



The California Zephyr

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A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 17-4

SPRING 2014

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

In the City of Riverside, CA there is a high school named Martin Luther King High. King High, as it is known, has a teacher named John Corona. Mr. Corona teaches history and he is also the track coach for the high school. John is not a veteran, but has the utmost respect for all veterans.

14 years ago John Corona came up with a great idea. He thought how wonderful it would be to have the entire junior class of King High interview veterans about their time in the military, with every junior taking part in the interview. Mr. Corona decided it would be best if he had 3-4 juniors per veteran. He helped the students write 30 or so questions to ask of the veterans. All the questions would be appropriate as not to bring forth any issues with PTSD. After the juniors interviewed the veteran they would then write a report on what they learned from the interview.

On March 21, 2014 I attended the Martin Luther King High School's 14th "King High Remembers". This was my 12th time attending this event. As I pulled into the schools parking lot there is a very large American Flag hanging over the schools driveway. This was the first year for this size flag.

One of the school employees told me they had a parent who had heard about the veteran interviews and asked if he could fly his flag. Of course the school said yes. The parent brought his crane, parked it in the parking lot next to the entrance of the school and proudly displayed his flag for all in attendance to enjoy.

This year there were more veterans participating in the interviews than in any of the previous years. There were 298 veterans in attendance, including 149 Vietnam veterans of which 21 were VVA members. There were veterans from WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Iraqi, Afghanistan and the Cold War. The school's gymnasium was full, the multi-purpose room was full and numerous portable classrooms were full with students and veterans.

My interview took place in the multi-purpose room. I had two very professional and polite young men interviewing me. They were very interested in what I had to say and had a great number of follow up questions to their original ones. When the interview time was over both students continued to ask me more questions. They could not get enough information. They also enjoyed the photo albums that I brought with me to share.

After the interviews are complete everyone returns to the gymnasium for a closing ceremony. This is where Mr. Corona gets to say thanks to everyone involved. This year one of the veterans asked Mr. Corona for a few minutes at the microphone. This veteran then asked all the veterans in attendance to stand. He called us all to attention and had us salute Mr. Corona for his dedication to the veterans and his students.

This is a great event. I have been honored to have taken part in this program for 12 years. I look forward to many more years of interviews with the junior class of Martin Luther King High School.

Because of the great success Mr. Corona has had with his program several other high schools in the Inland Empire have taken notice. Two of those being Corona High School in Corona and Rancho Cucamonga High School in Rancho Cucamonga who have started their own veteran programs.

It would be great if more high schools in California would become involved with programs like Mr. Coronas. If we all checked with our local High Schools to see if they may be interested in a program like this; we would be furthering the history of this great nation.

A huge Thank You John Corona for what you do for your students and all veterans.
Steve

ELECTIONS 2014

Ken Holybee, Election Chair

Coming in June, at the CSC convention we will be holding our election of officers and board members. All positions are open for election. We are always looking for members to run for the board to bring new ideas and sometimes just a different point of view. In this issue of the Zephyr there are candidates that have submitted their names for your consideration as potential board members. Look them over think about who they are ask them questions and don't let anyone just walk into a position because they have submitted their name.

There will be an opportunity to run from the floor for any position on the board. If you wish to do this you must present the same information as the members that have presented their letter of intent. You must be a member in good standing in California and meet any requirements for the office that you desire to run for. You can look at the state bylaws on the web site to see what is required. All members are encouraged to run for the board. If you are thinking about running bring a copy of your 214 if you are not a life member or a sitting board member and see the election committee to get a petition to run from the floor. You will need to get 25 percent of the registered delegates to sign your petition to be put on the ballot.

Some people have questioned the reason that we hold the elections the way we do. The simple answer is education. The easiest way to educate our members on procedures of the national election process is to do it at our convention. It can be a step up from speaking at your chapter or even at the state council meetings to stand and address a larger crowd. Remember that when speaking in from of our members you may be nervous but they are your friends. The first time I spoke to the membership at a state convention I thought I would die. With every mistake I made I learned that I was speaking to friends. Even at the national level we can look back at the way we started and smile at the process.

What I am saying is step up and give it a try. We can always use new people. Ask any sitting board member and they will encourage you to run. If they don't encourage you, that should inspire you to run for their position.

The process is fun and educational. You learn things about yourself you may not know. There is always room for us to add to our experiences in VVA. Remember that everything we do is for the benefit of veterans that may not be able to speak for themselves at this time. With our encouragement we can all speak and people will listen.

Letters of Intent Submitted

President Steve Mackey

1st V President Carl (Butch) Fredrickson

2nd V President Dick Southern

Secretary Tom Hohmann

Treasurer Barry Schloffel

North District Dean Gotham

North District Lou Nunez

Central District Richard Segovia

Southern District Mike Kennedy

At Large Al Sickle

CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHIES (NOTE: THESE ARE ALL WHO SUBMITTED THEM BY DEADLINE AND ARE IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER)

Name: Barry R. Schloffel

Personal Information: Married - 7 Children

Military Service: United States Air Force

• Hamilton AFB, California, Administrative Supervisor, Squadron Orderly Room

• Ton Son Nhut, Air Base, Saigon, Vietnam, Loadmaster

Work History: Retired after 34 years with Pacific Bell, SBC and ATT. Recent assignments include:

• Supervising Manager – 20 years: Provided direct/indirect supervision of 75 management and union represented personnel. Guided the development and ongoing implementation of critical work standards, and ensured compliance with corporate operating budgets, as well as other fiscal and quality objectives.

• Product Manager – 12 years: Led interdepartmental teams in developing new product offerings. Provided product cost analyses and budget management, determined product sales quotas and tracking mechanisms, and supervised the implementation of related advertising strategies.

• Regulatory Manager – 2 years: Primary interface between parent company and governmental regulatory bodies. Developed product specifications and guidelines, and provided expert testimony at federal and/or state hearings relevant to product issues such as cost/revenue analyses and the public perception of these products.

Education:

• Certificate, Business Management - Hass School of Business, University of California, Berkeley

• Certificate, Marketing - Hass School of Business, University of California, Berkeley

• Associate Degree, Liberal Arts - Columbia College, Sonora

VVA History:

• CSC Treasurer – 4 years

• Chair, State Finance Committee – three years.

• Treasurer, Chapter 391 – six years.

• Color Guard Captain, Chapter 391 – six years.

• Delegate, Chapter 391 CSC and National – four years

• Member – Future of VVA Task Force

Campaign Statement:

If re-elected as California State Council Treasurer, I will continue to effectively manage State funds. I will maintain the transparency of the Treasurer's office by regularly providing clear, accurate and complete revenue/expense statements. I will continue to ensure that all required reports are filed with the various state and federal agencies in a timely manner.

Dean E. Gotham, Jr.

Personal:

I was born in Long Beach, CA. on January 4, 1948. I have lived in many parts of California (Pittsburg, San Jose, San Diego, Escondido, Pismo Beach, and Clearlake); however, I consider San Francisco home because I went to high school there. I have lived in Illinois, New Mexico, and Nevada. I am divorced and have no children. I took care of my Father until he passed away in 2002. My brother and I provide care to my 87 year old Mother and 95 year old Aunt. My interests are gardening, VVA CSC, Chapter 951, veteran advocacy, hiking/botanizing and reading.

Military:

I enlisted in the Marine Corps in May 1967. I did boot camp at MCRD, ITR at Camp Pendleton, and radio school at C & E Battalion in San Diego. I served in Vietnam from April 1968- May 1969. I performed a number of duties: rough rider (drove a radio jeep in convoys for 3rd Motor Transport Battalion), NCOIC of 3rdMarDiv-Forward Combat Operations Center radio room, Communications Chief for Provisional Rifle Company in operations in Quang Tri Province, NCOIC Transmitter Site after bush duty. When I came back from Vietnam, I became an instructor at "B" Company, C & E Battalion MCRD-San Diego where I taught radio operations and equipment until I discharged in May 1970.

Education

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*The
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The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of VVA, the State Council or its members.

Who Are The Vietnam Veterans Of America?

Founded in 1978, Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. is the only national Vietnam veterans organization congressionally chartered and exclusively dedicated to Vietnam-era veterans and their families. VVA is organized as a not-for-profit corporation and is tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Service Code.

VVA'S FOUNDING PRINCIPLE
"Never again shall one generation of veterans abandon another."

PURPOSE
The purpose of Vietnam Veterans of America's national organization, the state councils, and chapters is:

To help foster, encourage, and promote the improvement of the condition of the Vietnam veteran.

To promote physical and cultural improvement, growth and development, self-respect, self-confidence, and usefulness of Vietnam-era veterans and others.

To eliminate discrimination suffered by Vietnam veterans and to develop channels of communications which will assist Vietnam veterans to maximize self-realization and enrichment of their lives and enhance life-fulfillment.

To study, on a non-partisan basis, proposed legislation, rules, or regulations introduced in any federal, state, or local legislative or administrative body which may affect the social, economic, educational, or physical welfare of the Vietnam-era veteran or others; and to develop public-policy proposals designed to improve the quality of life of the Vietnam-era veteran and others especially in the areas of employment, education, training, and health.

To conduct and publish research, on a non-partisan basis, pertaining to the relationship between Vietnam-era veterans and the American society, the Vietnam War experience, the role of the United States in securing peaceful co-existence for the world community, and other matters which affect the social, economic, educational, or physical welfare of the Vietnam-era veteran or others.

To assist disabled and needy war veterans including, but not limited to, Vietnam veterans and their dependents, and the widows and orphans of deceased veterans.

FUNDING

Vietnam Veterans of America relies totally on private contributions for its revenue. VVA does not receive any funding from federal, state, or local governments.



High School- San Francisco. Radio and Instructors Orientation Course (Naval Training Center) in San Diego. Five years combined of night school at San Diego Evening College and San Diego City College. I received my Associate of Arts Degree at Palomar College. I completed my course work for a Bachelor of Science Degree in Ornamental Horticulture at California Polytechnic University-San Luis Obispo.

Work History:

After the Marines, I was a postal carrier in La Jolla, CA for five years and a part time clerk for 1 year. I was employed at Cal Poly as a greenhouse/nursery worker and Greenhouse Manager. I worked as an estate gardener at Filoli Center in Woodside, CA.

In 1981, I became a self-employed gardener in Marin/Lake Counties until 2004.

VVA History:

Founding member of Chapter 951; served as Vice President for 1 year and President for seven terms; delegate to State Council since 2006 until I was elected North District VP in 2010; re-elected North District Director in 2012; I serve on PTSD Committee, Woman Veterans Committee and Government Affairs Committee. I am Vice President of Lake County Veterans Memorial Avenue of Flags Association. The Lake County Board of Supervisors and Lake County Veteran Service Officer honored me with Veteran of the Year in 2007 and Friend of the Veteran in 2009.

Campaign Statement:

I consider it an honor and privilege to serve another term as North District Director. I have learned a lot and look forward to the challenges and opportunity to learn more. I appreciate the diversity of Chapters in the North District. I view the job of Director to be an interface between Chapters and the Board of Directors. I have and shall continue to pursue

the interests and needs of Chapters to the Board. The current Officers and Board of Directors have worked well together and I seek to maintain a harmonious and supportive relationship with the North District Chapters.

Carl C. (Butch) Frederickson
Candidate for 1st Vice President VVA CSC

I am a native Californian living most of my life in Paradise in Northern California. About a year and a half after graduating high school I enlisted in the Navy.

After boot camp I received orders to an amphibious ship, USS Alamo. I spent the remainder of 1967, all of 1968 and part of 1969 aboard the Alamo. During that time I completed my first two tours in Vietnam. We spent our time between just south of Da Nang up to the DMZ. Returning after my second tour I received orders to Coronado for assault boat school and more weapons training. By then I was an E-5 Boatswains Mate. Upon completing this training I was flown back to Vietnam and spent my third tour on Swift Boats in the Mekong Delta.

Returning from my last tour it took awhile to get my head right and figure out what I was going to do with my life. After about a year of wandering I came back to California and entered college. Over the years I have completed about 5 years of college. Most of my education is in automotive technology with some business, psychology and law where it pertained to my career. I was successful in turning dealership service departments around from losing money to making money.

I am on staff at Butte Community College as an instructor teaching service advising with some management and law pertaining to the automotive repair field. I have recently accepted the Executive Director position at Vectors which is a transitional housing facility for homeless veterans. Some are working towards stopping their abuse of alcohol and/or drugs. I was asked to do this on an interim basis to get the facility back on track while a permanent Director is found. I have also been asked to be a veteran consultant at California State University, Chico. I am still considering this request.

I have 4 adopted children by a 1st marriage. All of our natural children were found to be severely deformed after they were miscarried. We also foster parented around 20 children. I have 3 step children by a second marriage. I have also raised my granddaughter since she was 6 months old and have adopted her.

I have been president of VVA chapter 582 for about 8 years taking one year off. Our chapter, because of our phenomenal members, is now a viable chapter and a positive force in our community.

At the January CSC meeting, President Steve Mackey presented me with a Resolution from the California State Legislature. It ends with the hope that my “efforts will continue.” My candidacy for 1st Vice President is a step towards that continuation. I believe that I will be an asset to the president and to the whole council.

Carl C. (Butch) Frederickson

Candidat for Secretary
Tom Hohmann
Personal:

My name is Tom Hohmann; I have lived in Riverside, California since 1948, the year I was born. My parents were both born in Minnesota and moved here in 1941 when my father was deployed here during World War II. I am married to Sherry, who I met in 1989 and married in 1990. We have 15+ critters, all adopted which equals – one dog and approximately 15 cats (we rescue animals and some “volunteers” have adopted us).

I enjoy classic and muscle cars, and have a 1970 SS 396 Chevelle and a four 1976 Cosworth Vegas. My second hobby is computers; I spend a lot of time on the Internet and online services, web publishing, newsletter publishing and keeping the State Council and Chapter 47’s paperwork chapter financial records current.

Military:

I enlisted in the USMC April 18, 1968; June, BITS and ITR training followed, deployed to Vietnam in October of 1968; with G Company 2/5 Marines, 1st MarDiv; assigned the M-79; then the PRC-25 radio. I participated in Operations Taylor Common, Meade River, and Muskogee Meadows and others. Three visits to the hospital, malaria (twice), once with shrapnel from a booby trap. Company office after ; promoted to E-4 Corporal in August, rotated home October 1969. Camp Pendleton, CA, sent to Court Reporter’s School in 1970; assigned Staff Judge Advocate’s Office; got out 1972 an E-5 Sergeant.

Work History:

In 1972 State Comp Insurance Fund, computer specialist/clerk-typist. GM Heavy Duty Line Technician 1972-84; then worked for a machine shop doing various engine machine work.

Cared for my Mom until she died in 1991. I’m a full time volunteer for: chapter & state officer positions; Riverside National Cemetery Support Committee; the Salute To Veterans Parade Committee and my Marine unit (2/5). Web design/publisher for seventeen years. Provide the full-time care of my wife.

Education:

Rubidoux High School 1966; Riverside City College 1966 to 1968 (microbiology). Marine Court Reporters school. GM technical schools; certified (ASE) as a Master Mechanic.

VVA History:

Joined 1989, active 1990; secretary 1992; president 1992-95; secretary from 1995-96; secretary/treasurer to present. State Convention 1992 to 2012 when I needed to stay with my wife, Chapter Rep 1992-98, National Convention 1997 to 2005. Chapter newsletter editor & webmaster; webmaster & newsletter editor Council. Council Secretary 1998 and continue to present.

Campaign Statement:

I feel that I can continue to make a difference and add to the council. Sherry and I discussed what this would mean to us if I should be re-elected, since it will affect both of us, especially now with her health (hopefully 2014 will see progress in getting her better). Both Sherry and my health problems are ongoing concerns for me, and I will do my best to perform the duties of state council secretary while taking care of her. I have not been able to attend the council meetings in Fresno for a while, but have been able to record the minutes via teleconference & continue the duties of CSC Secretary remotely. I hope you will consider my record as council secretary and my ability to fulfill the position.

I have been a secretary of sorts since my last years in the Marine Corps. It is something I do well, I think, and I feel I can do a good job for the California State Council. I’m stepping forward and running for State Council Secretary. I am familiar with how VVA runs, not everything, there is always more to learn. The “politics” of this organization may not be something some people like; I’m one of those who do like to be involved in the process, so yes I do like the “politics.” It’s a necessary part of any organization, and I feel I can help VVA continue on into the 21st century. Technology has a place in VVA, and would like to integrate more of it to make our jobs easier with more access to electronic related material. PDFs are fillable, hope to add submitting them online.

I feel that the more accessible we are, the more people are going to have an interest in what we do. I hope that we can continue to grow and let more people know about VVA. “VVA.... What a difference!”

My name is Manuel Louis Nuñez, better known as “Lou,” and I am strongly interested in running for the position of Northern District Director. My intention is to strengthen the communication and working relationship between the VVA California State Council and all VVA Northern California Chapters

I have been married for thirteen years to my wife Elva. Together we have three beautiful grown children and eight grandchildren. My wife and I have resided in Santa Rosa for over 27 years.

I am a retired Sonoma County Deputy Sheriff and served in the U.S. Army, Army Reserves, and Army National Guard. I served in Vietnam in 1969 and 1970 with the First Aviation Battalion.

I am a life member of VVA Chapter #223 and have served on its Board of Directors for three terms. I volunteer at Santa Rosa VA Outpatient Clinic. A year ago I started the coffee cart at the clinic to serve the veteran community. I am working toward my Peer Support Specialist certificate and toward my Human Service Advocacy Associates degree, which I hope to complete this April.

VETERANS INCARCERATED

Bob Chaney, Chair

We are still working to get AB2490 implemented in the institutions of California, When I talk to people I know at some of the institutions they are unaware of the law. For those of you who are unaware of AB2490. It is a law that states every institution shall have a Veteran Service Officer. If your isititution does not have a Veteran Service Officer, submit a request through your councilor for and appointment with the VA Re-Entry Specialist. This should be done at least 6 months before you planed release date. You should also have a copy of the Incarcerated Veteran’s Handbook at least the 3rd Edition. The 4th Edition should be released soon.

Over the past 3 months I have been correcting addresses

of the Vietnam Veterans and Associate members who are incarcerated. They have been returned to us because many had missing or wrong CDC #'s. Incomplete housing, wrong institution, or have been paroled. Remember, membership is at no cost to the Vietnam Veteran while incarcerated or for the first year of his/her parole. If you are incarcerated and are lucky enough to receive a copy of the Zephyr, Please share with fellow veterans. Then ask that veteran to mail us a new complete address the way your institution wants it addresses. I know postage is expensive, so if a few could get together and mail address in one envelope that will help.

Then once you are paroled or just before if you know where you will be staying, send us the new address so we may change it and you won’t miss and issue of the Zephyr or Veteran.

CA AVVA

We have become an advocate for Heart of the horse Therapy Ranch in Clovis CA. Chapter 933 introduced us to this great facility.

Heart of the Horse Therapy Ranch is committed to promoting therapeutic riding as an efficacious treatment modality for those who suffer from physical, mental or emotional disorders by developing community awareness of equine assisted/ facilitated therapy.

The population HHTR serves ranges from those who are physically challenged to those with emotional or behavioral disorders. Though not everyone with disabilities can safely participate in therapeutic riding activities, HHTR serves a broad segment of the disable community & Veterans from the Fresno VA Hospital here in the central valley.

Some of the conditions for which therapeutic riding has been proved an effective treatment are cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, traumatic brain injury, sensory impairment (i.e. loss of hearing or sight), Down Syndrome, Autism, learning disabilities, psychological impairments, emotional disorders and interpersonal challenges.

Heart of the Horse Therapy Ranch’s mission is to help exceptional central valley citizens achieve new heights and discover new abilities through supervised therapeutic equestrian activities.

We are very proud to be associated with this fine facility. <http://heartofthehorseranch.com/wp/>

CA AVVA now has an AVVA At Large Representative. We thank Chelli Croucher, the current CA AVVA Vice President for stepping up and accepting this position. The VVA chapter that Chelli was Chapter Representative of was not able to maintain the chapter and they, unfortunately, closed. This left a lot of the members as At Large; having no affiliation with any chapter.

Being an At Large member Chelli volunteered to represent the AVVA At Large membership which numbers 79 members. Chelli will be in contact with the members and bring any concerns, comments or questions that they may have to the CA AVVA Board of Directors.

If any At Large member would like to contact Chelli @ dragoonlady@hotmail.com, please do so and put AVVA in the subject line of your email.

I am sure that by the time that you receive this issue of the Zephyr, Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day will be past but we would like to say ~ Thank you for your service and Welcome Home!

AVVA feels that every day is Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day.

UPDATE ON MILITARY JUSTICE IMPROVEMENT ACT. SB1602

By Kate O’Hare-Palmer, Chair
CSC/Natiional Women Veterans Committee

By now, most of you have seen the reports on the failure of the Senate to pass the MJIA. The vote 55/45, with 60 votes needed for passing. Our troops need the protection for judicial fairness that is not dependent on the Chain of Command’s ability to remain impartial when there is a vested interest in the outcome. Senator Gillibrand said,

“I want to especially thank all the survivors. We owe our gratitude to the brave survivors who, despite being betrayed by their chain of command continue to serve their country by fighting for a justice system that will help make sure no one else suffers the same tragedy they did. Their struggles, sacrifice and courage inspire me every day.”

So many brave men and women stood forward and testified during these hearings. Our own Sonoma County

resident, Katie Weber, Army Veteran and part of the cast of the movie "The Invisible War," joined in the testimony in the Senate. Some of our VVA Board of Directors, Dr. Tom Berger and Ms. Marsha Four stood with the victims as they spoke. To remove the judicial component in military sexual trauma trials from the chain of command failed with the failure of this Bill. It is not over.

A married couple, Ben and Ariana Klay, Marine Officers, testified on Ariana's military sexual assault while her husband was deployed. Ariana's trial was described as an added assault to her. Her husband described the prosecution's statement that,"she deserved the ill treatment that she received because she wore running shorts and wore make-up." The opinion of the commanding investigator compared rape to prostitution or marrying a rich man. The closing statement of the "trial" included the definitions of cunt, slut, and whore.

It was determined that calling anyone these names is not considered harassment(in the military) The perpetrators of the rape were not convicted. There was not one question asked on the effects that this MST has had on Ariana or her husband.

The continued ostracism, intimidation, isolation, and humiliation of retaliation keep most victims from coming forward to report abuse. Only 8% of those reported MST cases are taken into a court setting and, of those, 500 cases end up in a court- marshal with 200 convictions in a year.

Representative Jackie Spier(D) 14th District cosponsored an bill called the STOP Act. (Sexual Assault Training Oversight and Prevention Act) This was included in the Military Appropriations Bill that passed late last December. It is to directly change the current Article 32 hearings that take place in the military as a "pre-trial" hearing. In the past, these hearings allowed intense examination of the victim(not allowed in civilian setting) and these tended to be rigged in favor of the accused. This bill will have judges, not commanders, direct non-judicial punishments. There will be separate offices with experts to handle the investigations and a special unit to provide medical services to the victim.

Many of these MST survivors have become leaders in their community and are advocates for change in spite of a military system that has turned their backs on them. The strength that they reflect is equal to that of them willing to give their life for their country earlier in their career. These are the exact kind of people that the military would recruit. This reflection of lack of support and protection of our troops is unforgivable.

WOMENS MILITARY HISTORY WEEK

By Kate O'Hare-Palmer

On March 19, 2014, Womens Military History Month was celebrated by the California Department of Veteran Affairs in Sacramento with a reception at the California State Library. Two women veterans were honored with the Trailblazing Award.

Brigadier General Sylvia R. Crockett began her military career in July, 1982 and currently serves as the Assistant Division Commander (Support), 40th Infantry Division and the full-time Director of Strategic Communications for the California Military Department. She started out in Personnel Services Company, moved to Protocol Officer in South Panama, and then moved to Military Intelligence. General Crockett was a Planner for I Corps, G3 Plans and Exercies for Ft. Lewis. General Crockett holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice from Sacramento State University, and a Masters' degree in National Security Strategy from the National War College.

Delphine Metcalfe-Foster, Jr. Vice- Commander, Disabled American Veterans. Delphine Metcalf-Foster's distinguished military service ended in 1996 when she retired as a First Sergeant from the United States Army Reserves. Mrs. Foster is a combat veteran of Deser Storm/Desert Shield. She also worked for the Department of the Navy at the Alameda Naval Air Station as a Quality Assurance Specialist and retired after a 20-year career.

In 2004-2005, Delphine had the distinction of being the first female to hold the position of Commander of the California Disabled American Veterans (DAV). She is a member of the Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee on Women Veterans; a body that provides recommendations directly to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric Shinseki. In August 2013, Delphine was also elected to serve as the 3rd Jr. Vice Commander for the Disabled American Veterans national organization; which currently has 1.2 million members. If re-elected each year in the next three years, Delphine will become the first female national commander of the DAV.

VA DISABILITY PAYMENT ISSUE?

TRUTH OR FICTION: VA OIG INVESTIGATED \$1.1 BILLION IN IMPROPER PAYMENTS

By Benjamin Krause

Do not believe the hype on this one – VA reported \$1.1 billion in improper payments to veterans – by “improper” VA OIG does not mean wrong. That means, while true, the game here is hype plus semantics.

This shocking claim from VA OIG's new report does not mean these payments went to undeserving veterans. It merely means VA did not dot every “i” and cross every “t” for normal payments or overpayments or underpayments.

Let me explain. When I read the headline and first sentence in a newsletter VA sent me, I thought, “Wow, \$1 billion in payments were made to veterans who did not deserve the money.” And how could I not think this when the first sentence started off, “VA reported \$1.1 billion in improper payments...” However, that is not what the report really says.

What I learned was that VA lumped together all payments, including overpayments and underpayments, into the same totals. VA waited until the appendix to explain that little detail, but I guarantee that Veterans Benefits Haters will hail the VA OIG report as a red flag indicating VA benefits should be cut.

Here is what you need to know.

VA followed an Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circular's definition in conducting this evaluation. There, OMB mandated defining potentially correct payments to deserving veterans as “improper” based on a variety of things. For example, if VA did not follow the regulations to the letter, even deserved payments must be labeled improper by VA's simple application of the rules. However, OMB goes a step further, and VA seems to gloss over a detail or two while explaining its findings until the end of the report.

Here is the full OMB Circular A-123 Appendix C definition per VA:

Incorrect amounts are overpayments and underpayments that are made to eligible recipients (including inappropriate denials of payment or service, any payment that does not account for credit for applicable discounts, payments that are for the incorrect amount, and duplicate payments). An improper payment also includes any payment that was made to an ineligible recipient or for an ineligible good or service, or payments for goods services not received (except for such payments authorized by law). In addition, when an agency's review is unable to discern whether a payment is proper because of insufficient or lack of documentation, this payment must also be considered an improper payment.

What concerns me about this report is that the Department of Veterans Affairs is disseminating VA OIG reports that could mislead casual readers with irresponsible headlines. You know, these are the readers who only read the headline and first paragraph, i.e. the majority of Americans.

I guarantee you will see a few talking heads on TV talk about how they believe the US should cut veterans benefits.

Yet, I still waiting to see is a report from VA OIG that documents the lack of value taxpayers get in exchange for the billions VA pays to major government contractors every year. Now that would be an amazing read.

In addition to my main semantic gripe about the title and lead paragraph, within the report, some of the conclusions may be a little looser than one would expect.

For example, when describing Compensation overpayments, VA OIG merely extrapolated an overall

guess of what the total improper payments are based on a sample. The report claimed that 10 percent of the sample received improper payments.

The term “improper” is defined for VA OIG by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as meaning, “when an agency's review is unable to discern whether a payment was proper as a result of insufficient or a lack of documentation, this payment must be considered an improper payment.” Specifically, the report may have classified correct payments to deserving veterans as “improper” based on semantics.

Further, VA's focus on Compensation highlighted only a few instances of payments made where VA did not cross a “t”. This means the inspection is more concerned with semantics than with giving Americans a firm understanding of VA's regulatory problems.

Here is part of what led to that terribly deceptive headline. While reading this, ask yourself if you think the guts of the report justifies the title:

VBA underreported improper payments for its Compensation program. From VBA's sample of 400 Compensation payments, the OIG reviewed 21 payments related to temporary 100 percent disability evaluations or traumatic brain injury claims. Of the 21 payments reviewed, we identified two related to temporary 100 percent disability evaluations that lacked routine medical examinations required to support veterans' benefits.

Specifically, VBA policy requires a temporary 100 percent disability evaluation for a service-connected disability following a veteran's surgery or when specific treatment is needed. At the end of a mandated period of convalescence or treatment, VA Regional Office staff must request a follow-up medical examination to help determine whether to continue the veteran's 100 percent disability evaluation. VBA did not count the two payments discussed above as improper payments. However, according to OMB Circular A-123, Appendix C, when an agency's review is unable to discern whether a payment was proper as a result of insufficient or a lack of documentation, this payment must be considered an improper payment.

VBA's test procedures for the Compensation program did not include a step to check for the medical examinations required to support temporary 100 percent disability evaluations. We recalculated VBA's improper payment estimate for the Compensation program to include the two additional improper payments. Consequently, the estimate increased from approximately \$321 million to \$565 million. The improper payment rate also increased from 0.67 percent to 1.17 percent. By the time of our review, a subsequent examination had been completed but a decision was still pending for one claim. An examination had not been completed for the other claim.

Do you think VA can properly claim \$565 million in improper payments based on a mere sample of 400 veterans? Check out this chart on the overall payouts VA OIG evaluated:

OPIOIDS - PAIN MED CHANGES VA INITIATIVE SHOWS EARLY PROMISE IN REDUCING USE OF OPIOIDS FOR CHRONIC PAIN

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has initiated a multi-faceted approach to reduce the use of opioids among America's Veterans using VA health care. The Opioid Safety Initiative (OSI) is a comprehensive effort to improve the quality of life for the hundreds of thousands of Veterans suffering from chronic pain.

Launched in October 2013 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, OSI is already demonstrating success in lowering dependency on this class of drugs. At eight sites of care in Minnesota, OSI practices have decreased high-dose opioid use by more than 50 percent. OSI incorporates the team approach with the goal of reducing opioid use by alleviating a Veterans' pain using non-prescription methods. There is an emphasis on patient education, close patient monitoring with frequent feedback and Complementary and Alternative Medicine practices like acupuncture.

“We have developed and implemented joint pain management guidelines which encourage the use of other medications and therapies in lieu of habit forming opiates,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “Early results give us hope that we can reduce the use of opioids for Veterans suffering with chronic pain and share these best practices across our healthcare networks.”

The Opioid Safety Initiative faces the challenge of

“Effective leadership is not about making speeches or being liked; leadership is defined by results not attributes.”
Peter Drucker

| Table 2. Improper Payment Reporting—VA FY 2013 PAR (Based on FY 2012 Actual Data) (in millions) | | | |
|---|----------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Program | Outlays | Improper Payment Percentage | Improper Payments |
| Beneficiary Travel | \$749 | 9.32 | \$69.74 |
| CHAMPVA | \$924 | 2.26 | \$20.92 |
| Non-VA Care Fee | \$4,447 | 9.64 | \$429.07 |
| State Home Per Diem | \$848 | 15.94 | \$135.23 |
| Supplies and Materials | \$2,230 | 0.11 | \$2.53 |
| Compensation | \$48,181 | 0.67 | \$321.10 |
| Pension | \$5,268 | 1.75 | \$92.43 |
| Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment | \$786 | 0.27 | \$2.15 |
| Education Chapter 33 | \$8,769 | 0 | 0 |
| Education Chapter 1606 | \$146 | 0.33 | \$0.48 |
| Education Chapter 1607 | \$88 | 0.44 | \$0.39 |
| Total VA | \$72,436 | | \$1,074 |

Source: VA's FY 2013 PAR

opioid dependency with an innovative and comprehensive plan that closely monitors VA's dispensing practices system-wide and coordinates pain management to include patient and provider education, testing and tapering programs, and alternative therapies like acupuncture and behavior therapy.

Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system suffer from high rates of chronic pain. Each VA facility employs personnel including Interdisciplinary Pain Medicine Specialty Teams and Consult Services, Facility Pain Committees, Pharmacy staff and Primary Care/PACT, and other professionals to accomplish the goals and objectives of the OSI.

VA has developed patient management initiatives including Pain Coach, which is a pain management app available for download by patients receiving pain management treatments, a Veterans' Health Library, including a Patient/Family Management Toolkit, and resources for Pain Management on My HealtheVet. All of these applications allow Veterans to better manage their pain without the use of opioids. VA's measurement-based pain care includes the "Pain Scale," which reduces uncertainty and helps Veterans by discussing the potential benefits of a medication and possible side-effects.

"The Opioid Safety Initiative is an example of VHA's personalized, proactive and patient-centered approach to health care. We are also using a full-range of support treatments for Veterans, including Complementary and Alternative Medicine," said Dr. Robert Petzel, VA's Under Secretary for Health. "We are delivering health care with the patient's long-term personal health goals at the forefront."

For further information, Veterans should contact their primary care health team. To learn more about VA health care, visit www.va.gov.

unclaimed

a michael joergensen film

Could an American MIA be struggling to find his way home? After enduring a traumatic childhood and serving two tours in Vietnam, Tom Faunce embarks upon an emotional quest to uncover the true identity of a man claiming to be an American soldier living in a remote village in Vietnam, decades after the war's end. As a veteran and Christian missionary, Tom firmly believes in the military creed, "leave no man behind," and lives by a personal oath to spend the rest of his life helping those in need. He can't turn his back on the man he meets in present-day Vietnam, despite a government's denial of the man's claim. His struggle to repatriate the man whom he believes could be a fellow soldier forms a deeply moving and haunting tale of two men whose lives intersect through the burdens of war. Unclaimed offers a compelling reason to revive awareness of the POW/MIA discussion.



Limited Engagement...

We are proud to announce that Unclaimed will be released theatrically in the U. S. on Friday, May 2, 2014!

The documentary will run exclusively at the renowned Quad Cinema in New York City and the historic Laemmle's Music Hall Theatre in Los Angeles May 2 through May 8.

For ticket and show time information, please visit:

<http://www.quadcinema.com>

Quad Cinema

34 West 13th St.

New York, New York 10011

<http://www.laemmle.com/theaters/4>

Laemmle Music Hall Theatre

9036 Wilshire Blvd.

Beverly Hills, CA 90211

For theatre audiences, we also have a newly edited commercial trailer! It's a slightly different trailer meant for the big screen.

See the commercial trailer here: <https://vimeo.com/90875597> or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSAS7cjqkso&feature=youtu.be>

Vietnam Veterans for Factual History

Our mission is to provide facts from professional historians, eyewitnesses, and participants in the Vietnam War to correct the historical record of the War wherever that correction is warranted.

Cavalry troops dismounting in preparation for patrol

As veterans, many of whom who served in the conflict and have remained very conscious of its history, we have become concerned that the 1978 prediction of Guenter Lewy has proven to be all too accurate. 35 years ago he wrote "Mythology, half-truth and falsehood concerning events in Vietnam abound and, unless corrected, will enter the textbooks for the mis-education of our children."

His prediction has proven to be all too accurate, and far too much of the literature about the war has been filled with exaggerations, inaccuracies, opinions presented as facts, and sometimes simple falsehoods. In recent years, historians, many of them being veterans of the Vietnam war, have written more accurately about the war's events. The newer work is often done with information gathered from the records of the communist protagonists, and these contributors are referred to as "revisionists". This is in contrast to the early and still prevalent writings in academia, originally by professors who had been part of the antiwar movement and now by a newer generation trained by those predecessors.

We started out as a group of veterans, historians, and other interested parties who came together recently in reaction to conferences dominated by those with clear antiwar biases. We have committed ourselves to set the record straight, with very factual approaches to those historical events. However this project is more than open to anyone for whom publishing the true history of the war in SE Asia is important. First among them would be the surviving Vietnamese who fought and suffered for their country - then those Americans who served outside of South Viet Nam's borders, or who were involved as diplomats, reporters, civil servants, or in any other capacity during that time, or those younger people who find this history of great interest; all are eagerly welcomed to this alliance. All are encouraged to bring their knowledge and experience of the history to light, as well as whatever questions they have or suggestions to help in fulfilling our mission. United we are bound to achieve more in serving this good cause.

<http://vvfh.org>

(Editor's note: this site has a lot of good information, I think; still exploring it myself)

C-123 & AGENT ORANGE

VA MUST CARE FOR USAF C-123 AIRCREW AGENT ORANGE EXPOSED VETERANS

Petition by

C-123 Veterans Association

These aircrew and flight nurse vets are denied medical care for flying warplanes acknowledged by decades of USAF testing as "heavily contaminated" with dioxin, the

SAVE-THE-DATE!

Exclusive Flashlight Tour Home Front at Camp Anza

Officers Club rehabilitation and veterans housing project

Join the tour on Thursday, May 22, 2014
6-8 p.m. at 5797 Picker Street, Riverside, CA

This is a rare opportunity for supporters, contributors, and future patrons to view the interior of the historic Camp Anza Officers Club and learn about its adaptive reuse to serve today's Veterans.



Front view of Camp Anza Officers Club



Camp Anza multiple family housing



Camp Anza single story housing

Liability waivers will be required to enter the site.
Closed-toed shoes and long pants required.

For more information contact Shonda Herold
(951) 826-5590 or sherold@riversideca.gov



WARD 6

MERCY HOUSE
We help people find their way back home.



toxin in Agent Orange. Agent Orange-exposed veterans need and deserve care they are eligible for under Title 38 (and under the Federal Register 8 May 2001 page 23166) regarding VA treatment of C-123 veterans exposed to herbicides, a category for which the law directs appropriate benefits which parallel those of Vietnam War veterans covered under their "boots on the ground" provisions. These men and women volunteer airmen flew the C-123 medium assault transports between 1972-1982, and while some of these veterans are also Vietnam veterans and covered under the VA's "boots on the ground" category, most are post-Vietnam veterans and were exposed AFTER the war aboard these toxic airplanes but absolutely qualify for the same care.

VA opposes, stating regardless of the law and regardless of other experts such as the US Public Health Service and the CDC/Agency for Toxic Substances Disease Registry which agree with the veterans, VA will care only for Vietnam veterans, or others if able to prove exposure to LIQUID Agent Orange and the toxin in it, dioxin. VA refuses care for veterans exposed to DRY dioxin. VA has even denied some C-123 veterans' claims with the statement that Agent Orange is "harmless," an issue resolved decades ago but surfaced here to help prevent these veterans being added to the VA's roles. VA even bars C-123 veterans from physical exams for their illnesses at VA medical centers, citing unpublished, internal VA policies while their Internet pages clearly state otherwise.

In my own denied claim (submitted as a test case as I'm already 100% VA disabled), the VA determined that my VA urology oncologist (who is also a professor at the Oregon Health Sciences University and also an acknowledged Agent Orange expert) was an "unqualified lay witness." They also dismissed expert scientific opinions confirming my Agent Orange exposure aboard my aircraft as "unqualified scientific" observations - from Columbia University School of Public Health, from the University of Texas Medical School and from the Toxicology Department of the Oregon Health Sciences University.

And my claim is one of those on which VA stated "In summary no harm is known to be caused by TCDD (note:

Vietnam Veterans of America-California State Council
Day at the Capitol Report
April 4, 2014

2014 VVA-CSC FIFTH ANNUAL DAY AT THE CAPITOL

By: Pete Conaty, VVA-CSC Legislative Advocate

On March 26 the California State Council held their fifth annual legislative day at the State Capitol in Sacramento. We also took the opportunity to observe Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day (WHVVD), which occurs every March 30.

WHVVD is recognized by proclamation of the Governor on March 30 of each year. Vietnam veteran and State Assemblyman (now Congressman) Paul Cook (R-Yucaipa) carried the legislation to annually recognize WHVVD.



Secretary for Veterans Services Keith Boylan also briefed attendees.

During the morning, Secretary Peter Gravett of the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA) welcomed the VVA to Sacramento. He then introduced Undersecretary for Operations, Mike Wells. Mike outlined the major goals and issues of the CDVA and thanked the VVA for their good works helping veterans. Deputy

The State Council's Day at the Capitol event is also when the Legislator of the Year awards are presented for exemplary service to veterans during the previous year. The VVA-CSC named Senator Bill Monning (D-Carmel) and Assemblyman Jim Frazier (D-Oakley) as their Legislators of the Year for 2013.



Senator Monning has fought for state funding for the Fort Ord Veterans Cemetery ever since he was elected to the Assembly in 2008. His latest bill on the issue was SB 232 in 2013 which provided state funding for establishment of a Veterans Cemetery at the former Fort Ord. The effort to get a Veterans Cemetery built on the grounds of the former Ft. Ord base has been going for 10 years. SB232 was the key that opened the door for receipt of the USDVA grant.



Assemblyman Frazier authored key veterans legislation in 2013. AB 287, which requires the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA) to annually compile a list of names of Vietnam veterans to be added to the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial, was signed into law by the Governor. AB 287 also directs the CDVA to form a committee to review and consider requests from the public to include names on the Memorial. Assemblyman Frazier has also requested that he be involved in the committee process.

AB 2098

CALIF. BILL URGES JUDGES
TO CONSIDER PTSD IN
SENTENCING OF MILI-
TARY VETERANS

A bill moving through the state Legislature would urge judges to grant probation and give shorter prison terms to defendants who have mental health problems stemming from their military service.

AB2098 passed the Assembly on Monday on a 70-1 vote. It requires courts to consider post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues in sentencing.

The bill's author, Democrat Marc Levine of San Rafael, says as many as one in five soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have PTSD and are more likely to commit crimes.

California law already requires judges to consider ordering treatment when granting probation for veterans with mental illness.

The bill is one of several that address how to deal with veterans in the criminal justice system. It now heads to the Senate.

FYI—AB 2098 is supported by the following groups: AMVETS, CACVSO, CalMOAA, CSCVC, VFW, VVA, American Legion.

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ABC's SHARK TANK

ABC's SHARK TANK PRO-
DUCERS LOOKING FOR VET-
ERAN ENTREPRENEURS

ABC's Shark Tank, the critically acclaimed, business-themed television show is continuing the search for the best Entrepreneurs with the best businesses and products that America has to offer. The Emmy-nominated show features The Sharks – tough, self-made, millionaire/billionaires who give

budding entrepreneurs a chance to make their dreams come true and become successful -- and possibly wealthy -- business people.

Producers are currently looking for military veterans with a great product or business in need of an investment for a possible special Veterans Day episode.

To apply, send an e-mail to SharkTankCasting@yahoo.com. Be sure to put VETS CASTING in the subject line.

NEW VETERAN ID CARDS VETERAN HEALTH IDENTIFICATION CARD

The VA is issuing a brand new Veterans Health Identification Card (VHIC) to protect Veterans by enhancing security and decreasing the possibility of identity theft.

TCDD = dioxin, the toxin in Agent Orange, acknowledged even by the VA as a potent carcinogen.) Even the VA disagrees with their own statement as per the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. VA has told representatives of the C-123 Veterans Association that no amount of scientific, medical or legal evidence will be allowed to affect our exposure claims because they have already determined that we somehow were not exposed to the dioxin contaminating our warplanes while flying the toxic airplanes for a decade...and being exposed and re exposed flight after flight. Dioxin builds up in the body, and can take 7 to 11 years to reach "half-life." Repeated flying simply built up our dioxin via inhalation and dermal routes of exposure, per the US Public Health Service.

Frankly, this seems to be a VA prejudicial policy, not an evenhanded evaluation of veterans' claims supported by mounds of non-VA evidence! We wish the Secretary were aware of this injustice.

Progress!

The VA has contracted with the Institute of Medicine to complete a review of the C-123 aircraft toxicity and report back to Secretary Shinseki. This renews a promise made to us two years ago. We're disappointed with the inherent delay this study entails but at least we now have a target date for substantial information to be presented to the VA. The IOM report is due around the end of 2014.

We hope the VA will, in the months ahead, evaluate C-123 exposure claims on legal, medical and scientific merits, rather than simply denying each veteran's application automatically as is now their procedure. The much-denied blanket denial policy, whereby Compensation & Pension orders all our exposure claims refused, is inappropriate.

VA must stop deceiving the Senate about this!

We also thank Yale Law School and the many scientists and government agencies for their input to the VA, all of which helped move mountains!



Sheraton Grand Sacramento Hotel

1230 J Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

Event Start Date : 8/24/2014 10:00 AM

Event End Date : 8/25/2014 5:00 PM

For more information or to nominate an individual for an award please see our website at: <https://www.calvet.ca.gov/WomenVets/Pages/2014-Conference.aspx>



Advantages of the new VHIC include:

No Social Security Number on the Card

Personalized Card to Include: Branch of Service, Status and Certain Awards

Braille Accessible
Meets National Standards
Displays Important VA Phone Numbers

No action is needed if you already have a Veteran ID Card (VIC) with photo. VA will automatically mail you a free replacement card. All we ask is to make sure we have your current mailing address.

Veterans will start seeing the new cards in the mail starting in April. It may take up to 3 months for the VA to replace all the cards. Once you receive your new card, destroy your old VIC as you would a credit card by cutting or shredding it.

If you have any questions or need to update your mailing address, you can contact our Eligibility Office at (909) 825-7084 ext. 5312.

- See more at: <http://www.lomalinda.va.gov/LOMALINDA/features/newidcards.asp#sthash.y0uUuU8f.dpuf> (check the web for your local VAMC web site - use a web search for it)

POW/MIA ID

AGENCY

HAGEL ORDERS OVERHAUL OF POW/MIA IDENTIFICATION

AGENCIES

By Nick Simeone

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel announced today that he's ordered an overhaul of the Pentagon agencies responsible for recovering and identifying the remains of America's war dead.

The reorganization seeks consolidate the mission, improve efficiency and increase the number of remains identified by the two key agencies charged with POW-MIA accounting efforts -- the Defense Prisoner of War Missing Personnel Office and the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, Hagel told a Pentagon news conference.

Last month, the defense secretary directed Michael Lumpkin, acting undersecretary of defense for policy, to provide him with recommendations on how to reorganize the two organizations into a single, streamlined unit with oversight for the entire mission.

FACT SHEET: SECRETARY HAGEL'S ANNOUNCEMENT ON PERSONNEL ACCOUNTING MISSION REORGANIZATION

On February 20, 2014 Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel directed the Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Michael Lumpkin, to provide him with recommendations on how to reorganize the Joint Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Command (JPAC) and Defense Prisoners of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) so that DoD could more effectively account for our missing personnel and ensure their families receive timely and accurate information.

Based on his recommendations, and those of past reviews, Secretary Hagel announced on March 31, 2014, the actions he has directed the Department to undertake to reorganize the mission of accounting for our personnel from previous wars into a single, accountable organization that has complete oversight of personnel accounting resources, research, and operations.

Actions to Reorganize DoD's Accounting Mission

1. DoD will establish a new Defense Agency that combines the Defense Prisoners of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO), JPAC, and select functions of the U.S. Air Forces' Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory. This agency will be led by a presidentially appointed official with a General officer deputy, and will be overseen by the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. All communications with family members of the missing from past conflicts will be managed and organized by this new agency. DoD will provide proposed changes to existing legislation needed to support this decision for consideration in the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act.
2. To streamline the identification process, an Armed Forces Medical Examiner working for the new agency will be the single DoD identification authority for past conflict identifications. They will oversee the scientific operations of the Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii, the satellite laboratory in Omaha, Nebraska, and the Life Science Equipment Laboratory in Dayton, Ohio.
3. DoD will work with Congress to realign its appropriations for this mission into a single budget line, allowing for greater execution flexibility in the accounting mission with the ability to align resources to respond more effectively.
4. To improve the search, recovery, and identification process, the Department will implement a centralized database and case management system containing all missing service members' information.
5. Secretary Hagel has directed the Department to develop proposals for expanding public-private partnerships in identifying our missing. The goal is to leverage the capabilities and efforts of organizations outside of government that responsibly work to account for our missing.

Implementation of these steps will help improve the accounting mission, increase the number of identifications of our missing, provide greater transparency for their families, and expand our case file system to include all missing personnel. DoD will continue to do everything possible to account for and bring home our missing and fallen service personnel.

AB 531 would have required the Department of Motor Vehicles to print the word "VETERAN" on the face of a driver's license or identification card issued if requested by a veteran who provides proof of their veteran status. The bill died in committee last year, but Assemblyman Frazier has reintroduced this year, AB 1637.

Assemblyman Frazier was also the major sponsor of the 25th Anniversary of the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial event in 2013. A close relative of Mr. Frazier died from exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam. He brought, at his own expense, "The Wall That Heals" Vietnam Memorial Traveling Wall to the State Capitol in late February.

A portion of the morning program was also devoted to hearing from key legislators. Assembly and Senate members stopped by to introduce themselves to the Council and to speak about veterans related legislation they are carrying.

After lunch, VVA-CSC attendees distributed informational packets to over 80 legislative offices containing:

- VVA-CSC's background document which outlines what the VVA does and details VVA-CSC programs and services.
 - A list of the top 10 veterans legislation sponsored and/or supported by the Council.
 - Co-author request for the legislative priority for 2014; the "Veteran" designation on the driver's license.
- **AB 1637-Frazier; Driver's Licenses: Veteran Designation.** Allows veterans to have that designation on their California driver's license. Requires veteran to present to the DMV a Discharge from Active Duty, verified by a County Veterans Service Officer.

During these visits to legislative offices, you secured five coauthors to AB 1637.



"These steps will help improve the accounting mission, increase the number of identifications of our missing, provide greater transparency for their families and expand our case file system to include all missing personnel," Hagel said.

An armed forces medical examiner working for the yet-to-be-named agency will be the sole DOD identification authority and will oversee operations of the central identification laboratory in Hawaii as well as those in Omaha, Neb., and Dayton, Ohio.

"By consolidating functions, we will resolve issues of duplication and inefficiency and build a stronger, more transparent and more responsive organization," Hagel stressed.

In explaining why the reorganization was necessary, Lumpkin told reporters it had become clear that the department needed a "paradigm shift" from what some have called "outdated, institutionalized thinking and behavior that didn't deliver the number of remains accounted for that we had hoped."

"As of next year, Congress has mandated the department have the capacity to identify up to 200 sets of remains a year, but last year the DOD agencies only identified 70 sets," he said.

Lumpkin said the new agency will maintain a single database of records related to missing Americans instead of the multiple databases currently in use. In addition, he said, proposals will be developed for expanding partnerships with private organizations already working to recover and identify remains to "fully embrace progressive science."

No date has been set for when the new agency will be stood up, but the undersecretary said it would be led by a

civilian appointed by the president.

"This is a top priority for the Department of Defense. There is no greater sacrifice a service member can make than by dying for this country and we want to honor these heroes by bringing them home," Lumpkin said.

Obama to award Medal of Honor to two dozen veterans, including 19 discrimination victims
By Scott Wilson

President Obama corrects a historical act of discrimination next month when he awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest commendation for combat valor, to a group of Hispanic, Jewish and African-American veterans who were passed over because of their racial or ethnic backgrounds.

The unusual presentation will culminate a 12-year Pentagon review ordered by Congress into past discrimination in the ranks and will hold a particular poignancy when conducted by the nation's first African-American president.

Although the review predates Obama's tenure, he has made addressing discrimination in the military — including ending the ban on gay and lesbian service members — a priority as commander in chief.

With the ornate White House East Room as backdrop, the March 18 ceremony will mark another step to revisit a history of discrimination in the armed forces as the nation's demographics and social values shift rapidly.

The recipients, whom the White House announced Friday afternoon, served in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Collectively, their award ceremony will mark the single largest group of Medal of Honor recipients



Photos by Fred Romero
cavarrazzi7@att.net
916-470-7912

since World War II, when more than two dozen service members were honored in that conflict's last days.

Just three of the 24 veterans who will be honored are still alive. All but five of the soldiers are Hispanic, Jewish or African American, including Melvin Morris, a former Green Beret who was wounded three times on a mid-September day in 1969 recovering the body of his fatally wounded master sergeant from a jungle ambush in the Chi Lang district of South Vietnam.

"I never thought much about it and didn't until recently," said Morris, 72, who was decorated three times for his service in Vietnam and retired from the Army after 22 years. "But I think that this is something the military always should address because, in almost every process we have, someone is overlooked."

The unusual historical accounting began in 2002 when Congress, as part of the military spending bill, ordered the Pentagon to look into whether Jewish and Hispanic service members had been passed over unfairly for the nation's highest military honor.

Defense Department officials said there was specific evidence to suggest such discrimination may have existed in the ranks, including instances in which Hispanic and Jewish soldiers apparently changed their names to hide their ethnicity. The congressional order spanned the period from December 1941 through September 2001.

The project was an enormous undertaking that sent military personnel officials searching for lost records and battlefield histories amid the complicated politics surrounding the military's highest honor.

Officials from each service branch focused on service members who had been awarded the second-highest medal for gallantry: the Distinguished Service Cross for the Army, the Air Force Cross for that branch, and the Navy Cross for the Navy and Marine Corps.

Although that narrowed the review, the Army alone identified more than 600 records that needed reassessment. The smaller branches found 275 among them.

"It's hard to be awarded the medal for a single person, and to go back for all those potential candidates, that is a very demanding scope and record-retrieval task," said a defense official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to comment on the review. "It was very time-consuming.

But we wanted to make sure that, as a process, we did it correctly and that the Medal of Honor process itself was honored."

Many of the veterans under review had passed away, making interviews impossible. Much of the review relied on existing information and comparisons to Medal of Honor recipients, but even then, there were challenges unforeseen when the project began.

In 1973, a fire tore through the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, destroying as many as 18 million military personnel files. Among those were Army service records from 1912 through 1960, a period that included World War II and Korea. The Air Force lost most of its personnel files from 1947 through 1964.

The disaster forced officials to recreate the military history of scores of potential candidates for the upgraded commendation by interviewing family members, fellow battlefield soldiers, and others.

The reassessment sent a host of candidates through the various service boards that decide on Medal of Honor recipients and then to the Joint Chiefs for approval. Two dozen veterans — all from the Army — emerged as worthy of an upgrade to the Medal of Honor.

They include 17 Hispanic soldiers such as Santiago J. Erevia, a former specialist four who served in Vietnam as a radio telephone operator in Company C, 1st Battalion (Airmobile), 501st Infantry of the 101st Airborne Division. He will receive the Medal of Honor at the March 18 ceremony for "courageous actions" during a search-and-clear mission near Tam Ky, Vietnam.

"We've wondered why he didn't receive it the first time and thought it may have been because of his name," said Jesse Erevia, 41, his son, who lives in San Antonio, not far from his father.

Erevia said his father had "some issues" with the Vietnam War, mainly concerning its rationale, and has mixed feelings about military honors in general. But the family is eager to attend the White House ceremony next month to see him receive an award they have long felt he deserved.

"He's never let me down," Erevia, a tamale salesman, said of his father. "His are big shoes to fill."

The third living veteran is Jose Rodela, a former

sergeant first class from Corpus Christi, Tex., who will receive the medal for bravery during fighting in Phuoc Long province, Vietnam, in early September 1969.

The review identified one deceased Jewish veteran, former Pfc. Leonard M. Kravitz, to receive the Medal of Honor.

In early March 1951, Kravitz was serving as an assistant machine gunner with Company M, 5th Infantry Regiment of the 24th Infantry Division. His actions in combat over two days in Yangpyong, Korea, were deemed worthy of the highest honor.

"In this instance, justice was delayed but not denied," Abraham H. Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, said Friday in a statement.

Morris was the only African-American veteran identified as part of the review. The initial congressional order did not include black service members for reassessment, but it was later amended to allow others deserving an upgraded commendation — not just Hispanic or Jewish service members — to receive one.

Of the two dozen soldiers in the White House announcement, five identified themselves on military personnel forms as "Caucasian." Military officials said their ethnicity or religious affiliation is uncertain, but their battlefield actions were found to deserve the highest honor.

Morris grew up in small-town Oklahoma, the son of a "do-it-all carpenter" and a housemaid. He joined the Army because at the time, he recalled, "it was the prestigious thing to do, and if you got in, you went."

As part of a Special Forces A Team carrying out search-and-destroy missions with local Montagnard troops, Morris was ambushed on Sept. 17, 1969, on a jungle patrol. His company commander was shot through the mouth and throat, his operations sergeant was severely wounded by a land mine and his master sergeant, Ronald P. Hague, was killed.

"We were a tight crew and we didn't leave anyone behind," Morris said. He took soldiers to retrieve Hague's body three times before succeeding. He said last rites over his friend and then was shot through the chest, the arm, and the ring finger — tearing it off along with his wedding band.

After recuperating in a stateside hospital, Morris returned to Vietnam for another tour, this time as the recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross. "I never thought about the medal, whether it should have been another higher one," he said. "I just kept doing what I was doing."

Morris said he did not consider whether his race played a part in the commendation selection. He was not blind to race; Morris recalled being unable to use the public drinking fountain outside the Southern base where he trained for Special Forces.

"This is wonderful," he said. "I'm overwhelmed. And there are more out there."

Morris said he will travel from his Florida home to the White House next month with his three children and his wife of more than five decades, Mary, who gave him the ring that was shot off with his finger that day in Vietnam.

"I haven't worn one since," he said.

Alice R. Crites contributed to this report.

CALIFORNIA VIETNAM VETER- ANS MEMORIAL

**ERROR CORRECTED ON CHARLESTON MEDAL OF
HONOR RECIPIENT RALPH JOHNSON**

A California veterans group has corrected an oversight concerning Charleston Medal of Honor recipient Ralph Johnson.

Johnson's name was recently added to the California

"It is in the character of very few men to honor without envy a friend who has prospered."

Unknown

Vietnam Veterans Memorial, where it should have been included 25 years ago.

No one knows for sure why it wasn't listed during the original dedication, but the omission was discovered while an author was doing a research on Vietnam memorials around the country.

Even though Johnson is from Charleston, California claims ties to Johnson after he enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1967 while he was living out west, working in Oakland.

The Department of Defense lists the state where someone enlists in the military service as their home of record, said Pete Conaty, of Sacramento, co-chairman of the California 25th Anniversary Memorial Committee. "So officially PFC Johnson is considered to be from California," he said.

Johnson's name was added to the monument near the state Capitol complex in a ceremony last month. He is one of more than 5,800 Californians who died in Vietnam.

"The 25th anniversary appeared to be the best time to do it," Conaty said.

The author who discovered the oversight was Albert Nahas, author of "Warriors Remembered," a book about Vietnam memorials from around the country.

Research sparked by Nahas' interest in the California monument showed there were only 13 California Medal of Honor recipients listed, when there should have been 14.

Johnson, 19, who grew up in Charleston, was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously. He was killed in March 1968 after throwing his body onto a grenade that had landed in a foxhole, while at the same time shouting a warning to his fellow Marines.

His sister, Helen Richards, lives in the Summerville area. Attempts to reach her were unsuccessful during the holidays.

Charleston's Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center is named in the fallen Marine's honor. The Navy also is naming a new Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer the USS Ralph Johnson in recognition of his sacrifice.

Reach Schuyler Kropf at 937-5551

FED EX CEO

Vietnam Experience Inspires Vet to Create Delivery Company

By David Vergun



Fred Smith served two tours in Vietnam with the Marine Corps, earning the Silver Star, Bronze Star and two Purple Heart medals.

Fred Smith, CEO of FedEx, speaks about his wartime experiences and about FedEx at the Pentagon, Feb. 28, 2014. The event, called "Battlefield to Boardroom," commemorates the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War. U.S. Army photo by David Vergun

During his wartime service, Smith said, he was impressed with the effectiveness of wartime logistics and Marine Corps leadership values. He thought he might be able to use some of that experience to build a successful business in the civilian sector.

Smith spoke about his wartime experiences during a Feb. 28 event at the Pentagon called "Battlefield to Boardroom." The presentation was part of the ongoing, nationwide "Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War." Lt. Gen. Raymond Mason, the Army's deputy chief of staff for logistics, hosted the event and represents the Army as one of the many partners involved in officially recognizing and commemorating the war.

Smith told the Pentagon Auditorium audience that after his Vietnam experience, he went on to found the shipping company Federal Express. Today, he serves as chairman, president and CEO of that Fortune 100 company.

"Everything that went into FedEx that made the business that it is today relates to what I learned in the

Marine Corps, and I've always been grateful for that education and for those I've served with," he said.

In 1966, Smith became a platoon leader with the 1st Marine Division in Chu Lai, South Vietnam. He said there was a shortage of officers, so pretty quickly he became commander of Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines. His rifle company participated in the epic battle for Hue City.

He said that commanding those men was the proudest moment of his life.

Of his Marines, he remarked, "They were the finest group of young men you could ever have -- courageous beyond belief -- and the memory of that is with me every day of my life."

During his second tour in Vietnam, Smith was a forward air controller with Marine Observation Squadron 2 at Marble Mountain.

Those wartime experiences, he said, gave him a deep appreciation for not only the leadership qualities of Marines, but also their organizational structure.

"Our close-air support with Marine Corps A-4s and F-4s was spectacular, unbelievable, bringing precision and coordination to the battle," he said.

When Smith started Federal Express in 1971, one of the first innovations he said he brought was integrating air-ground operations and ensuring everything was well coordinated, from the pickup and delivery folks to the pilots. "Lessons learned during Vietnam played over and over in my mind when we developed the business plan," he said.

Part of that plan development was getting a fitting motto and a mission statement, he said, recalling the famous Marine motto, Semper Fidelis, or "always faithful."

While it's not in Latin, the FedEx motto is short enough to remember, he said, and fits the mission: "I will make every FedEx experience outstanding."

The Marine colors are scarlet and gold, Smith noted, and the primary FedEx color is purple. Thus, the FedEx motto is known as the "Purple Promise."

Another lesson Smith said he learned from the Marines was ensuring that each operating company of FedEx is managed collaboratively and is capable of operating independently. He said that was his takeaway lesson from observing the military services working together and small-unit leaders being capable of operating independently when the situation called for it.

The process at FedEx for selecting leaders is "rigorous," he said, adding that the company usually promotes from within. "The vast majority of FedEx leaders today started out as pickup or delivery people, or washing airplanes," he added.

Not everyone is leader material, he noted, and they don't necessarily have to be. If they have good technical skills, he said, there's a career path for them at FedEx. With a workforce of some 350,000 people worldwide, not everyone can be a leader, he said.

As in every organization, people at FedEx sometimes get into trouble. The company's process for handling disciplinary problems dates back to lessons Smith learned from the Marines. Employees can request "mast" up the chain of command, all the way to the unit CEO, he said.

There's also a review board and, he said, and sometimes the board will hand over proceedings to a peer review board made up of those who work with the individual. The peer review board has the power to overturn management's decision.

Smith summed up his business philosophy: "If you take care of the folks, treat them right, put good leaders in front of them, communicate with them, set the example, make sure they understand what's in this for them, make sure they understand the importance of what they're doing, and profit will take care of itself."

FedEx recently was named No. 8 on Fortune magazine's list of the most admired companies, Smith said. "The reason that happened had nothing to do with me," he added. "It had to do with those 350,000 folks."

Sometimes when Smith is asked to give lectures at business schools, he's asked about the success of his company and why people like to work there. He said they're surprised when he tells them that his greatest learning experiences came from being with the Marines.

Of Marines and service members from all of the services today, he said, "I'm in awe of the quality of the troops and young officers I've had opportunity to come in contact with."

But Smith's experiences with his Marines during the Vietnam War have left an indelible mark on him, including those who were not as fortunate to return.

"There's not a day that goes by that I don't think about the names of those on the Vietnam Wall," he said, noting that he served with some of them.

WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY, 2014



Three Soldiers Memorial, The Mall, Washington DC

Army Combat Medic Jose Ramos stepped off the plane in Vietnam on October 2, 1967. Exactly twelve months later he would return home to California donning the Paratrooper Badge, Combat Medic Badge, Bronze Star with Valor, and Purple Heart—all heroic insignia and decoration earning his rightful place among America's war veterans and keepers of democracy, and worthy of recognition from a grateful society. But that didn't happen. Like so many of Jose's brothers-in-arms from Vietnam, he kept silent about his service in the wake of anti-war protests in the United States, choosing instead to find solace among fellow veterans who shared the same experiences and sacrifices, and to move forward with bitter acceptance that our country had forgotten or ignored the Vietnam War survivors, the 58,000 lost, and the 304,000 wounded.



Jose Ramos, the man behind Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day

Then came the Gulf War, along with Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, and the new and sudden surge of American patriotism in the wake of the tragedy of 9/11. Jose and his Vietnam veteran brothers and sisters swore what had happened to them would never happen again, making sure their community of Whittier, California paid tribute to the US Armed Forces returning home from their tours of duty. And as our Vietnam veterans selflessly ensured the spotlight remained on our returning troops from the Middle East and Central Asia, an interesting thing happened. It seemed the more they sought recognition for others, the more they brought recognition upon themselves. In 2002, Whittier became the first city in the US to celebrate a formal "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day" (WHVVD), in honor of Jose and other Vietnam veterans from the surrounding area. The effort was gaining national attention as Whittier sent one of their own, Linda Sanchez, to the House of Representatives.





Linda Sanchez

In 2004 Jose decided to throw a leg over his bicycle and ride to Washington, DC, hoping to gain support for Linda Sanchez's legislation to mark an annual WHVVD on March 30th, the anniversary of the end of the Vietnam conflict. Rep. Sanchez has introduced this same legislation to every Congress since her election to office in 2002. "As a nation, we owe the thousands of Vietnam veterans the proper homecoming they earned after honorably serving our country," says Sanchez. "Too many troops returned home to hostility and harsh ridicule from the American public— never getting so much as a simple 'thank you and welcome home.' We are 40 years overdue in honoring these brave men and women. It is time we made this right and recognized these veterans for dedicating themselves to our country."

Jose has worked diligently alongside Rep. Sanchez throughout the years, formally adopting the WHVVD into a nonprofit organization to accept donations for his effort. Headway was made on March 29, 2012, when President Barak Obama set aside the day as "Vietnam Veterans Day," and nearly every state in the Union has followed the Whittier example and designated March 30th of each year as their own WHVVD. "Among the proud people that call America their home," says Jose Ramos, "there is a small group that voluntarily rise and take an oath which promises to protect, honor and serve all who live within Her borders. This small group is called veterans. They live and many times die, fulfilling that oath. Upon their return home, it then becomes our turn to fulfill our end of this oath. We must now protect, honor and serve those who served us."

Please join us on March 30th, from whatever state in which you reside, thanks to the diligent work of Jose Ramos and Linda Sanchez, in recognizing the sacrifices of our Vietnam veterans. Individuals like Jose could have easily turned their backs to an ungrateful nation, but instead decided to take their experiences and put them to good use. Through the March 30th WHVVD's across the country, we finally have the annual opportunity to show our gratitude to veterans of the Vietnam War, and all other wars, and to properly celebrate their homecoming.

CALVET RESOURCES

CALVET, STATE LIBRARY OPEN VETERANS RESOURCE CENTERS IN LOCAL LIBRARY BRANCHES

Sacramento, CA – The California Department of Veteran Affairs (CalVet) and the California State Library announce the opening of a new Veterans Resource Center at the Whittier Public Library on February 11, 2014. Veterans Resource Centers will also open in Sacramento, Fresno, Los Angeles, Riverside and Ventura libraries in the next month.

The centers, staffed by library volunteers trained by CalVet, will make it easier for veterans and their families to learn about the state and federal benefits they have earned through military service and how to claim them and about the local services available to them.

Recognizing the need to reach and serve more California veterans, in October 2012, the State Library, in coordination with CalVet, conducted a pilot project to create Veterans Resource Centers in public libraries. The project received grant funding from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services to open veterans centers in Bakersfield, Redding and San Diego libraries. Those libraries, now open for over a year, have served more than 4,000 veterans and veteran families.

California is home to 1.8 million veterans. An additional 40,000 veterans are expected to return to the state every year for the next several years. State and federal benefits can help veterans and their families move successfully forward in civilian life. Veterans' benefits can help veterans begin or complete their education, care for their health, get job training, find employment, buy or improve their home, and live out their lives with the dignity and respect they deserve. Some veteran dependents qualify for benefits as well.

Unfortunately, many veterans are unaware of the benefits they are entitled to receive or how to claim them.

The library Veterans Resource Centers have proven to be an effective way for veterans to get the information and assistance they need.

"Our partnership with the State Library furthers CalVet's mission to serve veterans and their families and gets us into the communities where they live," said CalVet Secretary Peter J. Gravett. "We're very happy with the results of the three-library pilot. That the project has received additional funding and is expanding to six more library sites in California speaks for itself."

"The positive results along with an increasing need to help returning veterans are the reasons that more centers are being funded," said Acting State Librarian, Gerald Maginnity. "We are proud to provide resources to the men and women in the military who have sacrificed so much for their country." In addition to Whittier Public Library, centers will be opened in Sacramento and Los Angeles as well as Ventura, Riverside, and Fresno Counties.

For a list of Veterans Resource Center library locations and opening dates, go to <http://caveterans.org/resources-for-veterans>.

This project is supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

About the State Library: Founded in 1850, the California State Library is the central reference and research library for the Governor's office, legislature, state employees, and the general public. The State Library administers federal and state grants for programs in historical preservation, library construction, civil liberties education, literacy, volunteering, and broadband connectivity in public libraries. For more information, visit www.library.ca.gov.

About CalVet: The California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) works to serve California veterans and their families by ensuring they get connected to the state and federal benefits and services they have earned through military service. For more information, visit www.calvet.ca.gov or call 877-741-8532 toll free.

PENSION POACHING SCAMS

DON'T BE A VICTIM: BE AWARE OF PENSION POACHING SCAMS

The U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pension exists to help financially disadvantaged wartime Veterans and their survivors.

Be cautious if someone offers to move your assets around for you to qualify for VA pension. This type of scam is often directed toward Veterans and family members who do not actually qualify for VA pension. You could be required to repay these benefits to the government.

Examples of possible pension poaching scams:

Organizations that cold call Veterans, charge money for assisting with a VA pension claim, and take credit card information from Veterans over the telephone

People who charge as much as \$6,000 up-front to represent claimants before VA, with a percentage of any eventual back payment from VA as a portion of the ultimate fee

For more information about VA pension eligibility requirements which include special monthly pension benefits go to www.benefits.va.gov/pension or call 1-800-827-1000.



LOOKING FOR EXTRA CASH?

I know everyone can use some extra cash, and that is why the California State Council, Vietnam Veterans of

America, in California is partnering with State Controller John Chiang on "Operation Claim It" to return unclaimed property to California veterans and their families. Controller Chiang has returned \$2.5 billion in unclaimed property to its rightful owners since taking office, and wants to make sure that our veterans are claiming every dollar owed to them of the \$6.9 billion available.

California's Unclaimed Property Law was passed in 1959 to protect consumers by preventing businesses from keeping unclaimed property, using it as business income, losing it through mergers or bankruptcies, or drawing it down by fees. After losing contact with an owner for at least three years, businesses are required to send unclaimed or abandoned property to the State for safekeeping until the owner or heirs can be found and the property claimed. The most common types of unclaimed property include cash or assets abandoned in bank accounts, terminated insurance policies, forgotten utility deposits, and stocks and bonds. Other types of unclaimed property include precious valuables or collector's items found abandoned in safe deposit boxes or storage. One of Controller Chiang's proudest highlights was returning lost Congressional Medal of Honor and Navy Cross to the family of Lieutenant Commander Jackson Charles Pharris, who received the awards from President Harry Truman for acts of bravery during the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

The California State Council, Vietnam Veterans of America and Controller Chiang want you to know that the average amount paid out in unclaimed property is more than \$700, and you may have money waiting for you. You can search for and claim what rightfully belongs to you and your family – for free – on the Controller's website at www.claimit.ca.gov, or by calling the Controller's Unclaimed Property Division toll free at 1 (800) 992-4647.

HOW MANY VIETNAM VETERANS ARE STILL ALIVE?

By Andrew Gelman

The approximate percentage of Vietnam-era veterans who are still alive in 2013 is 75.

Some online estimates suggest that the number is much more stark: Only one-third of Vietnam veterans are still alive, these Web sites say, and the survivors are going fast.

But as Patrick S. Brady made clear in an article for The VVA Veteran, the magazine of the Vietnam Veterans of America, the reality is more reassuring. The rumor illustrates the danger of using incompatible numbers from different sources.

It was apparently based on an estimate that 800,000 Vietnam-era veterans had died by 2000. That number was reasonable: About 9.2 million Americans served in the military during the Vietnam era (1964-75), so that would mean about 8 percent of them had died and 92 percent were still alive.



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The problem arose when someone applied the 800,000 figure to a different denominator: 2.7 million, the estimated number of veterans who actually served in Vietnam, rather than at home or in some other theater. This made it appear that nearly one-third of those veterans were dead in 2000 and that they were dying at a rate of almost 400 a day. That would have meant more than 100,000 deaths a year, or nearly two million between 2000 and 2015 — a path to near-total disappearance.

In reality, the death rate for Vietnam-era veterans in recent years has been comparable to or lower than that of other men in their age group, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Of the men with the age distribution of Vietnam-era veterans who were alive in 2000, about 12 percent had died by 2010, with about 1.5 percent of the survivors projected to die each year since then.

How many Nam Vets die per day - is what???

Interesting Vietnam & other military statistical information

In case you haven't been paying attention these past few decades after you returned from Vietnam , the clock has been ticking.

The following are some statistics that are at once depressing yet in a larger sense should give you a huge sense of pride.

"Of the 2,709,918 Americans who served in Vietnam , Less than 850,000 are estimated to be alive today, with the youngest American Vietnam veteran's age approximated to be 54 years old." How does it feel to be among the last third of all the Vietnam Veterans who served in Vietnam to be alive?

I don't know about you guys, but it kind of gives me the chills.

Considering the kind of information available about the death rate of WWII and Korean War Veterans, publicized information indicates that in the last 14 years Vietnam veterans are dying at the rate of 390 deaths each day.

At this rate there will be only a few of us alive in 2015.

These statistics were taken from a variety of sources to include: The VFW Magazine, the Public Information Office, and the HQ CP Forward Observer.

NOT DEAD YET

Patrick S. Brady

Mortality Rates Among Vietnam Veterans Recently, the Internet has been a wash with dire predictions of the imminent demise of all Vietnam veterans. Both alarmed and suspicious, Vietnam veteran Pat Brady did some investigating. Here’s what he found. “If you’re alive and reading this, how does it feel to be among the last one-third of all the U. S. Vets who served in Vietnam?” Like a ritual salute, this question has passed from one veteran website to another in the past 18 months, accompanied by a drumbeat of numbers: 711,000 Vietnam veterans died between 1995 and 2000, or 142,000 deaths every year, 390 every day; no more than 850,000 Vietnam veterans remain out of 2.7 million, meaning at least 1.8 million have fallen to the swift scythe of the Grim Reaper; and “only the few” will still be around by 2015. “We died in ’Nam,” reckoned one veteran, “just haven’t fallen over yet.” This actuarial cadence-count went viral on “Before They Go,” a nine-minute video posted on YouTube by Veterans Appreciation Alliance, a group seeking sponsors and contributions for its Grateful Red, White & Blue Appreciation Tour. One website hailed the video as a “warning that our Vietnam vets are dying off rapidly, and we need to give them a proper ‘Welcome Home’ before they are gone.” Many veterans proved quite ready to believe that their comrades were falling fast to Agent Orange, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicide. But others were skeptical. Passing through the blogosphere, the supposed daily death toll of 390 Vietnam veterans sprouted a spurious pedigree, with several websites attributing it to the Naval Health Research Center. This was news to the Center, whose Public Affairs Office called on the makers of “Before They Go” to remove the bogus attribution. The nine minute video disappeared from You Tube by mid-April 2010, replaced by a four-minute version cleansed of the offending mortality figures. Yet the mournful numbers still pop up all over the Internet. Are they true? Where did they come from? First, we must face the limits of our knowledge: No one knows for sure how many in-country Vietnam veterans are alive. So anyone who tells you he is sure is making it

up. The number living must be measured against a baseline of those who were there in the first place. But no one is sure of that number either, despite a surfeit of surveys and estimates. The Department of Defense kept a consolidated file of those who died in the Vietnam War but not of those who fought it. Encyclopedias, dictionaries, and almanacs of the war are conspicuously silent about how many actually saw duty in Vietnam. To make up for the lack of an in-country master list, estimates and surveys have started with figures for those who served worldwide during the Vietnam era, and for those who served in the Vietnam theater, a term that includes Vietnam, its coastal waters, Laos, Cambodia, and sometimes Thailand. Defining the era presents problems of its own, with Section 101(29) of the U.S. Code for Veterans offering two definitions of the Vietnam era: 1) February 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975, for veterans who served in Vietnam; and 2) August 5, 1964, to May 7, 1975, for those who served elsewhere. These are the same parameters used to determine eligibility for membership in VVA. Adding to the confusion, some estimates treat the Vietnam era as ending not in 1975, but in 1973, the year of the Paris Peace Accords. So different estimates of those who served and those who survive produce different results, varying according to the location of service (Vietnam itself or the Vietnam theater) and time covered (usually starting in 1961, 1964, or even 1965, and ending in 1973 or 1975). A survey of surveys appeared in the first volume (1994) of the Institute of Medicine’s semiannual studies, Veterans and Agent Orange. Estimates of in-country Vietnam service, the Institute found, ranged from 2. 6 to 3.8 million, with most falling between 2.6 and 2. 9. Estimates for the Vietnam theater ranged from 2.7 to 4.3 million, with 3.4 million the most widely cited figure. These numbers must be seen against the larger total of those who served worldwide during the Vietnam era, 8.75 million from 1964-73, and 9.2 million from 1964-75. Depending on the estimate, one out of three Vietnam-era veterans served in the Vietnam theater, and four out of five Vietnam theater veterans served in Vietnam itself. With these estimates in mind, we can start closing in on what can be said about the number of living in country Vietnam veterans. Better figures are available for era veterans than for in-country veterans. The 2000 Census long form, for example, asked about period of service but not place. Estimates for living in-country veterans can be extrapolated from figures for living era veterans. Setting a benchmark for the year 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated there were 8,380,356 living Vietnam-era (here defined as 1964-75) veterans, about 90 percent of the original 9.2 million, with the death toll near 800,000. The Centers for Disease Control reached a like finding in a Post-Service Mortality Study of 18,313 Vietnam-era veterans, half of whom served in country. By the end of 2000, the CDC found, about 91 percent of era veterans were living, aged 46 to 67 in the sample, with a mean of 53; death rates for veterans were lower than for all men in the U.S. through 1998; and in-country veterans suffered 7 percent higher mortality than other veterans. That difference, the CDC said, was “not statistically significant,” was confined to the first five years after discharge from active duty, and was limited to “external causes”—mostly traffic accidents, suicides, homicides, and unintentional poisonings, many of them drug-related. If in-country Vietnam veterans accounted for about a third of all Vietnam-era veterans, and if they were Dying only slightly faster than the others, then the 800,000 era veterans who died from the 1960s through 2000 should have included fewer than 300,000 in-country veterans. That fact rules out the supposed passing of 711,000 of them between 1995 and 2000 alone, a figure that forms one verse of the Internet litany. Reaching a comparable estimate for the Vietnam theater, the VA Office of Environmental Epidemiology keeps an incomplete list of 3,056,000 Vietnam theater veterans, and counts 349,000 theater veteran deaths through 2001, a count the Office considers 95 percent complete. If four out of five theater veterans served in country and if they were dying only slightly faster than other veterans, then the 349,000 theater deaths should have included 280,000 to 300,000 in country veteran deaths through 2001, an estimate in line with the CDC and Census figures through 2000. The VA’s Veteran Population Model for 2007 estimates that 8,448,000 Vietnam-era (1964-75) veterans were living in 2000, and 7,526,000 living on September 30, 2010. While 47,000 leaving the military joined the ranks of Vietnam-era veterans during the decade, 969,000 deaths thinned those ranks. Again, if a third of era veterans were in-country veterans who were dying only slightly faster than other veterans through 2000, they should account for 325,000 to 350,000 of the 969,000 Vietnam-era deaths from 2000 to 2010, unless their mortality rate skyrocketed far above the rate for other veterans after 2000. There is no evidence that it did, and some that it did

not. A Current Population Survey by the Census Bureau for August 2009 estimated 7,183,000 living Vietnam-era veterans, including 3,566,000 living Vietnam theater veterans. Compared to other estimates, the era figure seems low, while the theater figure seems high, but the high number may cover a longer period—1961 to 1975—and may reflect inflated self-reporting of Vietnam service. But even allowing for such complications, the survey weighs against any soaring death rate for in-country Vietnam veterans. If three million or more theater veterans are alive, and four out of five of them are in-country veterans, then 2.4 million or more in-country Vietnam veterans should still live, triple the 800,000 rumored on the Internet. Origins Of A Myth So, thank God, most in-country veterans are not dead yet. But who started the story that they were? Doomsday dirges do not need footnotes, but mortality statistics do, and the sources cited for these Internet numbers are few and mystifying. One of them, “the Public Information Office,” likely leads to the American War Library. As one blogger warned: “The false number of 850,000 originates from the phony website of the American War Museum, which disseminates much false information for reasons only its manager (it is a one-man operation) might know.” The blogger misidentified the site. Otis Willie and Roger Simpson of the Public Information Office of the American War Library (not Museum) disseminated the number in a June 7, 2009, posting on alt.genealogy: “The official estimate of Vietnam War ‘survivors’ as of 25May2009 is 831,000. The number of Americans who served in Vietnam between 1945 and 1975 is 3.2 mil. To 2. 7 mil. 2.7 mil. Is the number counted by DoD in 1984 when producing ‘The Vietnam War Service Index.’” While most cyberspace chats have rounded off the number of living Vietnam veterans to 800,000 or 850,000, the American War Library’s more precise number is echoed in a posting by “Still here” on Veterans Benefits Network that regrets “there are only 831,000 of our brothers/ sisters still alive.” Calling itself “The World’s Largest On-Line Military, Veteran and Military Family Registry,” the American War Library asks: “If you are a Vietnam vet, have you verified that your name is listed in the Department of Defense’s Official Vietnam Veteran War Service Index?”This “official” index, the same one cited in the Library’s posting about 831,000 survivors, is often cited on the Internet as “officially provided by the War Library.”As far as I can tell, this Index is nowhere to be found. The American War Library seems to be a home business run by Phillip R. Coleman in Gardena, California. Various web postings have warned that “Roger Simpson” and “Otis Willie” are two of dozens of names used by Coleman; that the Library solicits personal information from veterans but does not provide free information about veterans; and that the Library and its many related websites post myriad military stories to attract attention and gain legitimacy. For examples of the warnings, Google “American War Library–exposed” or “American War Library scam,” or seewww.armchairgeneral.com/forums/showthread.php?t=96622 Statistics are hard enough without phony numbers thrown in. But in the available statistics, we find no evidence that the number of living in-country Vietnam veterans is only 800,000, and strong evidence that it is much higher. Again, by my own amateur extrapolations, fewer than 300,000 in-country veterans likely died before 2000, and a slightly larger number since, adding up to 600,000 or more dead, leaving two million or more alive. So if you’re a Vietnam veteran reading this, how does it feel to stand with the three out of four who are still here and mean to stay for a while? For information used in this article, I thank Mike Wells of the VA Office of Policy and Planning, National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, and James Messinger, the treasurer of the National Vietnam War Museum.





I am Dennis Fernandez Sr. (Vietnam War 1968 - 69, 82nd).

We raised over \$350,000 of donations, material and labor (Zero from the City) to erect a Memorial recognizing the 142 from San Jose who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

Although our foundation was not recognized by any of the organizations: VVA, American Legion, VFW, etc.

I just thought I would bring it to your attention that we are having our first anniversary of the Memorial.

We will have a ceremony on March 30th and it will be recognized by the City of San Jose along with "Welcome Back Vietnam War Veterans"

Our Foundation is very proud of what we have accomplished, which so many other organizations have tried and failed. We are most proud of the families of the Fallen now have a place to go to reflect with the loved ones they have lost.

Thanks for letting me bend your ear.

We will not let them be forgotten,

Dennis Fernandez, (Vietnam War 1968 - 69, 82nd Infantry)

President, San Jose Vietnam War Memorial Foundation - <http://www.sjwarmemorial.com/>



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VVA CA State Council contact info inside - page 2

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To:

In this issue:
• Chapter Activities-Events
• Legislative Information
• Veteran Information
• 25th Anniversary CA Vietnam Veterans Memorial
And more...

VVA & CSC Meeting Dates & Events

CSC Full Council January 24-26, 2014, Fresno, CA
CSC Full Council - April 25-27, 2014, Fresno, CA
CSC State Convention - June 27-28, 2014, Fresno, CA
CSC Full Council - August 23-24, 2014, Fresno, CA
CSC Full Council - October 24-26, 2014, Fresno, CA