



# The California Zephyr



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A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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SUMMER 2021

## MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

### THE CALIFORNIA WALL OF FACES PROJECT

By MIKE KENNEDY



While serving on the California State Council as the Southern District Director, I presented information to the State Council about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial's Wall of Faces Project.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund created the Wall of Faces on their website with the intent to "put a face to every name" inscribed on the Wall in Washington, D.C. At the time, several thousand of the more than 58,000 men listed on the Memorial did not have a photo attached to their Wall of Faces profile. During the October 2017 CSC meeting, I reported that of the 5,575 California names listed on the Memorial, 430 of them did not have a photo. The California State Council adopted a motion to start its own "Wall of Faces" project with the goal of finding all of the missing California photos. Thirteen counties in the state had photos missing for their hometown heroes, but most of them were from major metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Diego, and San Francisco. Los Angeles County alone accounted for 267 missing photos and 148 of those were from the City of Los Angeles.

Obviously, the best resource for photos is considered to be a Next-of-Kin, but there was a lot of discussion and questions in the beginning about where we could find these photos if relatives could not be located. One of the first challenges was the fact that VVMF records only show the Home of Record (city where they entered military service) as reported by the DoD and the respective service branches. The next best resource is a high school or college yearbook. However, again using Los Angeles City and County as examples, the Home of Record provides no clue about high school they may have attended. The Home of Record does not say anything about where in the city the individual lived. Making this an even greater challenge was the fact that between Los Angeles City and County there were between 75 and 90 high schools that operated during the Vietnam War era. This made it almost impossible to determine where to look.

A large group of people attending the CSC meeting volunteered to assist in our effort to clear the California names from the missing list. I agreed to coordinate the efforts and monitor the VVMF Wall of Faces website. After the October 2017 CSC meeting, I started sending weekly updates to members of the CSC BOD and the volunteers on the CSC Wall of Faces committee and anyone else who was interested in helping.

I cannot say that CSC or our volunteers are responsible for finding all of the missing names because there are several other groups and individuals across the country that have been working on the same task. However, we did have a number of successes, especially finding photos of individuals from smaller cities. The process was slow, but we continued to make progress as we reduced the list.

We submitted Freedom of Information Act requests to the National Personnel Records Center for some of the names that were most challenging. The FOIAs requested copies of any photos in their military records. That effort was not as productive as was hoped and we only received 2-3 photos out of all the requests submitted.

Although a deadline was not set for the project, we hoped that we could complete the project within 24 months. However, a number of names posed additional challenges because they had strong connections to other areas in the country and even a couple outside the United States.

As we continued to cross names off the missing list, one U.S. Navy sailor killed in Da Nang in 1968 proved to be particularly difficult to find. Department of Defense and VVMF records showed Vernon Parr Smith's Home of Record as Los Angeles, but he was born and buried in Pittsburgh, PA. The response to the FOIA request stated there was no photo in his military records and actually referred us to a high school in Pittsburgh, PA. A check with that high school failed to uncover a photo or any record of Vernon Parr Smith. One of our counterpart groups was able to locate Vernon Parr Smith's sister, but she did not have any photos and was unable to provide any other useful information. As we entered 2021, VVMF and virtually all the other groups doing similar research stated that they had exhausted all viable resources.

A real break came in January 2021 when a high school classmate of Vernon Parr Smith posted a remembrance on his Wall of Faces profile page. Luckily, the classmate who said he had no idea Vernon had been killed until he recently started to explore the VVMF website, included his email address in his post. Vernon's classmate, Gary Furuta said that he and Vernon Smith graduated from Manual Arts High School in Southwest Los Angeles in 1964. Vernon Smith's name appears in the 1964 Manual Arts High School yearbook, but there is no photo of him. A search of earlier Manual Arts yearbooks revealed lower classes only had group class photos in the yearbook with no names printed.

While trying to follow up on new information about where Vernon Parr Smith lived a representative with the local city councilman's office reminded me of a small community newspaper called the "Southwest Wave" that focused on the African-American community in Southwest Los Angeles during the Vietnam War years. The councilman's representa-

## Navy seaman killed in Vietnam river battle

Serviceman sustains fatal wounds aboard YFU 67 craft, near Da Nang

Seaman Vernon P. Smith, USN, son of Charles V. Smith, 1439 West Thirty-seventh drive, incurred fatal wounds aboard YFU 67, a small craft, in recent combat on a river near Da Nang, Vietnam.

Seaman Smith, 21, was a native of Pittsburgh and moved to the Southside about four years ago. He attended Manual Arts high school before entering the navy in January, 1966.

After training at naval stations in San Diego and Corpus Christi, Texas, he was assigned to Vietnam in July, 1967.

Services for Seaman Smith will be conducted in his native Pittsburgh. Details are pending.

Survivors include his father; mother, Mrs. Armistice Williams, sister, Miss Constance Smith, and grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. George Parr, of Pittsburgh; and grandmother, Mrs. Lucy Petross, local resident.



**DIES IN VIETNAM:** Seaman Vernon P. Smith, USN, son of Charles V. Smith, 1439 West Thirty-seventh drive, was killed in Vietnam while serving aboard YFU 67, a small craft.

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## The California

### Zephyr

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

#### Who Are The Vietnam Veterans Of America?

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

#### VVA'S FOUNDING PRINCIPLE

"Never again shall one generation of veterans abandon another."

#### PURPOSE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### FUNDING

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



tive mentioned that the newspaper often published photos and stories about local servicemen during the Vietnam years. Unfortunately, the newspaper is no longer operating, but I learned that the Los Angeles Public Library had a microfilm archive of the old newspaper. Due to the ongoing COVID pandemic, the LA Public Library was closed. I contacted the library and asked Nicholas Beyelia, Librarian II in the History and Genealogy section if he or another staff member could do the research for us. In a bit of irony, Mr. Beyelia told me the library had taken advantage of the pandemic closure and sent the archive to an outside vendor to be digitized and he suggested I recontact him in a month. The following month Mr. Beyelia told me the archive was still unavailable and to once again check back in a month.

Finally, after a third delay I received an email from Mr. Beyelia on June 11, 2021, stating the vendor had completed the digitizing project, but when he did a name search for Vernon Parr Smith, nothing showed up. Obviously, this was very disappointing news and seemed to close the door on what we believed was our last viable resource. I asked Mr. Beyelia if I could still go to the library after the physical archive returned to conduct a hand search just in case an article or photo was in the archive, but didn't show up in a digital search. He said the library had reopened and he would notify me when the archive returned and I could go to do the research.

Much to my surprise, I received another email from Mr. Beyelia on June 15, 2021. In that email he said he had, "jumped the gun" in his earlier message because the digital file he had received only contained the data from the original Southwest Wave. He said the records showed the newspaper had actually changed names a couple of times throughout its history and the later "incarnations" of the paper were not included in the first digital file he received. Upon receiving the updated digital file, Mr. Beyelia said he ran the text search again and a reference to Vernon Parr Smith immediately appeared. Included with his email was a copy of the front page of the February 15, 1968 issue of the "Southwest Topics-Wave" newspaper with a story and photo of Vernon Parr Smith, reporting that he had been killed in action in Vietnam.

With the discovery of the article and photo of Vernon Parr Smith, the CSC Wall of Faces project committee had accomplished its mission and goal. If not for the chance visit to the Wall of Faces site by Vernon Parr Smith's classmate, Gary Furuta and the diligence of Nicholas Beyelia at the

Los Angeles Public Library, we may never have discovered the last photo we needed.

Some of the people in VVA and AVVA who made significant contributions to this project are Steve Mackey, Bob Chaney, Bill Hodges, Bill Fortier, Patrick Gillis, Joseph Montoya, Alice Gomez, Michael Black, Pete Conaty, and many others. I know that I may have missed someone and I apologize for anyone I did not include. It is not because they didn't contribute as much, but the fact that so many did contribute, it is hard to remember them all.

Everyone who found a photo or discovered a resource that led us to a photo should be proud of the work we all did to recognize and honor all those heroes who did not make it home from Vietnam.

Thank you all for your service, your assistance, and support. Welcome home to all those who did not have a photo before we started this project. Now that we can see your face, we can say you are finally home and will never be forgotten!

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# Southwest Topics-Wave

A HICKS-DEAL PUBLICATION

Delivered to your home every Thursday

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Vol. 47 No. 5    1 2 3 4    1016 West Vernon Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90037    Thursday, February 15, 1968    119    Price: 10c A Copy

## OR INSECURITY?

When this year began, higher-bracket wage earners again joined most of the rest of us in receiving psychodex shocks by the deduction of the social security tax. For lower-bracket workers, of course, this has been a year-around experience, and the only differences noted are when the tax rate has been increased. There has been no vacation from deduction; and thereby lies a rather disturbing tale.

The same research analyst for Tax Foundation, Incorporated, points out that in a very large area of wages the social security payroll tax equals or exceeds the federal income tax. A levy that especially is aimed at helping the poor actually hits them harder than it does those in happier financial circumstances. This strange situation affected about 23 per cent of the nation's 4-person families last year.

With the poor being socked so heavily, it is little wonder that the social security payroll tax is the fastest growing, and now the second largest single source of federal revenue... perhaps it should be re-named social insecurity.

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## MORE TAXES!

Most of this year's tax hub-bub has centered on the new method of figuring the California state income tax... and out of all the mumbo-jumbo, official and otherwise, the best that can be said is that while in Cesar's day the warning was "Beware the Ides of March," this year this state's taxpayers had better beware the Ides of April.

In effect, the old family exemption has been slashed and brackets for determining rate increases have been narrowed... and the net result has been to apply higher rates to lower incomes.

The days of reckoning have come when we learn what it takes to raise \$1 billion in increased taxes, and this may be a timely tip: don't be April Fools! Start digging up that tax money now.

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## TODAY'S QUOTE:

"There's the interesting note that the taxpayer never finds it as easy to raise his taxes as the state legislature does..." -Otis W. Ford, in the Princeton (Missouri) Union.

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## Public hearing

Public hearing has been set before the Los Angeles City Council for approval of amendments to the city charter. The amendments are improvements of an already existing charter and will be held at 8:00 p.m. at the Los Angeles Convention Center.

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## Reader sells car fast with classified ad

F. J. placed a classified ad in The Wave Publications and shortly after the newspapers were distributed his car was sold. "I could have sold it any other way," he said.

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## Bank bandit writes note on stamps

The bandit who wrote a note on a page of trading stamps ripped a letter in a bank at 3000 South Vermont Avenue at 5:07 p.m., according to police reports.



FOUR EXPOSITION SITE: William H. Lee, left, publisher of the Sacramento Observer and State Assemblyman Thomas W. Brubaker (State) visits a guided tour of the new California Exposition site in Sacramento from Eugene R. Lennon, Cal Expo general manager. Some \$20 million of construction now is underway at the 430-acre site. The exposition, official "Showcase of the Golden State" will open July 1.

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## Seminar opens for small businessmen

ICBO, Pepperdine college provides series lectures

Seminar for small businessmen to be conducted on eight consecutive Monday nights begin this week at Pepperdine College, 9025 South Vermont Avenue, with lecturers selected from the faculty of the college, the Small Business Administration, and prominent business leaders.

"A recent survey indicates there is no scarcity of opportunity for the small businessman now or in the near future," according to Robert Robinson and the Rev. James Jones, co-chairmen of the International Council for Business Opportunity education committee.

"More and more members of minority groups are striving to improve their skills and enjoy the economic benefits of owning their own business," the chairman said in a joint statement.

\$200 is amount of the seminar which is limited to 25 participants to permit free communication between student and instructor.

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## Sheriff names new captain at Lennox

President and board of Lennox department announced appointment of a new captain to Lennox sheriff's station, was announced by Sheriff Peter J. Pichew.

Luther N. Lucas, who has been serving as a lieutenant at Lennox station, was promoted to the rank of captain, and will remain an associate of the Lennox sheriff's station.

He joined the department in 1965, and has performed assignments in various divisions. During late and post World War II, the 45-year-old officer served with the United States Navy. He has attended both Los Angeles City and East Los Angeles colleges.

Another promotion was that of Capt. John M. Arnold to the rank of inspector, and he was transferred to headquarters patrol division.

Inspector Arnold is well known in the Southside, having served for five years as captain of Pomona sheriff's station until September, 1965, when he became captain of the City of Industry station. While a lieutenant, he was assigned to Lennox sheriff's station for a time, and later was transferred to Firestone station.

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## Officials asked to name school after late judge

Local legislator has called upon officials of the city school system to name the facility to be built in the vicinity of Seventy-seventh and Hoover streets in honor of the late Municipal Judge Lewis Miller.

Councilman Billy G. Mills, in a letter to Dr. Robert J. Purdy, associate superintendent of elementary education, stated "It has come to my attention that a new school is about to be built in the Eighth district to serve the area in the vicinity of Seventy-seventh and Hoover streets.

Lewis Miller has long been a symbol for young people of today to emulate, particularly in his generosity. I therefore recommend you select the name Lewis Miller Elementary School for this new educational institution."

## Harbor freeway traffic studies start this week

Destination, origin cards given at ramps

Motorists asked to cooperate in new survey

Origin and destination study is underway this week on the overpass and off-ramp of the southbound Harbor Freeway to gather information for the design of highway planners who hope to improve traffic movement and provide faster service during peak periods.

Study is confined to the overpass and off-ramp between Santa Monica Freeway and Florence Avenue. Ramps included are those at Adams Boulevard, Exposition Boulevard, Thirty-seventh Street, Santa Barbara Avenue, Vermont Avenue, Shuman Avenue, Gage Avenue, and Florence Avenue.

Between 4 and 5:30 p.m., 1968 driver using these southbound ramps will be handed a postage-paid questionnaire card, asking where his trip started and its destination. The card is to be filled out and mailed. It need not be signed, and response is voluntary. Highway division officials said.

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## Navy seaman killed in Vietnam river battle

Serviceman sustains fatal wounds aboard YFU 67 craft, near Da Nang

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Seaman Smith, 21, was a native of Pittsburgh and moved to the Southside about four years ago. He attended Manual Arts high school before entering the navy in January, 1966.

After training at naval stations in San Diego and Corpus Christi, Texas, he was assigned to Vietnam in July, 1967.

Service for Seaman Smith will be conducted in his native Pittsburgh. Details are pending.

Survivors include his father, mother, Mrs. Arnette W. Smith, sister, Miss Catherine Smith, and grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. George Parr, of Pittsburgh, and grandmother, Mrs. Lucy Petrus, local resident.

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## Lutheran high school seeks gymnasium funds

Dr. Freitag, superintendent, announces \$75,000 fund drive to begin March 17

Dr. Alfred J. Freitag, superintendent of Lutheran high school, 2941 West Seventieth street, stated recently that bids will be opened soon for the first part of gymnasium construction for the school. The initial part of the plan calls for the construction of the most expensive part of the gymnasium complex, Dr. Freitag said. Included are gymnasium shower and locker facilities and dressing rooms.

The school has been acquiring adjoining property consisting of its present site at Seventy-seventh and Eighty-seventh streets. Plans have been prepared preliminary to start construction for the new construction.

Current plans are underway for a \$75,000 fund-raising campaign to begin March 17. Contributions will have to go out to different Lutheran congregations in the area to obtain 3-year pledges toward that goal. Besides seeking contributions, the campaign will pay off personal notes and trust deed indebtedness and currently carried by the school.

In addition, funds will be sought from St. Paul's Lutheran church, Los Angeles, which is the church's second school site in San Gabriel valley, and from the state.

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## Candidates begin filing

Declarations made by aspirants

Although Monday was a legal holiday, it also was the first day for filing official declarations of intention to run for public office. Registrar Frederick Ray E. Lee announced.

Those running for state seats are assembly posts seat file the declarations in time to reach the secretary of state's office by 3 p.m. Wednesday.

In the state senate race, Martin M. Donnelly, 626 East Fifty-ninth street, incumbent Democrat, filed intention on the first day of filing to seek reelection in the Twenty-ninth District. Also filing on the first day were Robert C. Greene, 4333 Charles Ave., Republican, and James G. Woodworth, 2063 West 141st Street, Hawthorne, Democratic incumbent, for the state senate in District 33.

No candidate filed on the first day for the Fifty-third Assembly District.

In the Fifty-fifth Assembly District, Lemm Ralph, Democratic incumbent, of 10133 Kebab Avenue, and Walter G. West, Democrat, of 145 West 126th Street, filed for reelection.

First day filings in the Fifty-sixth Assembly District were Delbert Martin, Republican, of 2006 West Thirtieth Street, and Charles Warren, Democrat, incumbent, of 876 Conchular Boulevard.

Incumbent Democrat Yvonne W. Blackwell, of 5925 Second Avenue, and Robert C. Greene, Republican, 4153 Charles Ave., filed in the Sixty-third Assembly District.

In the Sixty-fifth Assembly District, James M. Ulrich, Democrat, incumbent, of 5253 89th Avenue, filed for reelection.

## New detective captain assigned to station

Thomas W. Sena will succeed Louis J. Sunyich at University

Thomas W. Sena, who was promoted last week from the rank of lieutenant to captain, has been named commander of the detective bureau in University police division succeeding Capt. Louis J. Sunyich.

Captain Sunyich, who served 20 years at the Los Angeles police department, since 20 years of service, has been named as chief of police in Redondo Beach. Sunyich formerly was patrol commander at both University and Newton Street divisions.

Captain Sena, 47-year-old native of Boston, Massachusetts, has been a member of the Los Angeles police department since June 28, 1944.

Prior to his assignment as captain of detectives at University station, he was patrol commander at the administrative division. He also has served, among other assignments, in Seventy-seventh Street patrol and detective, University division, and as a watch commander at Seventy-seventh Street division.

During World War II, Captain Sena was a captain, and retired with two years of service from the air force reserve as a lieutenant colonel. He is a member of the National Officers' Association, and the Juvenile Officers' Association.

He is married, and has two daughters, Sandra and Barbara, and another daughter, Sally, 14.

He has attended Loyola University and California State College at Los Angeles, and will complete his bachelor of science degree in police administration this year.

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## Eight join college staff

Recruitment at Los Angeles Southwest college has passed the 2300 mark, and eight new faculty members have been added to the staff, Dr. John A. Greenham, president, has announced.

In the second semester of operation, the college has 1100 day students and 900 evening students enrolled.

Eight new faculty members include Dr. Betty Tern, chemistry; Clarence Kinser Jr., English; Mrs. Ellen T. Anderson, German; John K. Dawsey, physics; Howard Cohen, social science; Patrick Partidge, special reading and psychology; Mrs. Elaine L. Klemm, speech; and Mrs. Helen Crane, Spanish.

## Homecoming Pepperdine prepares for alumni

Pepperdine college will give a week of activities Monday in preparation for its annual Homecoming Day, February 24, when alumni and friends will visit the campus.

"This Could be the Start" is the theme of the week's activities which will be observed February 24 at 8 p.m. when the Pepperdine Waves basketball team meets last year's West Coast All-Star conference champions, the University of the Pacific Tigers.

Alumni are invited to join students for dinner in the dining hall before the game.

Homecoming events will include the presentation of the Homecoming queen and her court, coronation in formal ceremonies during a student assembly Wednesday at 10 a.m.

1968 quarter will feature alumni entertainment and recognition of an outstanding faculty member.

Other activities of the week will be a sale of used clothes and the holding of study displays. Monday, Hardware Harry Klava will conduct a jewelry and gift booth game. Thursday, and pep rally and luncheon, Friday night.

## Bank bandit writes note on stamps

The bandit who wrote a note on a page of trading stamps ripped a letter in a bank at 3000 South Vermont Avenue at 5:07 p.m., according to police reports.

Witnesses said the bandit fled down the street with the money, and the stamp.



NEW CAPTAIN: Thomas W. Sena who was promoted last week from the rank of lieutenant to captain, has been named commander of the detective bureau in University police division. He formerly was patrol commander at both University and Newton Street divisions.



NEW POSITION: Capt. Louis J. Sunyich, captain of detectives in University police division, has announced his resignation from the Los Angeles police department, and will become chief of police in the city of Redondo Beach. He formerly was captain of patrol at both University and Newton divisions.

## Historical Reflections Of The Vietnam War

### First To Die

"... *Who was the first American to die during the Vietnam War? ...*" is a question which resonates amongst many Vietnam War historians.

**22 December 1961 – James Thomas "Tom" Davis**, 24, Army Specialist 4th Class, Radio Direction Finder Operator, 509th Radio Research Station. During the early years of the Vietnam War, Davis was considered to have been the first American to die in Southeast Asia. Davis – an advisor to the South Vietnamese Army – and 9 other South Vietnamese Army soldiers, were killed when enemy forces ambushed their patrol near Duc Noa, South Vietnam. In his memory, the US Army radio station compound in Saigon was renamed "The Davis Radio Station". Years later, during a speech, US President Lyndon Bains Johnson referred to Davis as "... *the first American killed during the Vietnam War ...*".

That statement was proven wrong on 13 November 1982, when the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, DC, was dedicated, generally listing the names of American military personnel in the order they were KIA or MIA in Southeast Asia. As shown below, on Panel 1 – East, Davis's name is not the first engraved on the memorial but the 18th, thus following 17 other American military personnel who became KIA or MIA before him in Southeast Asia as follows:

DALE R BUIS ♦ CHESTER A OVNARD ♦ MAURICE W FLOURNOY ♦ ALFONS A BANKOWSKI ♦ FREDERICK T GARSIDE ♦ RALPH W MAGEE ♦ GLENN MATTESON ♦ LESLIE V SAMPSON ♦ EDGAR W WEITKAMP Jr ♦ OSCAR B WESTON Jr ♦ THEODORE G FELAND ♦ GERALD M BIBER ♦ JOHN M BISCHOFF ♦ WALTER H MOON ♦ ODIS D ARNOLD ♦ BRUCE R JONES ♦ FLOYD STUDER ♦ **JAMES T DAVIS** ♦



Davis



1957



Buis



Ovnard

**8 July 1959 – Dale Richard Buis and Chester Melvin Ovnard.** The first name on The Wall is Buis, followed by Ovnard. At night, Buis, 37, and Ovnard, 44, Advisory Team Bien Hoa, Military Assistance Advisory Group Advisors (MAAG), MAAG Vietnam, and 4 other American advisers were stationed at the MAAG compound in Bien Hoa, 20 miles northeast of Saigon, South Vietnam. The advisers, South Vietnamese soldiers and civilians had settled down after dinner in the base mess hall to watch the 1957 movie "The Tattered Dress" starring Jeanne Crain. When one of the soldiers switched on the lights to change the film reel, communist guerrillas – who had earlier infiltrated the base – placed the barrel of their weapons through the open windows and then proceeded to rake the room with rifle fire killing Buis, Ovnard, two South Vietnamese Army soldiers and one civilian – an 8-year-old South Vietnamese boy.

Thus, Buis and Ovnard were then considered to have been the first Americans killed in the Vietnam War. Later, in Ovnard's honor, a hotel in Saigon was named "The Ovnand Hotel" and there is street at Fort Hood, Texas, named "Ovnand Boulevard".

However, subsequent research revealed that prior to Buis and Ovnard's death, as many as 7 other Americans [5 military and 2 civilian pilots flying in support of the French] had previously died in Southeast Asia. Their names are listed herein below – from last to first – as follows:



Cramer



Fitzgibbon

No Image Available  
Clarke

**21 Oct 1957 – Harry Griffith Cramer**, West Point – Class of 1946, 31, Army Captain, Special Forces Advisor, Mobile Training Team, 14th Special Forces Operations Detachment, 1st Special Forces Group, Military Assistance Advisory Group Vietnam. Cramer, a World War II and Korean War veteran, was the first West Point graduate to pass Special Forces selection and had previously served in 1956 with the 14th Special Forces Operations Detachment in Thailand [training the Royal Thai Ranger Battalion at Lop Buri] and in early 1957 with the 1st Special Forces Group in Okinawa. Cramer was training South Vietnamese Special Forces troops in ambush techniques at dusk, 10 miles south of Nha Trang, when one of the South Vietnamese soldiers near Cramer was preparing to throw a lit block of melanite – a picric acid-based explosive used by the French Army in Indochina – when it accidentally detonated, killing Cramer. [Other sources report that although the training area was hit by Viet Cong mortars and Cramer's death was combat related, that information was withheld from the American public so as to avoid having to admit in 1957 that Communist forces were engaging American advisors in the field]. Cramer was the first Special Forces casualty of the Vietnam War and of the newly formed 1st Special Forces Group. To honor Cramer, the men of the 1st Special Forces Group wore black armbands for 30 days after his death. A parachute drop zone on Okinawa – Cramer Drop Zone – was named in his honor. In 1987, when the 1st Special Forces Group moved to Fort Lewis, Washington, they named a street – Cramer Avenue – after him.

**8 Jun 1956 – Richard Bernard "Fitz" Fitzgibbon, Jr., and Edward C. Clarke.** Fitzgibbon, 35, Air Force Technical Sergeant, Crew Chief, and Clarke, 30, Air Force Staff Sergeant, Radio Operator, were both assigned to Detachment 1, 1173rd Foreign Mission Squadron (HEDCOM) – Saigon, Military Assistance Advisory Group [MAAG] Vietnam. Fitzgibbon was a veteran of World War II and the Korean War while serving in the Navy from 1940 to 1954. Thereafter, he transferred to the Air Force. During a flight from Hong Kong to Saigon aboard an Air Force Douglas C-47 airplane, Fitzgibbon had witnessed Clarke performing in a less than satisfactory manner. Upon landing, Fitzgibbon – having previously mentored Clarke so that he could obtain a transfer out of the unit in response to his deteriorating mental state – berated Clarke and threaten to take stronger action in the future.

At 2145 Hours, after hours of drinking, Clarke walked up to Fitzgibbon and shot him 5 times with a .22 calibre pistol, murdering him. Clarke then walked into a bar next door, walked up to John Sakmar,

to the repatriation plan, Dewey received transfer orders to India [other sources report to OSS headquarters in Ceylon, then a British Crown colony and now known as Sri Lanka]. Earlier in the day, Dewey was driven to Tan Son Nhut Air Base for his outbound flight but, due to mechanical problems, the airplane was not released for flight and Dewey returned to his quarters. Later that evening, as Dewey was being driven a second time to the airport, when the jeep drove past the Saigon Golf Course, his jeep – unmarked by any flags as ordered by British command – was ambushed by Viet Minh soldiers loyal to Ho Chi Minh thinking its occupants were French [their intended target]. Dewey was hit by machine gun fire to the back of the head and died instantly. The enemy ambush team initially dumped his body into a nearby village fresh water well. However, once they were informed the man they killed was an American, they retrieved Dewey's body and then buried him somewhere near the village of An Phu Dong, at a location which still remains unidentified as of today – some 75 years later. Not only is Dewey the first American to be killed in South Vietnam, he is also the first American military personnel listed as "missing in action" in Southeast Asia. Following his death, a stone monument was erected near the location where Dewey was killed. Notwithstanding the fact Dewey was a decorated combat veteran of the US military – and that he had served and was killed by the communist Viet Minh in Indochina, since Dewey was killed prior to the 1 November 1955 Department of Defense "start date" of the Vietnam War, his name does not qualify to be engraved onto the Vietnam War Memorial.



Dewey Memorial, Saigon, Indochina – 1945.

**10 May 1845 – William Cook**, 25 [+/-], Navy Seaman, Musician, USS Constitution ["Old Ironsides"]. The Constitution – under the command of Captain John "Mad Jack" Percival, 65 – was at sea as part of a Department of the Navy worldwide two-year good-will tour. As the ship was entering the harbor at Tourane, Indochina [an area that would later become known as Da Nang, South Vietnam], Cook – who had been serving aboard the Constitution since March 1844 and had previously fallen ill of dysentery – accidentally died while aboard the ship. Upon anchoring in the harbor, Percival went ashore, made arrangements with local Buddhist monks and paid for a buried place for Cook to be built and cared for – in perpetuity. Cook was buried the following day in a small spirit house with a sailing motif which over the years became known by the local villagers on Tien Tsa Peninsula as "... *the American pagoda* ...", which is located at the foot of Monkey Mountain facing Da Nang. The records on Cook are limited, hence his age is estimated and there is no drawing or photograph of him. Cook's spirit house continues to remain in place and is cared for as established in 1845 – some 176 years ago.

Regardless of who died "first", these 9 Americans – and all the other American military personnel who lost their lives during the Vietnam War – became part of the US military history in Southeast Asia and they should never be forgotten.

Joseph Montoya  
Associate Member Liaison 1990 – 2022  
Vietnam Veterans Of America / Chapter 526 – West Los Angeles

*The original version of this article first appeared in the VVA Chapter 526 meeting agenda of 10 July 2021.*

## A VETERAN OF DISTINCTION

FOR HELPING WOMEN VETERANS HEAL, SHE WAS CALLED A "FEMINAZI"



By Eileen C. Moore  
Associate Justice,  
California Courts of  
Appeal  
Member VVA Chap-  
ter 785

*In a former life, Justice Moore served as a combat nurse in Vietnam in the Army Nurse Corps. She was awarded the Vietnam Service Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, and the Cross of Gallantry with Palm. She is a member of the Vietnam Veterans of America. Since 2008, she has chaired the Judicial Council's Veterans and Military Families Subcommittee. For nine years, she served as a mentor in a Veterans Treatment Court, primarily to women veterans. In 2015, her book "Gender Results" received a Benjamin Franklin award. (Cool Titles, 2014)*

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Diane Carlson Evans came home from serving as a combat nurse in Vietnam and never shed a tear. Her default format was: "Tell nobody. Feel nothing. Risk nothing."



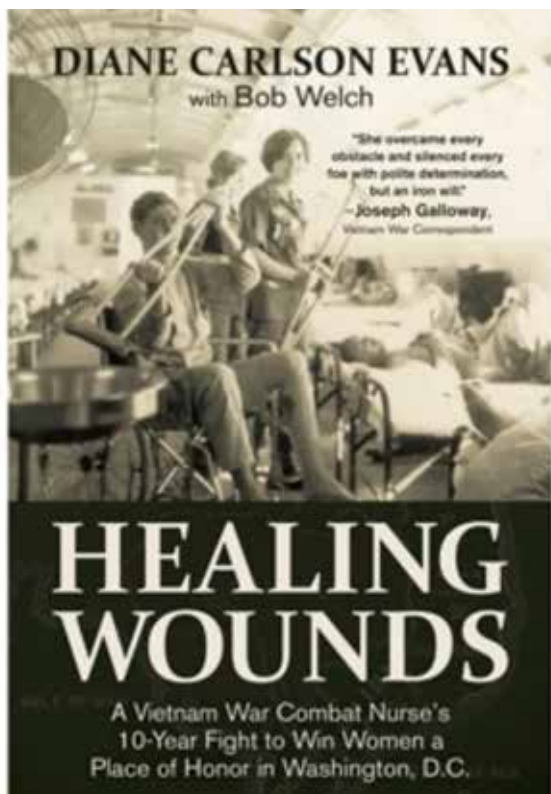
Diane Carlson Evans next to the Three Nurses Statue, Nov. 11, 2018 (Courtesy of Justice Eileen Moore)

ing." Then she went to Washington, D.C. for the dedication of the Wall in 1982.

As she read the names on the Wall, thinking "Who of you died on my watch? I'm sorry we couldn't save you," she heard, "Ma'am, were you a nurse in Vietnam? The man gulped and looked nervous before saying in a quivering voice, "I've waited 14 years to say this to a nurse, but I never came across one. Until now. I can't never thank you nurses enough. I love you." He then buried her in a smoldering hug. That's when she began healing.

### THE WALL & THE THREE SOLDIERS STATUE

Carlson Evans says in her book "Healing Wounds"



that the Wall had many critics, and that none of the senior administrators of the federal government attended the dedication. Six months after the Wall was dedicated, Three Soldiers, a bronze statue of three men who served in Vietnam was placed opposite the Wall. Its creation was spearheaded by the secretary of the Interior. President Ronald Reagan spoke at that dedication. Carlson Evans says the president did not mention anything about the 10,000 women who served in Vietnam, 80% of whom were nurses.

### AN IDEA FOR A MONUMENT

Other than the eight names of women who died in Vietnam listed on the Wall, there was no indication that women also served during the war. In addition to the 10,000 women who served in country, women served in an array of capacities around the world during the Vietnam War: doctors, intelligence officers, burial officers, WACs who counted caskets when they arrived in San Francisco, medics who unloaded the caskets and Red Cross volunteers. About 265,000 women served during the Vietnam era. Carlson Evans pondered the idea of a monument for those women.

Carlson Evans contacted Jan Scruggs, a Vietnam veteran and one of three founders of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation, which financed and selected the design for the Wall. She told Scruggs she was starting an effort to have a sculpture honoring the women who served, and hoped to have it placed close to the Wall, adding "We'd love your support." There was silence on the line. When he spoke, he said, "Well, that will never happen," and hung up on her.

### THE BEGINNING

Shocked but undaunted, Carlson Evans pushed ahead. She named the endeavor the Vietnam Women's Memorial Project, VWMP. Its motto was, "A Legacy of Healing and Hope."

Carlson Evans explained to Military.com that her memories of the war had started haunting her. She said when she saw the Three Soldiers statute, she thought, "But they've forgotten the women." She wanted a place of peace and healing for the women who served.

The goal of VWMP was to collect \$1.3 million for the project, none of it from the government. Carlson Evans' four kids stuffed envelopes and licked stamps.

The first groups she addressed were in River Falls, Wisconsin, where she was living. The American Legion Post cheered and applauded her idea, and the Lions Club gave her a standing ovation. In 1984, VWMP held a special event in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Carlson Evans didn't know whether three dozen or three hundred people would show up. More than a thousand did, including the press and scores of women vets.

Along with donations, VWMP received many notes. "For the nurse on the air evac flights who helped me get home. I still love her." From a woman in Michigan who said she was part of the Silent Majority: "I didn't stand up and stand behind you when you needed me most. Thanks for the second chance." From a veteran in New Jersey: "Thank God for you." An Illinois veteran wrote that two clerks were betting on how long he would live as the medical team worked on him and a priest administered Last Rites. He said he never saw the nurse, but felt her cradle his left hand in hers when she said, "You'll be all right, you'll be all right." A small girl who sent \$2 wrote: "This is all I have, but I want you to have it because if it wasn't for you, my Daddy wouldn't be here."

The American Nurses Association donated a small space in its Washington, DC headquarters.

### SOME REACTIONS WERE NASTY

But her home voice mail contained such words as: "This message is for Diane Evans, the [fill in the blank] woman who thinks women deserve a statue. You'd better watch out." A leading critic of the Wall and proponent of the Three Soldiers statue: "Who do you think you are? Forget about adding a statue to women. One statue is enough."

At a copy store where Carlson Evans was having some VWMP literature copied, the clerk asked: "You one of them feminazis?" She says some powerful people in Washington, D.C. were dead set against the project. At times, she was described as a radical feminist, and accused of climbing on the backs of dead soldiers to reach her moment in the sun. Hate mail, angry phone calls and threats were common. She was described by a Washington insider as "that woman coming in out of the cornfields."

### GOING NATIONAL

Carlson Evans received a huge win with the American Legion, getting the support of the local post, then the district, then the state and ended up at the national convention in New Orleans. The American Legion, with its nearly 3,000,000 members, resolved to call upon the Department of the Interior, Commission of Fine Arts, National Capitol Planning Commission to dedicate an area near the Wall

"to erect a statue honoring the women who have served during the Vietnam War."

With the Veterans of Foreign Wars, she had a much different experience. Carlson Evans took the same ladder approach until she was at the VFW national convention in Dallas in 1985. Its members made such remarks as: "You Vietnam vets are all alike ... you lost your war. You shamed America." Another said: "If we honor the nurses at the Vietnam Wall, then helicopter pilots will want a statue, and bomber pilots, and pretty soon we'll have a tank at the Wall." Carlson Evans responded: "We are not tanks. We are women." The VFW rejected her request for backing.

A North Carolina member encouraged Carlson Evans to attend some events that evening and try to get her resolution back on the agenda the next day. That evening, she witnessed some real old-fashioned backroom politics. The next day, when the subject was brought up again, the crowd booed. The National Commander stepped up to the microphone: "I am speaking to you as a veteran of a foreign war. If it wasn't for Vietnam, I would not be here on this stage; that's the war that qualified me to be part of this outstanding organization." He paused and then continued: "I was seriously wounded in that war. And, frankly, I wouldn't be here if it hadn't been for those nurses. They saved my life. And they deserve our support, as do all the non-nurses who were part of the Vietnam effort and who will be represented by the statue."

The motion passed. The VFW would support the women's statue. As Carlson Evans was leaving the room, a member fighting back tears told her he voted for her both days, and added: "I can only hope that you were the nurse who was with my son when he died."

In 1986, a fundraiser was held by the Lincoln Memorial. Senators Edward Kennedy and John Kerry spoke. Kerry said to the crowd: "Our mission is to remember. No one can remember in the way we ought to remember until there's a statue that reflects the service of women in Vietnam." General William Westmoreland, commander of United States Forces during the Vietnam War, agreed to serve as a VWMP honorary member.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation, the group responsible for the Wall, gave its official blessing to VWMP. Its endorsement and issuance of a Memorandum of Conveyance was necessary to proceed. Even the prickly founder who hung up on Carlson Evans two years earlier gave his tepid approval.

### ROADBLOCKS SET BY AN ACT OF CONGRESS

Just as matters in the federal arena were progressing nicely, Congress passed a law. Apparently there were so many requests for various works to be installed in the National Mall, Congress decided to create a process for approving them. The Commemorative Works Act of 1986, 40 U.S.C. 8902, et seq., created considerable procedural roadblocks to the creation of new memorials. The act barred construction of commemorative works on the National Mall and the National Capital Area unless they are approved by the secretary of the Interior, the Commission of Fine Arts, the National Capital Planning Commission and the National Capital Memorial Commission.

Plowing forward, Carlson Evans was able to obtain approval after approval. Only one federal agency remained.

### THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

In late 1987, on the day three nurses were scheduled to appear before the Commission of Fine Arts, the Washington Post's art critic wrote a column criticizing the intended design. He also said there were enough monuments to the Vietnam War and another "would create a serious symbolic imbalance." He thought the Three Soldiers statue represented women as well as men.

Secretary of the Navy Jim Webb, a Vietnam veteran, had written to the commission: "There will never be an addition of another statue at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. All these special-interest groups want statues, including the K-9 Corps."

The New York Times and the Boston Globe said the Vietnam Memorial, consisting of the Wall and the Three Soldiers statue, should be left alone. The Indianapolis News wrote that adding a women's memorial was like "painting the Statue of Liberty in Day Glo pink" or "adding Elvis Presley's visage to Mount Rushmore."

The criticisms were confusing. There already existed legislation setting aside that ground for the men and women who served in the Armed Forces in the Vietnam War. But some people simply did not want a statue exclusively commemorating the service of women during the war.

Four out of five members of the Commission of Fine Arts voted against the statue. To continue, VWMP needed another \$2 million.

### "60 MINUTES"

"I'm calling on behalf of Morley Safer ... we're explor-

ing the possibility of doing a segment on nurses and their fight to get a memorial."

"The Forgotten Veterans" ran in 1989. Afterwards, Americans around the country wrote letters and sent donations. Families of women who had committed suicide after serving in Vietnam wrote to encourage Carlson Evans. Her mailman complained he had to get a bigger mail bag.

APPARENTLY WASHINGTON WATCHES  
"60 MINUTES"

In November 1989, President George H.W. Bush signed legislation specifically authorizing the placement of a memorial to honor women of the Armed Forces of the United States who served in the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam era.

In 1990 and 1991, VWMP opened a design competition since the Commission on Fine Arts did not like the original design. Renowned Santa Fe sculptor Glenna Goodacre was the artist selected.

DEDICATION

After 10 years, the day finally arrived. At the dedication ceremony on November 11, 1993, Carlson Evans was asked where Vice President Al Gore, members of Congress and other dignitaries should sit. She responded: "Simple. There will be two kinds of seating: VIP and non-VIP. The VIP area is for all women veterans. The non-VIP area is for everyone else."

The crowd cheered as Carlson Evans removed the red, white and blue covering from the statue depicting three uniformed women surrounding a wounded soldier. Carlson Evans said: "Welcome home daughters of America. Welcome home my sister veterans. Let no one ever forget you again and what you did for this nation."

Diane Carlson Evans is a veteran of distinction and a champion for all women veterans.

**THANKS FOR YOUR SERVICE...  
NOW GET OUT OF MY COUNTRY**

At a symposium on deported veterans one of "the foremost authority on military veterans facing deportation" said that recruiters often tell noncitizens they will become citizens when they take the military oath.

Friedrich von Steuben, a Prussian military officer, was granted American citizenship for his service during the Revolutionary War. A citizen of France, the Marquis de Lafayette fought alongside George Washington in the same war. During the Civil War, more than 20% of those who served for the North were foreign born. About 18% of our troops in World War I were immigrants. Over 300,000 immigrants served in the U.S. forces during World War II. And so it has continued throughout our seemingly never ending wars. By 2016, there were approximately 511,000 foreign-born veterans.

When there are not enough U.S. citizen recruits to meet the military's demands, foreigners often fill critical roles, providing cultural, language and other skills vital to military operations. More than 20% of persons who received the Congressional Medal of Honor have been immigrants.

The Veterans Naturalization Assistance Program estimates there are over 100,000 noncitizen veterans in the U.S. No one seems to know exactly how many persons who served in our armed forces have been deported after they were discharged from the armed forces. But the estimates are in the thousands. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement sometimes waits for troops to return from deployment and separate from the military, then meets them at the airport when they're on their way home, and places the new veterans into removal proceedings.

THIS IS NOT THE AMERICA WE KNOW AND LOVE.  
SOME DON'T REALIZE THEY AREN'T CITIZENS

At a symposium on deported veterans presented by the University of Southern California and the Center for Law and Military Policy in March, one of the speakers, attorney Margaret Stock, a woman the Washington Times wrote was "the foremost authority on military veterans facing deportation," said that recruiters often tell noncitizens they will become citizens when they take the military oath.

It is not surprising that noncitizen recruits believe what the recruiters tell them. The oath of enlistment states: "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help

me God." The oath of citizenship states in part: "I hereby declare, on oath, that I ... I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God." Senator Tammy Duckworth spoke at the symposium. She described one former soldier who didn't realize he wasn't a citizen. He had twice been deployed to combat zones. He was on his way to the doctor for treatment of his post-traumatic stress disorder when he was arrested, placed in a holding cell and then deported.

THE D-WORD FOR CITIZEN VERSUS NONCITIZEN VETERANS

When veterans who are United States citizens return to civilian life and get on the wrong side of the law, we recognize the perils of combat on those warriors. We have created a whole new court system for the sole purpose of guiding them back to being the law-abiding persons they were before enlistment. Our courts have partnered with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, and the veterans are provided treatment instead of punishment. The D-word for them is Diversion.

Circumstances are very different for the noncitizen veterans who commit the exact same crime as the citizen veterans. Regardless of any essential help they provided to the military, and no matter their heroism, dedication, patriotism or love of America, the D-word for noncitizen veterans is Deportation.

DEPORTED VETERANS HELPING EACH OTHER

At the symposium, Stock told us that both the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security continue to oppose benefits for deported veterans. The documentary film "Ready for War," about the impossible situations of deported veterans, has some scenes in a shelter in Tijuana, officially called Deported Veterans Support House, but commonly known as The Bunker. An upside-down American flag, signifying distress in the military, is painted on the wall. The names of deported veterans are listed next to it.

The impact of the denial of veteran medical care to our noncitizen veterans in one scene is heartbreaking. One deported vet at The Bunker, who worked with prosthetics in the military, is shown trying to fit another deported veteran, who lost his foot, with a prosthetic. As the impression of the stump is taken, one can see the angry pink skin just below the ankle.

At The Bunker, they also try to protect each other from drug cartels. These deported veterans have extensive training in combat. Once those who are deported to Mexico get there, the cartels immediately try to recruit them, telling them: "You got weapons training, military training, in the United States. You're going to work for us." They sometimes end up being reluctantly recruited because they are threatened with death.

PATH TO CITIZENSHIP FOR THOSE WHO SERVE IN THE ARMED FORCES

Servicemembers and some veterans of the armed forces are eligible to become citizens of the U.S. under the Immigration and Nationality Act. There are two main paths.

Those who provided peacetime service are eligible to naturalize after an aggregate period of one year of honorable service. They must, however, be a lawful permanent resident [have a green card]. They may be eligible to naturalize despite being subject to deportation. 8 U.S.C. Section 1439 A separate wartime law covers those persons who have served during certain periods of conflict designated by Congress or the president. Through the years, various presidents have designated the periods of hostility. In 2002, for example, President George W. Bush issued Executive Order 13269, designating the period of war against terrorists of global reach, beginning Sept. 11, 2001, as one such period. An individual serving during wartime need not serve for any particular time in the military and can in some circumstances obtain naturalization while in boot camp or basic training. The person need not have a green card to obtain U.S. citizenship under the wartime law. 8 U.S.C. Section 1440 Except for bureaucracy, the process seems simple enough. At the symposium, however, Sen. Duckworth explained how difficult the process actually is for active duty service members. Importantly, while overseas, there is no easy access to political representatives. But even when they untangle the bureaucratic knots, service members face other barriers to their supposed paths to citizenship. A four-page Oct. 13, 2017, memorandum

from the office of the undersecretary of defense is mind boggling in its detail of how a service member goes about to just establish the simple fact of honorable service. Even a forgotten parking ticket can prevent a finding of honorable service.

And Stock described how much worse it gets when the service member tries to comply with the requirements of another agency, the Department of Homeland Security. One woman stationed in Korea had to come back to U.S. on her own dime, using leave time. She was quarantined for 14 days. She then showed up for her DHS appointment to become a citizen, but when she got there on her 15th day of leave, she was told they had a computer glitch and she'd have to come back another day. Months later, she was contacted and told to return. She had to do the same thing again. Eventually, she did become a citizen.

Duckworth said at the symposium that she asked for a State Department official to cover the military bases to give soldiers access to their path to citizenship, and the Trump administration refused. She recently asked the same of the Biden administration.

The senator's letter to President Joseph Biden reads in part: "Immigrant servicemembers possess critical skills that enhance military readiness, strengthen national security and protect our homeland. That is why, for over 200 years, Congress has provided servicemembers an expedited path to citizenship and both Democratic and Republican administrations have worked to streamline the naturalization process for servicemembers. In a period of armed conflict, such as now, Congress specifically intended for servicemembers to naturalize as soon as they entered service and prior to deployment. As your administration begins working to improve our Nation's immigration system, I ask you to prioritize military and Veteran naturalizations as well as bringing deported Veterans home to the United States where they belong. The United States relies on immigrant servicemembers in all sectors within the military, and it is clear that the government must better support and protect them. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request."

WHY DEPORTED VETERANS CAN'T GET HOME AGAIN

Most deported veterans were honorably discharged, suffered from PTSD, got convicted of a crime and were removed from the country. Their channels to get home again, while always few, have gotten fewer during the last couple of decades.

For a deported veteran, the only sure way back home is to die. An article in Military.com reports about the flag-draped casket of a veteran, Lance Corporal Enrique Salas. He "made it home the only way he could." The Persian Gulf War veteran, was deported to Mexico in 2006, and buried with military honors in Fresno County in 2018. The director of The Bunker, Hector Barajas, who became a citizen after Gov. Jerry Brown granted him a pardon, attended the funeral.

Senator Duckworth explained that much could be done to prevent deportation of our veterans without legislation. Agency willingness and interagency cooperation could accomplish a lot. For example, a person's veteran status is not even included in the paperwork for the Department of Homeland Security. So DHS personnel sometimes don't even realize they are deporting someone who served to protect our country.

Executive orders can also help. In fact, on Feb. 2, President Biden issued EO-14012. In it, he ordered the secretaries of state and homeland security and the attorney general to develop a plan to eliminate barriers and facilitate naturalization for eligible members of the military. One can only hope the Secretaries of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs are somehow looped into the process.

Sometimes, but rarely, a state might be able to help a veteran facing deportation. As already noted, a pardon from a governor has proved successful. Since someone from a state's National Guard is often on a governor's cabinet, the Guard may be able to provide assistance. Prior to 1990, sentencing judges had the discretion to recommend against deportation within 30 days of sentence. Known as Judicial Recommendation Against Deportation or JRAD, formerly 8 U.S.C. 1251(b)(2), federal or state judges familiar with the facts could take mitigating factors, such as veteran status, into account in making recommendations against deportation. But the Immigration Act of 1990, Pub. L. 101-649, abolished the sentencing court's discretion to grant a JRAD.

Adding to the blockades in the noncitizen veteran's path to stay home or get back home is that in addition to lost judicial discretion to grant a JRAD, there was also a curtailment of U.S. attorney general discretion with the passage of the Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, IIRIRA. Pub. L. 104-208, Section 604 et seq. Thus, if the government were inclined



to give a veteran a break, it no longer has the discretion to do so.

Also in 1996, the Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act was enacted. Pub. L. No. 104-132 AEDPA greatly expanded the realm of criminal offenses for which a noncitizen may be removed from the country, and eliminated the traditional judicial review of final removal orders.

**CONCLUSION**

A study of veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan revealed that 300,000 suffer from PTSD. 14 SCHOLAR 767. It is a familiar scenario to many of us in the law. A veteran self-medicates for PTSD or some other condition incurred as a result of military service. The veteran is arrested for breaking the law, usually a narcotics offense. And that's where the difference between being a citizen and not being a citizen is critical.

The citizen is shepherded into a treatment program. The noncitizen is taken to a detention center, imprisoned and then deported.

As matters stand, the noncitizen veteran must maneuver through the requirements of a specific military branch, the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, the attorney general and the Department of Veterans Affairs. Each has its own requirements, and usually one agency doesn't speak with the other about a noncitizen veteran's situation.

This is not the way America ought to be treating its veterans.

On May 7, Veterans Naturalization Assistance Program will conduct a naturalization clinic that is free to all U.S. veterans, from any rank, country and financial background. Email Nicqelle Godfrey at vnep@vetsprobono.org for more information.

**CHAPTER NOTES**

**Chapter 201**

**Return To In-Person Meetings**

Chapter 201 held its first in-person meeting since



February 17, of 2020 on March 15, 2021 at the Country Inn Restaurant. After a year in "isolation," and with the majority of the membership having received their COVID-19 vaccinations, the Chapter held it's first in-person meeting of 2021 with the reductions of gathering restrictions in Santa Clara County. Thirty VVA and AVVA members, and guests, attended the meeting.

President Warren Finch welcomed the membership



back and reported that the Annual April election of officers that had been postponed from last year with the authorization from the California State Council (CSC) in lieu of the COVID-19 restrictions. Because of the short time before the April 2021 election meeting, and the lack of Chapter gatherings for the past year, the membership voted to bypass the April Election meeting, with CSC approval, and maintain all elected officers in their current positions for the 2021-2022 Chapter year.

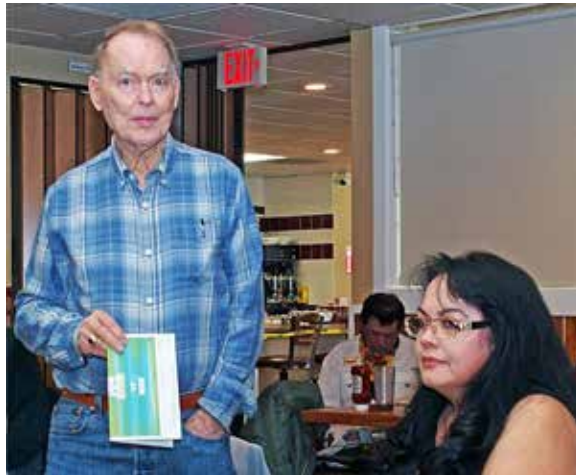
President Warren Finch and Secretary/Treasurer Stephen



Thompson

Chapter member Jack Wells (USMC, retired) has been deeply involved in providing support to children in Vietnam over numerous years. With support of the Chapter 201 membership, he has provided financial aid to orphanages and schools in the Da Nang area of Vietnam. During his approximately twice a year visits to Vietnam, he has also met with Vietnamese children of American fathers (Amerasians). During the March 15th meeting, Jack introduced his Amerasian guest, Jennifer Newcomer, to the membership.

**Jack Wells Introduces Jennifer Newcomer**



Jennifer was born in 1967 in Saigon. Her mother remembers that her father was an Air Force Major, stationed at either Tan Son Nhut or Bien Hoa air base when he met Jennifer's mother. Just before the Fall of Saigon in April 1975, her mother burned all of the letters, photos, and information about Jennifer's father, because of Communist punishments for anyone who assisted South Vietnam during the war. Jennifer and her mother, and a younger sister, were able to come to the U.S. in 1984 as a result of the Amerasian Homecoming Act. From experiencing frequent discrimination, as an Amerasian, because she looked different as a young girl in Saigon, in recent years Jennifer has spent quite a bit of time and her own money to buy DNA testing kits from Ancestry to send to some of the Amerasians still living in Vietnam to help them immigrate to the U.S.

**Jennifer Newcomer**



Jennifer is working with a group of Amerasians still in Vietnam and is looking into raising funds to conduct DNA tests in an effort to determine who their true fathers may be. This could allow them to be considered to become U.S. citizens and immigration to America. The Chapter membership voted approval of a donation to pay for the cost of five DNA test kits (\$60 each). Additionally, after the meeting Chapter members also provided Jennifer with donations for three additional test kits.

**THERE'S A SCHOOL ON THE DMZ**

By Jack Wells

Adapted from the R.R. Keane story

There's a school on the old Demilitarized Zone which straddled the 17th parallel in Vietnam. There's a school where Marines and North Vietnamese soldiers lobbed mortar, rocket, artillery rounds and strewed mines into shell craters caused by other mortar, rocket, artillery rounds and mines. There's a school in that country where Marine First Lieutenant Lewis B. Puller Jr. had his legs blown off by a mine 53 years ago, a school with Puller's name on it.

It's off old Highway 1, where large trucks, weighted



with sandbags, convoyed Marines and combat supplies in and out of Dong Ha, and nearby Con Chien, Cam Lo, and Gio Linh, which became known bitterly as Leatherneck Square. Back then, every Marine in dirt-red utilities knew nothing good would ever come of such a place. They swore that the wind, rather than blowing, made a sucking sound. It was a mean place, in mean times, with few memories that anyone wants to recall.

There was, and still is one memory that stands out:



the children. There were so many in frayed caps, blue shorts, barefooted along the roads, smiling, waving and begging. In Vietnam there was once a 90% literacy rate, but not in I Corps, not in Leatherneck Square, at least not that anyone could remember.

But most Marines who were in Vietnam remember



when Lt. Puller lost his legs and parts of both hands in October 1968. They remember because nearly all of them, since boot camp, worshipped his father, retired Marine Lieutenant General Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller, who with five Navy Crosses, was the legend they all wanted to emulate.

That was until they went to Vietnam and found out



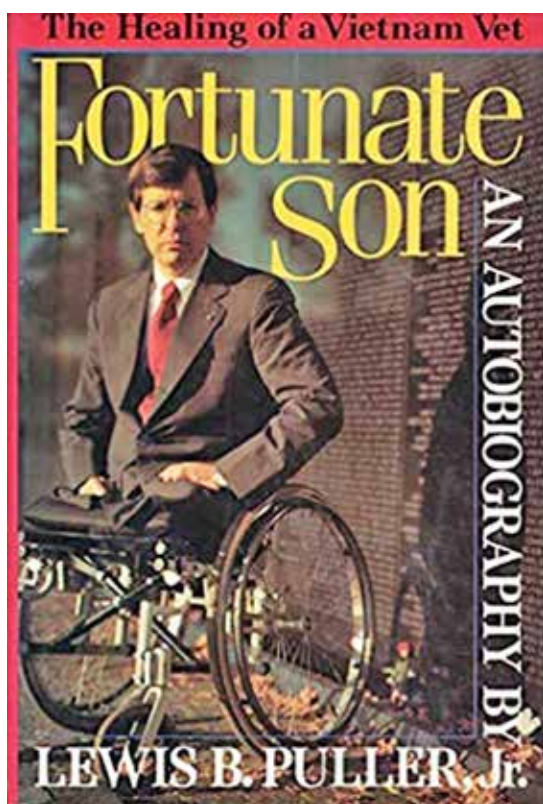
firsthand how truly difficult Chesty's deeds must have been. It also struck them that no one probably knew this more than his son, who paid a horrible price, being Chesty's "Fortunate Son."

An Army medic who helped the younger Puller at the Naval hospital in Philadelphia, still talks about how the "terribly wounded" Marine would scream in agony from



his wounds, as he counted down, off his bedside clock, the time for his next medication. He would never march or stand at attention again. His life would center around a wheelchair, and the pain, followed by the inevitable bitterness, would never completely go away.

As with many Marines who returned from Vietnam,



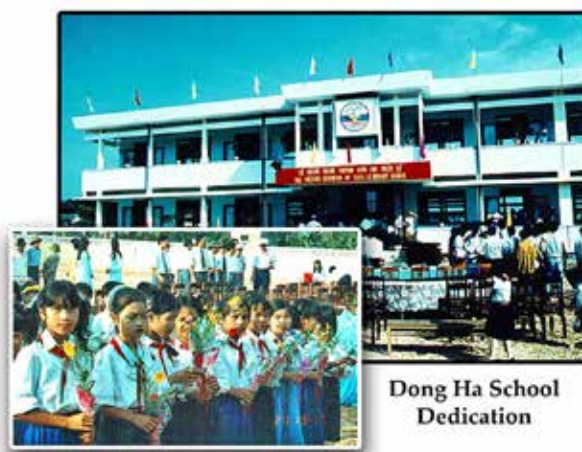
he drank too much, and when mixed with painkillers, depression followed. But Puller was tough. He fought back and wrote his autobiography, *Fortunate Son*. It was gut-wrenching, depressing and an inspirational catharsis of not only his Vietnam battle experience, but the love for his father. *Fortunate Son* was a masterpiece, for which he won the Pulitzer Prize.

In 1993 Puller made a "visit of reconciliation" to Vietnam. On the surface, Puller's years of bitterness were seemingly coming to an end. He was quoted as saying that he turned to "fighting the battle of reconciliation" and that "now I see it to be universal among men who have been in a war." It was then that he too, remembered the children of Vietnam, and realized that poverty and illiteracy were still prevalent.



According to fellow Vietnam veteran, John Wheeler, in an interview with *USA Today*, "In 1993, Puller discovered that Vietnam's greatest challenge is to educate its children. Although the fighting was over, elementary education for Vietnam's children, apparently did not rank high on the government's list of priorities. "Many schools are in caves and thatched roof huts, and most are over 40 years old," said Wheeler. With a population soaring past 70 million, Vietnam is one of the world's poorest and their literacy rate is in rapid decline.

When Lewis B. Puller Jr. died on May 11, 1994, letters and checks for the school project poured in. John Wheeler said the Army medic who treated Puller sent a donation. A woman in a nursing home sent \$10 a month. The literature class at Carl Sandburg High School, Orland Park, Ill., and others from around the world also donated. An Italian woman sent \$500, writing, "I think it takes sometimes more courage to live than to die: Puller's struggle during all these years to overcome his physical disabilities is an example of how personal tragedy can be convened into a positive force." The donations topped the \$71,000 needed to build a two-story, 12-classroom grade school to educate 535 students in Dong Ha. But that's not all, according to former Department of Veterans Affairs Assistant Secretary Edward Timperlake, himself a former Marine, there are plans to raise money over the next five years for 39 schools which will be built for about \$50,000



Dong Ha School Dedication

each.

But it was at Dong Ha in a corner of old Leatherneck Square, straddling the old DMZ, that the school was dedicated April 24, 1995 (also marking the 20th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War), and named in memory of Lewis B. Puller Jr. Terry Anderson, who was Associated Press bureau chief in Beirut when taken hostage and held captive for seven years, was on hand. Anderson was, in 1969, a Marine sergeant and combat correspondent in Vietnam, who befriended Puller in the last years of his life. "It was his dream to do this school" Anderson told reporters, as they unveiled a plaque honoring Puller. "I have not done anything in years that has given me as much



Terry Anderson Presents Dedication Plaque To Dong Ha School

personal satisfaction" Anderson said.

There's a school where children bedecked in red, white and blue uniforms dance for their American guests and gave them flowers. There's a school in that far away country, where Lewis Puller Jr. lost his legs and ultimately, his life.

**Chapter 933**

June 2, 2021: Chapter 933 member Olin Gray re-



ceives a precision model of the Navy Douglas Skyhawk A4C, the fighter he flew over Vietnam off the USS Constellation. Presenting the gift is John Ballman, from the Fresno Scale Modeler Society whose members create historically accurate models of planes and vehicles actually used by local veterans of the Vietnam War era. The model



bears the insignia of Gray's Squadron: VA55. Closeup of plane and map.



May 31, 2021: Chapter 933 member John Sturdivant prepares for the 35th Annual Memorial Day Sunrise Service. It is believed to be the earliest annual Memorial Day service on the West Coast, is open to the public, and held in Fresno Woodward Park near two VVA chapter war me-



morial sites.

The Chapter 933 Memorial Day Sunrise Service at Woodward annually draws veterans, their families, and other supporters in the region. Pictured is 933 member

John Cline with Valerie Salcedo, a professionally trained Broadway and opera singer who devotes countless hours to entertaining at veterans' events, and Janice Stevens, whose books have chronicled the lives of local veterans and who conducts a weekly memoir writing/discussion class for over forty-five local veterans and their spouses.

**Chapter 201**

Memorial Day 2021

The annual United Veterans Council (UVC) Memorial Day Ceremony was again held "virtually" this year due to the restrictions of the COVID-19 Pandemic. This year's ceremony was taped at San Jose's Oak Hill Memorial Park on 19 May with the final video produced and placed on the UVC web site as a YouTube Video on Memorial Day, 31 May 2021.



**Chapter 201 Vice President  
Gene Fanucchi**

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPste19QikE>)

Chapter 201 members participating in the ceremony included Chapter Vice President, and UVC Ceremonies Chair, Gene Fanucchi providing the introduction. Chapter 201 Chaplain William McCorquadale provided the invocation and Chapter member, retired U.S. Army Major



**Chapter 201 Chaplain  
William McCorquadale**



**Chapter 201 Member  
MG Robert Ostenberg (USA, Ret)**

General Robert Ostenberg presented a key note address.

During the opening of the Memorial Day Ceremony, wreaths were placed representing all the wars from the 1860s Civil War through the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, as well as wreaths honoring Blue and Gold Star families, and Medal Of Honor and Purple Heart recipients. For the Vietnam war, Chapter 201 Past Vice President Bob Kadlec, with the assistance of a Santa Clara University Army ROTC Cadet, placed the wreath honoring all who



**Chapter 201 Past Vice President Bob Kadlec**

gave the ultimate sacrifice during the war in Vietnam.

The UVC incorporated the Prisoner Of War and Missing In Action "Missing Man Table" tribute that was produced last year. The ceremony was introduced by Chapter President Warren Finch while Chapter Secretary/Treasurer Stephen Thompson, who, as Navy Corpsman serving with a Marine Force Reconnaissance unit in Viet-



**Chapter 201 President Warren Finch**



**Chapter 201 Secretary/Treasurer  
Stephen Thompson**

nam, is the recipient of a Silver Star for his actions during his time in Vietnam, led the ceremony.



**Chapter 201 Director  
Dennis Foggie**

Assisting Steve Thompson at the Missing Man Table was Chapter Sergeant at Arms, and BOD Director, Dennis Foggie.

The ceremony honored the Chapter's namesake Darwin J. Thomas who was born on April 28, 1943 in Santa Clara, California. Ensign Thomas, flying one of two

A-1H Skyraiders, was conducting a night armed reconnaissance mission in a hilly area about 25 miles southeast of Thanh Hoa, North Vietnam. He flew off the carrier USS Oriskany and was shot down over North Vietnam on



**Ensign Darwin J. Thomas  
lost over North Vietnam**

October 14, 1966. Originally listed as Missing in action, he is now listed as "killed, body not recovered."

**Chapter 357**

"The band is back together again"

Shasta Remember Everyone Deployed, sponsored by VVA Chapter 357 Redding had 2 opportunities to have a Information/Sales table on Sat. June 12 at a food park to celebrate the Army's Birthday and Sat. July 3 at the Annual Anderson Explodes fireworks display.

Our Goal is:



1. To let people know they're still at Vietnam Veterans



chapter

2. To recruit Vietnam Veterans



3. To sell Remember Everyone Deployed RED T-shirts





Alice Gomez, California AVVA President (and VVA Chapter 47 AVVA Liaison) would like to contact all California AVVA Chapter Liaisons and get their e-mail addresses. She hopes to meet them at the August CSC Convention too...and possibly at the VVA Convention in November in North Carolina.

to send boxes to those Deployed.  
A picture is worth 1000 words.

## THERE IS A CONVENTION IN YOUR FUTURE.

The VVA California State Council will be holding their 17th biennial convention at the Wyndham Visalia August 27 and 28. The weekend starts out with a pizza party sponsored by the California Veterans benefits Fund on Thursday, August 26, that features early registration for those that have sent in the delegate registration by the August 6 deadline. There will be vendors showing their items for sale. The Corn Hole game sponsored by the CSC will be a fun event to take part in and there will be some prizes for high scores.

On Friday, August 27, the convention begins with the opening ceremony with a color guard, a guest singer for the National Anthem, and some guest speakers and invited guests. Then we are on a mid-morning snack break sponsored by the California Veterans Benefits Fund. After the break, the convention is called to order and the convention committees will do their reports. The convention will then recess until Saturday morning.

At Noon, The Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America will host a luncheon with a number of meal selections for your dining experience. Following the luncheon AVVA will hold their meeting. For VVA there will be Amendment and resolutions hearings along with some educational sessions. The day ends with a POW/MIA ceremony and the Candidates forum.

Saturday, August 28, the activities for the day start with breakfast with the president and then the convention reconvenes with reports from the convention committees. After the lunch break the CSC elections will be held. Then the convention reconvenes with the final reports from the convention committees. After the closing ceremonies the convention will be adjourned.

Saturday night will be the CSC Awards Banquet reception sponsored by the California Veterans Benefits Fund. The Banquet hall is then opened for the banquet and the awards program to follow.

The convention Planning committee is working to make your convention delegates experience a great one. Send your delegates!

Convention delegate registration, AVVA Luncheon and VVA Banquet reservation information and other needed forms will be handled through the appropriate Convention Committees and are available on the CSC web site [http://www.vvacalsc.com/pages/stateconv/2020/2020\\_state\\_conv.html](http://www.vvacalsc.com/pages/stateconv/2020/2020_state_conv.html)

Dick Southern, Chair, Convention Planning Committee

## AM I A REAL VIETNAM VETERAN?

by pdoggbiker

The author of this piece contacted me right after posting my article last week about how many Vietnam Vets are still alive. The debates relating to what constitutes a Vietnam Vet continued within both the comment section of the article and on my many FB group pages. This is worth a read and pretty much sums it all up.

Have you ever asked yourself that question? I have, and I've struggled with the answer since the day I returned home from Vietnam in January 1972. That in itself seems to be an odd statement. Of course, I am a Vietnam Veteran if I did a tour in Vietnam. Right? Well yeah, I was there but the question is: "Am I a 'REAL' Vietnam Veteran?"

When I think about all of the stories I have read, and the movies I have seen, "real" Vets had a much different experience than I had. I didn't get shot; I didn't even get wounded. Other than a battle with the delirious fevers of malaria, I came home unscathed... physically. So why wasn't I a happy camper? What more could I have asked for? And why did I feel so guilty about that? And why did I have nightmares? And why do I even question whether I am a real Vet or not? None of it makes sense to me.

For many years after I came home, "back to the world", I never talked to anyone about my Army service and I chose not to seek out other veterans. I kept to myself for the most part. But then on one unexpected occasion when I had an opportunity to speak with a fellow Vet who was a bit older than I was, he asked me what year I served in? When I replied "1971," he laughed and said: "OHhh, that doesn't really count, we had the war mostly all wrapped up by then!" I'm sure his intent wasn't malicious, but man those words stung! And that for sure strongly reinforced my doubt... coming from another Veteran... Nope, I'm not a "real" Vet!

The most devastating years of the war as far as the number of casualties was during the peak years of 1967-1968-1969. That is when 2/3 of all of the war's 58,318 American deaths occurred. Those three years were the heaviest combat years from what was America's longest war at the time. Those were the times during the war that most of the books and movies were about. The guys who fought in the actual "heavy combat" during those three years were real Vets for sure. They have absolutely and unequivocally earned and certainly deserve the highest respect and recognition from all of us.

But what about the earlier 60's and then the 70's years of the war? Do those years count? As the war was winding down when I was there in 1971, the casualties had dropped way down. There were "only" 2,357 men killed. Only!!? That counts, right? Of course it does, those 2,357 men and the men who fought in the battles with them, large or small, are for sure real Vets, but what about the rest of us in 1971 and the other years? Should being a "real" Vet be defined as ONLY those who have been in "heavy combat" that resulted in heavy casualties?

I don't think there is any doubt that receiving military orders to report to Vietnam for a one-year tour of duty was traumatic for anyone, no matter what year it was. The big unknown is: Will it be bad? or really bad? Will I ever come home again? Will I live or die? There's no way around those thoughts. Those psychological contemplations and fears were real, and in my mind, all of us who had to face that basic reality from day one and going forward, are "real vets" regardless of what years we served in and regardless of what our assignments were.

However, I am sure that some may disagree, so let's delve into it deeper to try to determine if some of my following listed encounters and experiences count toward being a "real" Vet or not.

Does just being assigned to an infantry unit as a rifleman and sometimes a grenadier and at times a machine gunner count?

Does pulling guard duty on the perimeter of an LZ or a Firebase or an Airbase, for 30 consecutive nights or longer without a day off count? Even though the "only" casualties that my unit suffered there were few?

Does going outside the wire with just a small squad of 6-8 men on dozens and dozens of ambush patrols overnight into the rice paddies count? Even though the "only" casualties my unit suffered there were from friendly fire?

Does the fear and exhaustion of carrying a rifle and humping a heavy rucksack up and down the mountains and hacking through the jungles of the dangerous Central Highlands count?

Does the intense fear that results from being shot at and pinned down by snipers as bullets from automatic weapons whiz by you on a hot and humid afternoon in the jungle count? When you are so scared that you're holding your steel pot tight against your head and lying flat on the ground, trying to hide under your heavy rucksack which is your only cover? Even though none of that resulted in any casualties at all?

Does hearing the terrifying loud explosions of artillery rounds that came in so dangerously close that you can hear the shrapnel cutting the tree branches above and around you count? Even though there again we somehow luckily avoided casualties?

Does being in a convoy roadside ambush count? Seeing trucks get blown up, seeing soldiers wounded and bloodied? Seeing helicopter "dust-offs" landing to pick up the wounded? Hearing the sounds of the gun-truck's 50 caliber machine guns firing up the hillside where the rockets were fired from, so very close by. Even though my platoon was rushed out of the kill zone and unable to return direct fire after the initial terrifying explosions, does any of that still count?

Does the fear and adrenalin of flying around the country in helicopters and being dropped into remote areas to perform search and destroy missions count? Even though we rarely made enemy contact?

After all, the casualties in my 1/22 infantry battalion were comparatively minimal during 1971 as the war was winding down, and as I stated earlier, I didn't even get shot, or see any of my buddies get killed. I know of some that were killed while I was there, but I didn't see it happen. So maybe that doesn't count. None of what I saw or participated in would be called "heavy combat." I have never been in a "real" combat battle. Real combat battles have names. Right?

The reality is: any battle that YOU are in is a big one, no matter how small it may be, because it doesn't take a large enemy force or a big battle to kill you... it only takes one man, with one gun, to shoot you one time.

I don't even want to get into how the majority US population felt about all of us Vets when we returned home, questioning why we as individual soldiers even chose to go over there in the first place! Chose!!? Everyone knows those regrettable stories about how disrespectful we Vietnam Veterans were treated. Not like "real" Veterans, that's for sure!

And then there was the time that I was sitting around a campfire one night with 3 or 4 older Vets that were from the Korean War and WWII, drinking beer and listening quietly to their military service stories. Like many Viet Vets, I never talked much about Vietnam before. But I decided to join in and take a turn that night. I simply mentioned how hot and humid it was over there, and how much rain there was during the monsoon season, and how I hated sleeping on the wet ground. One of the old guys replied: "Well that's your own fault because you didn't do a good job trenching around your tent." I cordially laughed and said "what tent? We didn't have tents, we just draped ponchos over tree branches in the jungle!" The Old Vet then scolded me: "Why do you Vietnam guys always think you had it so bad and came back always whining and complaining about how bad your time over there was!?" Ouch!

Well, maybe I shouldn't have dropped it, but I bit my tongue, as I was raised not to talk back to my elders. I think you can see the point though, that negative attitude was prevalent, not only in American society as a whole but also in some of the older Vets from previous wars as well. And it had a devastating effect. Yep, it reinforced that I wasn't a "real" vet.

Even some of older Veterans organizations such as the VFW that were predominantly run by the much older "real" Vets back then, shunned and rejected us Vietnam Veterans. We were thought of as rogue soldiers that were not even in a declared (real) war. To them, Vietnam was simply just an unpopular, poorly run, failed police action. And we were not "real" war vets that were worthy of membership, regardless of the level of our combat experience. That will never happen again! Please note, the point is not to denigrate the VFW (or any other Veterans service organizations), as they serve a great purpose and need for many Veterans and have long ago reversed that type of unfair prejudice. The point is, that was just one example of the reality that we faced in our society upon returning home from war!

At some point, many many years later, actually fairly recently, I became involved with the DAV as a volunteer driver. I transported Veterans to and from their medical appointments at the VA hospital.

That was really the first time I had any serious interaction with other Veterans. And I discovered something that I never really gave much thought to before: There are tons of Veterans who served in Vietnam without seeing any combat, let alone "heavy combat." The fact is, only a small percentage of those who served were in the infantry. The vast majority of the troops served in non-combat support roles while in Vietnam. However, the war engulfed the entire country of South Vietnam and there were no front lines or rear lines, so as a result, EVERYONE who served, lived with the reality that anyone could get hit at any time,

no matter where they served in-country or what branch of the military they served in, or what year it was. The reality was that any base, large or small, could be subject to sapper attacks or incoming mortar rounds at any time. Still, those who served on the bases all bravely reported for their duty regardless of whatever unknown dangers and fears lie ahead of them. Does that count? I think it does.

I had a lot of free time while waiting for the guys to finish up with their Dr. appointments. So, I sometimes wandered around the VA medical center to kill time. I often walked past a doorway that opened up into a large room. There was a sign over top of the door that said "Heroes Hall." I was amazed and wondered what elite honor group was allowed to go in there! I thought that must be some kind of private club. I would just peek in sometimes to see what "real" heroes looked like. But I couldn't really see them very well, and I certainly wouldn't dare go in there! I wasn't even sure if I was a "real" Vet, and I was positive that I was no hero!

Eventually, when some of the guys that I was transporting as a volunteer, found out that I was also a Veteran, they invited me into Hero's Hall to have a cup of coffee with them. Well, I could tell from talking with those guys that they were no different than me and certainly didn't seem to be heroes either. It was interesting but surprising to discover that the men and women in Heroes Hall seemed to be just regular Veterans like me, and all Veterans were welcomed into Heroes Hall. After talking for a while and getting to know them better, they seemed to think that I was a "real" Vet too! I felt good about that.

Believe it or not, The Army thought I was a "real" war veteran. They awarded me the Combat Infantryman Badge (CIB), along with some other medals that I put away in a drawer after returning home, hidden for 40 years. Even though I didn't get them out again until I became a grandfather, it seems like that should count.

And as it turned out, the VA also thinks that I am a "real" Vet. The more I volunteered and the more time I spent in the VA facility, the more comfortable I became with it. I even started seeing some of the doctors there, and they found that I didn't return home unscathed! The wounds just took a while to be diagnosed. Besides having had malaria, I have been diagnosed by the VA doctors as having service-connected PTSD, and also service-connected Cancer which the VA attributes to agent orange exposure in Vietnam.

It's very possible that you didn't come home unscathed either. The VA has a whole list of cancers and heart disease and diabetes and a lot of other medical ailments that they attribute to agent orange exposure. If you haven't already, it's worth checking into because many of us were exposed unknowingly to agent orange, regardless of our duty assignments and roles in combat or non-combat activity. Agent Orange wasn't selective! You may have read the following assertion regarding the ticking time bomb named Agent Orange; which goes something like this: We survived, came home from the war, and brought death home with us. That makes me ask: how many of us are still dying from the war? And, does that count?

And, I found out that you didn't have to be in "heavy combat" to suffer from PTSD. I went all those years without seeking treatment because I questioned whether I was even a "real" vet and therefore couldn't possibly have PTSD (think denial!) So, if you have asked yourselves similar questions, like the ones that I have raised here, or have had some similar thoughts or feelings or doubts about the effects of your service, that in itself can be a form of or a part of PTSD. It's estimated that 30% of Vietnam Veterans suffer from PTSD. It's treatable and it's worth seeking help for. AND it counts!

It has been more than ten years ago now that I wrote this preface in my book Rucksack Grunt :

"You can engage in a conversation with 1,000 different Vietnam Veterans and get 1,000 different stories about their war experience. Some guys had it bad; some guys had it not so bad. It all depends on what part of the country they were in, what year they served in, and what their specific MOS and duty assignments were.

They all served."

So in closing.... To all of my fellow Vietnam Veterans:

If you can relate to this story in some way or if you have ever asked yourself: "Am I a Real Vietnam Veteran?"

Yes, WE all served!

and Yes, it all counts!

I like to think that is the answer.

An essay by Robert Kuhn

B-Co. 1/22 Infantry 1971-1972.

<https://rucksackgrunt.com>

With contributions by Michael Belis

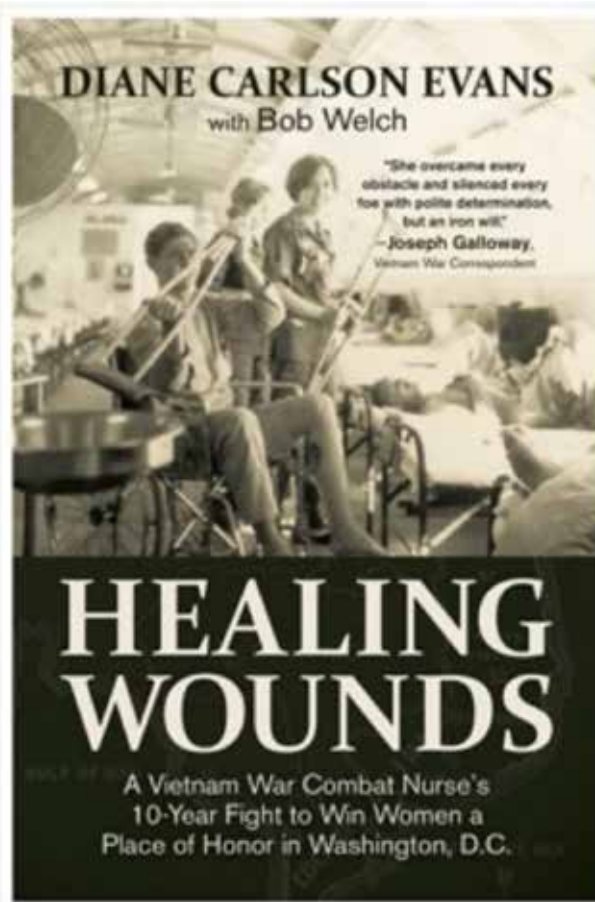
C-Co. 1/22 Infantry 1970-1971.

[www.1-22infantry.org](http://www.1-22infantry.org)

## HEALING WOUNDS

### Review

"A powerful book. A necessary book. Within the first dozen pages, tears were flowing. Diane took on three heroic tasks in her life: serving as a combat nurse in Viet-



nam; despite ferocious opposition, leading the battle for a monument on the Mall to women who served in Vietnam; and telling her story in this book of the emotional price paid when she was shamefully rejected and reviled by fellow Americans. Diane recovered from the war and its aftermath by acting, doing, and salvaging the memories of the women who served. We owe her an incalculable debt." -- Theodore Roosevelt IV, Underwater Demolition Team 11, Vietnam two tours: 1966 and 1967

"Evans' book is a soulful accounting of her long-fought journey to recognize the immense contributions and sacrifices of women during the Vietnam War." -- Chuck Hagel, 24th Secretary of Defense, United States Senator, and Vietnam Veteran

"A fascinating, yet heart-rending chronicle of Diane Carlson Evans' heroic journey and her decade-long struggle to honor the women who served during the Vietnam War. Every Brother and Sister veteran, their families, and those who haven't served, should read Healing Wounds." -- John Finley Sommer, Combat Medic, 3/12th Infantry, 4th Infantry Division, Vietnam, 1968 and Executive Director, The American Legion, 1991-2009

"Diane Carlson Evans went from working as a combat nurse to becoming a national advocate for all the women who served during the Vietnam War. What makes Healing Wounds different from other nurses' wartime memoirs is the aftermath. Evans came home with the awful inventory of battle in her memory. She married and became a mother of four, yet the loss and sacrifice she witnessed in her fellow nurses and patients never left her. This emptiness, combined with the country's indifference to the women's war efforts, drove her into the political world to push for a statue to honor those females who served, next to the statue of the Three Soldiers at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. One powerful Washington, D.C. committee vetoed the idea and said if there was a statue dedicated to women, the next statue might have to be for the dogs who served in the K-9 units. It is this compelling story of perseverance that will make you angry, proud, and inspired." -- Elizabeth M. Norman, PhD, RN, author of "Women at War: The Story of Fifty Military Nurses Who Served in Vietnam," and "We Band of Angels: The Untold Story of American Women Trapped on Bataan by the Japanese"

"The sun is shining on us,' Diane Carlson Evans said on a radiant fall day as she opened the ceremony to dedicate the Vietnam Women's Memorial on November 11, 1993. I was among 25,000 others who celebrated in a triumphant moment for our nation, for all women who served in Vietnam, and for Diane, whose dignity, decency, and courage are of the highest caliber I know. I was in Vietnam as a twenty-two-year-old reporter. Diane, a twenty-one-year-old nurse. We thought we were all grown up. Healing Wounds affirms what I have long believed: the best Vietnam war stories are love stories. Diane's love of her country, her patients, and her fellow nurses, carried her through the mud and blood of Vietnam. Her love carried her over every obstacle placed in her path in the ten

years, ten years, it took her to spearhead her vision into reality. Don't be fooled by her Minnesota nice. Diane is a woman warrior who fights with love and courage of her convictions instead of bullets. Healing Wounds is exquisitely painful, heartbreakingly beautiful, and ultimately, triumphant. Finally, the sun is shining on Diane Carlson Evans." -- Laura Palmer, Author, "Shrapnel in the Heart," Co-Author, "War Torn, Stories of War from the Women Reporters who covered Vietnam"

"I was Lieutenant Sharon Lane's Head Nurse when she was killed by a rocket while on duty in our hospital in Vietnam. She is remembered with her name etched on the Wall in Washington, D.C. Diane Carlson Evans' long journey fighting for us has helped heal my deep emotional wounds and those of thousands of sister veterans who lived through that war and who are honored and forever remembered by the Vietnam Women's Memorial." -- Colonel Jane Carson, USA(Ret), Vietnam, 1969-70

"It's been said before, but it's worth repeating: To create a great memoir you 'only' need two things: a compelling story and the ability to tell it compellingly. Diane Carlson Evans has three compelling life stories to tell. And she tells them exceptionally well in her new, eye-opening memoir..." -- The VVA Veteran, a publication of Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.®

### About the Author

Diane Carlson Evans, a former captain in the Army Nurse Corps who served in the combat zone of Vietnam is the founder of the Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation, Inc. She served as president and CEO of the Foundation's board of directors—headquartered mainly in Washington, D.C.—for thirty years. Today she advocates for veterans and speaks nationally about the contribution of women during wartime. Evans has received numerous honorary doctorate degrees and prestigious awards from civic and veterans organizations. Learn more at:

[www.dianecarlson-evans.com](http://www.dianecarlson-evans.com).

Bob Welch is a seasoned journalist and the award-winning author of more than twenty books. Among them is American Nightingale, about the first World War II army nurse to die after the landings at Normandy. The Wizard of Foz: Dick Fosbury's One-Man High-Jump Revolution won the 2019 Track & Field Writers of America's Book of the Year.

## GERALD HISAYOSHI YAMAMOTO, 1943-2021

Gerald Hisayoshi "Jerry" Yamamoto, a former Vietnam Veterans of America at-large Board member, the longtime VVA National Minority Affairs Committee chair, and a former president of Redondo Beach, California, VVA Chapter 53, died July 20 after a long illness. He was 77.



"Jerry was a beloved figure at VVA for decades, and one of the organization's most dedicated leaders," said National President John Rowan. "Nearly every time he ran for an at-large seat at a National Convention he'd outpoll every other candidate—a measure of how respected he was among our members for his hard work on behalf of minority members and all veterans."

Jerry Yamamoto was born on October 18, 1943, during World War II at the Rohwer War Relocation Center, an internment camp for Japanese Americans in Arkansas. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1966 after graduating from UCLA. Following his military service, he earned two Masters Degrees—in anthropology and Public Administration—and went on to a long career with the California Public Employees Retirement System, and as a volunteer veterans advocate.

"Jerry was an advocate and supporter of veterans in word and deed," said his friend and fellow VVA member James Maddox, who served on the Minority Affairs Committee.

"He was committed to veterans and their families. At the 2017 VVA Convention, I watched Jerry engage Connecticut Senator Richard Blumenthal. It was masterful, as he began talking with Blumenthal in the corridor outside the Convention floor, speaking with politeness and passion. Regardless of the station of the person he was talking with, Jerry made sure that they understood and would support veterans and their families."

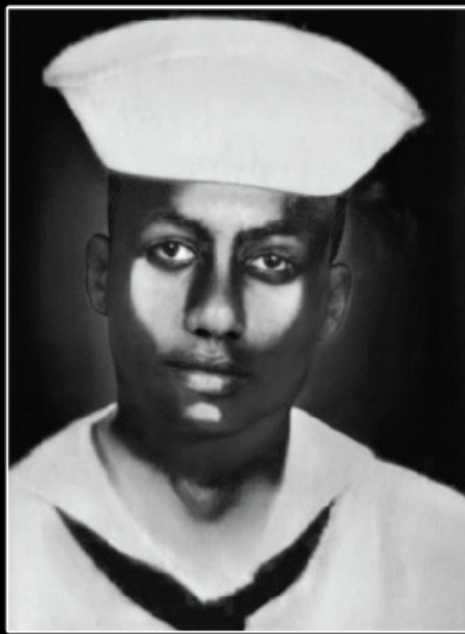


**VVMF Wall of Faces**  
**June 15, 2021**  
**MISSION**  
**ACCOMPLISHED**



There were **430** photos missing when we started.  
 Today, all **5575** Californians listed on the  
**Vietnam Veterans Memorial**  
 now have a face to go with their name.

<b>NAME</b>	<b>RANK</b>	<b>BRANCH</b>	<b>CASUALTY</b>	<b>HOME OF RECORD</b>
<b>VERNON PARR SMITH</b>	<b>SN</b>	<b>USN</b>	<b>02/05/68</b>	<b>Los Angeles, CA</b>
<b>UNIT - NAVSUPACT Da Nang, YFU-67, USNAVFORV</b>				



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

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To:

**In this issue:**

- Chapter/Council Activities-Events/Photos
- Council Officer/Committee Reports
- Legislative News
- Veteran Info
- And more...

**CSC Meeting Dates & Events**

State Convention August 27-28, 2021 - Visalia  
 Full Council - October 29-31, 2021 - Visalia

**Zephyr deadlines 2 weeks AFTER each CSC meeting**