoodHousekeeping.com and The Spruce.com

ANNUAL MEETING

Co-op Members Elect Directors, Approve Bylaw Changes

Over 200 members attended the 70th annual meeting of the Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative on Saturday, Sept. 24. They heard from the president and general manager, elected board members, and decided on proposed amendments to the co-op's bylaws.

Board President Talks About 70 Years of Progress & Support

In his report to the membership, President Jeff Nielsen talked about how things have changed since Golden West received its cooperative charter in 1952. He said members today enjoy fast, reliable, dedicated telecommunications connections instead of sharing party lines with eight of their neighbors. They can also choose to watch TV without commercials.

"The one thing that hasn't changed in those 70 years is Golden West's commitment to you, its member/owners," Nielsen said. "Every advancement in services,

every customer experience improvement, every margin reinvested in infrastructure took place to benefit the members of the cooperative and promote prosperity in rural communities."

Manager Emphasizes Importance of Fiber-Optic Investment

Golden West General Manager Denny Law addressed attendees next. He expanded on Nielsen's message by discussing the cooperative's support of rural areas through investment in technology, community donations, and jobs.

Law highlighted Golden West's ongoing, multi-year, capital-intensive effort to update its entire service territory with fiber-optic technology. The project involves burying about 14,000 miles of new fiber-optic cable through Golden West's service area. That's the same distance as traveling to the southern tip of South America and back.

"Since 2011, Golden West has invested over \$400

million in construction, new fiber-optic cables, and related electronics – and we're not finished yet," Law said. "In the next five to six years, Golden West will complete the project bringing unmatched technological capability to everyone within our service territory boundaries."

A fiber-optic connection offers phenomenal browsing, streaming, and video chat experiences. It is foundational for economic and community development, enables businesses to access global markets, and increases educational opportunities. The connection also allows farmers and ranchers to use smart agriculture practices to optimize production and expands access to telemedicine and health care.

Voting on Directors & Bylaws

During the required business meeting, the membership elected four people to four-year terms on the cooperative's board

of directors. Those elected include Angela Simons of Enning serving District I, John Knutson of Quinn serving District II, Penny Svenkeson of Hot Springs serving District V, and Randy Koerner of Freeman serving District VIII.

In addition, the membership approved the proposed amendments to Golden West's Bylaws. The changes address requirements for membership, the rights and responsibilities of the cooperative and members, and the meeting of members. An updated copy of Golden West's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws can be found on the website at goldenwest.com/bylaws.

Over 20 prizes were given away including gift cards, beef certificates, and cash. Marvin and Marcella Schmidt of Draper won the \$500 grand prize drawing.

Thanks to all the members who attended this year's meeting. The 71st annual meeting will be held on Sept. 23, 2023.



Pictured from left to right are **John Knutson** of Quinn (District II), **Randy Koerner** of Freeman (District VIII), **Angela Simons** of Enning (District I), and **Penny Svenkeson** of Hot Springs (District V).

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| 2 RUNNERS-UP | \$250 Local Shopping |
| 20 WINNERS | \$100 Local Shopping |

WIN BIG SHOP LOCAL Customer Appreciation Giveaway

Register to **WIN** at: theexchangesd.com/giveaway

You must be a Golden West residential customer and be at least 18 years of age to register. Only one entry and prize awarded per household. No purchase necessary. **You must list a local merchant's name when you register. The retail or service-based merchant must be in a Golden West community.** The value of the gift certificate must be spent with only one merchant. Entries close at noon MT on Friday, Dec. 2, 2022. Drawing will be held and winners will be posted on the Golden West Facebook page and website by 5 p.m. that day.

Those without internet access can call 1-855-888-7777 to register.

HBO AND **CINEMAX**

All Golden West cable TV subscribers can enjoy a **FREE PREVIEW** of HBO and Cinemax from **Tuesday, Nov. 22, through Monday, Nov. 28.** Visit goldenwest.com/hbo-preview for details.



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