



Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.
Chapter 691 Newsletter
The Community Friendly Chapter
P. O. Box 2226
Merced, CA. 95344 - 0226



Volume 2005

February

President	Ed Mentz, Sr.
Vice President	Gary Frago
Secretary	Larry Long
Treasurer	Robert Gamez
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The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. , California State Council , or Chapter 691 as a whole.

From The Presidents Desk
Happy New Year

This is a test run of a new format for the Chapter Newsletter, between the Editor and the President. The editor types the articles using the 4 x 8 size columns and e-mails the text to me to cut and paste into the newsletter format. I then scan the photos or use digital images (enhance and converted with Adobe PhotoShop) and insert them into the pages. We gain a sharper more attractive looking newsletter, but lose color with the laser printer and the larger size paper. Looking forward to hearing your comments. Do not despair we can add a full sheet of paper, print on both sides and use larger print if required by us old-timers.

REMEMBER TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

- This is a reminder that the V A is in the process of furnishing new I D cards to all that are signed up with them. They hope to have all new cards issued by November of 2005. You are asked to go to the nearest V A Medical facility to get a new one made.
 - There was, what turned out to be a rumor, that a new phone directory was to be published with cell phone numbers that would allow telemarketers to have access to all cell phone numbers. That has proven to be untrue. Some phone companies will publish such a directory, but it will not be available to the general public and your number will not be given out without your approval. So says the bold letters. I wonder what it says in the fine print?
 - The National Vets Organizations are really getting concerned about the care, or lack of, for our troops facing hostile actions in foreign lands. The major treatment facilities are filling up fast and the Feds give out the number of KIA, but you seldom hear of the total number of seriously wounded.
 - Word is out that those vets receiving V A Disability Pay and Families receiving Survivor Benefits will get a 2.7% increase in their January checks.
 - I noticed from the Treasurer's report at the January membership meeting that the amount of funds available for use is getting pretty darn low and some fund raisers are needed to get it back up there.
- With that said, we did spend a few hundred at that meeting. A donation of \$200 was made to help with the construction of a Fisher House at the V A Hospital in Palo Alto. These establishments are similar to the Ronald McDonald Homes, except they are all near a medical facility that cares for our troops and are for their family members to use while visiting. In addition to that we donated \$500 to help bring "The Wall" to Ceres again. It is planned to be there from April 20th to the 27th. The setting up to take place the first day, with the opening ceremony in the evening of the 2nd day, closing ceremony in the evening of the 25th, breakdown on the 26th for

departure on the 27th. Our Chapter Color Guard will lead the Presentation Of The Colors. As most of you may know, once it is set in place a 24 hour per day vigilance is required and this takes several people to keep it going. It is going to require a lot of volunteers. If you can be there at any time during that time span, please let me know and I will get your name added to the list with date and time for your help.

► The chapter elections were discussed at the meeting and it is time for you to start thinking about throwing your name in the ring for an elected position. Walt Butler III was elected as Chair for the Election Committee and will be contacting members to get their input (decision to run or to nominate someone to run). President Mentz has already indicated that he will be in the running for that position again.

► A little correspondence is needed for a couple of our back from Iraq Troops who are in the V. A. Hospital in Palo Alto. Walt Butler III passed on the info at the meeting that they were in need of some words of encouragement. As it is getting close to Valentine Day, perhaps some of you could send a nice cheerful one and add a little note of encouragement inside. They are Cpl Raymond Warren and (rank unknown) Jason Pool. I often hear people say in this type situation, "I wouldn't know what to say". Anything will do; We support you 100% and /or hope you get better soon. I contacted Mrs. Beltz and she will have her 4th graders write also (and maybe a Valentine or two). Please address any mail in this manner: Raymond Warren or Jason Pool, % Jill Gandolfi, Brain Injury Rehabilitation Unit, VA Palo Alto Health Care System, 3801 Miranda Ave, Palo Alto, CA 94304.

► The quarterly CSC meeting will be held in Fresno on Feb 25 - 26 -27.

► A new law went into effect on 12/10/04 that increased the V. A. Home Loan guarantee from a maximum of \$240,000 up to \$359,700. That is enough of an increase to allow the purchase of a building large enough to house your lawn mower in the Bay Area. Maybe even a car.

► There is also a reminder out concerning agents for shoppers at the AF Base commissaries (I do not know if it is the same for the other services). What this means is that those authorized to use the facility, but are not able to go there due to illness, being an invalid, etc, or for children whose parents are deployed with the military, can name an agent to do their shopping for them. Credentials to allow such shopping must be obtained at the Base Pass and Registration Office. That could be most helpful for those widows who are getting too old and feeble to do for themselves or are house bound. I have no details about what type proof would be needed in order to obtain such credentials.

► An item was received from the Air Force Sergeants Association to note that 29 Veterans Service Organizations joined together to request that the US Postal Service issue 29 Postal Stamps to honor those groups. Let the USPS know that you support that proposal.

► Our fighting troops have a long way to go before they are considered as valuable as are the civilians who perished in the 9/11 disaster, but there is a Bill being proposed to increase the death benefit from \$12,000 to \$100,000. It probably will not pass, but at least someone

thought about our troops. As some of you were too young to remember, I will tell you that the benefit back during WW II (60 years ago) was \$10,000. 60 years and it only increased by \$2,000 and believe me \$10,000 was a lot of money back then. The big scandal was that a lot of women were getting married to troops who were on the way overseas in hopes of collecting that insurance. Some did it many times.

► **Profile:** The Merced Sun-Star quite often chooses a person in business in the local area and does a profile of that person, including a picture. Saturday, 1/22, they chose Chapter Member Joe Maes. Joe has been in the monument business for a very long time and has had his own since 1986. For those of you who are unaware, Joe did the Memorials in Court House Park. He is an expert in his field and does exceptional work. It is nice to see you recognized Joe.

► Dig out the candles - it is birthday time for Gary Frago, Bill Masasso, Frank Paredes, George Shirah, Wayne Weathers and Carl Wheatley. Since Frank is the youngest in the group he can do the hula for the celebration. Enjoy, enjoy.

► Fathers Day, June 19, 2005, will mark the 15th anniversary of the Sons and Daughters In Touch (SDIT). These are the children of servicemen killed in Vietnam. In 2003, VVA sponsored a trip for many of them to travel to Vietnam to visit the place where their father was killed. Many of them never knew their father. They formed the organization to share their grief, stories and gather information about the war and the part their fathers played.

► In the current war situation, it is hard to figure that the Air Force and Navy are planning to downsize, but it is true. The AF is going to cut 20,000 (from 379,000 to 259,000) and the Navy by 7,300 (from 373,200 to 365,900). The Army and Marines are going to increase a little. Army by 9,000 (from 493,000 to 502,400) and Marines by 3,000 (from 175,000 to 178,000).

► **Seeking Contact** - The widow of AF TSgt Douglas G. Brandt, who served at NKP, Thailand in 1968 is attempting to locate anyone who might have known him while he was there. He was an aircraft mechanic and worked on O-1's and O-2's. He supposedly made several trips to Vietnam with the Support Squadron, but she can find no proof of such trips in the paper-work she has been able to locate. He died of cancer and she is trying to prove it came from those trips to Nam. Anyone having any info, please contact her at BrandtHawaii@aol.com or contact me and I will pass it on.

► Dues, dues and more dues. Several members have let their membership elapse and need to get their dues paid very soon or lose out on the next edition of this informative, up to the minute, mind stirring pieces of paper. If you do not receive the March Issue, you will hate yourself in the morning. Several ran out at the end of November so this is the last edition if not paid. Most, or all, of you should have received you notice from National. If you can't remember, just look at the date on the address label on this newsletter

where I have indicated the month and year of the end of your membership. Please get them in, the chapter needs you.

► The Board of Directors meeting for February will be held on the 7th at 6:00 PM at the Community Center at Castle Vista. The membership meeting will be held on the 21st at 7:00 PM in the conference room of citibank, 19th and M Sts in Merced. For those wishing to partake of the potluck prior to the meeting, please follow this guideline - for those with last names beginning with A-I, please bring a dessert, from J-Q, please bring a vegetable and from R-Z, please bring a main dish.

Cheers - Billy D

SUPPORT OUR TROOPS

Remember: September 11, 2001

December 7, 1941

30 yr Anniversary - end of the Vietnam War.

Saturday, March 5, 2005, flag at half-mast.



New POW Documentary Just Released

“missing, presumed dead”

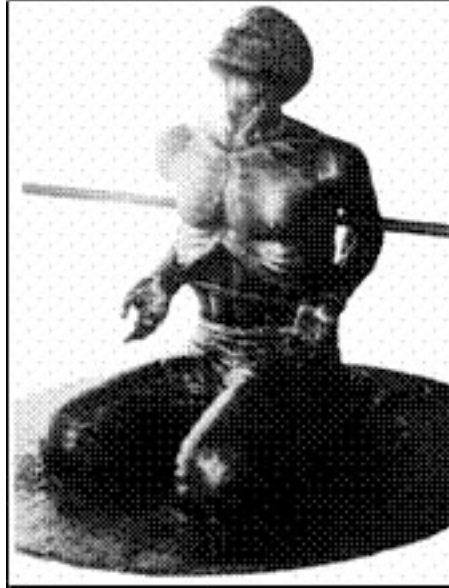
The Search for America’s POWs

This 65 minutes documentary is the true story of Bob Dumas’s 50-year search for his brother, Roger, missing in North Korea, and our government’s policy on POWs. Just released, it is one of the first of its kind to tell the families side of this story and how it has affected them. Roger Dumas was waiting in line to be repatriated when Chinese troops came and took him and others out of line, never to be seen again. If we do not remember history we are destined to relive it. Conservative figures list 32,000 are MIA from WW II, 8,000 from Korea, and at present, over 1700 from South East Asia. For more information write Bill Dumas, 91 Arlington Dr. #7, Pasadena, CA. 91105 or contact the Chapter president.

Checks Presented to Fresno VA Hospital



Left to right: DAV members Normand Cloutier & Robert Linden, David Phillips Public Affairs Service Program Director, VVA Chapter 691 President Ed Mentz, Sr., VVA Treasurer Robert Gamez. A total of \$400.00 was presented to the VA along with 250 Christmas Cards from Frank Sparks School in Winton.



**New National
POW - MIA Memorial**
Riverside National Cemetery

The Riverside Memorial Committee is seeking letters from families of Prisoner of War and those Missing In Action. To take their place of honor as a permanent part of the designated National POW MIA Memorial. Construction was started in their "Field of Honor" last September. Let your stories be told, for the World to know about their sacrifice so they will not be forgotten. Open your hearts so the truth may be known. Donations are also needed to maintain the project. The image you see on the right is part of a t-shirt designed for this purpose with proceeds going to the memorial fund. For more information, visit the website at: **rncsc.org** or write to: RNCSC, Attn: POW-MIA Memorial Project Paul Adkins, 22495 Van Buren Blvd. Riverside, CA. 92518 or the Chapter president.

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