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## VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA CALIFORNIA STATE COUNCIL

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### VVA-CSC ANNOUNCES SENATOR JANET NGUYEN AND ASSEMBLYMAN RANDY VOEPEL AS 2017 LEGISLATORS OF THE YEAR

The Vietnam Veterans of America, California State Council (VVA-CSC) has named Senator Janet Nguyen (R-Garden Grove) and Assemblyman Randy Voepel (R-Santee) as their Legislators of the Year for 2017. The VVA-CSC Legislators of the Year award is bestowed upon legislators who have supported California's veterans and their families during their service as California legislators.

#### Senator Janet Nguyen (R-Garden Grove)

Senator Janet Nguyen is a Vietnamese-American whose family fled South Vietnam after the Vietnam War. Prior to the California State Senate, Nguyen was a member of the Orange County Board of Supervisors from 2007 to 2014. She also previously served on the Garden Grove City Council. In addition, she is the former Vice-President of Government and Public Affairs for the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce and is a small business owner. Senator Nguyen is a member of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs.

In her first three years, she has authored eleven bills concerning veterans and the Republic of Vietnam.

According to the VVA-CSC's Veterans Advocate, Pete Conaty, "Senator Nguyen's commitment to veterans and the military is obvious from her efforts in the Legislature and her insight and support on the Senate Veterans Committee. She was born in Saigon and emigrated with her parents to the United States in search of freedom and liberty. These ideals are what the Vietnam Veterans fought for and we are proud to see that she is now fighting for us."

#### Assemblyman Randy Voepel (R-Santee)

Randy Voepel was elected to represent California's 71st Assembly District in 2016. Before joining the Assembly, Voepel served as on the Santee City Council between 1996 and 2000, and then served as Mayor between 2000-2016. He is a Vietnam veteran, having served two tours in the conflict with the US Navy. After leaving the service, he worked nearly forty years in the insurance industry. He serves as the Vice Chair of the Assembly Committee on Veterans Affairs. He is the only Vietnam veteran currently serving in the California Legislature.

In his first year in office, he has authored four bills concerning veterans and the State Military Department.

"Assemblyman Voepel is one of us; a Vietnam veteran, and he understands our issues and the importance of helping not just our generation of veterans, but the men and women who are currently returning home from deployments in the Middle East," said Dean Gotham, Chairman, VVA-CSC Government Affairs Committee.

Senator Nguyen and Assemblyman Voepel will be presented their awards at the VVA-CSC's Annual Capitol Legislative Day in the Spring of 2018. This is a day when VVA-CSC leaders and members alike travel to the State Capitol to advocate on issues of importance to veterans and to educate legislators, consultants, and staff.

3. CA AB 386  
Author: Gonzalez (D)  
Title: Legal Services for Deported Veterans  
Last Amend: 05/04/2017  
Status: 09/15/2017 In SENATE. From third reading. To Inactive File.  
Notes: 4/3-S-A
4. CA AB 409  
Author: Quirk-Silva (D)  
Title: Southern California Veterans Cemetery  
Status: 02/09/2017 INTRODUCED.
5. CA AB 513  
Author: Voepel (R)  
Title: Uniform and Travel Costs  
Status: 02/27/2017 To ASSEMBLY Committee on VETERANS AFFAIRS.  
Notes: 3/16-S-A
6. CA AB 737  
Author: Baker (R)  
Title: California Vietnam Veterans Memorial  
Last Amend: 04/19/2017  
Status: 04/19/2017 From ASSEMBLY Committee on VETERANS AFFAIRS with author's amendments.  
04/19/2017 In ASSEMBLY. Read second time and amended. Re-referred to Committee on VETERANS AFFAIRS.
7. CA AB 897  
Author: Allen T (R)  
Title: Military Identification  
Status: 04/04/2017 In ASSEMBLY Committee on VETERANS AFFAIRS: Heard, remains in committee.
8. CA AB 998  
Author: Grayson (D)  
Title: Veterans Homes: Internet Web Site  
Last Amend: 03/28/2017  
Status: 06/14/2017 To SENATE Committee on VETERANS AFFAIRS.
9. CA AB 1056  
Author: Kiley (R)  
Title: Asbestos Tort Trust Transparency Act  
Status: 03/06/2017 To ASSEMBLY Committee on JUDICIARY.  
Position: NoPosition
10. CA AB 1237  
Author: Frazier (D)  
Title: Veterans  
Status: 02/17/2017 INTRODUCED.
11. CA AB 1314  
Author: Irwin (D)  
Title: County Mental Health Services: Veterans  
Status: 04/27/2017 To ASSEMBLY Committee on HEALTH.
12. CA AB 1362  
Title: Veterans Bond Acts  
Last Amend: 03/22/2017  
Status: 03/22/2017 From ASSEMBLY Committee on HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT with author's amendments.  
03/22/2017 In ASSEMBLY. Read second time and amended. Re-referred to Committee on HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.
13. CA AB 1619  
Author: Berman (D)  
Title: Private Postsecondary Education  
Last Amend: 05/30/2017  
Status: 07/05/2017 In SENATE Committee on EDUCATION: Not heard.
14. CA SB 349  
Author: Lara (D)  
Title: Chronic Dialysis Clinics: Staffing Requirements  
Last Amend: 08/22/2017  
Status: 09/12/2017 In ASSEMBLY. To Inactive File.  
Position: Oppose
15. CA SB 359  
Author: Galgiani (D)  
Title: Professions and Vocations: Military Medical Personnel  
Status: 02/23/2017 To SENATE Committee on RULES.

## GOVERNMENTAL ADVOCATE REPORT

By Dana Nichol and Seth Reeb

Happy 2018, it is going to be a great year! This is the second year of the 2017-18 Legislative Session. Bills that were still alive at the end of 2017 will be taken up again in the first weeks of 2018 (2-year bills). Also, new bills can be introduced. All of these bills will work their way through the process until the end of the 2-year session in September. Elections will be in November and in January a new Legislature will convene for the 2019-20 Legislative Session and the whole process starts over.

VVA-CSC Day at the Capitol event, March 14, 2018, Governor's Conference Room  
All California VVA members are encouraged to attend the 2018 Day at the Capitol event on Wednesday, March 14, 2018 in the Governor's Conference Room on the first floor of the State Capitol. Attendees will hear from legislative speakers and we will also be presenting the 2017 VVA-CSC Legislator of the Year Awards to Senator Janet Nguyen (R-Garden Grove) and Assemblyman Randy Voepel (R-Santee) at this event.

#### 2-year bills

These bills are still alive from last year and will be heard at the beginning of 2018 to see if they will be eligible to continue to make their way through the legislative process.

1. CA AB 57  
Author: Brough (R)  
Title: National Guard: Enlistment Bonuses: Financial Relief  
Status: 12/06/2016 INTRODUCED.  
Position: Watch
2. CA AB 85  
Author: Rodriguez (D)  
Title: General Assistance: Employable Veterans  
Last Amend: 06/29/2017  
Status: 07/11/2017 In SENATE Committee on VETERANS AFFAIRS: Not heard.  
Position: Support



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16. CA SB 408  
Author: Nguyen (R)  
Title: Income Taxes Withholding: Exemption:  
Active Duty  
Status: 02/23/2017 To SENATE Committee on GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE.  
17. CA SB 485  
Author: Nielsen (R)  
Title: Veterans Homes  
Last Amend: 07/05/2017  
Status: 07/11/2017 In ASSEMBLY Committee on VETERANS AFFAIRS: Not heard.  
Notes: 3/7-S-A, 3/13-S&Sp-A  
18. CA SB 694  
Author: Newman (D)  
Title: Community Colleges: Veteran Resource Centers

Last Amend: 05/02/2017  
Status: 06/15/2017 To ASSEMBLY Committees on VETERANS AFFAIRS and HIGHER EDUCATION.  
19. CA SB 741  
Author: Mendoza (D)  
Title: Charitable Raffles  
Last Amend: 06/07/2017  
Status: 06/13/2017 In SENATE Committee on GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION: Not heard.  
Notes: 3/20-SiA-A  
Position: Support If Amended

**WOMEN VETERANS COMMITTEE**  
Kate O'Hare-Palmer, Chair  
Kate's speech on veterans day 2017 at the wall.

Thank you, diane, for that wonderful introduction. It's amazing to me, i've been coming here for years sitting out there with you all, now i'm up here to tell my story. I wanted to say that this is a special anniversary, the 35th, i was here for the 25th, this is amazing. Last month, I opened up a fortune cookie, and it said you will be traveling and coming into a fortune. I traveled across from california to here,

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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.





and here is my fortune, my brothers and sisters, Welcome Home.

I want to share a short bit about my time as an army nurse in Vietnam, my transition home, and the current needs of women veterans who have served in the military. My military service truly began in my home, because both my parents were in the Army Air Corps during World War II. My mother scrambled eggs in the morning and was teaching us more's code. I could have used that SOS a few times in vietnam. My older brother, Tom, was an in country veteran in 1965 and 66. I thought his pictures come home, he was in a hospital there and I wanted to help. I was a nursing student. It was that simple. Upon graduation, i raised my right hand with three of my friends and we took the oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies. I believed this, i am a constitutionalist. The war was permeating all of our lives and I didn't know how much then my heart, my mind, and my soul would be tested. I went to Vietnam in June of 1968, the day after Robert Kennedy was assassinated. Within two hours of hiting Chu Lai I was in an operating room scrubbed in. After three weeks, I began to wonder how I was going to make it. Working between the emergency and operating rooms I saw injuries and carnage that nobody could be prepared for. Even though I trained out of 5000 bed L.A. County general hospital. I was grateful for the training that i received in the Army before i went over. It helped me with my first tracheostomy to save a life. The teamwork of all the medics, nurses, and doctors that i was able to work with was hard to beat and will be forever remembered. We were a team.

We supported the First Cav in and Marine divisions in I corp in 68. Some of us were either dating, engaged, or married to men who were also serving in the military. Not only were we caring for those in our hospital, we were worrying would we see our guy come in on a letter -- litter? That evacuation hospital reserve unit came down to Chu Lai and second surge was sent down to three core and we changed our mission to support Big Red One. I know there's a lot of you here in the spring of 1969, the long range reconnaissance patrol brought in soldiers who had been held as POWs in cambodia. They were severely mutilated, some of the genitals cut off, and they were barely alive. One of them asked me to let them die, he didn't want to go home like that. I just hugged him. My duties were never ending, my hands continued to work, but my compassion was being drained. My soul was tearing, and no one wants that, no one that is in a war ever wants war to continue. The robot Kate took over those last few months in country. It was too much.

Coming home to Travis Air Force base and bussed into oakland people, we had protesters throw rotten vegetables on us. We were not prepared for that. I was buffered somewhat in the early 70's by being at Fort Stewart, Georgia with my husband. And I worked at a local hospital while the South Vietnamese soldiers were being trained to fly helicopters back in Vietnam. However, the war followed me home. An unexpected thing happened to me, I started having bad dreams... I was covered in blood because I was an operating room nurse. They started coming into into my daytime life, I called them my day mares. After being in Vietnam and being so strong, I felt so weak and scared, I didn't know what to do. It broke up my marriage, because I didn't want to tell my husband after being so strong that I was so scared and weak. Those memories are relegated to a subconscious, and I returned to San Francisco and finished college.

One night while i was working at the VA San Francisco, a patient came out of his room and said you were my masked angel, I recognize your blue eyes and your voice. I will never forget when you said to me "you are safe now, you will go home." It was stunning to me to meet somebody that was alive. We cry for all of these names, we cry for all of these men and women that died. But to meet somebody that made it back was the beginning of our healing.

The dedication in 1993 of the Women's Memorial was an ecstatic day for us. We were back together and acknowledged. The effort, energy, and support to get this project completed were herculean. On that day, we were greeted by our brothers. Many had their military records and were looking for their nurses, clerks, women they worked with in intelligence or aircraft maintenance. They were looking for the American Red Cross workers who had flown into their LZ. These thank you's and hugs that we got, and continue to get every time we come here, are so amazing to us. Diane's message in circle of healing was truly begun. The spiritual component of healing was a weaving through us, and it was only the beginning of a long road for many of us.

I am grateful to the Vet Center, because they really helped me. They gave us back our pride and honor in our

service when we were feeling less than whole. During our Vietnam era, there was a 2% a cap on how many women could serve. Now there's almost 15% women that serve. Over 250,000 served during the Vietnam era, but it's much more than that now. What I wanted to mention, because there's still many areas that need advancement. We continue to help with that. Women experience toxic exposure related to cancers and PTSD like our fellow soldiers. The Vietnam Veterans of America and other major veterans service organizations have worked tirelessly to help get that Toxic Exposure and Research Act passed last year, but that's only the beginning. You need to keep on everyone, so we get the benefits and the care that we deserve after toxic exposure. It's for our children and our grandchildren now. Timely care is needed at the VA Healthcare. OB and gynecological care should be standard in all the hospitals. It's a goal, but it hasn't been met yet. Infertility in both women and men that served in country or serve in other areas today that have toxic exposure is something we need more work on. VA benefits need inclusion of comparable claims and adjudication for women veterans. Suicide and homeless rates for women veterans are on the rise, and we need to look at that and help. Military sexual trauma care is a sore point. In 2014, we had a bill passed that was supposed to help take care of that. It's not enough, we need to say, "no more ever again." The forever GI Bill that just passed will be greatly used by our veterans that have been delayed entry back to school for either family, mental health, or medical reasons. The majority of us veterans, all of us, we have gone home, served in our communities, been in places of leadership, and we continue to work with ourselves and others. We need to stand and work and live together always, because we are special. We are. Thank you, i'm proud to be a veteran and Welcome IHome.

## PARASITE

### VA STUDIES VIETNAM VETS FOR EXPOSURE TO CANCER-CAUSING PARASITE

By Gina Harkins Senior Staff Writer MOAA



Servicemembers who fought in Vietnam could be at risk of developing cancer caused by a parasite they might've ingested decades ago through raw or undercooked fish while deployed to Southeast Asia.

Test results from a study conducted this spring by the Department of Veterans affairs show Vietnam War veterans could be infected with a slow-killing parasite, The Associated Press reported. Twenty percent of the 50 veterans tested were positive or bordering positive for antibodies from tiny parasitic worms called liver flukes, according to the wire service.

Liver flukes can cause cholangiocarcinoma, a bile-duct cancer.

Health officials posted a warning on the VA site that servicemembers who "ate raw or undercooked freshwater fish during their service in Southeast Asia, such as Vietnam War veterans, might have been infected" by liver flukes.

"However, currently VA is not aware of any studies that show that bile duct cancer occurs more often in U.S. Vietnam War Veterans than in other groups of people," the warning states.

Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., has asked the National Academy of Sciences to research the potential link between water-borne parasites and bile-duct cancer. He cited the case of Jerry Chiano, a Vietnam War veteran from New York. The Navy Seabee swam in local rivers and ate fish while serving in Vietnam. Chiano later developed bile-duct cancer, but the VA did not recognize the disease as service connected, according to Schumer's letter.

Chiano died on Nov. 19. He was 68 years old.

"Veterans, like Jerry Chiano, shouldn't have to wage their own war to gather the scientific facts about bile duct cancer in order to receive earned benefits," Schumer wrote four months before the Navy veteran's death. "...This research will prove critical as Americans are diagnosed and can more readily assess their likelihood of risk."

People who've ingested liver flukes sometimes don't show symptoms for decades. The parasites can mature to adulthood inside the human biliary duct system, according to the VA, and the irritation and scarring caused by liver fluke infections can lead to cancer.

As of last year, the VA had treated about 700 veterans with cholangiocarcinoma in the past 15 years, the AP reported. Most of those veterans didn't submit claims for benefits since they didn't know about the potential link to their time in service, according to the AP.

"Of the claims submitted, [three] out of [four] have been rejected," according to data obtained by the AP via Freedom of Information Act request. Curt Cashour, a VA spokesman, told the AP that the department is taking its study seriously, but added that "until further research, a recommendation cannot be made either way."

The parasites that can lead to cancer are typically found in Southeast Asian countries, including Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and rural areas of Korea and China, according to the VA. The Mayo Clinic lists symptoms of cholangiocarcinoma as jaundice, intensely itchy skin, fatigue, white-colored stools, abdominal pain, or unintended weight loss.

### VA STUDY SHOWS PARASITE FROM VIETNAM MAY BE KILLING VETS

A half century after serving in Vietnam, hundreds of veterans have a new reason to believe they may be dying from a silent bullet — test results show some men may have been infected by a slow-killing parasite while fighting in the jungles of Southeast Asia.

The Department of Veterans Affairs this spring commissioned a small pilot study to look into the link between liver flukes ingested through raw or undercooked fish and a rare bile duct cancer. It can take decades for symptoms to appear. By then, patients are often in tremendous pain, with just a few months to live.

Of the 50 blood samples submitted, more than 20 percent came back positive or bordering positive for liver fluke antibodies, said Sung-Tae Hong, the tropical medicine specialist who carried out the tests at Seoul National University in South Korea.

"It was surprising," he said, stressing the preliminary results could include false positives and that the research is ongoing.

Northport VA Medical Center spokesman Christopher Goodman confirmed the New York facility collected the samples and sent them to the lab. He would not comment on the findings, but said everyone who tested positive was notified.

Gerry Wiggins, who served in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969, has already lost friends to the disease. He was among those who got the call.

"I was in a state of shock," he said. "I didn't think it would be me."

The 69-year-old, who lives in Port Jefferson Station, New York, didn't have any symptoms when he agreed to take part in the study, but hoped his participation could help save lives. He immediately scheduled further tests, discovering he had two cysts on his bile duct, which had the potential to develop into the cancer, known as cholangiocarcinoma. They have since been removed and — for now — he's doing well.

Though rarely found in Americans, the parasites infect an estimated 25 million people worldwide, mostly in Asia.

Endemic in the rivers of Vietnam, the worms can easily be wiped out with a handful of pills early on, but left untreated they can live for decades without making their hosts sick. Over time, swelling and inflammation of the bile duct can lead to cancer. Jaundice, itchy skin, weight loss and other symptoms appear only when the disease is in its final stages.

The VA study, along with a call by Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer of New York for broader research into liver flukes and cancer-stricken veterans, began after The Associated Press raised the issue in a story last year. The reporting found that about 700 veterans with cholangiocarcinoma have been seen by the VA in the past 15 years. Less than half of them submitted claims for service-related benefits, mostly because they were not aware of a possible connection to Vietnam. The VA rejected 80 percent of the requests, but decisions often appeared to be haphazard or contradictory, depending on what desks they landed on, the AP found.

The number of claims submitted reached 60 in 2017, up from 41 last year. Nearly three out of four of those cases were also denied, even though the government posted a warning on its website this year saying veterans who ate raw or undercooked freshwater fish while in Vietnam might be at risk. It stopped short of urging them to get ultrasounds or other tests, saying there was currently no evidence the vets had higher infection rates than the general population.

"We are taking this seriously," said Curt Cashour, a spokesman with the Department of Veterans Affairs. "But



until further research, a recommendation cannot be made either way."

Veteran Mike Baughman, 65, who was featured in the previous AP article, said his claim was granted early this year after being denied three times. He said the approval came right after his doctor wrote a letter saying his bile duct cancer was "more likely than not" caused by liver flukes from the uncooked fish he and his unit in Vietnam ate when they ran out of rations in the jungle. He now gets about \$3,100 a month and says he's relieved to know his wife will continue to receive benefits after he dies. But he remains angry that other veterans' last days are consumed by fighting the same government they went to war for as young men.

"In the best of all worlds, if you came down with cholangiocarcinoma, just like Agent Orange, you automatically were in," he said, referring to benefits granted to veterans exposed to the toxic defoliant sprayed in Vietnam. "You didn't have to go fighting."

Baughman, who is thin and weak, recently plucked out "Country Roads" on a bass during a jam session at his cabin in West Virginia. He wishes the VA would do more to raise awareness about liver flukes and to encourage Vietnam veterans to get an ultrasound that can detect inflammation.

"Personally, I got what I needed, but if you look at the bigger picture with all these other veterans, they don't know what necessarily to do," he said. "None of them have even heard of it before. A lot of them give me that blank stare like, 'You've got what?'"

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## VA FACILITY CLOSURES

**SHULKIN SAYS HE'S CONSIDERING CLOSING 1,100**

**VA FACILITIES**

By Hope Yen

Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin says his department is seeking to close perhaps more than 1,100 VA facilities nationwide as it develops plans to allow more veterans to receive medical care in the private sector.

At a House hearing Wednesday, Shulkin said the VA had identified more than 430 vacant buildings and 735 that he described as underutilized, costing the federal government \$25 million a year. He said the VA would work with Congress in prioritizing buildings for closure and was considering whether to follow a process the Pentagon had used in recent decades to decide which of its underused military bases to shutter, known as Base Realignment and Closure, or BRAC.

"Whether BRAC is a model that we should take a look, we're beginning that discussion with members of Congress," Shulkin told a House appropriations subcommittee. "We want to stop supporting our use of maintenance of buildings we don't need, and we want to reinvest that in buildings we know have capital needs."

In an internal agency document obtained by The Associated Press, the VA pointed to aging buildings it was reviewing for possible closure that would cost millions of dollars to replace. It noted that about 57 percent of all VA facilities were more than 50 years old. Of the 431 VA buildings it said were vacant, most were built 90 or more years ago, according to agency data. The VA document did not specify the locations.

While President Donald Trump's budget blueprint calls for a 6 percent increase in VA funding, Shulkin has made clear the government's second-largest agency with nearly 370,000 employees will have to operate more efficiently and that budget increases should not be considered a given in future years. The department recently announced hiring restrictions on roughly 4,000 positions despite the lifting of the federal hiring freeze and also left open the possibility of "near-term" and "long-term workforce reductions." Shulkin is also putting together a broader proposal by fall to expand the VA's Choice program of private-sector care.

The Pentagon's BRAC process often stirred controversy in the past as members of Congress expressed concern about the negative economic impact of shuttering military bases and vigorously opposed closures in their districts.

Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, R-Neb., a vice chair of the appropriations panel, told Shulkin that Congress was looking forward to working with the VA "constructively" on the issue in part by determining how excess VA buildings could be put to good community use, such as for fire-fighting, security or landscape maintenance.

"Don't ever use the term BRAC because it brings up a

lot of bad memories," Fortenberry cautioned. "You automatically set yourself up for a lot of controversy."

## VA HOTLINE

**WHITE HOUSE VA HOTLINE NOW FULLY**

**STAFFED AND OPERATIONAL AROUND THE CLOCK**

**TO SERVE NATION'S VETERANS**

Today the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that the White House VA Hotline, first launched in June as part of President Donald J. Trump's commitment to reforming VA, is now fully staffed with live agents working to serve Veterans 24-hours a day, 365 days a year.

The hotline, which became 24-hour operational in mid-October, is now staffed by a team consisting of 90 percent Veterans or employees who have a Veteran family member, and is in response to Veterans' requests to talk to agents who could relate to their experiences.

"The White House VA Hotline provides our nation's Veterans with a direct, dedicated contact line that allows them to interact with highly trained, live agents to answer their needs and concerns," said VA Secretary David J. Shulkin.

"Since the initial launch of the hotline in June, we listened to our Veterans, who indicated that they prefer speaking with other Veterans and Veteran family members, and we adjusted our hiring based on that feedback," added Shulkin.

"We're proud that the hotline is now staffed 24/7 by a team of mostly Veterans or Veteran family members who have direct knowledge of their particular concerns and can use their experience to address them in the best way possible with the resources of the VA. This represents a true win-win for Veterans and their loved ones."

Since 24/7 coverage began in October, the hotline has served more than 10,000 callers.

Hotline agents answer inquiries, provide directory assistance, document concerns about VA care, benefits and services, and expedite the referral and resolution of those concerns. Agents undergo regular updates and training on VA services based on hotline trends and are assisted by newly implemented tracking software to help VA capture and improve its response, referral and resolution processes to best support Veterans.

The hotline can be accessed at 855-948-2311 and is VA's first non-clinical, non-emergency around-the-clock call center. It provides Veterans a supplemental option to report issues if they are not being addressed through VA's normal customer service channels.

The hotline's agents are located at a VA facility in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Agents have access to a multitude of resources and contact information to help Veterans. The hotline also generates real-time reports to VA experts who can help address the specific issues of Veterans as well as make better-informed decisions on where program improvements are needed.

## MYHEALTHERVET

**ONLINE VA SCHEDULING NOW AVAILABLE**

**THROUGH MY HEALTHERVET**

You can now manage your primary care and certain specialty care VA appointments online at participating VA facilities. You will need a Premium My HealtheVet Account to use online scheduling. If you do not have a Premium account, please visit My HealtheVet or contact the My HealtheVet Coordinator at your nearest VA facility.

U.S. Army Veteran G. Paul Moffett, who helped test online scheduling at the VA Tennessee Valley Healthcare System in Murfreesboro, TN, says it's about giving Veterans greater control over scheduling their care.

"Rather than making a phone call and playing go fish, now I can [go online and] pick the date that best fits my schedule," he says. "You can use it anytime, anywhere — on whatever Internet-access device you have. I'm excited about it. It's great stuff."

Currently, online scheduling is available at more than 100 VA facilities and their associated Community Based Outpatient Clinics. VA plans to add more appointment types in the future and is working to make online scheduling available at nearly all VA facilities next year. Check to see if your VA facility offers online scheduling.

Where can I find the online scheduling tool?

If you are eligible to use online scheduling, you will see a "Schedule a VA Appointment" option when you log in to your My HealtheVet Premium Account.

To make an appointment online, you need to be registered as a patient in My HealtheVet and have a Premium Account. To schedule a primary care appointment, you

must have had a primary care appointment at that facility within the last two years. Contact your facility for information about available specialty care appointments.

What else can I do with the online scheduling tool?

You can:

Self-schedule primary care appointments at participating VA facilities where you have had a primary care appointment in the past two years.

Request help scheduling primary care appointments at participating VA facilities where you receive care.

Self-schedule or request help scheduling specialty appointments, such as outpatient mental health, optometry and audiology, at participating facilities.

View or cancel appointments and requests.

Track the status of appointment requests.

Send messages about requested appointments.

Get notifications about appointments.

If your VAMC does not currently participate in online scheduling, please know that VA is working to expand access to additional medical centers. If you need to make an appointment immediately, call the VA facility where you want to receive care. Find your VA health facility's phone number.

Just to summarize, to use VA Online Scheduling today, you will need to:

Be a current VA patient

Have a Premium My HealtheVet Account

Check if your VA facility offers online scheduling at this time

Have had a primary care appointment at your participating facility within the last two years

...and that's it!

Need Help?

If you need help with online scheduling, please dial 1-877-470-5947. For TTY assistance, dial 711. The Help Desk is open weekdays from 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. CT.

## VETERAN DRIVER LICENSE

**MORE THAN 64,000 VETERANS APPLY FOR**

**VETERAN DESIGNATION ON CALIFORNIA DRIVER**

**LICENSES**

In the two years since Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr. signed legislation authorizing a VETERAN designation on California driver licenses and identification cards, more than 64,000 veterans have visited their County Veterans Service Office to apply and the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) has issued more than 55,000. In the process, veterans learned about their eligibility for other benefits, and 28% applied for additional benefits. Thus far, an additional \$17 million has been awarded retroactively and \$31 million will be received by veterans statewide annually.

"There are 1.7 million veterans in California. Our hope is that each one of them has ready access to all of the benefits they have earned through their service to this country," said CalVet Secretary Vito Imbasciani. "Getting them into a County Veteran Service Office is the first step to ensuring they do."

A veteran designation on a driver license or ID card recognizes military service and makes it easier for veterans who don't have a retired ID or a VA ID to access privileges and benefits without having to carry their military record with them. As an added bonus, a veteran designation means a business can easily confirm veteran status when offering discounts on holidays such as Veterans Day.

The DMV and CalVet have vigorously promoted this program in conjunction with the County Veterans Services Offices (CVSO), and veteran service organizations statewide. While the program has been a success, there are still hundreds of thousands of eligible veterans in California who don't know the program exists or are planning to participate when their current driver license is up for renewal.

Veterans can follow these three important steps to obtain their designation.

STEP 1 – Take your DD-214 to a CVSO to obtain a Veteran Status Verification Form (and check your eligibility for other benefits at the same time!) To find a local CVSO, call 844-737-8838 or visit [www.calvet.ca.gov](http://www.calvet.ca.gov).

STEP 2 – Go online or call DMV at 800-777-0133 for an appointment to visit a DMV field office. Present the completed and stamped Veteran Status Verification Form and driver license application to a DMV representative at your local DMV field office.

STEP 3 - Pay your \$5 designation fee and related application or renewal fees.

Veterans are required to pay a one-time \$5 designation fee, in addition to any other application fees associated with a renewal, duplicate, or original driver license and/or ID card. The designation fee is included in the legislative language contained within Assembly Bill 935.



The CalVet and the California DMV wants to remind veterans that they must first obtain a Veteran Status Verification Form from a CVSO, BEFORE visiting a DMV field office to apply for the designation.

## CHAPTER NOTES

### Chapter 201

Darwin J. Thomas Memorial Chapter 201 closed out 2017 with its annual Holiday luncheon at The Spaghetti Factory in downtown San Jose, California on December 17th. Over 80 VVA and AVVA members and guests enjoyed a spaghetti feast and were honored with a presentation by author Richard Botkin. Richard is a former Marine infantry officer and author of "Ride the Thunder: A Vietnam War Story of Honor and Triumph." The Chapter was also honored with attendance of Chapter 201 member MG Kent Hillhouse's (USA, Ret) guest; the Honorable William Peacock, former Under Secretary of the Army (and retired Marine Colonel) and his wife Nancy.



The last quarter of 2017 saw Chapter 201 VVA and AVVA members participating in several significant events including a POW/MIA Ceremony, California Veterans Memorial Ceremony, Los Gatos Veterans' Memorial Presentation, Veterans Flag Lowering Ceremony, and the annual Santa Clara County Veterans' Day Parade.

Chapter 201 VVA and AVVA participated in the POW/MIA Ceremony sponsored jointly by VVA Chapter 464, American Legion Post 409 and the Department of Veterans Affairs at the Golden Gate National Cemetery in San Bruno, California on September 15, 2017. Chapter 201 member Rose Herrera (former San Jose Vice Mayor) conducted the Missing Man Table Ceremony and AVVA Chapter 201 Vice President Cang Kim Dong gave an emotional presentation on his time as a POW in Vietnam.



Chapter 201 VVA and AVVA participated in the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial Ceremony on October 14th at Capital Park in Sacramento for the unveiling of new names to be added to the memorial. Chapter 201 member Fran McVey, with the Scottish American Military Society, and six members of the Chapter 201 AVVA provided the lead Color Guard for the opening ceremony.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Honor Committee added the names of fourteen Vietnam veterans who entered active duty from California and later passed away from Agent Orange related diseases. Other names on the California Memorial, that are not on the National Wall, include those sailors killed in 1969 when an Australian aircraft carrier cut their destroyer in half. Since they were "off the line" for a few days to participate in an exercise, they were not official "combat deaths" in the War.

Chapter 201 member Mike Frangadakis, founder and past president of the Los Gatos Veterans Memorial &



## Welcome Home Veterans Bike & Car Show

April 14th

Calling all Bikes & Cars:

Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 391 Sonora is hosting a Bike and Car Show on April 14, 2018. All makes, models and years are welcome. The show will be held at the Tuolumne Co. Sheriff Posse Grounds, Rawhide Road, Jamestown. Entry is \$30 advance, \$35 after April 6<sup>th</sup>, includes commemorative pin (first 300) and People's Choice judging. Custom trophies for Best of Show Bike & Car. Public admission is free, parking is \$5. Food, music and prize drawings will be part of the event. Hours 10 to 4. Advance registration is encouraged, see [www.vietnamveterans391.org](http://www.vietnamveterans391.org) or contact Patrick at 209-740-5304 or Rodger at 209-480-8423. Sponsorship opportunities are available. All proceeds from the event support local veterans, community outreach and scholarships.



## Welcome Home Veterans



## Bike and Car Show

All Makes, Models and Years Welcome



Sheriff's Posse Grounds  
19130 Rawhide Rd,  
Jamestown CA



April 14th, 2018

# FOOD \* MUSIC \* RAFFLE

Entries \$30 -\$35 after April 6th **Open to the Public \$5 Parking**  
Show 10 to 4 Gates Open at 8

Proceeds Support Local Veterans,  
Community Outreach and  
scholarships

**REGISTRATION & EVENT INFORMATION**  
[WWW.VIETNAMVETERANS391.ORG](http://WWW.VIETNAMVETERANS391.ORG)  
Patrick 209-740-5304  
Rodger 209-480-8423



Support Foundation, and Chapter 201 member Kent Hillhouse (MG, USA, Ret.), the current foundation president, held an open house to present the design for the proposed Los Gatos, California Veteran's Memorial on October 26, 2017. The presentation at the Los Gatos Civic Center provided an opportunity for residents to see the outline of a proposed memorial approved by the Los Gatos Town Council. The foundation expects to begin fundraising to cover the memorial's approximately \$1.5 million cost (<http://www.honoravet.org>).



Los Gatos Veteran's Memorial with the Flame of Liberty Design Presentation Los Gatos, California October 26, 2017

VVA Chapter 201 member Mike Frangadakis Founder & Past President of Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation, Los Gatos, California

VVA Chapter 201 member Kent Hillhouse (MG, USA, Ret) President of Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation, Los Gatos, California

The centerpiece of the memorial is a Flame of Liberty, inspired by the Statue of Liberty's flame, will be made of a very heavy, shatterproof glass. It will be lit at night and rest on top of a water feature, with a Soldier's Cross sitting inside. The Soldier's Cross is designed to honor the fallen and is made up of a rifle and soldier's boots with helmet on top. Two rock-faced Walls of Liberty will be behind the flame, with the backside of one used to recognize major donors. A serpentine Wall of Honor will lead visitors to the memorial. The Wall of Honor will contain panels recognizing the six branches of service. This is also where individual veterans and active service members will be recognized.

Chapter 201 VVA and AVVA members honored deceased Veterans at San Jose's Oak Hill Memorial Park on October 29th. Chapter 201 is the sponsor for the October Flag Lowering ceremony each year. United Veterans Council of Santa Clara County (UVC) Past President, and Chapter 201 Vice President, Gene Fanucchi acted as the Master of Ceremonies while Chapter 201 President Warren Finch officiated for the VVA. Chapter Chaplain Randy Richmond provided the invocation and benediction and members Jack Wells and Stephen Thompson (Secretary) lowered and folded the flag. Members of the Chapter 201 AVVA provided the Color Guard for the Ceremony.



Gene Fanucchi acted as the Master of Ceremonies while Chapter President Warren Finch officiated for VVA Chapter 201. Chapter members Jack Wells, Randy Richmond and Stephen Thompson lowered and folded the flag.



Chapter 201 President Warren Finch officiated for VVA Chapter 201 as Chapter members Randy Richmond, Jack Wells and Stephen Thompson lowered and folded the flag

The United Veterans Council of Santa Clara County (UVC) conducts a ceremonial Flag Lowering on the last Sunday in every other month to honor those deceased Veterans who are recognized on a Flag Plaque at the entrance to Oak Hill Memorial Park during the previous months. A deceased Veteran does not have to be interred at Oak Hill to have his or her name on the honor plaque. Many Veterans are buried overseas or in the National Cemeteries throughout the country. The names of Veterans to be honored are provided by the families and Oak Hill places the name on the Honor Plaque daily. After a Veteran is honored, the name is recorded in the "Book Everlasting" which is located in the lobby of the Administration Building.

On November 11th, over thirty-five Chapter 201 VVA and AVVA members participated in the 2017 United Veterans Council of Santa Clara County (UVC) Veterans' Day Parade in downtown San Jose, California on the occasion of the 99th anniversary



many, National Guard bringing in military vehicles, San Luis Obispo Sheriff's Honor Guard, Welcome Home Military Heroes supporting us with a flag line for our guests, Grizzly Youth group, San Luis City fire department, motorcycle groups, the Veterans Center and



Chapter 201 Color Guard in the UVC Veterans' Day. Alexander Cao (AVVA-201), Stephen Thompson (Secretary), Jack Wells, Gerald Arnold, Randy Sessler (Director) and Duy Nguyen (AVVA-201)

of the "War To End All Wars."

The annual UVC Veterans' Day parade in San Jose honors all those who have served, and those continuing to serve their country during the largest Veterans' Day Parade in Northern California. Over 90 numbered units march in the two-hour parade to honor veterans of all wars and pay tribute to our military service personnel, and their families, who have given so much for their country.

### Chapter 982

Course you won't get this till next year but we still wish everyone a Merry Christmas. We are so thankful for all our VVA members and a special thank you to AVVA members for always being there. Veterans Day 2017 was a great day for us hosting "We Honor Vets" celebration. The American Legion Post 66 was co-host. The idea was to honor all post Vietnam Veterans and we had a great turn out but we also received a lot of Veterans from WWII, Korea, and Vietnam. Thanks to Michael Knight for chairing the event and thanks to all our members for helping. Chapter 982 Color Guard opened the ceremony. Women Veterans from Chapter 982 and American Legion Post 66 performed the POW/MIA ceremony, they did a beautiful job. Our supporters were

Bash/Dance. Great fun.



Then comes Christmas. Chapter 982 Color Guard led the annual Christmas parade in Guadalupe. Great parade with the whole town coming out. It is a night time parade, really special.

We are preparing for Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day for 2018. Our annual event this coming year will be March 24, 2018 with a Dinner/Dance, raffles, silent auction, baked goods sale, 50/50, a no host bar and live music by Steppin Out. This year our event will be held at the Veterans Memorial Building in Santa Maria. Tickets are \$25 and we promise a lot of fun. Call Deek 805-710-3115 or Jerry 805-295-9139 for more info.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Jerry Kaufman

Support Our Troops - May God Bless

### Chapter 446

Covina Field of Valor

November 4th to November 12th the Covina Rotary presented the Field of Valor for the 6th year. The Field of Valor is 2,001 American flags flown 24 - 7 for people to visit during Veterans Day week. There are 8 fields 250 flags per field with one flag in the middle of the field for Donald Ward Evans, Medal of Honor recipient, raised in Covina. Both sides of the middle rows are for Medal of Honor recipients. There is also a field of fifty flags from the first to present.

There are events every day. Opening ceremonies on





the November 5th, unserviceable flag retirement on the 9th, closing ceremonies on the 11th this year. School children from the surrounding schools visit the field during the day and learn about our flag, its history as well as service to our country.

A local Boy Scout Troup does a great job with the flag retirement. Flags are collected all year and stored for this event held after the sun goes down. This year there were approximately 500 flags to be retired. As each flag is placed in the fire, the two Boy Scouts would step back and salute until the flag was consumed.

The flags are available to honor a Veteran for \$35. If the Veteran was killed in action; the name tag is hung on the flag with a black ribbon. Otherwise the name is hung



with a yellow ribbon. This year the names of Carl Jensen and Jose Ramos were honored by Chapter 446.

Money raised this year was in excess of \$65,000.00. All proceeds minus expenses are used to help needy Veterans. How was the money distributed? \$3,500 for Utilities, \$5,700 for Insurance, \$38,000 for Rent/Housing, \$3,900 for DMV, \$10,000 for Debt, \$2,500 for Auto Repair and \$1,400 for furniture. I rounded off the numbers but the numbers are significant and beneficial to needy Veterans.

The Rotary uses 100% of the money raised to help Veterans or Veteran Services. All of the materials are donated (The only expenses are the labor of the workers to put up the tents and the porta-pottys), and the field is manned 24 hours a day by volunteers from the local business owners, Veteran organizations (Chapter 446), and the Veterans Club from Mt. Sac (a local community college). It's a wonderful event and amazing to walk amongst 2,000 of our beautiful flags.

Al Biernesser  
Treasurer  
Chapter 446

#### Chapter 400



## Fresno Veterans Day Parade

by Craig Meadors

On November 11, Fresno held it's 98th annual Veterans Day Parade. Chapter 933 participated with three vehicles, and were once again greeted with enthusiastic crowds clapping and cheering as they progressed down the parade route. The parade is considered the biggest in the USA. After the parade, Chapter members met at Applebee's restaurant for lunch. A day well spent with fellow vets, families, and friends.

Left Front: Steve Hayhurst, Marilyn Meadors, Wanda Grimsley, George Grimsley, Sal Gomez, Lee House.  
Left Back: Craig Meadors, Don Hayhurst, Lester Camp.

Taken along the staging area.  
Left: George Grimsley, Sal Gomez, Steve Hayhurst, Lee House.

Above:  
Along the parade route.

Taken from inside the lead vehicle. Carrying the Chapter banner are Steve Hayhurst and Sal Gomez.

## A SOCIAL GATHERING POTLUCK STYLE

On December 14th, Chapter members met at the Meadors' home for an evening of delicious food, good fellowship, and fun times.

Members were treated to a great variety: Lasagna, Black Bean Chili, Spaghetti, Ham, Enchiladas, Rotisserie Chicken, Pilaf, Cobb Salad, and Scalloped Potatoes. Of course there was cake with a special message 'Merry Christmas VVA Chapter 933!'

Chapter members and wives attending: Bill & Sue Dattola; David & Patsy Finster; George & Wanda Grimsley; Sal & Marjorie Gomez; Steve & Jo Ann Hayhurst; Paul & Norma Kaser & Michael; John & Henrietta Sturdivant; Don & Dolores Hayhurst; Olin & Luanne Gray; John & Bobbi Miller; Jonathan Zwickel; Craig & Marilyn Meadors.

photos by Marilyn Meadors



The photos (below and page seven) were taken by the Golden State Warriors on December 11, when Chapter 400 was recognized for it's service to veterans.



Chapter 400 president Bill Hodges, along with his wife and fellow Chapter 400 member, Sue, were treated to a game against the Portland Trailblazers, and also enjoyed the pre-game shoot-around from first row court side seats.

At half time, Bill was presented with a plaque from the Warriors and Walmart, as a Community Playmaker, arranged by Operation: Care & Comfort.

The presentation was made by two Warrior Girls.

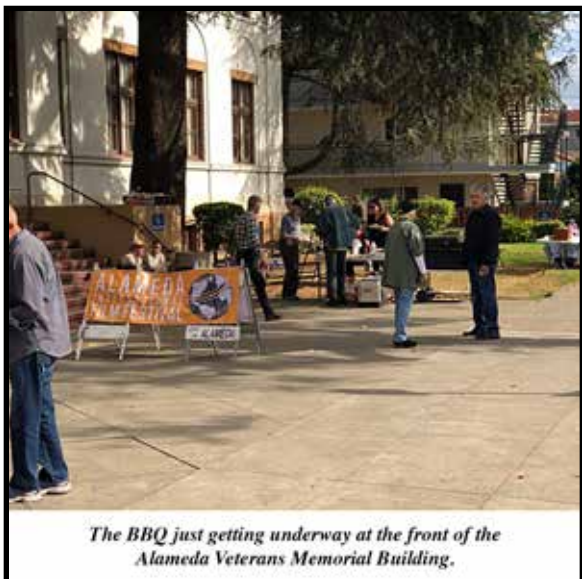
Bill was not allowed to take them home.

Veterans Day was certainly a busy time for Chapter 400! First, we dedicated the recently acquired, painted and installed a U.S. Flag repository for retired U.S. Flags.

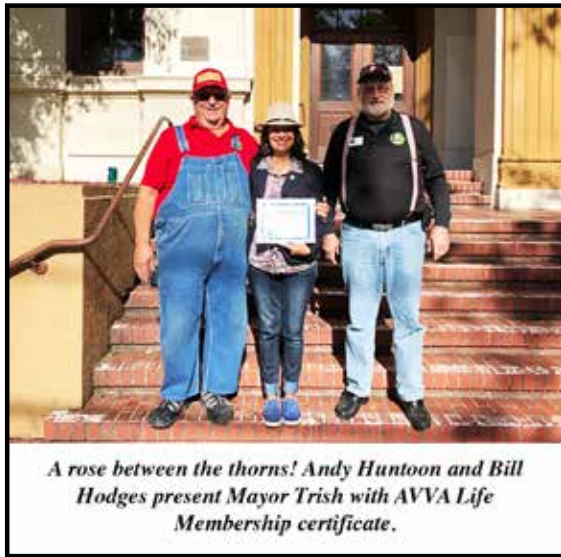


We also hosted a BBQ, complete with hamburgers, hot dogs and sausages, which were offered to all veterans and families, and any passers-by who were walking by on this really beautiful day!

Since the Alameda Vets Building was also hosting a film festival, their patrons were also invited to partake of our vittles, much to their gastronomical delight.



The "star" of the event was Mayor Trish Herrera Spencer, who has many times come the aid of veterans, and specifically, VVA Chapter 400.



*A rose between the thorns! Andy Huntoon and Bill Hodges present Mayor Trish with AVVA Life Membership certificate.*

To return here show of commitment to us, we honored Mayor Trish with a Life Membership in AVVA, of which she most proudly received.

Chapter 400 Treasurer Andy Huntoon explaining the trials and tribulation of attaining a "retired" mail box for our U.S. Flags.

Trish shows up at our Alameda events (City of Alameda sponsored, such as Park Street Car Show, Park Street Wine & Crafts exhibits, attending our annual Memorial Day Ceremony and delivering the welcoming address, etc),

Chapter 400 this past Memorial Day weekend, dedicated a monument to the 100 City of Oakland residents who died in Vietnam, while servicing their country.

The ceremony was to be at the Oakland Veterans Memorial Building (which is our official address). The City did us a "favor", by NOT charging us for use of OUR building for this one hour event.

We invited Mayor Libby Schaff, the City Council Members, and Oakland representatives who serve on the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, to participate. Mayor Schaff was also asked to give the welcoming address.

We received NO response from ANY! With the exception of Councilman Abel Guillén, who was late in arriving.

We then invited Mayor Trish to give the welcoming address, for which she graciously said yes.

Mayor Trish wholeheartedly honors and supports veterans!

As an Oakland-born and current resident, I'm totally ashamed of how my city treats (mis-treats?) it's veterans!!

## Chapter 756

Refurbishing of the Long Beach Vietnam Memorial



The Chapter members are happy to hear of the upgrading of the L.B. Vietnam Veterans Memorial which was the hard work of our membership. On November 10, 2001 it was dedicated to the Long Beach Veterans who gave their lives during the Vietnam War. Since then there has been some issues that have impacted the Memorial over the years and the Chapter wants to address those issues.

1. Over all security for the Memorial is lacking without a fence.
2. Issues such as vandalism has occurred in many areas of the Memorial such as graffiti on the benches, stolen broken lights, stolen flags, plants stolen, holes in the helicopter by throwing objects, lack of maintenance of the ground area such as trash, weeding and people walking on the plants leaving the area in complete disarray, and homeless sleeping on benches and all respect for the Memorial lost.

With the addition of the skate board area next to the Memorial the issues has been out of control. The Chapter understands the need for the skate board area for the needs of the community but it has created damage to the Memorial.



The City of Long Beach took upon itself the cost of enclosing the Memorial and giving back the dignity and respects the Memorial deserves. The area is secure now and the vandalism is down but only this has happened since the fence was

erected and it has given the Memorial more sense of security and privacy. The City has stated that the Park personnel would open it and close it during the week and there has been a lack of follow thru on this issue and that is an area that should be corrected and better follow thru so anyone can visit the Memorial during posted hours. The issue of general clean up by the City should be in a schedule manner as to maintain the Memorial dignity. Repairs to the helicopter are needed and threw out the year there should be schedule washing of the Helicopter and flag replacements. But there is the main concern the "Fence must stay" that is the only way to keep vandalism away and keep repairs and cost down. The Chapter wants to be involved and will support the upgrades.

Max Stewart, President

562-882-6566

aircop72@gmail.com

Conrad Gomez, Secretary/Treasurer

562-882-1374

tizi82@aol.com

## Chapter 391

The late Victor Mario Salas, a Vietnam veteran and resident of Tuolumne County for 33 years before his death last year was honored by having his name placed on the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Sacramento.

Salas, a cabinet maker by trade, was a member of Chapter 391, Vietnam Veterans of America of Tuolumne County for 28 years and died of an Agent Orange-related disease last December.

The Memorial is located in Capitol Park and the ceremony was performed by the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA) with the Honorable Pete Conaty presiding on Saturday, October 14.

There were 13 other Vietnam veterans honored and there were over 100 people attending the ceremony. There were family members and friends of the 14 men, plus the Scottish Rite Military color guard and bagpipes plus Vietnam veterans from several VVA chapters including 11 from Chapter 391.

Also in attendance were 16 members of Salas' family on hand for the ceremony including daughters, sons, grandchildren and spouses.

Chapter 391 member Al Sickle, a Navy veteran of the Vietnam War eulogized Salas as "my friend, my mentor and a man who would give you the tie-dye shirt off his back." Salas was known for buying and wearing tie-died shirts and putting his cabinet business name, Marlon Cabinets) on them and giving them away.

According to Salas' daughter, Lori Salas-Thomas he was also known for making furniture also.

"Tons of my own furniture was made by my Daddy," she said.

Sickle is a member of the CDVA's Memorial Honor Committee which selects nominated veterans for this singular honor.

There have been 48 names added to the Memorial since the passage of Assembly Bill 287 in 2013 which allowed names to be added to the 5,633 California men and women who died in the Vietnam War.

Two of the 14 men honored were killed in action in 1964 and subsequent research indicated they were California men.

The Memorial was dedicated in December, 1988 and features the names of California men and women who died in Vietnam or were known to be held as Prisoners-Of-War or Missing-In-Action.

There is also sculpture and artwork depicting POWs, nurses and other scenes from the war.

That criteria for inclusion on the Memorial is for the veteran to have served honorably in the US Armed Forces in Vietnam, was born in California or entered the service in California and died from a service-connected disability



incurred while serving in Vietnam. The most prominent diseases were Agent Orange-related diseases and PTSD.

The ceremony will be repeated again next October.

Anyone wishing to have certain veterans investigated for inclusion on the Memorial should contact Frank M. Smart, 536.0439 or 559.1908.

## THE VIETNAM WAR THE PBS SERIES

### OPINIONS:

#### REWRITING HISTORY

##### 'BEYOND SHAMEFUL': DON'T FALL FOR THIS

##### DECEITFUL VIETNAM FLICK

Exclusive: Maj. Gen. Patrick Brady exposes startling omissions, distorted facts in war film

Note: Maj. Gen. Patrick Brady is a recipient of the United States military's highest decoration, the Medal of Honor. He is former president of the Medal of Honor Society.

Needless to say, Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's "documentary," "The Vietnam War," has caught the attention of Vietnam veterans. Except for the John Kerryites, the feedback is decidedly negative.

The filmmakers' obsequious devotion to the Vietnam-era media narrative is breathtaking. Many call Burns and Novick's "Vietnam" a hatchet job. That attitude certainly has merit, but I barely got past Tet when it was clear to me that what they were doing was more subtle than a hatchet job. A better description is: The filmmakers damned us – not only the veterans, but America as well – with faint praise.

They use a deceitful journalistic tool of gathering token credibility bites from those on the other side of their preordained narrative in an effort to appear objective. Burns and Novick's "Vietnam" is plagued with media malfeasance including obfuscation, omission and some really messed up moral equivalences.

North Vietnam would have fallen in weeks if the American media had been there and treated it as they did our efforts in the South. The GIs knew this and would often declare that we should not fear the enemy – they will only take your life. Instead, they'd say, fear the media because they will steal your honor.

In this latest effort to highlight the GI disdain for Vietnam's people, I was amazed to learn that we ridiculed their homes by calling them hooches. Really? We called our own living quarters hooches. And mama-san was a term of endearment for our hooch maids, not in any way an insult.

The Grantonian remark that U.S. Army Gen. Creighton Abrams "drank a lot" disturbed me. What was the point? That he was a drunk? I knew Abrams, and he was unquestionably one of the greatest soldiers we ever produced. I never heard a word about him drinking a lot.

I was especially disturbed by the notion that we wouldn't carry the Vietnamese dead. In one tour in Vietnam, my unit and other helicopter ambulance units ("Dustoff"), carried hundreds of Vietnamese dead, as well as Communist dead and wounded.

The documentary's co-creators repeat Walter Cronkite's apocalyptic version of Tet despite the fact that it was surely one of the greatest military victories in the history of warfare. We killed 41,000 and captured 2,500 of 84,000 enemy combatants. Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap, the Communists' supreme commander, was ready to quit. (Years later, I would represent Army Gen. William Westmoreland in a visit with Giap, who was willing to go on the record with Westy and admit what a catastrophe Tet was for his side.) Yet it was portrayed as a defeat, thanks to the likes of Uncle Walter, who had his nose up Ho Chi Minh's posterior. It was like America turned around after Normandy and retreated across the English Channel or George Washington quitting after Yorktown.

Burns and Novick repeatedly remind us that we didn't understand the Vietnamese. How then do we understand that they would vote for a Communist over a nationalist? As for Ngo Dinh Diem's popularity, it is worth emphasizing that after the Vietnam division of 1954, hundreds of thousands fled Ho Chi Minh's North in favor of Diem in the South. How many went North? We have no idea of Ho's popularity since Communists don't do polls.

I have seen the terrors of Communism up close – in Berlin, watching them build a wall around their own people; in the DMZ in Korea, where I saw human beings turned into robots; in Russia, where the people were still paranoid of Communists well after the fall of the wall; and in Vietnam, where I personally picked up the remnants of Communists' atrocities beyond evil. Diem and the refugees recognized those evils, as did many in the South. We saw the fruits of that evil after the fall in the tragedies of



## PARTY!

**SPONSORED BY THE STEVE WARREN  
MEMORIAL CHAPTER 464 VIETNAM  
VETERANS OF AMERICA**

**FEBRUARY 4, 2018 3PM-GAME END**

**MENLO PARK VA HOSPITAL**

**PTSD PROGRAM BLDG. 351**

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the concentration camps and boat people.

Contrasting Burns and Novick’s fawning depiction of Ho versus that of Diem is instructive. Ho embodied many of the characteristics of Burns’ Hollywood. He was an atheist. He was a Communist. He was a propagandist who controlled the media, and he certainly was not celibate. Diem was far from the Hollywood denizens. He was a devout Catholic, so devout that he lived a celibate life in emulation of Christ and many saints. He was an anti-communist, pro-nationalist, and he lived an extremely austere life. He was not a man who coveted opulence. His extraordinary faith and austere lifestyle belies any motive of personal aggrandizement.

The Buddhist burning was covered, but not the Buddhist Communist connection – nor was the fact that many members of Diem’s family were murdered by the Buddhists, some buried alive. Still almost half of Diem’s staff were Buddhists. Diem was a dedicated nationalist with the best interests of his country at heart.

After our complicity in the murder of Diem, Ho said, “I can scarcely believe the Americans would be so stupid.” Ho had a very high opinion of Diem and tried to recruit him. I was in flight school with some Vietnamese pilots at the time we murdered Diem, and I remember their distress, not only because of his death but over the fact that some Americans celebrated it. They would remind us how it felt three weeks later as we mourned President John F. Kennedy’s death.

To draw a moral equivalence between Ho and Diem, Communism and nationalism, is bad enough. But to draw a moral equivalence between the war cowards at home and those who risked their lives for them in Vietnam, as the filmmakers do here, is beyond shameful.

Let me give you Vietnam in a nutshell. It matches in unselfishness anything we ever did. There was really nothing in it for us in a materiel sense. We were simply trying to help a helpless people be free from the horrible evil of Communism. And the Vietnam veteran fought with a valor and humanitarianism never before seen in any war in our history.

Look at the facts ignored by Burns and Novick. The American soldier was never defeated on any significant battlefield in Vietnam. The average infantryman in the Pacific in World War II saw about 40 days of combat in four years. His counterpart in Vietnam saw about 240 days of combat in one year. The percentage of those who died is similar to other wars, but the prevalence of traumatic amputation and crippling wounds was 300 percent higher in Vietnam than in World War II and 70 percent higher than in Korea. Multiple amputations occurred at the rate of 18.4 percent compared to 5.7 percent in World War II. Approximately 75,000 Vietnam vets were severely disabled.

Medal of Honor recipient Gen. Patrick Brady tells the inspiring, miraculous story of his days as a Dust Off air ambulance pilot in Vietnam. Get his reissued book, auto-graphed: “Dead Men Flying: Victory in Viet Nam”

Above our magnificent grunts, the aviation accomplishments in Vietnam are unprecedented. In World War II, aircraft losses were 16 percent, and, in Vietnam, 43 percent. I read that in World War II, some pilots completed tours after 25 missions at an average of four hours per mission, or total 100 hours! In Vietnam, 100 hours was an average month for many, and 25 missions an average week.

As an aside, Mike Novosel, a fellow “Dustoff” pilot, and I were playing golf with a famous fighter pilot much celebrated for having flown 100 combat missions. Between us, Mike and I had more than 5,000 combat missions! Needless to say, we reminded the fighter pilot of this as he bent over an important putt.

Burns and Novick’s narrative is woefully dismissive of the extraordinary valor and humanitarianism of the Vietnam GI. I saw mention of only one of 260 Medals of Honor awarded. What is remarkable is that 30 percent of the Medals of Honor earned in Vietnam, far more than any other war, were for soldiers covering explosives with their bodies to save their fellow soldiers. That is not only a remarkable statistic, it is a remarkable tribute to the quality of our troops.

The film’s creators also ignore perhaps the most amazing story of the war, Charles Kelly and “Dustoff,” the most famous call sign of the war. Kelly gave his life to save aeromedical evacuation. His dying words uttered when he refused to leave patients while under fire – “when I have your wounded” – set the standard for life-saving on the battlefield to this day.

“Dustoff” has been singled out by every supreme commander in Vietnam for special recognition. They led the humanitarian effort and set battlefield survival records unparalleled in combat. Over 500,000 combat missions and more than 900,000 rescued – men, women, children, enemy as well as friendly.

Although one in 10 GIs was wounded, less than 1

percent died, thanks to “Dustoff.” Your chances of survival were greater if you were wounded on a battlefield in Vietnam than if you were on an accident on a highway in America. How in the hell could any documentary of Vietnam omit “Dustoff”?

The filmmakers also ignore the fact that it was the outstanding veterans from that war who were responsible for the unprecedented victory in Desert Storm.

By the way, Congress continues to ignore the “Dustoff” crews. Although they have been recommended for a Congressional Gold Medal, Congress ignored them but found time for the Filipinos in World War II (surely deserving). Not one unit from Vietnam has received this honor.

In addition to the humanitarian efforts of “Dustoff,” Burns and Novick fail to highlight the contributions of the GI to the welfare, health and education of those wonderful people. Vietnam may be the only war we ever fought – or perhaps that was ever fought – in which the American soldier added to their heroism a humanitarianism unmatched in the annals of warfare. And the U.S. soldier did so during the heat of the battle. He cared for and about those people, especially the young. The Vietnam veteran fixed as he fought. He cured and educated and built hospitals and orphanages in the middle of the battle. He vaccinated thousands, adopted the children, educated them. He cared for and about those people. No barrier, no political system, will erase what our Vietnam veterans gave to those people.

And the fruits of our humanitarian effort are still there in psyche of the people of Vietnam, in their hearts and souls – as they are in the hearts of so many people all over the world who have been touched by the American GI. I have been back three times and was amazed at the treatment I received. Of all the countries in the world that the young want to visit, America ranks No. 1. (Their favorite city is Las Vegas.)

Our defeat was at the hands of our elite in the courtrooms, the classrooms, the cloak rooms and the newsrooms: cowardly, media-phobic politicians; an irresponsible, dishonest media; and other cowards and spoiled brats and professors from Berkeley to Harvard.

Living with the scars of war is difficult. For some, it’s unbearable. But all veterans suffer. The Vietnam veteran suffered physically as much, perhaps more, than any veteran of the past century. But no other veteran has suffered the mental agony of the Vietnam veteran.

The thing that makes Vietnam so intolerable is what the elite tried to do to dishonor the source of those scars, to intensify the pain of Vietnam veterans and destroy their unselfish and honorable legacy. They opened a gash in the psyche of veterans and then rubbed salt in it. And equally as bad were the atrocities committed by the Communists targeting the friends we abandoned.

The Vietnam veterans not only distinguished themselves in combat, they came home and became model citizens. They were the best educated forces our nation ever sent into combat – 79 percent had a high-school education or better. Contrary to media reports, Vietnam vets didn’t abuse drugs more than their civilian cohorts. They were less likely to go to prison than non-vets. Their income exceeded non-vets by 18 percent, and their unemployment rates were lower.

We see horrifying suicide rates among today’s warriors, yet Vietnam veterans, who saw as much or more combat than any warriors ever, after living through the media calumny of their service and sacrifice, had a lower suicide rate than their civilian counterparts. And, as a tribute to their patriotism, despite their shoddy treatment, more than 90 percent of the veterans are glad they served. And so are 87 percent of the American people who saw through the media distortion of their service. Burns and Novick are obviously not among the 87 percent.

The Burns/Cronkite babble that Vietnam was a war we couldn’t win is sad. There is no such thing as “a war we cannot win” if we decide to win. The immeasurable and irredeemable tragedy Burns and Novick label Vietnam is true only in the manner in which we abandoned our allies and mistreated our veterans.

It was our vets in Vietnam who slowed the onslaught of Communism to this day. And Communism is dead in Vietnam; they just don’t know what to do with the corpse.

Humanitarianism was our great victory in Vietnam, a victory as great as in any war. There is an inscription on the wall of a veteran’s cemetery that says they sacrificed their youth that liberty might grow old. There is no one anywhere to whom that better applies than the veterans of Vietnam. Humanitarianism and a roadblock to communism were our great victories in Vietnam.

Next to the Vietnam Wall, we need a John Kerry/Fonda Wall of Shame listing those who prominently blasphemed the Vietnam GI. And let’s add the names of every member of Congress who voted in December 1974 to be-

tray our allies and leave them to be slaughtered by an evil, vicious enemy.

Read more at <http://www.wnd.com/2017/11/beyond-shameful-dont-fall-for-this-deceitful-vietnam-flick/#zGSVOQcP48132Fob.99>

## THE VIETNAM WAR: A GREAT LIE

By Terry Garlock

As the Ken Burns and Lynn Novick documentary on the Vietnam War came to a close at the end of the 10th episode, over 18 hours, anti-war protestors with greying hair must be celebrating since the film thoroughly vindicated their arguments – a manipulation many of us predicted before the opening of the first episode. Great lies have an element of truth, and while Burns tells a great story in film, that does not make his stories true.

The documentary misleads viewers from the beginning with two false premises, first that Ho Chi Minh and his North Vietnamese were nationalists dedicated to reunify North and South Vietnam. In fact, the North was determined to impose Communist rule by force on South Vietnam. We were there to stop the spread of Communism in southeast Asia. The difference is vast.

America’s part in the war was certainly not immoral or misguided as Burns portrayed, and the war was not unwinnable from the getgo, the second false premise the film pushed repeatedly from different angles. Americans were depicted as dubious, confused, incompetent and fully expecting to fail, while our enemy was presented as united, energetic, enthusiastic, pitching together as a well-oiled machine, fueled apparently by the virtue of their mission. The irony is comical, even if lost on most viewers who won’t notice the film used old Communist propaganda footage to depict happy North Vietnamese working eagerly as a team.

Statistics on enemy desertion during the war would put the lie to the film’s selective virtue and villain, but that would require viewers to think instead of being swept along by feelings. The dry truth – though it does not make good film – is America’s purpose was not a war of conquest at all, but to block the invading Communists and defend South Vietnam against their attacks. That meant finding and killing the invading enemy whenever their concealed positions were revealed.

Our soldiers’ lament that they fought hard to take a hill, took heavy losses then abandoned the hill, leaves an appearance of the absurd on the surface. But among combat vets – who know more than couch critics – it should raise questions far different than a feeling we should have stayed to defend the top of that hill in the middle of nowhere. Maybe the tactic of ordering an attack on a dug-in enemy holding the high ground advantage was a lousy command decision, a poor way to spend American lives, but the flip side is America was not in a real estate war. Securing every patch of ground we took away from the enemy by force would have required millions more troops and would have made little sense, but I understand the sense of futility. We were in a different kind of fight, to stop an invading enemy by attacking and killing them wherever their positions were revealed.

Like naïve children, the film crew shows horrific scenes from Vietnam, disturbing to any viewer with a shred of humanity. Burns and Novick should know better. As I tell students, during the Vietnam War we had three TV channels, ABC, CBS and NBC, and news came on one hour a day, at dinner time, delivering scenes from Vietnam of blood-spattered wounded and dead, enemy and allies, adults and children. And so, to the viewing public back then, just as to the Burns film crew now, the Vietnam War seemed like a foul and nasty business in which Americans should not be involved.

What the children don’t realize is every war is an ugly, foul, unfair, unforgiving killing contest full of chaos, imperfection and collateral damage. It has always been so. If you want to find glory in war, the only place you will find it is in a Hollywood movie.

Burns might be surprised to know that Gen. Eisenhower in WWII, the good war, openly wept as he walked through a European battlefield, requiring great care to avoid stepping on body parts. War is a bitch, like a different planet, and reporting in WWII was heavily censored to prevent panic at home.

This might be a good place to pause to tell you a few lessons America should have learned from the war, but did not.

Lesson 1: don’t get involved in a war unless committed to the overwhelming force to win.

Lesson 2: combat should not be viewed through the lens of home life, because it is a different world, with unfamiliar values and mores requiring tough standards and lethal measures. The public at home knows nothing about



life in that world and has no business watching idiotic talking heads on TV and second-guessing from the comfort and safety of their living room. We should stay out of wars until we can't, and when forced to fight we should squash our enemy like a bug then tell the public about it when the awful task is done.

That is why - if I were king - we would apply Lesson 3: journalists in a war zone could write anything they wish, but no photos and no videos until after the war is done. Citizens with sufficient brains and motivation could read and be informed, but the masses would have to wait until after the conflict closed to have their feelings manipulated by powerful images.

There certainly were villains in the Vietnam War, but a bit different than the film portrays. The chief villains were Communist invaders intent on conquest, feeding to naïve anti-war types like Burns and his predecessors the cover story of being nationalists, like a Vietnamese version of George Washington's patriots. Without Communist aggression there would have been no war. Ho Chi Minh's mission of conquest made America's stand to defend South Vietnam a noble cause, even though our own villains screwed it up badly as we fought to stop the Com-mies.

The Communists were the chief villains also for systematically committing countless atrocities against non-combatants, ignored by the US media. Sig Bloom lives in Jonesboro, GA. As a helicopter pilot he flew a news crew to a place near the Ho Chi Minh Trail during the Cambodian incursion in 1970; they said they were eager to see the atrocity he vaguely mentioned. When they arrived, they saw American medics treating Cambodians in leg irons, starved to skin and bones on the brink of death, having been slaves to the North Vietnamese humping ammo on the trail. The reporters were not interested since it was not an American atrocity, so Sig took off, leaving them behind to fend for themselves. Having personally witness such as this, and worse, was my baptism into complete distrust of the press. Cronkite et al forfeited any shred of integrity they may have ever had.

LBJ and McNamara, among others, were breathtakingly stupid in how they micromanaged the war with insane rules that withheld overwhelming force and prevented victory, fully to blame for prolonging the war as it ate American - and Asian - casualties. US Generals polished their next star instead of resigning in protest about how the stupidity from the White House was spending American lives as if they were cheap. The American anti-war movement gave aid and comfort to an enemy engaged in killing America's sons. The news media twisted the truth, like showing their outrage at the execution in the streets of Saigon during Tet of 1968, but never seeming to care he had just been caught murdering a Saigon police officer, his wife and 6 children. After so much focus on that one execution, the media seemed uninterested in the Communists' execution of thousands of civilians in one battle: doctors, nurses, teachers, business owners, government officials and other "enemies of the people," hidden in mass graves in the battle of Hue in 1968. The media also didn't raise too much fuss about genocide next door in Cambodia, I suppose because America had finally disentangled from Vietnam, a goal far more important to the media than truthful reporting. Can you say "hypocrisy?"

But Burns, squinting ever so tightly to keep his eye on the anti-war narrative, wouldn't know that. Here's something else he does not know, and can never truly appreciate.

Like every other war, as we came home from combat we had no idea how much we had been changed. We didn't know it would be hard to re-connect, even with those we loved, or the isolation many of us would learn to feel from a public that was and remains oblivious to the brutalities of life we had learned.

Every one of us who were in combat carries with us memories hidden in our secret box deep down inside. When bad things happened, like a buddy whose guts were suddenly scattered in the bushes when a booby trap detonated and he screamed for his Mom while he died, or a fellow helicopter pilot who burned alive in the wreckage of his crashed aircraft, a soldier pushed that anguish down deep into his secret box and closed the lid tight so he could go on to do what he must do. For the rest of his life, he carries his secret box deep inside, and no matter how many years pass, when he opens his box the heartbreak he felt at the time is still there, fresh as yesterday when unwrapped.

When asked about things that only we know are hidden away deep inside, some of us will open our box to answer, many won't, because they can't find the right words, they know others will never understand, and they don't want to cry in front of people, as often happens when we raise the lid to our box.

Congress cut off funding to South Vietnam in 1974,

breaking the promise America made to our allies - our friends - when we withdrew in 1973, and Congress refused to intervene when North Vietnam took South Vietnam by force in 1975, thereby violating America's pledge to come to their aid if the Communists violated their pledge not to attack. It broke our heart that America did not keep its word, and that our country abandoned our friends to a horrible fate of executions, re-education camps, being driven from their homes and jobs, and becoming permanent 2nd class citizens in their own country, living under the thumb of Communist control. In this matter of honor, we were better than that, our country was better than that, so we still carry that heartbreak and shame in our secret box

Now comes the Ken Burns film story, as if told by naïve children, mixing a wrapper of reality around half-truths, distortions, and carefully selected interviewees that feed his leftist narrative that the North Vietnamese were the good guys, justifiably committed to their cause while America bumbled and stumbled in a well-intended but completely misguided horrible mistake.

Those of us who answered our country's call to do our duty in a tough place like Vietnam had to become accustomed to the overt and covert insults from fellow citizens who organized their protests and convinced themselves we had done dishonorable things when, in fact, we were doing the hardest things we have ever done while serving a purpose larger than ourselves. Not even Ken Burns and his masterful film skills can take from us pride in our service.

Since the public doesn't have the knowledge to recognize the film's omissions and distortions, viewers will be swept along by powerful scenes, mood music and interviewees they won't know were cherry-picked for the war's turning them into tormented victims. For hordes of viewers who have no idea they are being fed the big lie, the Burns film will become the standard by which the Vietnam War will be judged. Most viewers won't know and won't see in the film that the vast majority of us who fought in Vietnam are still proud of our service and would do it again, and they won't know their trust in Burns' film is one more disappointment we will cram into our box and close the lid tight.

Terry Garlock lives in Peachtree City, GA. His columns, written when the mood moves him, run in The Citizen, a local Fayette County GA paper, because they publish his columns the way he writes them, unlike major papers like the Atlanta Journal Constitution, which edits, composes their own desired title and limits word length. Readers may reach Terry at [tlg.opinion@gmail.com](mailto:tlg.opinion@gmail.com)

#### ANOTHER ROUND IN THE BATTLE OVER VIETNAM

There are two Vietnam wars, and the second is still going 40 years after the first ended. The United States fought the first one from 1959 to 1975 in the jungles, villages and airspace of Indochina. The second is the war over how that war, the first lost war in America's national history, is remembered.

Ken Burns' 10-part Vietnam documentary is aired on PBS, the second conflict is sure to heat up again with renewed intensity. The positions will be fiercely argued. What was the war good for? Absolutely nothing, as the 1970 song put it? Or was it a heroic cause? The most important - and poignant - group who will offer answers to these questions is Vietnam veterans themselves. They see themselves reflected, against the roll of the dead, on the black granite walls of Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, or in the faces of Frederick Hart's evocative sculpture of three soldiers nearby.

Many who served came home and got on with their lives, whatever the wounds and scars of war. A more visible subset of aging warriors sits astride motorcycles in Veterans Day parades or stands in the median strips of our streets holding cardboard placards. They live their lives as war survivors. They ponder what might have been.

Often, no matter how their lives have unfolded, Vietnam vets have a chip on their shoulder. They ask or wish that their patriotism, their service, be better recognized, even glorified: They stepped forward, regardless of the flawed rationale and conduct of the war, when hordes of other young men, especially the so-called best and brightest, avoided the unpleasantness altogether.

For those who avoided the draft and the danger, there is often a quiet guilt - I have witnessed it many times. They dodge the inevitable question: How did you manage to get out of it? Hasty marriage? Graduate school? A trick knee? Men in this category do not invite conversation about that time in their lives, any more than combat veterans discuss the horrendous things they witnessed in the war zone. Only those who came of age after the draft turned into a lottery, the ones with high, untouchable numbers, or those who arrived after the Army went voluntary, escaped the moral dilemma of serving or resisting or malingering.

The statistics are revealing. Of the 26.8 million men who were eligible for service during the war period, 15.4 million were deferred, exempted or disqualified. Of those who served, 2.1 million were deployed to Vietnam. More than 58,000 died, 300,000 were wounded and 245,000 have filed for injuries incurred by exposure to the defoliant weapon Agent Orange. More than 50,000 draft-age men fled to Canada and Sweden. There are no statistics on those who suffer from permanent psychological wounds.

The men who actively protested against the war may feel best about themselves. They were engaged in the struggle of their generation, and they deserve the lion's share of credit for stopping the war. Their resistance, especially from 1967 to 1969, when U.S. casualties were the highest, forced the hand of America's leaders. They have a better argument for serenity in their old age than those who merely avoided service and stood smugly on the sidelines.

Then there are the politicians. The rationale for American involvement - the phony Tonkin Gulf resolution and the discredited domino theory - forced the moral dilemma on the Vietnam generation. Five years after Saigon fell, in the election of 1980, presidential candidate Ronald Reagan romanticized the conflict as a "noble cause." He planted the enduring notion, so popular on political hustings nowadays, that America must never again fight a war it does not intend to win. This glib rhetoric is sure to be prominent in renewed debates over the war, and it may make those who bear the brunt of the war's loss feel better: It wasn't their fault. But scoffing detractors will ask whether more troops and more bombs would really have ensured victory. They will turn Reagan's phrase upside down: America must never again force another generation to choose between service or resistance in an arguably immoral war.


It is with bitter irony that the Vietnam generation has witnessed the friendly visits of Presidents Clinton and Bush (both of whom avoided the war) to Hanoi, or the jovial Oval Office interchange between President Trump (deferred because of bone spurs) and Nguyen Xuan Phuc, the prime minister of our new ally and bulwark against China, the People's Republic of Vietnam. They must cope with the recent revelations that Richard Nixon scuttled a Lyndon Johnson peace deal during the 1968 election for cold political reasons, a deal that might have saved the 20,000 American soldiers who died during Nixon's subsequent six-year presidency. With mixed feelings or quiet applause, they watched John Kerry, a bonafide war hero and an antiwar leader, in his last act as secretary of State, meet the Viet Cong veteran who tried to kill him in the murky waters of the Mekong Delta.

Reconciliation after divisive wars, especially a lost war, is a tricky business. Those who served in Vietnam or resisted may never be considered members of a Greatest Generation, like World War II veterans. Nevertheless, their experiences are authentically American, deeply revealing of divisions and ideals that haunt us still.

In the early 1980s, the design for the now-celebrated Vietnam memorial wall - a site that has evolved into a place of contemplation for the pacifist as well as the warrior - attracted advocates and enemies who saw it as yet another opportunity to re-fight the war. An editorial in the Boston Globe summarized what would become a five-year art battle this way:

"Commemorating the war in Vietnam is likely to prove no simpler than fighting it."

By James Reston Jr., Los Angeles Times



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# 47 YEARS AFTER VIETNAM WAR SECRET MISSION, GREEN BERET RECEIVES MEDAL OF HONOR

By Corey Dickstein

A retired Army Green Beret credited with saving multiple lives during a covert four-day mission into Laos to target North Vietnamese soldiers operating there will receive the Medal of Honor next month, 47 years after his heroic actions, the White House announced Wednesday.

President Donald Trump will present the military’s highest honor to retired Army Capt. Gary Michael Rose on Oct. 23 at the White House, an upgrade of the Distinguished Service Cross Rose received in 1971. Rose was awarded the nation’s second highest medal for valor just four months after the Special Forces mission in which he survived bullet and rocket wounds and a helicopter crash to provide life-saving aid to more than 100 comrades, according to the award citation.

Soldiers who served with him, lawmakers and Pentagon officials have lobbied for several years for Rose’s award to be upgraded, which required a special waiver passed by Congress and presidential approval.

In an Army statement, Rose said the Medal of Honor belongs to the secretive unit he served with during the Vietnam War, the Army’s Military Assistance Command Studies and Observations Group.

“That medal, to me, recognizes finally the service of all the men in all those years that served in MACSOG,” Rose, 69, said in the statement. “It’s a collective medal from my perspective [which represents] all the courage and honor and dedication to duty that those men served.”

Rose, then a sergeant, was the only medic among 16 Green Berets and 120 Vietnamese tribal fighters called Montagnards when they were dropped by helicopter on Sept. 11, 1970 into the Laotian jungle on a mission, dubbed Operation Tailwind, to raid a North Vietnamese encampment. The elite Studies and Observations Group was based in southern Vietnam from where it routinely led such missions into Laos, leading the U.S. covert war against North Vietnam along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

The force came under fire almost immediately after it was dropped off.

By the operation’s end, every American and Montagnard soldier would be wounded – including three Montagnards killed – and three Marine helicopters would crash, including one with Rose inside, according to accounts provided by the Army.

During the four days of the mission, the Green Berets and Montagnards moved 15 miles through the jungle, facing “well-armed” platoon- and company-sized enemy units, according to the award citation.

On the second day of the mission, one of the Montagnards was wounded so badly that he could not escape to cover as rocket and mortar rounds fell on the group. Rose ran 50 meters through enemy fire and used his own body to shield the wounded soldier from further injury as he treated him, the citation read. After stopping the blood flow, Rose then carried the man back through a field of enemy fire to protective cover.

Throughout the mission, Rose continued to brave enemy fire to treat wounded comrades, often ignoring his own injuries, according to the award citation.

“Despite the deadly volleys falling around him, Sgt. Rose displayed a calm professionalism as he administered medical treatment to countless men. Two were so severely wounded that they would have died without the sergeant’s vigilant care,” the citation read.

As the mission came to an end, the helicopter carrying Rose from the battle was hit by an enemy anti-aircraft round, according to the Army. As the chopper fell, Rose saw a Marine helicopter crewman had been shot in the neck. He rendered life-saving medical aid to the Marine before the helicopter crashed, throwing Rose from the aircraft.

With the helicopter leaking fuel and smoking, Rose crawled back into the downed aircraft to pull his wounded comrades from the wreckage and administered medical treatment until another helicopter arrived to remove them from the fight, according to the Army.

“On return to base, Rose, covered in blood and wounds, refused all treatment until the other wounded men were attended to first,” according to the Army statement.

Rose, who grew up in southern California, enlisted in the Army in 1967. After returning from the Vietnam War, he was commissioned as an officer, remaining in the service until he retired in 1987 as a captain, according to Army records. His other awards include two Bronze Star Medals with “V” device for valor and three Purple Hearts.

Rose’s award will mark the second time that Trump has presented the Medal of Honor. The other recipient, James McCloughan, also a Vietnam War medic, was presented the award on July 31.

Though Rose said the award belonged to all of the men from his unit, he also said he was honored to have the opportunity to receive it.

“I am going to have the privilege of being able to meet the president of the United States with my dear wife, in the Oval Office, I have been told,” he said in the Army statement. “And that is something I will treasure until the end of my days.”

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Convention - June 22-24, 2018, Fresno, CA  
August 24-26, 2018, Fresno, CA  
Zephyr deadlines 5 weeks prior to each CSC meeting