



The California Zephyr®

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An Organization Chartered By The U.S. Congress



A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 14-1 - SPRING 2008

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And more...

CSC MEETING DATES

Full Council Meetings:

April 25-27, 2008 - Fresno CA

2008 State Convention - June 4-8, 2008 - Fresno, CA

WE FEW, WE HAPPY FEW,

We Band of Brothers...



PRESIDENT

Ken Holybee

Sitting here I am thinking of what we have accomplished in the last two years and the projects we have started. We have started our service officer program and have gotten some funding for it through grants. I would like to see us expand this program through all of our chapters. With this thought I have invited Tom Splitgerber, President of the County Service Officers Association, to speak to us at our April CSC meeting about how we can work together to help veterans. Tom has some very good insight on how we can expand our program.

We have had some very good speakers at our meetings that include Dr. Carolyn Hughes from the Fresno VA speaking on Brain Injuries and PTSD; Tom Berger from the National PTSD committee giving a short workshop on PTSD. CDVA Secretary Tom Johnson has spoken to us more than once as well as other dignitaries and guests. I have tried to make the meetings worth the time and money you put into attending. Hopefully I have accomplished this to some extent.

We have also held a legislative workshop, led by Rick Weidman from our national office that has gotten some of our members very involved with their local legislators and Congress persons. Some of our committees have taken off and really made some progress and others still seem to need more guidance from our leadership in the state.

We have also started a foundation, California Veterans Benefit Fund, to raise money for the state council and the service officer program. This has been a long process and it is starting to take off. We will also use this as the fundraiser for the 20th Anniversary of the California Vietnam Memorial. Mark down the dates December 10th thru the 14th 2008. The place is Sacramento and Dick Southern will be giving information on rooms for the event. Jerry Yamamoto is the chair of this committee and will putting out updates as we go. The CSC will host this event and also host a dinner on Friday night December 12th to honor the people that made the memorial a reality. This event will be the biggest task we have taken on and when the time comes I know we can count on the members for support. We will have continuing reports from the chair and other committee chairs as we go.

We have our convention and elections coming up in June. I am encouraging members to think about running for the leadership positions in the state council. There are some challenges and some rewards to holding these offices. I know that more of our members are starting to retire and this would be a good place to put in a little time. I know that running unopposed is the easiest way to win a seat but if someone is running against you it is a better way to see and hear what people's ideas are regarding what we have done and where we would like to go.



NHRA POW/MIA Funny Car for 2008 - More on page 12



I attended the County Officers Association Legislative day in Sacramento. This was a very educational meeting with speakers from the state legislature stopping in to tell us what they are trying to do for Veterans. I also had a chance to speak to some of them one on one and tell them some of what we see going on regarding benefits or lack there of. This was their first meeting of this kind and I think it was a success. There was also a time for the VSO's to address the service officers about their programs. I learned quite a lot listening to the speakers from the DAV, VFW and American Legion. They were giving updates on their programs how they think things should be improved. I announced that we are hosting the 20th anniversary of the California Vietnam Memorial and informed them that we would be sending fliers and updates as they come available. I would like to thank Pete Conaty for his

assistance with this and thank him for his role as MC.

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

Carl J. Jensen

I would like to strongly encourage each of you to consider running for an elected position in our great organization. Some of our local chapters are preparing to hold elections in April and the California State Council will hold elections during the State Convention, June 5th through the 8th, in Fresno.

VVA belongs to all of its members. If we choose to depend on only a few individuals to lead, we do them and ourselves a disservice. If we lose the few who choose to serve us, due to relocation, retirement, illness or death, we are then left with a terrible void to fill. So, please give some serious thought to becoming more involved. We need and can use your help. Serve on a committee of personal interest or better yet chair a committee and work your way up the organizational ladder. It's just food for thought!

Recently I had the opportunity to visit one of the VA's flagship Polytrauma Center at the Palo Alto VAMC. For those of you who are unaware, these are incredibly unique facilities. There are only six across the entire country and are where some of our most profoundly wounded veterans and military members go for care and rehabilitation for Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI).

The Polytrauma Centers are necessary and essential within the VA health care system. Men and women treated at these clinics are often suffering from two or more debilitating injuries. Many patients suffer with a TBI from roadside bombs (IEDs), rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), mortar blasts, vehicle accidents and other devastating incidents. Teams of as many as twenty VA specialists work together to help the injured recover mentally and physically, or that is their ultimate goal. No

civilian care has the ability to treat multiple war wounds and offer the level of expertise that these Polytrauma Centers provide.

My visit served as a great reminder of why area veterans' advocacy organizations are so important. One of our many purposes is to fight for adequate assured funding of the VA health system so veterans of all wars are cared for thoroughly and completely. We are the bulldog at the door; A watch dog to monitor and to remind the government when they under serve and disserve a disabled veteran. We need to continually reach out to our friends, relatives and neighbors to remind them of the needs of all veterans in general. We need to be relentless in our efforts to voice our concerns on veterans' legislative issues with our elected representatives in congress and Sacramento.

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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.

I look forward to seeing everyone in Fresno for the next CSC Full Council Meeting.

Key Bills Pending in the 110th Congress

Defense:
 H.R. 1538 – (28 Co-Sponsors), Rep. Ike Skelton (D-MO), 3/29/07 passed in House – Referred to Senate Committee on Armed Services. Amend title 10, United States Code, to improve the management of medical care, personnel actions, and quality of life issues for members of the Armed Forces who are receiving medical care in an outpatient status.

S.986 – (1 Co-Sponsor), Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV), 3/26/07 – Referred to Senate Committee on Armed Services. Expand eligibility for Com-

bat-Related Special Compensation paid by the uniformed services in order to permit certain additional retired members who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for that disability and Combat-Related Special Compensation by reason of that disability.

American Flag:
 H.R.692 – (12 Co-Sponsors), Rep. Bart Stupak (D-MI), 1/24/07 – Would order that the National flag be flown at half-staff in a State, territory, or possession in the event of the death of a member of the Armed Forces from that State, territory or possession who dies while serving on active duty.

Health Care and Medicare:

H.R.4 – (198 Co-Sponsors), Rep. John Dingell (D-MI), 1/12/07, Passed House referred to Senate Committee on Finance. The Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 2007 – Amend part D of title XVIII of the Social Security Act to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate lower covered part D drug prices on behalf of Medicare benefi-

ciaries.

H.R.1222 – (50 Co-Sponsors), Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), 2/28/07 - Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel. To restore health care coverage to retired members of the uniformed services, and for other purposes. (Keep Our Promise to America's Military Retirees Act).

Social Security:

H.R.82 - (276 Co-Sponsors). Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA), 1/4/07 – Referred to House Committee on Ways and Means. Amend title II of the Social Security Act to repeal the Government pension offset and windfall elimination provisions. Companion Bill: S.206 – (21 Co-Sponsors), Sen. Diane Feinstein (D-CA) Referred to Senate Committee on Finance.

H.R.93 – (Co-Sponsors – none), Rep. Ginny Brown-Waite (R-FL), 1/4/07 – Referred to House Committees on Rules and Budget. To protect Social Security beneficiaries against any reduction in benefits.

Veterans:

H.R.67 – (Co-Sponsors – None), Rep. Mike McIntyre (D-NC), 1/4/07 – Referred to House Committee on Veterans Affairs. Amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the outreach activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

H.R.92 – (8 Co-Sponsors), Rep. Ginny Brown-Waite (R-FL) 1/4/07 – Referred to House Committee on Veterans affairs. To establish standards of access to care for veterans seeking health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

H.R.207 – (13 Co-Sponsors), Rep. Jose Serrano (D-NY), 1/5/07 - Referred to House Committee on Armed Services. To provide for identification of members of the Armed Forces exposed during military service to depleted uranium, to provide for health testing of such members.

H.R.339 – (2 Co-Sponsors), Rep. John Duncan (R-TN), 1/9/07 – Referred to House Committee on Veterans Affairs. To improve access to medical services for veterans seeking treatment at Department of Veterans Affairs outpatient clinics with exceptionally long waiting periods.

H.R.402 – (25 Co-Sponsors), Rep. Joe Knollenberg (R-MI), 1/11/07 – Referred to House Committee on Veterans Affairs. To provide for annual cost-of-living adjustments to be made automatically by law each year in the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans. Companion Bill: S.161 – (1 Co-Sponsor), Sen. John Thune (R-SD) – Referred to Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs.

H.R.463 – (36 Co-Sponsors), Rep. Steven Rothman (D-NJ), 1/12/07 – Referred to House Committee on Veterans Affairs. To terminate the administrative freeze on the enrollment into the health care system of the Department of Veterans Affairs of veterans in the lowest priority category for enrollment (referred to as "Priority 8").

H.R.612 – (5 Co-Sponsors), Rep. Bob Filner (D-CA), 1/22/07 – Referred to House Committee on Veterans Affairs. To extend the period of eligibility for health care for combat service in the Persian Gulf War or future hostilities from two years to five years after discharge or release. Companion Bill S.383 – (1 Co-Sponsor), Sen. Daniel Akaka (D-HI), 1/24/07 – Referred to Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs.

H.R.1273 – (Co-Sponsors – none), Rep. Shelly Berkley (D-NV), 3/1/07 – Referred to House Committee on Veterans Affairs. To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to restore plot allowance eligibility for veterans of any war and to restore the headstone or marker allowance for eligible persons.

H.R.1307 – (22 Co-Sponsors), Rep. Heather Wilson (R-NM), 3/1/07 – Referred to House Committee on Judiciary. To establish the Office of Veterans Identity Protection Claims to reimburse injured person for injuries suffered as a result of the unauthorized use, disclosure or dissemination of identifying information stolen from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

H.R.1426 – (5 Co-Sponsors), Rep. Tom Latham (R-IA), 3/9/07 – Referred to House Committee on Veterans Affairs. To provide veterans enrolled in the health system of the Department of Veterans Affairs the option of receiving covered health services through facilities other than those of the Department.

S.67 – (3 Co-Sponsors), Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI), 1/4/07 – Referred to Senate Committee on Armed Services. To permit former members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability rated as total to travel on military aircraft in the same manner and to the same extent as retired members of the Armed Forces are entitled to travel on such aircraft.

S.815 – (2 Co-Sponsors), Sen. Larry Craig (R-ID), 3/28/07 – Referred to Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs. To provide health care benefits to veterans with a service-connected disability at non-Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities that receive payments under the Medicare program or the TRICARE program.

Pay and Compensation:

H.R.89 – (22 Co-Sponsors), Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), 1/4/07 – Referred to House Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Military Personnel. To extend eligibility for combat-related special compensation paid to certain uniformed services retirees who are retired under chapter 61 of such title with fewer than 20 years of creditable service.

H.R.243 – (9 Co-Sponsors), Rep. Jerry Weller, (R-IL), 1/5/07 – Referred to House Committee on Armed Services. To provide for the payment of Combat-Related Special Compensation to members of the Armed Forces retired for disability with less than 20 years of active military service who were awarded the Purple Heart.

H.R.303 – (102 Co-Sponsors), Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), 1/5/07 – Referred to House Committees on Armed Services and Veterans Affairs. To permit certain additional retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation and to eliminate the phase-in period under current law with respect to such concurrent receipt.

H.R.333 – (32 Co-Sponsors), Rep. Jim Marshall (D-GA), 1/9/07 – Referred to House Committee on Veterans Affairs. To permit retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service connected disability rated less than 50 percent to receive concurrent payment of both retired pay and veterans' disability compensation, to eliminate the phase-in period for concurrent receipt, to extend eligibility for concurrent receipt and combat-related special compensation to chapter 61 disability retirees with less than 20 years of service.

H.R.1272 – (7 Co-Sponsors), Rep. Shelly Berkley (D-NV), 3/1/07 – Referred to House Committee on Veterans Affairs. To improve the pension program of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

STATE LEGISLATION:

Current Legislation

*Denotes special attention focus

AJR 37, as amended, Arambula. Hmong community. This measure would commend the Presi-

dent of the United States and the United States Congress for protecting the rights of Hmong refugees to pursue full citizenship in this country and for amending the federal USA Patriot Act and federal Real ID Act to redefine terrorist organizations, terrorists, and those providing material support to terrorists to exclude groups, such as the Hmong, who contributed and supported the United States during the Vietnam War and who pose no threat to national security.

AB 1012, as amended, Charles Calderon. Oil and gas deposits: property tax assessments. Property tax exemption: disabled veterans. Existing property tax law provides, pursuant to the authorization of the California Constitution, for the exemption from property taxation of specified amounts of the assessed value of the home of a disabled veteran, or a veteran's spouse in the case in which the person has, as a result of a service-connected disease or injury, died while on active duty in military service. This bill would correct an erroneous cross-reference and remove obsolete references to prior exemption amounts.

AB 2064, as introduced, Arambula. Instructional materials: Vietnam War. Under existing law the Legislature encourages instruction in the area of social sciences that may include instruction on the Vietnam War including the "Secret War" in Laos and the role of Southeast Asians in that war. When adopting instructional materials for use in the schools, governing boards are required to include only instructional materials that, in their determination, accurately portray the cultural and racial diversity of our society, including the role and contributions of Asian Americans, to the total development of California and the United States. This bill would require the State Board of Education and the Curriculum Development and Supplemental Materials Commission to ensure that the History-Social Science Framework, evaluation criteria, and instructional materials adopted, as specified, include instruction on the Vietnam War, including the "Secret War" in Laos, the role of Southeast Asians in that war, and the refugee/immigrant/new American experience.

AB 2055 Military Personnel: Combat Stress Support Team Program. (Mary Salas, Chula Vista) Would require the Military Department to create a Combat Stress Support Team Program, to provide emergency crisis counseling, referral and personal support, combat stress evaluations, and mental health support for state military personnel and their families. This bill is supported by the California State Commanders Veterans Council.

AB 2082 (Salas) - Student financial aid: military service. Expands the criteria for giving special and additional consideration for Competitive Cal Grant awards to applicants who are members of the California National Guard (CNG)

AB 2171, as introduced, Cook. Purple Heart Memorial. Existing law prescribes various duties for the Department of General Services in connection with development and maintenance of the park around the State Capitol Building. This bill would authorize the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Capitol Chapter 385, in consultation with the department and a specifically created committee, to construct and maintain a memorial in the Capitol Historic Region to honor California residents who have been awarded the Purple Heart. It would require that the planning, construction, and maintenance of the memorial be funded with private donations through a nonprofit foundation to be established. It also would prohibit construction of the memorial until the master plan of the State Capitol Park is approved and adopted by the Joint Committee on Rules and the Department of Finance has determined that sufficient private funding is available to construct and maintain the memorial.

*AB 2449 Military service: privileges: job protection. (Mike Davis, Los Angeles) Would allow a city attorney of the city in which an employer

maintains a place of business to act as an attorney on behalf of a service member against an employer who fails or refuses to comply with the provisions of the law which provide protections to members of the National Guard and the military reserves to return to their jobs after they complete a period of active service. (Note: At the present time, a County District Attorney may act on behalf of the service member.)

*AB 2568 Property Tax exemption: principal residence: veterans and their unmarried surviving spouses. (Guy Houston, Livermore) Would fully exempt from property taxation, beginning with the lien date for the 2009-10 fiscal year, the principal residence of a disabled veteran, the veteran's spouse, and the unmarried surviving spouse of a disabled veteran and a veteran who died while on active duty as a result of a service-connected disease or injury. For purposes of this section, a disabled veteran is one who is blind in both eyes, has lost the use of two or more limbs, or is totally disabled as a result of injury or disease incurred in military service.

*AB 2641, as introduced, Cook. Military service: protection: ombudsman. Existing law provides certain benefits and protections for members of the state militia, as specified. This bill would require the Governor and each state agency and department to appoint an ombudsman to take complaints, as specified, and to resolve and coordinate the resolution of those complaints from state employees that are members of the California National Guard or members of a reserve component of the Armed Forces of the United States, as specified.

*AB 2671, as amended, Salas. Prisoners: veterans. Existing law requires the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to develop a plan that would ensure prisoners who are substance abusers receive appropriate treatment, as specified.

AB 2896 Vehicles: special license plates. (Nell Soto, Ontario) Would authorize a surviving family member of a person who was killed in action in military service to have a special license plate with the Gold Star and the inscription, "Gold Star Family. Note: A very similar bill, SB 1455, is in the process of being introduced by Senator Dave Cogdill (Fresno). Council position: Recommend support of both bills. The Council supported similar legislation last year. Based upon preliminary review of both bills, the Senate version would probably be preferred so it is expected that the Council should expend greater effort on that bill.

*SB 1222 County Veterans Service Officers: funding (Gil Cedillo, Los Angeles) Would modify the standards for state allocation of funding to the Counties for support of the Veterans Service Offices by requiring that the amount of funds be equal to three dollars for every veteran who is a resident of California. The bill would also appropriate funds in this amount for the Fiscal Year 2008-2009. Since the total amount of this appropriation would be approximately \$6.6 million, the possibility of success for this bill during the current state fiscal crisis would appear to be very small. The appropriation for the current fiscal year was \$2.6 million, and the Governor has directed that this amount be reduced by ten percent, or \$260,000, for next year.

SB 1397, as introduced, Negrete McLeod. Prison Industry Authority: procurement. Existing law authorizes the Prison Industry Board to, among other things, establish procedures governing the purchase of raw materials, component parts, and goods and services. This bill would require the board, in procuring any of those goods or services, to comply with certain provisions of law that give preference to small businesses and disabled veteran business enterprises in awarding contracts.

SB 1401, as amended, Simitian. Armed forces Forces: traumatic brain injury screening. Existing law provides for certain rights and privileges

for active members of the Armed Forces, reservists, and veterans of the Armed Forces, including members of the California National Guard. This bill would require the Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs, or his or her designee, to assist an eligible member, as defined, or veteran in obtaining a best practice an appropriate health screening for traumatic brain injury, as described. A member or veteran would be eligible to receive the assistance when he or she returns to this state after service in specified combat zones. This bill would require the Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs, or his or her designee, to develop a plan for outreach to eligible members and veterans, as described, regarding traumatic brain injury. This bill would also require the Adjutant General, or his or her designee, to develop a plan for outreach to eligible members of the California National Guard who have returned from combat and remain on duty.

SB 1495, as introduced, Kehoe. Taxation. Existing law provides that a disabled veteran's property tax exemption, once granted, remains in continuous effect unless the title to the property changes, the property is altered so that the property no longer qualifies as a dwelling, the owner is no longer considered disabled, or the owner does not occupy the property as his or her principal place of residence on the property tax lien date. This bill would, for purposes of the disabled veteran's property tax exemption, specify that a dwelling not occupied because of a misfortune or calamity, continues to be the principal residence, for purposes of the exemption, on the property tax lien date provided that the person's absence is temporary and the person intends to return to the dwelling when able to do so. This bill would also provide that, except under specified circumstances where a dwelling is destroyed in a disaster for which the Governor has proclaimed a state of emergency, when a dwelling has been totally destroyed, and thus no dwelling exists on the lien date, the disabled veterans' exemption is not applicable until the structure has been replaced and is occupied as a dwelling.

SB 1675, as introduced, Cox. Veterans' Revenue Debenture Act of 1970 prescribes procedures for the issuance of debentures by the Department of Veterans Affairs and for the administration thereof. Those provisions require the department to adopt a resolution of issuance whenever the department determines that debentures should be issued, and requires the resolution to be submitted to the Veterans' Debenture Finance Committee for their consideration. Upon approval by the Veterans' Debenture Finance Committee, the resolution of issuance becomes effective and the State Treasury prepares the debentures in accordance with the resolution. This bill would authorize that a resolution of issuance may provide the department with the discretion to structure the terms and conditions of any authorized issuance of debentures, as specified, including the discretion to determine interest rates and payment dates.

*SB 1680, as amended, Wyland. Veterans: educational assistance: dependents. Student financial aid: Military and Veterans Benefits Office. This bill would require the California Community Colleges and California State University, and request the University of California, to establish on each of its campuses a Military and Veterans Benefits Office and appoint a full-time Military and Veterans Benefit Advisor for each office. The bill would provide that the purpose of the office be to assist a student who is an active duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States, the California National Guard, or a reserve component of the Armed Forces of the United States, a veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States, or his or her family member in determining that students eligibility for state or federal educational benefits or grants. By requiring community college districts to establish an office on each of its campuses, the bill would constitute a state-mandated local program.

CENTRAL DISTRICT

Ed Mentz, Director

Greetings from your CSC Central District Director. It has been my privilege to have served you these past six years. I am very grateful for the support you have given me and the many friendships that we have made. There comes a time, however, when it becomes necessary for one to step aside and allow another to step up to the plate or hand over the baton for them to run. My plate is full and my journey leads me to new horizons for the coming year. I wish my successor the best and I will always be available for support if needed. With that said, here is my report.

Due to time restraints, family health and work commitments, I have been very active with the chapters that are relatively close to my home base and apologize for not being able to visit my distant Chapters. My home base chapter has required a lot of my time and went through some hard times. I am happy to say, that these chapters have re-grouped and are doing well as I write this report. Of course the growing Sonora Chapter has always done well and even is active with a Veterans Incarcerated program.

I have also been very active coordinating with the local Federal and State legislative offices, along with the Merced County Veterans Advisory Committee and Congressman Cardoza's Veterans Advisory Committee for the 18th Congressional District.

POW-MIA

Ed Mentz, Chairman

AMERICANS ANNOUNCED AS ACCOUNTED FOR: There are still 1,763 US personnel listed by the Department of Defense as missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War. The most recent identifications, though now months ago, brought to 820 the number of US personnel returned since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. 90+% of the 1,763 still missing and unaccounted for were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Laos and Cambodia under Vietnam's wartime control.

JPAC COMMANDER TRAVELS: The new JPAC Commander, RADM Donna Crisp, USN, recently completed her first trip as JPAC Commander to Vietnam and Cambodia, meeting with officials in both countries to introduce herself and become familiar with US officials and operations in both countries. Due to a conflict with Secretary Gates' visit, she had to postpone her planned visit to Laos. Shortly before her Southeast Asia trip, she also visited the Republic of Korea to discuss ways to expedite cooperation related to Korean War losses. Deputy to the JPAC Commander Johnnie Webb had worked for many years with the South Koreans, including the last two years establishing a JPAC-like facility in South Korea. On that trip, RADM Crisp went on to Beijing to meet with PRC officials in an effort to restore recovery operations in that country.

UPDATE ON JPAC OPERATIONS: The 102nd Joint Field Activities (JFAs) in Laos were concluded February 13th, following 30 days of recovery efforts by four teams operating in Khammouan and Xekong Provinces. The 40th JFA in Cambodia that began on January 15th completed its work on March 1st, followed by a repatriation ceremony attended by many senior Cambodian officials and US Ambassador Joseph M. M. as well as JPAC and other US officials. The 41st JFA in Cambodia began as the 40th concluded, though the focus will be an excavation in Prey Veng Province and Phase 2 Testing on another site in Cambodia, before moving on to Laos before completing their work. Phase 2 Testing (P2T, in JPAC shorthand) is more comprehensive than an initial survey/investigation conducted by the Investigation Team, but doesn't constitute an excavation. It is intended to more accurately fix the scope of the site to be excavated. The earlier Cambodia JFA teams were operating in Ratankiri, Stung Treng and Kampong Sam Provinces,

the latter off the coast of southern Cambodia, at Koh Tang (Tang Island), site of the May, 1975 USS Mayaguez incident. JPAC specialists, plus members of the US Navy's Mobile Diving Salvage Unit #1, recently completed work that began on January 15th in the Republic of Palau conducting ground and underwater recovery operations on WWII losses. (Source: <http://www.pow-miafamilies.org>)

VETERANS INCARCERATED

Ed Mentz, Chairman

A new program available for our wounded Armed Forces including incarcerated veterans is the "Silver Star" banner, a non-profit organization which is honoring them for their service to their country. In Texas they had 140 inmates who were veterans, and only 14 qualified for the Silver Star Banner and Certificate. To qualify for this honor, Veterans must have served in an area of war/conflict and were wounded or at least suffer from a 10% disability related to their service. A Purple Heart qualifies automatically, however; it is not necessary to have been awarded a Purple Heart. A vet could be suffering from PTSD, Agent Orange, TBIs or other afflictions that would be a result of their Military Service served in war/conflict as documented by their VA disability. (Source: <http://www.silverstarfamilies.org/Support-SS-Banner-Flag.html>)

I had the pleasure of meeting Stacy Studebaker, the VA Re-Entry Specialist, Domiciliary Service from Palo Alto who was visiting the Sierra Conservation Center, Jamestown, CA on March 19th. The VA has been mandated to check on the status of the health care for veterans who are incarcerated and explain their limited benefits available to them while incarcerated and after they are released. She will be visiting other facilities in her Northern CA area of responsibility in the future.

Kudos to Edward Bush, and Sam Ramirez the sponsors of the Sierra Conservation Center Veterans Group, Jamestown, CA who unknowingly signed up a year ago to see what it was all about. They have done an exceptional job, and a Thank You goes out to John Mendiola, of Chapter 391 for his involvement with the VIP. A Big Thank You for a job well done to all the Veteran Members of the Sierra Conservation Center who donated \$1700 to Operation MOMs. As veterans you have served your county before and you are doing so now by helping others and setting a fine example for new VIP Groups to follow. My hat goes off to Beth Barnes for her dedication to all Veterans and her devotion to the VIP.

I would also be remiss if I did not recognize the veterans who are members of V.V.G.S.Q (Vietnam Veteran Group San Quentin) or the veterans who were members of VG-1 at Ironwood, for their years of devotion and all the work they have accomplished to support their scholarship programs and what they have contributed to various charities. It was an honor to testify on your behalf and hope in a small way helped contributed to your success, and the future of the CA Veterans Incarcerated Program.

TREASURER

Tim Forrest

Since my last report I have been keeping very busy. This year's ski season is now over; I'm sure you are all aware that I am a volunteer snow ski instructor in Big Bear with the USARC (United States Adaptive Recreation Center). Most of my students are vets who I teach ski techniques for amputees and other disabilities. The last group of vets were from Wounded Warriors, a group out of San Diego. What a thrill, and I encourage all who can to consider contacting the school and volunteering for the upcoming summer program and next year's ski season. I also attended the Region 9 meeting in Phoenix, Az. The meeting was very informative and we had some great guest speakers. I'm sure our Region 9 director

will elaborate more in his report. We can all be proud that Dick Southern is serving us well, as this meeting attested. It was well organized and instructive.

As your treasurer, I wish to remind all chapters that do not file form 990's with the IRS of the now new requirement to file the e-postcard form 990N. Please see other article in this edition for further information. If you need assistance, call me.

A new fiscal year has started and we are operating on a continuing budget from last fiscal year. Our finance committee chairman Barry Schloffel is asking that all those who wish budgets for fiscal year 2009 to have them submitted to him (with copies to me) by the April 1st. If you find yourself reading this article after April 1, the finance committee meeting will be held May 11. With a little cajoling and begging on your part, your budget request may still be considered. Be at the next state council meeting in April to ensure that your budget will be considered.

April 10 thru the 13th I will be attending the National board and finance meetings. I will once again take advantage of some free time to visit with the wounded troops at Walter Reed Hospital, and will continue with the distribution on Mac Donald food vouchers.

As a reminder once again if anyone wishes to make a visit to Walter Reed Hospital they need to make much advance scheduling and the person to talk to the, Visitors Bureau Coordinator. Her number is (202) 782-8399.

Proposed changes for Next Fiscal Year Travel voucher reimbursements

- I have proposed to eliminate travel voucher reimbursements to chapters for their delegate travel to CSC meetings.
- With that proposal I am recommending that CSC continue with budgeting up to \$800 per year for each delegate.
- The delivery system will be \$200 per weekend of attendance by chapter delegate. This will be basically at \$100 per day.
- No vouchers will be required and the attendance roster will be the formal item used for payment allocations.
- The official attendance roster will be kept by the secretary and copy given to Treasurer for payment processing.

Stay tuned for more information on this:

- 1st see if the finance committee recommends these changes to the CSC board and then see if CSC board approves these recommendations or make modifications

IRS RELEASES 'E-POSTCARD'

The Internal Revenue Service has released its Form 990-N, also known as an "e-Postcard," a new tax document required of all groups whose gross receipts normally total less than \$25,000 per year.

Previously only groups that earned more than \$25,000 yearly had to file with the IRS, but the agency stated it wanted to get an accurate count of how many nonprofit groups exist and to provide more and better information about small groups. (Churches and organizations that file as part of a group do not have to fill out a 990-N.)

Groups must file the form starting this calendar year for fiscal years ending on or after December 31, 2007. The e-Postcard is due by the fifteenth day of the fifth month after the end of a fiscal year.

You cannot file the e-Postcard until after your tax year ends. For all our VVA chapters the tax year ends February 29, 2008 this year. That means the e-Postcard is due to be completed by July 15th, the same as those chapters required to file Form 990's.

The e-Postcard is easy to complete. All you need is the following information about your organization.

- Employer identification number (EIN)
- Tax year
- Legal name and mailing address
- Any other names the organization uses
- Name and address of a principal officer
- Web site address if the organization has one
- Confirmation that the organization's annual gross receipts are normally \$25,000 or less
- If applicable, a statement that the organization has terminated or is terminating (going out of business)

File the e-Postcard at: <http://epostcard.form990.org/>

MEMBERSHIP

I would like to thank all of you that have been coming to the membership meeting tiers at the State Council meeting. We have had some good discussions and have been able to help a few chapters get their membership questions answered.

At the state level we hear from the National Membership Committee, once a month. As of January 31, 2008 CA has 3,362 members. New York still leads the nation with 4,953 members and Michigan with 3,688. There are a total of 56,772 members in Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. with 56 of these members located world-wide. Of this total, 940 of the members are Women Veterans. There are 1,824 Incarcerated Veterans and 245 Permanently Hospitalized Veterans.

July 2008, VVA will be holding their Leadership Conference in Greenville South Carolina. The Membership Committee is preparing a seminar, "Path to Successful Recruitment & Retention of Members." This will be a presentation on membership development at the chapter level. I will be attending this presentation, in hopes that I can bring back some new recruitment and retention ideas.

The CSC Membership Committee is planning on developing a membership packet that will be distributed to new chapters and to existing chapters. This packet will include answers to many questions that are asked regarding DD214's, time-frame for chapter reports, what is required of a chapter with in their State Council, policy and procedure, and bylaws questions. This may take some time to put together, but I am hoping to have a rough draft by our convention in June.

Your input is welcome. Membership questions or concerns can be emailed to me at, nebhuskfan@aol.com.

Thank you,
Steve Mackey, Chair

AVVA CA ASSOCIATES

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce the officers for CA Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. As you may know, Sonja Holybee has stepped down in her position as AVVA State Representative (President). We thank Sonja, sincerely, for all of her dedication in getting the CA Associates headed in the right direction. We hope to keep headed in that direction and make CA Associates the best that we can be. We will keep Sonja in our thoughts and prayers, hoping that her health will take a positive direction.



As Sonja's Vice President, I have assumed the duties of President. I am, also, the Affiliate Representative for Chapter 47, Riverside, CA; a member of the AVVA National Elections Com-

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA, INC., CALIFORNIA STATE COUNCIL - SPRING 2008

Chapter	Address/Phone	E-Mail/ Web Site	Primary Contact	Meeting Information
47	PO Box 3007 Riverside 92514-4277 951-781-6137	nebhuskfan@aol.com www.vva47.com	Steve Mackey	3rd Saturday, 10 am at Lifespring church Social Hall located at the corner of Columbia and Main St. in Riverside. Board meets prior to the meeting (check web site for special meeting locations & times)
53	PO Box 7000-185 Redondo Beach 90277 310-540-8820	n9140y@ca.rr.com www.vva53.us	Jerry Yamamoto	Monthly at 7 p.m., 4th Wednesday at Billy's Restaurant, 5160 W. 190th St., Torrance, CA 90503 (except in December)
201	PO Box 26203 San Jose 95159-6203 408-246-2288	poka513@comcast.net www.nichecom.com/vva	Robert Beresford	Board meets on 3rd Monday at 7:30 pm; chapter social on 3rd Monday at 7 pm. Both held at VFW Post 3982, 1313 Franklin St., Santa Clara 95050
218	PO Box 2241 Santa Barbara 93120 805-682-0550	vva218@vvachapter218.org www.vvachapter218.org	Keith Perkins	Meetings on 2nd Tuesday at 6:15 pm at Veterans Memorial Building, 112 West Cabrillo Blvd., Santa Barbara
223	1352 Maple Ave. Santa Rosa 95402 707-521-4218 / Fax: 707-838-1430	vets@vva223.org www.vva223.org	John Crooker	2nd Tuesday 7 pm. Board; General Meeting 3rd Tuesday 7 pm. Vets Building, 1315 Maple Ave., Santa Rosa. 3rd Saturday is a chapter breakfast.
355	PO Box 2986 Canyon Country 91386-2986 818-508-9626	lostpatrol@msn.com	Frank LaRosa	3rd Sunday of each month, 11 am, at a local restaurant
357	PO Box 4021 Redding 96099 530-242-1596	coonradt@snowcrest.net	Rocky Cantrell	2nd Tuesday each month, 7 pm at Redding Veterans Memorial Hall
368	PO Box 1566 Mariposa 95338 209-966-4039	rainbow@sti.net	Larry Coan	1st Thursday, 7 pm at the VFW Hall in Mariposa
391	PO Box 5391 Sonora 95370 209-928-3848	chap391@lodalink.com www.vietnamveterans391.org	Dick Southern	General Meeting, 2nd Tuesday, 7 pm.; Board, 1st Tuesday 7 pm, at Sonora Veterans Hall, 9 N. Washington St, Sonora, CA
400	200 Grand Ave., # 208 Oakland 94610 510-444-5235	fdrdocent@comcast.net	Bill Hodges	3rd Tuesday, 7 pm, Oakland Vets Bldg, 200 Grand Ave.
441	782 N. Brundage Farmersville 93223 559-594-5710	rod6768@mindWinter.com	Rod Hughes	2nd & 4th Mondays, 7:30 pm
446	87 N. Raymond Ave., Suite 210 Pasadena 91103 626-795-8141 (also Fax)	vva446@att.net	Steve Malmberg	Board meets 1st Friday each month, 7:30; General Meeting 2nd Tuesday, 7 pm, Senior Center, 85 E. Holly St., Pasadena
464	PO Box 25540 San Mateo 94402 650-341-5333	vva464@yahoo.com theveteran.net/vva464	Ponce Gonzalez	1st Wednesday, 7:30 pm at American Legion Post 666, 757 San Mateo Ave., San Bruno 94066
472	2115 Park Blvd. San Diego 92101-4792 619-239-5977	vva472@hotmail.com www.vva472.com	John Weaver	Member meeting held quarterly, announced on Web site; Board meets 4th Wednesday 7 pm at Veterans Memorial Center, 2115 Park Blvd., San Diego
500	PO Box 255484 Sacramento 95868 916-481-6020	vva500@sbcglobal.net www.norcaltravel/vva500.html	Mary Lou McNeill	General Meeting, 3rd Tuesday, 7 pm; Board - 1st Tuesday, 7 pm. Roosevelt Veterans Memorial Hall, 110 Park Drive, Roseville (Royer Park)
526	PO Box 2222 Culver City 90232 310-260-6910	wmctaggart@pmcos.com	John Hamilton	1st Tuesday, 7:30 pm
535	PO Box 37 Grass Valley 95945 530-470-8507	wreddekkop@sbcglobal.net http://www.nccn.net/%7evvanc/	Harold Graves	1st Thursday, 7 pm. Grass Valley Veterans Memorial Bldg., 255 South Auburn, Grass Valley
547	PO Box 884 Kentfield 94914 415-454-8823 / Fax: 415-454-2737	cijens@hotmail.com http://www.vietnamveteransmarin.org/	Carl Jensen	3rd Wednesday, 7 pm. American Legion, Post 313, Club Room, 12 Ward St., Larkspur, CA 94939
563	PO Box 751284 Petaluma 94975-1284 707-762-9078	johnc85393@aol.com	John Cheney	Veterans Memorial Bldg., Petaluma Blvd., Petaluma, 4th Thursday each month except Nov. & Dec.
582	PO Box 3070 Paradise, CA 95967 530-893-8435	zashiban@sbcglobal.net	Stephen Wilson	3rd Wednesday each month, Veterans' Memorial Hall, 554 Rio Lindo Ave., Chico, CA 95928
643	PO Box 745 Dinuba 93618 559-528-2811 / Fax: 559-528-2384	nafw@sbcglobal.net	Peter McManus	2nd Wednesday, 7 pm at Dinuba Memorial Building, 249 S. Alta Ave., Dinuba, CA 93618
691	PO Box 2226 Merced 95344-0226 209-356-1938	esc_vvaed@sbcglobal.net www.mymerced.com/0704k163.html	Ed Mentz	3rd Monday, 7 pm, Citi Bank, 19th & M, Merced - 6:30 pm for potluck dinner. Board - 1st Monday, 7 pm Community Center in Castle Vista
702	PO Box 525 Yountville 94599 707-252-7537 / Fax: 707-944-0955	rossisvva@aol.com	Ross Hall	1st Tuesday, 7 pm at Yountville Veterans Home in the Lee Lounge (second floor of main building). Board meets 3rd Saturday, 8 am in the canteen (first floor)
756	PO Box 90994 Long Beach 90809 562-596-5170	stumpfires@verizon.net	Dave Stumpf	1st Wednesday, 7 pm at VFW Post 8615, 2805 South St., Long Beach
781	1100 Main St. PO Box 102 Ferndale 95536 707-725-6946	carlhndup@suddenlink.net www.vva781.org	Carl Young	2nd Tuesday each month, 7 pm, Ferndale Veterans Memorial Hall, 1100 Main Street, Ferndale, 95536
785	2345 Barraca Parkway Irvine 92606 714-540-8518 / Fax: 714-662-2033	gunnymims@aol.com www.vva785.org	Bill Mimiaga	1st Wednesday, 6 pm (social hour prior), at US Army Reserve Training Center Armory, 2345 Barranca Parkway, Irvine, CA
880	508 Riddle Court Modesto 95356 209-523-3880	emg@msn.com	Errol Green	3rd Tuesday, 6 pm at American Legion Lodge, 1001 S. Santa Cruz, Modesto
933	PO Box 26256 Fresno 93720 559-855-3565	hanniford@comcast.net	Carl Shipley	1st Tuesday at Clovis Veterans Memorial Bldg., 453 Hughes Ave., Clovis 93612
951	PO Box 1313 Lakeport 95453 707-262-5651	barnett@tgaxpro.net vva951.org	Dean Gotham	Board - 1st Tuesday at 290 N. Main St., 7 p.m.; General Meeting - 2nd Tuesday at 801 N. Main St. 6 p.m. (St. Mary's Hall), Lakeport
982	4814 Talmage Rd. Moorpark, CA 93021 805-529-1313	halfaro12000@yahoo.com	Henry Alfaro	

mittee and am currently the Chairperson for the CA Associate Elections Committee. Nina Schloffel is serving as our Secretary. Nina is a member of Chapter 391, Sonora, CA. She is active in her community and has done a great job with her duties as Secretary. Carol Southern is Treasurer. Carol is the Affiliated Representative for Chapter 391, Sonora, CA; Alternate Region 9 Director for AVVA and has announced her intent to run for the office of AVVA, Region 9 Director. We are very, lucky to have Carol as Treasurer.

At this time CA has 558 Affiliated Members. We thank you for your continued support of Associates and the support that you give our veterans.

During the CSC State Convention, AVVA will be hosting a luncheon, Friday June, 6, 2008. The cost of the luncheon is \$25.00. Everyone is welcome and you are invited. Our guest speakers will be a very motivational couple. Dr. & Mrs. (Toni) Ed Eames. The Eames are world renowned advocates of living with disabilities. Ed Eames, PhD and Toni Eames, MS, are a unique and powerful couple with a passion to advocate for disabled people. As Adjunct Professors of Sociology at California State University, Fresno, CA both are established writers and authors. Toni Eames was inducted into the National Hall of Fame for Persons with Disabilities in 1998. This promises to be a wonderful program. Their faithful, Golden Retrievers, Keebler & Letrell, will be accompanying them.

Thank you & Welcome Home,
Elayne (cysticfib@aol.com)

GOLD STAR CHILDREN

Five years ago – on March 17, 2003 – a group of 70 Americans huddled intently around television monitors in Singapore's Changi International Airport to view a CNN news broadcast from home. What was evening news for our families in the States served as a wake-up show across the International Dateline in the South Pacific. As the message rippled across the globe, it riveted attention: President Bush had warned Saddam Hussein to leave Iraq within 24 hours or face an invasion of American and coalition troops.

For these American tourists, there was powerful irony in the timing of that televised pre-war message. As the scars of one war were finally healing, pains were set to be inflicted on a new generation of soldiers and their families.

Part of Sons and Daughters in Tough (SDIT) – a nationwide assembly of the estimated 20,000 children of American servicemen killed in the Vietnam War – our weary travel party was concluding an historic two-week trip to Southeast Asia. Serving as our guides were two dozen Vietnam veterans – soldiers and nurses – who generously shared their time, energy, personal experiences, knowledge and comfort with the now grown sons and daughters of their fallen fellow servicemen. Hearing that foreboding news report, I couldn't help but wonder, "If war in Iraq does happen, will a new generation of 'sons and daughters' arise, having lost their parents in combat in the Middle East?"

"In Honor, Peace and Understanding"

The official theme of our trip to Vietnam was a sentiment that underscored our desire to fully experience the places our dads were stationed and lost. We wanted to walk through the same villages, and to know the people our dads were trying to protect. We wanted to see and better understand what, and whom, they were fighting against.

We lost our fathers to war in the 1960's and early 70's and it took more than three decades before our nation could say "Vietnam" and think of a people and a culture rather than a bad memory. "Will it take forty years for the wounds to mend so that a new mindset tells us "Iraq" isn't a bad word?" I wondered standing there in the airport.

Reflecting on the preparation for our trip, I also wondered whether veterans of a war in Iraq would support a new generation of sons and daughters as much as Vietnam War veterans have supported us. For each of us, the trek to Vietnam was a trip to our personal ground zero. After two years of exhaustive research by Vietnam Veteran and retired Army Col. Dick Schonberger, we sons and daughters were able to laugh and cry, to light incense and lay flowers at the exact locations our fathers died in America's longest war. Often, residents of the surrounding villages stopped their work in the fields and rice paddies to join our spontaneous ceremonies. Some village elders took time with us to recall incidents of the war that killed 58,256 Americans and many more Vietnamese.

During our two weeks in Vietnam, we floated the Mekong Delta on sam pans; crawled through the Cu Chi Tunnels far too small for Westerners; held a group memorial service on the sands of China Beach; roamed incredulously through an official Vietnamese war museum devoid of accuracy and objectivity; visited the Hoa Lo Prison (Hanoi Hilton) to recall the torture and fate of POW's including Everett Alvarez, John McCain and Fred Cherry, and the many others who returned – or didn't – from captivity there.

The circumstances and political climate had never been better for our trip to Southeast Asia. Anticipating the aftermath of a looming war in Iraq, it was painful to think of how long it might take for a new generation of sons and daughters to feel comfortable enough to journey to Iraq to see their own personal ground zero. A delay in being able to grieve and honor a loss would prolong the pain of these new 'sons and daughters.'

Visiting My Ground Zero

In the middle of our journey, I broke away from the group for three days and traveled to the remote jungle hamlet of Ban Namoung, Laos. In an attempt at taste-bud diplomacy, I presented Red Vine licorice to the children of the village and a bottle of Jack Daniels to the village chief. As I wandered among the dogs, pigs and chickens that roam the dirt streets of this third-world village, I could better understand the basis for questions the villagers had asked the night before, "Are all Californians wealthy?"... "Are women in America really allowed to hold jobs?"

I've always wanted to inspect the wreckage of my father's B-57 that has rested in the jungles of Laos since Father's Day 1965. Despite the best efforts of the villagers, time and an unconquerable terrain prevented me from getting to the exact site. In the village below, residents joined me in erecting a shrine of flowers, family photographs and incense beneath a stand of banana trees. To complete this memorial to my dad and the pilot of his jet, the villagers added small parts of my dad's plane they had crafted into tools they used daily. It was a physically and emotionally exhausting journey and after three days of less than intermittent English with my Lao hosts, I crossed the border into Vietnam and raced with my guides toward the South China Sea. My travel partners were at Hue City on the Perfume River and I was desperate to see familiar faces!

A Common Bond

Our group had come together from every corner of the United States to confront lifelong questions in Vietnam. Our dads served in every branch of the U. S. military. We are the "sons and daughters" of privates, generals, and Medal of Honor recipients. We are as colorful as the fabric of America. We are different, but with so much in common. As ironic as it is, at one point, from July 2004 to February 2007, U. S. and multi-national forces in Iraq were led by a "son" – US Army General George Casey, Jr. – who lost his father in Vietnam in May 1970. Today, Gen. Casey is Chief of Staff of the U. S. Army.

Lending a Hand

On Veterans Day 2007, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial that bares the names of our fathers,

and each of the 58,256 Americans lost in Vietnam, celebrated its 25th Anniversary. To support the new educational Vietnam Veterans Memorial Center scheduled to open in 2010, SDIT launched a campaign to raise at least \$1.00 for every name on the Wall.

Looking ahead with 20/20 hindsight, SDIT is also lending a hand to the estimated 2,000 new 'sons and daughters' of Americans killed in the War on Terror. We work closely with Tragedy Assistance for Survivors (TAPS), Snowball Express and the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund – organizations that weren't around when we were kids, but today they deliver critical support to American military families. Fortunately, our nation has learned to provide better care for the military families that bear the lion's share of war. Whether it is family counseling, scholarship funds, a weekend vacation to momentarily block out the pain, or any of the other therapies employed to ease the burden of grief, this new generation of sons and daughters is being cared for as they rightly deserve.

Setting a Precedent

The time will come, maybe in my lifetime and hopefully in that of my children, when the "sons and daughters" of U. S. service personnel lost in the Global War on Terror – in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere – will travel to their own personal ground zero. My hope is that our organization's trip to Vietnam five years ago, its 18-year existence and outreach programs, will serve as a historic benchmark for them, a lesson on how to confront, endure, and prevail in the unique life experience we share.

Later on that same March 17, exactly five years ago, our group landed in Los Angeles to a rousing "Welcome Home" from friends, family and more veterans. With the buildup to battle in Iraq, the story of our historic trip to Vietnam went largely unnoticed. However, our memories, photographs, souvenirs, and the red dirt on our shoes reminded us of where we had been, and why.

Regardless of when or why each war began, or where we were, – and above and beyond the pain and sorrow that comes from losing one's father or mother in battle, – we "sons and daughters" from WWII, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf War, the Global War on Terror and every other US military action share one thing: our common bond as America's Gold Star Children.

Tony Cordero is the Chairman and Founder of Sons and Daughters In Touch. To support the campaign to raise \$1.00 for every name on the Wall, visit www.sdit.org

NEWSLETTER OF THE YEAR

At the CA State Convention in June, during the banquet, an award for the Chapter Newsletter of the Year will be presented.

The submission process for Chapter Newsletter of the Year is by self-nomination. Nominations should be submitted by the chapter president and contain his or her signature, as well as that of the newsletter editor. The chapter president also must attach a letter of support to the nomination form.

A nomination for the newsletter award must include the official nomination form along with three copies of the three most recent editions of the publication. Publications will be judged on editorial content, readability, organization and clarity of expression, layout, and graphics.

A form is available on the state council's web site (www.vvacalsc.com) under the State Convention menu item. Deadline for submissions is May 15, 2008.

Please send your nominations to: VVA CSC-Zephyr Editor, PO Box 3007, Riverside, CA 92519-3007

Opinions, Information and Reminiscences

VVA CHAPTER 47

Chapter 47 Riverside/Inland Empire, CA. is becoming involved in a new project that we are honored to be a part of; Riverside National Cemetery Support Committee is assisting us in various ways, also. Missing in America Project (MIAP) is a project geared to locate, identify and inter the unclaimed cremated remains of American veterans through the joint efforts of private, state and federal organizations. To provide honor and respect to those who have served this country by securing a final resting place for these forgotten heroes. The focus of the MIA Project will be a massive, nation-wide effort to locate, identify and inter the unclaimed remains of forgotten veterans. This task will be executed through the combined, cooperative efforts of members of the American Legion, other volunteer service and veteran organizations, local Funeral Homes, State Funeral Commissions, State and National Veterans Administration Agencies, and the State and National Veterans Cemetery Administrations. Local, state and national laws must be followed in the identification, claiming process and proper interment of the unclaimed remains of forgotten veterans.

This will be a lengthy project and will require many man-hours to ensure that we have done our utmost to discover every forgotten veteran and procure each a dignified resting place. This will also be a labor of love, a task of redemption, for a debt of service that can never be repaid.

The second phase of the MIA Project will be the creation of a network of individuals working with local Funeral Homes, State, and National Agencies to ensure that, from now on, the cremated remains of any unclaimed veteran will be identified, claimed and interred in a timely manner. This will be an ongoing project and will most likely be a cooperative effort between many voluntary service organizations.

The MIA Project will be a long-term project, but not a time sensitive project.

Chapter 47 members have been asked by some of the So CA. Moving Wall hosts to help with the planning of the Wall to their area. We, are, currently involved in planning or signed as volunteers in all of the four So.CA. stops of The Moving Wall.

VVA CHAPTER 53

Activities for 2008

Chapter 53 is currently involved in planning the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial 20th Anniversary Celebration that's taking place in Sacramento from December 10th thru 14th. Greg Green, one of our founding members---"a plank owner" ---in "squid" talk-- is one of the original members of the Commission that created the Memorial. Greg and his fellow Commissioners will be the honorees at the CSC-sponsored Friday night dinner on December 12th. Assemblymember Ted Lieu, 53rd Assembly District, introduced and carried the bill, ACR 64, that was enacted to authorize the celebration.

Chapter 53 just launched its 2008 Annual High School Scholarship Program, which is in its 13th year. Ten local high schools are included in the program which requires students to write a 500 word essay. Over 35 students have been awarded scholarships in the scholarship program's history.

Another project of the chapter is assisting the Steering Committee of the "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day" event that's being held on Sunday March 30th in Whittier, CA. This celebration is the culmination of the extensive efforts of Jose Ramos, a member of Pasadena Chapter 446, to have a day established in law to annually

recognize the accomplishments of Vietnam- era veterans and to formally welcome them home. Rep. Linda Sanchez authored House Resolution 189 which passed Congress to establish that date.

We will be celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. It was first chartered by VVA on November 9, 1983. Please join us in celebrating this special occasion this year.

The chapter is assisting the Employment Development Department in several activities during the year. First, we have made a monetary donation to assist the Los Angeles South Avalon EDD office to celebrate the "Veteran Appreciation" month of May in conducting a job fair. Second, we are members of the South Bay Veterans Employment Committee which helps to resolve issues of veterans employment. Thirdly, we are working with the EDD/US Vets Initiative, Inc. "Hire A Hero, Hire A Veteran" Career Expo to be held in November 2008 at the Long Beach Convention Center, just as we did in 2007. Also, we'll be working with those two organizations and the City of Compton to conduct its 2008 Homeless Veterans Standdown.

Establishing contacts with Vietnam veterans from other organizations has been a recent development for the chapter. Continuing contacts have been made with the Native American Veterans Association in Los Angeles. We are trying to help them build their website. John Castillo, the NAVA Secretary will be performing the "Honor Warrior Song" at the "Welcome Home Vietnam Veteran Day" event in Whittier. Several contacts have been made with representatives from the Republic of Korea (ROK) Vietnam Veterans Association of Los Angeles. The ROK organization wishes to establish a formal relationship with, and work with, VVA.

VVA CHAPTER 446

Angelina Wilson (below photo, center/front) successfully completed the Veterans Upward Bound Winter 2008 quarter. Angelina enlisted in the Army and served honorably from 1970 through 1978. After she was honorably discharged, she



enrolled at Rio Hondo College in 1978, however, due to financial hardships and her decision to raise her family; she consequently dropped out. After 30 years away from school she learned about the Veterans Upward Bound Program (VUB) through her husband, Joesph Wilson who honorably served for 25 years and who also participated in VUB in the Fall of 2007. Angelina enrolled in VUB in the Winter of 2008 and successfully completed the program with Perfect Attendance. Through Veterans Upward Bound, Angelina was able to academically prepare to return to college after many years. Thanks to the collaborate effort of the Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 446, who coordinated the donation of laptops from Soldiers Angels, Angelina was awarded a Gateway Laptop to help her with her studies. Angelina will begin East Los Angeles College in the Summer of 2008.

Soldiers Angels is a phenomenal organization that has brought light, love and hope to many of the men and women of the Armed Forces. Soldiers Angels has truly been angels on earth to these individuals, their families and the Veterans Upward Bound Program. Thanks to the Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 446 and the generous contribution from Soldiers Angeles, VUB has been distributing laptops every quarter to low-income/first generation college veterans who are pursuing a college education. Soldiers Angels has been a blessing to our veterans. Thus far, VUB has distributed a total of 9 new Gateway Laptops directly to veterans!

VVA CHAPTER 781

As discussed during our last state council meeting, we encourage you to consider supporting our local stand down. Please visit our website www.northcoaststanddown.org.

March 17, 2008

Dear VVA Chapter Presidents: On October 3-5, 2008 the North Coast Stand Down will be held at the Humboldt County fairgrounds. We would like to invite you and your members to join us in providing a hand up to veterans and their families from Humboldt, Del Norte, Trinity and Mendocino counties.

At last year's event the financial support from the veterans organization was a critical component towards the success of last years North Coast Stand Down. We are once again calling upon our veteran organizations to support this event. North Coast Stand Down is a California nonprofit public benefit corporation that is exempt from federal income tax Internal Revenue Code section 501 (c)(3), Tax ID # 03-0601842. Please mail all donations to North Coast Stand Down, PO Box 1012, Arcata, CA 95518-1012. You can be a sponsor for a \$100 or more.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at (707) 839-9490. Thank you for your support. Yours in Comradeship,

Larry Connolly
Board Chairman
North Coast Stand Down

For three brief days local volunteers, community leaders and families will be providing the respect, honor and empowerment for our veterans and their families. Volunteers from all over the north coast will gather at the Humboldt County Fairgrounds, veterans and civilians alike, to provide services that has changed the lives of veterans at previous North Coast Stand-downs.

Our mission is to support all veterans. To this end we provide free food, earned benefit information, lodging, haircuts, transportation, referral services and supplies. Perhaps even more important, they will be among a group of people who appreciate what they have done for your country. The camaraderie that results is just another positive reason to be here.

It is our hope that we can provide them with whatever it takes to make their lives easier, and the lives of spouses and children. Widows of veterans will find counselors available to help them sort through the benefits they are entitled to.

They have served our country and now it's time for it to come through for them. There's a lot of reasons why we have these stand downs, and they all amount to the same overall goal; to reach out to all veterans and to welcome them home.

This stand down is for them. From a grateful community.

For information on a this community service pro-

gram: planned for October 3-5, 2008, either attending and/or supporting our communities efforts, please contact our Director, Kim Hall (707) 826-6191 or director@northcoaststanddown.org or visit our website www.northcoaststanddown.org.

AB 1952

Please support AB 1952 which has been "double-referred" to the Business & Professions Committee to be heard on April 1st and then the Veterans Affairs Committee shortly thereafter. The Office of Assemblywoman Patty Berg has submitted the amendment to Legislative Council to include a request for municipalities and counties to include the exemption on all future printed forms.

You can read the text of AB 1952 at www.leginfo.ca.gov

What We Need From Our Local Vets:

Assemblywoman Berg is requesting letters from Veterans Organizations and individual veterans expressing support for this legislation. Letters of support may be mailed and/or faxed to the Capitol Office:

Assemblywoman Patty Berg State Capitol P. O. Box 942849 Sacramento, CA 94249-0001 916-319-2101 (fax)

Currently, counties and cities use two different laws to waive business license fee waivers for veterans. This can create confusion and inequitable treatment. AB 1952 would conform the two laws, simplify the process for veterans, and ease confusion among local officials.

And lastly, we need to push for legislation to fix some of the weasle wording in Title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations. We are having veterans being held up for medical care because of the wording now in place. The veteran I'm assisting meets the provisions of section 17.53 (111), (noted below) and we're over 200 miles away from Fort Miley. Please share this information with all concerned.

Cite: 38 CFR 17.52 (a) and change the following sentence to read the "VA 'shall' not 'may' contract with non-VA facilities for care in accordance with the provisions of this section. I find it sad that a veteran can meet the "tight" criteria of this regulation, and still be denied medical care because the VA deciding not to provide it anyway, because of liability escape clause, in this case the word "may." WE meet, like many other rural area veterans, the need for these services because of geographic inaccessibility to Fort Miley. Too often I run into veterans that are self employed, and the need to take a day and a half off to get care outside our geographic area. Our Rep. at Fort Miley will only reiterate that the VA is "not insurance, it's a health plan." What the hell does that mean, the regulations say one thing about the care that is available, including their limited supply of the information booklets "VA Health Care Overview" which briefly discussed what care is available with the VA, but... they may not back-up what their saying by actions. This is total "BS."

Carl Young
President, Vietnam Veterans of America
Humboldt Memorial Chapter
"Welcome Home"

VVA CHAPTER 785

We will once again be participating in our Nation's "Run For The Wall" 2008 (www.rftw.org)



with both our Operation Lift-Off Vans and over two dozen of our Chapter Members and family who will be supporting the Vietnam Veteran motorcycle riders on their 10 day "mission" from Ontario, California to the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC. We depart May 14th and arrive in DC on Memorial Day "riding for those that can't, our POW/MIA's.

This will be the Chapter's 5th year supporting "RFTW" which promotes healing among all veterans and their families and friends and to call



for an accounting of our POW/MIA's. Our main support for "RFTW" is the "Mobile Water Point" that carries ice water, Gatorade, snacks, chips, beef jerky, slim jims, cookies, all to keep our bikers hydrated, salted and to maintain their electrolytes on this grueling 10 day journey. Most of the thousands of riders are Vietnam era veterans and well into their sixties.

This is for many their last journey and it is fitting as it is the 20th Anniversary of "Run For The Wall." The oldest veteran biker on the "run" last year was 72 years old.

Chapter 785 conducts fundraisers to help offset the cost of, not just the water and food, but the increased and soaring prices of gasoline. If you feel that you would like to participate supporting our "veteran riders" vicariously through Chapter 785, we would be honored. Please send your checks of support to our Chapter Treasurer Peter Sandro 601 Aldean Place Newport Beach, California 92663 (Note on donations: Chapter 785 "Mobile Water Point")

Mission Statement: To promote healing among ALL veterans and their families and friends, to call for an accounting of all Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action (POW/MIA), to honor the memory of those Killed in Action (KIA) from all wars, and to support our military personnel all over the world. Philosophy: We strive to maintain a safe, supportive and private atmosphere in which all participants can reflect and heal on their journey to the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. in the hope that they can return home to a new beginning.

Goals: 1. To guide the participants across America. 2. To educate future generations as to the importance of accountability in wartime actions emphasizing that no one should be left behind. 3. To participate in Rolling Thunder in support of their demand for government accountability for POW/MIA's.

This year we will be departing from Ontario, California on the 14th of May. Chapter 785 invites all to see off the hundreds of veteran bikers heading on a Southern Route and our chapter which will be taking the Central Route. Two Routes... one "mission." Once we arrive in DC we will be joining "Rolling Thunder" that passed in review last year with one million biker participants. This is a very emotional "mission" with many highs as we are "Welcomed Home" by so many hundreds of thousands of our Nation's citizens as we travel through their small villages and towns across the Nation. The hugs from veterans and their "Welcome Home" is truly moving and brings emotional tears to many. The healing that does in fact take place is incredible and very difficult to properly put with descriptive words. Once you have taken your first journey you will return

year after year.

Both our newly elected Chapter 785 President Jerry Nostadt and VP Harry Steelman will once again be participating in this year's "mission" and they send a Mahalo to all for your all support. Semper Fi Chapter 785 sends.....

WINGS & ROTORS COMBAT HELICOPTERS TO ACCOMPANY RIDERS TO VIETNAM WALL

FLYING THUNDER

Wings & Rotors Air Museum announced its most challenging mission. Their four combat-certified, Vietnam era helicopters will escort over 300,000 motorcycle riders from California to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC on the annual Memorial Day Rolling Thunder 2008. Wings & Rotors Flying Thunder - Flight to the Wall will accompany two well established groups to the Vietnam Wall - Run For The Wall and Rolling Thunder's - Ride for the Wall.

Every Memorial Day Weekend for 20 years, motorcycle riders from every corner of the country have converged on Washington, DC at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, better known as 'The Wall.' The numbers have risen, currently reaching many hundreds of thousands riders. They will be joined along the route by Wings & Rotors Air Museum's historic Vietnam era helicopters.

For the first time in the history of the 'Ride,' four restored, fully operational and combat-certified Vietnam era helicopters - three UH-1 "Hueys" and an OH-58 Kiowa - will fly along with the riders, making layovers along the way at Vietnam Memorials and other Veterans' memorial sites. The ceremonial stops will be made on both the eastern and western legs of the flight.

Departing California on May 14, 2008, the trip will take riders and helicopters across America on several routes which include both cities and small towns along the way who will sponsor special ceremonies and remembrances. The riders and helicopters will arrive in Washington, DC for Memorial Day Weekend and the ceremonies at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the Mall.

The motorcycles riders and helicopters will take several routes to Washington, DC, stopping in communities along the way that have either Vietnam Memorials or other Veteran remembrances. The cities will also host riders and provide housing, meals and fuel, in what has become a tradition over the years of Run For The Wall and Rolling Thunder's 'Ride to the Wall.' Communities will also seek out local Vietnam veterans to attend these functions.

The annual "Ride" takes place to coincide with Memorial Day Weekend. Motorcycle riders from every corner of the country ride to support veterans and their families and to honor the memory of those Killed in Action (KIA) from all wars. Most importantly, they ride to keep the issue of accounting for all Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action (POW/MIA) within the public's continued awareness.



For additional information on Wings & Rotors Flight to the Wall contact:

Shayne Meder
Larry Purcell
Wings & Rotors Air Museum
Flight to the Wall
951-662-5653
949-488-2893

FLIGHT TO THE WALL

SPONSORSHIP CASE FOR SUPPORT

For the first time in the history of what is known as "Rolling Thunder", four restored, fully operational and combat-certified Vietnam era helicopters – three UH-1 Huey's and an OH 58 Kiowa – will fly along with the riders, making layovers along the way at Vietnam Memorials and other Veteran's memorial sites. The ceremonial stops will be made on both the eastern and western legs of the flight.

The Media coverage will be continuous and complete, cities small and large will be given a special opportunity to thank all Veterans of all wars, future generations will see, hear and touch a living, breathing piece of history...and you can be a part of it, playing a key role with strong, positive national exposure – for an unforgettable occurrence.

Our overall sponsorship goal is \$300,000, which will cover all of the costs for the roundtrip from our home field of French Valley Airport to Washington DC and return.

\$300,000 Sponsorship goal shared by 3
\$100,000 per Corporate/Title Sponsor 5
\$ 60,000 per Corporate Sponsor 8
\$ 37,500 per Corporate Sponsor

Our journey is long and logistically complex. Our most immediate needs are funds to support the helicopters, ground and film crew. Wings & Rotors Air Museum's (a 501 (c)(3) non-profit) most challenging mission is to fly four combat-certified Vietnam era helicopters, escorting over 300,000 motorcycle riders from California to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC on the annual Memorial Day Rolling Thunder's "Ride to the Wall 2008."

We'll land in over 35 cities, some for fuel and a brief visit, others for an overnight and celebration. We're letting mayors, chambers of commerce and service organizations know that we are coming, so they can alert the veterans of their community that we're there to remember them, to thank them and..for many...to bring closure. We've a well prepared media plan and the helicopters will be accompanied by an award-winning film crew. We hope to capture some of the emotions that will be present in each city and each Veteran's encounter with his past.

It's about our veterans...supporting them, recognizing them, and remembering them. While there are tributes and ceremonies – articles and books – none are really "up close and personal." But that's what we're about, what this project is about. We're taking our appreciation and our thanks to our Veterans in the most direct and intimate way. We're taking the sight and sound of their war to them – helicopters that delivered them into Harm's Way, that provided veering fire while they were in dire straits – and brought them back, out of the war zone, whole or damaged. They've never forgotten the big Hueys with their distinct sound and aggressive stance, whether gunship or med evac. Seeing them again is a healing potion bringing many veterans back into a world they left behind many years ago.

VVA CHAPTER 201

OBSERVATION POST March 2008
Our Business meeting is 3rd Monday monthly, 7:30pm, held upstairs at American Legion Post 564, 2120 Walsh Ave, Santa Clara. This is a busi-

ness meeting only, no food or drinks allowed upstairs.

Pres: Bob Beresford, 408-258-5205, bear1robert@sbcglobal.net
VP: Dave Sanders, 408-370-0731, amddave@aol.com
Sec/Treas: Mike Shaw, 408-246-2288, poka513@comcast.net

Annual VVA 201 elections will be held at our April 21 meeting, also to be held upstairs at American Legion Post 564 at 7:30pm.

Mountain View High School has requested Vietnam War era speakers for early April. If you are interested, contact Mike Shaw (contact above) so I can coordinate with you when I know more specific details.

The 20th Anniversary of the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial will take place in December of 2008: www.cavietnammemorial.com or www.cdva.ca.gov/Memorials/Vietnam.aspx

The Veterans Service Office, 68 N. Winchester, Santa Clara, CA 95050, 408-553-6000, is where you should go for help with filing VA claims. All Veterans should have a copy of their discharge paper(s) or DD-214 on hand and inform their next-of-kin where it is kept because proof of military service is required to be eligible for burial or other VA benefits. Request military records online: www.archives.gov/veterans/evetrecs
Federal Benefits for Vets: www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/current_benefits.asp

The Moving Wall (1/2 scale): www.themoving-wall.org
The Wall That Heals (1/2 scale): www.vvmf.org
The American Veterans Traveling Tribute (4/5 scale): www.avtt.org
The Vietnam Wall Experience (3/4 scale): www.vietnamwallexperience.com

Airplane Cockpit Views (biplanes to jets) : www.codeonemagazine.com/test/archives/2007/articles/jan_07/cockpits/cockpits.html
Air Force Thunderbirds 2008 show schedule: http://thunderbirds.airforce.com/
August 30 and 31 - Travis Air Force Base, Calif
September 27 and 28 - Salinas, Calif

* Bingo every Thursday, 7-9 pm, Palo Alto VA Auditorium, Building 101. Help is needed donating/ serving refreshments to the hospitalized Vets.

* Mar 15, 2pm, VP-50 Memorial Service at Moffett, check at museum for info.



AVVA Chapter 201 at San Jose Veterans Day Parade 11-11-07.

* Apr 13, 1-4pm, Gold Star Families Reunion - Stories of the Fallen, History Park, Empire Firehouse, 1650 Senter Rd, San Jose, 408-481-0880.

* Apr 19, 6pm, Blue Star Moms Spaghetti Feed, St. Justin Catholic Church, 2655 Homestead Rd, Santa Clara, 408-235-9835, www.southbaybluestarmoms.org

* Apr 25-26, 5am, Wheelchair Salmon Fishing Derby, donations/help needed, Monterey Bay Veterans, 32C Cannery Row, Monterey, CA 93940, 831-646-8324, mbvinc@pacbell.net, www.mbv.org



VVA Chapter 201 at San Jose Veterans Day Parade 11-11-07. Left to right: Mike Shaw (US flag), Barbara Johnston, Bob Johnston, Walter Dillard.

Vet Service Office: 68 N. Winchester, Santa Clara, CA 95050, 408-553-6000
Vet Center: 278 N. Second, San Jose, CA 95112, 408-993-0729

VIETNAM VETERAN WEARS PURPLE HEART ON HIS

SLEEVE
By Christopher Quirk (cquirk@gilroydispatch.com) - Staff Writer

Gliding behind the counter at the San Martin Post Office, Robert Johnston does not have restricted movement, does not have visible scars - in short, there are no signs he carries 27 shards of shrapnel in his body.

Yet the Vietnam veteran feels them every day - in the tingling of his left leg, in the small bump on his chest where a piece has risen to the surface - and he does not want to forget them. To the 27-year Gilroy resident, every day should be Veterans Day.

"It's very important to have the single day of recognition," said the gravely voiced 57-year-old with shaved head, wrap-around white beard and the calm focus of a father giving advice. "But that single day of recognition - the spirit of it should be felt 365 days a year."

The post office made a contribution toward year-round recognition when it surprised Johnston - as well as more than a dozen Bay Area employees who are Purple Heart recipients - with a shirt honoring his 21 years of military service and 32 years with the post office. The shirts accompanied the reissue of a Purple Heart stamp, which features a close-up of the medal on a white background.

"I'm just honored to have a Purple Heart recipient in my place of employment," Postmaster Tracey Fry DeBell said. "All military people are doing a great service whether they're recognized or not because they're upholding the basis of what the United States was built upon."

Johnston served two nine-month tours in the Army from 1968 to 1970. He was injured in 1969, during his first tour, while he was defending a position at night. Viet Cong fired a rocket-propelled grenade that landed just feet behind him and sprayed shrapnel into and through 28 different places on his body. He was treated for his wounds, but 27 of the pieces of shrapnel remain - enough that he sometimes sets off metal detectors.

While his wartime experiences were sometimes traumatic, Johnston uses them to enrich the office, Fry DeBell said.

"Bob has a way of putting what the majority of us think are crises into the correct perspective by humbly asking if the situation is a life or death matter," she said.

Johnston and his wife - a fellow Vietnam veteran who he met in the reserves - are doing their part to make certain that other veterans and their families are recognized and taken care of dur-

ing and after their service. Whether just helping lift boxes or lending a sympathetic ear, the "little things" make a difference, said San Martin resident Rick Badillo, who was deployed in the Middle East for a year starting Aug. 2005.

"Him being able to step up and help out, it takes a little bit of a weight off," he said.

When military personnel come back, the Johnstons help them readjust to civilian life.

"Combat brings about an appreciation for life because it can be gone that quick," Johnston said. "When you go from these kind of hyper feelings" - he squeezed his fists as though gripping the yoke of a plane in a tailspin - "to quiet, peaceful life - there's a void there. There's an imbalance."

In addition, Johnston brings families closure by exchanging items - such as uniforms, gear or memorabilia taken in combat - with Vietnamese officials. He traveled to Vietnam twice, also exchanging information regarding the possible whereabouts of prisoners of war and people missing in action.

Though Johnston was initially nervous looking out the window of his plane, about to touch down in Hanoi - "the lion's den, the capital city of the enemy" - meeting with former Viet Cong changed his thinking.

"I held no animosity, no hostility toward them," he said. "They were doing the very same thing I had been doing. They were serving their country, trying to stop an enemy. We were both doing a job.

Though he might claim it was just a job, he still put his life on the line for his country and he continues to contribute to its security, wife Barbara Johnston said.

"He's not recognized often enough for what he does and what he participates in," she said.

WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY - March 30

On June 25, 2007, our US Congress unanimous-



ly passed House Resolution 169 [H.Res 169]. On November 9, 2007, our US Senate also unanimously passed Senate Resolution 289 [S. Res 289]. Both Resolutions are titled: WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY. Both Resolutions ask President Bush to proclaim March 30, 2008 as the first national day of recognition for the Vietnam Veterans who were treated poorly and with disregard after completing their service of duty during the Vietnam War and returned home. As all who remember, the Vietnam War was a divisive issue in America, yet it was the Vietnam Veteran who was held responsible for the outcome and the issues of the war. In all, we blamed and punished the messenger for the message. Over three decades have passed since the end of that war, and now finally our US Congress and US Senate leaders have seen the wrong committed and have voted UNANIMOUSLY IN BOTH HOUSES to change the past, by correcting the problem today in the present. In support of these Resolutions, I have mailed to the White House over 20,000 postcards signed by veterans, students and fellow Americans asking the president to give the Vietnam Veteran the day they truly earned and deserve. Now that America, the US Senate and the US Congress have spoken, all that is pending is for the Oval Office to proclaim March 30, 2008 as WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY.

What I am asking of you and the VVA organization is your support and endorsement of both these Resolutions by submitting to the President a letter endorsing our resolutions and asking him to proclaim March 30 NOW, before the date comes and goes and once again the Vietnam Veteran is left behind and forgotten. I also ask you to show your support by publishing an article about both resolutions in your magazine so that ALL who receive your publication are aware that America is proud of ALL IT'S VETERANS and is ready to thank and welcome home those men and women who served with pride, honor and dignity during a very difficult time in American history. If you need any further information about the resolutions or have any questions in regard to my campaign, please feel free to contact me at home: 562.696.3965 or my cell 562.761.2681, you can also visit my web site at www.whvvd.org and of course you can contact Congresswoman Linda T. Sanchez [sponsor of H. Res. 169] at 202.225.6676 or Senator Barbara Boxer [sponsor of S. Res. 289] at 202.224.3553. I thank you in advance for your attention and response to my request. I feel confident that you see and understand the good that these bills will bring not only to the Vietnam Veteran but also to America who understands it is time to heal an old wound. God bless you, GOD BLESS AMERICA AND ALL IT'S VETERANS.

José G. Ramos, founder/team coordinator
www.whvvd.org

WORTH HAVING

By Keith King, President, VVAF

A friend of mine recently told me that the only people who fail are the ones who are out there trying new things or ideas. When we came up with the idea of creating a book for the 25th Anniversary of The Wall, no one was sure it would be a success—not just a financial success but a creative success, and a book we could be proud to call ours.

Bob George is the president of Boston Publishing and a Vietnam veteran. He had the credentials to create the book but had no experience with VVA. We spent many hours talking about the content of this book and its look, its design—every element of it. He spent hours and hours with members of the VVA national staff getting their input and perspective on our issues and what content we should include. The details of creating this book, selling ads to sponsors, and getting it printed and delivered in time for the Parade are mind boggling. The fact that Bob George and his staff pulled this off is a minor miracle. But the final product proves that we truly owe Bob George and his team a debt of gratitude. It is testament to us as veterans, and it honors us and our brothers and sisters on The Wall. But don't take my word for it.

Here is what one Vietnam veteran who read the book had to say: I was handed this copy by a friend at Raytheon who had purchased it. I was asked to deliver it to the Raytheon Library as a gift for all employees to read. I thought that I'd read it before I dropped it off, believing it would be a quick read of just another magazine about the anniversary. I was wrong. I could not put it down. I had to read it from cover to cover. Maybe being a Vietnam veteran clouds my judgment

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1-800-626-8387

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Individual membership is open to Veterans who served on active duty in the US Military (for other than training purposes) from February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975 or from August 5, 1964 and May 7 1975 for Vietnam-era Veterans.

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ email _____

Individual membership or Associate membership Dues:
\$20 for Annual ___ / \$20 for Renewal ___ / \$50 for 3 Year Membership ___

Life Memberships:
\$250 (age 49 and under) \$225 (50-55) \$200 (56-60) \$175 (61-65) \$150 (66+)

For individual membership a DD214 is required if not already on file.

Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America is an adjunct organization with VVA, Both Veterans and non-Veterans may join. If joining AVVA you are eligible to be a member of VVA Yes ___ No ___

Print this page and fill out and mail with DD214 (if needed) to our address above.

If you are a current member, to renew provide your Membership # _____ Chapter _____

a little bit. Maybe non-Vietnam vets, and more probably non-veterans, won't feel the impact that this Commemorative provides. What I can tell you is that this is an emotional manuscript with many very personal letters and stories that will put you on the ground in the '60s. It will also place you into the relationships between mothers and sons, children and fathers, and the friendships prematurely and tragically ended, and the guilt that sometimes followed. And all this was done in 107 pages. If you've never been to The Wall, or have not really understood the reason for it, reading this may help explain why it is so important to all of the families and friends of those whose lives were lost during those years. All 58,256 of those names should not be thought of as just names on stone, but rather as people, whose average age turns out to be around 19.5 years. When you see your reflection in the stone, you can almost imagine it being the face of the person whose name you are looking at. Nearly three million Americans went to serve in-country during those years. They all have their own stories and most of them still do not talk about it. If you visit The Wall, you can see it in their tears. You can also read it in this Commemorative.



NHRA 2008

Melanie Troxel moved to Funny Car in 2008, and introduced the design of her new car at the Winternationals in Pomona, CA, Feb. 7, 2008. The POW/MIA - Vietnam Veteran theme was brought from her 2008 Top Fueler sponsored by Evan Knoll/Torco Racing Fuels. Evan Knoll's health caused him to take 2008 off and the future of the design was unknown, almost right up to the Winternationals. Roger Burgess (top right photo, far right) of ProCare RX, also a Vietnam veteran, took on sponsorship of the car (owned by Mike Asheley). These photos represent just a bit of what the car will be showing to America on the 2008 NHRA Season.



Upcoming races in CA - Sonoma, July 25-27, and back in Pomona, Nov. 13-16. The complete schedule is at: <http://nhra.com/2008/schedule.asp> in case you might be in any of those other race locations.

Come out to a race and see how beautiful the car is, and how proud the team is to represent the POW/MIA families, the Vietnam veterans, and all veterans.



You're out there somewhere...
We owe it to them, and their families to Never Forget.

DID YOU KNOW?
There are still 1,763 US personnel listed by the Department of Defense as missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War.

The most recent identifications brought to 820 the number of US personnel returned since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975.

90% of the 1,763 still missing and unaccounted for were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Laos and Cambodia under Vietnam's wartime control.

At the end of the war, U.S. intelligence and other data confirm that roughly 200 missing Americans were last known alive or reported alive in close proximity to capture. Vietnam knows that these are highest priority cases, directly related to the live prisoner issue, but has accounted for far less than half of these Americans by returning identifiable remains.

After two years of no results from the Vietnamese in 1979-80, during a September 1982 ABC "Nightline" program, the late Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach flatly denied that Vietnam was holding any U.S. remains, as did other senior Vietnamese officials throughout the Carter Administration. Yet, in 1983, Vietnam returned eight remains with clear evidence of storage.

www.pow-miafamilies.org
Please Welcome Our War Veterans.
<http://www.VVA.org>

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

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loyalty
sacrifice
intensity
strength inspirational
hero...bravery
worthy...respect
herorine & heros*



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PO Box 1583
Santa Rosa, CA 95402

(see inside for VVA CA State Council contact info)

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