



The California Zephyr



Official Publication of the VVA California State Council
An Organization Chartered By The U.S. Congress



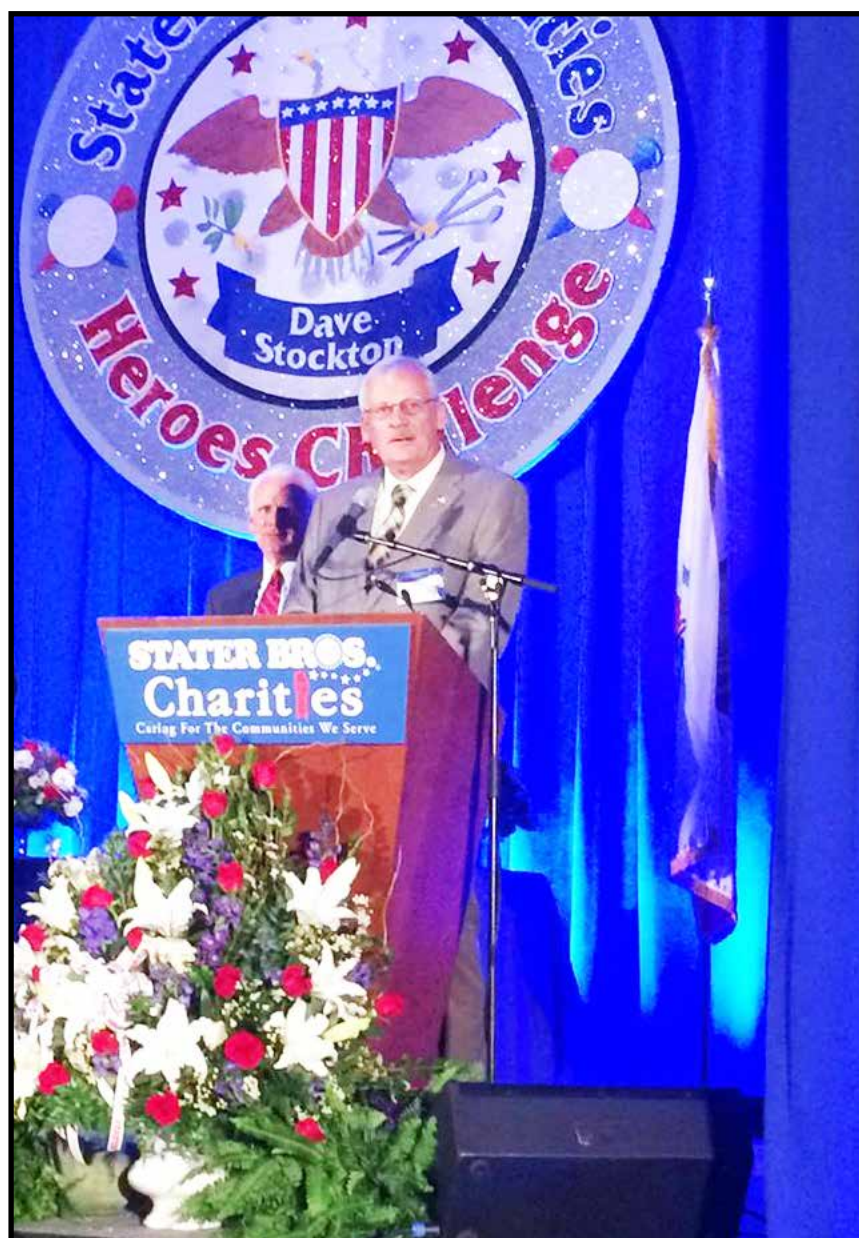
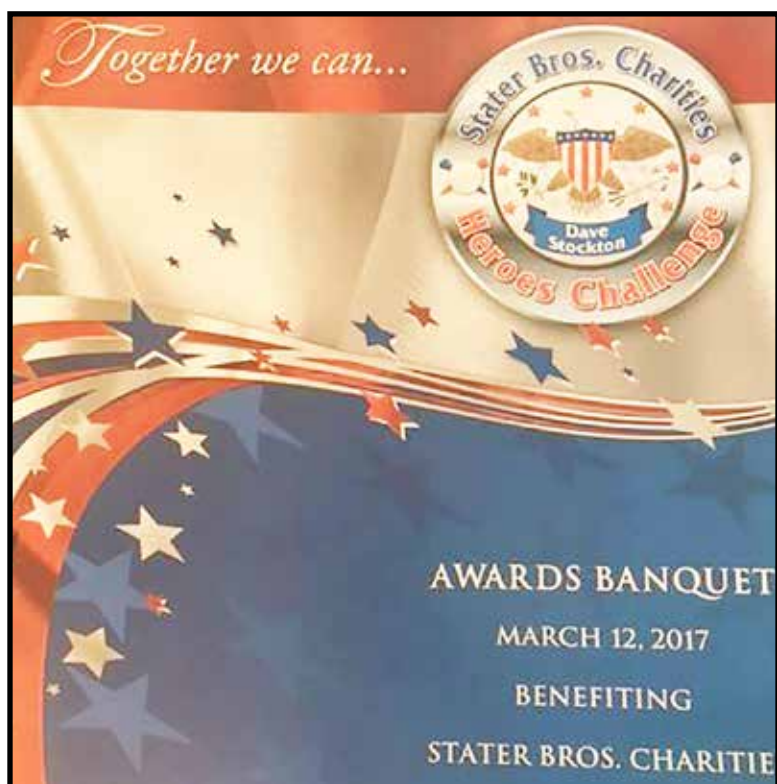
A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 19-2

SPRING 2017

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

On Sunday March 12, 2017 Elayne and I along with our friends Mike and Debbie Kennedy had the great honor to attend the Stater Bros. Charities Heroes Challenge Awards Banquet at the Riverside Convention Center.



Stater Bros. Markets is a Southern California Market Chain. Years ago the Chairman of the Board, Jack Brown, asked the chain to start a charity. So Stater Bros. Charities was born. The charity has donated millions of dollars to local non profits in the Inland Empire.

Every year Stater Bros. Charities holds the Heroes Challenge Golf Tournament. At this tournament they have invited and have had in attendance a few Medal of Honor Recipients. This year there were 10 Medal of Honor Recipients participating in the golf tournament.

On the Sunday before the golf tournament the charity has an awards banquet where they honor local Community Heroes for their extraordinary commitment to improving the quality of life in the communities they serve. This year they choose five individuals who have assisted with helping veterans and their families.

At this year's banquet 9 Medal of Honor Recipients were present, 8 from Vietnam and one from Afghanistan. We were honored to have two of the Vietnam Medal of Honor Recipients sitting at our table. One was a helicopter pilot who flew Dustoffs in the same area as I did. He was there two years before me, but the area had not changed any so we had a lot to talk about.

Each of the 5 individuals honored for their work with Veterans received a \$15,000.00 donation each for their favorite charity. I humbly admit I was one of those honored. Of course my charity was Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 47.

It was a great privilege to meet all 9 Medal of Honor Recipients, shake their hands and have my picture taken with them. All very humble men. What a great evening.

Thank You Stater Bros.. Charities for recognizing what we do for our veterans and their families. Everyone needs to know what great things you do for the community and there veterans.

I would like to thank all of the VVA California chapters for what you do in your communities as it does not go unnoticed.

Keep up the good work.

Steve Mackey

DEEK SEGOVIA, 1ST VP, CSC

Resignation, January 2017

I would like to take this opportunity to ensure that the facts concerning my resignation are available to all who may care to know about it, and to thank everyone in our organization for your support, sharing of knowledge and experience, and especially your friendship.

I began serving on the VVA California State Board (CSC) of Directors in the position of Central District Director. I learned a great deal about how the chapters and organization work through my visits with the chapters I was responsible for as well as attending meetings of the CSC. I have met many wonderful people who helped energize me, and I must say that the VVA is one of my passions and I will continue learning more about our organization through leadership conventions, meetings and other VVA activities.

Having to step down from the At-Large Director position was a difficult decision to make, but one that was necessary due to time and energy constraints. Briefly, for example, I am a member of two color guards, one with our local chapter 982 and one with the Chumash Native American Color Guard. I attend a weekly drum circle with our local Cultural Center and will be involved in building a Veteran's Memorial there in Guadalupe. I also serve as a mentor with the San Luis Obispo Veteran's Treatment Court, assist the Central Coast Veterans Helping Veterans, and will be going through training to help out with the NAACP. I also work closely with the County Veteran's Service Officers of both Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties. I serve on two Veteran Collaborative Organizations as well as the ad hoc committee hosting a tribute to all post-Vietnam Veterans to be held on Veteran's Day 2017. This is in addition to the time I devote to assist any of our veterans in need.

I represent myself as a member of VVA in all my endeavors, as this is where I began learning more about veterans, myself included. I have been given tools and materials to conduct four Town Hall Meetings, which have not been conducted by any other organization in our area. For this I am grateful to have had the opportunity to give back to my community in the name of the Vietnam Veterans of America.

I am proud of being a life member of the VVA as well as the AVVA and hope that my time on the BOD was a worthwhile, productive contribution to our organization. I had to lighten my load, but not my passion. Thank you all for your support and inspiration.

VSOs

YOUR CALIFORNIA STATE COUNCIL SERVICE OFFICER PROGRAM

Dick Southern

Vietnam Veterans of America, California State Council (CSC), operates a Veteran Service Officer (VSO) program in California. These highly trained Veteran Service Officers interview, advise, and otherwise assist, all veterans, and their families, in understanding and obtaining the benefits to which they are entitled. Specifically, the VSO guides veterans through the complex processes and forms needed to establish and/or validate their rights to veterans' benefits. Such benefits include, but are not limited to, pensions, education, insurance, hospitalization, home loans, outpatient medical care and burial. Our VSOs are located in key locations in California.

According to the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA), the greatest concentration of veterans is in the Los Angeles and San Diego Counties. These two counties account for over 500,000 veterans, or about 28% of the total veteran population in California. We support these veterans with an office in Long Beach.

Northern California veterans are served out of a vet center near Oakland. Our VSOs are near VA Regional Offices. The VA provides the Long Beach VAMC office space to the California State Council at no cost. However, the CSC must provide its own office supplies. Since this includes computers and software, these costs are significant.

| State Council Officers | Address | Phone/Cell | E-mail |
|-------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---|
| President - Steve Mackey | 7401 Candlelight Dr. Riverside, CA 92509 | 951-681-9531 951-231-7268 | nebhuskfan@aol.com |
| 1st Vice President - Dean Gotham | 15879 32nd Ave Clearlake, CA 95422-9353 | 707-459-8601 | deang1968@gmail.com vp1@vvacalsc.com |
| 2nd Vice President - Dick Southern | PO Box 68 Tuolumne, CA 95379 | 209-928-3848 | southern@lodelink.com vp2@vvacalsc.com |
| Secretary - Tom Hohmann | PO Box 3007 Riverside, CA 92519-3007 | 951-683-7251 | tomh47@aol.com secretary@vvacalsc.com |
| Treasurer - Barry Schloffel | 1244 Shaws Flat Rd. Sonora, CA 95370-5433 | 209-532-6119 | bshowful@att.net |
| District Directors | Address | Phone | E-mail |
| North District - Butch Frederickson | 661 Dogwood Ln Paradise, CA 95969-3828 | 530-877-1340 | ccfuvnalum@comcast.net north_district@vvacalsc.com |
| Central District - Al Sickle | PO Box 1424 Murphys, CA 95247-1424 | 209-728-2138 | leanin.al391@yahoo.com central_district@vvacalsc.com |
| South District - Mike Kennedy | 14766 Foxfield Ln Fontana, CA 92336 | 909-899-0085 | mike3sps@verizon.net south_district@vvacalsc.com |
| Vacant | | | director@vvacalsc.com |
| Committees | Chair | Co-Chair | E-mail |
| Membership | Mike Kennedy | | mik3esps@verizon.net membership@vvacalsc.com |
| Public Affairs | Ponce Gonzalez | | ponce408@yahoo.com public_affairs@vvacalsc.com |
| Government Affairs | Dean Gotham | | deang1968@gmail.com government@vvacalsc.com |
| Legislative Lobbyist | Pete Conaty | | pconaty@sbcglobal.net legslative@vvacalsc.com |
| Constitution | Mike Kennedy | | mike3sps@verizon.net constitution@vvacalsc.com |
| Resolutions | Deek Segovia | | rsegov11b@gmail.com resolutions@vvacalsc.com |
| Women Veterans | Kate O'Hare Palmer | | koharepalmer@gmail.com women_veterans@vvacalsc.com |
| Meeting Planner | Dick Southern | | southern@lodelink.com |
| POW/MIA | Bob Chaney | | bkrbob@charter.net powmia@vvacalsc.com |
| Zephyr | Tom Hohmann | | tomh47@aol.com zephyr@vvacalsc.com |
| PTSD | Vacant | | ptsd@vvacalsc.com |
| Veterans Incarcerated | Mike Walker | | mawalker3733@gmail.com incarcerated@vvacalsc.com |
| CA AVVA Pres., Region 9 Dirsector | Elayne Mackey | | mmm4evr1@aol.com avva_liaison@vvacalsc.com |
| Agent Orange | Ken Holybee | | holybee@comcast.net agent_orange@vvacalsc.com |
| Veteran Benefits | John Weaver | | j.weaver@cox.net veteran_benefits@vvacalsc.com |
| Convention Planning | Dick Southern | | southern@lodelink.com convention@vvacalsc.com |

The goal of the National VSO Program and that of the California State Council Program is to assist all veterans and their families. Not only the Vietnam veteran, but all veterans past and present. Our organization was founded as a Veterans Service Organization with the founding principle of “Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another”. This principle holds true throughout this program. We must reach out and help as many veterans as we possibly can each and every day. This is one of the founding principles for this Program and its main objective.

We currently employ two paid VVA Service Officers and three volunteers. Based on job performance and length of service, wages are \$11 - \$18 per hour and our employees typically work 20 – 30 hours per week. We recently accepted a VA Voc Rehab program person as an administrative assistant working 30 hours a week. The VSOs report directly to the Chief Service Officer, Dick Southern,

who provides supervision and guidance. Overall financial responsibility rests with the CSC Treasurer, Barry Schloffel. Steve Mackey, CSC President, has overall responsibility for the operation of the program. The employees are paid via a payroll company, retained by the CSC to handle all payroll and tax related matters for our employees

Although the current war has changed the public’s attitude towards veterans, the VA has not changed. They are still as hard and bureaucratic as ever before and our veterans need help in submission of their claims. Someone has to be there for them. That someone has to be us.

VETERANS INCARCERATED

We don't have much to report other then what Chapter 391 has done. We've been working with Sierra Conservation Center in Jamestown veterans incarcerated self help

group. The inmates made some sea bags on their own time, and surplus material that was donated by the institution. The Veterans Incarcerated committee of chapter 391 Sonora has filled them with items needed by homeless veterans in our community. As of now we have awarded 4 bags.

Each bag has hygiene things, blanket, towels, underclothing, pants and windbreakers.

Michael Walker has also been busy. He has

The California Zephyr

PUBLISHER
Steve Mackey.

EDITOR
Tom Hohmann

Published Quarterly to all members of California VVA and AVVA as part of their membership.

Contact us at:
VVA CSC
PO Box 3007
Riverside, CA 92519
<http://www.vvacalsc.com>

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.



sent out contact info to a lot of institution's throughout the state, and has gotten some respond . He has been approved to go to Susanville to meet with community resource manager(CRM) and staff sponsor. He was also contacted by Wasco S.P., and would like one of us to meet with the CRM there. I will try to follow up. We were also contacted by Avenal S.P. We need to set up meeting with Avenal's CRM. This is why we need chapters to step up to help our fellow veterans.

The committee would like to hear from any chapters that have a prison near them, to discuss the benefits of going into the institutions to help our fellow veterans. For southern chapters contact Michael Walker at mawalker37332gmail.com, northern chapters contact John Mendiola at yardsbyjohn@yahoo.com.

LEGISLATION IMPORTANT BILLS

AB 153 AUTHOR: Chavez [R]

TITLE: Military Fraud

DIGEST: Requires certain elected officers to forfeit their office upon the conviction of a crime pursuant to the federal Stolen Valor Act or the California Stolen Valor Act that involves a fraudulent claim, made with the intent to obtain money, property, or other tangible benefit, that the person is a veteran or a member of the Armed Forces. Provides for penalties.

Position: Support

AB 242 AUTHOR: Arambula [D]

TITLE: Coroners Reports: Veterans: Suicide

DIGEST: Requires a final report of an autopsy to indicate if the deceased person was a member of specified branches of the military, either at the time or prior to death. Provides for such data to be made available to the State Department of Public Health and requires a report.

Position: Support

AB 431 AUTHOR: Bigelow [R]

TITLE: Armories: Homeless Shelter

DIGEST: Revises the list of armories to be made available to include all armories in California for purposes of providing temporary shelter for homeless persons between October 15 and April 15.

Position: Support

AB 528 AUTHOR: Gray [D]

TITLE: Personal Income Tax: Exclusion: Military Retirement Pay

DIGEST: Excludes from gross income specified percentages of retirement pay received by a taxpayer from the federal government for military service.

Position: Support

AB 665 AUTHOR: Levine [D]

TITLE: Military Personnel: Veterans: Resentencing

DIGEST: A service member or veteran who was sentenced for a felony conviction prior to 1-1-15, and who may be suffering from certain conditions as a result of his or her military service, to petition for a recall of sentence.

Position: Support

AB 1249 AUTHOR: Gray [D]

TITLE: Property Taxation: Exemptions: Veterans

DIGEST: Provides that the veterans' organization exemption shall not be denied to a property on the basis that the property is used for fraternal, lodge, or social club purposes to any portion of a property that consists of a bar where alcoholic beverages are served

Position: Support

SB 339 AUTHOR: Roth [D]

TITLE: Veterans Treatment Courts: Judicial Council Assessment

DIGEST: Requires the Judicial Council to report to the Legislature on a study of veterans and veterans treatment courts that includes a statewide assessment of veterans treatment courts currently in operation and a survey of counties that do not operate such courts that identifies barriers to program implementation and assesses the need for such courts in those counties.

Creates the Veterans Court Assessment Fund.

Position: Support

SB 485 AUTHOR: Nielsen [R]

TITLE: Veterans Homes

DIGEST: Revises and recasts provisions of existing law which provide for the operation of veterans' homes and which establish the duties of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Provides for the senior executive appointed to oversee the operations of such homes and specifies which homes are administered by the Department. Requires the adoption of uniform statewide policies and procedures. Makes changes concerning criteria for veterans' home admission, payment of fees by resident spouses, funding, and specified fund.

Position: Support

SB 776 AUTHOR: Newman [D]

TITLE: Corrections: Veterans Benefits

DIGEST: Requires the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to provide at each state prison a correctional officer who is trained and accredited by the Department of Veterans Affairs to assist incarcerated veterans in applying for and receiving any federal veterans benefits for which they may be eligible.

Position: Support

To access the Legislature's website which has the language, status, votes, and analyses of all legislation from 1999 to the present, go to: <https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billSearchClient.xhtml>

If you have any questions, please contact:

Dean Gotham

Chair, Government Affairs Committee deang1968@gmail.com

Pete Conaty Legislative Advocate pconaty@sbcglobal.net

VETERAN LEGISLATORS CALIFORNIA STATE LEGISLATURE 2017-2018

Senator Josh Newman (D-SD30-Fullerton) Elected in 2016

This is Senator Newman's first term in the Legislature. He is a veteran who served as an officer in the United States Army. His active duty assignments included service in South Korea with a nuclear weapons detachment and conventional artillery units in the 25th Infantry Division at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii.

Upon graduation from Yale University, he was commissioned through the US Army Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia. In 2012, Newman founded ArmedForce2Workforce, a non-profit organization to assist young veterans in the Orange County and the greater Los Angeles find employment.

Senator Newman is a current member of the Steering Committee for the Orange County Veterans & Military Families Collaborative (OCVMFC) and is the Chair of its Employment Working Group. He also serves as the 1st Vice Chair of the California Democratic Party Veterans Caucus, Chair of its Legislative Committee, and is a co-founder and board member for the Veteran Business Network of Greater Los Angeles.

Senator Newman is a member of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Senator Richard Roth (D-SD31-Riverside) Elected in 2012

Major General Roth was commissioned in June 1972. He attended Emory University School of Law, graduating with a Juris Doctor degree in 1974. General Roth entered active duty in February 1975 and served with Strategic Air Command and Pacific Air Forces units in Arizona, Okinawa and California. Upon his release from active duty in April 1979, the General transferred to the Air Force Reserve and was assigned as an individual mobilization augmentee with Strategic Air Command bomb and refueling wings from 1979 to 1985. He subsequently served three times as a Staff Judge Advocate at the wing and group levels in Air Force Reserve Command, then served as the mobilization assistant to the Judge Advocate General of the U. S. Air Force, Washington, D.C. He retired in 2007.

Assemblyman Bill Brough (R-AD73-Dana Point) Elected in 2014

After high school, Bill Brough enlisted in the U. S. Army serving on active duty from 1986-1990 and was recalled to active duty in support of Desert Shield/Desert Strom in January 1991. Bill was a Cobra Helicopter mechanic and graduated from the U. S. Army Airborne School. His duty stations included Fort Bragg, NC, Hanau, Germany and Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Bill graduated from the University of Connecticut after his military service and served as a Presidential Appointee at the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs in the Bush Administration from January 22, 2001 through November 2004. He is a founding officer of American Legion Post 281 (Laguna Niguel, Dana Point, Laguna Hills and Aliso Viejo) and was elected to the California State Assembly in November 2014 representing the 73rd District.

Assemblyman Rocky Chavez (R-AD76-Oceanside) Elected in 2012

Colonel Chavez worked his way through California State University in Chico and earned a BA degree. He then served over 28 years as a United States Marine. He was subsequently appointed Chief of Staff for the 4th Marine Division. Upon retirement from the Marine Corps, he went on to spend nearly a decade on the Oceanside City Council. In 2009, Colonel Chavez was appointed by Governor Schwarzenegger as Undersecretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs in Sacramento, later serving as Acting Secretary.

Assemblywoman Susan Talamantes-Eggman (D-AD13-Stockton) Elected in 2012

After graduating from high school, Susan Eggman served four years as a medic in the U. S. Army. She then attended California State University, Stanislaus, where she earned a B. A. in psychology and a master's in social work. Susan worked as a mental health provider and a medical social worker, before receiving her Ph. D. from Portland State University. Ms. Eggman most recently served on the Stockton City Council. While there, she successfully lobbied the federal Veterans Administration to build their new facility in San Joaquin County.

Assemblyman Devon Mathis (R-AD26-Visalia) Elected in 2014

After graduating from Reedley High School in 2001, Devon joined the California National Guard where he served as Sergeant for nearly 10 years, including 2 combat tours to Iraq, with the 1114th Transportation Company. He was awarded a Purple Heart during his second tour in Iraq, when he sustained major injuries from a road side bomb attack in 2008. After returning home, Mathis went through extensive VA therapy. This road to recovery prepared him for a return to civilian life and to his college success. In 2009, while attending at Porterville City College Devon served as the Veterans Club President. He completed his studies in counseling and graduated with an AA in Social Science in 2011. He graduated from Fresno State University, he changed majors to Public Administration. Devon received a BA in Public Administration and graduating as the President of the Veterans Fraternity.

Assemblywoman Melissa Melendez (R-AD67-Lake Elsinore) Elected in 2012

Melissa Melendez entered the United States Navy upon graduating high school. She attended the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, Calif., where she spent a year and a half in a Russian language course, becoming a fluent Russian speaker. She then became one of the first women approved by the U. S. Navy to fly aboard an Orion EP-3 reconnaissance aircraft overseas, conducting intelligence-gathering operations in partnership with our allies. She served as a Russian translator for ten years during the Cold War, as well as during Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm. While serving in the Navy full-time, Melissa also attended college and received her BA in History and Political Studies from Chaminade University in Honolulu, Hawaii. After the Navy, she then formed her own successful transcription company, contracting with the Chief of Naval Operations and the Secretary of the Navy. Her husband is a Navy veteran, having served 10 years on active duty as a journalist and public affairs officer. Ms. Melendez is a member of the American Legion.

Assemblyman Randy Voepel (R -AD71- Santee) Elected in November 2016

Randy Voepel enlisted in the U. S Navy in 1969 and separated in 1978. Voepel served tour of duty in Vietnam, from 1969 to 1970 and again in 1972. After the navy he for worked in the insurance industry 39 years. He served as the Senate City Commander Mayer for 16 years. Randy is a member of the American Legion and the VFW.

This Document Was Prepared For The Exclusive Use Of Pete Conaty & Associates And Its Clients

MEMORIAL VANDALIZED VIETNAM WAR MEMORIAL IN VENICE VANDALIZED BY TAGGERS AGAIN

By Hailey Branson-Potts

Contact Reporter Crime Vandalism



Pedestrians run and walk past the Vietnam War memorial on Pacific Ave. The Vietnam War memorial on Pacific Ave in Venice has again been marred by graffiti. (Al Seib / Los Angeles Times)

A Vietnam War memorial in Venice that was damaged by a tagging crew last year has again been marred by graffiti, authorities said.

Los Angeles County sheriff's detectives are investi-

gating the latest defacement, which was reported to authorities Friday by a citizen who sent photographs, said Ramon Montenegro, a spokesman for the sheriff's Transit Policing Division.

Montenegro said the graffiti, which consists of thin, hastily written letters, appears to have been painted by gang members.

The massive mural on Pacific Avenue, which fills a blocklong brick wall, is reminiscent of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. On a black background, it bears the names of 2,273 soldiers counted as either prisoners of war or missing in action in Vietnam, as well as the words "You Are Not Forgotten."

In May 2016, just before Memorial Day, the wall was marred by Angel Castro, a 24-year-old tagger known as "Liter," whose moniker was spray-painted in giant white letters on the wall. Castro was sentenced in January to four years in state prison after pleading no contest to vandalism and robbery. He also was ordered to pay \$38,000 restitution.



Steven Barber uses black spray paint to cover the white letters of graffiti on the wall. (Al Seib / Los Angeles Times)

The graffiti covered dozens of veterans' names, and detectives still are searching for other vandals who may have helped, Montenegro said.

The most recent tagging does not appear to be related, Montenegro said.

"We're treating this as a completely separate crime," he said. "It's a different style. The tagging last year was done by what our people classify as 'prolific taggers,' people that might consider themselves artists except for the fact that their canvas is someone else's property."

Montenegro said the new graffiti "looks a lot more amateurish ... like it came from somebody that had a spray can of paint."

Detectives do not have suspects in the latest vandalism, he said.

"We do have nationally renowned graffiti-tagging detectives working on this. ... I feel confident that if it's possible to identify this person, they will find them," Montenegro said.

The Sheriff's Department is investigating the vandalism because the mural, which was dedicated in 1992, is painted on a Metropolitan Transportation Authority building and, therefore, is under the sheriff's jurisdiction, Montenegro said.

The graffiti on the veterans memorial "strikes a nerve with people, including me because I'm a veteran myself," Montenegro said.

"Somebody went out of their way and took their time to put those names of Americans that gave their lives in the Vietnam War to keep us free," he said.

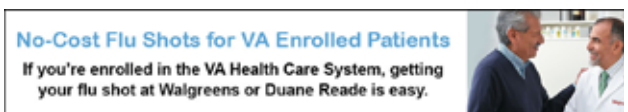
The nonprofit Social and Public Art Resource Center, which is based in Venice, will begin restoring the mural in the coming days, it said on Facebook.

Authorities have asked anyone with information about the latest tagging, or last year's vandalism, to contact the sheriff's Transit Policing Division at 888-950-7233.

hailey.branson@latimes.com

INFLUENZA (FLU)

There has been a resurgence of influenza infections



late in this flu season, so give yourself a Valentine's Day gift of health by getting a no cost flu vaccination by simply walking into your nearest VA medical facility or one of the 8000 partnering Walgreens Pharmacies and getting a vaccination!

The Department of Veterans Affairs has once again teamed up with Walgreens Pharmacies nationwide to allow all veterans who are currently enrolled in the VA healthcare system to be able walk into any of the over

8000 Walgreens nationally (and the Duane Reade pharmacies in the New York metropolitan area) to receive a vaccination at no cost. Vaccinations will be available through March 31, 2017.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention does not recommend the high dose (HD) vaccine for people over 65 and so this no-cost vaccination through Walgreens is of Trivalent at the standard dosage. If you wish to receive an HD vaccination please visit your nearest VA Medical Center or Community Based Outpatient Clinic for that vaccination.

Veterans wishing to receive the no cost vaccination at Walgreens simply need to present a Veterans Identification Card and a photo ID, at any participating Walgreens to receive the vaccination.

In addition, after the Walgreens pharmacist administers the vaccine Walgreens will transmit that information securely to VA where it becomes part of the patient's electronic medical record.

VA is committed to keeping Veteran patients healthy, and during this flu season, vaccination is the best way to prevent the spread of flu. No matter where you live, visit your local VA clinic or Walgreens to get a free flu shot.

- To find your local VA, visit va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp
- To locate a Walgreens store near you, call 800-WALGREENS (800-925-4733), or go to com/findastore
- To learn more about the partnership, call 1-877-771-8537 or visit <http://www.va.gov/PURCHASEDCARE/programs/veterans/immunization.asp>
- To get more information on flu and flu vaccine, visit publichealth.va.gov/flu or www.cdc.gov/flu

VIETNAM HELICOPTER CREW MONUMENT APPROVED FOR ARLINGTON

The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA) is pleased to report a breakthrough in the effort to establish an appropriate and meaningful monument within Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) honoring the almost 5,000 pilots and crew members who died operating rotary-wing aircraft in the Vietnam War. By unanimous vote, the VHPA Executive Council on March 13, 2017 accepted an offer proposed by ANC management to place a tree commemorative monument incorporating the art and language found in the original Vietnam Helicopter Pilot and Crew member Monument design.

Background. Following lengthy negotiations with Ms. Karen Durham-Aguilera, Executive Director, Army National Military Cemeteries, Ms. Durham-Aguilera authorized a commemorative monument at the location of the VHPA-dedicated tree located in Section 35, bordering Memorial Drive. The negotiated dimensions, 22 inches high, 21 inches deep (front to back at the base), 32 inches wide across the front, and trapezoidal in shape, contain all design elements of the original Vietnam Helicopter Pilot and Crew member Monument proposed to the Secretary of The Army and found within H.R.877/S.315, the Vietnam Helicopter Crew Monument Act.

The commemorative monument will be placed between the red maple tree dedicated by the VHPA on August 28, 2015 and the sidewalk bordering Memorial Drive. This particular drive is used by thousands of visitors to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the Memorial Amphitheater, the Challenger and Columbia Shuttle Memorials, to name but a few. This ideal location will maximize public awareness of the Vietnam War and the important and dangerous missions performed by helicopter pilots and crew members.

The VHPA Legacy Committee carefully considered all possible options before concluding the ANC-proposed commemorative monument was the very best solution. Factors in the decision-making process include:

Location. The revised Vietnam Helicopter Pilot and Crew member Monument will stand in a prestigious location in front of the living tree (note: the proposed monument detailed in H.R.877-S.315 does not specifically define where the tribute would be placed). ANC is a large cemetery (current size: 624 acres); it is possible ANC would keep the memorial tree, but place the monument elsewhere if legislated into the cemetery. A good example is the Battle of the Bulge Monument. Approximately the same size as our legislative model, it is located near the Ft. Meyer boundary wall away from traffic flows, and is viewed by very few visitors to the cemetery.

Legislative uncertainty. The VHPA Legacy Committee cannot guarantee passage of S.315 in the Senate. Although confident the House version, H.R.877, would pass by the end of 2017, senate legislative rules could block the

companion bill from being heard and brought to a vote on the Senate floor before the end of the 115th Congress in 2018. Although the February 28/March 1 "congressional hall walk" accomplished by VHPA and Gold Star Family volunteers was extremely helpful and brought aboard many cosponsors, there is no certainty of senate success due to the very nature of the process.

Time. Completing the approval process in a timely manner will eliminate what is likely to be another two to three years of bureaucratic processing. The idea of a lasting memorial monument honoring our fallen comrades in ANC was first considered almost three years ago in April, 2014; the legislative process could add another two years to the time line. If legislation is passed, it is probable ANC would spend another 12-18 months determining and surveying a suitable placement location. If the Executive Director's proposal is accepted, however, the commemorative monument will probably be approved by the United States Commission of Fine Arts (USCFA) by June, 2017. If approved quickly, the monument will be constructed by the Vermont Granite Company and delivered to Washington, DC by late autumn, 2017.

Conclusion: The VHPA Legacy Committee is convinced the important goal of placing a suitable stone tribute to the many thousands who died operating rotary-wing aircraft in the "Helicopter War" of Vietnam was achieved by accepting the proposal of Ms. Karen Durham-Aguilera, Executive Director, Army National Military Cemeteries. Accepting this proposal ensures future visitors to ANC will learn and understand the important role and sacrifice of those who operated helicopters in the Vietnam War, the horticultural value of the fine red maple tree dedicated August 28, 2015 will be retained, and important Arlington National Cemetery grave space is preserved for future burials of deserving American heroes.

CHAPTER NOTES

Chapter 446 San Gabriel Valley

Join us for an informal lunch and get together at Annia's Kitchen at the San Gabriel (El Monte) Airport. We meet on Tuesdays at 11:30AM for lunch, but more importantly for comradeship. We gather outside on the patio (weather permitting). If you would like to join us or are just interested, text Al Biernesser at 714/815-9798 and let him know, he will put you on the notification list.

Any and All Veterans welcome.
Annia's Kitchen
4233 Santa Anita Ave.
El Monte, CA 91731
<http://www.anniaskitchen.com/>

Chapter 982

Thank the Lord for the rain, sure been a blessing. Our Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Dinner/Dance is March 25th. This is our big event for scholarship funds. This year we will honor our Veteran Service Officers. Our guest speaker this year is Jose Ramos, the founder of Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day. It will be a great event. June is San Luis Obispo standdown, Elks parade in Santa Maria and Chapter 982 trap shoot at Santa Maria Gun Club. November 11, 2017, Veterans Day, Chapter 982 is hosting "We Honor Vets" at the Madonna Exposition Center in San Luis Obispo honoring post Vietnam Veterans. Prior to the main event will be a Freedom Ride with motorcycles and old cars. The ride will pass through the Five Cities area and back to San Luis Obispo. The free lunch is limited to the first 300 post Vietnam Veterans. They will also be presented with certificates and a special gift. Guests of the Veterans are welcome at a cost of \$25 each. You can sponsor a Veteran for \$65. We are looking for sponsors and donors. Flyers and more info coming later. Contacts are Michael Knight, Chairman 805-481-0359, John Knox 805-544-0651 or Jerry Kaufman 805-295-9139.

Two members of our Chapter, Deek Segovia and Peter Cruz spent a day helping out a fellow Vietnam Veterans and his with some home repairs. They have been waging quite a battle with the VA bureaucracy attempting to get assistance with claims. The veterans, we'll call him Jim, has been diagnosed with dementia and Alzheimer's disease, and is recovering from prostate surgery. He spends his time in bed and cannot communicate beyond a couple of words. Jim can no longer keep up with home repairs hence our assistance with plumbing and removal of bedroom door for safety. We have made arrangements to return and help out with additional projects and assist with their claims. Chapter 982 Rider's Group has donated the money for the repairs. Our Rider's Group president

Peter Cruz. Thank you Peter. Some of our members also volunteered their time to repair the women's rest room at the Guadalupe City Hall. We use Guadalupe City Hall gym for our Welcome Home Dinner/Dance celebration. It needed a lot of work, 3 full days of scraping, patching, painting, replace hardware and fixtures, sanding floor. Our Chapter also donated two new mirrors and a couple of pictures and a small table to bright up the place. It will be greatly appreciated by the women Thank you all that were able to help out, Deek Sogovia, Peter Cruz, Gerry Estrada, Deek's brother Ray, and Penny Chamousis.

Our monthly bowling night continues to be great fun, some pretty bowling at times and lots of fun.

We had two guests at our March meeting. Husband and wife, Marcella & Morris Franklin. Marcella is program manager of American Red Cross - Central California Region. Marcella was a primary emergency responder and environmental scientist for nearly two years at Ground Zero, spent 10 years in Iraq and Afghanistan in support of US military war operations and redevelopment missions. She met her husband Morris in Iraq and they were married before deploying to Afghanistan. Morris served for 5 years in the Army in both Iraq and Afghanistan. He later worked for the State Department in reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan. They had some interesting stories to tell. Thank you both.

It will be a good year - see you next issue.

Jerry Kaufman - President Chapter 982

Recent guests, Marcella and Morris Franklin



Chapter 535

Unveiling Plaque at the Armed Forces Pavilion & Community Garden, Auburn, CA

Long the dream of Dr. Donna Arz, founder and Executive Director of The Healing Light Institute and Forgotten Soldier Program in Auburn, CA, a Veterans' Garden has come to fruition. The garden is located at 995 Lincoln Way, Auburn. See www.theforgottensoldierprogram.org

The pavilion and garden are located on what had been a vacant lot, sometimes strewn with trash and overtaken by weeds and native grasses, but vision and indulgence, together with willingness on the part of the absentee owner of the lot and the blessings of Auburn's city government has made the venture a reality.

Some five years in the making, an official groundbreaking ceremony occurred on July 24, 2014. Over a period of time, several project managers were able to lend a hand, but over the past two years, former US Marine and Vietnam War veteran Tom Eberlein contributed hundreds of hours of work to bring the site to reality. Eberlein is a member of VVA-535 and the Marine Corps League.



Bart Ruud sharing remarks at the unveiling of the VVA-535 Plaque



Tom Eberlein, Dave Chair, Mike Laborico, Enrique Vasquez, Dave Johnson, Bart Ruud, Harold Graves at the unveiling of our VVA-535 Plaque in Auburn, CA at the Armed Forces Pavilion - March 4, 2017. Missing from the photo are at least Al Hernandez and Ralph Remick. As a part of the unveiling ceremony, Ralph blew "Taps" on his horn to honor the men and women who have laid down their lives and paid the ultimate sacrifice for the cause of freedom. All present appreciated his rendition of the 150-year-old



Tom Eberlein, without whom the Armed Forces Pavilion/Garden would exist only as a dream. Tom has voluntarily dedicated nearly two years of his life bringing The Forgotten Soldier Program vision to fruition. His work, six to seven days a week, has truly made the Pavilion an iconic piece of landscape in Auburn, CA.



President Harold Graves and Dave Johnson unveiling the VVA-535 Plaque



Numerous organizations have contributed time and effort to the cause and all assistance has been greatly appreciated. Two very significant contributions among the many are noted: Home Depot in Auburn contributed substantial materials and a labor force to build a deck and shade structure as well as a dozen raised bed gardening sites which have supported the production of vegetables and flowers which add a sense of serenity. Home Depot has long been involved with Veterans causes and it is a part of the culture of the company to assist with projects which support veterans needs. Additionally, the United Auburn Indian Community contributed a significant donation of \$5,000.

Local veterans and citizens have discovered the pavilion and are often seen sitting and enjoying a respite from ongoing pressures of life. As winter wanes and summer approaches, planting of vegetable crops is anticipated as is expansion of the gardening area so that the entire lot will eventually be utilized. Even in its infancy, the project is a stunning success and a positive step toward affording veterans and other users a place to enhance their health and wellness.

While the garden site was initially leased, The Forgotten Soldier Program is in the process of purchasing the site so that the benefits can continue in perpetuity.

On March 4, 2017, VVA-535 veterans unveiled a bronze plaque dedicated to Vietnam veterans and effectively to all veterans. The unveiling was witnessed by veterans from WW II to the present, by Auburn dignitaries and by many local citizens.

Tom Eberlein, Dave Chaix, Mike Laborico, Enrique Vasquez, Dave Johnson, Bart Ruud, Harold Graves at the unveiling of our VVA-535 Plaque in Auburn, CA at the Armed Forces Pavilion - March 4, 2017. Missing from the photo are at least Al Hernandez and Ralph Remick. As a part of the unveiling ceremony, Ralph blew "Taps" on his horn to honor the men and women who have laid down their lives and paid the ultimate sacrifice for the cause of freedom. All present appreciated his rendition of the 150-year-old melody.

Chapter 643

Chapter 643

We are alive and well. Our chapter is located 45 miles South East of Fresno in the City of Dinuba Ca. Our Chapter sits on the edge of Fresno and Tulare County line. The Chapter meets once a month 7:00 p.m. on the Second Wednesday at Dinuba Memorial Hall. The Chapter always has refreshments of finger foods and our meetings start and end with a prayer. We try to maintain our meetings in a fun and orderly time of one hour. Committees come prepare to let us know what projects they might be working on and recruit free labor if needed. Chapter 643 is run by President, Army Colonel, David Meals. His meetings are prepared by Secretary/Treasurer George Madrid, US Navy Seabee Veteran. Mary Zwetzig Associate member helps George with the Treasurer's report.

The first photos are of the once a year fireworks sales that raises enough money to get us by for the whole year and still contribute to selected non-profit organizations. We have a good partnership with TNT Fireworks





Company. They give us the fireworks on consignment with a booth to rent from them. We have to follow all the City code and Fire Marshall requirements. A VVA chapter at a well placed location with lots of man-power and many hours can make over \$30,000 gross. However, 50% belongs to TNT and some charges also have to be paid from the monies earned. Our small town is allowed seven to eight booths for non-profit groups. You also need to have a bin made just for this type of exposure as thief's will try to cut locks if you don't follow TNT suggestions. Email George Madrid if you have questions.

The two photos (below) show members from the Chapter # 643 Honor Guard Firing Squad at Smith Mountain Cemetery for Memorial Day Ceremony. The second photo is with MC George Madrid and Regional Wall Chairman Moses Ibarra giving us a talk on his arrival in



Vietnam. Both are members of Chapter #643. At the ceremony we allow for a service man Veteran to give us his views of memories that stand out in his dreams 46 years later. These Ceremonies are held on Memorial Day and Veterans Day at Smith Mountain Cemetery. The crowd can be over 200 people who come to pay respects. Mr. Olson (Civilian) supplies music from the school kids/adults who sing and recite poems.

On Memorial Day a wreath is laid on the tomb for those who served by a selected Veteran from the audience. Veterans Day is a chance for Schools to entertain the crowds with some making speeches in honor of those who are serving or served. Plus kids love putting up over 700 casket flags all over the cemetery in the early hours and taking them down at 3:00 PM. This honor is bestowed on Veterans who have passed away with this ceremony going back to the days that the VFW was in charge. The ceremony at Smith Mountain Cemetery began right after the Korean War and carried forward until American Legion took it over.

Once the demise of most VFW and Legion Members the Ceremony was turned over to Vietnam Veterans. Our VVA guys did not began to get involved until the start of 1999. Looking back at our uniforms we had Mismatched pants and shirts. Some us with no uniforms for the marching and firing squad details as the chapter was very poor. Once we got in the groove we became more organized and our uniforms started to fit and look good. It did not hap-

pen over-night and thanks to chapter members who cared enough to be there for our fallen brothers the ceremonies became special for people to come and be part of this special occasion.

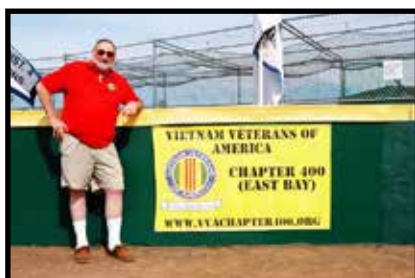
George Madrid US Navy Seabee geodrid@sbcglobal.net 559-623-3233

Chapter 400

For the third straight year, is proudly sponsoring the Challengers, which is part of the Alameda Little League.

Yesterday, we had the Opening Season ceremonies, and our chapter led the parade around the field, with the team right behind us.

Today was the first game of the 2017 season, attended by Andy Huntoon, Arnold Dos Santos and Bill Hodges.



Chapter 357

HMONG VETERANS SHARE HONORS

'Secret' unit fought next to US troops

Jenny Espino, Record Searchlight

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans, the program that honors and remembers Shasta County soldiers who were killed in the war, had a few extra guests to recognize Sat-



urday.

They were about 20 Hmong soldiers who fought next to American troops as a "secret" Central Intelligence Agency Special Guerrilla Unit from Laos communities.

These veterans, some who were trained, armed and

fought while still children, gather for Hmong festivities in their communities. Dressed in old military uniforms, they made an appearance at the Shasta County Veterans Memorial Hall. This was their first time being invited to the welcome home ceremony.

"It's pretty amazing," said Brig. Gen. John Thao of the Hmong veterans organization, United States National Defense Force Support Command Civil Military. "There is community diversity and a lot of community relationships here. I can see it."

Thao, 34, coordinated with community organizer Ed-die McAllister so the Hmong veterans could participate in the Redding gathering. They traveled from Sacramento, Butte and Yuba counties and Salem, Oregon. Two of them were prisoners of war.

John Thao, at the door, and about 20 other Hmong veterans were invited to a Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans event Saturday at the Shasta County Veterans Memorial Hall.

Jenny Espino/Record Searchlight

Chang Ger Thao, 58, served in the war as a teenager from 1975 to 1979. His older brother, Cher Chou Thao, 64, also was a secret soldier.

Thao reflected how he was recruited into the army to fight communism and the constant moving he had to do after the war ended.

"We moved through the mountains. We were still fighting ... to protect ourselves and our families until 1979. All of my friends, they all got killed," Chang Ger Thao said.

He was among the few in his immediate circle to survive. Thousands of Hmong from Laos feared their gov-



ernment for having helped American forces and sought asylum in Thailand.

"We had a chance to move out to the borders in Thailand," said Thao, who lived in refugee camps there throughout the 1980s.

Tong Vang, 55, of Yuba City fought in the war from 1970 to 1975. He vividly remembered his 20 years moving from refugee camp to the next.

The Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans ceremony started and ended at the Veterans Hall and included a visit to the Northern California Veterans Cemetery in Igo.

A partnership between the Vietnam Veterans of America chapter 357 in Redding and the Missing in America Project, the event marks its eight year. At least 10 veterans were interred at the cemetery. They are:

»James E. Allen, who served in the Army and fought in Vietnam

»Ricky Bennett, Navy, Persian Gulf War

»James L. Buis, Marine Corps, World War II

»Emerson E. Drake, Navy, World War II

»Michael S. Drake, Army, Vietnam

»Coy D. Froedge, Navy, Vietnam

»Eric F. Gentry, Army, Vietnam

»James G. Hoover, Navy, Cold War era

»Colleen D. McNulty, Army, Vietnam

»Michael O. Riley, Air Force, Vietnam

Local veterans read through the names of the more than 40 Vietnam War veterans who were killed in action. Saturday was the eighth annual Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day, a ceremony that started and ended at the Shasta County Veterans Memorial Hall and included a visit to the Northern California Veterans Cemetery in Igo.

Chapter 201

Over the past year Chapter 201 has made it one of its goals to recognized veterans and community leaders who have supported and honored the veterans' community or individuals. Recently President David Sanders presented Certificates of Appreciation to several individuals for their efforts.

Chapter 201 member Major General Kent Hillhouse (USA, ret) continues to support our veterans and the veteran community and has done extensive work with the

Veterans Memorial and Support Foundation of Los Gatos, California. He was recognized for his tireless efforts to win the approval of the Los Gatos' Flame of Liberty Veterans Memorial at the Los Gatos Civic Center to honor and support both veterans and the men and women of all service branches currently serving around the world.

Chapter 201 member William D. (Bill) Lewis was honored for his dedication to the "California Challenge" Ride2Recovery Program that raises funds for Physically and Mentally Challenged or Impaired Veterans. During the Sacramento "Hero's Honor Ride" this year he rode 22 miles, and help raised \$49,000 toward the program.



Chapter 201 President Dave Sanders presents Certificate of Appreciation to Bill Lewis for his participation in the VA Palo Alto Polytrauma Center "California Challenge" Ride2Recovery Program

Barbara Ledig, Geriatric Care Manager with the Pacific Gardens Assisted Living Facility in Santa Clara, California, was recognized for honoring a two tour Vietnam Veteran who passed away while in Hospice care. He had no family or friends at the time of his death and as his care manager for the past six years, Barbara Ledig held a simple memorial service at the Care facility that included members of the American Legion, VFW as well as members of Chapter 201.

Steve Burrell, Principal of Joaquin Miller Middle School in Cupertino, California was recognized for his dedication to honor veterans and encourage student recognition and appreciation of the service of our veterans during the annual Joaquin Miller Middle School Veterans' Day Assemblies. During the assemblies, students escort individual veterans to an honor guard flag raising ceremony followed by visits to various classrooms where students are able to ask veterans questions about their service. The Annual Veterans' Day Assemblies provides recognition of each veteran, the students and the school staff and a feeling of understanding and appreciation of each other.

Tad D. Campbell was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation for his work in the design and development of the web site for the Darwin J. Thomas Memorial Chapter 201 of the Vietnam Veterans of America (www.vva201.org). Tad Campbell, the past National Commander-in-Chief of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, was recognized for his effort in the creation of an outstanding medium to inform the Chapter membership, other veterans as well as the general public, on the activities of the Chapter in its service to America which has received wide praise.



Director Randy Sessler and Vice President Bob Kadlec present Certificate of Appreciation to Tad Campbell for his work in the design

and development of the web site for Darwin J. Thomas Memorial Chapter 201

Chapter 201 Members Jack Wells and Randy Sessler participated in the annual American Legion District 13 Four Chaplains ceremony in San Jose on February 4th. The annual ceremony honors the four U.S. Army chaplains who gave their lives to save other civilian and military personnel as the troop ship USAT Dorchester sank on February 3, 1943, during World War II after being torpedoed by a German submarine. The chaplains helped other soldiers board lifeboats and gave up their own life jackets when the supply ran out. They joined arms, said prayers, and sang hymns as they went down with the ship.



VVA-201 Members Jack Wells & Randy Sessler post Chapter 201 Colors during the American Legion District 13 Four Chaplains Service

Chapter 47

The chapter held its annual Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day event on Saturday March 25. It began with a motorcycle ride from American Legion Post 79 in Fairmont Park and traveled to Riverside National Cemetery. At the cemetery a ceremony was held and keynote



speaker former SSgt. Ed Ryan gave his address. Chapter board members Jess Gomez and Ruben Rasso, the event coordinator, also spoke. Dancing Cloud Drummers and Singers performed.



Chapter 756

Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 756 and Westminster School District to sponsor \$1,000 of prizes for 7th and 8th grader drawing contestants

"The price of freedom that we have experienced in the Vietnam war needs to be told to younger generations."

First Place: \$400

Second Place: \$300

Third Place: \$200

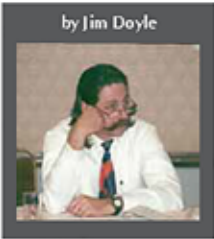
People's Choice: \$100

Picture 1: Mr. Max Stewart, Founder of Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 756; Mr. Stephen Cooper, VP; Mr. Conrad Gomez, President; Mrs. Frances Nguyen, WSD Trustee; and Mrs. Trish Montgomery, WSD Public Information Officer, at Ngou-Viet newsroom.

Picture 2: 2nd from left: Mr. Stephen Cooper, once in the newspaper business, shows interest looking at Vietnamese



by Jim Doyle



In January 1969 at the end of a day long flight across many time zones it was the early, early morning of another day

after that. 250 guys who didn't know each other struggled and strained to look out the tiny windows as the plane began its descent through the night, watching red and green tracers stitching holes through the darkness. Red tracers were the good guys, U.S. Green tracers were the bad guys, Them. OK, I get it.

We were replacements. Replacements for a bunch of guys we didn't know who were in the flag draped transfer cases slowly moving up a conveyor belt into the belly of the plane we were preparing to disembark. They were cargo for the flight back to Travis Air Force Base in Northern California, where they would be unloaded and replaced with the duffel bags of another 250 guys who didn't know each other for their trip across the pond, and the cycle repeated itself endlessly. It was simple logistics, live bodies in, dead bodies out, nothing more, and nothing less.

When the door of the plane opened, I noticed two things immediately – the oppressive heat and humidity, like a wet wool blanket wrapped around me, and the smell. It was the unmistakable smell of death. It hung like a fog in the air and even though I had never had occasion to smell death I knew instinctively that is what it was.

The following morning, after a formation and chow, we had some down time and could wander around the 93rd Replacement Depot in Long Binh Base. After a couple of days, we all had our assignments and were loaded

The division made three amphibious landings in World War II – North Africa, Sicily, and Normandy. The 3rd Battalion of the 26th Infantry Regiment, the "Blue Spaders" was chosen to secure the historic Nuremberg War Crimes Trials.

It is estimated that over 3 million American men and women served in Vietnam during the course of that decade long war, known as The American War in Vietnam.

During the "era" over 9 million Americans served in the military in various capacities around the world, including in the United States. The most authoritative estimate is that 3 million served in Vietnam.

I was a combat infantryman. Not every serviceman or woman served in a frontline "combat" role. By the military's own estimate, it takes at least nine other service members to support every combat soldier, whether it's the troops loading the supply trucks with food and ammunition, to the finance clerk in Fort Dollar Bill to make sure you got your pay, or the radio operator in a base camp who dispatches a MEDVAC helicopter to pick up the wounded and dying. A nine to one ratio is a fair presumption given the seemingly endless list of military occupational specialties, or MOS's.

As an infantryman I am grateful for each and every one of those other 9 who in a very real sense took care of my needs while I, and 299,999 others trekked through jungles and rice paddies, held the line in remote camps miles from large, "permanent" bases, and in forts and installations across the United States, where they trained medics, helicopter pilots, nurses, supply specialists, and those in the Puzzle Palace, The Pentagon, where policy was developed, and the countless others who made a miserable and tough job a little less miserable and a little less harsh. Of course, it's all a matter of degrees in war but I think I can speak for most of the 299,999 others like me who would have had a much tougher experience if not for the 2,700,000 of our fellow soldiers who served in Vietnam over that terrible decade.

During my first couple of months in country I was committed to fulfilling the task I was assigned, helping the Vietnamese people, or less concisely "winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese" came because it meant I could shed the extra-extra gear and carry my own combat load. Point was a job typically described as suicidal and reserved for those whose sanity and grip on reality was in serious doubt. I won't argue that point.

I chose it for a what seemed to me a perfectly sane and valid reason – if I was to get blown up I wanted it to be my fault. It wasn't about not trusting someone else to do the job, because we all trusted each other.

Given the choice after 47 years and much reflection

on trucks or helicopters for our journey to our units. I rode in a deuce-and-a-half the 20 miles from Long Binh to Di An. Ignoring the unmistakable fact that there was a great deal of violence happening all around me I was struck by the sheer beauty of the country.

A lush, green landscape stretched as far as my eyes could see. The scene before me completely contradicted all the propaganda I had been fed over the previous year while learning how to seek out, close with, and destroy the enemy. I was also schooled repetitively in the major tool for identifying the enemy – they are Vietnamese.

Does that mean the Vietnamese woman with betel nut stained teeth serving my meal in the Battalion Mess Hall was the enemy? The 8-year-old kid who sold me Coca Cola while we were out on patrol was the enemy? The barber on base was the enemy? The girls at the steam and cream were the enemy? Yes, no, maybe. This whole construct was as clear as our overall policy of winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people.

Slants, gooks, dinks, zips. What a lyrical litany of terms to describe the people we were there to help. Like a bunch of drunken rubes, we all sang the same song, in disharmonious syncopation.

The Big Red One was formed in 1917 out of the American Expeditionary Force led by General John J. "Blackjack" Pershing when the United States entered World War I. The division has fought in every major war the United States engaged in except for Korea.

During the Korean War the 1st Division was still an occupation Army in Germany, holding the line against those godless commies just across the border in the Soviet Bloc. As a matter of fact, they are still there, although in much smaller numbers, and have played and continue to play major roles in the wars in Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

people" which over time became a kind of code for "kicking ass and taking names later."

Sometime around my 20th birthday in March, 1969, amid all the boom whoosh crash bang of the war, in small villages and vast expanses of jungle and even more incalculable wastelands of destruction little flashbulbs began going off in every corner of my mind. At some point those little flashes merged into an intensely brilliant glow that forced a new and informed perception of what was going on around me, and my substantially insignificant part in it all.

We were doing all the wrong things for all the right reasons.

Freedom, justice, self-determination, and the A to Z list of all the reasons that had been expressed by our leaders, political and military alike about why we were there had a noble and appealing ring to them.

They mirrored our own struggle for independence from England nearly 200 years previously, but the previously mentioned strategy of kill them, burn their villages, move them off their ancestral lands, and generally disrespect any cultural, historical, personal, or moral boundary seemed in direct conflict with the noble side of the equation. I was left with this

horrible notion that everything about what I was engaged in was dishonest, wrong, and immoral. I flipped.

From that point on Mom, apple pie and the flag were no longer acceptable arguments in support of the behaviors I found myself in the middle of.

Going forward my overriding concern was primal – survival. It was a simple and straightforward mission and although I was intensely focused on my own survival it was not entirely selfish. I was just as concerned with assuring the survival of the guy in front of me and the guy behind me because I believed that if they survived I also would survive also.

After what seemed like forever humping one hundred feet of rope, extra-extra ammo, and extra whatever there was (I was the FNG remember, the Fucking New Guy- whatever needed to be humped in the field that someone else didn't already have, ended up on my back, or side, or front, or wherever it would fit) I chose to walk point when the offer

on all the circumstances I would do the same thing, only changing 58,261 things. That is the number of names etched into the polished black granite of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC. By extension it would also change an estimated 3 million other things as well, the number of Vietnamese, military and civilian who were killed during the war. Imagine the 3,058,261 families who would not have to go through the torment of losing their loved ones.



The Ace of Spades was used to frighten and demoralize Viet Cong soldiers. It was common practice to mockingly leave an ace of spades on the bodies of killed Vietnamese and even to litter the forested grounds and fields with the card.



guage newspapers.



Kate O'Hare-Palmer presented award on January 16, 2017 to Dr. Kathryn Magruder M.P.H., PhD, For Investigative Research And It's Impact In Support Of Our Nation's Women Vietnam Veterans.

THE 30-YEARS WAR IN VIETNAM

Vietnam '67

Christopher Goscha Vietnam '67 Feb. 7, 2017

It should go without saying that the Vietnam War is remembered by different people in very different ways. Most Americans remember it as a war fought between

gle to prevent the Communists from marching into South-east Asia, deeply dividing Americans as it did. The French remember their loss there as a decade-long conflict, fought from 1945 to 1954, when they tried to hold on to the Asian pearl of their colonial empire until losing it in a place called Dien Bien Phu.

The Vietnamese, in contrast, see the war as a national liberation struggle, or as a civil conflict, depending on which side they were on, ending in victory in 1975 for one side and tragedy for the other. For the Vietnamese, it was above all a 30-year conflict transforming direct and indirect forms of fighting into a brutal conflagration, one that would end up claiming over three million Vietnamese lives.

The point is not that one perspective is better or more accurate than the other. What's important, rather, is to understand how the colonial war, the civil war and the Cold War intertwined to produce such a deadly conflagration by 1967.

COLONIAL WAR

Without World War II, the struggle in Vietnam might have played out very differently.

The Japanese had occupied French Indochina (Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia) in 1940, and they left the fascist Vichy French government, allied with Tokyo's German partner after the fall of France in 1940, in charge of day-to-day affairs. This collaboration ended in early 1945, as the Allies terminated the German hold on Europe and prepared to defeat the Japanese in Asia. In March, worried that Vichy troops would turn on them, the Japanese overthrew the French, ending 80 years of colonialism. A few months later, the Japanese capitulated, creating a power vacuum in Vietnam.

Vietnam '67 Historians, veterans and journalists recall 1967 in Vietnam, a year that changed the war and changed America.

Ho Chi Minh and his Communist-led Viet Minh nationalist front seized the opportunity. On Sept. 2, 1945, Ho proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Taking power, however, was one thing; holding onto it was another. Within days, Allied troops landed to disarm Japanese forces. The British debarked in southern Indochina below the 16th parallel, while Chinese nationalist troops occupied the north. In the wings, the leader of a newly liberated France, Charles de Gaulle, ordered his men to re-establish colonial rule. Unable to maintain order, three weeks later the British allowed the French to dislodge the Viet Minh from Saigon, triggering war below the 16th parallel.

Accompanying the Chinese troops in the north were Vietnamese nationalists long opposed to Ho and his Communist Party. Local Chinese commanders preferred, however, to keep Ho's Vietnam in place in order to avoid the chaos occurring in the south. They imposed a coalition government on Ho, but did little more. This uneasy truce between Vietnamese Communist and anti-Communist nationalists broke down when the Chinese withdrew in mid-1946, leaving their allies at the mercy of the Communists, who swiftly defeated them before focusing on the French. Despite Ho's sincere efforts to negotiate decolonization peacefully, the French wanted Indochina back. Full-scale war broke out in December 1946.

The French refusal to decolonize enabled the Communists to monopolize the nationalist mantle as they bogged the French down in a guerrilla war. Nationalists working with the French begged them to decolonize before it was too late. But even when the French finally created the State of Vietnam in 1949, led by the ex-emperor Bao Dai, they refused to grant it full independence.

The arrival of the Cold War in Asia following the Chinese Communist victory in 1949, and the start of the Korean War a year later, strengthened the French hand. By casting themselves as the Asian front line of the free world's struggle against global communism, the French persuaded the Americans to abandon their anti colonialism in favor of supporting France in Indochina.

This strategy came with a price, though. The French may have used the Americans, but the Americans used the French - their army, their administration, their State of Vietnam and its troops - to indirectly fight the Communists in Indochina. The United States created a Military Assistance Advisory Group in 1950, funded counterinsurgency programs and stepped up C.I.A. operations. By 1954, the Americans were paying for more than 70 percent of the French war - because it was their war, too. Chinese Communists pushed back, directly in Korea by sending in troops, and indirectly in Vietnam by sending their own advisers and arming a new regular army for Ho, the People's Army of Vietnam, or P.A.V.N. All of this transformed Vietnam into the deadliest war of decolonization of the 20th century.

By 1954, Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap commanded a divisional army and was ready to engage the French in a series

of set-piece battles. This army carefully organized an epic siege of the fortified French camp at Dien Bien Phu, carrying artillery across mountainous terrain to destroy the air base supplying colonial troops. When the guns fell silent on May 7, 1954, the French Army had suffered its greatest colonial defeat since losing Quebec in 1759, and the Vietnamese Communists had proved they could fight conventional battles -- and win. No other 20th-century war of decolonization produced a Dien Bien Phu.

But fighting big battles came at a cost, for this type of war required the enormous mobilization of people. In 1953, Ho's party initiated a land reform program to encourage peasants to support the war. It also harshly overturned the landed and commercial classes as part of the communization of the state. The problem was that this dual military and social revolution exhausted the population. When the Chinese joined the French to reach a cease-fire, Ho agreed that he could push his people no further. The Communists had won a battle at Dien Bien Phu, but not the war. And behind the French, Ho knew, stood the Americans. On July 21, 1954, the Communists accepted a cease-fire at Geneva that separated the country in half at the 17th parallel, with elections to follow in two years.

CIVIL AND COLD WARS RESUME

Something else happened as the French looked to exit Indochina at Geneva. One of the few non-Communist nationalists to have refused to collaborate with both the colonialists and the Communists stepped off the fence: Ngo Dinh Diem. Bao Dai had named him prime minister in June 1954, in a last-minute bid to prevent the French from handing over Vietnam to the adversary. The Americans feared the same thing and began rapidly pivoting their support to him.

When France and China agreed at Geneva to hold elections to unite the two Vietnams, Diem and his newly enthusiastic supporter, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, took note but signed nothing. Geneva may have ended the French war, but it did not end America's indirect one. Instead the Americans replaced their reliance on the French colonial state to contain Communism in favor of working through an independent, non-Communist Vietnamese state led by their "miracle man." As long as Washington did not tread on this new nation's sovereignty and Diem did not endanger the decade-old American strategic investment in Vietnam, indirect containment could continue.

After Geneva, Communists and anti-Communists focused on taking over their respective states, consolidating their political power and promoting economic development with their allies. The Communists completed land reform in 1956 as part of plans to collectivize the economy along Soviet lines. Dissent was crushed as Ho's party extended its Communist state to all the north. Diem ordered the French Army out and pushed Bao Dai aside as he created a republic in 1955 under his family's authoritarian control. He neutralized religious and political groups before going after remaining Communists and anyone else who opposed him. Diem welcomed American aid and advisers, but he rejected direct military intervention.

This is where Le Duan, the veteran Communist who had run the party's war in the south against the French, enters the picture. Since Geneva, he had painted a dire picture of what was happening below the 17th parallel: Not only had Diem and the Americans rejected the idea of holding elections, but Diem's repression was also destroying what little remained of the party's southern network. Although Hanoi's leaders balked at resuming war outright, unsure of Sino-Soviet support and worried that the Americans would send in troops, in 1959 Le Duan persuaded the party to intervene indirectly in the south or risk losing it forever.

This new strategy reactivated the Ho Chi Minh Trail to bring southward thousands of administrators (most of whom were native southerners sent north after Geneva). They formed a competing southern proto-state in the form of the National Liberation Front, created in 1960, and protected by the People's Liberation Armed Forces - what came to be known, to its enemies, as the Viet Cong. That same year, Le Duan assumed the party's leadership. He reactivated the Central Office of South Vietnam to run this indirect civil war to bring down Diem's state and unify the country on Hanoi's terms before the Americans could intervene.

PARALLEL, DIRECT WARS

Diem did fall, but not his state. In 1963, the Kennedy administration watched in shock as the N.L.F. greatly expanded its hold over the countryside. Diem's half-baked counterinsurgency projects forcing millions of peasants into strategic hamlets, as well as his relentless attacks on non-Communist opponents, created the red-hot discontent on which the insurgency thrived. In June 1963, a Buddhist monk immolated himself in downtown Saigon in a

sign of protest. Worried that Diem's policies were playing into Communist hands, South Vietnamese generals sought American support for a plan to overthrow their president. The Kennedy White House approved, and on Nov. 2 and 3, 1963, a military coup ousted Diem, killing him in the process.

The question now was whether Washington or Hanoi would intervene directly. Starting in 1963, Le Duan pushed for gradual, direct military intervention, meaning the dispatch of P.A.V.N. troops southward. The hope was that, together with the N.L.F./P.L.A.F., Hanoi could take the south before the Americans could escalate.

Not everyone in the party agreed, however. Some, including Vo Nguyen Giap, advised caution, pointing out the dangers of provoking the Americans into the conflict head on especially when the Soviets were advocating superpower d'tente. Le Duan, however, knew that he could count on China's Mao Zedong, who was highly critical of the Soviets and their lack of revolutionary backbone. In early 1964, the party approved direct intervention in the south.

Lyndon B. Johnson also had to choose. Would the new president continue America's indirect war? Would he cut his country's losses and get out? Or would he send in American troops to save the South? Like Le Duan, Johnson chose war.

Following an attack on an American helicopter base at Pleiku in early 1965, Johnson opened a sustained air war against Vietnamese targets above and below the 17th parallel, and authorized troops to land in the south in March. A few months later, American and P.A.V.N. troops clashed in the highland valley of Ia Drang, the first of many big battles to come. It was in the same area where P.A.V.N. regiments had decimated French mobile groups a decade earlier.

By 1967, almost 500,000 American troops were in Vietnam, as Hanoi sent its own boys southward. The second half of the 30-Years War for Vietnam was now underway, with a vengeance.

Christopher Goscha is an associate professor of international relations at the University of Quebec at Montreal and the author of "Vietnam: A New History."

BLUE WATER VETS

VVA Applauds Introduction of New Blue Water Vietnam Veterans Act

"For over a decade, Vietnam Veterans of America has sought legislation to restore presumptive Agent Orange exposure status to members of the Armed Forces who served in the territorial waters of Vietnam," said John Rowan, VVA National President. "We applaud Congressman David Valadao (CA-21) and the original cosponsors of H. R. 299, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act, and we will work with them to pass this much-needed bill."

"We could not agree more with Congressman Dennis Ross (FL-15), that "there is absolutely no reason those veterans who served in the waters off the coast of Vietnam and currently suffer from diseases related to Agent Orange exposure should not qualify for current VA care," Rowan said.

"Presumption of service connection exists for Vietnam veterans who served in country, on land and inland waterways. Enactment of H. R. 299 will bring a modicum of justice to several thousand Navy personnel who have been denied service connection by the VA since 2002. They no longer will have to prove direct exposure to Agent Orange, and they will receive expedited consideration for VA benefits if they are afflicted with any of the health conditions associated with exposure to this defoliant," Rowan said.

VVA fully endorses the sentiments expressed by Congressman Tim Walz (MN-1): "When Congress allowed the Agent Orange Act of 1991 to expire, the need for this legislation became absolutely critical. Our nation must exhaust every effort to identify, prevent, and heal the injuries, illnesses, and wounds our military service personnel received during their service."

WALL 35TH ANNIVERSARY

As you may know, 2017 marks the 35th anniversary of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Few could envision the mission that would drive the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund 35 years after The Wall's dedication.

In 2009, as we were planning exhibits for the future Education Center at The Wall, we realized that more than half of the visitors to The Wall weren't even alive when it was dedicated. We recognized that to these younger visitors, the names were disassociated with the individuals who



served and sacrificed. We began the virtual Wall of Faces, collecting photos to put faces with the more than 58,000 names. When the Education Center is built, the Wall of Faces will be a major exhibit fifty feet wide and two stories tall.

Today, we acknowledge the milestone of posting the 50,000th photo (last week) with the addition of Bobby Joe Quinn of Morristown, Tennessee, who fell in Vietnam exactly 50 years ago today (Jan. 9, 1967).

This effort is the result of many, many volunteers around the country who have put in countless hours of phone calls, inquiries to high schools and funeral homes and innumerable requests to friends and family members of our fallen heroes. They have rallied community organizations, schools, and newspapers to the cause.

The photos they continue to collect remind visitors to The Wall of Faces what their first "true love" looked like. The photos move thousands of visitors who see The Wall of Faces on the digital display at The Wall That Heals. The photos will help tell the stories behind the names for decades to come as people visit our website. The photos give those names life and relevancy for new generations.

As we celebrate the 35th anniversary of The Wall, we look towards many milestones and events. Without the dedication and hard work of all our volunteers and supporters, this wouldn't have been possible. Together, I look forward to honoring each name on The Wall.

Jim Knotts

President and CEO

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund

NATIONAL CEMETERIES

VA'S NATIONAL CEMETERIES LEAD NATION IN SATISFACTION SURVEY

RANKING TOPS PRIVATE FIRMS, FEDERAL AGENCIES

For the sixth consecutive time, the Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration (NCA) was ranked first in customer satisfaction among the nation's top corporations and federal agencies in an independent survey conducted by the CFI Group utilizing the science of the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI).

"NCA continues to embody our MyVA principles focusing on a culture of continuous performance improvement so that families trust us during important times of need," said Interim Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert Snyder. "We are simplifying operations and providing Veterans quality care and services. We want them to view VA as MyVA; a world-class, customer-focused, Veteran-centered service organization."

The ACSI is the only national, cross-industry measure of satisfaction with the quality of goods and services available in the United States. Beginning in 1999, the federal government began using the ACSI methodology to measure citizen satisfaction with its agencies.

For 2016, NCA achieved a customer satisfaction index of 96, currently the highest ACSI score in either the private or public sector. The score is nearly 32 points above the 64 point average for federal agencies. NCA participates in the ACSI every three years, previously in 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010 and 2013. This is the sixth time NCA participated and the sixth consecutive time NCA received the top rating among participating organizations.

The ACSI survey polled the next-of-kin or other people who arranged for the interment of a loved one in a VA national cemetery, six months to one year prior to the survey's commencement.

NCA received ratings in the categories of: customer service, respectfulness of the service and interment and maintenance of the national cemetery, achieving an aggregate score of 96 out of a possible 100 points, indicating respondents are extremely pleased with their experience at VA national cemeteries and with its employees. The score for customer service was the highest received for this measure since the survey's inception. Respondents also reported particularly high levels of satisfaction around the respectfulness of the service and interment and the maintenance of the national cemetery. In addition, respondents

were willing to recommend NCA's services to others.

According to Interim Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs Ronald E. Walters, NCA is continually seeking to improve customer services to Veterans.

"NCA has a proud tradition as an industry leader in both the public and private sectors," Walters said. "These results demonstrate NCA's continued commitment to providing dignified burials and lasting memorialization for Veterans and their family members."

For a complete listing of ACSI's results, visit: <http://www.theacsi.org/acsi-benchmarks-for-u-s-federal-government-2016>.

ABOUT NCA

Burial in a VA national cemetery is open to all members of the armed forces and Veterans who have met minimum active duty service requirements, as applicable, and were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable. Members of the reserve components of the armed forces who die while on active duty or who die while on training duty under certain circumstances are also eligible for burial, as are servicemembers and former servicemembers who were eligible for retired pay at the time of their death.

A Veteran's spouse, widow or widower, minor children, and, under certain conditions, unmarried adult children with disabilities, may also be eligible for burial. Eligible spouses and children may be buried even if they predecease the Veteran.

VA provides the gravesite, grave liner, opening and closing of the grave, government headstone or marker, U.S. burial flag, Presidential Memorial Certificate and perpetual care of the gravesite at no cost to the family.

VA operates 135 national cemeteries and 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites in 40 states and Puerto Rico. More than 4 million Americans, including Veterans of every war and conflict, are buried in VA's national cemeteries. VA also provides funding to establish, expand, improve, and maintain 105 Veterans cemeteries in 47 states and territories including tribal trust lands, Guam, and Saipan. For Veterans not buried in a VA national cemetery, VA provides headstones, markers or medallions to commemorate their service. In 2016, VA honored more than 345,000 Veterans and their loved ones with memorial benefits in national, state, tribal and private cemeteries.

Information on VA burial benefits is available from local VA national cemetery offices, from the Internet at www.cem.va.gov, or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 800-827-1000. To make burial arrangements at any open VA national cemetery at the time of need, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117.

VIETNAM VETERAN ADOPTS THE SENIOR DOG HE NEEDS

Vietnam veteran adopts the senior dog he needs
It was 2014 when George, a Vietnam veteran, first met Bobby-Eagle, a then 10 year-old Bichon Frise. The senior



dog was suffering from separation anxiety. Yet he turned out to be the perfect pet to help George overcome the disabling impacts of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and his wife cope with being a double amputee.

When we first shared this pair's story of mutual healing it was evident they had formed a special relationship. Nearly three years later their bond is stronger than ever. Thanks to our partners at the Humane Society of the Huron Valley in Ann Arbor, Michigan for making this story of enduring love possible.

"WE DIDN'T GET THE DOG WE WANTED – WE GOT THE DOG WE NEEDED"

At nearly 13 years of age Bobby-Eagle may not be the affectionate, cuddly lap dog George and his wife Patricia had hoped to find. Still, they would not change a single thing about their furry companion.

"We wanted a lap dog," George admits. "He's not. We wanted doggy kisses. He's coming around, and his kisses are precious. We felt we didn't get the dog we wanted – we got the dog we needed."

Since coming home with George and Patricia, Bobby-Eagle has become an invaluable member of the family. In addition to helping George cope with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder the little white pup swiftly picked up a few life-saving skills. Among them is recognizing Patricia's sleep apnea; Bobby-Eagle wakes her up whenever she experiences an episode. Vietnam veteran adopts the senior dog he needs

Although it took some time for Bobby-Eagle to settle in and fully trust his new people, George and Patricia remained patient and worked with him as he slowly began to realize that he was "home." Transitioning from a shelter environment into a household is not always easy for companion pets. It is important that people give adopted dogs and cats the time they need to adjust.

"He has really changed," George observes. "When we first got him, it took him a while to accept and trust us. When going on walks, he would just meander around, sniffing, etcetera. My wife Trish said he was 'checking the mail.' Now he walks off leash, obeys my commands, and runs all over the park stopping to 'check the mail.' Then he races me home. When he gets home he goes crazy, rubbing on the floor and furniture and throwing his chew bone."

FAITHFUL FRIEND

Bobby-Eagle and George bonded fairly quickly, leaving Patricia a bit left out at first. But it did not take too long for the senior dog to warm to her as well. Now the two are practically inseparable.

"At first he accepted me but ignored Trish," George explains. "Now, with her giving him scratches and loving, she gets kisses and says, 'That's mommy's baby.'"

Patricia lost her left leg nearly ten years ago after an automobile accident. In July of 2015, she lost her right leg as a result of poor circulation caused by smoking. Bobby-Eagle sensed her depression and more limited mobility. He was content to spend a good part of his days lounging in bed with Patricia to keep her company.

It was as though the little curly-haired dog appointed himself as Patricia's four-legged therapist.

"He has brought us great joy and love with his trust and love for us," George says. "We hope that we're providing a good home in his senior life."

It is nearly three years into their adoption and George is still mesmerized by his little senior dog. Even the smallest things bring the Vietnam veteran untold joy.

"We have so much pleasure watching him sleep," he says. "He has so many positions. Some nights he sleeps tightly against me, then later he moves to Trish. But most of the time, his butt is against me with his head on Trisha's stump."

SENIOR DOG IS YOUNG AT HEART

With his puppy days far behind him it would be reasonable to expect Bobby-Eagle to take it slow. But the union of this senior dog with his elderly guardians seems to have brought a more youthful vigor into all of their lives. It is one of many reasons that companion pets are often recommended for senior citizens. Vietnam veteran adopts the senior dog he needs

"He has become more playful," George says of his furry charge. "Before, he never played with toys, but now he plays with his chew bone – throwing it and chasing it. Sometimes he'll bat it in the air and chase it."

While Patricia is more limited in the things she can do with Bobby-Eagle, she is no less amused by his antics.

"Trish enjoys when I throw it," he continues. "She hears him running and says, 'You and your crazy dog.'"

Since being adopted the senior dog has discovered a love for play-fighting, and likes to be chased. And while a collapsed trachea sometimes limits his wild times, Bobby-Eagle enjoys spending as much outdoor playtime as possible with his Vietnam veteran dad.

Bobby-Eagle's zest for life and friendly nature made him a fixture in the neighborhood. His positive influence has now spread beyond the walls of their home.

"Bobby-Eagle has become the neighborhood ambassador," George explains. "We live three houses from a park that has four entrances, and when we walk, he goes and checks on his doggy friends and greets any new dogs. On the other side of the park is a middle school, and the kids just adore him."

LITTLE DOG, BIG BLESSING

As it turns out it is not just the local kids who adore the curly-haired senior dog.

"He now has a girlfriend who moved in across the street from us. She's a young chihuahua named Doodles."

Family, friends, a cozy bed, treats, and a blossoming romance. What more could a dog want?

Since joining George and Patricia's pack, Bobby-Eagle has learned to love and play again. His anxiety is subsiding as he grows to understand that his family is not

going to abandon him. In exchange for the comfort and

security that George and Patricia have provided, Bobby-Eagle willingly offers up endless unconditional love and loyalty.

"He is a super intelligent, loving dog," George says. "We were blessed by how he came into our lives, and we pray we bring joy and love to him for the rest of his life."

EXCHANGE

SHOPPING

DoD OPENS ONLINE

EXCHANGE SHOPPING TO VETERANS

The Defense Department announced today that veterans will soon be able to shop online at military exchanges.

The policy change will extend limited online military exchange shopping privileges to all honorably discharged veterans of the military, DoD officials said in a news release.

The shopping benefit will be effective this Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2017.

While shopping privileges exclude the purchase of uniforms, alcohol and tobacco products, it includes the Exchange Services' dynamic online retail environment known so well to service members and their families, the release said. The change follows careful analysis, coordination and strong public support, officials said in the release.

"We are excited to provide these benefits to honorably discharged veterans to recognize their service and welcome them home to their military family," said Peter Levine, performing the duties for the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness.

"In addition, this initiative represents a low-risk, low-cost opportunity to help fund morale, welfare and recreation programs in support of service members' and their families' quality of life. And it's just the right thing to do," Levine added.

The online benefit will also strengthen the exchanges' online businesses to better serve current patrons. Inclusion of honorably discharged veterans would conservatively double the exchanges' online presence, according to DoD officials, thereby improving the experience for all patrons through improved vendor terms, more competitive merchandise assortments and improved efficiencies.

"As a nation, we are grateful for the contributions of our service members," Levine said. "Offering this lifetime online benefit is one small, tangible way the nation can say, 'Thank you' to those who served with honor."



RIP Hal Moore of Ia Drang

When Lt. General Harold Gregory "Hal" Moore Jr. died February 10th this year, he was recalled by many Americans as a hero of the Vietnam War. This was in part thanks to the film

and a book based on the his exploits as a Lt. Colonel commanding soldiers of the 1st Battalion of the 7th Cavalry (1st Cav. Division) at the Battle of Ia Drang, South Vietnam, in 1965.

What created the heroic image of Moore and his men in the minds of Americans was primarily the 2002 film *We Were Soldiers*, directed by Randall Wallace and based on the book *We Were Soldiers Once...and Young* by Hal Moore and Joseph L. Galloway, who at age twenty-four witnessed the early and one of the bloodiest battles of the war.

Unlike the Vietnam War films of many earlier directors, most notably Oliver Stone, *We Were Soldiers* portrays American troops and their leaders as mostly decent duty- and faith-driven citizens. This emphasis in the film must have surprised those brought up on films like *Platoon* and *Born on the Fourth of July*.

The film's positive references to the religious elements of the soldiers' lives probably seemed uncomfortably old school especially to many young viewers. (See *Hacksaw Ridge* for the most recent example of a movie highlighting this theme.)

For Family, God, and the Troops

A short book on the General's religious side is *A General's Spiritual Journal* (2007). Other books giving

"Garryowen, sir!"

(Personal note: "Garryowen, sir!" was a response I heard from Cav troops attached to our base. "All these guys couldn't be named Gary Owen," I thought. Then it was explained to me that this was a proud reference to the old Irish marching song of the 7th. I understood it better after hearing it used repeatedly in heroic scenes of all the Ford/Wayne cavalry films.)

After Korea, Moore served as a West Point infantry tactics instructor (one of his students was Cadet Norman Schwarzkopf) and made a special study of the fateful Battle of Dien Bien Phu. Ironically when he arrived in Vietnam he commanded his 7th Cav unit in a battle that might have resulted in just such a defeat as the French suffered at Dien Bien Phu.

Dien Bien Phu, Little Bighorn, and Ia Drang

The assault by North Vietnamese troops began on Nov. 14th, 1965, with soldiers of the 7th Cav soon being surrounded by enemy troops. There was little or no chance of being relieved or retreating safely. Had it not been for the presence of close air support from helicopter gunships and the Air Force and Navy tactical jet fighters, and for the courage of the Ameri-

insight into the motivation and inspirations of Moore is *A Soldier Once... and Always* and *We Are Soldiers Still: A Journey Back to the Battlefields of Ia Drang*.

Portraying Moore in *We Were Soldiers* is Mel Gibson, who sometimes gives the character a wry sense of humor, as in a scene in a church where he prays for and with a worried soldier who has recently become a father and is about to ship out to Vietnam:

"Our Father in heaven, before we go into battle, every soldier among us will approach you each in his own way. Our enemies too, according to their own understanding, will ask for protection and victory...I pray you watch over the young men like Jack Geoghegans that I lead into battle. Use me as your instrument in this awful hell of war to watch over them. ...Oh yes, and one more thing, dear Lord, about

our enemies; ignore their heathen prayers and help us blow those little bastards straight to Hell. Amen."

Contemplating his own mortality late in life, Moore once said, "I just want to be with my God and family- and my men ---throughout eternity."

Moore, who was ranked in the bottom fifteenth percentile of his class on graduating from West Point, just missed action as an infantry officer in WW II. Eventually he served with 82nd Airborne Division. During the Korean War he commanded a heavy mortar company and then an infantry company.

Almost a century after the Battle of the Little Bighorn, Lt. Colonel Moore, in Vietnam, served in the 7th Cavalry as Custer had -- and in the "Garryowen" 3rd Brigade to boot (pun intended).

can soldiers involved, the battle may have ended as badly as the Little Bighorn ambush did for Custer.

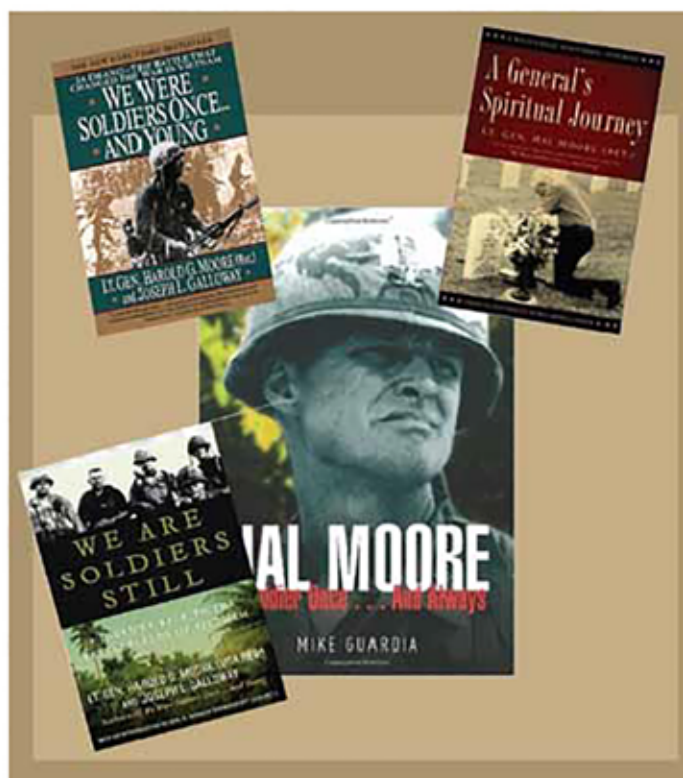
Sgt. Ernie Savage, who, after several bloody assaults by the NVA on isolated 2nd Platoon, B Company, inherited command of the beleaguered remains of that small unit, reported after the battle, "It seemed they [the Vietnamese attackers] didn't care how many of them were killed."

With the help of leadership like that of Sgt. Savage and Lt. Colonel Moore, the 7th held out with 100 KIA and probably one thousand NVA KIA.

Galloway, the reporter who himself eventually took a shooting role in the fight, claimed it was "...the battle that convinced Ho Chi Minh he could win the war."

The film *"We Were Soldiers"* mentioned above has many graphically bloody scenes, but one of the most memorable scenes reviews the cost of the war to those on the home front. Death telegrams are being brusquely delivered to the wives of Fort Benning by taxi drivers. Hal Moore's shocked wife Julie encourages the wives to form a group to deliver the dreaded messages as gently as possible and to stand by to support the grieving widows.

Hal Moore died three days before his 95th birthday. He was preceded in death by his wife Julie in 2004.



The Wall Project Committee

The Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 643/ Dinuba California

The American Legion Post 19/ Dinuba California

Proudly Presents

"WESTERN REGIONAL VIETNAM MEMORIAL WALL"

Permanent wall

Wall is half size of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C,

Sunday April 30, 2017

Dinuba Veteran Memorial Hall

249 S. Alta Avenue

Dinuba CA 93618

3rd Annual Dedication Ceremony

1:00 p.m.

Free Admission/ Gates open daily at sun rise till sun set

www.vvmwall-dinuba-ca.com

Director Moses Ibarra 408-460-8708

Event organizer Romelia Castillo 559-273-3161 romeliasr@yahoo.com

Luncheon bar-be-cue following ceremony \$10 donation funds go toward payment of wall



VVA CA State Council (contact info inside - page 2)

VVA Chapter 223 - Postal Permit
PO Box 1583
Santa Rosa, CA 95402

NON PROFIT ORG
NON PROFIT
US POSTAGE PAID
Santa Rosa CA 95402
Permit # 679

To:

In this issue:

- Chapter Activities-Events/Photos
- Legislative News
- Council Committee Info

And more...

VVA & CSC Meeting Dates & Events

April 21-23, 2017, Fresno, CA

July 21-23, 2017, Fresno, CA

August 8-12, New Orleans, LA

October 27-29, 2017, Fresno, CA

Zephyr deadlines 5 weeks prior to each CSC meeting