



The California Zephyr



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An Organization Chartered By The U.S. Congress



A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 17-4

WINTER 2014

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

First off I want to wish everyone a Happy New Year. It seems that time goes by a lot faster as we get older.

I would like to say thank you to all those involved in the planning and the day of the 25th Anniversary for the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Sacramento. I was unable to attend but I have heard nothing but positive comments about the event. I want to thank all those who attended the event, thank you for taking time out of your schedule to help celebrate the anniversary of the memorial. Enjoy the pictures that you will find in this edition of the Zephyr. Thank you to the Zephyr staff for a job well done.

As we enter 2014, I would also like to say thank you to the CSC Officers, Board Directors, CA Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, Committee Chairs and especially to all the delegates who attend. If we did not have the great members that we have there would be no CA State Council. We appreciate all of your hard work in keeping your chapters up to date and moving forward. Working together we can make 2014 a great year.

Nationally Vietnam Veterans of America is growing. We are now over 70,000 members strong. But there are still Veterans out there who do not know that VVA exists. I run across them all the time. We need to reach out to these veterans and let them know about VVA.

My favorite saying is, "If we all recruited one new member, we would double CA's membership." CA VVA membership lists 4,625 members, that being members belonging to a chapter and At Large members. We are #2 in the nation behind New York which has 5,566 members. The more members we have the stronger we can become.

If you want to stay current with Veteran news be sure and check <http://vva.org/>. Facebook has numerous Veteran related websites. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/82305046481/>.

CSC has a website @ <http://vvacalsc.com/>. You can find the Finance Policy and Reimbursement Form here along with all Chapter Report forms such as Election, Financial, Attorney General site among many others. Filing information is also listed. This site has all the current CSC meeting dates and news. Website Coordinator Tom Hohmann is in the process of updating the site to make it even better. Check it out, it is there to use for our members.

Happy New Year and be safe and well!

Steve

VETERANS INCARCERATED

Bob Chaney, Committee Chair

I have received an update on In-Prison Services from CDCR. This is what they say they are doing.

IN-PRISON SERVICES

CDCR offers voluntary support groups that meet regularly throughout the month. These programs:

- Provide community assistance and support with reentry

Promote and foster better self-worth through interactions with fellow veteran inmates and volunteers

Facilitate periodic visits by a representative of the VA, who ensures that inmates close to release understand what benefits are available to them.

- Offer workshops on affliction management and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

In addition to these voluntary programs, the Division of Adult Parole Operations (DAPO) provides the following in-prison services:

Transitional Case management Program (TCMP) :

- Prepares and submits VA benefits applications
- Applications are submitted to VA up to 180 days prior to release from incarceration
- Provides the inmates with the VA's Guidebook for California Incarcerated Veterans
- Contracted benefit workers in adult prisons provide application assistance for inmates to obtain Veterans, Social Security and Medi-Cal benefit entitlements upon release

Parolee Health Management Unit (PHMU) :

- Meets with veterans six months prior to release
- Works closely with each VA Healthcare System in California to provide accurate information about resources with detailed instructions for point of entry..

- Provides contact information for local resources
- The VA provides the Healthcare for Re-Entry Veterans (HCR V) program to assist offenders with a successful transition.

- Assists inmates with a V A healthcare enrollment form
- Provides assistance with submission of enrollment forms and obtaining copies of military records.

These programs are all good, and they have been working on these same ones for years. But they fall short of AB2490 Veteran Service Officer Bill. Although CDCR and CDVA are talking, they have not come up with a plan to implement AB2490. One says it is the CDCR's responsibility, another says it is a county problem and still another says it is CDVA's problem. Some counties have more than one institution and that really puts a lot of strain on the counties with small VSO offices. They need help with hiring more qualified VSO's. The institutions also have to make sure the VSO's have access to the veterans with a limited amount of trouble plus a place to work.

CDCR address helping with the applications process for VA benefits which is fine

for Per Diem housing and VA covered medical programs. But it does not address the Disability Claims issue. This is where a full time VSO will help. We all know that it takes a lot longer for the VA to handle Disability claims than 180 days.

County Veterans ID Cards. We know how hard it is for parolees to get ID cards. From a conversation I had with a Re-Entry specialist, he said the paper work the veteran leaves prison with along with the help of the parole agent had facilitated the acquiring SS cards and State ID's. They can also receive a Count Veteran ID in some counties. CDVA has, through its county service officers, developed a County Veterans ID Card. This has been made available to all counties. But at last count only about seven counties have adopted the program. I heard one VSO stated he does not have the time or people to do this and the ID Machine cost \$5000. Yet another VSO stated this is a great way to get veterans in to the office with their DD214 and see if they qualify for any benefits or need any other type of help. That VSO has over the last few months processed about 400 ID cards to date. If you are an incarcerated veteran, when you get released check with your County Veteran Service Officer and see if they offer the ID program. Many businesses offer 10% discounts to veterans and this is a good way to show you are a veteran. The county VSO may even be able to identify those businesses in your area that offer discounts.

Now to all Incarcerated Veterans, Please drop me a line and let me know what services or programs your institution is providing, I wish all institutions had the programs the CTF, Soledad has. Address all correspondence to: Bob Chaney, Veterans Incarcerated Chair, P. O. Box 3007, Riverside, CA 92519-3007. I hope to hear from many of you.

WOMEN VETERAN COMMITTEE

Kate O'Hare-Palmer, Chair

By the time you are reading this newsletter, the holidays have come and gone. Hopefully, you were all blessed with time spent with loved ones and friends. These events seem to get more precious as the years fly by.

Last November 11, 2013 marked the annual Veterans Day Observance at the Wall and the 20th Anniversary Commemoration of the Vietnam Women's Memorial in Washington, D.C. I was fortunate to have been there to celebrate with women that I had



Diane Evans (l) with Kate O'Hare-Palmer at the Vietnam Women's Memorial



Marsha Tansey Four (L), Kate O'Hare Palmer at the Vietnam Women's Memorial

served with in Chu Lai (2nd Surgical Hospital and the 312th Evacuation Hospital) and Lai Khe (2nd Surgical Hospital). It was cold and sometimes windy and, yet, we were warmed by all the good wishes and the amazing gratitude of many veterans that came up to us to say, "thank you for all you for all that you did." Many women told their stories during the oral histories at the monument. Marsha Four was among those who spoke and you can see her story on you tube (<http://youtu.be/NcFCc-AHJFQ>).

The Vietnam Memorial Volunteers are a wonderful group and they have dedicated thousands of hours to the Memorial, teacher workshops and VIP tours. As you talk with them, you realize that each one has their own connection to the wall. This year I learned that half of the panels on the wall were from 1968. I was stunned. It felt like so many were lost during the time that I was there...but to see their names rising around you.... so powerful.



Vienam Women's Memorial 20th Anniversary, November 11, 2013

MILITARY JUSTICE IMPROVEMENT ACT 2013

If you have been following this Bill backed by Sen. Gillibrand (NY) you will already know that the bill did not have enough supporters(60) to pass the Senate last month, so

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THE CALIFORNIA ZEPH-

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

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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.



the vote was not taken.

On December 20,2013, the Congress passed a defense bill with provisions to crack down on sexual assault in the military. The Senate voted 84-15 for the legislation which would provide \$552.1Billion for the regular military budget and \$80.7Billion for the war in Afghanistan and other overseas operations. This is a reflection of deficit-driven efforts to reduce spending and the drawdown in the conflict(?) lasting more than ten years.

More than two dozen reforms to the Pentagon Policy will affect MST. Some of these include: No longer will the commanders have the authority to overturn jury convictions or sentences. The military members convicted of a sexual crime will be discharged or dismissed. Victims will also

get new legal protections and counseling after reporting a crime. There will be no tolerance for retribution that many have faced previously for reporting such crimes.

President Obama has directed Secretary Chuck Hagel and JCOS Chairman Martin Dempsey to implement the law's provisions to make these substantial improvements by December 2014.

Senator Gillibrand will still push for a vote in the Senate in early 2014. “I do not want to wait another year to enact the one reform survivors have asked for. Remove commanders with no legal training and those that have conflicts of interest from decisions of whether or not to prosecute a rape or sexual assault.”

Sen. McCaskill(MO) had introduced another MST bill that mainly differed from Sen. Gillibrand's bill in keeping

the chain of command in place within the MST justice proceedings. She states” we should give the significant reforms the time they need to succeed.” She plans to hold commanders accountable to ensure these historic reforms “are implemented effectively.”

The Congress feels that these are sweeping changes to the Uniform Code of Military Justice .

One hopes that they will be enacted quickly.

CHAPTER 933

VIETNAM VETERANS UNVEIL MEMORIAL IN FRESNO

TO HONOR THEIR HEROES

By Bonhia Lee

Vietnam war veterans in Fresno are usually the ones honored for their service. But on Sunday, they turned the table on family members and friends by saluting them for their love and care throughout the years.

The Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 933, dedicated a small monument at Woodward Park to the friends and family members who helped them adjust to life back home after the war.



At left Robert McCracken gets a closeup look at the newly unveiled monument in Woodward Park. The Fresno chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America dedicated a monument at Woodward Park Sunday thanking civilian supporters of veterans. The monument dedication was at the Lakeview Shelter just past the Audubon Gate entrance to the park. Mark Crosse — The Fresno Bee

"We are so used to being honored in a variety of ways with monuments, parades and ceremonies," said Steve Doak, a chapter member. "Yet many of us have held the heartfelt opinion that we have failed to adequately recognize the real heroes in this equation."

The veterans unveiled a gray stone and bronze plaque, near the Lakeview Shelter, with a simple inscription for their heroes: "Thank you. This monument honors the love and support given throughout the years by friends and family to our veterans. We deeply appreciate your dedication, understanding and willingness to stand by us in our struggles abroad and at home."

The message is deep and meaningful to Henry Wegermann of Fresno, a Marine Corps veteran who served between 1967 and 1969. He presented the veterans group with the idea for the monument after his wife and biggest supporter, Roganne, died two years ago.

Wegermann is a Brazilian native who immigrated to the United States in 1965. Two years later, he entered the draft and went into the Marines. He hoped for a chance to work at United States embassies, where he could help lower and raise the American flag in support of his adopted country.

In August 1968, he was one of seven Marines critically wounded during an ambush. When he recovered, he was sent to Camp Pendleton, where he was assigned flag duty. But before he could raise his first flag, a commanding officer said he couldn't touch the flag because he wasn't an American citizen.

"To me, it was unreal that I couldn't raise and lower that flag," said Wegermann, who has since become a U.S. citizen.

That moment haunted him and became part of the hole that he occasionally retreated to over the years.

But his wife's support -- sometimes a simple hug, a hand to hold or her silent strength -- helped him out of that quiet zone, Wegermann said.

"When my wife was living, I was thankful for her, but I never really thanked her and her family," Wegermann said.

Ahwahnee resident Margaret Camp, whose son William, a Marine, was killed in action at age 19 in 1968, attended the ceremony. She was happy to be among those honored for the support she has offered so many veterans over the years.

But the Gold Star mother considers it her job.

"You can't give us credit for that," Camp said. "We were born to that."

The reporter can be reached at (559) 441-6495, blee@fresnobee.com or @bonhiale on Twitter.

Read more here: <http://www.fresnobee.com/2013/11/24/3630404/vietnam-veterans-unveil-memorial.html#storylink=cpy>

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CHAPTER 785

SNOWBALL EXPRESS

In 2006 VVA 785 adopted these children of our fallen military heroes. During 2006 through 2008 all our chapter members worked tirelessly during Snowball Express (SBE) programs here in the OC. Chapter members Bill Mimiaga, Greg Young, Al Rasch, Jeanette Chervony all



Pictured above is John Baca with Maddie Bancroft who lost her father in Iraq in 2003.



Greg Young, John Baca MOH, and Bill Mimiaga (Monsoon) - (l to r) in Dallas TX with SBE

served on the SBE Board of Directors. They are trustees and volunteers of the organization now headquartered in Dallas Tx. John Baca MOH life member and namesake of 785 has been a volunteer and on our advisory council since 2007.

We remember.

Every day, many of the men and women of the armed forces return to their families and their civilian lives. But not every one will have that chance, and the families left behind are forever changed. Snowball Express remembers those fallen heroes who will never return, and honors the supreme sacrifice their families have made. Snowball Express serves the children who will never be reunited with their mom or dad.

We Honor these children and families.

Since 2006, the mission of Snowball Express has been a simple, yet profoundly important one: Provide hope and new happy memories to the children of military fallen heroes who have died while on active duty since 9/11. We bring children together from all over the world for a four-day experience filled with fun activities, like sporting events, dances, amusement parks and more. Parents of children of the fallen often tell us that their child is reserved, withdrawn or unwilling to talk about their loss. Participating in Snowball Express changes that, making each child feel special and giving them an opportunity to share their feelings about losing something so precious, their parent.

VVA 223 SANTA ROSA

HEALDSBURG SOS ANNUAL PACKING FOR 4TH ID

Over 200 people helped pack 290 boxes at St. John's School Gym. Many different Sonoma County organizations helped again to send packages to the 500 4th ID troupes in Afghanistan. Mary St.Claire started this program eight years ago when her son was stationed with them over in Iraq. What started with 10 boxes has grown to today's volume!! VVA #223 donated \$4100 for the shipping this year. There was a huge variety of goodies including socks, hats, gloves, toiletries, candy, games, and even womens items for those 25 women stationed there this year. We had an amazing visit via Skype with Melissa Hermosillo, Denise Wambeke and Major Reid at Ft. Carson, and with Lt. Col. Brad Wambeke

and his staff in Kandahar, Afghanistan. We were very honored to be able to speak with them all, share some holiday cheer and to wish Lt. Col. Wombeke a happy birthday. Check out Chris Smith's article (<http://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/20131204/articles/131209799>) in the Press Democrat, 4th ID's (<http://www.dvidshub.net/news/117758/soldiers-set-receive-massive-care-package#.UthB7HmMvjwand>) the Press Democrat's photo gallery (<http://www.pressdemocrat.com/gallery/gallery/20131204.120409992.html>)

VVA 933 - FRESNO

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CHAPTER 400 - EAST BAY

The chapter has been busy sending out donations that would be worthy of our benefactor, Patrick Lynch. Each year, since receiving a large amount of money from Mr. Lynch's estate, we have been sending out checks to benefit his and our fellow veterans, along with those future veterans, who are in Harm's Way.

This year, we have send contributions to both of the Northern California Fisher Houses (Palo Alto and Travis AFB), Operation MOM, Pathway Home, VVA CSC VSO Program, and a recent drive to send several thousand pairs of white socks to our troops serving in Afghanistan.

We also had a table at a recent Good Guys car show, to reach out to veterans in attendance. It was quite successful, as we were able to talk with and enlighten our brother and sister veterans as to their benefits. Plus, we got to see a lot of really nice hot rods, one of which was entered by our chapter vice president, Dave Pastor.

Our newly reformed finance committee is meeting anew to plan our 2014 contributions.

The below photo is of Chapter 400 Director Roberto Rocha, presenting a check to Pathway Home.

Repectfully submitted by Bill Hodges, Chapter 400 Secretary

CA AVVA

ATTENTION AT LARGE MEMBERS

CA AVVA would like to say thank you to all of our At Large members in CA. We appreciate your membership and support by becoming an AVVA member. At this time CA AVVA has 78 At large members. Each State with members of AVVA who are not associated with a VVA

Chapter or an AVVA incorporated Chapter may have a Delegate who will represent all At-Large members within that State.

The State Associate Representative or State President may contact all At- Large members every even-numbered year between January 1 and February 28, and give every At-Large member, who is qualified, the opportunity to run for the position of At-Large State Representative. This contact may be USPS, telephone, internet, or newsletters such as the Zephyr.

At Large members may be this status because they prefer not to be associated with their local chapter or they may have been listed as At Large mistakenly. If you have been listed as such and want to be affiliated with your local chapter, please let us know and we will help get you there.

If you are possibly interested in this position, please contact me for more information. Elayne Mackey @mmm4evr1@aol.com

Thank you again and CA AVVA values their At Large members as we do all our great members.

CA AVVA ELECTIONS

2014 will be the election year for CA AVVA. All offices are open for election. You must be an AVVA member in good standing with no pending disciplinary actions. This is a (2) two- year term of office.

State Elections may be held from January 1, 2014 to June of 2014. CA will be holding their elections on:

- Saturday April 26, 2014, 2pm. (location to be determined)

We will be electing:

- President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Board Director.

More information will be announced.

CSC LEGISLATIVE ADVOCATE

By Pete Conaty and Dana Nichol

CALIFORNIA STATE COUNCIL CAPITOL LEGISLATIVE DAY - MARCH 26, 2014

The 2014 VVA-CSC Capitol Legislative Day will be on Wednesday, March 26, 2014 in Sacramento in the State Capitol Basement Eureka Room. This is the same place we have held previous legislative days. Starting at 8:00 am, there will be a full breakfast and at noon there will be a flank steak lunch. These meals will be provided by the State Council for attending VVA members. During the morning, attendees will hear from legislators who drop in to address the group. Many of these legislators will brief the VVA on legislation they are carrying of importance to veterans. Also, representatives from the California Department of Veterans Affairs and the Legislature's Veterans Affairs Committees outline their priorities for the year. In the afternoon, VVA members visit their local legislators and educate them on issues of importance to veterans and their families.

For those who will be coming from out of town and would like to arrive the night before, the Holiday Inn at Downtown Plaza and the Vagabond Inn Old Town have reasonable rates and are walking distance from the Capitol (3/4 mile).

- Holiday Inn, Downtown Plaza: 300 J St, Sacramento, CA 95814 (916) 446-0100
- Vagabond Inn, Old Town: 909 3rd St, Sacramento, CA, 95814 (916) 446-1481

LEGISLATION UPDATE

As you are aware, earlier this year the Governor signed 41 bills dealing with veterans and military issues. The State Legislature is organized into 2 year legislative sessions, starting in the odd year. Therefore, 2013 was the first year of the current session. No legislation can span across the two year sessions, but can span across the years within the session. Some bills introduced in 2013 remain viable (they were not killed in a committee or miss a deadline) and will continue in 2014. For bills that still live, but are still in the house they originated in, they must pass out of that house (Senate or Assembly) before January 31 or they die. These are called "2-year bills".

There are 50 veterans or military 2-year bills still alive. 34 of them are operating under the January 31st deadline and 16 are operating on the normal 2014 schedule.

These 162-year bills and any bills which are introduced in January, have until August 31 to make it through the full legislative process. There will be more veterans bills introduced in January on behalf of my clients, as well as those introduced by legislators for a variety of reasons.

For more information on California legislation, go to: www.ca.leginfo.ca.gov

CSC 14TH BIENNIAL STATE CONVENTION JUNE 27 – 28, 2014

It is early, but not so if financial resources have to be arranged to have your chapter delegates be able to attend. June will be here before you know it. Here is the Holiday Inn Hotel info:

Hotel reservations are to be made by chapter delegates and guests through the convention hotel direct by: **June 13, 2014**

- The convention room rate is \$89.00 a night.
- Local tax is (12%)
- This rate is good for up to 3 days before and after the convention dates.
- Here is the reservation information that you will need.
- Reservation phone number to call for our group is: **559-233-6650**
- Reservation **code will be VVA. Ask for in-house reservations.** Please use only that phone number and code to assure your correct pricing, so that the CSC can get proper credit toward our room guarantee and you can get the room that you are looking for.
- We will have a block of 50 sleeping rooms put aside for the weekend.
- Our reservation cutoff date is June 13, 2014, so you need to act immediately and phone for your reservation at the Holiday Inn Fresno Downtown.
- Room reservations received after June 13, 2014, will be on a space available basis and may not be at the Convention rate.

Welcome reception on Thursday June 26. Pizza and golf.

All other convention registration, AVVA Luncheon and VVA Banquet reservation information and other needed forms will be handled through the appropriate Convention Committees.

CONVENTION PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dick Southern Convention Planning southern@lodelink.com

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MEMORIES OF A BUDDY

SHARED MEMORIES OF NAVAJO MAN KILLED IN

VIETNAM BRINGS CLOSURE TO FAMILY, ARMY

BUDDY

By Vida Volkert, Staff writer
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GALLUP - Ed Ryan knew him as "Joe. " That's how Van Etsitty, a slim Navajo man from Mariano Lake, introduced himself in Vietnam to his squad leader 45 years ago.

So Van "Joe" Etsitty was a quiet 27-year-old man who liked to sketch animals and landscapes in his free time and could easily fall asleep in the middle of the jungle - like



the night when the six-member squad was on patrol and took a half hour break to rest.

They were very tired, Ryan remembered, and sat down on the ground inside a thick bush. It was dark, warm and humid, and the men had to be quiet to avoid detection. As soon as the time was up, they got up and walked for a quarter of a mile when they realized Etsitty had been left behind.

"We had to go back," Ryan said. "We found him asleep, and I said to myself, how do you sneak up on an Indian? I knew he would wake up and start shooting. I was careful to put my foot on his gun barrel."

That story still makes Ryan laugh, but when he talked about what followed a few months later, his voice cracked.

"We lived an extreme life. We lived the life that nobody in the U. S. has ever experienced," he said. "Vietnam was hours and hours of terrible boredom, with pieces of intense fear. We went from one extreme to the other, and it could happen in a heartbeat and you didn't know when that heartbeat was going to be."

For Etsitty, that heartbeat happened June 1, 1968. Ryan's squad was sent out to support a unit that had been dropped off by mistake in the middle of an enemy camp.

"Our men were being killed," he said. "Our mission was to get there and do something about it."

Ryan's squad was in a helicopter above the ground when they caught enemy fire. Ryan, who would normally travel behind the pilot, sitting with his feet dangling in the air so that he could quickly jump off and get back inside because the gunfire was too heavy. Etsitty was the radio operator that day and was reporting to the base.

"We were catching so much fire. When we circled around, he was still there," Ryan said about Etsitty. "We were 50 feet off the ground when they nailed him. That's the last time I saw him. We left his body on the chopper."

Ryan, 67, told the story to members of Etsitty's family a recent morning during a brief meeting at the lobby of the Econo Lodge in Gallup. A forensic psychologist based in Riverside, Calif., Ryan traveled to New Mexico 45 years after losing Etsitty to meet his family, visit Etsitty's grave in Fort Defiance for the first time and to find closure. During his tour in Vietnam, Etsitty was the only man he lost. "Sometimes, it's too much information for the family. It was very quick. He died immediately," he said to Etsitty's younger brother Dan Etsitty, his niece Raquel Warner and nephew Virgil Warner.

He presented each family member with a purple-heart medal.

"This is what he was wearing that day (when his body was returned to the States)," he said. "I don't know what the Army did or told the family. He was a good man. Dependable."

The last time Dan Etsitty, 65, saw his brother was at the family ranch in Mariano Lake, where the two learned to ride horses and care for cattle and sheep. The two went to school in Gallup, where Van Etsitty also played football.

Raised in the same household with Van Etsitty, Raquel Warner, now 49, had grown up thinking that he was her brother. She held the medal with one hand and wiped away her tears with the other.

"Did he talk about his brothers? His family?" Raquel Warner asked. "He was a quiet man, and because of what we were doing, we didn't have much time to talk," Ryan said.

Ryan and Etsitty's family drove to the veterans cemetery in Fort Defiance that afternoon and visited his grave, something Ryan had been wanting to do for decades. But fear to confront the past and relive Vietnam kept him from doing so. Raquel said Etsitty might have used the name Joe because that was the name of his father. She talked about Etsitty's passion for drawing and that's when it hit Ryan, that "Joe" was an artist.



Vietnam veteran Ed Ryan, right, salutes the gravesite of Van Etsitty while Etsitty's family, Dan Etsitty, left, Raquel Warner and Virgil Warner stand by at the Tsehootsooi Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Fort Defiance Saturday. Ryan was with Etsitty when he died in Vietnam and has been searching for the grave for decades.



A quarter left by Ed Ryan on the headstone of Van Etsitty fulfills a military tradition of marking the grave of a fallen comrade at the Tsehootsooi Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Fort Defiance.

"That memory is vague to me," Ryan said. "I see him sketching. We had a little base camp. We didn't spend much time there, but that's the only place where that could have been. Because that's the only place where he could have been sketching."

During the Christmas dinner at the Thoreau Chapter House later that day, Warner presented Ryan with a



Van Etsitty's interpretation of "The End of the Trail."

painting Etsitty had done before he went to Vietnam - Etsitty's interpretation of "The End of the Trail." In Etsitty's version, a Native American warrior is sitting on a blue horse. The color of the horse and the warrior looking down, almost as if he was defeated, evoked sadness in Ryan. Thoreau Veterans Commander Jackson Gibson, who served as the link between the Etsittys and Ryan, elaborated on the importance of colors and horses in Navajo culture. In the creation myth, the first people climbed from a world of darkness to the blue world. Horses are sacred animals.

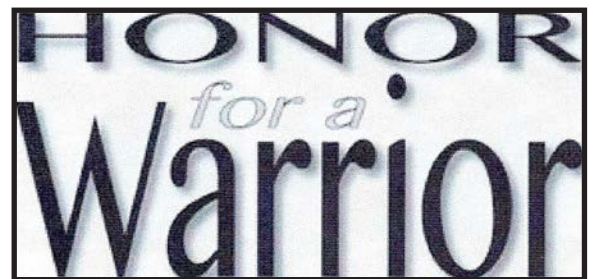
Ryan was enthralled, absorbing as much as he could about the world of his late squad member, who seemed



Ed Ryan, right, tells Dan Etsitty about his experiences with Etsitty's brother in Vietnam.

very much alive in the memories of his relatives. At times, he could see him in some of the men, particularly the quiet ones.

"Those men were very much like Van," he said. "They didn't say anything. That struck me that night."



And his attention was caught by the Christmas tree in the corner of that room because it was decorated with pinecones that were not produced by that tree.

"They were put there," he said. "And there were boxes of gifts, and those gifts were wrapped in plain brown bags. I opened my bag and it was all nuts. Food. Different kinds of nuts. Oh, well, I thought a lot about that.... They are proud people, and their gifts would sustain people rather than some kind of bubble.... I took the whole thing, (including) what little I knew before about Navajo and the country."

Ryan and Etsitty served in the Army in Vietnam with Charley Company, 2/60 Infantry, 9th Infantry Division.

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CALIFORNIA VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

By Charles Earthman, VVA-223

There were 58,287 Americans killed in the Vietnam War. 5,822 were listed as residents of California, almost 10% of those killed in Vietnam. Although we are a large state with a large population, 1 in 10 is a lot to sacrifice.

But pay we did. From every corner of the Golden State Californians answered the call to duty in the 1960's--some kicking and screaming--but still taking that oath and serving their country. Those were turbulent times and Vietnam was an unpopular war, but we served and many of us paid. Some paid the ultimate price.

So it was that hundreds of people gathered in Capitol Park for the 25th anniversary of the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Originally dedicated in 1988, the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial has stood as a testament to the 5,822 men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice at the request of our Nation.

A solemn ceremony in honor of Prisoners of War and those still Missing in Action took place that morning before the main ceremony. It was a moving event with colors presented by the Scottish American Military Society complete with pipes and it reminded us not to forget those still listed as missing in action or held captive in enemy hands.

The main ceremony's emcee was Pete Conaty, who is well known by veterans throughout the state. Pete is a Vietnam combat veteran with the Purple Heart. Keynote speakers included Sister Linda McClenahan, Chairwoman of the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial Committee;



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

November 23, 2013

California Vietnam Veterans Memorial

On behalf of the state of California, I am pleased to send my greetings on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Dedication of the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Sacramento is honored to be the home of this memorial to the men and women who lost their lives during the Vietnam conflict.

The California Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated on December 10, 1988, as a tribute to the nearly 6,000 California men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of their country.

Vietnam veterans served our nation during their time in the military, and many continue to serve by helping their fellow veterans, their communities and those still in the armed services, both here and abroad.

To all California Vietnam veterans, "Welcome Home" and thank you for your service to our nation and our state.

Sincerely,

Jerry Brown
EDMUND G. BROWN JR.

GOVERNOR EDMUND G. BROWN JR. • SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814 • (916) 445-2841

Stan Atkinson, longtime friend of B. T. Collins and supporter of the memorial; and Peter J. Gravett, CalVet Secretary. Secretary Gravett said, "I am honored to see so many people here today with us to honor and remember, not only the men and women who lost their lives in Vietnam during that very unpopular war, but also those who came back and became parents, artists, community leaders or most importantly, our neighbors and loved ones."

The ceremony culminated with the laying of wreaths by several veteran service organizations and the unveiling of PFC Ralph Henry Johnson's newly engraved name. PFC Johnson won the Medal of Honor when he gave his life for his fellow Marines. He was number 5,823. (photos below & page 7, 8)

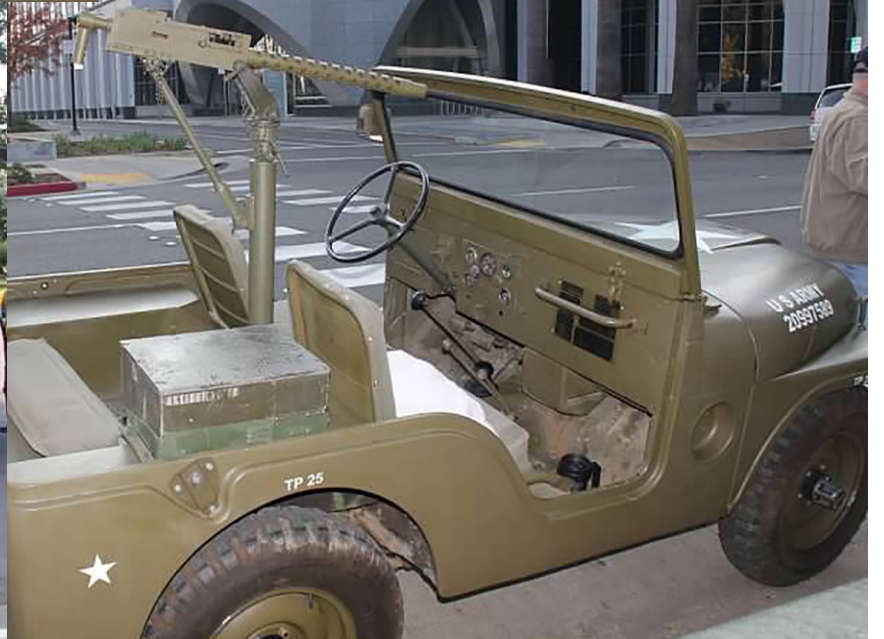


(continued On page 9)

Photos by: Brooke McKusick, VVA-223 - And Fred Romero,







VA OFFERS DENTAL INSURANCE PROGRAM

WASHINGTON (Nov. 15, 2013) VA is partnering with Delta Dental and MetLife to allow eligible Veterans, plus family members receiving care under the Civilian Health and Medical Program (CHAMPVA), to purchase affordable dental insurance beginning Nov. 15, VA officials announced today.

VA continues to explore innovative ways to help Veterans get access to the care and services they have earned and deserve, said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. This new dental program is another example of VA creating partnerships with the private sector to deliver a range of high-quality care at an affordable cost, for our Nation's Veterans. □

More than 8 million Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care can choose to purchase one of the offered dental plans. This three-year pilot has been designed for Veterans with no dental coverage, or those eligible for VA dental care who would like to purchase additional coverage. Participation will not affect entitlement to VA dental services and treatment.

There are no eligibility limitations based on service-connected disability rating or enrollment priority assignment. People interested in participating may complete an application online through either Delta Dental, www.deltadentalvadip.org, or MetLife, www.metlife.com/vadip beginning Nov. 15. Coverage for this new dental insurance will begin Jan. 1, 2014, and will be available throughout the United States and its territories.

Also eligible for the new benefits are nearly 400,000 spouses and dependent children who are reimbursed for most medical expenses under VA's CHAMPVA program. Generally, CHAMPVA participants are spouses, survivors or dependent children of Veterans officially rated as permanently and totally disabled by a service-connected condition.

Dental services under the new program vary by plan and include diagnostic, preventive, surgical, emergency and endodontic/restorative treatment. Enrollment in the VA Dental Insurance Plan (VADIP) is voluntary. Participants are responsible for all premiums, which range from \$8.65 to \$52.90 per month for individual plans. Copayments and other charges may apply.

Historically VA's free dental services have gone to Veterans with dental problems connected to a medical condition that's officially certified as service connected. Free dental services will continue for those Veterans.

For more information on VADIP, visit www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vadip, or contact Delta Dental at 1-855-370-3303 or MetLife at 1-888-310-1681. Veterans who are not enrolled in the VA health care system can apply at any time by visiting www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll, calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or visiting their local VA health care facility.

VADIP ENROLLMENT IN 3-YR DENTAL PILOT PROGRAM BEGINS

A new VA program will soon allow all enrolled veterans and CHAMPVA beneficiaries to purchase private dental insurance at a reduced cost. Dependents of Veterans, except those eligible under CHAMPVA, are not authorized to participate in VADIP. Those individuals may be eligible for separate dental insurance coverage offered by the carriers. Created by the Caregivers and Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010, this three year pilot program known as the VA Dental Insurance Program (VADIP) will offer a wide array of affordable plans to veterans and eligible dependents through Delta Dental and MetLife. Covered services include diagnostic, preventative, surgical, emergency and endodontic/restorative treatment. Delta Dental and MetLife are offering multiple plans. Each participant pays the fixed monthly premiums for coverage and any copayments required, depending on the type of plan selected. Monthly premiums will range from \$8.65 to \$52.90, depending on level of coverage selected. The initial participation period will be at least 12 calendar months. Afterward, VADIP beneficiaries can renew their participation for another 12-month period or be covered month-to-month, as long as the participant remains eligible for coverage and VA continues VADIP. Participation in this program is entirely optional and dental service connection is not required. Enrollment begins on Nov. 15, 2013, with coverage beginning on Jan. 1, 2014. For more information call 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or go to <http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vadip> and click the insurer's link for specific information regarding registration, rates and services. [Source: <http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/>

[vadip](#) Oct 2013]

DoD/TSA PARTNER TO PROVIDE MILITARY TSA PRECHECK AT 100 AIRPORTS

Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard, as well as Reservists and National Guard members, eligible for expedited screening

As part of the ongoing effort to move away from a one size fits all security approach and provide more of the traveling public the ability to participate in expedited screening, today the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the Department of Defense (DoD) announced a partnership to expand TSA Precheck expedited screening benefits to all U.S. Armed Forces service members, including those serving in the U.S. Coast Guard, Reserves and National Guard. As a result of the agreement, these individuals will be able to enjoy the benefits of the program at the 100 participating airports across the country, beginning Dec. 20.

Currently, members of the U.S. Armed Forces can utilize TSA Precheck lanes at 10 domestic airports by presenting their Common Access Card (CAC). The partnership expands the program to the military at all 100 airports offering TSA Precheck, allowing service members to keep their footwear on as well as light outerwear, belts, laptop in its case and their 3-1-1 compliant liquids/gels bag in a carry on in select screening lanes.

"Expanding TSA Precheck screening benefits is great news for our service members and is a tangible sign of this nation's gratitude for the men and women who serve this nation bravely each and every day," said Mary Snavelly-Dixon, director, Defense Manpower Data Center. "We will continue to work with the Transportation Security Administration to help expand this program further."

"TSA joins with the American people in showing its appreciation for the service and sacrifices of our men and women in the Armed Forces," said TSA Deputy Administrator John W. Halinski, a 25-year Marine Corps veteran. "Providing expedited screening while on travel is the least we can do for these courageous men and women."

The new process being established under this agreement allows all active duty, U.S. Coast Guard, Reserve and National Guard service members to use their DoD identification number when making reservations. That ID number will be used as their Known Traveler Number. When arriving at the airport, service members will then be permitted access to TSA Precheck lanes for official or leisure travel on participating airlines.

More than 18 million passengers have experienced TSA Precheck since it launched in October 2011. TSA has recently expanded this expedited screening program to 60 new airports in addition to the existing 40, bringing the total number of airports with TSA Precheck to 100.

TSA has long recognized our men and women in uniform as nearly a quarter of TSA's workforce is a veteran or currently serves as an active duty service member in the U.S. Armed Forces.

In addition to expanding TSA Precheck to service members, TSA wants to remind the American public about the Wounded Warrior Screening program. This program makes the overall experience for wounded service members as simple as possible. This includes personalized service and expedited screening to move through security checkpoints without having to remove footwear, light outerwear, jackets or head wear. Wounded warriors or their care coordinators can contact TSA Cares toll free at 1-855-787-2227 with details of the itinerary once flight arrangements are made with the airline.

TSA will always incorporate random and unpredictable security measures throughout the airport. No individual will be guaranteed expedited screening. Travelers can check the TSA Precheck Participating Airports page for information on locations and hours of active TSA Precheck lanes.

Further information on TSA Precheck for military members can be found at www.TSA.gov and www.defensetravel.dod.mil.

PARTNERSHIP MEANS FASTER AIRPORT SCREENING FOR SERVICE MEMBERS

American Forces Press Service

Defense Department and Transportation Security Administration officials today announced a partnership

to expand "TSA Precheck" expedited screening benefits to all U.S. armed forces service members, including those serving in the Coast Guard, Reserves and National Guard, during their official or leisure travel.

As a result of the agreement, these individuals will be able to enjoy the benefits of the program at the 100 participating airports across the country beginning Dec. 20, officials said.

Currently, members of the armed forces can use TSA Precheck lanes at 10 domestic airports by presenting their common access cards. The partnership expands the program to all 100 airports offering TSA Precheck, allowing service members to keep their footwear and light outerwear on and their laptop in its case, as well as to have their 3-1-1 compliant liquids and gels bag in a carry-on bag in select screening lanes.

"Expanding TSA Precheck screening benefits is great news for our service members and is a tangible sign of this nation's gratitude for the men and women who serve this nation bravely each and every day," said Mary Snavelly-Dixon, director of the Defense Manpower Data Center. "We will continue to work with the Transportation Security Administration to help expand this program further."

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TSA also noted that wounded service members can get expedited screening without having to remove footwear, light outerwear, jackets or headwear. To take advantage of that program, wounded warriors or their care coordinators can contact "TSA Cares" toll free at 1-855-787-2227 with details of the itinerary once flight arrangements are made with the airline.

TSA will always incorporate random and unpredictable security measures throughout the airport, officials said, so no one is guaranteed expedited screening. Travelers can check the TSA Precheck Participating Airports Web page for information on locations and hours of active TSA Precheck lanes.

"SPACE-A" TRAVEL ON MILITARY FLIGHTS

For service members and their families, traveling Space Available — or Space-A — on military flights can be a great benefit, but you have to be flexible. Military flights are unpredictable and subject to delays and cancellations. You'll need to be ready both financially and emotionally to change your plans at a moment's notice. But for many Space-A passengers, traveling to places like Hawaii, Alaska, Germany, Italy or Japan at no or very low cost is worth the effort. The following information will help you understand how the system works.

Understanding Space-A travel Military planes (and planes contracted by the military) have mission assignments throughout the world and often offer empty seats to eligible passengers. Space-A passengers can't reserve seats; available seats are offered to registered passengers before the flight. Here are some things you should know before you try to find a Space-A flight:

- Eligibility. Available seats are offered to service members, retirees, certain DoD employees and their eligible family members. Guard and reserve members may also travel Space-A but with restrictions. Eligible family members can travel without their active duty sponsor under certain circumstances, such as Environmental and Morale Leave or when their service member is deployed for more than 120 days.

- Military terminals. Space-A flights leave from military passenger terminals on installations throughout the United States and around the world. You must sign up for flights on a register maintained at each passenger terminal. Policies and procedures for Space-A travelers vary by installation, so make sure you understand the

rules for registration at each terminal from which you are trying to fly. You can find contact information for military terminals at Air Mobility Command(AMC).

· Flights. For security reasons, military flight information is not generally published online. The best way to find out about Space-A flights is to call the passenger terminal and ask. The busiest terminals often have regularly scheduled flights and offer the best opportunity for Space-A seats.

· Costs. In general, flying Space-A is at no cost to eligible passengers. However, some contracted flights charge Space-A passengers a small fee, and you may be required to pay a departure tax if you are traveling internationally. On many flights, meal service isn't provided, but you may have an opportunity to buy a boxed meal before the flight.

Signing up for a Space-A flight In order to fly Space-A, eligible passengers must register (sign up) at the military passenger terminal from which they want to depart. Uniformed service members must be on leave or pass status when they sign up. Registration can be very competitive at some busy terminals, so be sure to sign up as early as you can. · Passenger registration. You can sign up on the terminal's register up to 60 days in advance. You may sign up for more than one destination and at more than one terminal. When you sign up, make sure you have your military ID and leave papers (if necessary). Some terminals accept fax or email sign up, but procedures vary by terminal. For contact information on military passenger terminals, visit AMC. When you get to your destination, be sure to register for a return flight.

· Categories. Once registered, you are assigned a passenger category. These categories determine how seats are assigned. Within each category, passengers are prioritized based on the date and time they registered. Available seats are assigned first to Category I passengers, continuing through the categories until all empty seats are filled.

· Category I. Active duty service members and their accompanying families traveling on emergency leave.

· Category II. Service members and their accompanying family members traveling on EML. This includes command-sponsored family members who are stationed outside the continental United States.

· Category III. Service members and their accompanying families traveling on ordinary leave or reenlistment leave status, and unaccompanied family members of service members deployed 365 consecutive days or more. This category also includes service members and their families on house-hunting leave.

· Category IV. Unaccompanied family members on EML orders and eligible family members of service members deployed 120 days or more.

· Category V. Students whose sponsor is stationed in Alaska or Hawaii and students enrolled in a trade school within the continental United States when the sponsor is stationed overseas.

· Category VI. Retirees and their accompanying family members. This category also includes Guard and reserve members who are traveling within CONUS, Alaska, Hawaii and U. S. territories.

For more detailed descriptions, go to DoD Air Transportation Eligibility regulation. · Documentation. Make sure you understand what documentation you will need to travel, including:

· Your military ID

· A copy of your leave orders, if applicable (for emergency leave, EML or ordinary leave passengers)

· Unaccompanied family members of service members who are deployed for 120 days or more need a letter verifying eligibility from the service member's commanding officer

· A passport and appropriate visas (if traveling overseas)

· DD Form 1853: Verification of Reserve Status for Travel Eligibility (for eligible Guard and reserve members)

· At the terminal. Plan to arrive at the terminal early. Space-A seats can be released two or three hours before a scheduled flight. Check with the passenger counter to be sure you are registered for the flight and your documents are in order.

Traveling Space-A Space-A travel can be trying — especially if you're traveling with young children. Planning ahead will help things go a little more smoothly.

· Research where to go. The busiest military passenger terminals will have the most available Space-A seating.

· Figure out when to go. Try to fly when schools are in session. The busiest times to fly — which means fewer available seats — are during holidays and summer vacation. Visit DoD Education Activity for the Department of Defense school calendar.

· Prepare for long delays. Flights can be delayed for

hours or even days. Sometimes flights make unscheduled stops or are rerouted. Be sure to carry plenty of snacks and reading materials. If you are traveling with children, pack extra food and toys.

· Bring cash or credit cards. You'll want to have enough money to buy a commercial plane ticket home or pay for a hotel room, if necessary. Many passenger terminals close at night, so you will need to find lodging if you are still waiting for a flight.

· Pack lightly. Luggage allowance will depend on the type of aircraft. By limiting your luggage, you'll be able to board any available flight to your destination.

· Be flexible. As a Space-A passenger, you could fly on a comfortable passenger plane or in the cargo hold of a C-130. To get the most out of your trip, you'll need a good attitude and a sense of adventure.

----- SOURCE: MilitaryOneSource News Release at http://www.militaryonesource.mil/mwr?content_id=268596

MOTHER RECEIVES MOH FLAG RECOGNIZING SON’S VIETNAM ACTIONS

Forty-four years after making the ultimate sacrifice to protect fellow Marines while fighting North Vietnamese soldiers, U.S. Marine Pfc. Class Bruce Carter — a Medal of Honor recipient — was recognized during a formal military ceremony Dec. 5, 2013. The ceremony was held at the Miami VA Medical Center, which was named after Pfc. Carter in 2008 as a tribute to his bravery and selfless sacrifice.

Marine Corps Gen. John F. Kelly, Cmdr., U.S. Southern Command, presents Georgie Carter-Krell, mother of Marine Pfc. Bruce Carter -- a Medal of Honor recipient -- with the official Medal of Honor flag during a ceremony Dec. 5, 2013, at the Miami VA Medical Center.

U.S. Marine Gen. John Kelly, commander, U.S. Southern Command, presented Carter’s mother, Georgie Carter-Krell, with the Medal of Honor Flag on behalf of the president of the United States, the secretary of the Navy and a grateful nation.

During the ceremony, Carter-Krell presented the Medal of Honor flag to Mark Morgan, associate director of Miami VAMC. Carter-Krell has carried on her family’s



legacy of service by volunteering at the hospital for more than 20 years.

Carter served as a radio operator with Hotel Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Division. On Aug. 7, 1969, while in combat north of Vandgrift Base in Quang Tri Province, Vietnam, Carter threw himself on an enemy grenade, giving his life in service so that his fellow Marines could survive.

The Medal of Honor, the nation’s highest military award, has been awarded to 3,467 Servicemembers since its inception in 1862. Fewer than 100 recipients are still living.

Carter was the only Medal of Honor recipient from South Florida who served in the Vietnam War. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor in 1971.

Carter’s Medal of Honor Citation reads as follows: “For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as grenadier with Company H in connection with combat operations against the enemy. Pfc. Carter’s unit was maneuvering against the enemy during Operation Idaho Canyon and came under a heavy volume of fire from a numerically superior hostile force. The lead element soon became separated from the main body of the squad

by a brush fire. Pfc. Carter and his fellow Marines were pinned down by vicious crossfire when, with complete disregard for his safety, he stood in full view of the North Vietnamese Army soldiers to deliver a devastating volume of fire at their positions. The accuracy and aggressiveness of his attack caused several enemy casualties and forced the remainder of the soldiers to retreat from the immediate area. Shouting directions to the Marines around him, Pfc. Carter then commenced leading them from the path of the rapidly approaching brush fire when he observed a hostile grenade land between him and his companions. Fully aware of the probable consequences of his action but determined to protect the men following him, he unhesitatingly threw himself over the grenade, absorbing the full effects of its detonation with his body. Pfc. Carter’s indomitable courage, inspiring initiative, and selfless devotion to duty upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the U.S. Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life in the service of his country.”

MORTALITY RATES AMONG VIETNAM VETERANS

Patrick S. Brady

Recently, the Internet has been a wash with dire predictions of the imminent demise of all Vietnam veterans. Both alarmed and suspicious, Vietnam veteran Pat Brady did some investigating. Here’s what he found.

“If you’re alive and reading this, how does it feel to be among the last one-third of all the U. S. Vets who served in Vietnam?” Like a ritual salute, this question has passed from one veteran website to another in the past 18 months, accompanied by a drumbeat of numbers: 711,000 Vietnam veterans died between 1995 and 2000, or 142,000 deaths every year, 390 every day; no more than 850,000 Vietnam veterans remain out of 2.7 million, meaning at least 1.8 million have fallen to the swift scythe of the Grim Reaper; and “only the few” will still be around by 2015. “We died in ’Nam,” reckoned one veteran, “just haven’t fallen over yet.”

This actuarial cadence-count went viral on “Before They Go,” a nine-minute video posted on YouTube by Veterans Appreciation Alliance, a group seeking sponsors and contributions for its Grateful Red, White & Blue Appreciation Tour. One website hailed the video as a “warning that our Vietnam vets are dying off rapidly, and we need to give them a proper ‘Welcome Home’ before they are gone.” Many veterans proved quite ready to believe that their comrades were falling fast to Agent Orange, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicide.

But others were skeptical. Passing through the blogosphere, the supposed daily death toll of 390 Vietnam veterans sprouted a spurious pedigree, with several websites attributing it to the Naval Health Research Center. This was news to the Center, whose Public Affairs Office called on the makers of “Before They Go” to remove the bogus attribution. The nine minute video disappeared from



VVA accepts donations of all kinds, but we especially need clothing.

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Baby items
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Stereos, radios, portable TVs
All bedding, draperies, curtains
Kitchenware
Usable small furniture & rugs
Small appliances
Tools (all kinds)
Jewelry and cosmetics
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You Tube by mid-April 2010, replaced by a four-minute version cleansed of the offending mortality figures.

Yet the mournful numbers still pop up all over the Internet. Are they true? Where did they come from? First, we must face the limits of our knowledge: No one knows for sure how many in-country Vietnam veterans are alive. So anyone who tells you he is sure is making it up.

The number living must be measured against a baseline of those who were there in the first place. But no one is sure of that number either, despite a surfeit of surveys and estimates. The Department of Defense kept a consolidated file of those who died in the Vietnam War but not of those who fought it. Encyclopedias, dictionaries, and almanacs of thewar are conspicuously silent about how many actually saw duty in Vietnam.

To make up for the lack of an in-country master list, estimates and surveys have started with figures for those who served worldwide during the Vietnam era, and for those who served in the Vietnam theater, a term that includes Vietnam, its coastal waters, Laos, Cambodia, and sometimes Thailand.

Defining the era presents problems of its own, with Section 101(29) of the U.S. Code for Veterans offering two definitions of the Vietnam era: 1) February 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975, for veterans who served in Vietnam; and 2) August 5, 1964, to May 7, 1975, for those who served elsewhere. These are the same parameters used to determine eligibility for membership in VVA. Adding to the confusion, some estimates treat the Vietnam era as ending not in 1975, but in 1973, the year of the Paris Peace Accords. So different estimates of those who served and those who survive produce different results, varying according to the location of service (Vietnam itself or the Vietnam theater) and time covered (usually starting in 1961, 1964, or even 1965, and ending in 1973 or 1975).

A survey of surveys appeared in the first volume (1994) of the Institute of Medicine's semiannual studies, Veterans and Agent Orange. Estimates of in-country Vietnam service, the Institute found, ranged from 2. 6 to 3.8 million, with most falling between 2.6 and 2. 9. Estimates for the Vietnam theater ranged from 2.7 to 4.3 million, with 3.4 million the most widely cited figure.

These numbers must be seen against the larger total of those who served worldwide during the Vietnam era, 8.75 million from 1964-73, and 9.2 million from 1964-75. Depending on the estimate, one out of three Vietnam-era veterans served in the Vietnam theater, and four out of five Vietnam theater veterans served in Vietnam itself.

With these estimates in mind, we can start closing in on what can be said about the number of living in country Vietnam veterans. Better figures are available for era veterans than for in-country veterans. The 2000 Census long form, for example, asked about period of service but not place. Estimates for living in-country veterans can be extrapolated from figures for living era veterans.

Setting a benchmark for the year 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated there were 8,380,356 living Vietnam-era (here defined as 1964-75) veterans, about 90 percent of the original 9.2 million, with the death toll near 800,000. The Centers for Disease Control reached a like finding in a Post-Service Mortality Study of 18,313 Vietnam-era veterans, half of whom served in country. By the end of 2000, the CDC found, about 91 percent of era veterans were living, aged 46 to 67 in the sample, with a mean of 53; death rates for veterans were lower than for all men in the U.S. through 1998; and in-country veterans suffered 7 percent higher mortality than other veterans. That difference, the CDC said, was "not statistically significant," was confined to the first five years after discharge from active duty, and was limited to "external causes"—mostly traffic accidents, suicides, homicides, and unintentional poisonings, many of them drug-related.

If in-country Vietnam veterans accounted for about a third of all Vietnam-era veterans, and if they were Dying only slightly faster than the others, then the 800,000 era veterans who died from the 1960s through 2000 should have included fewer than 300,000 in-country veterans. That fact rules out the supposed passing of 711,000 of them between 1995 and 2000 alone, a figure that forms one verse of the Internet litany.

Reaching a comparable estimate for the Vietnam theater, the VA Office of Environmental Epidemiology keeps an incomplete list of 3,056,000 Vietnam theater veterans, and counts 349,000 theater veteran deaths through 2001, a count the Office considers 95 percent complete. If four out of five theater veterans served in country and if they were dying only slightly faster than other veterans, then the 349,000 theater deaths should have included 280,000 to 300,000 in country veteran deaths through 2001, an estimate in line with the CDC and Census figures through 2000.

The VA's Veteran Population Model for 2007

estimates that 8,448,000 Vietnam-era (1964-75) veterans were living in 2000, and 7,526,000 living on September 30, 2010. While 47,000 leaving the military joined the ranks of Vietnam-era veterans during the decade, 969,000 deaths thinned those ranks. Again, if a third of era veterans were in-country veterans who were dying only slightly faster than other veterans through 2000, they should account for 325,000 to 350,000 of the 969,000 Vietnam-era deaths from 2000 to 2010, unless their mortality rate skyrocketed far above the rate for other veterans after 2000.

There is no evidence that it did, and some that it did not. A Current Population Survey by the Census Bureau for August 2009 estimated 7,183,000 living Vietnam-era veterans, including 3,566,000 living Vietnam theater veterans. Compared to other estimates, the era figure seems low, while the theater figure seems high, but the high number may cover a longer period—1961 to 1975—and may reflect inflated self-reporting of Vietnam service. But even allowing for such complications, the survey weighs against any soaring death rate for in-country Vietnam veterans. If three million or more theater veterans are alive, and four out of five of them are in-country veterans, then 2.4 million or more in-country Vietnam veterans should still live, triple the 800,000 rumored on the Internet.

Origins Of A Myth

So, thank God, most in-country veterans are not dead yet. But who started the story that they were? Doomsday dirges do not need footnotes, but mortality statistics do, and the sources cited for these Internet numbers are few and mystifying. One of them, "the Public Information Office," likely leads to the American War Library. As one blogger warned: "The false number of 850,000 originates from the phony website of the American War Museum, which disseminates much false information for reasons only its manager (it is a one-man operation) might know."

The blogger misidentified the site. Otis Willie and Roger Simpson of the Public Information Office of the American War Library (not Museum) disseminated the number in a June 7, 2009, posting on alt.genealogy: "The official estimate of Vietnam War 'survivors' as of 25May2009 is 831,000. The number of Americans who served in Vietnam between 1945 and 1975 is 3.2 mil. To 2. 7 mil. 2.7 mil. Is the number counted by DoD in 1984 when producing 'The Vietnam War Service Index.'" While most cyberspace chats have rounded off the number of living Vietnam veterans to 800,000 or 850,000, the American War Library's more precise number is echoed in a posting by "Stillhere" on Veterans Benefits Network that regrets "there are only 831,000 of our brothers/ sisters still alive."

Calling itself "The World's Largest On-Line Military, Veteran and Military Family Registry," the American War Library asks: "If you are a Vietnam vet, have you verified that your name is listed in the Department of Defense's Official Vietnam Veteran War Service Index?" This "official" index, the same one cited in the Library's posting about 831,000 survivors, is often cited on the Internet as "officially provided by the War Library." As far as I can tell, this Index is nowhere to be found.

The American War Library seems to be a home business run by Phillip R. Coleman in Gardena, California. Various web postings have warned that "Roger Simpson" and "Otis Willie" are two of dozens of names used by Coleman; that the Library solicits personal information from veterans but does not provide free information about veterans; and that the Library and its many related websites post myriad military stories to attract attention and gain legitimacy. For examples of the warnings, Google "American War Library—exposed" or "American War Library scam," or see www.armchairgeneral.com/forums/showthread.php?t=96622

Statistics are hard enough without phony numbers thrown in. But in the available statistics, we find no evidence that the number of living in-country Vietnam veterans is only 800,000, and strong evidence that it is much higher. Again, by my own amateur extrapolations, fewer than 300,000 in-country veterans likely died before 2000, and a slightly larger number since, adding up to 600,000 or more dead, leaving two million or more alive. So if you're a Vietnam veteran reading this, how does it feel to stand with the three out of four who are still here and mean to stay for a while?

For information used in this article, I thank Mike Wells of the VA Office of Policy and Planning, National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, and James Messenger, the treasurer of the National Vietnam War Museum.

VIETNAM POW PASSES

Retired Brig. Gen. James Robinson "Robbie" Risner,

who was the senior ranking prisoner of war in Vietnam for five years, died Oct. 22 at the age of 88, according to the Air Force.

During his career, Risner was awarded the Silver Star twice, the Air Force Cross twice and the Air Force Distinguished Service Medal. On one mission in 1952, his wingman's plane was hit and started to leak fuel, so Risner tried to use his plane to push his wingman home, according to his first Silver Star citation.

Ultimately, Risner flew more than 108 combat missions in the Korean War, becoming an ace with eight kills, Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Welsh wrote in a tribute to Risner. During Vietnam, Risner was shot down twice: First in March 1965, when he was rescued after bailing out over the Tonkin Gulf. A month later, Time magazine featured him on the cover.

"On Sept. 16, he was shot down again, and this time, was captured," Welsh wrote in the Oct. 24 tribute. "To make things worse, his captors had the Time article, and made him their 'prized prisoner,' which meant more abuse."

During his time in the Hoa Lo Prison, Risner endured years of solitary confinement, torture and other abuse, but he stood out as a leader among the POWs, such as when he helped organize a church service in 1971, even though it meant he would be punished.

"As their captors led Risner away, Col. 'Bud' Day and the more than 40 other POWs in the room began singing 'The Star Spangled Banner' to show their support," Welsh wrote. "Hearing the defiant singing, Risner walked away with his back straight, head held high, full of pride."

"When asked later how he felt at that moment, Risner said, 'I felt like I was 9 feet tall and could go bear hunting with a switch.' That moment and his words are reflected by a statue, exactly 9 feet high, that now stands at the U.S. Air Force Academy. Bud Day spoke at the unveiling of the statue, saying, 'We knew he was in fact 9 feet tall. This is a life-size statue.'"

U.S. Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., who was also a POW during the Vietnam War, issued a statement Thursday in honor of Risner.

"I am deeply saddened by the passing of my dear friend and fellow POW Air Force Brig. Gen. James Robinson 'Robbie' Risner," McCain said in the statement. "From the first moment of his imprisonment to his last, Robbie was an exemplary senior officer, an inveterate communicator, an inspiration to the men he commanded, and a genuine American hero. My thoughts and prayers are with his family — he will be dearly missed."

On Friday, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, a Vietnam veteran, said his heart goes out to Risner's wife Dorothy and the entire Risner family.

"I have known and admired Robbie for many years, and was always moved by his unwavering spirit and love of country," Hagel said in a statement. "He served in the U.S. Air Force for more than 30 years — seven of which he endured as a prisoner of war in Vietnam, facing relentless torture and extended periods of solitary confinement at the so-called Hanoi Hilton."

"Robbie's constant resistance in the face of his captors served as an inspiration not only to his fellow prisoners of war, but millions of Americans around the country. While our nation has lost a great hero, Robbie — like all American prisoners of war — will never be forgotten."



New Sign (above) Spotted in Bakersfield Area honoring former CSC President and long time vet advocate



Chapter 756 at Veterans Day Parade (above)

In memory of Greg Boysol
Fred Buhler, Chapter 535

On the evening of December 17th, 2003, several members of Chapter 535 gathered in Nevada City at the Chapter’s booth to sell brownies, hot cider and coffee during Victorian Christmas. We had operated this booth for a number of years. This booth has always been one of our chapter’s most successful fund raisers. Shortly after 7PM Greg Boysol mentioned that he was going to get something to eat. One of the Chapter’s founding members, Greg had served as Chapter President and was our Chapter Treasurer, a position he had ably filled for several years. He was also Treasurer for the California State Council. As Chapter 535’s representative to the CSC, I often travelled to Fresno with Greg to attend quarterly meetings.

When Greg didn’t return, we started to look for him up and down Broad Street but were unable to find him. After the event closed at 9 PM and we started taking the booth down, we asked a passing police officer if he might have heard anything about our missing brother. He looked startled and asked us to repeat Greg’s name. He then turned away and spoke briefly into his radio. When he turned back, he said, “Mr. Boysol died earlier this evening.”

We later found out that Greg had walked over to the Nevada City Veterans Hall, two short blocks from our booth, where he suffered a massive heart attack. Although an EMT team was nearby, Greg died before the team arrived at the Vet’s Hall.

On the tenth anniversary of Greg’s death his significant other and business partner, Diane Meyers, wrote the following message to be read to chapter members during our Christmas dinner.

Message from Diane Meyers.
I want to share the peace and hope of the Holidays with tenth anniversary of the passing of Greg Boysol, I especially Sacramento.
It was Dec 17th ten years ago that Greg and I had stayed wanted to go up early to help with set up. He left in the afternoon evening that a sheriff’s deputy showed up at the door and said With the utterance of those words my life changed forever. 20 years. Your first reaction is you just can’t believe it, so I Unfortunately I am not the only one who has lost a VVA as last month, we lost Dale.



you all as you gather tonight to give thanks and remember. Since this is the wanted to be there with you all; however, I had a previous engagement in home to work since it was “Brownie Night” at Victorian Xmas and he kissing me good bye, saying “see, ya’ later”. It was several hours later that “Do you know a Greg Boysol?” I had lost my significant other, my business partner and my friend of almost had to call Dick Corn after the officer left to verify the night mare. 535 member since 2003, many were good friends of Greg. Even as recently

In the middle of sorrow and despair, however, I found I had family in VVA 535. Several members spent many hours with me immediately after Greg’s death. My family was all back East and Greg’s last family member (his mother) had just passed away two months earlier. The late Bob Carton accompanied me to the mortuary and coroner’s officer the next day, Fred and Margie were constantly at my side, and Bill Holman helped with all the notifications and planning, and many other members who helped with the funeral and dinner. Many still call, just to see how I am doing. This support is something you can’t put a price on and I appreciated it all.

With the passage of these ten years, I frequently find myself wondering what Greg would have thought about the world today: The politics, the advances in technology, and the achievements of VVA locally and statewide in the last years. The Chapter’s website is fantastic and Greg would have been proud. The growth in membership and the achievements of 535 would also have pleased him.

On the funny side, I bet Uncle Si of Duck Dynasty would be one of his favorite TV characters. And I wonder how would he feel about his favorite actor, Bryan Cranston from Malcom in the Middle, becoming a drug czar in Breaking Bad? Even though someone has left this world, these thoughts go thru your mind, reminding you of their presence and influence on your life.

Finally one last story I will share with you all about Greg. When I vacated our office in Yuba City, a neighboring insurance agency that we were friends with, took over our lease and the contents. It was a few years later that the Insurance Agent called me and we talked for a while. Then he told me something he said I may not believe. He told me he had to have Greg’s spirit “removed” from the building. At first I thought.....hmmm “what have you been smoking?”. But as he told the story, it sent goose bumps up my arm.

It seems that shortly after the agent moved in, they started seeing a male figure in the doorway and feeling a presence in Greg’s office. The owner’s daughter and secretary actually ran out of the office in fright one day when they saw the figure coming at them and going into Greg’s room. This went on for some time until they hired a woman who worked with “spirits” and she was able to make an on-site visit, feel the presence and move his spirit along “to the other side”. While it takes a belief in the super natural to really grasp the story, I can believe that Greg had “unfinished business” he just felt he needed to complete.

In closing, I hope this wasn’t a downer, but more a reminiscence of ten years ago when a vet died far too early, but doing what he loved—helping his fellow vets! My Best Wishes to All over the holidays. Hopefully my life will become less complicated soon, so I can rejoin the group and participate.
Diane L Myers
Lifetime AVVA Member



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To:

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

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