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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I want to thank everyone for a productive 2016. We had numerous requests from all over the state for Veterans assistance. When I receive the different requests I contact the area chapter to see if they can help. Every chapter that I have contacted to assist a veteran went above and beyond to help out.

One veteran was looking for food for Thanksgiving. The chapter I asked to assist the veteran not only helped him out for Thanksgiving, they helped him get set up with Meals on Wheels so that he has food for a lifetime.

This is what it is all about, not stopping with just one good deed but seeing beyond to what can be done to help.

VVA National is working on plans for the future of VVA. At the October National Board meeting we were given a presentation on where VVA is going. It's called "Lights Out? Preserving Our Legacy", The Strategic Plan.

The plan calls for VVA to create two panels of 8 people each, which the National Officers choose last month. Panel A will develop a plan on closing down VVA while Panel B will develop a plan on starting a new group to take over for VVA when VVA decides to close their doors. They want the new group to be another veterans group to follow in VVA's footsteps.

Panel A would work to formulate a strategic plan to "transition" at a time certain in the future and to communicate the plan to the general membership for approval at a Convention. The recommended members for the panel should have varied backgrounds in VVA leadership roles/experience or a personal work record history that relates to the task at hand and a track record for finishing they're assigned tasks that can be unitized to help develop the plan. The plan will have various aspects that need to be addressed to complete the transition.

- Corporation's Legal Environment
- State Requirements to Close
- Federal Requirements to Close
- Take Care of VVA Employees
- Take Care of Professional Partners
- Notification to Membership
- Notification to Donors
- Payment of Debts or Negotiate Settlements of Obligations
- Inventory of All Assets
- Veterans' Benefits Service and Records
- Determination on What to do with Legacy Documents/Information
- Establish Timeframe for the Transition

Panel B would determine the feasibility of forming, chartering, funding and/or empowerment of a new veterans' organization to perpetuate our legacy and assure the tomorrow of all veterans, which will be communicated to the membership for approval at a Convention. The recommended members for the panel should have varied backgrounds in VVA leadership roles/experience or a personal work record history that relates to the task at hand, a good energetic communicator and a track record for finishing they're assigned tasks that can be unitized to help develop the plan. The plan will have various aspects that need to be addressed to complete the feasibility.

- Determine if there is Interest in Forming a New Veterans' Organization
- Establish a Procedure for Chartering
- Identify Funding Availability
- How the New Veterans' Organization would be Structured
- Determine if there will be Membership Development
- Availability of Existing VVA Resources

Now VVA is not going to be closing their doors anytime soon. National wants to start early so that when the time does come to close VVA doors we will be ready and hopefully there will be a group to take over for us. This is a number of years down the road.

Just remember that all the plans the two panels come up with have to be voted on by the delegates at our National conventions. So if you want your voice heard on the decisions as to where VVA will be going in the future make sure you send all your delegates to the National Conventions. Your votes will be very important to VVA's future.

Best wishes to you all for the New Year. Keep up the good work. It is appreciated by all.

The CSC board and the chapters have a lot to be proud of.

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCATE'S REPORT

By Pete Conaty:

NEW LEGISLATORS AND NEW LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The November elections brought in 22 new legislators to the California Senate and Assembly. The State Legislature operates in two year sessions beginning in the odd year, therefore 2017 will be the beginning of the 2017-18 Legislative Session. In January, everything starts anew. New committee chairs and members, new legislation, and the newly elected legislators.

In the 40-member State Senate, there are nine new Senators. Six of them moved up from the Assembly and three are first-time legislators. In the 80-member Assembly, there are 22 new Assemblymembers. Eighteen are brand new and four were reelected to the Legislature after a being out of office for a while.

Almost 20% of the Legislature is brand new. This makes it very important that

veterans attend the annual Day at the Capitol event so that these new legislators can be educated on veterans issues and meet veterans from their district. Proposition 28 in 2012 changed the rules on term limits for the Legislature. Beginning in 2013, legislators could serve a total of 12 years in the Senate, Assembly, or a combination of the two houses. Legislators elected prior to that are under the old rules. More legislators are under the new rules and this will allow legislators more time to become policy experts in their legislative interests.

- Legislators elected in 2012 can serve until 2024.
- Legislators elected in 2014 can serve until 2026.
- Legislators elected in 2016 can serve until 2028.

Therefore, it behooves veterans to build relationships with their local legislators who could be deliberating on important veterans legislation late into the next decade.

VETERANS IN THE LEGISLATURE

The 2017-18 Legislature will have 8 veterans serving. Two of them are newly elected, first time legislators: Senator Josh Newman (D-Fullerton) and Assemblyman Randy Voepel (R-Santee). They join Senator Richard Roth (D-Riverside) and Assemblymembers Bill Brough (R-Dana Point), Rocky Chávez (R-Oceanside), Susan Eggman (D-Stockton), Devon Mathis (R-Visalia), and Melissa Melendez (R-Lake Elsinore).

That means 7% of the Legislature has served in the military. Again, this is why it is so important to meet your legislators and their staffs and tell them what is important to the veterans community.

Assemblyman Voepel is a Vietnam Veteran of the U. S. Navy. I am gathering more details on their military bios and will sending that information out soon.

2017 LEGISLATION

I will be working with VVA-CSC Government Affairs Committee Chair Dean Gotham on developing our legislative strategy going forward. Also, there will be no shortage of veterans and military related bills introduced by legislators themselves and other special interest groups that we will be asked to take positions on.

2016 was a pivotal year for veterans groups as the vast majority of Veterans Service Organizations (VSO's) joined forces to defeat Prop 61, the deceptive Rx Proposition which would have tied drug prices by some state agencies to the drug prices paid by the Federal Veterans Administration. This measure was quickly seen as harmful to California veterans by California's VSO's who came out in early opposition to the measure. VSO's lead the charge against this deceptive and poorly written measure and were joined by health, business, labor groups, and others in opposition.

There were numerous television commercials, billboards, and campaign mailers featuring veterans and VSO's in opposition to the measure. Other groups were opposed to this measure also, but it was VSO's such as the Vietnam Veterans of America-California State Council who lead the charge. By the election, the opposition tried to claim that VSO's were paid to oppose this measure, while they were the ones paying for endorsements, such as \$50,000 was paid to VoteVet, a political action committee, that masqueraded as a veterans organization.

As a result of the VSO activity newspaper editorial boards took special vote of Prop 61. After examining it closely, all the major California newspapers came out in opposition to Prop 61.

After the federal V.A. issued an opinion that Prop 61 would cost them \$4.8 billion in additional cost annually, VSO's doubled down in the opposition and helped turn the tide against Prop 61. VSO's also were used in advertising to educate the voters that Prop 61 was also bad for all Californians.

As a result of the attention brought to Prop 61, the measure was defeated by 53.2% NO to 46.8% YES on November 8, 2016.

The early and unified opposition to Prop 61, which was successful, shows that when the organized veterans groups came together to work for a common goal, they can be successful. Prop 61 helped raise the profile of all veterans groups and associations in California among the general public. Let's all continue to work together for the common good of California's veterans and all its citizens in the future.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Shortly after the opening of the 115th Congress, the House of Representatives passed its first two pieces of legislation.

H.R. 27 and H.R. 28 — both veterans bills. H.R. 27, the Ensuring VA Employee Accountability Act will require that a copy of reprimands or admonishments are retained in a VA employee's permanent record.

H.R. 28, the Biological Implant Tracking and Veteran Safety Act of 2017, directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to adopt and implement a standard identification protocol for use in the tracking and procurement of biological implants. Both bills will need to pass the Senate before becoming law.

The House passed H.J. Res. 3, which approves the selection of a location for a memorial to commemorate and honor the members of the Armed Forces who served on active duty in support of Operation Desert Storm or Operation Desert Shield. The Senate must also pass this resolution before final approval by the president.

VETERANS INCARCERATED

John Mendiola, Chair
yardsbyjohn@yahoo.com

Just a short report on the VIC. We are attempting to get volunteer's from other chapters to start going into the institution close to their chapter, and set up dialog with staff sponsors. We are also attempting to coordinate with Dominic Yezzo the national chair-

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man of the veterans incarcerated committee, to come to Sierra Conservation Center here in Jamestown to do a presentation. I am also trying to set up a meeting with the necessary people from the county to set up presentation on Veterans Court in this county. I will be going to Mule creek state prison, in Lone to meet with veterans incarcerated groups to find out how we can help them with their VA issues.
Michael Walker, Co Chair
mawalker3733@gmail.com
Working with President Steve Mackey to get a better working relationship with US Vets for paroling veterans.

CATCH 22

My name is James. I'm a vet with an honorable discharge, a VVA member, and a "Life-Term" inmate (Lifer)

in San Quentin. I'm now in a very real "Catch-22" that also applies to many other California Lifer-vets.
To be "found suitable for parole" Lifers have a hearing before the "Board of Parole Hearings" (BPH). One requirement is that the Lifer present written proof that, if paroled, they'd be placed in a transitional reentry program on the very same day he (or she) is actually released from prison.
Being "found suitable" does not cause immediate parole. BPH and the Governor's Office take 150 days (approx.) to review the suitability finding. If the Lifer passes both reviews, parole then begins.
Vets with Honorable Discharges are eligible for placement in VA-funded reentry programs. I'm told current law bars those programs from writing a "placement-guarantee-letters" (to BPH) 150 days before the Lifer-vet actually arrives at their facility door. (Rightfully so, if some other homeless vet comes to their facility anytime during

those 150 days, that empty bed previously reserved for the Lifer-vet, must immediately be given to the homeless vet!)

The Catch-22 is that a Lifer-vet won't be found suitable for parole without a reentry "placement-guarantee-letter," and VA reentry facilities can't write that letter! This reveals a gap between state parole policies and VA policies, with Honorably Discharged vets caught in the middle.
Lifer-vets can apply

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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.



to non-VA reentry programs like the Salvation Army, Sister Marys, or Swords-To-Plowshares. Some of these programs will write placement –guarantee-letters acceptable to BPH. A few of these kinds of programs impose conditions on applicants, which would be illegal in VA facilities. Almost none of those programs address “vet-specific” issues like counseling and referrals for VA benefits, PTSD, and vet-suicide.

Why should an Honorably Discharged vet be forced to choose between a non-VA reentry program that’s ill-equipped for his (orher) needs, or, probable further incarceration? This seems like a fixable problem, but I don’t know how to fix it. I can only hope that creating awareness of this, will cause someone to devise a constructive solution.

Thank you for listening.
James B. Dunbar C38759
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GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

Dean Gotham, Chair

The legislative process continues in January, 2017 with a new National Congress and new State Legislature. The current legislative term was successful for VVA. The Toxic Exposure Research Act and Fairness for Veterans Act were signed into law. The team effort by National staff and the lobbying efforts of VVA members were essential to the success of these bills. It was a successful year for veteran legislation in California, as well.

An integral component of our legislative efforts is communicating with legislators. An excellent way to begin this process is to attend the 2017 CSC-VVA Legislative Day/Day at the Capitol. This year’s event will be March 28th and will occur at the Capitol. The final details of the Legislative Day will be announced as the date approaches. As part of Legislative Day activities, CSC will award Legislator of the Year awards to Senator Richard Roth and Assemblyman Rocky Chavez. Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day will be observed with a ceremony at Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Capitol Park.

As indicated at the October CSC meeting, it is time to prepare a new legislative agenda and complete Resolutions for the VVA 2017 National Convention. Committee Chair’s are encouraged to present their suggestions and Resolutions at the January CSC meeting.

CA AVVA

Elayne Mackey, Liaison

Happy New Year to you all. We have had so much illness, lost so many friends, and have seen unrest in our country and countries around the world. We will never forget our loved ones or the sorrow that we see. From all of our losses we move forward to new beginnings with renewed hope and energy. We wish you all positive thoughts, good health and love for 2017.

Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America are doing very well. We are ending 2016 with a clear vision of looking forward to 2017 and the beginning of 2 new programs, which will be previewed as soon as we have board approval.

Our membership is our roots and we will never forget that. I am very proud to be a part of this great organization.

Thank you AVVA & VVA for all of your support, donations, good wishes and simply – thank you for your friendship.

Elayne, Nina, Penny & Carol

A LESS THAN HONORABLE POLICY

By John Rowan

Kristofer Goldsmith spent the end of his teenage years photographing mutilated bodies. Mr. Goldsmith knew that he would face bullets and bombs when he enlisted in the Army shortly after Sept. 11, and like al-

most every soldier of his generation, he volunteered to serve with the understanding that he would go to war. He made sergeant in just over two years and spent an entire year in Baghdad.

The battle that Mr. Goldsmith wasn’t prepared for was coming home. He drank to get to sleep. He isolated himself so he wouldn’t hurt his friends and family when he suddenly lashed out with rage.

Then he tried to kill himself. Rather than treat him medically, the Army treated Mr. Goldsmith like a criminal. Just a few weeks after his unsuccessful suicide attempt, he was issued a less-than-honorable discharge for what the Army labeled serious misconduct. There was no court-martial finding him guilty. In 2007, Mr. Goldsmith was separated administratively with a few strokes of a pen.

His undiagnosed and untreated post-traumatic stress disorder was hard enough for him to deal with — now he had discharge papers that looked like a criminal record.

Mr. Goldsmith has spent the last decade appealing his discharge. He has sought treatment for his PTSD and his depression. He’s been invited to the White House to speak about mental health programs, and he’s started classes at Columbia University. Yet the Army continues to deny his request for an honorable discharge, holding the line on its initial conclusion that a suicide attempt amounts to a serious act of misconduct.

The Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that as many as 20 percent of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan may have PTSD. Earlier this year, The New York Times reported that as many as 13 percent of post-9/11 veterans have received less-than-honorable discharges. Last year, NPR reported that between 2009 and 2015, the Army separated more than 22,000 combat soldiers for misconduct after they had received diagnoses for mental health problems or traumatic brain injury.

That’s why Vietnam Veterans of America wrote to President Obama urging him to use his power to pardon all post-9/11 veterans who received less-than-honorable discharges without the due process of a court-martial. As outlined in a recent memorandum to Mr. Obama by the Veterans Legal Services Clinic at Yale Law School, using this presidential power is not without precedent. On his last day in office, President Gerald R. Ford issued a mass pardon, granting clemency discharges to Vietnam veterans in violation of the Military Selective Service Act or the Uniform Code of Military Justice between August 1964 and March 1973. President Jimmy Carter, in 1977, issued full pardons to those Americans who had refused induction via the Vietnam-era draft, erasing the felony-level offense of draft resistance for thousands of people. Today’s veterans deserve similar consideration.

The “misconduct” the military frequently cites to justify less-than-honorable discharges is often related to PTSD, traumatic brain injury or other service-related illnesses and injuries. Yet the military itself is culpable, having for years underdiagnosed those problems. After service, things often get worse, since “bad paper” discharges can result in the denial of veterans benefits. Without proper care, and with the stigma of a less-than-honorable discharge, these veterans are often more likely to become substance abusers, homeless or incarcerated — or to die by suicide.

Because PTSD was not entered into the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders until 1980, countless Vietnam veterans were also separated from service unfairly with “bad paper” administrative discharges that denied them access to critical benefits. Now that we better understand the effects of war, it is unconscionable that our newest veterans are being discharged for similar reasons.

It is extremely difficult for veterans suffering from a service-related condition such as PTSD to successfully appeal for a discharge upgrade on their own. This process can cost tens of thousands of dollars for private doctors who can treat and document their conditions. Furthermore, the complicated process of fact-finding and case-building typically requires hundreds of hours of work by a lawyer. The federal government stopped sponsoring discharge-upgrade centers in the early 1980s, so veterans are stuck on waiting lists for years before they can find attorneys familiar with the process.

This could be rectified if Mr. Obama simply upgraded them all to honorable discharges. This action has the potential to save lives, and it would follow a long tradition of presidents’ working to set things right for veterans before leaving office. The president should immediately grant access to PTSD and T.B.I. screening through the Department of Veterans Affairs for all veterans, regardless of discharge status. To avoid overwhelming the already-strained V.A. system, he should call on the broader medical community to help in the screening.

Mr. Obama should also start working with Donald J. Trump, who made improving veterans’ lives a central

campaign pledge, to ensure that this program extends as long as needed.

Our country should be ashamed that, after volunteering to serve in wartime, injured and ill veterans are forced to spend years fighting the bureaucracy to get the recognition and treatment they deserve. Mr. Obama, our commander in chief until Jan. 20, must stand up for these people.

The Day it Snowed in Vietnam: a true story

Copyright 1995-2009 Jim Schueckler

Complete memoir with photos is at <http://www.VirtualWall.org/snow/>

Carols played in the mess hall and the calendar read "December 24, 1969," but it didn't feel like Christmas Eve. We were tired from a long day of flying many missions picking up infantrymen and recon patrols from field locations, bringing them back to the big airfield at Phan Thiet for the Christmas cease-fire. Gunship helicopters had escorted us because they were usually needed, but today not a shot had been fired in either direction. Soldiers on both sides of this war were glad to allow the cease-fire to start one day early.

It had been a hot day, and even in the evening, after the withering sun had dipped below the horizon, we sat sweltering in tee-shirts in the pilots' hooch. The air was somber. The usual discussions of recent close calls and superior airmanship were subdued by the subject on everyone's mind, but nobody would talk about: the recent loss of four pilots and four crewmen. We joked about the cease-fire and wondered how long it would last. One man predicted that the base would be hit with mortars just before midnight. It seemed there was nothing to celebrate. One pilot tried to change the mood and proclaimed "We have to do something happy! Let's sing Christmas Carols!" But nobody started singing.

Mike Porter, my copilot, finally blurted out, "Let's take up a collection for the Project Concern hospital!" I thought back to the first time I saw the Project Concern hospital at Dam Pao; I was copilot for Ted Thoman. A medic showed us a baby in desperate need of medical care, suffering from convulsions and dehydration. Flying that Huey helicopter at top speed, Ted soon had the baby girl and her parents at the hospital at Dam Pao. That mission made me feel good; it had been the only mission, so far, that was not part of making war. The memory was vivid because only hours before we had extracted a recon team under fire. The bullet holes in the aircraft had been counted, but not yet patched.

Mike shook my shoulder to wake me from my reverie. "Hey Jim, let's ask to fly the Da Lat Macvee mission tomorrow to take money that we collect tonight." Under his crewcut blonde hair, Mike's boyish face lit up, and I had to remind myself that he was among the older Army helicopter pilots; he was 22.

Mike's excitement was contagious—I jumped up, said "Great idea, let's go ask! and almost ran out the door. We stopped at the crew chiefs' hooch and asked Bascom if he would like to fly tomorrow. He and Dave quickly agreed, also wishing to escape the prevailing sadness.

Major Stringer, the company commander, was in the operations bunker. I explained our plan but he answered: "We don't have the Da Lat Macvee mission. In fact, there are no missions; there's a cease-fire tomorrow . . . remember?"

I pleaded the cause: "Please, Sir, could you call battalion and see if some other company has Da Lat Macvee?" Macvee, the Military Assistance Command Vietnam was the US Army unit of advisors to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. One or two US advisors were assigned to small military compounds in almost every large village. A Macvee mission usually meant flying the province Senior Advisor around to visit the villages. Macvee missions were a respite from the tension and danger of combat assaults or recon team missions, but had their own risks of weather, wind, and being without gunship escort. Flying near the beautiful city of Da Lat, up in the cool mountains, was an additional treat.

The CO picked up the phone and then started writing on a mission sheet form. He handed it to me and said, "Da Lat Macvee helipad, oh seven thirty; We took the mission from the 92nd." He opened his wallet, and handed me some money. "Here. Good luck!"

When we reached the gunship platoon hooch three pilots looked on sadly as one man raked a pile of money across the table towards himself. We made our sales pitch about the hospital. The lucky gambler pushed the money towards us and said: "Here—take it! I'd just lose it all back to these guys anyway, Merry Christmas!"

Similar responses began to fill our ammo can with money of all denominations as we roamed among hooches and tents, collecting money from men whose generosity



made me believe in the Christmas spirit again. At one stop, a pilot gave us a gift package of cheese. Food! We could take food! We decided to make another pass through the company area, asking for cookies, candy, and other food-stuffs. As we left one hooch with our arms full, the men inside began singing "Deck the Halls," and soon those in other buildings were competing. Christmas Eve had arrived in this tropical land of heat and war and death!

When we reached the mess hall, the cooks were still there, preparing for Christmas Day. To our question the mess sergeant replied: "Do you have a truck with you? We have a surplus of food because so many guys went home early." One pilot went to get the maintenance truck while the rest of us sorted cans and cartons of food. We then drove to the infantry mess hall where we accepted four cases of freeze-dried foods. The medic at the dispensary gave us bandages and dressings.

We tied down the huge pile of booty in the Huey. After returning the truck, the four pilots walked together back to our hooch. One looked at his watch and said, "Hey guys! It's midnight. Merry Christmas!"

My alarm clock startled me out of a deep sleep. A check with my wristwatch verified the time, but something was wrong. There was no shouting, no rumble of trucks, no roar of propellers and rotors. Mornings had always bustled with the sounds of men and machines preparing for the daily business of war, but today there were no such sounds. I thought to myself, "Is this what peace sounds like?"

In the shower building, Mike and I talked about what our families would be doing today on the other side of the world. As all short timers do, I reminded Mike that in just two weeks I would be going home, my year in Vietnam over. My wife promised me another Christmas celebration, with decorated tree and wrapped presents. I would be meeting another Mike for the first time, my son, now only a few months old.

After breakfast, the others went to the flight line while I called for a weather briefing. When I reached the helicopter, Mike was doing the preflight inspection and had just climbed up to the top of the Huey. Together, we checked the main rotor hub and the "Jesus nut" that holds the rotor on the helicopter. Everything was fine; we were ready to fly. We took off and headed for the mountains.

It always felt good to fly with this crew; we were a finely tuned team. The rugged and muscular Lee looked every bit like the cartoon cowboy he chose for his nickname "Bad Bascom." He was the crew chief of this Huey and did all the daily maintenance on it; it was his "baby." With Mike as copilot and Dave as door gunner, we had taken that helicopter into and out of many difficult situations, from landing supplies on a windy mountain top to extracting recon teams from small clearings while taking enemy fire. The radio call sign of the 192nd Assault Helicopter Company was Polecat; we were Polecat Three Five Six and proud of it. This day was beginning to feel even better because we were going to use our combat skills for a mission that seemed so unrelated to war.

I decided to climb higher than usual in the smooth morning air. As we left the jungle plains along the coast, the green mountains of the Central Highlands rose up to meet us. On the plateau, a thick blanket of fog lay like cotton under a Christmas tree. It spilled over between the peaks in slow, misty, waterfalls. In the rising sunlight the mountain tops cast long shadows on the fog. The beauty and serenity of the scene were dazzling. Had I noticed this before? I think I had, but today the gorgeous scenery wasn't a backdrop for the unexpected horror of war.

The mess hall had been quiet. The airfield was quiet. The radios were quiet. We weren't even chattering on the intercom as we usually did. Our minds were all with different families, somewhere back home, thousands of miles away. Everything was quiet and peaceful. It felt very, very, strange. Was this the first day of a lasting peace, or just the eye in a hurricane of war?

As our main rotor slowed down after we landed at Da Lat, a gray-haired Lieutenant Colonel walked up to the Huey. "Merry Christmas! I'm Colonel Beck. We have a busy day planned, my men are spread out all over this province, and we're going to take mail, hot turkey, and pumpkin pies to every one of them!" He handed me a map that had our cross-stitched route already carefully drawn on it. The colonel's distinguished look turned to a big grin as he added, "Oh--would you guys like to have some Donut Dollies with us today?" Four heads with flight helmets were eagerly nodding "YES" as the two young ladies got out of a jeep.

Donut Dollies were American Red Cross volunteers, college graduates in their early twenties. Although no longer distributing donuts like their namesakes of World War II, they were still in the service of helping the morale of the troops. At large bases they managed recreation centers but

they also traveled to the small units in the field for short visits. For millions of GI's they represented the girlfriend, sister, or wife back home. Over the Huey's intercom, Colonel Beck introduced Sue, with the short, dark, hair and Ann, a brunette, the taller one.

Soon we were heading towards the mountains with a Huey full of mail, food, Christmas cargo, and two American young women. For the soldiers who had been living off Vietnamese food and canned Army rations at lonely, isolated outposts, these touches of home would be a welcome surprise.

As we approached the first compound Colonel Beck, by radio, told the men on the ground that we were going to make it snow. Sue and Ann sprinkled laundry soap flakes out of the Huey as we flew directly over a small group of American and Vietnamese soldiers who must have thought we were crazy. Several of them were rubbing their eyes as we came back to land. I will never know if it was emotion or if they just had soap in their eyes.

The three Americans came over to the Huey as we shut it down. Ann gave each of them a package from the Red Cross and Sue called out names to distribute the mail. After 15 minutes of small talk, Colonel Beck announced, "We have a lot more stops to make" and got back into the Huey. The soldiers stood there silently, staring at us as we started up, hovered, and then disappeared into the sky.

At the next outpost, Colonel Beck left us so he could talk privately with the local officials. The crew and I didn't mind escorting the Donut Dollies. It was easy to see how happy the soldiers were to talk with them. I wondered how Sue and Ann were feeling. Their job was to cheer up other people on what was probably their own first Christmas away from home; if they were lonely or sad, they never let it show. Throughout the day, the same scene was replayed at other small compounds. Some soldiers talked excitedly to the girls, while others would just stand quietly and stare, almost in shock to see American women visiting them out in the boonies.

Finally, with the official Macvee work finished, we were above the hospital at Dam Pao. Mike landed us a few hundred feet from the main building. Several men and women came out, carrying stretchers. They showed surprise that we were not bringing a new patient, and then joy when we showed them the food and medical supplies. Mike opened the ammo can full of money and said, "Merry Christmas from the Polecats and Tigersharks of the 192nd Assault Helicopter Company." One of the women began to cry and then hugged Mike.

A doctor asked if we would like to see the hospital. He talked as we carried the goods from the Huey to the one-floor, tin-roof hospital building. "Project Concern now has volunteer doctors and nurses from England, Australia, and the USA. We provide health services to civilians and train medical assistants to do the same in their own villages. We try to demonstrate God's love, so we remain neutral. Both sides respect our work, and leave us alone."

One of the women described a recent event. Two nurses and a medical assistant student were returning from a remote clinic in the jungle when their jeep became mired in mud. Many miles from even the smallest village, they knew that they would not be able to walk to civilization before dark. A Viet Cong foot patrol came upon them, pulled the jeep out of the mud, and sent them on their way.

There were homemade Christmas decorations everywhere; most made on the spot by patients or their families. Inside, the hospital was clean and neat, but stark; there were few pieces of modern equipment. The staff lived in a separate small building.

As we moved into one ward, a nurse gently lifted a very small baby from its bed, and before I could stop her, she placed him in my arms. He'd been born that morning. Although they had expected complications, the mother and baby were perfectly healthy! As I held the tiny infant, I started to tell the others that I would soon be meeting my own baby son, but the words got stuck in my throat. So I just stood there, marveling at the warmth and hope in that tiny new human being nestled peacefully in my arms. Would this child grow up in peace, or would this tiny life be snuffed out by a war that had already claimed thousands of Vietnamese and Americans? Would the deaths of my friends this past year help ensure for him a life of peace and freedom, or had they died in vain?

The staff invited us to stay for supper with them, and I could tell the invitation was sincere. However, the sun was getting low, and I didn't want to fly us home over eighty miles of mountainous jungle in the dark. I also would have felt guilty to take any food, even so graciously offered, from the most selfless people I had ever met. As we started the Huey, the doctors and nurses were about fifty feet away, still talking with Colonel Beck. The Colonel took something out of his wallet and gave it to one of the men with a double-hand handshake. He then quietly

climbed on board.

There was no chatter on the intercom as we flew back to Da Lat. Mike landed the Huey softly. I asked him to shut down and got out quickly. Then we all stood there silently; I wanted to hug Sue and Ann, but I knew Donut Dollies were not allowed to hug. Instead, we all exchanged warm handshakes and Christmas wishes. Colonel Beck thanked us for taking him to the hospital. We, the crew of Polecat 356, got back in and flew away and out of the lives of our new-found friends.

Silence also marked the flight back to Phan Thiet. I thought of my family and friends back home and couldn't wait to see them. I also thought about the good friends I would soon be leaving behind, and other good friends who would never go home to their families.

I reflected on the rare nature of the day. I would always be able to remember Christmas Day in Vietnam as very special. Here, in the midst of war, trouble, and strife, was a time of sharing, happiness, love -- and peace.

Epilog: I attended the 1993 dedication of the Vietnam Women's Memorial to place letters of remembrance from the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association. As friendly and helpful as 24 years earlier, other Donut Dollies were eager to help me find Sue and Ann, identified from a photograph I had taken at Dam Pao in 1969. One Donut Dolly finally exclaimed: "That's my sister!" and led me to Ann. I collected on a long-overdue hug. Sue and I talked by telephone a few days later. I felt good to learn that Christmas Day in Vietnam was also special to them.

Project Concern International, 3550 Afton Road San Diego, CA 92123 is still doing similar humanitarian work in Asia and several US cities.

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Please feel free to forward or reprint this email note.

Please also consider linking to this memoir from your web site or your page on Facebook, Twitter, or similar web sites.

The URL is <http://www.VirtualWall.org/snow/>

CHAPTER NOTES

Chapter 223

Chapter 223 ended the year with a successful Christmas Party. We had over 300 people in attendance for an excellent meal provided by the chapter and members donations. There were over 60 children that received presents from Santa and ran enough that their parents hoped they would sleep an extra hour. We have been doing this for about 25 years and it has grown every year. We hope to continue for many more.

We filled the last quarter of the year with many ongoing programs as well as a few extras. We serve free coffee and donuts at the front of the VA clinic every morning. We have told the crew to stay home when it rains. Hopefully they will start listening to us. We have had some heavy rain this year and we do not need anyone getting sick. Our work with the food bank continues with our distribution on the 4th Tuesday of the month.

We are working with the VA to put on another town hall meeting. We are looking at putting focus on environmental contamination and what is new in the electronic health care. This will be in mid-May and should be very interesting. We have members that sit on the Veterans and Family Advisory Council for our clinic and hospital and we are keeping lines of communication open with the VA leadership. We seem to be able to work to change things that we feel need addressed. We are always looking for solutions to the problems that come up.

Chapter 982

It all started at the March meeting of the Guadalupe chapter 982. You probably saw the photo in the April edition. Our club members holding umbrellas with the chapter banner displayed. There were 3 young men present. Guests of our president, Jerry Kaufman. Prior to the photo these senior high school students introduced themselves to the group, declaring their love for the Marines by enlisting for several years as Infantryman. We all applauded. During the break I overheard several vets talking to the kids. Conversation was mainly about what they should expect as we did back in the 1960s. One vet told the smallest young man "if your drill sergeant gives you a hard time, call me and I'll kick his ass." After the kids left and we were about to close the meeting, someone stood up and said "We want to adopt these kids". They were serious.

Since then Jerry's kids, have completed boot camp. One is pending for eye problem. This generous offer from the group lead me to ask them if they were serious. Ev-

everyone agreed. I wrote up the proposal with the help of a friend from MOAA who told me they already have a program in the high schools called ROTC. They get hundreds of members this way.

I submitted the proposal to many high ranking government officials who all said it was exactly what the military needs. A mentorship of new enlistees for the entire length of their service, including when they process out. They can become members of their local chapter and mentor new enlistees.

At present, the Undersecretary of the DoD's suicide prevention office and the VA national Suicide Prevention Department head along with the Undersecretary of Public Affairs from the DoD are all behind the program called 'Veterans-SOS, sustaining our support'. The mentors, along with the enlistee, are referred to as Veterans, Brothers and Sisters, will have the support of the local Veteran Readjustment Counseling office outreach staff. Communication between the soldier and the mentors will be by social media. Training for the mentors will be from a VA affiliate in San Diego, PsychArmor. They are set up for training on-line. I just registered and did the first session, kinda fun.

Can't say the Guadalupe Chapter 982 isn't creative. They have started a National Suicide Prevention Program that has received a lot of attention.

We are very thankful to Jerry Kaufman, our leader with a clear picture of the future.

Cost: \$0.00

Lives Saved: invaluable.

Jack Ravin Chapter 98

Senior West Coast Aide to

Secretary Max Cleland

American Battle Monuments Commission

Washington, D.C.

Chapter 535

Submitted by Bart Ruud Board Member

VVA-Chapter 535 Grass Valley, CA

(Permission granted by VVA-535 Member, Bill Hald.)

Text by Bill Hald)

Another "Tour of Duty", so to speak....

Apparently, once a vet always a vet. Needless to say my allegiance to my country has never faltered over the years and at times, as an artist, I have sculpted something to convey my patriotic concern for my country. With this current bronze, however, my wife has called it "another tour of duty" so to speak, given the time that it took me to get it "just right". It is entitled *We The People*.

The concept for this piece came to me in a series of dreams that repeated itself over a three-night period. That monkey on my back became a raging gorilla, at which time I trashed an eagle sculpture I had been working on for six months. I then created and produced this bronze, *We The People*, our bald eagle standing guard "on the wall" as it were. The "wall" consisting of four books: our Constitution, symbolized by the three books titled Legislative, Executive and Judicial, respectively, with the Holy Bible topping it off to uphold the fight for our freedom of religion whilst at the same time watchful for all enemies both foreign AND domestic. Also, she's clearly mad as hell and not going to take it anymore!

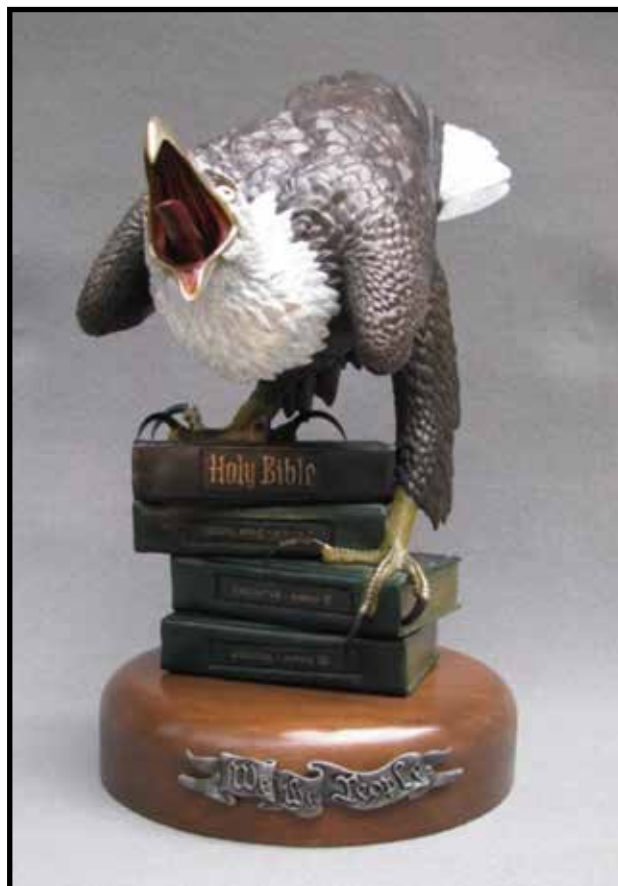
The sculpture, *We The People*, has dimensions of the following: Height 32", Depth 24", Width 18" and Weight approximately 120 pounds.

Sculpted from my heart to yours, this bronze was an absolute pleasure to create. Said piece was sculpted, molded, cast in bronze, welded, cleaned up and patinated in my 440 square foot foundry garage. Yes, I change hats a lot! Even the wood base was made in house, as it were. I like to say that I did everything except grow the tree. However, this bronze would not exist except for the full backing of my wife...what a trooper! She is even a lifetime Associate Member of the Vietnam Veterans of America as well.

Long after all the ballyhoo and orations about this and that political party is over, this bronze sculpture, *We The People*, will forevermore be an example of devotion and unyielding vigilance for we the people of our beloved United States of America. An edition of 50 in honor of our states is offered for adoption so as to allow Americans to invest in America's founding heritage.

We The People Goes National

Serendipitously during a trip in February 2016 to the VA Reno Hospital for a follow-up to some blood tests (Oncology reports I have stage one leukemia. Something to check once a year) my wife noticed in the lobby a billboard inviting veterans to participate in the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. I thought, "O. K., here we go. Perhaps we'll place in Reno"...we did, 1st place in the sculpture category.



So, O.K. here we go again, perhaps we'll win 1st place regionally as well. Then, we were notified 25 April 2016 that we placed first and nationally one of the three sculptures to be judged in the finals.

Okay, God-willing I thought maybe we have a chance. Said piece was freighted to the host site at G. V. "Sonny" Montgomery V. A. Medical Center in Jackson, Mississippi for the final judging. Now I found myself really wanting to win.

Then on 26 June 2016 we got word that *We The People* had placed 1st nationally. Awed and grateful we were, our prayers had been answered.

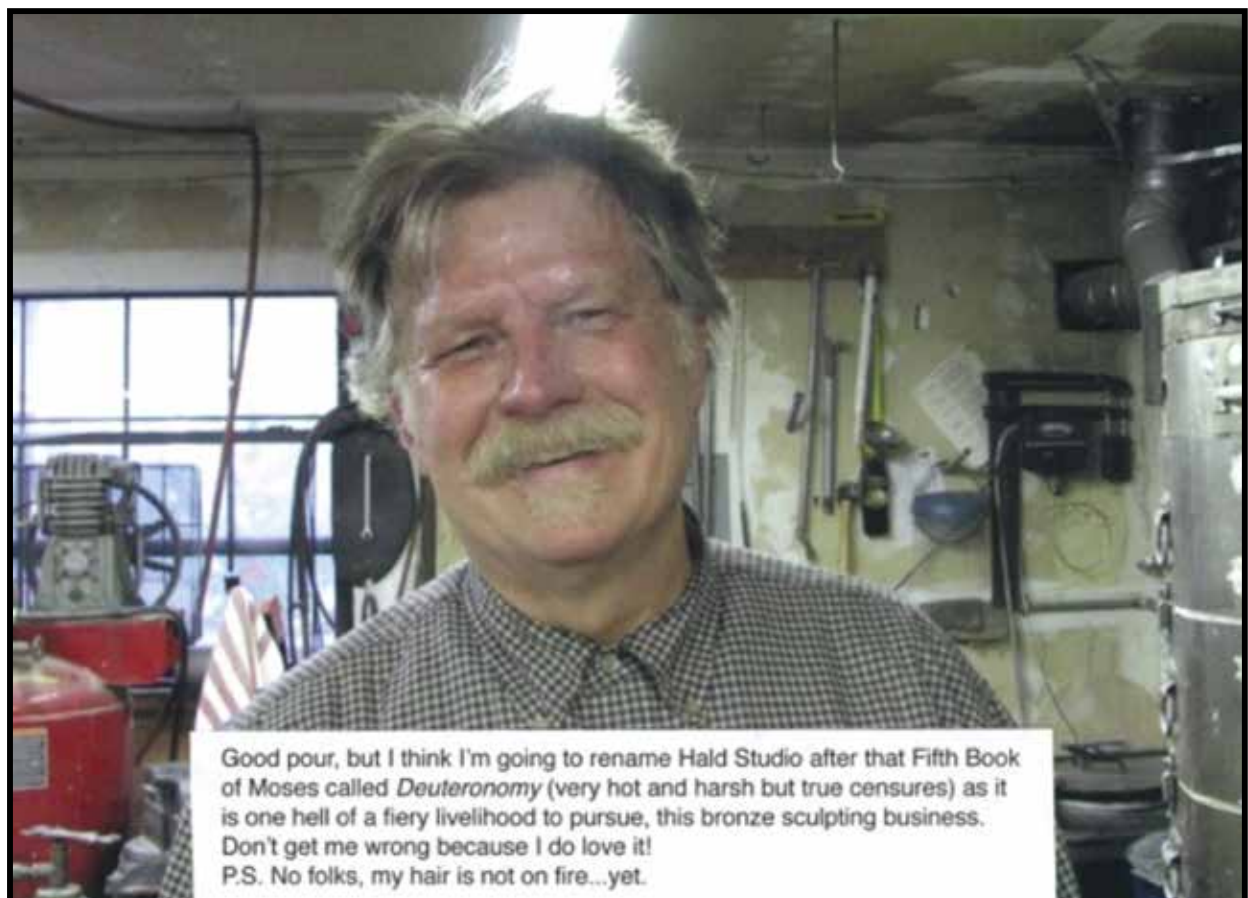
All of us 1st place winners out of 6,000 entries encompassing the visual arts, performing arts and creative writing, etcetera were treated royally for a six-day gala in Jackson, Mississippi with all expenses paid. Much to my delight my wife was able to join me on this most memorable trip. We had a blast!

Next year the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival will be held in Buffalo, New York...who knows...we'll see.

Link: <http://www.va.gov/opa/speceven/caf/index.asp>
See 1st place notifications below for regional & national.

God Bless and Love You All, Bill

haldstudio@suddenlink.net (530) 274-8287



Chapter 400



Bill Dos Santos

For us, the past 50 years since our Vietnam experience seems like a blur. As we look back on our lives we have been blessed with family, friends, and a variety of life experience. Some of us also had a tough time of it. Pick your drama/trauma and we all know

Vietnam Vets who have suffered at some level as a result of their Vietnam experience. For all of us, Vietnam Veteran or not, life is full happiness, sadness, wealth, poverty, hard work, retirement, you name it, but most of all memories. As we take stock of our lives, it is important to put things in perspective lest we become legends in our own minds. When taking stock of our own lives we would be remiss if we did not remember those who are the true heroes. Those who made the ultimate sacrifice during our War. Those who stepped up to the line when asked by their Country to fight for their Country in a far away land. Those who were robbed of all those life experiences and



memories we were miraculously gifted.

Come Memorial Day weekend 2017 Chapter 400 will dedicate a Memorial to the 100 Vietnam Veterans from Oakland who were Killed in Action. This long overdue Memorial will be located in the Oakland Veterans Memorial Building; will be made of granite with the names and



service of each Veteran inscribed on it.

As we enter the New Year, take a moment to take stock of our good fortune and remember in your hearts those whose lives were cut short by fighting for something much larger than themselves. Vietnam Veterans from Oakland who will never have the experiences or memories of a life lived.

Chapter 201

Chapter 201 held its annual Holiday Luncheon at Harry's Hof Brau Restaurant in San Jose, California on December 18th. Fifty-two members, prospective members, and guests gathered to celebrate the holidays and re-

view the accomplishments of the year. The chapter was honored to have Central District Director Al Sickel and



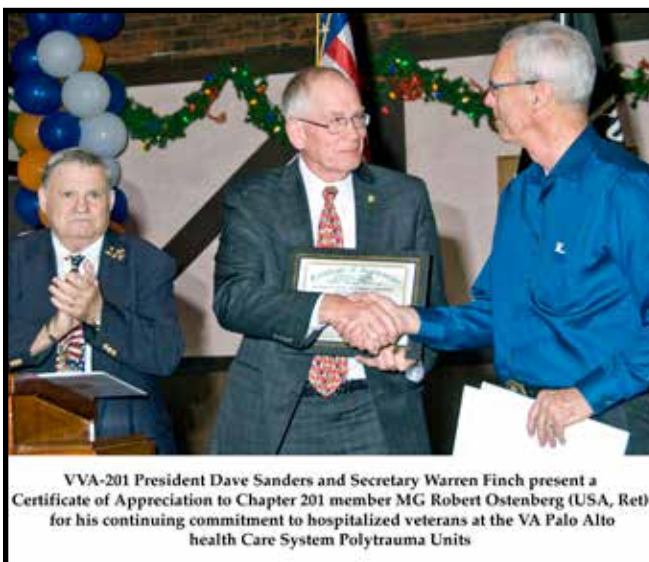
his wife Toni join the membership during the festivities.

The highlight of the gathering was a presentation by Richard Brummett from VVA Chapter 165 in Bellingham, Washington, founder of the Dragoon Scholarship Fund. Chapter 201 currently sponsors six Vietnamese children



in the Da Nang area under the Dragoon Fund.

During the luncheon, Chapter 201 member Jack Wells was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation for his work to coordinate the Chapter's participation in the



Dragoon Scholarship Fund.

Additionally, Chapter 201 presented retired Army Major General Robert Ostberg with a Certificate of Appreciation for his tireless and continuing commitment to visits with hospitalized veterans at the VA Palo Alto health Care System Polytrauma Units.

Chapter 1031

At 6 pm on November 2nd at the Oceanside City Council chambers, Scott Wolf (VVA Chapter 1031) received the following awards:

- 2016-2017 Oceanside Veteran of the Year plaque signed by the Mayor and councilmembers from Oceanside
- a US House of Representatives Proclamation from Congressman Darrell Issa (49th District of California)
- a State of California Senate Certificate from Senator Joel Anderson
- a California Legislature Assembly Certificate from Rocky Chavez (Col, USMC Ret), Assemblymember 76th District

At a luncheon on November 3rd at the Sheraton in Carlsbad, Scott Wolf was one of 75 individuals recognized as a

2016-2017 Volunteer of the Year. The organization

hosting the awards was the North County Philanthropy Council.

At a luncheon on November 4th at the Scottish Rites Center in San Diego, Scott Wolf was one of 15 individuals selected

as a nominee for the award of San Diego County Veteran of the Year. The award was won by VVSD (Veterans Village of San Diego).

Scott received Certificates from:

-- Sheldon Margolis - Exec Dir, Veterans Museum of Balboa Park

-- Susan Davis - 53rd District Representative

The chapter received its Charter on November 3, 2009. On November 4, 2016, we celebrated the 7th Anniversary of our charter. Attendees included members of Chapter 1031, friends, Chuck Atkinson (President/Founder of VANC), members of VANC (Veterans Association of North County), VVA Chapter 472 President Don Barnard, Mike Kennedy (CSC Southern District Director), Steve Mackey (CSC VVA President), and his wife Elayne



Mackey (CA State AVVA President).

There were a total of 26 attendees. Those who came early enjoyed a short social time with a glass of wine,



which was followed by a catered dinner. Everyone enjoyed a great meal followed by a white cake with raspberry filling. Thank you to all who helped make our Anniversary party such a success!

Chapter 785

At the Rams home game, the pinning ceremony took place during the game and our bios were read and photos display on the Jumbotron. Covered by many TV stations and local sports programs.

Regards Greg Young Past President and current Treasurer VVA 785 Charles Morales VVA 785 Sgt of Arms. Jim Van Ry VVA 785 new life member.

Vietnam Veterans of America 785 is the John Baca Medal of Honor chapter. Several of their members were honored to represent thousands of our active military, SBE, Taps, SDIT, Gold Star and veterans' families at the Los Angeles Rams Football Game. Chapter 785 distrib-





Left: John Sturdivant, Jack Adam, Dave Finster, Paul Kaser, Craig Meadors, Steve Hayhurst.

This page gives you the feel for the attitude of appreciation of the supporters along the parade route. Yes, it was a very fine day for all.



uted 70 field level tickets, thanks to the generosity of the LA Rams.

Greg Young (Retired LASD and Star Post 309 member), Jim Van Ry, Charles Morales (Retired LASD) and all Vietnam veterans were recognized for their service and sacrifice to our Nation. They were pinned with the Vietnam Commemoration lapel pin by Vince Ferragamo, former Rams quarterback in front of 85,000 fans.

NEWS FOR VETERANS

VA EXPANDS NEW INNOVATORS NETWORK PROGRAM

The Department of Veterans Affairs Center for Innovation (VACI) is expanding its Innovators Network Program. Fourteen new VA Medical Center innovation sites and one National Cemetery innovation site will join the eight selected last year, for a total of 22 recognized innovation sites across the country. The sites were selected from a highly competitive pool of 44 sites from across the country. The selection was based on a review of 12 parameters, including: proposed Veteran-centered approach; plans to empower and engage employees and collaboration with local infrastructure enablers.

The VA Center for Innovation identifies, tests and evaluates new approaches to efficiently and effectively meet the current and future needs of Veterans through innovations rooted in data, design-thinking and agile development. Each of the Network sites is focused on building a culture of innovation to support employees working with input from Veterans to design and develop new innovations to better serve Veterans and their families.

“VA continues to increase its ability to rapidly respond to Veterans’ needs and deliver the best possible experience for Veterans. We have invested in creating a culture of innovation which we can constantly find, test

and create better ways to deliver services to our Veterans,” said VA Secretary Robert McDonald.

The Network began as a pilot in early 2015 and seeks to build and empower a community of VA employees who are actively engaged in innovation. The Network has been a tremendous success in developing VA’s culture of innovation, empowering employees to improve the experience and care of our Veterans, and successfully funding transformational innovations that significantly reduce costs and improve the care and services available to Veterans. The Network program and Innovation Specialists – dedicated staff at each innovation site – have trained over 1,300 VA employees on innovation-related competencies to help them first recognize, and then solve problems that are negatively impacting or preventing Veterans from receiving the care and services.

To support initiatives, the VA Innovators Network creates a pathway to accelerate the development of new, reimagined experiences for Veterans and their families. The accelerator has invested in 38 projects across the VA. Two of its biggest, Technology-Based Eye Care Screening from the Atlanta VA and the Care in the Community Tool from the Portland VA project to save over \$20 million over the next five years and improve Veterans access to services and care.

The following sites been selected as Innovators Network Sites for 2017:

- Albany Stratton VA Medical Center, Albany, N.Y.
- Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center, Cleveland, Ohio
- Grand Junction VA Healthcare System, Grand Junction, Colo.
- Hines VA Medical Center, Chicago, Ill.
- Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center, Richmond, Va.
- Lebanon VA Medical Center, Lebanon Pa.
- Lexington VA Medical Center, Lexington, Ky.
- VA Loma Linda Healthcare System, Loma Linda, Calif.

- New Mexico VA Healthcare System
- Puget Sound VA Healthcare System, Seattle Wash.
- VA San Diego Healthcare System, San Diego, Calif.
- South Texas Healthcare System, San Antonio, Texas
- Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center, Tuscaloosa, Ala.
- White River Junction VA Medical Center, White River Junction, Vt.
- Fort Snelling National Cemetery, Minneapolis, Minn.

VETERAN DRIVER LICENSE

DURING FIRST YEAR, 38,000 CALIFORNIANS APPLY FOR VETERAN DRIVER LICENSE PROGRAM

Veterans Day 2016 marked the first anniversary since the State of California started offering Veterans the opportunity to place a printed VETERAN designation on a California driver license or identification (ID) card. So far, 38,000 California Veterans began the process of adding the distinguished marking to a driver license or ID card, which can be used as a simple and official way to confirm military service.

During the first year of this successful program, more than 38,000 Veterans visited a County Veteran Service Office (CVSO), where they obtained the Veteran Status Verification form needed to apply for the special designation. Veterans then visit a Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) field office with the form to add the VETERAN designation to obtain a license or ID. The DMV processed and issued more than 31,000 licenses and ID cards to Veterans, as Veterans usually wait until renewal time before adding the new designation.

The driver license and ID program partners include the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet), CVSOs, and DMV. The program honors the military service of our Veterans. As part of the program, more than 7,400 Veterans who visited a CVSO also learned about and filed new benefit claims. Additionally, a VETERAN designation often means a business can easily confirm Veteran status when offering discounts on holidays such as Veterans Day.

To obtain the VETERAN designation, follow these three easy steps:

STEP 1 – Find your military discharge certificate (DD214). If you need assistance obtaining your military records, then contact a CVSO. To find a local CVSO, call 844-737-8838 or visit www.calvet.ca.gov.

STEP 2 – Take your DD214 and government identification to a CVSO and obtain your completed and stamped Veteran Status Verification Form.

STEP 3 – Visit www.dmv.ca.gov or call DMV at 800-777-0133 for an appointment. Then bring your Veteran Status Verification Form to a DMV field office. Complete your application, pay any fees including the \$5 fee to add the Veteran Designation.

New Study Could Pressure VA to Expand Agent Orange Benefits

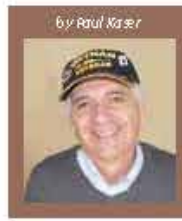
By Charles Ornstein, ProPublica
Mike Hixenbaugh, The Virginian-Pilot

A new study has found a close relationship between Agent Orange exposure during the Vietnam War and high blood pressure, a conclusion that could lead the Department of Veterans Affairs to dramatically expand the number of veterans eligible for compensation. The study, published last week by VA researchers in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, found a higher rate of hypertension among members of the Army Chemical Corps who handled Agent Orange during the war compared to those who didn’t. Corps members who served in Vietnam but did not spray the chemicals also had a higher rate of hypertension than their peers who served outside Vietnam. Both results were statistically significant and add to a body of evidence linking Agent Orange exposure and hypertension. The findings come 41 years after the close of the Vietnam War and decades since the last supplies of Agent Orange were incinerated. Since then, veterans have become increasingly distrustful of the VA. They maintain that their exposure to Agent Orange, which contained the toxic chemical dioxin, has harmed their health and has been passed on to their children. A VA working group has been studying the latest

A BLESSING TO THOSE MOST IN NEED.

The Children's Hospital visit was, as usual inspiring, with doctors and therapists bringing patients into the sunshine for a breath of fresh air and a chance to pet and even ride the horses. Chapter members arrived early to help unload portable corrals and equipment and stayed to help with take-down and repacking.

As noted, this is always an emotionally moving experience offering veterans and veteran wives a chance to bring some light and happiness to many of the young patients at Children's.



by Paul Kiser



Above: Heart of the Horse Ranch enjoys the faithful and loyal effort of its volunteers.

Below: Jack Hannah and Don Hayhurst sharing stories.



photos by Craig Meadors

scientific literature since March to determine whether any illnesses should be added to the agency's list of diseases for which vets are automatically entitled to compensation if they served in Vietnam. Specifically, the group has been looking at new evidence linking bladder cancer, underactive thyroid, Parkinson's-like symptoms and hypertension to Agent Orange exposure. The VA had been expected to announce its decision this year, but officials now say that will be left to the administration of President-elect Donald Trump. "For this administration, the deadline for proposing new rules for potential new presumptions [of service connection to herbicide] has passed, and this will become work for the new administration to take to completion," VA officials said in a written statement first reported last

week in Stars and Stripes. Hypertension is the most common ailment among veterans seeking health care at the VA. It is one of the most common ailments among older adults generally. The study released last week found the prevalence of hypertension among members of the Army Chemical Corps to be higher than among other aging veterans. Although most of the Agent Orange used in Vietnam was sprayed from Air Force planes, the Army Chemical Corps also sprayed the herbicide from hand sprayers and helicopters. Researchers analyzed responses from about 3,000 members of the Army Chemical Corps who participated in a 2013 survey. The research team then verified their self-reported exposure to Agent Orange by using dioxin levels in their blood and checked their self-reported

blood pressure against medical records and in-home testing. Among Chemical Corps members who sprayed herbicides in Vietnam, 81.6 percent said they had high blood pressure. That compares to 64.6 percent among Corps members who did not serve in Vietnam and did not spray herbicides. Researchers said that difference could not be explained away by other characteristics they analyzed, including age, race, weight, alcohol use and tobacco use. It's unclear if the results from the Army Chemical Corps apply to other Vietnam veterans, the researchers said. For years, the VA has been weighing whether to provide Agent Orange benefits to vets with high blood pressure, which could potentially cost billions of dollars. In 2009, a federal advisory panel said there was

evidence suggesting a connection between Agent Orange exposure and several conditions, including Parkinson's disease, ischemic heart disease and hypertension. A VA internal working group of scientific experts wanted to recommend the department grant benefits to veterans with all of those conditions, according to Dr. Victoria Cassano, a member of the group who was acting chief consultant for the VA's Environmental Health Strategic Healthcare Group. But the group's superiors at the VA told the panel to change its position and recommend against providing benefits for heart disease and hypertension, Cassano said. It recommended in favor of Parkinson's disease. In late 2009, then-VA Secretary Eric Shinseki said he would add ischemic heart disease and Parkinson's disease to the VA's list, but not hypertension. According to Shinseki's testimony to Congress in 2010, "the evidence regarding hypertension was less compelling" than for the other conditions. Instead, Shinseki called for the VA study completed last week. "I wasn't really surprised by these findings," said Yasmin S. Cypel, the study's principal investigator and a health science specialist at the VA. "I just felt that based upon the research that there was evidence to indicate that there might be an association." Rick Weidman, legislative director of Vietnam Veterans of America, said the new report should add pressure to the VA to compensate vets for hypertension. His group has been pressing the VA to add the condition to its list of Agent Orange-connected diseases ever since the advisory panel first noted evidence of a link. He can think of only one reason to explain the agency's reluctance: "Money." "Simple as that," said Weidman, a Vietnam vet. "There are so many people who utilize the VA who have hypertension, they know it's going to cost." An estimate of the cost of offering compensation for Vietnam vets with hypertension was not available. Cassano, the former VA official who thought VA should have agreed to provide hypertension benefits in 2009, said the new research by Cypel and colleagues was "really well designed." "It's a very definitive study," Cassano said. "It's showing that just being in Vietnam gives you a higher relative risk of developing hypertension." While hypertension affects many veterans, it is not as debilitating as other conditions and generally can be treated inexpensively with medications. Therefore, she said, the costs may not be as high as some have predicted. Waiting for vets to develop ischemic heart disease or suffer a stroke is "a pennywise pound foolish decision."

Several veterans said that if the VA begins offering Agent Orange benefits for high blood pressure, they would apply for them. "It has never been anything I considered," said Ron Bass, 67, who served as an Air Force crew chief in Vietnam from 1969 to 1971 and takes medication for his condition. "I would definitely file a claim for it," said Ron Zatawski, 66, who served in the Army in Vietnam from 1970 to 1971. "We went through areas that they had sprayed Agent Orange. ... We didn't know how toxic this stuff was." Victoria Davey, another researcher on the hypertension study, said there's still much to learn about the effects of Agent Orange on vets. She is leading a new study comparing the health of Vietnam vets with similarly aged U.S. residents who never served in the military. "This doesn't close the book on long-term health consequences of service in Vietnam," Davey said of the hypertension study. charles.ornstein@propublica.org Twitter: @charlesornstein

HOMELESSNESS

VA URGES NATIONAL AND LOCAL PARTNERS TO ACT NOW TO END VETERAN HOMELESSNESS
SECRETARY ANNOUNCES 30-DAY EFFORT TO PRIORITIZE AVAILABLE RESOURCES TO SUPPORT AND HOUSE HOMELESS VETERANS

Robert A. McDonald, Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) Secretary today announced a concentrated 30-day effort by VA staff and partners to house as many homeless Veterans in their communities as possible. To accomplish this, Secretary McDonald charged VA's network of federal, local and nongovernmental partners to target available housing and supportive services to the nation's most vulnerable Veterans.

Secretary McDonald made the announcement from Los Angeles, the city with the most homeless Veterans last year, during a forum with community leaders. Since 2010, ongoing efforts to assist Veterans who lack stable housing



Four-ship formation on a defoliation spray run. U.S. Air Force photo



VIETNAM HISTORY

During World War II the Viet Minh, later referred to as the Viet Cong were our allies in the fight against the Japanese in what was then French Indo-China. They routinely rescued American pilots who had been shot down in the region and succeeded in disrupting Japanese supply lines in the border areas with China. The Vietnamese were intent on expelling the Japanese from Vietnam, then establishing an independent Vietnamese state.

Of course the French, Dutch, and British were just as intent on regaining control of their colonial dominance of the region following the war, and Ho Chi Minh's pleas to the United States for assistance in exercising self-rule for Vietnam fell on deaf ears. Many Americans felt that one element of the war was an end to Imperialism, but Europeans felt quite differently, seeking to reassert their dominance in Southeast Asia even before Germany and Japan had been defeated.

While it is true that Ho and his cadre were Marxists and had shaped the future of their country within a framework of Communist ideology, his Declaration of Independence, a reiteration of Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of 170 years before, was accomplished without help from other Communist nations and actually took many of them by surprise. Many American diplomats who had worked closely with Ho and his cadre understood Ho's desire to expel the French, preferably without bloodshed but not excluding that option if necessary after the war. A like number felt anyone to the left of Genghis Khan was a commie and should be eliminated. These were the germs of the Cold War.

Major Archimedes L. Patti, an Office of Strategic Services (OSS) officer, in a report to superiors noted that Ho was not a dogmatic Communist, but rather a Nationalist whose primary goal was to achieve American support for his effort to establish a free and independent Vietnam. The OSS was the forerunner of the CIA.

This assessment was in glaring contrast to the unyielding desire of the French, British, and Dutch to reoccupy and reassert control over their former colonies in Southeast Asia. There was a great deal of reluctance by some US diplomats because of the corrupt nature of the Diem regime.

General Walter Bedell Smith, General Eisenhower's Chief of Staff in World War II and the man who negotiated the final surrender of German forces in May 1945, was the US representative to the Geneva Conference and expressed a willingness to abide by the agreement in a statement that lead many to believe that the US would not only accept the terms but help implement the elections and

Asia once the war ended. Indo-China, Singapore, and Indonesia were theirs and they did not intend to give them up to the "natives."

Following the war, the west was consumed with anti-Communist lunacy and was willing to pay any price to contain and defeat leftist ideology.

In May 1954 the French were soundly defeated at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu and the die was cast for the future troubles in Vietnam.

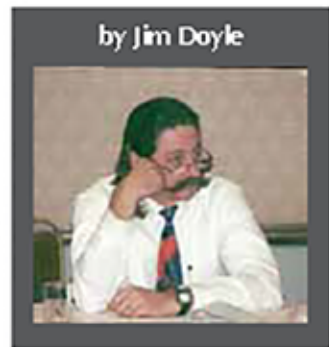
In the spring and summer of 1954 a conference was held in Geneva, Switzerland to determine the fate of French Indo-China and the region following the French defeat by the Viet Minh. The French agreed to withdraw and a plan to establish three countries; Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam was struck and agreed to by all participants. Although the US was involved they did not sign the "Geneva Accords."

Following their defeat in Vietnam the French then dispatched troops to Algeria where they were again defeated by indigenous guerilla forces, establishing the French as a towering military force whose list of military victories would fill a postage stamp and lead to a satirical link on the Google search engine several years ago. When "French Military Victories" was entered into Google it was redirected to a link that asked, "Don't you mean French military defeats?"

A temporary partition of Vietnam at the 17th Parallel was agreed to and a mechanism for free elections to be held in 1956 to unite the country had begun. The US was party to the conference but did not sign the agreement.

Ho Chi Minh established the Communist state of North Vietnam and Emperor Bao Dai became the putative head of state in the newly established Republic of South Vietnam (RVN) and the Diem family, representing the 5% of the population who were Catholic were ordained the political leadership of the 95% Buddhist population with US financial and military support, even though there was not use military or political force to tamper with the process, though no US signature graced the agreement.

Diem eventually refused to participate in the elections and in a referendum received nearly 600,000 votes despite the fact that there were only 450,000 registered voters in the country. This provided the CIA with the opportunity to meddle and muddle in any and every subsequent effort to wage peace in Vietnam, and the rest, as they say is history.



by Jim Doyle



....for your consideration!

French military victories

For those without comedic tastes, the self-proclaimed experts at Wikipedia think they have an article about Military history of France.

Did you mean: french military defeats?

Your search - french military victories - did not match any documents.

Suggestions:

Make sure all word s are spelled correctly.

Try searching for a country that kicks more ass.

Try to search for losses, there are plenty of those.

THE NURSE AT HOTEL 3

It was another typical day in III Corp, Vietnam. Hot, humid, hazy. As we banked right into the corridor for the Hotel 3 Helipad on the lower southeast side of Tan Son Nhut AFB in Saigon, I remember thinking how I disliked ash and trash missions. Bored and sleepy from the drone of the engine and the popping of the rotor blades, I made myself come to life to prepare for the flight down the corridor, watching for other aircraft, kites being flown from the streets below, and the landing at Hotel 3. We had gotten the call from Robinhood Base Ops while in the refuel pit at Cu Chi that there was a PAC (Passenger, Aircraft) to be picked up at Hotel 3 for transport back to Lai Khe. It was the last part of the mission for the day and I was tired, sweaty, and ready for a cold brewsky back at “Sherwood Forest”, home of the 173rd Assault Helicopter Company in Lai Khe. I had been in country less than a month so I was still being assigned to fly ash and trash missions...delivering packets here, carrying supplies there, transporting PACS to DEROS (Date of Estimated Return from Over Seas), change of duty station, etc. I really did not like flying ash and trash missions but it was part of the Readiness Level process...get checked out at the company airfield in the aircraft, then fly the ash and trash missions with an experienced Aircraft Commander to learn the III Corp area land marks, and build flight time. A “freedom bird” was just lifting off the runway at Tan Son Nhut, carrying a load of soldiers back to “the real world”. Prelanding check complete, the call was made to Tan Son Nhut tower. “Tan Son Nhut tower, this is Robinhood 14, inbound to Hotel 3 for passenger pick up.” “Roger, Robinhood 14, you're cleared to land Hotel 3, winds calm, altimeter two niner three zero” “Roger, Tan Son Nhut, cleared to land Hotel 3”.

As we landed at Hotel 3, there was a lone figure sitting on a duffel bag. It was the PAC we were to pick up. The rotor wash blew the sand and trash around and the PAC ducked to shield their face. It was then that I realized it was an American female. That woman was to change the rest of my life and influence me forever. She was to become my best friend, my closest confidant, my lover and eventually my wife.

As the crew chief and door gunner helped her load her duffel bag onto the aircraft and strap in, I could not help but see that she was, indeed, a very attractive lady. She was a “round eye” and even though I had been in country only a short time I had missed seeing American women. So I, of course, put on my best alpha male profile. I was a US Army helicopter pilot, for God's sake!! We were a proud, cocky bunch; young, bold, daring and full of ourselves. Defiant, cool, and debonair, we were without a doubt “Above The Best”.

“Tan Son Nhut tower, this is Robinhood 14, Hotel 3, ready for departure”. “Roger, Robinhood 14, winds calm, altimeter remains the same, clear for takeoff.” “Robinhood 14, roger, on the go.”

The flight back to Lai Khe was uneventful, except for my periodic stealing of a glimpse of the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. I could see from her fatigue insignia that she was an Army Second Lt. and that she was part of the 44th Medical Brigade. A nurse, I figured, but what the hell was she doing going to Lai Khe? I didn't know there was a field surgical hospital opening in Lai Khe and that she was on her way to be stationed there. The Aircraft Commander, of course, knew where he was going, he was at the controls, and made the radio call as we approached Lai Khe: FNGs were not allowed to use the radios. “Lai Khe tower, Robinhood 14 is two miles out to the East for the Dust Off pad, one PAC on board for drop off, no casualties, then to the refuel pit”. “Roger, Robinhood 14, you are cleared to land at the Dust Off pad, no delay, winds 140 at 5, altimeter two niner niner two, call for departure to the refuel pit.” The Dust Off pad had to be kept cleared for possible casualties. “Robinhood 14, roger, no delay”. After we dropped off the woman at the Dust Off pad, she walked away and I said to myself “Well, there she goes. I'll never see her again.” “Lai Khe tower, Robinhood 14, ready for departure from Dust Off for refuel”.

“Roger, 14, you are cleared to remains the same.” Refueled, sand bags and PSP, and put the chief and door gunner stayed with the next day's flight. The Aircraft ops to close our flight plan, debrief, Then I went to my hooch, dropped Club for that cold beer.

As the next few weeks passed, (troop carriers) in the first platoon, friends with a 2nd platoon pilot learned you do with risk, because killed. Roger was killed April during a battalion night combat Line 26 of “The Wall”.

Survivor guilt is a very of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress school roommate of ten months, suite mate, Stephen Martin, and I got very tight with during flight two months of each other. “Why alive?” I would ask myself that for answer to that question. It just is.

Roger knew some of the Field Hospital, and before he was them. I convinced him to take me

of seeing the nurse I had transported from Hotel 3 to Lai Khe. I did meet her, however the introduction was met with cold indifference...there were hundreds of men around her and I was but one of them. I am told the approximate ratio of male to female personnel in Vietnam was 10,000 to 1. Besides, the nurses, and especially the operating room nurses, which is what she turned out to be, were cautious not to form any attachments because of the nature of their job...bodies in, sew 'em up the best you could, then bodies out. Survivor guilt was as much a part of the nurses' component of PTSD as the casualties they worked on.

But I was persistent...I would go visit in a friendly fashion and eventually the barriers came down and Kate, the nurse I had flown in from Hotel 3, and I became friends. As time passed, Kate and I became close friends and we would sit on the front porch of her tent in the evenings and talk for hours on end. We would talk of home, family, schooling, hopes for the future...anything but the death and devastation we were in the middle of in Vietnam, and, as time progressed, I would brush her beautiful long hair.

She was one of the few nurses who did not have her hair cut short. We became a refuge for each other, blocking out the carnage of the war we were caught up in.

I wanted to be a gunship pilot. I spent my first three months constantly trying to get into the Crossbows, which was the 173rd AHC's gun platoon. They were a pretty tight group but I complained enough that I was finally transferred to the Crossbows in my fourth month in country. They wanted you to have 5 or 6 months as a slick driver but one of the Crossbows DEROS date came due and I wanted to be a gun driver so badly they let me transfer over. I became Crossbow 33.

As more time passed, Kate and I became intimate and in that intimacy we really found refuge. In each other's arms we could make the whole world go away for a few hours. We could pour our feelings into our lovemaking and all was OK. I fell deeply in love with her and she with me. She was my one piece of sanity in a place that was completely insane.

Time passed and we grasped at whatever normalcy we could. We would walk to the PX, shop and have ice cream together. We would go for walks on our days off through the rubber plantation of “Sherwood Forest” in Lai Khe, and we would just talk. Eventually, I asked Kate to marry me and she accepted.

We went to the PX and picked out our rings.

But the war was ever present. There were constant rocket attacks, she feared for my life as a helicopter pilot and I worried about her and the constant carnage she was dealing with. I recall one night we were in her bunk, savoring the blissful aftermath of lovemaking, when the rockets began to fall, shattering our little world... we had to roll out of the bunk together onto the floor, me covering her, and pull the mattress over on top of us to protect us from shrapnel.

Her DEROS date came up and we prepared ourselves to say good-bye. She had extended her time in country by two months so that she could stay with me, but she would have had to re-up in the Army Nurse Corp for another four years to stay with me to finish my tour. She cried openly about our upcoming separation and we held each other particularly close those last few nights. I cried inwardly, for I had already developed the survival need to show few, if any, emotions. War does that to us.

Survival...it was all about survival. And the war goes on...

I spent the rest of my tour as a gun jockey, making fire team lead, and flying my ass off to keep me busy. Ten and twelve hour days were not uncommon. Kate and I did the usual letter and tape correspondence, and I made it down to Saigon a few times where I was able to make a MARS call to her from the USO, “I miss you. Over” ...God bless the USO. I am so thankful they are there to help soldiers. We did not have laptops or cell phones in those days, so MARS was the only type phone line we could use. They gave you six minutes and you had to wait for an open phone...sometimes hours.

Both ends had to say “over” at the end of each sentence.

Kate and I did manage to get a very passionate and lovely R&R (Rest & Recreation) together on the island of Maui in Hawaii. R&R was, and is, so essential for the soldier at war. It gives you a chance to feel normal in a normal environment, a break from a place where normal is quite abnormal. But sometimes you cannot escape war, no matter where you go. Kate and I were walking out of our hotel in Hawaii on the Sunday Morning I had to return to Vietnam and I saw the papers at the newsstand.

There on the front page were some very graphic photos I had taken on a mission, stolen by another unit member and sent to his girlfriend in the US with an untrue, fictitious story. My helicopter ride back to the unit was met with armed guards and immediate escort to Phu Loi and MACV HQ. The ensuing ass chewing by the battalion commander, the 1st Avn. Brigade commander, and ultimately Gen. Abrams are still burned into my memory. After my return to the states I was stationed at Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, Ga., as an Instructor Pilot for Vietnamese students. I was recalled from training one day, interrogated by the CID, informed charges of murder could follow because there was a



refuel, winds 140 at 5, altimeter we parked in the revetment of helicopter to bed. The crew the helicopter to prepare her for Commander and I went to base and do the necessary paperwork. my gear, and headed to the “O”

I began flying UH-D slicks the white flight. I became good named Roger Auld, which I it hurts when good friends are 21st, 1969, in a mid-air collision assault. He is on Panel 23W,

difficult and real component Disorder). I also lost my fight James P. Casey, my flight school another pilot, James Dunn, that school. All were KIA within was I the only one to come home many years to come. There is no

nurses down at the 2nd Surgical killed, he would go visit with him on occasion, in hopes

Congressional Investigation into the matter. This shook me up quite a bit but, fortunately, I never heard another word about the incident. Just like that it disappeared.

I did 'go down' a couple of times, and had my helicopter shot up a few times. One of the times we were hit, we went down but we were quickly recovered, and one time, because I was flying wing man, “lead” did not realize I had gone down because all my electronics and radios were shot out. That time we had to form a perimeter around the aircraft and wait for someone to come find us. Needless to say, that resulted in a few tense and anxious hours, just waiting for “Charlie” (the Viet Cong) to open up on us. But, for whatever the reason, he never did and we were safely extracted.

I quit flying missions a few days prior to my DEROS, as was the norm, and prepared to return to “the real world”, get married, have children, and live happily ever after... which has not been the case. Our greeting upon return to San Francisco was scarred by protesters who did and said some very ugly things. I was directed into a cordoned off men's room and told to change into civilian clothes and leave my fatigues in a corner.

Kate and I were married after my return in a beautiful ceremony...and divorced 14 months later. The following years were pretty hard on me. In 2001, after my fourth divorce (also known as “AIDS” for Aviator Induced Divorce Syndrome), I was diagnosed with PTSD by the Veterans Administration. I am now in my 17th year of recovery from alcoholism, and I live alone, back in the mountains of North Carolina in a log cabin on seven acres of land. It is my refuge, my sanctuary, my little piece of heaven on earth.

I continued to fly for the military and retired as a CW4 in 1996 after 28 proud years of service. My flying career took me from flying the OH-13 in flight school to my years of flying as an Instructor Pilot and Instrument Flight Examiner in the Huey, Cobra, and, finally, the AH-64 Apache.

I spent countless hours over many years in search of Kate, my first and only true love, to no avail. I had not talked to or seen her for forty-five years. Since 2001, through intense VA counseling and therapy, I came to understand that I still loved her and I had never stopped loving her, but my PTSD had effected virtually every part of my being and my ability to relate. Hence, my four marriages and their failures.

On Memorial Day Weekend of 2016 I went to Washington, D.C. to ride in “Rolling Thunder” on my motorcycle. As I was walking Thunder Alley, where all the Veterans Organizations and concessionaires put up tents, I saw her name tag and found myself face to face with Kate after 45 years of not seeing or talking to her. Not only could you have knocked me over with a feather, I was like a stumbling, babbling 14-year-old. I had so much to say but did not know how, or if, to say it. After a few awkward moments, we began to talk coherently and we exchanged phone numbers. She needed and wanted to talk to me as badly as I needed and wanted to talk to her. As it turns out, she also has PTSD and multiple marriages, but that is her story. However, we have talked and she has acknowledged she still loves me.

What are the chances of two people, one who lives in California and the other living in the mountains of North Carolina, in Washington, D.C. for “Rolling Thunder”, among thousands of riders and spectators, finding each other after 45 years? Go figure.

We talk on the phone almost every night now for two and three hours like teenagers, our memories and our love has rekindled more passionately than ever, and I have gone out to California to see her. We have settled and forgiven the past, acknowledging that the war, our youth, and the blunt force of the real world we came back to, left us with serious, deep grained scars and no knowledge or tools to work with.

I now look forward to a happy and satisfying set of “Golden Years” with Kate, and after 17 years of being alone, 45 years apart from my Kate, I think I can finally allow someone into my world without fear of rejection, someone who knows where I have been and understands how screwed up things can get, and with whom I can form an emotionally intimate, mature relationship. At our age now, the emotional part of our relationship far outweighs the physical one. Somewhat troubled by PTSD, ED, and diabetes from Agent Orange, I am amazingly surprised at how quickly and comfortably the intimacy part of our relationship has returned. We still hold each other, whisper sweet nothings to each other, and thank God we are alive and finally together again.

The world is a beautiful place again. Because of the miracles that have happened through extensive and continuous PTSD counseling with the VA counseling staff, and the AA program, I am a functioning member of society. I have my moments, but life is good...today....and that is all I can ask for...today.

Funny how things remain with you throughout the years. In Vietnam my call sign was “Crossbow 33” and today I still think of myself as such. I am and always will be “Crossbow 33”

Randy Cassels Class 68-35
173 Assault. Helicopter Co. Lai Khe, RVN 1969
Call Sign “Crossbow 33”

CHAPTER 464 REDWOOD CITY

For the third consecutive year, a member of Chapter 464 was named Senator Jerry Hill’s 2016 Veteran of the Year from the Thirteenth Senate District. Romie Bassetto was nominated by Chapter members in recognition of his thousands of hours of volunteer work in the San Mateo County Veterans community. He was the 2015 co-chair when The Wall That Heals came to Golden Gate National Cemetery, putting in countless hours organizing the volunteers and keeping the event on track with logistics support.

Chapter members also nominated Carolyn Livengood for Patriot of the Year and she was selected by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors Veterans Commission in November 2016 for recognition of her many years of work in support of Veterans. She wrote about Veteran issues affecting the area. She continues to chair the Avenue of Flags Committee which supports Memorial Day, Veterans Day and Wreaths Across America programs at the Golden Gate National Cemetery in San Bruno.



Romie Bassetto, Carolyn Livengood with Sen. Jerry Hill



Members Mike Cooney, Ponce Gonzalez, Leo McArdle, Gary Higgins, Helen Wong at Golden Gate National Cemetery, December 17 participating in Wreaths Across America.

have resulted in a 47-percent reduction in homelessness among Veterans. Between 2015 and 2016 alone, Veteran homelessness decreased by 17 percent – four times the previous year’s decline. While these statistics indicate that the efforts of VA and its partners are producing successful outcomes for many Veterans, more must be done to accelerate progress.

“We have made significant progress in dramatically reducing homelessness among Veterans in recent years, but we know there is more to be done,” Secretary McDonald said. “For the next 30-days – during a time of year when temperatures in many parts of the country can become dangerously cold – I challenge VA and all of our partners to strategically target available resources to help our nation’s homeless Veterans. Together, we can find where the needs are greatest among Veterans in each community and ensure that every Veteran has access to safe, permanent housing.”

The 30-day surge comes from a best practice Secretary McDonald observed in Tampa, Florida, where local housing officials hosted a one-day event to find homes for as many homeless Veterans as they could. Tampa officials called this Operation Reveille, referencing the French term for a bugle call to action. VA officials have adopted the term.

Operation Reveille builds on the all-in, surge concept VA uses during its homeless stand downs, which provide homeless Veterans with a one-stop shop for medical care, support services and needed clothing and toiletries. For a list of when VA medical centers are holding stand downs, click here.

From prioritizing unsheltered Veterans for immediate placement into safe housing, to organizing homeless stand downs and rapid rehousing events in their communities, there are many actions VA staff and partners can take to help Veterans quickly exit homelessness.

For more information on how to help Veterans in your community find permanent housing over the next 30-days, please download this one page overview of the 30-day surge and contact your local VA medical center to find out about specific needs of homeless Veterans in your community.

To learn more about VA programs and services that support homeless and at-risk Veterans, visit www.va.gov/homeless. A fact sheet on VA’s work to end Veteran homelessness is available here (<https://www.va.gov/homeless/docs/HomelessGeneralFactSheet-1610.pdf>). A fact sheet on VA’s work to end Veteran homelessness in Los Angeles is here (<http://www.losangeles.va.gov/documents/Fact-Sheet-Ending-Homelessness-in-Los-Angeles-20160727.pdf>).

YOU ARE INVITED TO THE 4th ANNUAL “WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY” CLASSIC CAR SHOW APRIL 1, 2017.



HELD AT THE VETERANS MEMORIAL SENIOR CENTER
1455 MADISON AVE, REDWOOD CITY.
SPONSORED BY THE STEVE WARREN MEMORIAL CHAPTER 464 OF THE
VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA.

Date: Saturday April 1, 2017 Time: 10am – 3pm

- Pre-Registration Fee: \$20.00 per vehicle.
- No Vehicle Pre-registration after March 25, 2017.
\$25.00 day of show.
- BBQ lunch will be available
- Make checks payable to: Vietnam Veterans of America
Chapter 464. (Cash only, at the gate.)
- Mail to: VVA Chapter 464 Treasurer, c/o 11 Camerino
Ct, American Canyon, CA 94503
- For additional information contact: President Gary
Higgins, 650-368-6713 or email:
je.higgins07@comcast.net

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LIABILITY RELEASE

The undersigned, desiring to enter the “WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY” CLASSIC CAR SHOW, does hereby tender his/her application for registration to this show on April 1, 2017. In consideration of the acceptance by the WHVVD coordinating group of this application, the undersigned does hereby agree to release the WHVVD, the property owner, tenants, and all other participants from any and all liability arising out of the “WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY”, CLASSIC CAR SHOW.

The undersigned also: (1) Hereby releases, waives, discharges, and covenants not to sue the WHVVD, sponsors, advertisers, participants, property owners and lessees (Releases) of the premises used to conduct this show. (2) Hereby agrees to indemnify and save and hold harmless the WHVVD and coordinating individuals from any loss, liability, damage, or cost they may incur out of the show whether caused by negligence of WHVVD personnel or otherwise. (3) Hereby agrees that this Release and Waiver of Liability, Assumption of Risk and Indemnity Agreement extends to all acts by the WHVVD or its personnel. If any portion hereof is held to be invalid, the balance of this Agreement shall continue in full force.

Acceptance on terms and conditions stated above, by:

Owner: _____ Date: _____
Exhibitor: _____ Date: _____
(If different from the owner)

The WHVVD and/or sponsoring group reserves the right to reject any car that does not meet the standards of the show directors. All drivers must be 18 years of age or older and must possess a valid Driver's License and current Insurance Certificate. Solicitation of cars or products by participants is not allowed without express written agreement by the WHVVD



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

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To:

In this issue:
• Chapter Activities-Events/Photos
• Legislative News
• Council Committee Info
And more...



VVA & CSC Meeting Dates & Events
January 27-29, 2017, Fresno, CA
April 21-23, 2017, Fresno, CA
July 21-23, 2017, Fresno, CA
October 27-29, 2017, Fresno, CA
Zephyr deadlines 5 weeks prior to each CSC meeting