



The California Zephyr



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SPRING 2013

VVA CSC Capitol Day in Sacramento

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA-CALIFORNIA STATE COUNCIL

Day at the Capitol Report

By: Pete Conaty, VVA-CSC Legislative Advocate

Photos by Fred Romero

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On March 20 the California State Council held their fourth annual legislative day at the State Capitol in Sacramento. We also took the opportunity, while we were at the Capitol, to attend a ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Capitol Park in honor of Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day (WHVVD), which occurs on March 30. WHVVD is recognized by proclamation of the Governor on March 30 of each year. Vietnam veteran and State Assemblyman (now Congressman) Paul Cook (R-Yucaipa) carried the legislation to annually recognize WHVVD.

We had a great turnout for this event with about 60 attendees participating. CSC members were also joined by 3 representatives of the Sacramento Blue Star Mothers organization. The President and Legislative Committee members of the California Association of county Veterans Service Officers also stopped by to Council members. In addition to hearing from legislative and CA Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA) speakers and taking part in the WHVVD ceremony, attendees also visited their local legislators and urged support for veterans legislation.

During the morning, Secretary Peter Gravett of the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA) spoke to the group. He outlined the major goals and issues of the CDVA and thanked the VVA for their good works helping veterans. Secretary Gravett also introduced newly appointed Undersecretary for Operations Mike Wells and newly appointed Deputy Secretary for Veterans Services Keith Boylan.

CAL-VET TEAM ADDRESSES VVA-CSC



L to R: Lindsey Sin-Deputy Secretary for Women Veterans, Phil McAllister-Legislative Consultant, Mike Wells-Undersecretary for Operations, Peter Gravett-Secretary, Robin Umberg-Undersecretary for Veterans Homes, Keith Boylan-Deputy Secretary for Veterans Services.

The Council awarded its 2012 Legislator of the Year award to Senator Rod Wright (D-Los Angeles) for his exemplary efforts to help California's veterans and their families. Senator Wright is the state's leader in fighting for equality in family law for military parents who have faced the loss of child custody rights when they were called up for active duty on short notice. This concept has since been copied in over 30 other states around the country. In response to concerns from serving and former military parents who had been mobilized for the Global War on Terror and as a result became the victims of paternity fraud, Senator Wright has repeatedly worked to enact legislation to ensure that those who are sent into harm's way to fight for our freedoms are not taken advantage of. Senator Wright was the author of a resolution seeking redress from the United States Government for the victims of the World War II disaster in Port Chicago, California. A presidential pardon was granted to one of the victims of that disaster as a result of his efforts.

The VVA-CSC's Legislator of the Year for the State Assembly is Speaker of the Assembly John Pérez. Speaker Pérez will receive his award at the Annual Veterans Recognition Luncheon on June 26. Speaker Pérez was chosen for his leadership, support, and dedication to veterans, service members, and their families. Under the leadership of Speaker Pérez, the Assembly has actively sought to improve the coordination and performance of state programs that provide services to veterans. Speaker Pérez has also approved the use of almost \$2 million dollars from the Assembly's internal operating budget to support veteran employment programs with the National Guard and the California Conservation Corps, in addition to providing funds to the California Department of Veteran Affairs for improved outreach and benefit services. Speaker Pérez

was also one of 12 individuals selected in 2012 to receive the Charles Dick Medal of Merit from the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS).

VVA-CSC LEGISLATORS OF THE YEAR



L to R: Ken Holybee-CSC Legislative Chair, Senator Rod Wright, Steve Mackey-CSC President, Pete Conaty-CSC Legislative Advocate.



John A. Pérez
Speaker of the Assembly

A portion of the morning program was also devoted to hearing from key legislators who were scheduled to drop in to address the group. 14 Assembly and Senate members stopped by to introduce themselves to the Council and to speak about veterans related legislation they are carrying:

Senators

Lou Correa (D-Santa Ana)
Steve Knight (R-Palmdale)
Ted Lieu (D-Torrance)
Jim Nielsen (R-Gerber)
Rod Wright (D-Los Angeles)

Assemblymembers

Rocky Chavez (R-Oceanside)
Ken Cooley (D-Rancho Cordova)
Jeff Gorell (R-Camarillo)
Shannon Grove (R-Bakersfield)
Jim Frazier (D-Oakley)
Melissa Melendez (R-Lake Elsinore)
Al Muratsuchi (D-Torrance)
Sharon Quirk-Silva (D-Fullerton)
Rudy Salas (D-Bakersfield)

After lunch, VVA-CSC attendees distributed informational packets to all 120 legislative offices containing:

- * VVA-CSC's background document, outlining what the VVA does and details of VVA-CSC programs and services.
- * A list of key veterans legislation sponsored and supported by the Council.



Assemblyman Rocky Chavez (in front of flag) and VVA-CSC members. Chavez is the former Secretary of the CA Dept of Veterans Affairs and is a retired Marine Colonel.

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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.



At 3:00 we took a break from the legislative portion of the Capitol Day to go to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial for a short ceremony for Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day. Those who spoke were CDVA Secretary Peter Gravett, CSC President Steve Mackey, Senator Ted Lieu, Assemblyman Al Muratsuchi. Assemblymen Rocky Chavez and Jim Frazier also led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance. Local veteran and Law Enforcement Chaplain Frank Russell delivered the invocation and closing prayer. VVA member Phil Rios sang the National anthem. This was an emotional and heartfelt ceremony as befitting those brothers and sisters left behind. CSC members Richard Segovia and Gary Colletti presented a wreath on behalf of the State Council. VVA 500 President



Assemblyman Jeff Gorell (3rd from left in rear row) and VVA-CSC members. Gorell is a Lt. Commander in the Naval Reserve and last year was deployed to Afghanistan.



Senator Steve Knight (3rd from right) and VVA-CSC members. Knight served in the Army in Germany during the 80's as a track systems mechanic.

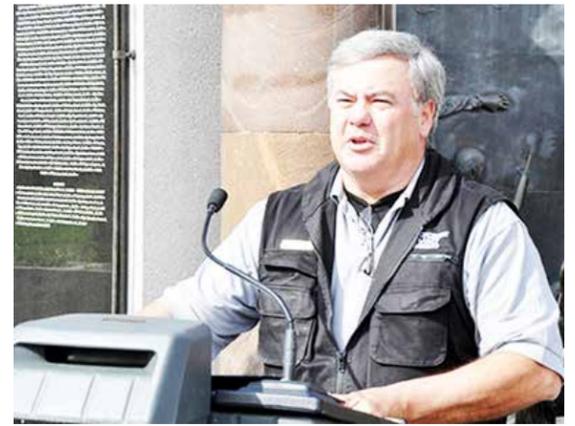


Assemblyman Rudy Salas (3rd from left) and VVA-CSC members.

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Left: L to R: William "Easy" Smith and Ted Adams present VVA 500 wreath.



attended that day's events and for the unique perspective they bring to our advocacy efforts. Also, when veterans from across the state meet with their legislators and help to show our strength, it brings home the importance of veterans issues to our elected officials.

I would like to hear from some of the participants to get guidance on how we can improve in next year's event. Hopefully we can work it out so more members from the southern part of the state can attend. Many members of the Legislature's Veterans Affairs committees are from the LA and San Diego areas of the state. It would be very beneficial to have some of the leaders of our Southern California chapters attend next year's event so that they may communicate our message to the crucial LA and San Diego delegations.



Assemblyman Jim Frazier (left), Assemblyman Rocky Chavez (center).



Above and Left Photographs Are By W.R.I. "Easy" Smith VVA 500 2013 CSC Legislative Day



Left: L to R: Richard Segovia and Gary Colletti present CSC wreath.

CSC DAY AT THE CAPITOL

LEGISLATIVE DAY AT THE CAPITOL FOR VIETNAM VETS

By Charles Earthman

On March 20, 2013, VVA members from all over California descended on the Capitol for their annual CSC Legislative Day. This was the sixth year that California's veterans have gathered in the Capitol to interact with state legislators on issues that matter to both Vietnam-era veterans and veterans returning from today's crises.

Veteran's legislative advocate Pete Conaty, CSC President Steve Mackey, and VVA-CSC legislative Chair Ken Holybee hosted the event. Pete Conaty handled the lion's share of the job as emcee.

Breakfast and lunch were served in the Capitol Basement Cafeteria's Eureka Room. The day's activities started with Peter Gravett, Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs, giving the Department's outlook and goals for 2013 and introducing the leadership team tasked with doing the job. Charles Hunnicutt, President of the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers, spoke and introduced some of the VSO's who were present. The remainder of the morning we listened to legislators, committee consultants, and legislative staff who dropped by to inform VVA members about some key legislation affecting California veterans.

Many bills were discussed that involve California veterans including bills sponsored by the VVA-CSC. AB 244 would authorize veterans' organizations to participate in a special interest license plate program. AB 287 would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to annually complete a list of names to be added to the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial. AB 1289 proposes to make the California Vietnam Memorial the official state Vietnam veterans' memorial. Many more bills too numerous to mention here are supported by the VVA-CSC.

The VVA-CSC Legislator of the Year Award was presented to Senator Rod Wright (D-Los Angeles) for his tireless work on legal issues on behalf of California veterans stationed abroad and for his past support of California veterans' issues. He spoke passionately of his close friendship with a survivor of the Port Chicago disaster in World War Two.

VVA members visited with legislators to discuss key bills and afterwards there were closing remarks in the cafeteria before adjourning to walk to the California Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Capitol Park for the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Ceremony.

This was the fourth year the ceremony has been performed. In 2007, both the U. S. Congress and the U. S. Senate passed resolutions proclaiming March 30th as National "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day" and in 2009 California became the first state to recognize March 30 as WHVVD. In 2012 President Barack Obama signed an Executive Order proclaiming March 29 as WHVVD. The movement to recognize this day is growing and perhaps one day it will be commemorated throughout this great land. Hopefully in our lifetime.

CSC PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Here it is another election year for National Officers. The VVA National Convention will be held in Jacksonville, FL, from August 13-18 at the Hyatt Regency. The delegate count has been sent out to all chapters. California has a total of 95 delegates eligible for the convention. It would be nice to have as many of those delegates attend the convention as possible.

So, it is time to start planning. With the convention on the East Coast I know it will be expensive to send your delegates, but if you start raising funds now, maybe you will be able to send all of your eligible delegates. Let's make a huge showing in Florida.

I would like to thank all those who attended the California State Council's 4th annual Legislative Day in Sacramento. We had a great turnout with approximately 60 VVA members from throughout the state in attendance. During the morning we had numerous legislators come by to inform us on what they are doing for the veterans of California.

Pete Conaty and Associates, mainly Dana Nichol, put together an informational package on what the CSC does in California. One package was made for every State Legislator. The packets were divided among everyone and we set out, through the State Capital to visit the Legislator's offices.

I personally delivered 9 packets to 9 different legislators from the 5th floor down to the 2nd floor. Every office I walked into I advised them who I was,

what organization I was with and handed them the packet. When they opened the packet and saw Pete Conaty and Associates typed inside, every one of them said they knew Pete Conaty and how he is working hard for our organization and all veterans.

I want to thank Pete Conaty and Associates, including Dana Nichol, for all the hard work they do on behalf of Vietnam Veterans of America, California State Council.

A special thank you to the CA Veterans Benefit Fund (CAVBF) for their support in this event.

Steve Mackey, CSC President

AVVA REPORT

Core Values

As Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, we are passionate about our work and the real-life issues facing Veterans and their families. We strive to create a positive impact on our Veterans and their families by making life better. Our achievements are built on a solid foundation of core values that inspire action, integrity, teamwork and outstanding results. Our values form the basis for decision-making and all actions of Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America – both as individuals and as a Veterans Service Organization.

Commitment

In everything we do as Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, our perspective is based on the view of our members, Veterans and their families, ensuring that we understand their needs and expectations, and can prioritize and problem-solve for their unique challenges.

Ethics & Integrity

As a National Veterans Service Organization, we expect all conduct to be rooted in integrity, mutual respect, and civility. We value ethical behavior in our members and leaders at all levels of AVVA. We believe in the dignity and worth of all people, strive to foster an appreciation of and respect for diversity and differences among our leaders, members and peers.

- We are committed to a teamwork environment where every Associate is a valued member, treated with respect, encouraged to contribute and recognized and rewarded for his/her efforts.

- Everyone at AVVA is responsible for considering the ethical implications of each decision or action, and is urged to challenge assumptions, raise alternatives and seek out diversity.

Relevance

Our expertise and progressive, proactive atmosphere yield a powerful combination that continuously sets us apart. It is an approach that translates into timely decisions and executions, a constant quest for solutions, rapid responses to the media on issues facing Veterans and their families, legislative advocacy on all bills pertinent to the wellbeing of Veterans and their families and any issue that may make a tangible difference in the world around us for the better.

- We anticipate opportunities and challenges, and are quick to confront complex or ambiguous situations. While we work with a sense of urgency, we always consider the impact of our actions before we proceed.

Teamwork

We believe knowledge is power and we support our Members' right to access information that impacts their roles as Veteran advocates. We also recognize everyone's right to be listened to and heard regardless of their point of view.

- AVVA members are a team, loyal to one another, caring for each other both personally and professionally while being supportive of each other's efforts.

- Our system of teamwork inspires people to make their best contributions, provides them with the support they need to be successful, promotes communication and celebrates their shared accomplishments.

- We present a unified image, both visually and in behavior, so that we may insure the integrity of the organization while building a recognizable reputation as a service organization.

THE SERVICE WOMEN'S LEGACY :

HONORING PAST TRAILBLAZERS & HOW THEY ARE LIKE CURRENT SERVICEWOMEN.

It is the one year anniversary for Women Army Vietnam Veterans Induction into the U.S. Army Women's Hall of Fame.

The Hall of Fame awards were presented to all women who have contributed extraordinary service to women in the Army. This induction was for all those who had served in Vietnam. Maj. Gen. McWilliams, President of U.S. Army Women's Foundation, had discussed the challenges faced by women who had served in Vietnam. "The women who served in Vietnam did it for their country—in terrible conditions," she said. "They dealt with things they could not ever have been trained for; the trauma, the shock, the tropical diseases, compounded all the things that happened." Those women came back home and Americans didn't take notice of the work they had done.

Women serving in Vietnam had pivotal roles as nurses, translators, navigators, clerical staff, technicians, aviation mechanics, and many other specialized areas. These women laid the groundwork for the following generation to enter many new specialties within the military. They opened the door to new opportunities and careers for women in the military.

The Army Women's Foundation website is listed below with the link to past podcasts. There is more information on the actual induction ceremony and also podcasts on the continuing challenges of women in the military transitioning home after serving overseas.

<http://www.awfdn.org/podcast/video3.shtml>

Kate O'Hare-Palmer

VVACSC Women Veterans Comm. Chair.

Wilma Vaught



Vaught in 1997

Service/branch Air Force

Years of service 1957–1985

Rank Brigadier General

Commands held U. S. Military Entrance Processing Command

Battles/wars Vietnam War

Brigadier General Wilma L. Vaught (born March 15, 1930) is a retired American military leader. She was the first woman to deploy with an Air Force bomber unit, and the first woman to reach the rank of Brigadier General from the comptroller field. Vaught became concerned that the role of women in the military was going unnoticed, and pushed for a memorial as the leader of the Women in Military Service to America Memorial Foundation. This resulted in the Women in Military Service for America Memorial being built at the entrance to Arlington National Cemetery. In 2000, she was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame, and in 2010, she was inducted into the Army Women's Foundation hall of fame.

Gen. Vaught has worked tirelessly over the years to create and sustain WIMSA. (Women in Military Service For America) The goal of 250,000 women registered has been reached. However, there are over 2.5 million women

veterans who need to be registered. Tell 3 Women-Pay Forward the Legacy is a new campaign asking each woman veteran to help register three women each. The website: www.womensmemorial.org has a download for the registration form.

If you have not been to the memorial, it is a definitely something to experience. The displays of various women in military eras are represented. There is a computerized section that allows you to look up any registered member and read her history. This is a great legacy for our families both now and in the future.

VIETNAM WOMEN'S MEMORIAL 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



Veteran's Day Weekend — November 9-11, 2013

Join the Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation as we celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the dedication of the Vietnam Women's Memorial. Plans are underway for a series of events to commemorate this extraordinary landmark event. The weekend before Veterans Day is a perfect time to gather with friends and to hold reunions. Official events begin on Saturday the 9th of November. The Embassy Suites, Downtown on 22nd street between M and N will be the host hotel and suites will be available at a reduced rate (202-857-3388). Check back for news of even more plans and events that may appear for the 8th and 9th.

PLEASE GO TO THE WEBSITE: www.womensmemorial.org for a full list of the calendar of events throughout the Veterans Day week.

VETS HELPING VETS

By Fred Buhler, President
VVA Chapter 535 - Grass Valley

Friends of Nevada County Military was founded over eight years ago to support troops from Nevada County serving in the Middle East, and their families. The group has sent more than 6,000 gift boxes to troops in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, and provides support meetings for families and returning vets. Since the beginning, members of Chapter 535 helped sponsor "Friends", providing encouragement and much needed financial support.

Last fall the Postmaster in Nevada City told "Friends" about a veteran suffering from Multiple Sclerosis who is wheel chair bound and needed help fixing a number of problems in his house. Dale receives his medicine



and much of his food by mail. Given the deteriorated condition of his driveway, the mail man was frequently unable to deliver the mail. Recognizing the importance of



Dale's mail to his survival, the Postmaster had personally been driving out to Dale's house to deliver the mail.

Dale served in the Navy during the Vietnam War and later served in the Marine Corps. He lives in a modular home up on San Juan Ridge, about 14 miles from town. He has struggled with MS for more than fifteen years, and is now quadriplegic.



When Milt Schmidt from "Friends" and I went out to see what was needed, we found Dale's steep driveway was almost impassable. We also found the walls of his house were badly damaged by rain and the particle board floors were breaking down. In his bedroom his bed had fallen through the floor. Bathroom fixtures needed to be replaced. Both the front and the back door and the ramps he uses with his wheelchair needed to be replaced. The electrical system was overloaded and had failed in much of the house. Because Dale has limited movement, trash had accumulated around the outside of the house to the point we were unable to assess the condition of the foundation of his house. Accumulated trash also created a major fire hazard, a serious problem in this high fire risk area.

"Friends" partnered with members of the local Vietnam Vets Chapter and the Gold Country Chapter of the Marine Corps League to address the many problems we found. Much of the repair work was done by John Byner, Commandant of the Marine Corps League chapter and a licensed contractor. The VVA and "Friends" put a work party together to remove four large truck loads of trash as well as provide labor to move furniture and personal belongings out of the house so that John could make the necessary repairs. A member of "Friends" also arranged for delivery of ground asphalt and a roller to resurface Dale's driveway.

Home Depot, under their Community Impacts Grant Program, provided a \$5,000 grant to fund the purchase of materials. Under this program, priority is given to projects for veterans than include housing repairs, modifications and weatherization work. Grants of up to \$5,000 are made in the form of The Home Depot gift cards for the purchase of tools, materials or services. This was just what we needed to get started. Many local businesses and private individuals donated additional building materials and cash to help with the project. We also held a fund raiser at a local restaurant.

We have made a lot of progress over the past six months. The floors have all been replaced, the bathroom rebuilt and the driveway resurfaced. The front and rear doors and ramps have been replaced. The electrical system has been updated. Much of the trash has been removed. Next week we will install new carpet throughout the unit. John is now starting to replace all the walls and the windows which are badly damaged and will install a new heating and air conditioning unit.

In addition to helping a fellow vet, a rewarding aspect

of this project has been veterans organizations and local businesses working together, vets helping vets.

What does Dale think about all this? He is amazed after struggling for so many years that a group of vets would get together to provide much appreciated help. He commented, "you guys have given me my life back!"

VVA CHAPTER 982

Welcome to Guadalupe CA.

Well I cannot believe it's voting time again. The Election Committee is busy getting everything ready for our Annual Meeting meeting. Good luck to all who are running.

We are getting ready for the stand down that will be at the Vets Hall in San Luis Obispo, CA on May 18th and 19th. We will be there to help out where and how we are needed.

Since we were voted into office last July 2012 this chapter has been in the Arroyo Grande Harvest Parade,



had a successful BBQ fundraiser for our fallen brother Jr. Lariba's family, the Agent Orange committee put on a successful Town Hall meeting at the direction of Richard Segovia. When the holiday season was upon us we donated dry goods and monies to the SBCO food bank. We also donated clothing to the Family Care Network of the Central Coast that was donated to us by the customers of the Old Navy store in San Luis Obispo and we also collected toys for the Toys for Tots drive. The BOD & Officers got together and planned a Christmas Potluck dinner celebration for the members and their families. Manuel Razo and the members of Chapter 982 assisted the family of Sal Rodriguez putting a memorial and potluck together to send our fallen brother on his way. To top off this awesome year we had the most successful Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Celebration on Mar 30th that brought our Veteran Community together with our local Politicians and community members. Then to our surprise we got proclamations from both Madame Mayor Frances Romero of Guadalupe and Madame Mayor Alice Patino of Santa Maria.

Wow how awesome is this. We are doing good things for our local communities and citizens. Keep up the good work.

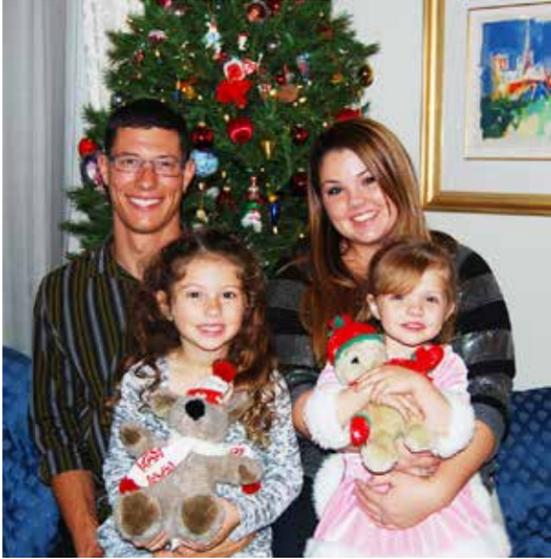
VVA CHAPTER 472

Chapter 472 in San Diego in their usual fashion joined



the Veteran's Parade in downtown San Diego in late 2012. Always joined by brother Chapter 1031 in Escondido as well as the Vietnamese Community Association, the members flocked to the Veteran's Museum where they were joined by Associate members for the 10 am kickoff. Escorted by some forty to fifty Patriots astride motorcycles, the group ran all the lights to easily form up on time. More than the predicted forty thousand again lined the downtown area and were exceptionally receptive to the veterans of the Vietnam War. The members that walked the route greeted many veterans and thanked them for their service. Always a rewarding and refreshing experience, many members feel they are rejuvenated from the entire day and are ready to continue the task of helping

our veterans no matter the era they served.



The Annual Christmas Party was held in December with some 70 members and friends joining the AVVER's and Chapter 472. The Kister Family Singers, a patriotic group from Escondido as well as our 2011 Christmas Family sang led the traditional songs for the dinner and gift activities. The 2012 Christmas Family comprised of SSGT Charlie Linville, USMC, and family were present and honored for their patriotism. Charlie was wounded in Iraq and in rehabilitation at the present time. The Chapter keeps a close watch over the family to insure they are getting his most deserved medical care or any needs.

INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON VETERANS

Ken Holybee

In 2011 Governor Brown signed an Executive Order that created the Interagency Council on Veterans (ICV) in California. This council brought together Government Agencies (GA) and Non Government Organizations (NGO) to close the gaps in assisting Veterans. There were four committees formed to work in these areas, Health, Housing, Education, and Employment. When they held their first workshop in February of 2012 I was put on the Employment committee representing VVA. In the first group meeting the work centered on what was the most important issues for the committees to look at. This was done by a series of small groups brainstorming and putting a list together listing the issues that were more like roadblocks to veterans in getting services and benefits. This was done by moving from one group to another in a two day meeting and giving our concerns to all of the groups that you wished to have some input in. The GA's held their meeting earlier in the month than the NGO's and then all the information was compiled and broken down into which committee would address which issues and where they were in importance to the members. Not only were we looking at the problems but what solutions could we recommend as a way to bridge the gaps. Working in the Employment committee has been very educational for me, regarding what is being done and how the information gets to veterans. As a non professional I speak as a veteran and sometimes I need things explained to me in simpler terms than the professional people working with the veterans in job search. I think I benefit the other members by asking these types of questions.

Over the last year they, California Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA), which is the host of these meetings and also central in the ICV, has been working on web sites and "apps" to assist the veterans in finding the information they need. Some of these "apps" are already operating and some are just now coming on line. All of the information on these "apps" can be found on the CDVA website at CalVet.org or the old site of cdva.ca.gov., they are changing the addresses to make it easier to locate the

information.

Since most of the efforts are aimed at the newest veterans there are discussions about how to notify and inform them of the programs available to them. One way that the VSO's can assist is by inviting the veterans to social functions or hosting functions for them. Most of the small groups of these veterans are doing as we did upon our return home, by going to school or trying to reconnect with family. By hosting social functions we can teach social skills and help them and their families integrate into areas that employers gather. Although there are many "apps" to locate jobs, housing, health, and educational facilities there is no "app" that reintegrates veterans into social behavior areas. If we remember, it took us many years after coming home to relearn how to talk to people, other than veterans. We were usually a little short tempered when trying to explain most things to someone that did not understand the language we used while in the service and we did not understand the words used by civilians that had changed more than we did. I do not think we can afford to wait twenty or thirty years for the reintegration to begin with these veterans.

All of the meetings of the Interagency Council on Veterans are open to the public to attend or for comment. The information on meetings must go out at least ten days before the meeting to allow the public to know about the meeting and receive the agenda for these meetings. The information is sent out from the CDVA thru their CalVet newsletter and thru their information page. Dick Southern posts this information when he receives it by email. You can go to CalVet.ca.gov or contact Ballou, Carolyn@CalVet [Carolyn.Ballou@CALVET.CA.GOV] to get on the email list to keep informed of upcoming events.

Eight years ago the CDVA stated that "they were not doing a good job outreaching to veterans". They have worked hard thru two administrations and an ever changing leadership team to correct this problem. I think with the assistance of all that have worked with them and the input we have had this is changing. I wish it could have changed faster but we take what we can get. I have seen many changes in these past years that have made life a little easier on our veterans, but there is still more to do. Our input, as veterans, is very important to the leadership of our state and our department of veterans' affairs. The more contact we have with, not only our legislators, but also our county service officers the more we can change the lives of the veterans coming home in the future. Our voices and involvement does make a difference even if it takes longer than we wish.

AGENT ORANGE AND THE IOM

Ken Holybee

The following is the opening paragraph from the statement I presented to the Institute of Medicine on January 16, 2013. I will have the rest of the statement on the CSC web site. This was my first time addressing this type of body. It was made up of Doctors, Ph D's, and professionals in area of epidemiology. In their format we could present but no questions could be asked of us.

"While great strides have been made over the last several years in understanding the health effects of exposure to the phenoxy herbicides used in Vietnam, there are still way too many lingering questions. Vietnam veterans and their families continue to suffer and die from a variety of health conditions, without any apparent family history of such conditions."

After we spoke we listened to presentations from Tanya Mack from the "Children of Vietnam Veterans Health Alliance", Debra Kraus widow of a Vietnam Veteran, and Wes Carter Air Force Veteran and a member of the C123 flight crews of contaminated aircraft.

Andy Olsham, PhD Chair of Epidemiology, University of North Carolina, Chappell Hill was a call in expert. The opinion that he was presenting is that male mediated birth defects seldom occur. I had a very difficult time sitting there and listening to him. I feel that with this type of "experts" on the panel or presenting to them anything to do with our children and grand children will be difficult to have defined as male mediated.

Difficulties in the Agent Orange issues are nothing new to Vietnam Veterans. Going back to the late 70's the government had already decided that there was no connection to birth defects and the chemicals in Agent Orange. We must remember that when we speak of Agent Orange we are speaking about the multitude of agents used in Vietnam. When the government speaks they are talking about 245T and 24D which was mixed 50/50 for disbursement as Agent Orange. 245T was the main ingredient in Agent Orange that when it was heated quickly or over heated it created TCCD Dixon.

My biggest fear, personally, is that the government will close down the IOM studies as they did in the 80's with the CDC and the Agent Orange research and studies. The IOM will make their final report in October of this year. If the Agent Orange act of 1991 is not extended there will be very little chance of getting any future presumptive illnesses accepted by the VA. I have asked that the "Twelfth Report of the Committee on Government Relations together with Dissenting Views" also be put on the CSC web site. These reports are too large to print in the newsletter. It has just come to light, to most of us, the information we are now receiving, but there is still much that is hidden from us. We need to inform and educate or legislators about this information.

The extension of the Agent Orange Act will help us in getting research that may assist our children. The research that is being looked at regarding birth defects is, in my opinion, being misguided and controlled by the interests of people that want their views as the outcome. We are still encouraging veterans with children that suffer from birth defects and other anomalies that have manifested in later life to file a claim with the VA. Some VA facilities will accept the claims and others will discourage you from filing them.

What we need from all members is contact with your members of congress and your senators aids. If we can keep them informed on these issues and keep the issue on their minds we can make changes. We are starting a grass roots effort to influence congress to remember our sacrifices and the sacrifices our children are making in their everyday lives because of our service. This is not just a Vietnam issue but an issue that all veterans are facing. As long as any administration can stop or control research that affects the health of the nation we are at risk of losing all we fought for.

AFTER 40 YEARS VIETNAM MEMORIES STILL STRONG

The last U.S. combat troops left Vietnam 40 years ago Friday, and the date holds great meaning for many who fought the war, protested it or otherwise lived it.

While the fall of Saigon two years later is remembered as the final day of the Vietnam War, many had already seen their involvement in the war finished — and their lives altered — by March 29, 1973.

U.S. soldiers leaving the country feared angry protesters at home. North Vietnamese soldiers took heart from their foes' departure, and South Vietnamese who had helped the Americans feared for the future.

Many veterans are encouraged by changes they see. The U.S. has a volunteer military these days, not a draft, and the troops coming home aren't derided for their service. People know what PTSD stands for, and they're insisting that the government takes care of soldiers suffering from it and other injuries from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Below are the stories of a few of the people who experienced a part of the Vietnam War firsthand.

'MORE INTERESTED IN GETTING BACK'

Dave Simmons of West Virginia was a corporal in the U.S. Army who came back from Vietnam in the summer of 1970. He said he didn't have specific memories about the final days of the war because it was something he was trying to put behind him.

"We were more interested in getting back, getting settled into the community, getting married and getting jobs," Simmons said.

He said he was proud to serve and would again if asked. But rather than proudly proclaim his service when he returned from Vietnam, the Army ordered him to get into civilian clothes as soon as he arrived in the U.S. The idea was to avoid confrontations with protestors.

"When we landed, they told us to get some civilian clothes, which you had to realize we didn't have, so we had to go in airport gift shops and buy what we could find," Simmons said.

Simmons noted that when the troops return today, they are often greeted with great fanfare in their local communities, and he's glad to see it.

"I think that's what the general public has learned — not to treat our troops the way they treated us," Simmons said.

Simmons is now helping organize a Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day in Charleston that will take place Saturday.

"Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another. We stick with that," said Simmons, president of the state council of the Vietnam Veterans of America. "We go to the airport. ... We're there when they leave. We're there when they come home. We support their families when they're gone. I'm not saying that did not happen to

the Vietnam vet, but it wasn't as much. There was really no support for us."

A RISING PANIC

Tony Lam was 36 on the day the last U.S. combat troops left Vietnam. He was a young husband and father, but most importantly, he was a businessman and U.S. contractor furnishing dehydrated rice to South Vietnamese troops. He also ran a fish meal plant and a refrigerated shipping business that exported shrimp.

As Lam, now 76, watched American forces dwindle and then disappear, he felt a rising panic. His close association with the Americans was well-known and he needed to get out — and get his family out — or risk being tagged as a spy and thrown into a Communist prison. He watched as South Vietnamese commanders fled, leaving whole battalions without a leader.

"We had no chance of surviving under the Communist invasion there. We were very much worried about the safety of our family, the safety of other people," he said this week from his adopted home in Westminster, Calif.

But Lam wouldn't leave for nearly two more years after the last U.S. combat troops, driven to stay by his love of his country and his belief that Vietnam and its economy would recover.

When Lam did leave, on April 21, 1975, it was aboard a packed C-130 that departed just as Saigon was about to fall. He had already worked for 24 hours at the airport to get others out after seeing his wife and two young children off to safety in the Philippines.

"My associate told me, 'You'd better go. It's critical. You don't want to end up as a Communist prisoner.' He pushed me on the flight out. I got tears in my eyes once the flight took off and I looked down from the plane for the last time," Lam recalled. "No one talked to each other about how critical it was, but we all knew it."

Now, Lam lives in Southern California's Little Saigon, the largest concentration of Vietnamese outside of Vietnam.

In 1992, Lam made history by becoming the first Vietnamese-American to be elected to public office in the U.S. and he went on to serve on the Westminster City Council for 10 years.

Looking back over four decades, Lam says he doesn't regret being forced out of his country and forging a new, American, life.

"I went from being an industrialist to pumping gas at a service station," said Lam, who now works as a consultant and owns a Lee's Sandwich franchise, a well-known Vietnamese chain.

"But thank God I am safe and sound and settled here with my six children and 15 grandchildren," he said. "I'm a happy man."

ANNIVERSARY NIGHTMARES

Wayne Reynolds' nightmares got worse this week with the approach of the anniversary of the U.S. troop withdrawal.

Reynolds, 66, spent a year working as an Army medic on an evacuation helicopter in 1968 and 1969. On days when the fighting was worst, his chopper would make four or five landings in combat zones to rush wounded troops to emergency hospitals.

The terror of those missions comes back to him at night, along with images of the blood that was everywhere. The dreams are worst when he spends the most time thinking about Vietnam, like around anniversaries.

"I saw a lot of people die," Reynolds said.

Today, Reynolds lives in Athens, after a career that included stints as a public school superintendent and, most recently, a registered nurse. He is serving his 13th year as the Alabama president of the Vietnam Veterans of America, and he also has served on the group's national board as treasurer.

Like many who came home from the war, Reynolds is haunted by the fact he survived Vietnam when thousands more didn't. Encountering war protesters after returning home made the readjustment to civilian life more difficult.

"I was literally spat on in Chicago in the airport," he said. "No one spoke out in my favor."

Reynolds said the lingering survivor's guilt and the rude reception back home are the main reasons he spends much of his time now working with veteran's groups to help others obtain medical benefits. He also acts as an advocate on veterans' issues, a role that landed him a spot on the program at a 40th anniversary ceremony planned for Friday in Huntsville, Ala.

It took a long time for Reynolds to acknowledge his past, though. For years after the war, Reynolds said, he didn't include his Vietnam service on his resume and rarely discussed it with anyone.

"A lot of that I blocked out of my memory. I almost never talk about my Vietnam experience other than to say, 'I was there,' even to my family," he said.

NO ILL WILL

A former North Vietnamese soldier, Ho Van Minh heard about the American combat troop withdrawal during a weekly meeting with his commanders in the battlefields of southern Vietnam.

The news gave the northern forces fresh hope of victory, but the worst of the war was still to come for Minh: The 77-year-old lost his right leg to a land mine while advancing on Saigon, just a month before that city fell.

"The news of the withdrawal gave us more strength to fight," Minh said Thursday, after touring a museum in the capital, Hanoi, devoted to the Vietnamese victory and home to captured American tanks and destroyed aircraft.

"The U.S. left behind a weak South Vietnam army. Our spirits was so high and we all believed that Saigon would be liberated soon," he said.

Minh, who was on a two-week tour of northern Vietnam with other veterans, said he bears no ill will to the American soldiers even though much of the country was destroyed and an estimated 3 million Vietnamese died.

If he met an American veteran now he says, "I would not feel angry; instead I would extend my sympathy to them because they were sent to fight in Vietnam against their will."

But on his actions, he has no regrets. "If someone comes to destroy your house, you have to stand up to fight."

A POW'S REFLECTION

Two weeks before the last U.S. troops left Vietnam, Marine Corps Capt. James H. Warner was freed from North Vietnamese confinement after nearly 5 1/2 years as a prisoner of war. He said those years of forced labor and interrogation reinforced his conviction that the United States was right to confront the spread of communism.

The past 40 years have proven that free enterprise is the key to prosperity, Warner said in an interview Thursday at a coffee shop near his home in Rohrsville, Md., about 60 miles from Washington. He said American ideals ultimately prevailed, even if the methods weren't as effective as they could have been.

"China has ditched socialism and gone in favor of improving their economy, and the same with Vietnam. The Berlin Wall is gone. So essentially, we won," he said. "We could have won faster if we had been a little more aggressive about pushing our ideas instead of just fighting."

Warner, 72, was the avionics officer in a Marine Corps attack squadron when his fighter plane was shot down north of the Demilitarized Zone in October 1967.

He said the communist-made goods he was issued as a prisoner, including razor blades and East German-made shovels, were inferior products that bolstered his resolve.

"It was worth it," he said.

A native of Ypsilanti, Mich., Warner went on to a career in law in government service. He is a member of the Republican Central Committee of Washington County, Md.

A DIFFERENT RESPONSE

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Duane Johnson, who served in Afghanistan and is a full-time logistics and ordnance specialist with the South Carolina National Guard, said many Vietnam veterans became his mentors when he donned a uniform 35 years ago.

"I often took the time, when I heard that they served in Vietnam, to thank them for their service. And I remember them telling me that was the first time anyone said that to them," said Johnson, of Gaston, S.C.

"My biggest wish is that those veterans could have gotten a better welcome home," the 56-year-old said Thursday.

Johnson said he's taken aback by the outpouring of support expressed for military members today, compared to those who served in Vietnam.

"It's a bit embarrassing, really," said Johnson. "Many of those guys were drafted. They didn't skip the country, they went and they served. That should be honored."

ANTI-WAR ACTIVISM

John Sinclair said he felt "great relief" when he heard about the U.S. troop pull-out. Protesting the war was a passion for the counter-culture figure who inspired the John Lennon song, "John Sinclair." The Michigan native drew a 10-year prison sentence after a small-time pot bust but was released after 2 1/2 years — a few days after Lennon, Stevie Wonder and others performed at a 1971 concert to free him.

"There wasn't any truth about Vietnam — from the very beginning," said Sinclair by phone from New Orleans, where he spends time when he isn't in Detroit or his home base of Amsterdam.

"In those times we considered ourselves revolutionaries," said Sinclair, a co-founder of the White

Panther Party who is a poet and performance artist and runs an Amsterdam-based online radio station. "We wanted equal distribution of wealth. We didn't want 1 percent of the rich running everything. Of course, we lost."

The Vietnam War also shaped the life of retired Vermont businessman John Snell, 64, by helping to instill a lifetime commitment to anti-war activism. He is now a regular at a weekly anti-war protest in front of the Montpelier federal building that has been going on since long before the start of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Haslett, Mich., native graduated from high school in 1966 and later received conscientious objector status. He never had to do the required alternative service because a foot deformity led him to being listed as unfit to serve.

"They were pretty formative times in our lives and we saw incredible damage being done, it was the first war to really show up on television. I remember looking in the newspaper and seeing the names of people I went to school with as being dead and injured every single week," said Snell, who attended Michigan State University before moving to Vermont in 1977.

"Things were crazy. I remember sitting down in the student lounge watching the numbers being drawn on TV, there were probably 200 people sitting in this lounge watching as numbers came up, the guys were quite depressed by the numbers that were being drawn," he said. "There certainly were people who volunteered and went with some patriotic fervor, but by '67 or '68 there were a lot of people who just didn't want to have anything to do with it."

THE VETERANS BENEFITS BACKLOG

MANY OF THOSE SEEKING BENEFITS ARE HAVING TO WAIT FAR TOO LONG. THE VA NEEDS TO DO BETTER.
By The Times editorial board

It is shameful that veterans of the United States military have to wait months, and sometimes more than a year, to begin receiving the benefits they are owed after their years of service. Yet that is the case.

Almost 900,000 veterans across the country currently have claims pending for disability, pension or education benefits; nearly 600,000 of those claims are considered backlogged by the Department of Veterans Affairs — meaning they have already taken more than 125 days to process. According to a report released in March by the Center for Investigative Reporting, the average time a veteran must wait before receiving benefits is 273 days, although veterans filing their first claims wait an average of 316 to 327 days. Those filing for the first time in Los Angeles wait an average of 619 days, according to the report.

The backlog has been repeatedly and publicly bemoaned in recent weeks, and officials of the VA have been appropriately contrite. Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki vowed publicly this month that by 2015, no one would have to wait more than 125 days.

"This has been decades in the making, 10 years of war," Shinseki told CNN. "No veteran should have to wait for claims. If there's anybody impatient here, I am that individual, and we're pushing hard."

But 2015 is two years from now, and 125 days is still an unacceptably long time. Some older vets and more vulnerable ones caught in the morass of paperwork and processing may not survive the wait.

To a certain extent, this problem is the result of factors beyond the control of any official or claims processor. With the return of more than 1 million Americans from 10 years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan — wars in which more service members survived than ever before — and the aging of Vietnam and Korean war veterans, demand for benefits has increased dramatically and overwhelmed the VA's processing abilities. In addition, in 2009, officials approved three more medical conditions — Parkinson's, ischemic heart disease and B-cell leukemias — for coverage for Vietnam War-era veterans exposed to the herbicide Agent Orange, which has added to the demand. The VA has also accepted as eligible for benefits veterans with several diseases associated with Gulf War Illness syndrome and any combat veteran of any war with documented post-traumatic stress disorder.

For the fiscal years 2010 to 2012, the agency processed 1 million claims a year. But that wasn't fast enough. In 2010, it received 1.2 million claims. In 2011, 1.3 million new claims. In 2012, 1.08 million claims. Thus, the backlog grew from 180,000 to 600,000 currently, according to testimony this month before the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs by Allison Hickey, the undersecretary for benefits at the VA.

But there are things that can be done to speed up this process. Above all, the VA needs to stop processing all this

paperwork ... on paper. It needs to switch to an electronic system as soon as possible. If the Internal Revenue Service still processed all claims for tax refunds on paper, Americans would be rioting in the streets, protesting the wait.

There are several things the agency is preparing to do that will make the process faster. Officials do say that claims-gathering will be digitized by the end of this year. The agency also plans to create fast-track lanes for veterans filing claims that cover two problems or fewer (for instance, claiming two service-related disabling conditions instead of four).

Also, sometimes veterans' claims languish so long that the underlying medical reports have expired and the administration insists on a new exam, which can take a couple of months to get. Instead of that, the VA has begun a process that allows veterans' doctors to fill out a questionnaire and submit it.

A spokesperson for Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Beverly Hills) said his office had been told that the L.A. regional benefits office hired about 35 more employees late last year and hopes to cut homeless veterans' average wait time to 80 days.

All this is promising, but there's a long way to go. The Department of Veterans

Affairs needs to tackle this issue aggressively and try to beat its own deadline of 2015. The United States owes it to the nation's veterans.

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DEATH BENEFITS AND OTHER BENEFITS

When a veteran dies the surviving spouse, children and parents may be eligible for benefits from the Veterans Administration. Family members may be eligible for one or more benefits based upon the circumstances of the death of the veteran. The Veterans Administration may provide Dependents Indemnity Compensation, DIC as it is referred to. This is a monetary benefit that is tax-free and is not income based for a spouse or children. It is also available for parents but is income based. Dependents Indemnity Compensation may be paid to the surviving spouse, children or parents of a service member who was killed on Active Duty, or for a veteran who died from a service-connected disability.

A Death Pension is available as an income supplement for a low-income surviving spouse and/or children of a veteran. The veteran must have served during a wartime period, and income and net worth must be within specified limits.

Burial benefits include at no charge, a headstone, a burial flag, as well as a Presidential letter of recognition of the veteran's service. Burial Allowance monies are available to off-set the cost of the burial. Burial Allowance can be paid for a veteran who died from a service-connected disability or was in receipt of VA compensation at the time of death.

Finally under the Dependents Educational Assistance (DEA) Program, both the surviving spouse and children may be entitled to education and training opportunities. These benefits may be used for degree and certificate programs, apprenticeship, and on-the-job training. If you are a spouse, you may take a correspondence course. Remedial, deficiency, and refresher courses may be approved under certain circumstances. The veteran must have died or is permanently and totally disabled as the result of a service-connected disability.

There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To find out if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call your local veterans service office. They can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the California Association of County Veteran Service Officers web page at: <http://www.cacvso.org/page/2011-1-22-13-52-31/> (for your county's location) or go to their home page for additional info. Also CalVet (calvet.ca.gov) has much information available

VETERANS FIGHT CHANGES TO DISABILITY PAYMENTS

Kevin Freking, AP

WASHINGTON (AP) — Veterans groups are rallying to fight any proposal to change disability payments as the

federal government attempts to address its long-term debt problem. They say they've sacrificed already.

Government benefits are adjusted according to inflation, and President Barack Obama has endorsed using a slightly different measure of inflation to calculate Social Security benefits. Benefits would still grow but at a slower rate.

Advocates for the nation's 22 million veterans fear that the alternative inflation measure would also apply to disability payments to nearly 4 million veterans as well as pension payments for an additional 500,000 low-income veterans and surviving families.

"I think veterans have already paid their fair share to support this nation," said the American Legion's Louis Celli. "They've paid it in lower wages while serving, they've paid it through their wounds and sacrifices on the battlefield and they're paying it now as they try to recover from those wounds."

Economists generally agree that projected long-term debt increases stemming largely from the growth in federal health care programs pose a threat to the country's economic competitiveness. Addressing the threat means difficult decisions for lawmakers and pain for many constituents in the decades ahead.

But the veterans groups point out that their members bore the burden of a decade of war in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the past month, they've held news conferences on Capitol Hill and raised the issue in meetings with lawmakers and their staffs. They'll be closely watching the unveiling of the president's budget next month to see whether he continues to recommend the change.

Obama and others support changing the benefit calculations to a variation of the Consumer Price Index, a measure called "chained CPI." The conventional CPI measures changes in retail prices of a constant marketbasket of goods and services. Chained CPI considers changes in the quantity of goods purchased as well as the prices of those goods. If the price of steak goes up, for example, many consumers will buy more chicken, a cheaper alternative to steak, rather than buying less steak or going without meat.

Supporters argue that chained CPI is a truer indication of inflation because it measures changes in consumer behavior. It also tends to be less than the conventional CPI, which would impact how cost-of-living raises are computed.

Under the current inflation update, monthly disability and pension payments increased 1.7 percent this year. Under chained CPI, those payments would have increased 1.4 percent.

The Congressional Budget Office projects that moving to chained CPI would trim the deficit by nearly \$340 billion over the next decade. About two-thirds of the deficit closing would come from less spending and the other third would come from additional revenue because of adjustments that tax brackets would undergo.

Isabel Sawhill, a senior fellow in economic studies at The Brookings Institution, a Washington-based think tank, said she understands why veterans, senior citizens and others have come out against the change, but she believes it's necessary.

"We are in an era where benefits are going to be reduced and revenues are going to rise. There's just no way around that. We're on an unsustainable fiscal course," Sawhill said. "Dealing with it is going to be painful, and the American public has not yet accepted that. As long as every group keeps saying, 'I need a carve-out, I need an exception,' this is not going to work."

Sawhill argued that making changes now will actually make it easier for veterans in the long run.

"The longer we wait to make these changes, the worse the hole we'll be in and the more draconian the cuts will have to be," she said.

That's not the way Sen. Bernie Sanders sees it. The chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs said he recently warned Obama that every veterans group he knows of has come out strongly against changing the benefit calculations for disability benefits and pensions by using chained CPI.

"I don't believe the American people want to see our budget balanced on the backs of disabled veterans. It's especially absurd for the White House, which has been quite generous in terms of funding for the VA," said Sanders, I-Vt. "Why they now want to do this, I just don't understand."

Sanders succeeded in getting the Senate to approve an amendment last week against changing how the cost-of-living increases are calculated, but the vote was largely symbolic. Lawmakers would still have a decision to make if moving to chained CPI were to be included as part of a bargain on taxes and spending.

Sanders' counterpart on the House side, Rep. Jeff

Miller, R-Fla., the chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, appears at least open to the idea of going to chained CPI.

"My first priority is ensuring that America's more than 20 million veterans receive the care and benefits they have earned, but with a national debt fast approaching \$17 trillion, Washington's fiscal irresponsibility may threaten the very provision of veterans' benefits," Miller said. "Achieving a balanced budget and reducing our national debt will help us keep the promises America has made to those who have worn the uniform, and I am committed to working with Democrats and Republicans to do just that."

Marshall Archer, 30, a former Marine Corps corporal who served two stints in Iraq, has a unique perspective about the impact of slowing the growth of veterans' benefits. He collects disability payments to compensate him for damaged knees and shoulders as well as post-traumatic stress disorder. He also works as a veterans' liaison for the city of Portland, Maine, helping some 200 low-income veterans find housing.

Archer notes that on a personal level, the reduction in future disability payments would also be accompanied down the road by a smaller Social Security check when he retires. That means he would take a double hit to his income.

"We all volunteered to serve, so we all volunteered to sacrifice," he said. "I don't believe that you should ever ask those who have already volunteered to sacrifice to then sacrifice again."

That said, Archer indicated he would be willing to "chip in" if he believes that everyone is required to give as well.

He said he's more worried about the veterans he's trying to help find a place to sleep. About a third of his clients rely on VA pension payments averaging just over \$1,000 a month. He said their VA pension allows them to pay rent, heat their home and buy groceries, but that's about it.

"This policy, if it ever went into effect, would actually place those already in poverty in even more poverty," Archer said.

The changes that would occur by using the slower inflation calculation seem modest at first. For a veteran with no dependents who has a 60 percent disability rating, the use of chained CPI this year would have lowered the veteran's monthly payments by \$3 a month. Instead of getting \$1,026 a month, the veteran would have received \$1,023.

Raymond Kelly, legislative director for Veterans of Foreign Wars, acknowledged that veterans would see little change in their income during the first few years of the change. But even a \$36 hit over the course of a year is "huge" for many of the disabled veterans living on the edge, he said.

The amount lost over time becomes more substantial as the years go by. Sanders said that a veteran with a 100 percent disability rating who begins getting payments at age 30 would see their annual payments trimmed by more than \$2,300 a year when they turn 55.

A MARINE'S VIETNAM STORY



Bob Bayer has no idea how he ended up with Marine MOS 4312 [public affairs specialist] right out of boot camp at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego in 1967.

"My experience at the time I enlisted was limited to taking a few journalism classes in high school and junior college. Apparently, my name and the need to fill some 4312 billets arrived at Headquarters Marine Corps on the same fateful day."

Bayer's first duty station was at the El Toro Marine Corps Air Station in Orange County for on the job training in military public affairs, or Informational Services Office in Marine parlance at that time. From there he was supposed to be detailed to Ft. Benjamin Harrison in Indiana to attend the Defense Information School. Instead orders came in for him for Fleet Marine Corps-Pacific.

"Meaning I was on my way to 'scenic Vietnam'," Bayer joked.

Bayer arrived at Danang Air Base in a C-130 on a flight out of Okinawa, through which most Marines passed while en route to Vietnam.

Shortly after arriving, he found himself sitting on a bench at the Marine air terminal while waiting to catch a ride to the 1st Marine Division ISO office. He pulled out a copy of Track and Field News.

"The guy next to me sees what I'm reading and strikes up a conversation about being a runner in high school in



L. A. It turns out we had competed in some of the same track meets. His name was Wade Early and we're still in occasional contact."

Early was an 0311 [rifleman] with the 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment and, when he met Bayer, he had just returned from R&R. He described to Bayer how his platoon had been overrun a few weeks earlier.

"I remember thinking that although we were both 20, he looked a hell of a lot older than me. After he left to catch a ride back to the 3/1, I found a copy of Stars and Stripes. As I was reading it, I came across a list of those who had been killed in action, and the name Farrell Hummingbird (KIA on Jan. 14, 1967). Farrell had been a bunkmate of mine in boot camp.

"I now had lots to think and worry about, and I'd only been on the ground in Vietnam about an hour and hadn't even come under fire from the enemy yet."

Once with his unit, Bayer settled into the routine of a Marine Corps combat correspondent. He would get up in the morning with his fellow combat correspondents and trudge up the hill from the hooches that served as their barracks to the ISO office, a Quonset hut in the 1st Marine Division's headquarters compound on a hillside northwest of the Danang Air Base.

Those who were assigned jobs in the office would start their daily tasks, while those who were in from the field would write and file their stories, after which they would eventually be ordered back out in the field to cover an operation or do a specific story. Whenever Bayer was assigned to a particular unit, he would report to the operations office to find out what was happening and see if there were incidents that deserved coverage. Or he would talk to various troops in the unit to, in his words, "ferret out stories."

"If it was a battalion embarking on an operation, I would go out with it and look for stories. If we had lots of contact with the enemy, it was easy to come up with them."

Bayer would then either go back to the ISO to write and file, "or I would find a spare typewriter at the battalion's command post, write and then send the stories to the rear on the mail and courier run truck."

One such story resulted from an occurrence the same month he arrived at the 3/1, February 1967. His battalion was operating along the coast south of Danang and the Marble Mountains, the infamous clandestine Viet Cong stronghold deep within its cavernous environs, which was unbeknownst to the Marines who manned a lookout post atop one of the mountains.

"I was on patrol with a squad when we started taking sniper fire from a [nearby] leper colony. We were ordered not to shoot back because the leper colony was considered a no-fire zone. The VC in the area knew this and would do some sniping at us from the compound."

The squad Bayer was with left the area. Bayer filed a story on this incident, but somewhere up the chain of command the story was killed. He never found out why.

Although Viet Cong units in the zone in which the 3/1 operated, the area had become fairly pacified, according to Bayer. Even today he speaks highly of the battalion's intelligence staff and how the information gathered would be the impetus for company- or platoon-size sweeps where they would be looking for, "and frequently finding" specific individuals suspected of being Viet Cong.

On one sweep, the unit he was with encountered stronger than anticipated resistance.

"We ended up capturing a half dozen North Vietnamese Army Regulars with their 82mm mortar and ammunition. They told us they'd come down the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and then worked their way over to the area south of Danang. The NVA told us that they had been

escorted by local VC units and that their mission was to start hitting targets around the Danang Air Base. To my knowledge, this was one of the first elements of what was to be a major thrust into the Danang area 1967 by the 2nd NVA Division."

Major battles between the Marines and the 2nd NVA Division occurred starting in April, 1967, and continued into 1968.

"I went out with the 3/1 on the first day of Operation Union, April 21st, 1967, and wound up getting wounded," Bayer recalled.

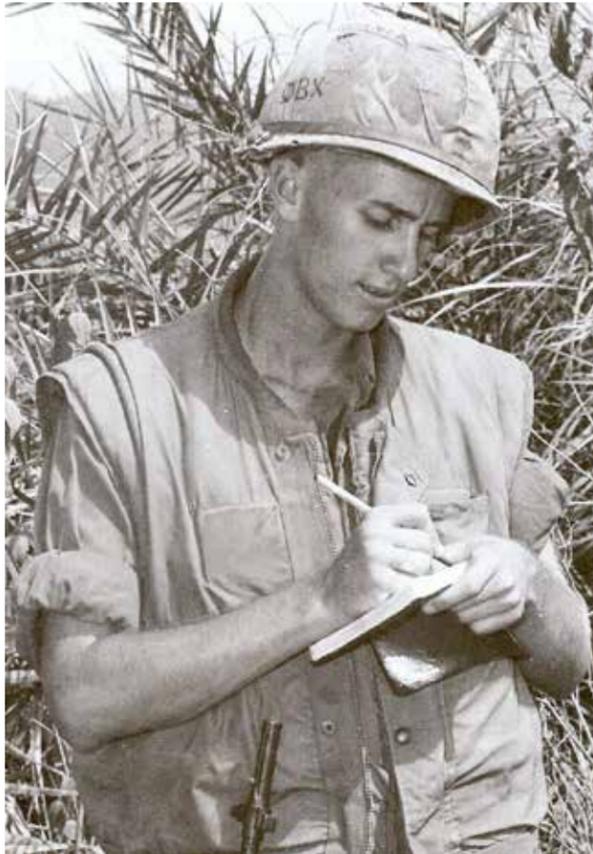
"That day really sticks out in my mind. I flew in with one of two companies from 3/1 that were sent into the Que Son Valley to reinforce a company from 2/1 that had been decimated after running into a large element of the 2nd NVA Division. We were pinned down by heavy fire most of the afternoon and casualties were quickly mounting among the two companies from 3/1."

Numerous air strikes and a large amount of artillery support eventually helped temporarily thwart the NVA attack on the Marines.

"I was in the process of helping move our dead and wounded from the front lines to positions inside our perimeter late in the afternoon when I spotted a radio operator I knew. I was leaning over to ask if he had seen where I'd left my camera and other gear when there was a 'BOOM!' from a mortar round that impacted 10 feet behind him. I got knocked back on my butt from the explosion," said Bayer, who neither felt immediate pain nor realized he'd been hit.

"I saw the radio operator over in front of me and I jumped up to help him. That's when I felt warm liquid running down the front of me. I put my hands there and realized it was my own blood."

Bayer was quickly attended to by a corpsman who checked him over and wrapped a battle dressing about his chin and head. He'd been hit just below the left side of his jaw, and a piece of shrapnel had "sliced down through my neck and lodged under my right collarbone," Bayer was told by the doctor who operated on him the next day at the 1st Hospital Company hospital in Chu Lai. A number of pin-sized pieces of shrapnel had also pierced his body,



particularly in his chest. Shortly after being treated by the corpsman, Bayer passed out from shock and loss of blood.

When he came to, he found himself in a heavily damaged brick building with many others around him likewise being attended to by corpsmen. Wounded or not, that same night he volunteered to man the lines to help guard against NVA probes against the Marines' perimeter.

"I got my rifle and spent the rest of the night on the line," Bayer remembered. He was medivac'd out the next morning.

"I believe that the radio operator survived. He was lucky because the radio, which was still on his back when the round hit, absorbed most of the blast from the impacting mortar round. This probably also shielded me from sustaining more serious wounds," said Bayer, who later received a Purple Heart.

In September 1967, another incident took place which Bayer will most likely never forget:

A fellow combat correspondent, Gordon Fowler, was with the 5th Marines in the beginning of Operation Swift, yet another battle in the Que Son Valley between

1st Marine Division and the 2nd NVA Division.

"A few days later, Fowler was back in his hooch late at night describing what happened on Swift. He was normally a laid back Texan, but after the first day of Swift, Gordon was as wired as I'd ever seen him. He described how the unit he was with had been overrun, how there had been NVA all over the place, how the Marines had taken very heavy casualties, how a chaplain—Father Vincent Capadanno—had been killed while doing heroic deeds [for which he would eventually awarded the Medal of Honor], and how Gordon himself had received shrapnel wounds."

The next day, Bayer and an ISO newbie named Tom Donlon were ordered out on that same operation. They got to the Que Son Valley about mid afternoon on a resupply chopper. And no sooner had they reported in than an order came down for the company to move out ASAP to help another company that was heavily engaged.

"We could hear the battle in the distance," Bayer said. "We double timed it over and linked up with them and spent a tense night fighting and getting mortared."

The next morning Bayer and Donlon went with the company a short distance to retrieve the bodies of about a half dozen Marines who had been killed the day before.

"They were lying out in a rice paddy. But instead of moving out into the open from the cover of the tree line we were in, it was decided to call in Marine jets to drop tear gas bombs in the rice paddy to screen the attempt to get the KIAs. Everyone was told to put on their gas masks. Soon the jets made their bombing runs and we were able to pull the KIAs back to our lines without the NVA being able to see what was going on through the cloud of tear gas. This was the only time in a year and a half in Vietnam that I saw anything like that," Bayer said.

He also encountered the weirdness for which the Vietnam War was so well known. One night he and other lower-ranked ISO enlisted men -- they called referred to themselves as the Snuffies -- were staggering down a hillside from the Thunderbird Club enlisted men's watering hole to their hooches where they lived when they weren't out in the field when the NVA started raining rockets down on the Danang Air Base, which was a couple of miles in the distance.

"We looked up to see bright flashes coming from the air base. It didn't take us long, even in our somewhat besotted states, to figure out what was happening. Our hooches were situated on pads that had been cut into the hillside. They were built a couple feet off the ground and had plywood floors and sheet metal roofs. You could step off the hillside and onto the roof," Bayer recalled.

"Someone yells, 'Let's get on the roof and watch the fireworks show!' Another shouts, 'Grab the beer and the beach chairs!' A third Snuffie screams out, 'Get naked!' So before long you have about 10 stark naked Marines sitting on the roof of a hooch in beach chairs and drinking beer while the air base is getting blasted," Bayer recalls, using the present tense as if the escapade had just happened. "It's about as surreal a scene as one can envision. And I don't make this stuff up."

Bayer's MOS sometimes required him to serve as press escort for the civilian media in Vietnam, thereby causing him to intermingle with some very well-known and respected reporters and photographers. One of those was UPI photographer Kent Potter, later killed when the Army of the Republic of South Vietnam (ARVN) helicopter he was flying in took a round and crashed in Laos during 1971's Operation Lam Son 719, an operation whose intent it was to cut off the part of the Ho Chi Minh Trail which wove its way through Laos, down into Cambodia and on into South Vietnam. Killed along with Potter were Life Magazine photographer extraordinaire Larry Burrows, the AP's beloved French-Vietnamese photographer Henri Huet, and Keizaburo Shimamoto, a Japanese freelancer on assignment for Newsweek magazine.

In the summer of 1968, Bayer had escorted Potter out to the scene of Operation Allen Brook. They landed in a hot LZ aboard a helicopter that was sent in to evacuate casualties.

"Things were pretty chaotic and there was lots of



firing. I told Potter to stay put while I went over to a small command unit nearby to try and get a handle on the situation. When I returned to where Potter had been, he was nowhere to be found. He had taken off toward the tree line about 100 meters away at what seemed to be the focal point of the fighting. The open area surrounding the LZ was a sea of tall elephant grass, and all I could see were the tops of those trees. I worked my way over there and found him after what was probably a half hour," Bayer recalled.

"By then the fighting had deescalated. Potter already had lots of good shots and wanted to get back to Danang to get his film processed. We went back to the LZ. There were a number of casualties that had been moved there. I told Potter we wouldn't be getting on any helicopter out until the WIAs had been flown out."

The two eventually got out on the helicopter that had been sent in to carry out those killed in action.

Bayer said that after being in Vietnam a few months "learning the ropes," and despite the serious wounds he had received in April 1967, he felt he knew how to conduct himself while out in the field and get the stories his job required. "The danger element was always there, but I learned how to deal with it."

(After leaving the Marine Corps in October 1968, Bayer got a degree from California State University at Northridge, then went on to have a career as a journalist in Southern California. He retired in 2009 from the Los Angeles Times, where he worked for 24 years.)

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DEDICATION OF SONS OF SAN JOSE VIETNAM WAR MEMORIAL: WHO WERE THESE GUYS?

By Joe Rodriguez jrodriguez@mercurynews.com San Jose Mercury News

As vividly as she can remember anything, Anita Bernal Laguna remembers when her only brother, Raymond Bernal Jr., joined the Army, and how she learned he would never return.

"I begged him not to go," she said on the telephone from Las Vegas, where she now lives in retirement. In 1965 she was a spunky, smart young woman from San Jose's old Northside neighborhood. She used to closely monitor the grisly Vietnam body counts on television and had come to oppose the war in Southeast Asia.

"Nobody can kill a Bernal!" That's what he told me," Laguna recalled. "When he left he was so proud. I decided I would have to be OK with that." And she was, until a year later when her brother was 19 years old. That's when two soldiers appeared at the door wanting to speak with her mother, who cried out, "No, not my son!" All Laguna remembers is one of the soldiers quietly mumbling, "I'm sorry."

On March 30, city officials and veterans will unveil a "Sons of San Jose" monument for the 142 city boys like Raymond Bernal who died in the war. Unlike today's revered soldiers, Vietnam era warriors were not lauded as heroes and had precious few chances to become revered figures in the public eye. Their sacrifices were shrouded in protests and shame.

Now, nearly half a century later, an elegant hunk of black granite, etched with local names, might help the public finally honor those soldiers. Here are three of San Jose's proud homeboys.

Tormented memory

Antonio Chavez hung out with Bernal at San Jose High in a tight-knit group of nine friends. All of them joined the military.

"Raymond was the only one who didn't come home," said Chavez, a retired Santa Clara County social worker.

The tall and chubby Bernal was a sweet dancer who was also destined for musical greatness. He played sax, clarinet and bass guitar in his own rhythm and blues band. He performed in nightclubs before he was of legal age, and often got hauled home to his mother by the police. Bernal was so good, he played with the Righteous Brothers at the Civic Auditorium, and James Brown's entourage was recruiting when Bernal joined the Army.

Chavez said Bernal was wounded twice in Vietnam and could have come home early, but he rejoined his unit

out of loyalty. He was killed in a fire fight in November 1966 with only a month to go on his combat tour.

"My own life spiraled out of control," said Laguna, and the family unraveled from "internal blame." Laguna dropped out of school, married and divorced an abusive guy and struggled as a single mother. It took years for her to finish college and reclaim her own life and even become a business owner.

Bernal wasn't forgotten. The city named a small park on the north side after her brother, but something was always missing. Until the memorial was born.

"The names of all the other guys from San Jose," needed to be together, she said. "Raymond will be with them. That monument will finally bring him home. He can rest now."

Holding out hope

Leo Flores still thinks about his best buddy from the Vietnam War, Army machine-gunner Robert Susumu Masuda of San Jose. Actually, Flores still thinks about Masuda a lot, every time he sees reports about Afghanistan and Iraq, or attends a therapy session for the post-traumatic stress disorder and survivor's guilt he brought back from the war.

"I was supposed to be his assistant gunner that night," Flores said by telephone from his home in Hollister. "They sent a new guy instead."

Masuda and Flores were both short, but Masuda was stocky and strong enough to carry a heavy machine gun and the ammunition belts.

"The other guys used to make fun of us for being short, but when they saw him use that gun, that got him respect." He remembered Masuda as friendly, devoted to his girl back home and to his Japanese-American friends, family and culture.

The two buddies had bonded after several fire fights, including a two-week battle for one hill in the Mekong Delta. But on a routine mission, Masuda was sent to guard a trail leading to a village in May 1969. He and his new gunnery assistant simply disappeared. Flores said all they found of Masuda was his infantry patch, torn from his shirt and nailed to a tree. He was only 21.

"They always did that to try and scare us," Flores said.

Masuda's body was never recovered and is now listed as "died while missing." It took years for the memorial organizers to track down the Masuda family, some of whom still live in San Jose.

"Our father passed away a year after my brother became missing, from a heart attack," Ronald Masuda wrote in an email. "We feel it was too much for him not knowing what happened to Bob. We still hope he might come home, but it's been 44 years now."

Chosen to speak

Karen Nastor Paulson never knew her uncle, Army paratrooper Tony Nastor Jr., but she's the one her surviving uncles have chosen to speak about him.

"It's still painful for them," said Paulson who only knows her Uncle Tony through family folklore. "I remember sitting with my grandma ... and she would always say, 'The good die young,' when she talked about Tony."

The Nastor family lived in San Jose and all of them worked together in their ancestral occupations as fishermen and farmers.

Together they fished and dived for shellfish, oysters, mussels and abalone off the Santa Cruz and Monterey county coasts. As the oldest son, Tony headed up the collection of the daily catch. When his younger brothers were old enough, he taught them how to free dive and bring up abalone.

"It was always a competition with the three boys," Paulson said.

Tony graduated from San Jose High in 1965 and enrolled at San Jose City College in hopes of becoming a police officer. But he asked his dad for permission to drop out and join the military after a friend was killed in Vietnam.

"He wanted to take revenge," Paulson said.

Paulson recently found an emotional letter to Nastor written by his father, urging him to carry on. But Nastor died before it arrived and the letter found its way home, where it remained sealed until Paulson opened and read it last week.

The high school near downtown, oldest in the city, has a plaque listing every graduate who died in the Vietnam War. Paulson said her uncle was killed, at 21, by a booby trap when he was on patrol in Binh Dinh Province shortly after the Tet Offensive in 1968. That horrific North Vietnamese attack was widely credited with convincing the American public that the war was not worth the sacrifice.

"Until the day my grandmother died," Paulson wearily remembers, "she always said, 'The good die young.'"

Contact Joe Rodriguez at 408-920-5767.
SONS OF SAN JOSE MEMORIAL

Dedication ceremony at noon, Saturday, March 30, at Guadalupe River Park near HP Pavilion, San Jose. www.sjwarmemorial.com.

Names inscribed on San Jose Memorial

Ronald Lee Aleshire
Jimmie Marron Alvarez
Warren Lester Anderson
Joseph Antognini III
Alonso Aragon Jr.
Stephen Anthony Balters Jr.
Jeffrey Thomas Bardsley
Robert Eugene Beaumont
Leslie Allen Bellrichard
Thomas Howard Bergren
Raymond Bernal Jr.
Thomas George Brocker
Kermit Edward Burkey
Michael Edward Burns
Gary William Butler
Charles Byrd
George J. Carrillo Jr.
Timothy Michael Carroll
Jackie Charles Carter
Manuel Angel Castillo
Gerald Cervantes
Armando Chapa Jr.
Roberto Cobarrubias
James Miles Combs
Christopher Corwin Cook
William Donald Cook Jr.
Richard James Coston
Jimmy Douglas Curry
Kenneth Alan Dahl
David Michael Davison
Thomas Joe Dawson Jr.
Louis Scott Di Bari
Wolf-Dieter Dietz
Juan Leon Guerrere Duenas
Richard Monroe Dyke
Joseph Escamilla
Jaime Esquivel
Gerald Francis Filippi
Eduardo Flores
Richard Allan Forbes
William Holt Fowler III
Bruce Gary Friel
Richard Garza Jr.
Kenneth Gilbert Gellerman
Robert Gonzales
Michael John Grecu
Scott Craig Griswold
Dallas George Grundy
Phillip O. Guillen
Ernest Lemas Gutierrez
Robert Ralph Hammer



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 John Edward Lopez Jr.
 Chester George Lyons
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 William A. Mansergh Jr.
 Ernesto Martinez
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 Joseph Louis Mendoza
 Michael Mereno
 Robert Gail Miller
 Angelo Raymond Morales
 Carlos Garcia Munoz
 Tony Valdez Nastor
 Kenneth Lawrence Neal
 Steve Masao Ohara
 Jack Coleman Owens
 William Allen Palenske
 Richard Michael Patrick
 Raymond Allan Petersen
 Donald Ray Phipps
 John Richard Poso
 Timothy Cole Proudfoot
 Miguel Angel Puentes
 Alex Leon Quiroga
 John Arthur Ramirez
 Lynn Murray Randall
 Rudolph Sotelo Renteria
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 Floyd Irwin Robinson
 Joe Ignacio Rodriguez
 Gilbert Ruiz
 David Frank Santa-Cruz
 Gilbert Serrano
 Samuel Arthur Sharp Jr.
 David Howard Shoemaker
 Rosendo Flores Silbas
 Charles Lenet Smith
 James Douglas Smith
 John Calvin Smith
 Matthew Edward Smith
 Eusebio Solis
 Kenneth Lyle Spitzer
 Daniel Edwin Strobbe
 Jon Tasch
 Kenneth Carl Titsworth
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 Patrick John Vasquez
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 Donald James Wade
 George Allen Waldron
 Thomas James Walker
 Craig Leslie Walton
 Larry Ellis Williams
 Donald Ray Williamson
 Dennis Harold Wright
 Murray John Wyman
 Augusto Maria Xavier

FREE E-READERS FOR VETS

This website that offers free reading devices for eligible Veterans.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS: Honorably discharged combat veterans who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan wounded emotionally and suffering from PTSD. Provision of DD Form 214 (Report of Separation) or Military Campaign medal is required. http://connectedwarrior.org/feeks_application.pdf If you feel you qualify please send email to kbradley@connectedwarrior.org They are both wonderful devices. I have a Nexus 7 (that I purchased separately for \$199.00). Both the Nexus 7 and Kindle Fire HD are sold at \$199.00 and \$249.00 (depending on storage - 8GB or 16GB).

STOLEN MEMORIAL

STOLEN VIETNAM MEMORIAL PAYS IT FORWARD IN PETALUMA CALIFORNIA

A story for your consideration for your great magazine. We thank 15 special young men who lost their lives in Vietnam over three decades ago for the story that follows.

Something very special has happened in Petaluma, California. Petaluma is a quaint town of 60,000 North of San Francisco where special things sometimes happen. American graffiti was filmed here and it even held the historical moniker of "Egg Basket of the World". A patriotic community, it holds one of the largest Veteran's Day Parades around. However what's making news in this town pretty goes back to a story many years ago when 15 Petaluma young men lost their lives back in 1969 in the Vietnam War. Friends to the end.

It came as a big shock when a memorial plaque created many decades ago to honor those friend came up missing in Walnut Park. Stolen for it's scrap value of about \$200, it's emotional value was priceless to the veterans.

After it was reported stolen, you can imagine the outrage in the community toward this ultimate sacrilege. The average age of those brave mentioned on the plaque was only 20, most just out of High School, lives cut way to short in a war many didn't want to remember. As the media grabbed the story, the donations poured in not just from Petaluma but from all over the state not to mention a very special group you may not expect, the Vietnamese community. So the memorial would be returned to its' glory... a tragedy turned into a blessing as the plaque would now be better the ever.

But..

The story doesn't end here. The contributions to the almost forgotten war memorial being so significant have led to a visit to Petaluma of another very special memorial, the 400 foot representation of the almost 60,000 who paid the ultimate sacrifice - The Traveling Vietnam Wall. I feel those 15 young men, remembered again decades later, would appreciate the sentiment to their fallen brothers all in a town called Petaluma. My organization "History Connection" is working with the veterans coordinating the event and we extend a warm welcome to all those who have served and their families to visit Petaluma.

The local veterans know deep down it were those "Special 15" who turned tragedy into triumph.

Kind regards,

Joe Noriel

President

Petaluma Museum/History Connection

707-776-7534 Cel

707-778-4398

www.historyconnection.net

www.petalumamuseum.com

AGENT ORANGE INFO

Important, Agent Orange Declassified documents from Admiral Zumwalt's report to the VA. Please pass along to your members.

ATTN: All Veterans

At the Agent Orange & Other Toxic Exposure Committee meeting and then again at the Govt Affairs Cmte meeting in Silver Spring last week we were presented with extraordinary documents that were once classified and now reveal the federal relationship across agency effort to deny any causal relationship between the exposure to Agent Orange (at any level) with veteran illnesses, disabilities, and tragically the impact on the progeny of Vietnam Veterans.

I am forwarding these documents to every State Council President and begging each of you to send

these documents to every Vietnam Veteran in your state including all of your chapters, officers, and their families.

If every Vietnam Veteran reads these reports and comes to understand the magnitude of their findings we can raise our voices once again to Congress, the President, and the VA and Dept of Defense that we have been systematically and purposefully lied to for decades and our children have suffered as a result.

We would also like to have this shared with every State Director of Veterans Affairs so that each state is informed and activated. The medical costs of the disabilities of so many Vietnam Veterans and their progeny are an economic and social impact in every state. We hope that every State Legislature will take up this cause and pass state resolutions calling for Congress to act.

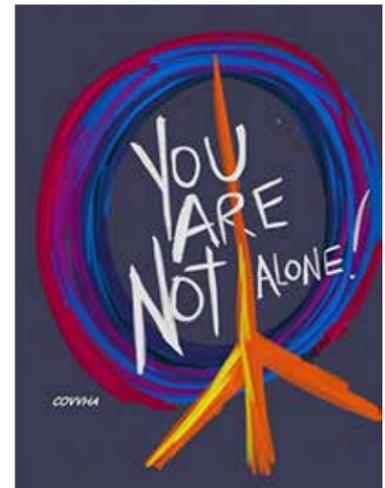
These documents have been verified and confirmed by others who participated in this work.

We are now on the hunt for additional documents and materials referenced in this report that are essential to our case.

If you have any questions regarding this material, please contact the VVA office and/or Herb Worthington/ Chairman of the Agent Orange and Other Toxic Exposures national committee for VVA. He is and will remain the point man on this mission.

We now have DRAFT legislation that we are finalizing that will go to our champions on the Hill. Once that is ready we will again send this out to every Vietnam Veteran and their families and ask them to immediately contact their members of Congress and insist it be passed and fully implemented.

Ric Davidge, Chairman, VVA National Govt Affairs Committee: 907 229 5328



Dennis "Doc" Croucher CSC 1st VP Passes

Dennis Orland "Doc" Croucher lost his battle with cancer on February 8, 2013. He was born in Ventura on March 24, 1949, just a scant 63 years ago to Rita and Harley Croucher. He and his brother, Michael, were world travelers as children due to being Navy brats.

As an adult, after a stint in the Army, he worked in the music, publishing, and communications industries. He moved to Mariposa in 1979 where he met and married his wife Chelli, and they raised four children: Mindi, DJ, Tomi and Keena.

Doc was an avid reader who also enjoyed fishing, gardening, online poker and slots, playing his moldy oldies, shooting pool, hanging out with friends and family, cooking, yelling at the TV when his team was losing and helping people. When it snowed, he would make coffee and give it to the stranded travelers, then help them chain up and send them on their merry way.

He was the "Voice of the Grizzlies" for about 10 years. He emceed the Labor Day and Butterfly Day parades, the home show and various other community events. He was president of the local chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America, and first vice president of the California State Council of the Vietnam Veterans of America.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Rita and Harley Croucher.

He is survived by his wife, Chelli of Mariposa; his brother, Michael and wife Pati of Ohio; his children, Mindi and Curt Hibpshman, DJ Croucher, Tomi Croucher and Chris Allred and Keena and Bryan Johnson; grandchildren, Curtis and Nasheena Hibpshman, Christina and Luke Hughes, Melyssa, William, and Samuel Hibpshman, Emma Croucher, Kyra and Lily Johnson.

In lieu of flowers please send donations to the Dennis Croucher Family Fund at Yosemite Bank account #307015446. Memorial services were held on March 2, 2013 in Cathey's Valley.



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VVA CA State Council contact info inside - page 2

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• Chapter Activities-Events
• Legislative Information
• Veteran Benefit Information
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VVA & CSC Meeting Dates & Events
CSC Full Council Meeting - May 3-5, 2013, Fresno, CA
Region 8/9 Conference - June 7-9, 2013, Reno, NV
National Convention - August 14-18, 2013, Jacksonville, FL
CSC Full Council Meeting - August 23-25, 2013, Fresno, CA
CSC Full Council Meeting - October 25-27, 2013, Fresno, CA