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HISTORICAL REFLECTIONS OF THE VIETNAM WAR

Joseph Montoya

JODY CADENCE CALLS OF THE VIETNAM WAR

Throughout world history, as military units went off to war, some form of a military song was use not only to organize the movement of the unit but also to motivate the “esprit de corps” of the warriors themselves. From the days of the Roman Legion [753 BC – 476 AD], Crusading Knights [1095 – 1289], Japanese Samurai of the Edo period [1601 – 1868] and the French Imperial Grand Army of the Napoleonic Wars [1804 to 1814], military leaders developed various commands and songs by which to manage groups of warriors on the move.

United States military history reports that beginning with the early days of the Continental Army, soldiers were marching in cadence to some form of song [or call outs] by the early military officers – many of them recruited from foreign armies which had already developed the use of songs to manage troops in the field who would sing a song out loud while marching.

Although written records of Jody songs from prior periods were not documented, the first United States military Jody song was officially recorded in 1944 during World War II. Originally titled “The Duckworth Chant”, the Jody song – which later became known as “Sound Off” – was written by Willie Lee Duckworth, Sr. [8 January 1924 – 9 February 2004] of Sandersville, Georgia, a U.S. Army African-American Private, in 1944.



Duckworth

It is reported that while stationed at the Fort Slocum Army Provisional Training Center, New York, Duckworth was requested by his training platoon’s Drill Sergeants to develop a cadence song to improve the marching of the 9 other black soldiers in his unit. Duckworth wrote the words to match the required marching cadence which – once learned by the recruits – resulted in a marked improvement in the soldier’s marching skills, to the pleasure of the Drill Instructors. Thereafter, the song was approved by Bernard Lentz, West Point – Class of 1905, Army Colonel, Post Commander, Fort Slocum, who officially approved the use of the song “Sound Off” in all future recruit training programs. The

song makes use of the term “Jody” – a then military slang for “Joe D.” – a civilian male representing all of the men who cheated with another soldier’s wife, girlfriend or sister while the soldier was deployed in harm’s way either stateside or overseas.

Subsequent Jody songs would also express a soldier’s dislike of being in the military, of being homesick and of the overwhelming difficulties faced in military life. The main words to Duckworth’s “Sound Off” Jody song are as follows:

Ain’t no use in goin’ home,
Jody’s got your gal and gone.
Ain’t no use in feelin’ blue,
Jody’s got your sister, too.
Sound off!,
One, two.
Sound off!,
Three, four.

Over the next years, the cadence went through several revisions until adopted by the War Department who distributed copies of the Jody song to U.S. military posts around the world. In 1951, the composition was recognized by the American Society Of Composers and it became the title of a song performed by vocalist and big band leader Vaughn Monroe [7 October 1911 – 21 May 1973], a television and film actor of the 1940s and 1950s. The song also first appeared in the 1961 book titled “Marching Cadences Of The 187th Battle Group – 101st Airborne Division” by Army Sergeant Charles Moore.

I learned the words to a Jody song as a 17-year-old high school student when I read an Army yearbook my brother Marco Montoya brought home when he was discharged from the Army in early 1970. I recall I must have read that book a thousand times, every page and every Jody song. One song in particular has never escaped my memory and today – at 74 – whenever I’m out on an evening walk through my neighborhood, I find my walking taking on a certain cadence and these words suddenly are racing through my mind:

Your head is up, your chest is out,
Your arms are swinging in a gallant count.
Sound off,
One, two.
One, two, three, four One, two,
Three, four!
Left my baby way out west,
Thought the Army’s life was best.
Now she’s someone else’s wife,
And I’ll be marching the rest of my life.
Sound off,
One, two.

One, two, three, four One, two,
Three, four!

I recall years later watching the black and white 1949 movie titled *Battleground*. Set in the World War II European winter battlefields, the movie follows an Army infantry platoon of the 101st Airborne Division as it moves across Europe fighting Germans and – at times – each other. The cast included Van Johnson, Ricardo Montalban and James Whitmore [a World War II Marine Corps veteran 2nd Lieutenant with the 4th Marine Division who served in Saipan].



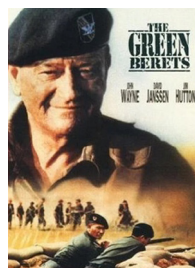
1949

In the movie's final scene, notwithstanding the miserable winter cold, the unit being depleted by death and illness and the lack of proper supplies and winter clothing, cigar-chewing Platoon Staff Sergeant Kinnie [Whitmore] – limping with his left boot falling apart yet wrapped up in a cloth binding – leads the surviving platoon members to a well-earned standdown while passing newly arrived replacement soldiers marching in the opposite direction – towards the front battleground. So as to impress the replacement soldiers, Kinnie – with his Thompson .45 caliber automatic machine gun slung over his left shoulder – yells out the Jody song titled "Sound Off" [a revised version of Duckworth chant] as follow:

You had a good home, but you left!
You're right!
Jody was there when you left!
You're right!

As Hollywood began to make films depicting the Vietnam War, script writers began inserting Jody songs from the Vietnam War era into their movies. One of the first is John Wayne's 1968 movie *The Green Berets* which includes a Jody song in the scene at the beginning of the movie while a Special Forces unit is at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Army Green Beret Colonel Mike Kirby [Wayne] is speaking with the 101st Airborne Division's commander [played by Lamar Asbury "Bill" Welch, the then active-duty Army Colonel, Commander, Army Airborne School, Fort Benning, 1967, making a cameo appearance while wearing a 1960s U.S. Army Fatigue Baseball Cap – commonly issued during the Vietnam War]. As the two soldiers discuss Kirby's need for skilled soldiers to make up his Vietnam War Special Forces A-Team, active-duty soldiers from the real airborne unit are seen running past the two while singing an airborne Jody song as follows:

If my main don't open wide,
I got another one by my side.



1968



1984

Years later in September 1984, I took part in a condensed airborne training jump school with The Phantom Division – a World War II parachute re-enactment organization – while attending The Soldier Of Fortune Magazine Convention at The Sahara Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. During our ground training in the Nevada desert, I recall one of the Parachute Instructors barking out the following airborne-related Jody song as we drilled across the desert floor:

C-130 rolling down the strip,
64 Rangers on a one-way trip.
Mission top-secret destination unknown,
Don't even know if I'm ever coming home.
Stand up, hook up, shuffle to the door,
Jump right out and count to four.
If my main don't open wide,
I got a reserve by my side.
If I die in a combat zone,
Box me up and ship me home.
Pin my medals upon my chest,
Tell my Mom I've done my best.

Over the 3-day course, we learned to do a perfect parachute landing fall [PLF] by jumping off the back of a moving pickup truck, what to do if our parachutes were headed into trees, high tension wires or another parachute and how in an emergency to cut-away from our main parachutes by activating our shoulder strap cape well parachute canopy release system – the hand activated devices attached to the parachute harness which releases the main canopy – and then manually deploying our reserve parachutes! Finally, on the morning of 21 September 1984, I put on an Army T-10 parachute and then boarded a restored World War II Army Air Force C-47 twin engine transport – similar to the airplanes used in the D-Day parachute invasion of Normandy, France, and painted with the white invasion stripes on the wings. I remember I was Jumper Number 8 in the second stick when I jumped out of a perfectly good airplane for the first time while over the Nevada desert southeast of Las Vegas. The sky was a perfect blue, the quietness at 3,500 feet was mesmerizing and – as I drifted downward – I saw the 7 parachute canopies of the jumpers who had jumped before me and who were by then descending in a cascading formation I had never seen before. As the C-47 continued on its given flight plan, the winds were perfect making the final decent and landing easy as I touched the ground with a perfect PLF. Still – to this day – I can recall how I was 100% alive for those few minutes as I floated back down to earth. That feeling followed me through 1990 as I continued to jump and completed 20 parachute jumps – 12 static line and 8 free-fall.

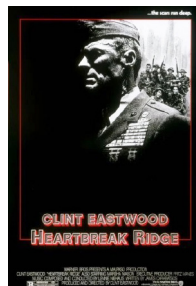
In 1981, the movie *Stripes* was a comedy success telling the story

of a group of misfit Army volunteer recruits [Bill Murray, Harold Ramis and John Candy] as they are led by Vietnam War 1st Calvary veteran and now Senior Drill Instructor Sergeant Hulka [Warren Oates]. Helping to corral the recruits are 2 female military police [Sean Young and Pamela Jayne Soles]. The beginning of the movie includes the recruits marching to an improvised Jody song of "Doo Wah Diddy". Then, at the end of basic training, since Hulka was injured by a misfired mortar round requiring the recruits to finish training on their own, the recruits perform a closing Jody song at their basic training graduation with the following exchange:

Where the hell have you been, soldier?
Training, sir!
What kind of training, son?
Army training, sir!



1981



1986

Jody songs continued to appear on military themed movies such as the 1986 Clint Eastwood film titled Heartbreak Ridge in which Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant Thomas "Tom" Highway [Eastwood], a Korean War Medal of Honor recipient, takes over the training of a platoon of Force Reconnaissance Marines. In one scene, while on a training run, the unit is seen running past a male commanding officer and a female liaison officer. Highway orders one of the Force Reconnaissance Marines – Corporal Quinones [Mike Gomez] – to sing out loud a Jody song. Quinones then belts out a Jody song which includes an insult towards women. Seeing the anger on the faces of the Marine officers – especially the female – the resulting rage on Highway's face is only the beginning of the hell that would later befall upon the Marines. The Marines ultimately end up in combat on the Island of Grenada.

In the 1987 movie Full Metal Jacket, there are a number of Jody songs. In the first part of the movie – set during basic training at Parris Island, South Carolina – Marine Corps Senior Drill Instructor Gunnery Sergeant Hartman played by Ronald Lee Ermy [24 March 1944 – 15 April 2018] – a real life Vietnam War veteran – leads recruits on a number of runs which includes the following Jody songs:

I love working for Uncle Sam,
Let's me know just who I am.
One, two, three, four – United States Marine Corps,
One, two, three four – I love the Marine Corps.
My Corps,
Your Corps.
Our Corps,
Marine Corps!

If that Jody song wasn't enough, movie director Stanley Kubrick

[26 July 1928 – 7 March 1999] added a few others to his Oscar winning film such as the following:

Up in the morning to the rising sun,
Gonna run all day till the running's done.
Ho Chi Minh is a son of a bitch,
Got the blue balls, crabs and the seven-year itch.
Another Jody song used in the movie included the following:
I don't know, but I've been told,
Eskimo p***y is mighty cold.
Mmm good,
Feels good.
Is good,
Real good.
Taste good,
Mighty good.
Good for you,
Good for me.

In the second part of the movie – set in Phu Bai during the Battle of Hue in South Vietnam – the Marines take on a Viet Cong sniper which has killed 3 of the Marines including platoon leader Lieutenant "Mr. Touchdown" Schinoski [Ed Ross], Corporal "Eightball" [Dorian Harewood] and Sergeant "Cowboy" Evans [Arliss Howard], all of them part of a unit called "The Lusthog Squad". After a bitter fire fight, the sniper is mortally wounded and – upon discovering the sniper is a female [played by Ngọc Lê] – she is killed not by Sergeant James T. "Joker" Davis [Matthew Modine], a combat correspondent for Stars And Stripes and the movie's narrator, but by his assistant, Private First Class "Rafter Man" [Kevyn Major Howard / 27 January 1956 – 14 February 2025], a combat photographer. The movie ends with surviving Marines marching out at nighttime from a house-to-house battlefield [filmed in an abandoned industrial tract in England] while singing a non-traditional Jody song: the theme song from the 1955 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse.



**FULL
METAL
JACKET**

1987

Today, although it's been more than 50 years since American military personnel were "in-country" in Southeast Asia, every veteran of the Vietnam War era may still recall their own version of a Jody song. And when they do, in a moments flash, they probably are back on the parade ground, yelling out each verse in unison with their fellow recruits while praying they don't take a misstep and get called out by that Drill Instructor they thought was insane and from hell – yet who's lessons probably ended up giving them the skills needed to survive their time in the military and their service during the Vietnam War. That discipline, that training, that Jody song, all added up to help bring each one of you back home. And for that, I remain most thankful.

The original version of this article first appeared in the VVA

Chapter 526 meeting agenda of 2 April 2026.

Chapters 756 and 53

Vietnam Veterans of America chapter 756 and 53, The City of Torrance, Ca. Armed Forces Day Parade and Civic Participation, 17 May 2026

THE CITY OF TORRANCE

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA CHAPTERS 756 AND 53

2026 ARMED FORCES DAY PARADE

By Steve Pierce, VVA 756

The 2026-Armed Forces Day Parade and Celebration and this

year being the 250 birthday of the Declaration of Independence and the United States. The City of Torrance has a long tradition of the Armed Forces Day Parade. The City of Torrance pulled out all stops in making this Armed Forces Day Parade and America's 250th Anniversary one of the best ever events.

Literally thousands came out to see the parade and participate in the civic activities. The Grand Marshall of the parade is General Omar J. Randall, Commanding General of the First Marine Expeditionary Force.

Vietnam Veterans of America Chapters 756 and 53 participated in the 64th Annual City of Torrance Armed Forces Day Parade and Celebration, May 17, 2026. Both groups used the parade to meet and greet citi-

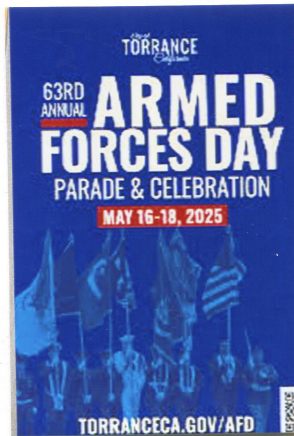
zens and tell about our honorable service in the armed forces and in the country of Vietnam. We are also a proud Vietnam Veterans of America of our service to the community and civic participation. It was a treat to meet and greet the audience.

The City of Torrance, California initiated the Armed Forces Day Parade and Celebration 20 years after World War II, in 1960 to honor the American military for their contributions to the war. This is the 64th year that the City of Torrance has hosted the Armed Forces Day Parade. Torrance has hosted the parade longer than any other city or organization,

Torrance is one of the few cities nationwide officially sanctioned by the Department of Defense to host an Armed Forces Day Parade and Celebration. The highlight of the Armed Forces Celebration is

2026 Annual Armed Forces Day Parade

Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapters 756, Chapter 53 and the Vietnamese Community of Westminster, Ca. marched in the Torrance Parade. The 64th Annual City of Torrance Armed Forces Parade and Celebration, Saturday May 16, 2026, honors all of the military branches that served and fought for the United States of America. Celebrating service, freedom, and 250 years of American history! 2026 honored service branch is the United States Marine Corps. This year's Armed Forces Day weekend will also reflect the significance of the nation's Semi quin centennial (The United States of America Birthday, 250 years), offering residents and visitors meaningful opportunities to celebrate service, freedom, and 250 years of American history. Over the decades, the Torrance Armed Forces Day Parade, it has grown into one of the nation's most prominent military celebrations and is recognized as the longest-running military parade in the United States. Organizers say the event regularly attracts up to 100,000 spectators and as many as 8,000 parade participants, featuring military units, vehicles and floats. In its early years, the celebration included Friday night fireworks behind City Hall, a Saturday morning parade, and a full day of military displays open to the public.



Pictures
Scrapbook
History
by Steve Pierce, VVA 756

the parade, but also a military and community exhibits, military hardware, and a 5K run sponsored by the City of Torrance. The city is proud to have such a close connection with all branches of the military.

This year the parade featured military flyovers, equipment displays, and opportunities for the public to interact directly with service branches, including the U.S. Marine Corp, U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, Air Force, U.S. Coast Guard, and the newly formed Space Force.

The Vietnam Veterans of America chapters are always looking to participate in ways to interact with the community, in parades, service projects and mentorship opportunities. Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 756, Long Beach, participated in the parade with the Westminster Vietnamese Community. The Vietnamese Community is proud of their Vietnamese and American heritage and always willing to show it, in the form of service or community participation. The Vietnamese community has always sent representatives to the parade. This year only one of those original participants was going to attend. The Vietnamese community got together to send 30 community leaders and the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 756 to participate in the parade. It was a great tribute to the Armed Forces and the VVA756 to participate.

Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 53 and 756, marched and rode in a variety of military vehicles, waving, saluting and marching in the parade.

The military treated parade goers with airplane flyovers, jets, tanks, military vehicles of all kinds were on the parade route. Every branch of the military was represented by a marching band and soldier, sailors and airpersons were open to talk and have pictures taken with parade goers.

It was a lot of fun

Chapter 47

Along with The City of Menifee, Paloma Valley High School,



and VVA Chapter 47 we held a Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day on March 26th in Menifee.

The guest speaker for the event was Army Vietnam Veteran and Metal of Honor winner John Baca, pictured with Chapter 47 Board Member Kurt Vanderwest. The event was well attended by the community and a chapter lunch at BJ's followed after the event.

President Tony Scrudato presents check for \$500 dollars to 29 PSP chief financial officer, Sherman Tan. 29 PSP is a nonprofit



that provides free rides from Ontario and Palm Springs airports to Twentynine Palms Marine base for active duty Marines and their families.



Past chapter president George Swift, board member Patrick Gillis, and chapter member Richard Hesgabeck attended the Fontana Days weekend event and accepted the parade award for best float in the May 2nd Fontana parade. The award for 1st place included a check for \$1,000 dollars, a 1st place trophy, and a certificate of congressional recognition. Way to go Chapter 47, and a big thank you to all the members who made the parade a special event for Fontana and our chapter.

Chapter 933

At the 37th Annual Sunrise Memorial Day Service, Woodward Park Fresno, were bugler John Avery, keynote speaker Mayor of



Clovis Vong Mouanoutoua, former Chapter 933 President Emeritus Alex Fabros, and current President Jim Anderson.



Chapter 933 AVVA members meet for 37th Memorial Day Sunrise Service Luncheon in Fresno.

Chapter 500

Members participated in annual Wreaths Across America event at VA National Cemetery near Dixon Ca.



Providing event logistics support to VA National Cemetery staff and VA National Cemetery Director Ashaley Jackson, we arranged assistance from two Sacramento area Starbucks managers to supply six coffee carafes, each containing 200 cups for volunteers consumption in early morning hours.

Plus we picked up \$90 worth of Mexican pastries to go with hot coffee, at a reduced price.



There were approximately 2,324 volunteers, a 9 am ceremony

then dispersed to place Wreaths on 45,000 headstones of veterans graves. Patrick Graham USAF VVA Treasurer used his trailer to haul load of Wreaths right to spite of volunteers.

Chapter 982

After our General Meeting on May 9, members were invited to the home of member Michael Knight and his wife Joan. They were treated to some great food and a beautiful back yard setting that backs up to Cypress Ridge Golf Course.

After our eats and treats, Mike unveiled his master piece he has been working on for a long time, a Memorial in his back yard. On the pillars he had built were poems from Vietnam, Cambo-



dia, Laos, France, and United States. These were listed on the first three pillars. The fourth pillar had a list of the poet's names and a list of the casualties from the countries involved in the Vietnam War. A REALLY spectacular setting.

And a little surprise while we were all gathered around in the back yard. A couple of golfers were on the course and stopped by an American flag that was placed by a sand trap, and shouted, "WELCOME HOME". What a nice surprise. Mike had placed a couple of signs on the course just before hole #7 that asked golfers when they came to the small America flag, to shout out a "welcome home" to the folks in the back yard just south of the flag. There were six or eight golfers who did it. What a great afternoon.

Honor Ride for Chapter 982 Member John Archuleta

On June 6, Welcome Home Military Heroes had organized an honor ride for past Chapter 982 member, John Archuleta who



passed away at the end of last year. Several members of our Chap-

ter participated by motorcycle or passenger vehicle. The ride began at Pappy's restaurant in Santa Maria, and ended at Old Juan's in Oceano. These were two of John's favorite places, along with his passion for motorcycle riding. When he was in good health, he would often be the lead vehicle for veteran salutes, with this three-wheeler decked out with flags.

Our Chapter 982 member John Buckley was Road Captain for this Honor Ride. In addition to our Chapter members and Welcome Home members who attended, there were riders from four or five American Legion Posts.

Chapter 582

Veterans Garden Project

In February, Chapter 582 competed against two other deserving nonprofit organizations for a grant from the Power of 100 Women.

The daughter of Vietnam veteran R.C. Brown, who tragically perished in the 2018 Camp Fire, graciously granted Chapter 582 the use of three-quarters of an acre of her property to establish a veterans garden in memory of her father.

We were honored to be selected and received a \$20,000 grant to launch the project. These funds allowed us to install a new well pump, upgrade the electrical system, add an 8,000-gallon water storage tank, install an irrigation system with over 5,000 feet of drip tape, and provide an ADA-compliant portable restroom.

In addition, we received a \$2,500 grant from Home Depot for gardening supplies and materials. Home Depot also provided 15 employee volunteers who participated in a community workday. To show our appreciation, Chapter 582 hosted a barbecue for the volunteers.

To date, we have planted more than 600 tomato plants, along with vegetables will be distributed to veteran organizations, food pantry's, and food banks.

Most importantly, Chapter 582 has partnered with other veterans organizations to transform the R.C. Brown Veterans Garden into more than just a place to grow food. It has become a place of healing, fellowship, and purpose—a welcoming environment where veterans and community members can connect, contribute, and feel valued.

The garden stands as a lasting tribute to R.C. Brown's legacy of service and dedication to others while continuing to serve veterans and the community he loved.

AVVA Program Growth and Support

In addition, Chapter 582 is actively developing its AVVA program to assist with fundraising efforts and provide support to the chapter wherever needed.

On March 29, Vietnam War Veterans Day, Chapter 582 sponsored a barbecue luncheon honoring Vietnam veterans. The event was well attended and received outstanding reviews from those who participated. AVVA members played an important role in the event's success by assisting with setup, serving meals, and clean-up.

Under the leadership of Chapter Representative Annette Wagner and Kelly Frederickson, the AVVA is continuing to expand its involvement. They are currently working with a local bowling facility in Orland to organize a fundraising event that will benefit Chapter 582 and support our ongoing programs and activities.

We are extremely grateful for the dedication, enthusiasm, and support of our growing AVVA program. Their contributions have strengthened our chapter and enhanced our ability to serve veterans and the community. We look forward to continued collaboration and growth in the months ahead.

Follow us on Facebook at R.C Brown Veterans Garden Project

Chapter 1147

February 23rd, We presented the VVA Certificate and Medal to a US Marine Cadet for Military Excellence at Fallbrook High School JROTC Awards Ceremony.

March 29th, We held a Free BBQ lunch for National Vietnam War Veterans Day, at the American Legion in Escondido.

April 24th, We presented the VVA Certificate and Medal to a US Air force Cadet for Military and Scholastic Excellence at Vista High School JROTC Awards Ceremony.

May 24th, We were in a booth at the Vista Strawberry Festival recruiting new members. On the same day, our members helped place flags on Veterans' graves at Oak Hill Cemetery, Escondido for the Memorial Day Ceremony. We assisted in the purchase of the flags in the amount of \$400.

May 25th, Memorial Day, our members participated in Ceremonies at Escondido, Oceanside and Vista.

Chapter 355

The chapter is based in the Santa Clarita Valley, the north end of LA County. The City of Santa Clarita is the 3rd largest city in LA County. We have members in Simi Valley, 36m West, and members in Palmdale, 36m East. We have brought in 6 new members since April 2025.

We meet on the 2nd Thursday for a breakfast meeting at the Stevenson Ranch iHop. Southern District Director Brian Heyman has visited our meetings twice.

We had our biennial election this April and elected new officers. Many of you knew our past President, Bruce Millhensch. I encourage you to reach out to him. Bruce is not well and has seen the need to step down. Our new President is RJ Kelly. RJ will be attending the National Leadership and Education Conference in August.

We continue to meet with, support and coordinate with other Veteran Groups, e.g. the American Legion, VFW, "Coffee4Vets", the SCV Veterans Collaborative, the "SCV Veterans Guitar Alliance", The SCV Guardians, the Elks & many others.

We acquired a panel from the Lancaster Mobile Memorial Wall. It contains the name of a local warrior from Saugus, KIA 1965.

This March we celebrated National Vietnam War Veterans Day at our local Senior Center with a program and a FREE lunch for over 100 Vietnam Vets. We donated \$1,250 to the center for hosting our program and feeding us.

We donated \$500 to the Run4theWall. We purchase \$150 of food for the Veterans Collaborative Food Pantry.

On June 14 we are having our "All American BBQ" celebrating Flag Day and the US Army Birthday. It is also a Fundraiser for our Veterans Relief Fund. All Vets will eat free! It is co-sponsored by "Moms for Liberty". Check out the Calendar on our website: www.vva355-ca.org We are also preparing for the SCV July 4th Parade Celebrating the 250th birthday of this great Nation. As part

of our entry we will have a 103 Yr-Old WWII vet in a WWII jeep.

We honored the fallen at the annual Memorial Day Tribute at Eternal Valley Memorial Park. About 800 attended, including Past Congressman Mike Garcia and Current Congressman George Whitesides. One of our members spoke about the meaning of Memorial Day.

Chapter 785

This year we continue to support 12 JROTC high schools in our area with \$800 each. This is our 12th year supporting these outstanding high school students.

Our chapter has recently lost five members, including my brother. We strive to help the widows, especially those with dependent indemnity compensation through the VA system.

We supported Gary Sinise at Camp Pendleton last month, with his Lieutenant Dan Band. This program was for our going star families and attended by several thousand.

Several of our folks attended a memorial service at my high school. We have a monument for 27 classmates that gave the full, measure in Vietnam.

Chapter 535

Membership is holding at 82 Regular and 4 associate members for a total of 86 members. Typically, 15-20 attend meetings. There is no consensus on adjustment of the meeting time or day to enhance attendance.

Chapter members have continued to help support a local food closet.

A national Vietnam Veterans Day event planned for March 29, 2026 centered in the Vietnam Donut Dollies service had to be scratched because the key player, a former Donut Dollie became unavailable.

On May 16, 2026 chapter members participated with activities at a VVA 535 information table at a local airport fly-in associated with Armed Forces Day.

Chapter 535 participated in the respective Grass Valley and Nevada City, CA Memorial Day ceremonies with placement of wreaths at monuments in two local cemeteries as well as posting as docents at several highway bridge plaques memorializing local servicemen killed in action.

Chapter 535 members advocated for support of SB 694, the Senate Bill having to do with reining in so-called veterans benefit claims sharks. SB 694 passed and was signed into law.

On April 10, 2026 several Chapter members attended the dedication and naming of the local VA clinic in memory of U. S. Navy Lt. Commander Lou Conter (deceased at age 102), last surviving sailor of the U.S.S. Arizona which was lost in the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Congressman Kevin Kiley wrote the legislation calling for the naming was present, together with members of the Conter family, for the dedication and revealing of a bronze bust of Lt. Commander Lou Conter.

On May 7, 2026 the Chapter elected a new slate of Officers and Directors to serve during the 2026-27 service period. Election results were reported to VVA national and to the CSC.

A \$1,000 academic scholarship has been awarded to a local Nevada Union High School graduate. Chapter members attended the

high school awards ceremony on April 22, 2026.

The Chapter is planning to staff a booth at the Nevada County Fair, August 12-16, 2026.

Chapter 464

The chapter held a successful annual WHVVD car show on March 29th at Post 105 in Redwood City.

Chapter volunteers were at SFO on 04/12/26 to send off Honor Flight Veterans going to Washington, D.C., to visit "The Wall" and other memorials.

Chapter members attended and participated in the California legislative days on 04/22 and 04/29 in Sacramento. The goal was to speak to our legislators about current bills and some in committee that are important to us.

Attended the dedication of the new Veterans Memorial in Redwood City. The new building was constructed on the site formerly used by the SF 49ers as their training facility. Steve Young, Tom Rathman, and other Niner Alumni participated in the ceremonies.

The chapter participated in Memorial Day ceremonies at Golden Gate National Cemetery and in the reading of the "Names" at the Sacramento Vietnam Memorial, hosted by Chapter 500.

Chapter 472

Continue contributions of clothing and comfort items to Alpha Project. February 21st Annual Memorial Motorcycle Run with 35 riders and \$4700 in proceeds. March 29th presentation at Chula Vista Veterans Home for Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans with 14 members and about 33 residents. April meeting presented \$1000 scholarships to three high school students. May 16 attended annual May Ride in support of Home Front San Diego supporting members. Members attended numerous Memorial Day events.

Chapter 201

Held a special field of honor ceremony at Oak Hill Cemetery in San Jose to include the Missing Man table and a 21 gun salute performed by AVVA Chapter 2201

Donated \$2000 to the Gold Star Moms Annual Mothers Day Brunch.

Provided assistance and active participation in the annual 4 Chaplains memorial ceremony in February.

In conjunction with AVVA Chapter 201 and the South Vietnamese Community in San Jose, joined in the celebration of the lunar new year and also in the remembrance of Black April on April 30, when Saigon Fell to the North Vietnamese.

Provided Financial and other assistance to allow him to vacate his apartment of 32 years and transition to Assisted Living within the VA system. Chapter 201 will rent a small storage shed for about a year as he transitions to his new living arrangement,

Southern District Director Report

As Southern District Director replacing Dirk Young who suddenly passed away, I've met with all of the chapters in SoCal except for San Diego, which is scheduled for June 20th in Poway.

I've also attended a regular breakfast Chapter 53 holds in Torrance and I was honored to be one of the Veterans interviewed by a high school senior participating in the annual scholarship contest

chapter 53 hosts.

Josh Mow wrote an excellent essay about my experience during Vietnam and was one of the winners. Chapter 53 hosted the scholarship winners and parents for breakfast where each student read their essay before the membership and received a check. I was honored to attend and met Josh's parents. Chapter 53 is doing great things in the community.

While serving as SoCal Director, I'm still active with Chapter 756 in Long Beach and joined them at Memorial Day ceremonies in Lakewood and at the American Gold Star Manor in Long Beach, where our chapter meets. We are very supportive of our Gold Star Mothers, and Fathers.

I also attended a Memorial Day observance at the Downey Cemetery where I serve as a member of the board of trustees for the Cemetery District.

The Downey Cemetery participates in the annual Wreaths Across America event where Chapter 756 is a major donor for the event and helps lay Christmas wreaths at the graves of 375 Veterans buried there.

I also attended Vietnam Veterans Day luncheons at Bob Hope Patriotic Hall and at the Santa Clarita Valley Community Center with members of Chapter 355.

And I had the honor of witnessing the swearing in of new leaders of Chapter 355 along with local, state and federal officials. Jerry and RJ are doing a fine job guiding the "lost patrol".

I participated in a "Traveling Vietnam Veterans Wall" event held in the City of Commerce over the Memorial Day weekend.

I attended a neighborhood council meeting in the Sawtelle area of Los Angeles along with our President Jerry Orlemann and his wife Kyle, who've been on point for years on the West LA VA "Soldiers Home" project. There is a National Guard Armory in the area where the County proposes to build a supportive housing facility for homeless. The neighborhood council opposes the project as does VVA since the Armory is on part of the property deeded to the "Soldiers Home".

On April 22nd I attended the Cal Commanders meeting and Legislative Day in Sacramento, where members walked the halls of the Capitol and met with Senators and Assembly Members on key legislation affecting Veteran benefits. The Cal Commanders recognized Senator Bob Archuleta as Veterans Legislator of the Year for sponsoring SB 694, to protect Veterans from "claim sharks". With the help of VVA and others VSOs, the bill passed and goes into effect January 1, 2027.

I've been involved in many activities in SoCal on behalf of our Council and have had quite a bit of "windshield time" visiting our Chapters.

I've been collaborating with Veterans Alliance of Orange County (Valor) on their years-long effort to build a Veterans Cemetery in Orange County. A site in Anaheim Hills called Gypsum Canyon near the 91 and 241 freeways has been acquired and funding has been secured.

Designs have been completed. Construction may start in 2028.

It's been an honor to serve our Council and membership and I intend to run for Southern District Director in July and ask for your support.

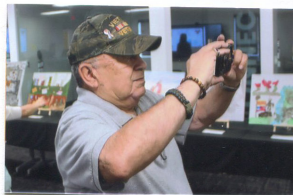
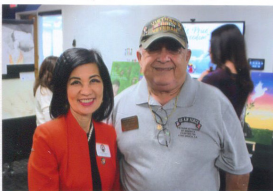
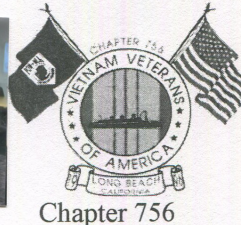
Brian Heyman Southern District Director

Westminster School District, Art Contest, 14121 Cedarwood Ave., Westminster, Ca. 92683, 6 May 2026
Sponsored by the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) Chapter 756, Long Beach, Ca.

Westminster School District

2026 "Price of Freedom" Art Contest

The City of Westminster, Ca. Westminster, School District in partnership with the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) Chapter 756, Long Beach, Ca., organize the annual Art Contest, The Price of Freedom. Middle School students from Westminster and many of the neighboring school districts submit artwork that competes with other middle school students for cash prizes. The Vietnam Veterans of America sponsors the event with cash prizes of \$400 for first place, \$300 for second place, \$200 for third place and \$100 for fourth place.



Pictures
Scrapbook
History by
Steve Pierce

Shortly after dark, the lookout on the wing of the bridge reported: "Light, bearing on the starboard bow." "Is it steady or moving astern?" the captain called out.

Lookout replied, "Steady, captain," which meant we were on a dangerous collision course with that ship.

The captain then called to the signalman, "Signal that ship: We are on a collision course, advise you change course 20 degrees." Back came a signal, "Advisable for you to change course 20 degrees." The captain said, "Send: I'm a captain, change course 20 degrees." "I'm a seaman second class," came the reply. "You had better change course 20 degrees." By that time, the captain was furious. He spat out, "Send: I'm a battleship. Change course 20 degrees." Back came the flashing light: "I'm a lighthouse. Your call." Battleship: We changed course.

The Meaning Behind the Story "The "Battleship vs. Lighthouse" story is a popular parable that uses a confrontation between a massive navy ship and a stationary beacon to

symbolize the danger of prioritizing worldly pride and human authority over the unchanging, absolute truths of God." • Immovable Truth: Just like the lighthouse, foundational principles, facts, and realities cannot be moved or negotiated by sheer force of will.

• Adaptability vs. Ego: The battleship represents ego, rank, and rigidity. Leadership requires the humility to recognize when you are on a collision course with reality and the agility to change direction."

In - Country - Memories of a Tour in Vietnam
Saturday, January 31st I will be celebrating my 79th birthday

The Chaplain's Corner

The Battleship vs. The Lighthouse Found in the book: "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" by Stephen Covey
Submitted by Steve Pierce, Chaplain, California State Council

The Story: The Battleship vs. The Lighthouse

Two battleships assigned to the training squadron had been at sea on maneuvers in heavy weather for several days. I was serving on the lead battleship and was on watch on the bridge as night fell. The visibility was poor with a patch of fog, so the captain, remained on the bridge keeping an eye on all activities.

and unfortunately I've decided to deactivate my In-Country page from Facebook. Lately, many of my cartoons are being recreated using AI and posted to other Facebook pages. Other pirates take my cartoon, remove the In-Country heading, copyright mark and my name, alter wording then share elsewhere. AI is becoming a nightmare for creative types, and I'm glad I'm too old to have to compete with it for a living. Thanks for your participation and for making In-Country one of the best experiences of my life. I've come to know many of you closely, and hope to remain connected. If you're interested in seeing new projects of mine, like or follow Fehrenbacher Illustration and you'll be alerted when I post something new. Best wishes!

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063663452578>

Editor's Note: I have enjoyed these creations of the shared experiences of our generation of veterans. I look forward to the author's book. It will become a great spot in my collection.



UPDATE:

I've decided to publish a collection of all of my In-Country cartoons into one nearly 380 page book. I'm tentatively titling it "The Complete In-Country Collection". It would be much cheaper than buying individual volumes AND give me a way to get my nearly 70 unpublished cartoons into print. I've already started production...more later. 😊😊😊

The California Zephyr

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Tom Hohmann

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

Who Are The Vietnam Veterans Of America?

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

VVA'S FOUNDING PRINCIPLE

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

PURPOSE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FUNDING

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



A California State Council Meeting Have You Ever Been To One?

If you haven't been to one, I can tell you about the CSC meeting we had in May. It was held at the Wyndham Visalia and started with the Board of Directors meeting on Friday evening. Saturday morning starts at 8:00 a.m. with a continental breakfast provided by CSC. The full State Council meeting starts at 9:00 a.m., with a Call to Order by the president, followed by his opening remarks. This is followed by the opening ceremonies that include the posting of the colors and the POW/MIA moment of silence. A roll call is done to determine a quorum. Next, we ask first-time attendees to introduce themselves and share a bit of their history, followed by approval of the agenda and minutes. At the May meeting, we had 2 guest speakers and an election orientation. Chapter reports are heard until 11:00 p.m. From 11:20 a.m. until noon, the district meetings are held. Lunch starts at Noon and goes until 1:30 p.m. The lunch provided by CSC was a deli Buffet. It consisted of Assorted Deli Breads and Sliced Roast Beef, Smoked Ham, Roasted Turkey Breast, and Sliced Swiss, American, Cheddar, and Monterey Jack Cheeses. California Field of Greens Salad, Pasta Salad with Herbed Vinaigrette Dressing, Tomatoes, Lettuce, Shaved Onion, Pickles, and Assorted Condiments. Make your own sandwich. From 1:30 to 5:30 p.m., the committee tiers are held. In May, they were Public Affairs, PTSD, Membership Affairs, West LA, Constitution, POW/MIA, Veterans Benefits, and government. Each committee meeting lasted 55 minutes and included a question-and-answer period. At 6:30 p.m., it was dinner time. The meal featured BBQed Chicken Thighs and pork ribs, again provided by CSC. That finished the day. Sunday at 8:00 a.m., there is the Vietnam Veterans Breakfast Buffet. Food and drink and lots of it. The General meeting starts at 9:00 a.m. with reports of the committees, the officers, and the board. The meeting is adjourned at 10:00 a.m. This gives everyone an early start to return home. If you haven't attended a CSC weekend, I suggest that you do sometime. Dick Southern Second Vice President CSC, Inc.



VVA CA State Council
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To:

In this issue:

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

CSC Meeting Dates & Events

July 10-12, 2026 - Election Meeting
October 2-4, 2026 Full Council
Zephyr deadlines-reminders will be emailed