

..... PARTING SHOT



Michael Keating/VVA Veteran

Raquel Welch, 1940-2023

There's something special and noteworthy about the renowned actress Raquel Welch that didn't make it into many of the scores of newspaper, online, and broadcast obituaries that followed her death at 82 on February 15: the fact that she made a trip to Vietnam to entertain the troops with the Bob Hope USO show during the 1967-68 Christmas holidays.

Tens of thousands of American troops saw her perform — an occasion none of them ever forgot. For that selfless act, as well as in recognition of her movie, TV, and stage work, Vietnam Veterans of America presented Raquel Welch with the President's Award for Excellence in the Arts at the Saturday night Awards Banquet at our 12th National Convention in Reno in 2005.

“The afternoon of the ceremonies, we asked Raquel to sign autographed photos for the delegates,” said Marc Leepson, *The Veteran's* Arts Editor who helped produce the Awards Banquet and autographing session. “Not only did she readily agree, but for more than three hours she signed and greeted every last man and woman who waited in a long, long line.”

That's the late Mike Najarian, a member of **Silver Spring, Maryland, Chapter 651** who later joined the VVA staff at the National office, in the photo above — one of the hundreds of happy VVA members who patiently waited for their moment with Raquel Welch, a truly kind human being. ♦