

# THE VETERAN LEADER

Inaugural Edition 3-2004



All Veterans — All Military  
Welcome

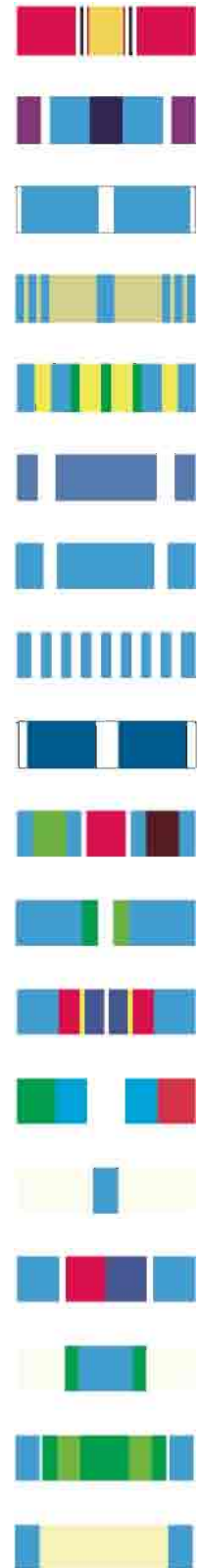


FOR U.S.  
FORCES ONLY:



# Serving All Veterans — All Military

FOR U.S.  
FORCES ONLY:



**Editor and National Commander/Australian Commander:**  
*Peter J. Forbes*

**International Executive Director:**  
*Nancy Verespy*

**National Vice Commander:**  
*Michael T. Breighner*

**National Treasurer:**  
*Frank Amalfitano*

**National Master Sgt-at-Arms:**  
*Michael R. Ackerfeld*

**NATIONAL BOARD MEMBERS:**

Vic Felts  
SFC Robert Haines  
Major Marc Hoffmeister  
Loy Smith

**WEBMASTER:**  
Major Marc Hoffmeister

**VETERAN LEADER POLICY:**  
All submissions for inclusion in the  
*Veteran Leader* must be in *Word* format.

**VETERAN LEADER AD POLICY:**

Full page: \$400.00  
Half page: \$220.00  
Quarter page: \$125.00

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the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition.

**Front cover:**  
Major Marc Hoffmeister prior to his return to the U.S. from the  
Global War on Terrorism. See cover story on page 48.

## ***Vision:***

The Vision of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. (VVnW) is to maintain, improve, preserve and defend the quality of life of all Veterans and their families.

## ***Mission Statement:***

The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. (VVnW) is an international, non-profit, accredited veteran service organization devoted to caring for and empowering all American and Allied Veterans and their families through the following programs: Veterans in Need, Support and Gratitude, Esprit de Corps, Case Management and Advocacy and Veteran and Community Outreach and Education.

## ***Overview***

The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. (VVnW), a benevolent organization founded in 1978, was born out of a need to have the service and special needs of Vietnam War Veterans recognized and acknowledged. Traditional Veterans organizations were unwilling to accept the service of Vietnam Veterans, as well as Veterans of other eras.

Today, VVnW is comprised of posts worldwide sustaining the mission of the organization. VVnW continues to strive, through

its many programs, to maintain, improve, preserve and defend the quality of life of all veterans and their families.

VVnW programs include the United Veterans Beacon House, a transitional homeless veterans housing and reintegration program, Military Support Package Project for military serving overseas and Support Packages to veteran families, Veteran Service Officers (VSOs), Veterans in Conflict with the Law (Incarcerated Veterans), Team Veteran Leader (a competitive military adventure racing team), Veteran information services, casework assistance, counseling resources and referral, 24-hour 1-800-VIETNAM phone line, Veteran Leader newsletter, VVnW websites, Education and Scholarship Programs, FIND-A-VET Locator program to help reunite Vietnam era veterans, Flag Awareness and community services.

VVnW is recognized by the IRS as a 501 (c) (19) non-profit veterans service organization with a federal ID #23-2151579 and manages the Veterans Fund of the United States with an IRS determination of 501 (c) (3) and ID #23-2897794.



# *Peter Forbes*

## *National Commander*

G'Day to all.

As you can see from the retirement letter within, Michael Milne has retired due to ill health. Mike's health has been poor for several years now and I, as National Vice Commander, have been taking up that slack. We thank him for all he has done over the past 24 years and Mike will stay on with the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition as Commander Emeritus so we are sure you will all see him at events and hear from him.

I have taken over as the National Commander by right of line of Command, National Bylaws and previous policies and procedures and will hold that position until 2006 or until the majority of the membership or the National Board of Directors vote me out.

I will make the hard decisions and do the hard yards to spearhead the growing momentum and for the good of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition. I am sure this will not make me all that well liked some of the time, so be it. However, one should look at the performance of the organization before they vote. I have the backing of the National Board of Directors and we are one united. Yes, we have had some concerns and those are remedied.

For those very few who have a problem with an Australian Veteran being in the position, I suggest that you get over it. The Majority of the membership voted me into the position of National Vice Commander and it will only be the Membership or the National Board who will vote me out. This is a membership run organization and will not be dictated by a few

disgruntled suspended members. I was speaking with a few Members the other day and one of them told me that this organization is NOT an exclusive American Veterans organization otherwise it would have in the name "American Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc." It doesn't.

I suspect I have spent too much time on the very few disgruntled ones that have attempted a coup - ones that had personal agendas and could not work for the benefit of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition. These few have had their membership suspended for working against the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition. These same suspended members cannot hold any office or be part of any committee of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition while they are suspended. These few are still out there working against the organization and taking up valuable time from the staff at National time that would be better spent. Don't let these few destroy YOUR organization.

**As our Vision states: "To maintain, improve, preserve and defend the quality of life of all Veterans and their Families." We Are The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition.**

I, along with the National Board, will expect more from all Posts and all Members as our Motto states, we are "**PEOPLE WHO CARE**". We need to live it, breath it, dream about it and make future plans for it - The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & the Veterans Coalition. If that is not



your focus or not your intent then we thank you for past participation and we will move forward.

As always the National-at-Large members are the backbone and the main supporters who pick up the slack when Posts drop the ball. This has been very evident with the Harley Davidson Raffles in support of the Military Support Package National program - A Very Special program that gives unconditional support to Our Messengers of Peace and Freedom! The National-at-Large Members have filled more than their quota.

We have asked and asked Posts to operate Homeless Veterans Food Drives for the United Veterans Beacon House program and Military Support Package goods drives for the Military Support Package program. We have offered to assist them, supply banners and signs, all to no avail. Very few Posts have completed any supportive projects. Over the last two years we have requested posts to perform such a small amount of support for Homeless Veterans - 4 Homeless Veteran food drives per year and for the current serving military, 2 Military Support Package goods drives per year. So far the response has been pathetic and we need to look at our motto of "People Who

Care". It seems like the membership like to be connected to benevolent and humanitarian programs such as the support for homeless veterans through the United Veterans Beacon House Program and they like to take credit for what is done as long as they don't have to do anything. The Posts that do not support the programs of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition will be listed in the Veteran Leader and The Website. This includes the Harley Davidson Raffle ticket sales that support the Military Support Package program.

By now you have seen the new *Veteran Leader* as you have one in your hand if you are reading this. We hope you like it and it will get better and better as we become used to the new format. If you have constructive input as to how we can do it better, please let us know. **All future articles submitted for publication must be in *WORD* format and on disc or via email. Artwork must be camera ready. If not, it will not be published**

Due to Mike's ill health the *Veteran Leader* issues have gotten the better of him. Once we get the one you are reading out, we will get back on track and will utilize adverts to defray the cost of color. However, color is well worth the expense as the Orange Berets stand out so well! We will get back on track.

Orange Berets - These have been discussed at great length due to the addition of The Veterans Coalition to our name and upon discussions with a number of current serving military, they have stated they would wear the orange beret as a mark of respect for the Vietnam Veterans. That is a great mark of respect. So at this stage we will keep only one official headdress - The Orange Beret. Golf hats can be worn anytime.

However, at official functions etc. the Orange Beret is the thing.

The National Board, upon great discussions, took the stand to include in our name *The Veterans Coalition*. This was done so that instead of just saying we embrace all Veterans, we actually live it. Younger Veterans and Veterans of other conflicts would not join for not wanting to impersonate a Vietnam Veteran. This is a great degree of respect, however, it had a double edge to it as it kept Veterans from joining and being served by us, yet we did not want to lose our identity and our roots. "The Veterans Coalition evolved out of a desire to embrace, support, encourage and welcome ALL VETERANS no matter when, where or how they served it just matters that they served!"

You all have received a copy of the new *'Who Are We'* with the ballots. These brochures have taken a great deal of time to put together so that we make a professional presentation to all. We hope you have given the one you received to another Veteran and encouraged them to join.

Major Marc Hoffmeister (pictured on the front cover) and SFC Bob Haines joined the Board some time ago and both are current serving military. Bob served in Iraq during Desert Storm with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne and Marc served in Iraq and Kuwait during The Global War on Terrorism. These two will bring a direct connection to the younger Veterans that we embrace. We thank them for their commitment and their foresight.

New Faces on the Board - They were both chosen due to their focus, for their insight and for their dedication to the causes of Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition. Vic Felts is the Commander of VVnW Texas Post 06, is the State

Coordinator for Texas and is the program coordinator for the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition "Vets Helping Vets" program at the Waco VAMC.

Loy Smith is the Post Commander for VVnW Louisiana Post 04 and has worked diligently for all Veterans and with the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition and the Post is involved heavily with the Community. Loy and his Post have assisted in Working Bees for the United Veterans Beacon House program, Color Guards and presentation projects. The Post runs the "Let Freedom Ring Festival" in Thibodaux, LA amongst other festivals. Loy is one man that lives "People Who Care". He has attended every United Veterans Beacon House Working Bee we have operated.

We thank them for their Commitment to Veterans. Your Board of Directors are doing a superb job in taking Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition forward.

I will close with a quote from our brochure: "WE ARE OUR BROTHER'S KEEPER."

We look forward to your support and the support for the Veterans and their families we have promised to embrace and to empower.

To paraphrase John F. Kennedy: Ask not what the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition can do for you, but rather what have you done for the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition today.

Remember to ask yourself today and each day, "What have I done for a veteran and/or a comrade today?"

Yours in Brotherhood  
Peter J Forbes

# *Nancy Verespy*

## *International Executive Director*

The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. will be celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary of service to veterans and their families in May, 2005. This is truly an event to celebrate considering where the organization started and where it is now.

There will be a National Convention in Washington, D.C. over Veterans Day weekend in November, 2005. I hope you will make your plans to attend.

I would like to tell you that it has been smooth sailing throughout these many years, but the seas have been rough at times even to the hurricane level!

Over this past year, in particular, there have been efforts made to destroy and discredit the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition National Board of Directors. The few have not succeeded. Defending the mistruths that have been distributed worldwide has taken many, many hours of valuable time that could and should be spent on providing services to veterans and their families. We have now taken on those few disgruntled members, suspended those who refuse to work toward the betterment of the organization and continued the process of building the organization to even better strengths and much larger numbers. We could go on and on about who said what, what was alleged and the fact that nothing has been shown to be out of the ordinary, but that would be playing into the hands of a few at the cost to those who need us to do more important things.

We have started many new posts in many areas of the country that had no prior knowledge of the

VVnW & The Veterans Coalition. This took us on many trips both toward the west and the south. We have come to learn of the indignities that Native American Veterans still have to tolerate and we are doing our part to right those wrongs. The Native American Veterans expect nothing, so when they receive nothing, they are not surprised! This cannot be allowed to continue and Peter Forbes and three veteran service officers have traveled to South Dakota and Montana to work directly with veterans as they either continue or begin the process toward getting the benefits they have earned. They will also then follow-up on what is happening with each of the individuals for whom the claims are filed and not leave those veterans behind. The organization will fulfill a commitment to those who served when called, but were then treated no better than hundreds of years ago. This is an example of being "our brother's keepers".

The Military Support Package Program continues because of our commitment to be sure that those who are serving as our messengers of peace and freedom will know that those veterans who have come before them honor their service and support them in their efforts. When the war first began we saw almost every home displaying an American Flag we couldn't keep enough flags in stock. Patriotism was on the top of everyone's list to show their support but now that support is not seen as strongly. Our men and women are returning to the U.S. expecting to see that support and it is sorely lacking. We need to encourage every household to fly their flag and in that same subject we need to get



those who are flying tattered flags to replace them and dispose of the old flag properly. We need to walk the walk, not just talk the talk!

We have received hundreds of letters from soldiers who have received packages from the organization and each one has the same sentiment gratitude that we sent the package and expressing their "hero" worship of Vietnam veterans. They say it is not important really what is in the package, but rather it is just that they got the package at all! We need to continue this program and while it is costly, what better way can we expend our funds than to support these veterans as they do so much for all of us. That's why the efforts of posts and individuals to conduct Military Support Package goods drives is so important just get your church, school or local supermarket to host a Support Day and they can take donations of items or moneys and then also get us the names of individuals to send packages to. We can help with all of these efforts but you need to take the first step.

We travel a great deal now taking the message of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition to areas that

have been unexplored and neglected for us. This may seem like a "fun, vacation" time for those who just see the small picture. Really it is hard work long days - most times from early morning to late at night. The satisfaction comes when you can help a veteran who has never spoken about his experiences of service, who may need a VSO, who want their medals, or who just want to be thanked and welcomed home. It seems especially important to those current serving veterans who come to see us to be welcomed into the veteran brotherhood. We want them to be part of the organization and that was the reason to add to the name of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. by adding & The Veterans Coalition.

Throughout many years we have been told by veterans of other eras that they just did not feel "right" about becoming part of a Vietnam Veterans organization and even though we explained that we represented veterans of all eras it just wasn't enough. That's why the addition has been made and it has increased our membership numbers greatly. We want these veterans. We need them for the future of the organization. We would never want them to know

the feelings that Vietnam Veterans experienced by not being welcomed by the VFW, the American Legion, etc. Of course, we will have some members and posts grumble because they only want to be a "Vietnam Veterans" organization but they have to look at the future and there is none if you limit who you will accept.

We have been doing Working Bees as part of the renovations of the United Veterans Beacon Houses in Shreveport, Louisiana, Norfolk, Virginia and Huntington, West Virginia. We have done everything from plumbing, painting, electrical work, cleaning, scrubbing, and debugging and it provides a great deal of personal satisfaction to know that every single thing we do is done so that a veteran can have a clean, safe, family environment place to live. The exhaustion is forgotten when we know that we are doing the right thing. We need help though if you believe in giving your brother veteran a hand up, not a hand out. We need even a few hours of your time to come to a Working Bee, to do a food drive, to collect items like linens, blankets, beds and dressers to help to provide the things that these veterans may not have had for

many years. They need to know that they are not forgotten and the United Veterans Beacon House is the way that we chose to show that remembrance.

There are so many things that happen each day that bring us a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment and that is what we each must focus on. Destruction will not work - only positive action.

We need to be reminded each day that what we must do is to live up to the motto of the organization by being "People Who Care". It is hard to care much some days, but thank goodness there are so many other days that are positive that it easier to do.

Why do this job? The answer is simple for me I believe that veterans are the stuff that heroes are made of that our young people only need to look to a veteran for a role model and if we don't correct the mistakes of the past we will only repeat them. We can never allow veterans to feel less than proud. We owe it to each of them.

I too ask myself each day "What have I done for a veteran today?"

## *Michael T. Breighner*

### *National Vice Commander*

This will be my first report as National Vice Commander.

I have traveled to Huntington, West Virginia to see our newest United Veterans Beacon House. We spent four days there renovating the house so that we can get our Homeless Veterans moved in. While there we met we the VA representative and also the Vet Center people and have their full support on the Project.

I also traveled to Eagle Butte, South Dakota to recruit and service Native American Veterans. We were involved in several ceremonies and I was honored by the Color Guard by getting my Eagle Feather for all my work for them. It was a Great Honor and I will always try to live up to that honor.



I have been working on Veterans Day event commitments for the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition by attending several meetings in Washington, D.C. The National Veterans Day Committee meets four times each year to make sure that everything is set for Veterans Day and to vote for the artwork that will be made into Pins and Posters. I will be attending the last meeting in October to get all the necessary passes, pins and posters.

## ***Michael Milne*** ***National Commander Emeritus***

Dear Veterans and Friends:

Twenty-five years have passed by so quickly. I never imagined those many years ago that I would still be involved with the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. how wrong I was! Originally we thought that this would just be for a group of Vietnam veterans who had similar health problems due to our exposure to Agent Orange and our difficulties with PTSD.

When we went to join the traditional veterans organizations in our area we were told that we were "not veterans of a foreign war or of any war" and therefore not eligible for membership. That prompted the formation of the organization and while we thought that we would just be a local organization it soon became apparent that Vietnam veterans were looking for an organization to join that would bring them together because of their common interests of Agent Orange exposure, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and the POW/MIA issue. These unresolved issues gave us a common goal and have bound us together for close to twenty-five years. The issues may have changed and expanded but veterans still need assistance that

Since becoming a National Board Member I have always done what is best for the Veterans and this Organization. With that being said I can't believe the way our membership has refused to do food drives to help our homeless veterans through the United Veterans Beacon House Program and also our Military Support Package Program. We, as veterans, have a responsibility to our currently serving men and women and to those who have served.

they cannot get elsewhere.

That one group evolved to posts and members around the world. The VVnW moved forward by joining with Vietnam Veterans Agent Orange Victims International and the Agent Orange Lawsuit when no other organization wanted to get involved; we gained accreditation for the VVnW from the Department of Veterans Affairs for Veteran Service Officers; we have gained associate member status with the Veterans Day National Committee and participate in the ceremonies on Memorial Day and Veterans Day at Arlington National Cemetery which also involves visits to the White House. The VVnW has the United Veterans Beacon House, a transitional housing project for homeless veterans, with homes in Pennsylvania, New York, Virginia, West Virginia, and Texas.

Agent Orange has caused me many personal difficulties and has affected my health now to the point where I can no longer give the hours to or do the travel that is essential to move the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. forward. I have decided to step down as the National Commander effective

We need your support and I hope that you can show that we are truly "People Who Care". Get involved and do something don't just sit back and talk about it!



June 1, 2004 and Peter Forbes, the National Vice Commander of the VVnW, will take over my position and duties. In fact, for some time now, because of my health problems, Peter has been doing the job of both Commander and Vice Commander and doing an excellent job of it.

I wholeheartedly give my support to Peter Forbes as he takes on this position of National Commander, to Nancy Verespy, the National Executive Director, Michael Ackerfeld, the National Master Sgt-at-Arms, Frank Amalfitano, the National Treasurer, and to the National Board Members, Michael Breighner, SFC Robert Haines and Major Marc Hoffmeister. I have no doubt that these individuals will



continue to move the VVnW forward and make that "real" connection to those who are currently serving in the military that is essential to the growth and life of the organization. I expect that you will support Peter and the rest of the Board as you have supported me over the last twenty-five years.

I am proud of what the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. has been able to accomplish. I am proud that we will soon celebrate our twenty-fifth anniversary of service to veterans and their

families. I am proud to be part of an organization that is made up of "People Who Care".

I will not be done with my involvement with the VVnW. I will make every effort to participate in organizational events as they happen but I wanted to leave you with the thoughts of how proud I am to have been given the opportunity to serve my fellow veterans and their families.

I expect that you would keep up the efforts of the organization and build it to larger numbers than

we could have ever imagined those many years ago.

Yours in brotherhood,



Michael Milne

National Commander

"An organization succeeds not because it is long established,

but because there are people in it who live it, sleep it, dream it, and build future plans for it."

## ***Frank Amalfitano*** ***National Treasurer*** ***National Coordinator, United*** ***Veterans Beacon House Project***

As of this publication the United Veterans Beacon House Program, a project of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition, has been received extremely favorably throughout the country.

Your team: Peter Forbes, Nancy Verespy, Loy Smith and Frank Amalfitano have traveled to many states and met with many VVnW members, VA officials and community leaders. We have been to New Mexico, Virginia, Louisiana, Texas, Pennsylvania and West Virginia responding to calls expressing an immediate need for veteran housing. In some areas we have been assisted by post members from TX-06, Waco, TX; LA-04, Thibodaux, LA; Rick Brody, New Jersey VVnW State Coordinator and Post NJ-03 Commander, and Michael Breighner, National Board Member. John Moore from West Virginia was the one National-at-large member who went out of his way to come to West Virginia to give what help he could.

The process to organize and establish a United Veterans Beacon House is a long, arduous and costly process that requires many hours and days of travel and meetings. These projects would not be possible without the support of our membership, through food drives and fund raising. Posts must do more than talk about the worthiness of the UVBH. They must show they support UVBH by having food drives and raising moneys to help the program. We all know anything worthwhile takes a great deal of team effort and funding and the UVBH offers veterans and hand up not a hand out.



Peter and Nancy have spent thankless days on the road putting together UVBH programs and running the organization. Loy has added the much needed support helping with the working bees and traveling when he can. I have my responsibility here at our New York Beacon House program which limits the time I can travel. I stay in touch with all the programs from my office in New York.

We currently have UVBH programs operating in Pennsylvania, New York and Louisiana. We are about to open homes in Huntington, West Virginia and Norfolk, Virginia. The home in West Virginia is scheduled to open in early October which will mean over 180 beds will be available to veterans in need through our VVnW UVBH program. The Virginia home should be operational by December.

We are waiting to hear from the CARES commission with their decision as to the Waco, Texas project, which will be on the VA campus. CARES will determine how and when we open a home in Waco. We are also planning to expand the Pennsylvania program, and I am proud to report that Robert Snyder who currently overseas the Akron, Pennsylvania Beacon

House, has agreed to manage. The Pennsylvania program will be unique in that we will be establishing homes in different cities throughout the state.

Any VVnW member who would like to speak to me for more details, please feel free to contact me directly at the following number 631-665-1571, Monday thru Friday between 9a.m. and 5pm.

Thanks to all our members for all your efforts and support. VVnW members are forever giving.

My duties as VVnW & The Veterans Coalition Treasurer require that I oversee the funding processes of the organization. This task is a complicated one that requires many hours of time by the National Executive Director. We contract for an independent audit each year and for an accountant to file our state registrations for fund-raising in all states that require registration. We are always looking for new, innovative ways to raise funds to run the many varied and worthwhile projects of the organization and would welcome

suggestions from members as to viable ways to do this. Each post has been sent thirty tickets to sell on the fundraiser of a 2005 Harley Davidson Road King classic and trailer and the response has been limited. The response seems to be - why should we be doing this for National? The answer is simple you are not doing this for National you are doing this so that programs that benefit veterans like the United Veterans Beacon House and the Military Support Package Program can continue. These projects take money and the portion of the post dues that comes to National does not even come close to covering any of these programs. By becoming posts of the organization you have made a commitment to support the National Programs and we would suggest that if you want to be associated with programs that are successful you do something to make that happen. When is your next UVBH food drive? When is your next goods drive for the Military Support Package program? What are you doing to help?

***Michael Ackerfeld***  
***National Board Member***  
***National Master Sergeant-at-Arms***  
***National Veterans Service Officer Report (NVSO)***

As the National Veterans Service Officer I operate and oversee the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition office at the Veterans Administration Medical Center at Northport, NY. I supervise several veterans service officers (VSOs) all volunteers. The offices are in operation Monday through Friday from 8:00 am until 4:00pm. We also make appointments for evenings and Saturdays based on the need of the client. We file many claims for these veterans to include applications for service connection disability, applications for increases in service connected disability and original applications for non-service connected veterans pension. We also provide information on all veterans benefits to veterans, their wives, widows and dependent children. We also provide counseling services in regard to federal and state veterans benefits.

The office manager and VSO is Jeremiah Simpson, and he is assisted by Alan E. Peers, full time

VSO and Carol Herbst part time VSO. All of the VSOs are accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Recently Jeremiah Simpson and Alan Peers accompanied Peter Forbes, the National Commander, on a two-week trip to South Dakota and Montana where they assisted Native American veterans with the claims process within the Department of Veterans Affairs. It is apparent that this group of veterans has been overlooked and under-served by the VA and the goal of the National Commander was to fulfill a commitment to these veterans to be sure that they had the best assistance in either opening a new claim, updating an existing claim and generally getting information that would get them the benefits they deserve. By taking Jeremiah and Alan it was certain that the best claims assistance would be provided and including Robert "Kim" King (Post Commander, MT-01, Fort Belknap, MT, VSO and National Native American Veteran



Coordinator for The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition) in the process the Native American veterans received the "best" and all claims will be followed through to completion. American Indian veterans seem to expect nothing so when they get nothing they are not at all surprised! The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition will do what others have failed to do we will help these veterans.

As the NVSO, I also oversee the office at the Norwich, Connecticut Vet Center. The office is managed by Ms. Penelope Kabisch. Ms. Kabisch was personally trained by me and

worked under my supervision for over two years. She single handedly operates her office independently with assistance from me as needed. She sees as many as 200 clients per month. VVnW & The Veterans Coalition assists her with all of her expenses as she receives no salary from the organization and works in excess of 40 hours per week.

I am currently training Noberto Quintana who is retiring to Puerto Rico. There are four VA hospitals in Puerto Rico. It is my intent to have a VVnW service office in all of the VAs in Puerto Rico. It is my desire to open at least one VVnW service office in every state of the United States.

## ***Victor Felts***

### ***National Board Member***

### ***Texas State Coordinator***

Hello, my name is Victor Felts and I am one of the VVnW and The Veterans Coalition National Board Members. I received a call from National the other day and was asked to write a column for the new VVnW and The Veterans Coalition publication. The subject was "what I have done or accomplished as a National Board Member?".

Well, I have to say my response could have been very quick because, I am only an interim board member who is running for reelection, and I have held this position for a very short period of time.

The title National Board Member has allowed me to accomplish one thing in my state (Texas) that I do feel proud about and believe can lead to bigger and better things in the future. I have started a statewide coalition. This coalition consists of the majority of the service organizations in the state of Texas. Not only is VVnW and The Veterans Coalition a part of this coalition but other organizations like the VFW, Purple

I owe a great deal of gratitude to the Veterans of the Vietnam War and the board of directors who have stood behind me one hundred percent. Without their backing and support and encouragement I would be unable to have the success that I have enjoyed up until now. I recently met with the National Commander Peter Forbes, and Executive Director Nancy Verespy and have received their full support as well as the support of the National Directors.

As the National Master Sgt-at-Arms I have responsibilities that establish the tone for the meetings of the National Board of Directors. I provide backup support for the National Commander and other board members and maintain order at all meetings. While the position

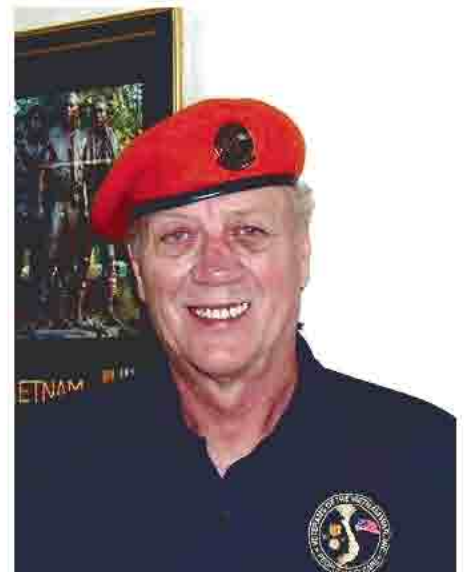
Heart Association, Marine Corps League and many others have all came together. We call it the Veterans Advocate Coalition.

Our board consists of the state commanders of these organizations and me. I am the Texas State Coordinator and a NATIONAL BOARD MEMBER for VVnW and The Veterans Coalition and I am the chairman of this organization.

We have two goals. The first is to keep our local VA open. The CARES Commission targeted seven hospitals to be closed throughout the United States and three of them are in the state of Texas. The Waco VA is one of them. This hospital is one of the few complete mental hospitals left within the VA's health care system and it is the hospital that I and 47,000 other veterans use in this part of Texas. It also has one of the best PTSD units in the entire United States. We believe that the VA is making a mistake when this hospital was chosen to be closed. As a matter of fact, almost all the

of Master Sgt-at-Arms does not appear to have much significance or importance in the operation of an organization maintaining the decorum of the business meetings of an organization the size of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition is an integral part of what is necessary to allow the National Board Members to conduct the important business of the organization. If order were not maintained there would be chaos and those we work for, veterans and their families, would not receive the full attention they deserve.

It is my honor to have been elected to the position of National Master Sgt-at-Arms and I will continue to fulfill my obligations of office.



hospitals targeted to be closed have large mental facilities.

We believe that not only the current veterans but the future veterans that are now in harm's way will need this hospital. According to the Surgeon General approximately 20% of the troops now deployed suffer from acute stress disorder and for the first time in the history of the US we have women in combat environments. The VA has no real facilities to treat woman for combat related trauma. That is one of many of the reasons we want to keep this hospital open.

The Central Texas area has one of the highest veteran populations in the United States. That is because Fort Hood, the largest military installation in the United States is at our backdoor and percentage wise, according to population, the Central Texas area has a very large homeless veteran population. The city of Waco, Texas has a population of only 100,000 and we have an estimated 1500 homeless veterans. This city really does not know how many homeless veterans we have and the Central Texas area has no real idea of the real number in our area, we just know that it is high. That is the Veterans Advocate Coalition's second goal - to become an informal partner of the VA and work on this problem.

Well that is what I have done as a National Board Member. I used the title to get me in the door with the other service organizations. I believe that minor accomplishments can become major ones when there is desire and commitment, and that is something I do have. What veteran advocate has not thought of what you could accomplish if the service organizations, just once, really started working together? I and two other VVnW members have accomplished this to some extent. When we talk to the VA they know that we don't represent hundreds or even thousands but we represent hundreds of thousands. As the old saying goes there is strength in numbers. And just dream for a second - if we can accomplish this in Texas and make progress maybe the surrounding states will try it to. Who knows? Maybe in the future the service organizations will realize what can really be done when the veteran population begins to work together; at least I and members of my post are willing to try.

As the Texas State Coordinator I have started a new post, TX-03, in Mesquite, Texas and have worked with other posts not only in Texas but in some of the

surrounding states. I am always trying to recruit new posts for the VVnW and The Veterans Coalition. I have sent out many packages and when able, will follow up on them. But to be honest, that is what a state coordinator is supposed to do. So to me, this is no great accomplishment. I was doing my job and I hope to be able to do it better in the future.

Also, there is one project I was involved in that I am very proud about. And this is a we, not an I because it took a coordinated effort, a large effort to accomplish this. So I believe in giving credit where credit is due. As a post commander I am very proud of the members of post TX-06.

I am service connected for PTSD. I have been in treatment for this disorder for something like 15 years. In 1991 I went through the inpatient program for PTSD at the Waco VA and have been in their outpatient treatment ever since. Approximately 3 to 4 years ago a few of us realized that many veterans had many questions and concerns that the staff could not answer. So myself, TX-06, Vice Commander John Robertson and two VA employees decided to start a peer support program - basically just one vet helping another vet, hence our name, "Vets Helping Vets" (VHV). This was something we did for our hospital, but VHV has grown. This year from a small number of veterans working with other veterans VHV was chosen by the VA to attend the "VA/Best Practice/ Boston Mental Health Conference" to participate. Only the best new practices in the VA are invited to attend this conference and we only started with approximately four individuals.

From these veterans and the two VA employees we have accomplished many things. We have our own computer lab with veterans as instructors. There is a music therapy room, a learning and study room with tutors available

for those who need one. An activity room where a veteran can come for a cup of coffee and some conversation. We run several peer support groups and one of our groups is being used in several cities in the communities in the Central Texas Area. We allow anyone who is a victim of trauma to attend these groups. This is our way of working with the community.

And last but not least I have to say how we became a post of VVnW and The Veterans Coalition because we owe a lot to VVnW. When VHV started we ran into lots of red tape. No one at the VA ever thought that we would succeed. So, we decided to become a service organization.

At this time there were only about 12 of us working with VHV. I emailed all the major service organizations about becoming a post. I explained to all of them that we all had PTSD problems. No one seemed to want to work with a group of vets who all suffered from PTSD and had this crazy dream that they could do something for their fellow veterans. And then on a Sunday, I received an email from Nancy saying they would be glad to have us as a post - the first 25 members of TX-06 all suffered from 100% PTSD. Now that VHV has become a success and is spreading to other hospitals many service organizations want to get on board. But we remember our friends and the ones who stood behind us when no one else would. So we thank VVnW and The Veterans Coalition for sticking with us, because we will stick with you.

And that is what I have accomplished since I have been involved with VVnW. And for my fellow members who read this, please remember one thing - Nothing is impossible, and even the smallest dreams can become reality. If you really want to help your fellow veterans, then just do it.

# *Major Marc Hoffmeister*

## *National Board Member*

I became involved with the Veterans of the Vietnam War Inc. in 2002 as a direct result of the organization choosing to sponsor our adventure racing team in the Armed Forces ECO Challenge. The race was a fundraiser for the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS). The outpouring of support for the team and our goals from VVNW was amazing and totally unexpected. As an active duty Army officer, I had spent precious little thought on the idea of veteran's organizations or of the critical role they could play in my future. After the race, my relationship with VVNW blossomed. I realized how I could play a crucial role in the future of the organization by effectively linking active duty service members with the VVNW. The goal seemed pretty simple...involve today's soldiers TODAY, reduce the generation gap between the Vietnam era and our newest veterans and educate our soldiers about their future and how veteran's service organization can influence it.

I have since taken on the mission of recruiting our newest generation of veterans in many different forums. The first efforts came through the continued aggressive exposure of our adventure racing team...we like to think that some day we can rival the marketing skills of the Army teams on the NASCAR circuit. Okay, so we may have a ways to go. I've also been actively involved in educating my fellow service members on the purpose and potential of the organization. Just like I once thought, most service members don't think much about joining a veteran's organization.

It's more about living in the moment then, suddenly, you're a veteran and these issues really do matter! In an effort to help break down that barrier, I managed to convince my brigade commander to support an all military 24 hour adventure race out of Fort Carson, CO. The race was a huge success and involved the entire brigade. (you can read about it online at [www.theveteranscoalition.org/teammveteranleader](http://www.theveteranscoalition.org/teammveteranleader) ) Over 80 competitors, 150 support personnel, and tons of involved spectators. Everyone walked away from the event with a new found appreciation for the questionable sanity of a certain Major and with a solid understanding of who the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. are and with no doubt that they are People Who Care!

I spent the last year overseas serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom pretty much as an overworked REMF (yeah, you all know what that means), serving as a planner for the Coalition Forces Land Component Command. I was staged primarily in Kuwait and traveled frequently to support our operations, spending time in Iraq, Afghanistan, Qatar, and Uzbekistan. During the year, I continued to reach out to people and educate them about what we do. I helped coordinate the global 24 Hour Run For The Troops, a fund raiser which involved around 150 people worldwide and raised several thousand dollars to help with the Military Support Package Program. We had over 100 of those runners right there in Kuwait, doing hot, dusty laps around a track in 110+ degree heat. It was quite the experience....and almost all of them are now members of the



VVNW and the Veterans Coalition. Stories of the run are also posted online.

Throughout my time with the organization, I have continued to try and creatively market the organization by leveraging all means available. As the VVNW Webmaster, I spend many hours in maintaining the VVNW websites and bulletin boards, and I'm always looking for ideas to improve, so please send them my way!

During the last year, I was asked to become a board member to fill the remaining tenure of a vacant slot. I was both honored and humbled by the request. I thought about my motivations for serving the Veterans Coalition and found the answer quite simple. As Veterans, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines, we are a special brotherhood. We share a common experience and a common bond that must never be forgotten. The VVNW and the Veterans Coalition are both an investment in the future and recognition of the past. Our organization is symbolic of that bond and I treasure the opportunity to serve it. Thank you for that privilege.

# ***SFC Robert Haines***

## ***National Board Member***

Hello, I'm SFC Bob Haines. I am an Infantry Non Commissioned Officer with the U.S. Army. I am currently stationed at Fort Carson, Colorado (even though I don't spend much time there these days). I have the unique mission of training National Guard units to deploy to Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. I say unique because this is the first time in the Army's history that we are training everybody up front close quarter combat skills.

To share a little about myself, I entered active duty on 23 March 1985. I have served in every position in an Infantry Rifle Platoon. I have been assigned as a Recruiter and a Drill Sergeant (I know, the Army loves me). I have been married for the last fifteen years to my beautiful wife, Pamela and we have a 12-year-old son, Cody. I will soon graduate with a Bachelors Degree in Business Administration from Columbia College, and I have a ton of military schools that I won't bore you with. I am a member of Team Veteran Leader the Adventure Race team, and recently was named as a National Board Member for the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and the Veterans Coalition.

I got to know VVnW through a little race we have in the military called the Armed Forces ECO Challenge, a brutal multisport race held in Alaska. VVnW stepped up and helped sponsor our team to compete. Now to this point I had been in the Army for about 15 years and been deployed to many countries and Desert Shield/Desert Storm and I have never joined a Veterans organization. I thought I didn't need to, my thinking was that they were for old guys from WWII and Korea. Well, upon my first phone conversation with Nancy Verespy and Peter Forbes I was hooked. I was never so wrong about the need for veterans helping veterans. The thing that impressed me about VVnW is they really live their motto, "People Who Care." That was it for me, that's what was missing from the other organizations that I had read about. They care about each and every person that walks through the door or calls on the phone.

The VVnW and Veterans Coalition have given me a chance to pay back a huge debt that all of us owe. That debt is for every Soldier, Sailor, Airmen, and Marine that has ever raised their hand and walked into harm's way. I had an empty spot on my heart and carried a lot of guilt because of feelings I was not contributing enough of myself to those that came before me. Through this wonderful organization I



now have a way to preserve the sacrifices, challenges, and honor that those special groups have bestowed upon us. I choose to serve my brothers and sisters in arms, to give a hand up when needed and service without reward.

So, what's the most important program that VVnW and The Veterans Coalition has? ALL OF THEM! They are all needed from the United Veterans Beacon Houses to the Incarcerated Veterans to the Support Package program. Men and Women, realize that with the fighting that we as a country are doing right now we need to maintain the service that we can provide for the veterans that are among us now and another generation of young veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. We have a lot of work to do. I'm ready, are you?

I will be retiring from active duty soon, but that means that I can only increase my efforts towards this organization. I will be training in the near future to be a Veterans Service Officer so I can further help our veterans get the assistance and services that they are entitled to. I am here for you, as a soldier, as a board member and friend. Please, I would love to hear from anyone in the Organization. I can be reached at 719-510-1298 (cell) or email me at [robert.haines@adelphia.net](mailto:robert.haines@adelphia.net) or [bob.haines@us.army.mil](mailto:bob.haines@us.army.mil).

I will close with a prayer for safety and courage for our men and women "over there" which in today's military could be one of over 100 countries. I also would pray for the membership of VVnW and the Veterans Coalition that we would work together to provide the very best for our heroes, Veterans.

## **Loy Smith**

### **National Board Member**

As a new National Board Member, I would like to share with you some of my experiences with the Beacon House Program. My first experience was with the Beacon House in Shreveport, Louisiana. When I first saw it, I knew we were in for a lot of hard work. Myself and three other members of Post LA 04, Leroy Chernier, Johnny Guillot and Ivy Louviere, were ready to take on the job with other VVnW members from Texas and Pennsylvania. No matter how hard we worked, we just couldn't out do Nancy Verespy and Peter Forbes who made sure everything run smoothly. The Beacon House is now up and running.

My second experience was working on the Beacon House in Huntington, West Virginia. Although it isn't as big as the building in Shreveport, it was still quite a challenge. We were able to accomplish a lot in our first trip in August, but were not quite able to complete all of the necessary repairs needed. On our next trip in September we were successful in accomplishing all of our goals.

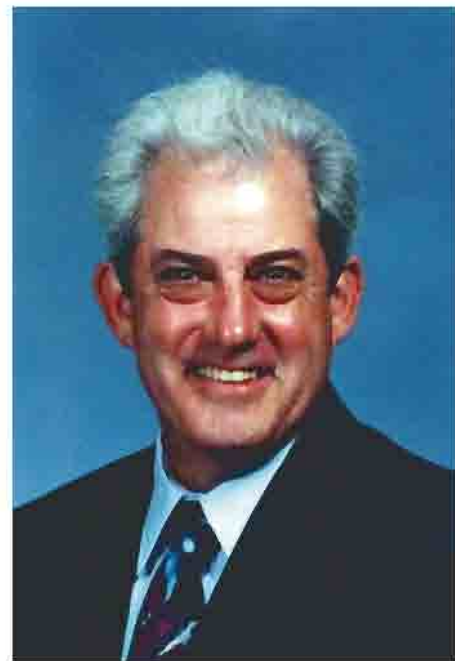
Even though the work is hard and time consuming, it is well worth the satisfaction knowing that

I have been able to help in some way, veterans that are less fortunate than myself. I am very pleased to have met so many hard working and dedicated people since I have been working on the Beacon House committee. I invite all of you to give your time and skills to work on a Beacon house in your area.

I am also Commander of Post LA 04, in Thibodaux, Louisiana. The post is very involved in the community of Thibodaux and surrounding areas. We help sponsor the "Let Freedom Ring Festival" which is held each year on the 4th of July. The Festival is free to the public with great food, live music, auction, games for everyone and ends with a tremendous fire works display. We start the day at 6:00 a.m. by cooking breakfast for all police personnel, firemen, E.M.T.'s and anyone else that happens to drop by.

For the Christmas Season, along with the Chamber of Commerce, we decorate the Canal St. Bridges crossing over Bayou Lafourche.

Each year our Post sponsors two scholarships to Thibodaux High JR. R.O.T.C. Senior Cadets.



Our Color Guard has participated in numerous opening ceremonies held in Thibodaux and the surrounding areas and we have had a food drive within our Post for the Beacon House in Shreveport.

We promote flag awareness and we hold flag disposal ceremonies for our local Boy Scouts. We have the Scouts participate in the ceremonies.

So as you can see we are busy with the business of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition and feel that we do make a difference for veterans and our communities. We are proud to be part of a group of "PEOPLE WHO CARE".

## **Important Notice About Your GI Bill Benefits**

**GI Bill Benefits have increased. Starting 1 October 2004, full-time students with GI Bill benefits can get over \$1000 per month to cover the cost of their education.**

**This increase could mean you have as much as \$36,000 to pay for your education. The GI Bill provides up to 36 months of education benefits for:**

- a. College, Business, Technical or Vocational Courses**
- b. Distance Learning including Correspondence Courses**
- c. Certification Tests**
- d. Apprenticeship/Job Training**
- e. Flight Training**

**If you are interested in taking advantage of your GI Bill benefits, you can receive information from military-friendly schools. These schools have trained admissions counselors who understand the GI Bill**

**Thomas A. O'Connor, Esquire**  
**Law Office of Thomas A. O'Connor, PC**  
**398 Wyoming Avenue**  
**PO Box 1829**  
**Kingston, PA 18705**  
**Fax: 570-714-1210**

It has come to my attention over the last several months that members of our organization have made various allegations against the administration of the National Organization and many of the individuals who were connected to the administration of the Organization.

There have been threats of investigations by local, state, and federal authorities and also of further legal actions which would be undertaken. I wish to report to you that I, as the National Legal Advisor, have not been informed or know of any investigation

concerning any alleged wrongdoings or improprieties of anyone connected with the present National Organization either by way of an appointed position or by way of an elected office.

As many of you may know, I have been associated with the National Organization in excess of twenty years. I have found that the current administration is just as hard working, if not more so than past administrations and to have been diligently fulfilling the mission of the organization. We are continuing to reach out to all veterans of all eras and it is my belief that this is being accomplished.

If anyone has any questions regarding any actions taking place on behalf of the organization, they should feel free to contact the



National Organization and they will get true answers instead of just rumors.

Also, if anyone wishes to contact me regarding any matters, please feel free to do so. I can be contacted at the address and fax number shown above.



## ***NEW POSTS NEEDED!***

**We want you ...**

The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition is always looking for people who would like to start new post in their area.

### **What does it take?**

Twenty-five members are needed to establish a post and get an organizational charter. These members can be veterans of any era along with interested citizens, wives, significant others as long as at least 75% of the post is made up of veterans.

**If you are interested, give us a call at 1-800-843-8626  
and we will send you an information packet.**

**Remember that we are looking for dedicated, energetic people  
who are willing and prepared to work for a good cause.**

**Is that you? Call 1-800-843-8626.**

**Join the growing Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition  
serving veterans and their families for over 25 years.**



# *Veteran Leader Adventure Racing Team*

## *Major Marc Hoffmeister, Team Captain*

Among a sea of veterans' organizations and programs targeted towards the betterment of the lives of our veterans, the Veterans Coalition is proud to support a program of a different strain.

Many organizations are challenged by the stereotypes of our citizens. Young soldiers rarely think of participating in a veteran's organization as though such organizations are comprised purely of soldiers from a by-gone era. Membership often occurs too late, after a veteran has moved beyond their service experience. Realization of the importance of membership and of the value served by veteran's organization in defense of soldier and veteran rights and liberties comes only after the need has arisen and issues have occurred.

Team Veteran Leader seeks to eliminate the perception of a generation gap and to educate our citizens about the value and sacrifice of our veterans as well as our serving military by integrating the organization into our nation's collective conscience in a surprisingly informal way...through recreational competition.

Team Veteran Leader is an Adventure Racing team comprised of a rotational base of Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve Service Members, Veterans, and family members of the above who share the common experience of service to our nation and membership to the Veterans Coalition. This is not simply a team sponsored by the Veteran's Coalition; we are an intimate part of the organization. We are also a group of dedicated athletes who share in a common mission:

1. To honor the veterans of our Armed Forces, past and present, for dedicating a part of their lives to the defense of our nation and its allies
2. To demonstrate by performance and example that no obstacle is so great that the human spirit cannot overcome it
3. To promote awareness of the goals and mission of the Veterans of the Vietnam War and the Veterans Coalition, Inc to the veterans of our Armed Forces as well as civilians and serving members of Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve Forces.

But how does adventure racing relate to a veterans organization? Adventure racing is a unique, multi sport team competition commonly comprised of orienteering, mountain biking, paddling, cross country trekking and rappelling. Races may be as short as a few hours and a dozen miles or last over a

week and cover several hundred miles. It is a grueling endurance competition where teams must navigate the course non stop and successfully complete the course without losing a team member to the ordeal. Races are designed to be an extreme challenge both physically and mentally and subject team dynamics to the ultimate test. Should a team lose a team member or fail to find a required checkpoint, they fail to complete the course. Success in adventure racing requires many of the same skills and values that make our military a success on the battlefield. Loyalty, personal courage, and selfless service enable team success. In competition, Team Veteran Leader strives to always exemplify the spirit and the strength of our Nation's military. Our team motto which encircles our team logo is an excerpt of the Soldier's Creed, further reinforcing our responsibility to uphold the traditions of those who have served before us.

When we compete, we bear not only the burden of competition, but a mission of awareness and education. As a team, we dedicate every race to a fallen soldier to honor their sacrifice for our nation. This tradition began with the Armed Forces Eco Challenge in 2002, which we dedicated to Medal of Honor recipient CPT Humberto "Rocky" Versace. Stephen Versace, Rocky's brother, was touched by our desire to honor Rocky nearly 40 years after his loss. Stephen asked the team to attend the post-humous Medal of Honor presentation by President Bush at the White House. Humbled by the experience and the impact our dedication had on Rocky's family, we have preserved the tradition ever since. It has grown increasingly meaningful to us as soldiers in light of the events of the Global War on Terrorism and our personal experiences during the war. We have all lost friends and we understand the importance of remembering them and acknowledging the selflessness of their service to our nation and to the world. This is our small way of ensuring our fellow soldiers are never forgotten. In August 2003, the team dedicated its 2nd place finish in the 400 mile USA Supreme Adventure Race in Park City, Utah to USMC SSGT James Cawley, a reserve marine who was killed in Nasiriyah, Iraq on 29 Mar 2003. Cawley was a Salt Lake City, UT Police Officer before being deployed and members of his SWAT team attended the race to talk with us and reminisce about their memories of Jim. Not only do we recognize the sacrifice of these brave men, but we also recognize the sacrifice endured by the friends and families who have stood by their side in supporting them in the defense of our nation. We grieve with them and we carry their pride



in these fine soldiers as our inspiration on the race course. In March 2004, the team won its division in the Bataan Memorial Death March at White Sands Missile Range, NM, racing in honor of Michael "Bud" Campbell, a death march survivor who passed away in 1996. A native Assininboine Indian, Bud's family and his tribe contacted us and requested we represent his memory in the race, and we were honored by the privilege.

While racing is our mainstream effort to involve people in supporting our troops and our veterans, the team is also very active in the military community. We go to great lengths to expand the horizons of our soldiers by providing them opportunities to experience the world of adventure racing and endurance competition. In 2003, the team orchestrated the Dagger Challenge, a 24 hour Adventure Race for soldiers based out of Fort Carson, CO. With 80 racers and over 100 military support personnel, the race course traversed the mountains of Colorado and challenged the competitors to push their own perceptions of personal limitations in order to complete the course. A resounding success, the race

not only taught the soldiers significant lessons about themselves, it also trained them in many of the skills essential to sustainment in a harsh and resource limited environment. Many of these soldiers deployed shortly after the race to Operation Iraqi Freedom where these skills proved invaluable.

In 2004, in an effort to both raise awareness and to raise donations to support the Veterans Coalition Military Support Package Program, the team coordinated and executed a 24 Hour Run for the Troops. This event was a globally synchronized run to highlight the participation of our coalition partners in the Global War on Terrorism. For 24 consecutive hours starting simultaneously at 1200 hrs Greenwich Mean Time on 29 May, participants ran continuously in 4 different countries and 8 different states. The run took place in England, Australia, the US and Kuwait, included over 150 runners and raised almost \$10,000 towards the Military Support Package Program. To add to the expeditionary flair of the run, the entire event was coordinated by Team Veteran Leader's founder while he was deployed to Kuwait and Iraq as a Future Operations Planner serving with the Coalition Forces Land

Component Command (CFLCC).

Team Veteran Leader aspires to advance the Veterans Coalition and its goals by continued competition on a National and International scale and by advancing its direct support to our soldiers and veterans. Future goals include the development of rehabilitation programs to assist veterans as they reintegrate into society by doing what we do best....enabling them to enjoy the outdoors. Specially designed clinics to teach mountain bike, white water paddling, rope skills and wilderness training will be coupled with social interaction amongst a peer group trained and experienced to help veterans cope with the scars of their wartime service. Another goal of the team is to host a specially designed adventure race directly targeted at our

soldiers who have lost limbs during combat action. Success in this endeavor will provide competitors the realization that the limitations of their new lifestyles are far less than they had perceived, enabling them to move on and pursue the dreams and goals which they may have pushed to the sideline during the battle for recovery.

As a team, we strive to lead by example and educate through experience. We have had modest success in competition and have been featured in a variety of print, internet, and television features for both our competitive performance and our involvement in veterans' affairs. Our true success, however, lies in those we touch and those we inspire. This has been our greatest success and one which we will continue to pursue as guardians of freedom and the American way of life.

## ***Toll Free Numbers For Contacting the VA***

VA Benefits: 1-800-827-1000

- Education • Home Loan • Disability • Medical Care
- Burial • Life Insurance • Sexual Trauma

Life Insurance: 1-800-669-8477

Education (GI Bill): 1-800-442-4551

Health Care Benefits: 1-877-222-8387

Income Verification and Means Testing: 1-800-929-8387

Mammography Helpline: 1-888-492-7844

Gulf War/Agent Orange Helpline: 1-800-749-8387

Status of Headstones and Markers: 1-800-697-6947

Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD): 1-800-829-4833

For health care services, contact your nearest VA Medical Facility

# Flashback

By Bob Kearney and Peter Haran

The true story of Australian Diggers in South Vietnam - Australia's longest war. Soldiers who pay the ultimate price in war cannot be forgotten for, as it should be their names are carved in stone.

In the jungles and on the dusty tracks of South Vietnam many young Australians were involved in shocking incidents that even today remain imbedded in their minds, they know there are worse things than dying.

Bob and Peter have written Flashback not to glorify war but to pay tribute to those who were physically, psychologically and or spiritually wounded forever, and yet today as is often the case with men wounded in battle are to a large extent forgotten. There were men who suffered horrific injuries, too gruesome to detail. Unimaginable injuries and pain that to some of them seemed far worse than a quick clean death.

They "survived" and were returned to Australia, mangled and permanently damaged only to spend the remainder of their shortened, difficult lives suffering "Flashbacks" while their loved ones tried desperately to understand.

The authors, Peter Haran and Robert Kearney pay tribute to Veterans of all Wars, particularly the "forgotten wounded."



## RECOMMENDATION:

Bob Kearney and Peter Haran's first book Crossfire was a down to earth look at Bob's first tour of Vietnam. It was a treat to read and for all those who had not experienced the war in Vietnam it gave ease of reading and understanding.

Their second book "Flashback" is even a superior look at the same war, just another tour "Same Shit, Different Day".

I have known Bob for over 32 years and served with and was befriended by Bob during his second tour in Vietnam with 7th Platoon, Charlie Coy, 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment.

I have known Peter for over twelve years and they both are to be congratulated on a job well done.

Make the effort to buy the book and enjoy the "real" stories of Vietnam. You won't be disappointed. I am privileged to call these two men my veteran brothers.

Yours in Brotherhood,

Peter J. Forbes



Note: For orders contact [vvwnatl@epix.net](mailto:vvwnatl@epix.net)



IRAQ WAR VETERAN COALITION

# ***This Marine Is Tired***

## ***From: Kevin Brown USNA '01***

Dad, you asked me what I would say to America from Iraq on 9/11 if I had a podium and a microphone. I have thought about it, and here is my response.

Your Son,  
Kevin



September 11, 2004

Dear America,

"People sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf."

-George Orwell

The Marine Corps is tired. I guess I should not say that, as I have no authority or responsibility to speak for the Marine Corps as a whole, and my opinions are mine alone. I will rephrase: this Marine is tired. I write this piece from the sands of Iraq, west of Baghdad, at three a.m., but I am not tired of the sand. I am neither tired of long days, nor of flying and fighting. I am not tired of the food, though it does not taste quite right.

I am not tired of the heat; I am not tired of the mortars that occasionally fall on my base. I am not tired of Marines dying, though all Marines, past and present, mourn the loss of every brother and sister that is killed; death is a part of combat and every warrior knows that going into battle. One dead Marine is too many, but we give more than we take, and unlike our enemies, we fight with honor. I am not tired of the missions or the people; I have only been here a month, after all. I am, however, tired of the hypocrisy and short-sightedness that seems to have gripped so many of my countrymen and the media. I am tired of political rhetoric that misses the point, and mostly I am tired of people "not getting it."

Three years ago I was sitting in a classroom at Quantico, Virginia, while attending the Marine Corps Basic Officer Course, learning about the finer points of land navigation. Our Commanding Officer interrupted the class to inform us that some planes had crashed in New York and Washington D.C., and that he would return when he knew more. Tears welled in the eyes of the Lieutenant on my right while class continued, albeit with an audience that was not very focused; his sister lived in New York and worked at the World Trade Center. We broke for lunch, though instead of going to the chow hall proceeded to a small pizza and sub joint which had a television. Slices of pizza sat cold in front

of us as we watched the same vivid images that you watched on September 11, 2001. I look back on that moment now and realize even then I grasped, at some level, that the events of that day would alter both my military career and my country forever. Though I did not know that three years later, to the day, I would be flying combat missions in Iraq as an AH-1W Super Cobra pilot, I did understand that a war had just begun, on television for the world to see, and that my classmates and I would fight that war. After lunch we were told to go to our rooms, clean our weapons and pack our gear for possible deployment to the Pentagon to augment perimeter security. The parting words of the order were to make sure we packed gloves, in case we had to handle bodies.

The first Marine killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom was in my company at The Basic School, and was sitting in that land navigation class on September 11.

He fought bravely, led from the front, and was killed seizing an oil refinery on the opening day of the war. His heroism made my emergency procedure memorization for the T-34 primary flight school trainer seem quite insignificant. This feeling of frustration was shared by all of the student pilots, but we continued to press on. As one instructor pointed out to us, "You will fight this war, not me. Make sure that you are prepared when you get there." He was right; my classmates from Pensacola are here beside me, flying every day in support of the Marines on the ground. That instructor has since retired, but I believe he has retired knowing that he made a contribution to the greatest country in the history of the world, the United States of America.

Many of you will read that statement and balk at its apparently presumptuous and arrogant nature, and perhaps be tempted to stop reading right here. I would ask that you keep going, for I did not say that Americans are better than anyone else, for I do not believe that to be the case. I did not say that our country, its leaders, military or intelligence services are perfect or have never made mistakes, because throughout history they have, and will continue to do so, despite their best efforts.

The Nation is more than the sum of its citizens and leaders, more than its history, present, or future; a nation has contemporary values which change as its leaders change, but it also has timeless character, ideals forged with the blood and courage of patriots. To quote the Pledge of Allegiance, our nation was founded "under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for

all." As Americans, we have more freedom than we can handle sometimes.

If you are an atheist you might have a problem with that whole "under God" part; if you are against liberating the people of Iraq, Afghanistan, Asia, all of Europe (twice), and the former Soviet bloc, then perhaps the "liberty and justice for all" section might leave you fuming. Our Nation, throughout its history, has watered the seeds of democracy on many continents, with blood, even when the country was in disagreement about those decisions.

Disagreement is a wonderful thing. To disagree with your neighbors and your government is at the very heart of freedom. Citizens have disagreed about every important and controversial decision made by their leaders throughout history. Truman had the courage to drop two nuclear weapons in order to end the largest war in history, and then, by his actions, prevented the Soviets from extinguishing the light of democracy in Eastern Europe, Berlin. Lincoln preserved our country through civil war; Reagan knew in his heart that freedom is a more powerful weapon than oppression. Leaders are paid to make difficult, sometimes controversial decisions. History will judge the success of their actions and the purity of their intent in a way that is impossible at the present moment.

In your disagreement and debate about the current conflict, however, be very careful that you do not jeopardize your nation or those who serve. The best time to use your freedom of speech to debate difficult decisions is before they are made, not when the lives of your countrymen are on the line.

Cherish your civil rights; I know that after having been in Iraq for only one month I have a new appreciation for mine. You have the right to say that you "support the troops" but oppose the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

You have the right to vote for Senator John Kerry because you believe that he has an exit strategy for Iraq, or because you just cannot stand President Bush. You have the right to vote for President George W. Bush if you believe that he has done a good job over the last four years. You might even decide that you do not want to vote at all and would rather avoid the issues as much as possible. That is certainly your option, and doing nothing is the only option for many people in this world.

It is not my place, nor am I allowed by the Uniformed Code of Military Justice, to tell you how to vote. But I can explain to you the truth about what is going on around you. We know, and have known from the beginning, that the ultimate success or failure of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the future of

those countries, rests solely on the shoulders of the Iraqi and Afghani people. If someone complains that we should not have gone to war with Saddam Hussein, that our intelligence was bad, that President Bush's motives were impure, then take the appropriate action. Exercise your right to vote for Senator Kerry, but please stop complaining about something that happened over a year ago. The decision to deploy our military in Iraq and Afghanistan is in the past, and while I believe that it is important to the democratic process for our nation to analyze the decisions of our leadership in order to avoid repeating mistakes, it is far more important to focus on the future. The question of which candidate will "get us out of Iraq sooner" should not be a consideration in your mind. **YOU SHOULD NOT WANT US OUT OF IRAQ OR AFGHANISTAN SOONER.** There is only one coherent exit strategy that will make our time here worthwhile and validate the sacrifice of so many of our countrymen. There is only one strategy that has a chance of promoting peace and stabilizing the Middle East. It is the exit strategy of both candidates, though voiced with varying volumes and differing degrees of clarity. I will speak of Iraq because that is where I am, though I feel the underlying principle applies to both Iraq and Afghanistan.

The American military must continue to help train and support the Iraqi Police, National Guard, and Armed Forces. We must continue to give them both responsibility and the authority with which to carry out those responsibilities, so that they eventually can kill or capture the former regime elements and foreign terrorists that are trying to create a radical, oppressive state. We must continue to repair the infrastructure that we damaged during the conflict, and improve the infrastructure that was insufficient when Saddam was in power.

We should welcome and encourage partners in the coalition but recognize that many will choose the path of least resistance and opt out; many of our traditional allies have been doing this for years and it should not surprise us. We must respect the citizens of Iraq and help them to understand the meaning of basic human rights, for those are something the average Iraqi has never experienced.

We must be respectful of our cultural and religious differences. We must help the Iraqis develop national pride, and most importantly, we must leave this country better than we found it, at the right time, with a chance of success so that its people will have an opportunity to forge their own destiny. We must do all of these things as quickly and efficiently as possible so that we are not seen as occupiers, but rather liberators and helpers. We must communicate this to the world as clearly and

frequently as possible, both with words and actions.

If we leave before these things are done, then Iraq will fall into anarchy and possibly plunge the Middle East into another war. The ability of the United States to conduct foreign policy will be severely, and perhaps permanently, degraded. Terrorism will increase, both in America and around the world, as America will have demonstrated that it is not interested in building and helping, only destroying.

If we run or exit early, we prove to our enemies that terror is more powerful and potent than freedom. Many nations, like Spain, have already affirmed this in the minds of the terrorists. Our failure, and its consequences, will be squarely on our shoulders as a nation. It will be our fault. If we stay the course and Iraq or Afghanistan falls into civil war on its own, then our hands are clean.

As a citizen of the United States and a U.S. Marine, I will be able to sleep at night with nothing on my conscience, for I know that I, and my country, have done as much as we could for these people. If we leave early, I will not be able to live with myself, and neither should you. The blood will be on our hands, the failure on our watch.

The bottom line is this: Republican or Democrat, approve or disapprove of the decision to go to war, you need to support our efforts here. You cannot both support the troops and protest their mission. Every time the parent of a fallen Marine gets on CNN with a photo, accusing President Bush of murdering his son, the enemy wins a strategic victory. I cannot begin to comprehend the grief he feels at the death of his son, but he dishonors the memory of my brave brother who paid the ultimate price. That Marine volunteered to serve, just like the rest of us. No one here was drafted.

I am proud of my service and that of my peers. I am ashamed of that parent's actions, and I pray to God that if I am killed my parents will stand with pride before the cameras and reaffirm their belief that my life and sacrifice mattered; they loved me dearly and they firmly support the military and its mission in Iraq and Afghanistan. With that statement, they communicate very clearly to our enemies around the world that America is united, that we cannot be intimidated by kidnappings, decapitations and torture, and that we care enough about the Afghani and Iraqi people to give them a chance at democracy and basic human rights.

Do not support those that seek failure for us, or seek to trivialize the sacrifices made here. Do not make the deaths of your countrymen be in vain. Communicate to your media and elected officials that you are behind us and our mission. Send letters and encouragement to those who are deployed. When you

meet a person that serves you, whether in the armed forces, police, or fire department, show them respect. Thank the spouses around you every day, raising children alone, whose loved ones are deployed.

Remember not only those that have paid the ultimate price, but the veterans that bear the physical and emotional scars of defending your freedom. At the very least, follow your mother's advice. "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all." Do not give the enemy a foothold in our Nation's public opinion. He rejoices at Fahrenheit 9/11 and applauds every time an American slams our efforts. The military can succeed here so long as American citizens support us wholeheartedly.

Sleep well on this third anniversary of 9/11, America. Rough men are standing ready to do violence on your behalf. Many of your sons and daughters volunteered to stand watch for you. Not just rough men- the infantry, the Marine grunts, the Special Operations Forces- but lots of eighteen and nineteen year old kids, teenagers, who are far away from home, serving as drivers, supply clerks, analysts, and mechanics. They all have stories, families, and dreams. They miss you, love you, and are putting their lives on the line for you. Do not make their time here, their sacrifice, a waste. Support them, and their mission.



***The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition have so many different projects that you as a member can be involved in or support. Call 1-800-843-8626 for more information.***

## *Please Dear Lord* *The Law Is The Law...*

So if the US government determines that it is against the law for the words "under God" to be on our money, then, so be it.

And if that same government decides that the "Ten Commandments" are not to be used in or on a government installation, then, so be it.

And since they already have prohibited any prayer in the schools, on which they deem their authority, then so be it.

I say, "so be it," because I would like to be a law abiding US citizen.

I say, "so be it," because I would like to think that smarter people than I are in positions to make good decisions.

I would like to think that those people have the American Publics' best interests at heart.

**BUT, YOU KNOW WHAT ELSE I'D LIKE?**

Since we can't pray to God, can't Trust in God and cannot post His Commandments in Government buildings, I don't believe the Government and its' employees should participate in the Easter and Christmas celebrations which honor the God that our government is eliminating from many facets of American life.

I'd like my mail delivered on Christmas, Good Friday, Thanksgiving and Easter. After all, it's just another day.

I'd like the US Supreme Court to be in session on Christmas, Good Friday, Thanksgiving and Easter as well as Sundays. After all, it's just another day.

I'd like the Senate and the House of Representatives not have to worry about getting home for the "Christmas Break." After all ~ it's just another day.

I'm thinking that a lot of my taxpayer dollars could be saved, if all government offices and services would work on Christmas, Good Friday and Easter.

It shouldn't cost any overtime since those would be just like any other day of the week to a government that is trying to be "politically correct".

In fact ... I think that our government should work on Sundays (initially set aside for worshipping God...) because, after all, our government says that it should be just another day....

What do you all think????

If this idea gets to enough people, maybe our elected officials will stop giving in to the minority opinions and begin, once again, to represent the majority of ALL of the American people. SOBE IT ...

"Please Dear Lord, give us the help needed to keep you in our country! 'Amen' and 'Amen'"

~~ Ginny Peterson  
Hackettstown, NJ 07840

## *United Way Donations*



**United Way**

**The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition is eligible to receive donations through the services of United Way. Anyone who gives via United Way may designate that all or any portion of his or her donation be directed to a specific recipient.**

**All you need to do is write in our organization on the pledge card or appropriate form.**

**We need your support.**

**Your dollars will always be put to the best use.**

**For more information contact:**

**VVnW and The Veterans Coalition at 1-800-843-8626.**



# *Facts About The Fire At The National Personnel Records Center*

A fire at the NPRC in St. Louis on July 12, 1973, destroyed about 80 percent of the records for Army personnel discharged between November 1, 1912 and January 1, 1960. About 75 percent of the records for Air Force personnel with surnames from "Hubbard" through "Z" discharged between September 24, 1947 and January 1, 1964, were also destroyed.

It is hard to determine exactly what was lost in the fire because:

- There were no indices to the blocks of records involved. The records were merely filed in alphabetical order for the following groups:

- World War I
- Army
- November 1, 1912-September 7, 1939
- World War II
- Army
- September 8, 1939-December 31, 1946
- Post World War II
- Army
- January 1, 1947 December 31, 1963

In general, millions of records, especially medical records had been withdrawn from all three groups and loaned to the Department of Veterans Affairs prior to the fire. The fact that one's records are not in NPRC files at a particular time does not mean the records were destroyed in the file.

If a veteran is advised that his or her records may have been lost in the fire, he or she may send photocopies of any documents they possess to the NPRC, particularly separation documents. This enables the NPRC to reestablish files by adding those documents to the computerized index and filing them permanently.

- In the event a veteran does not have any records in his or her possession, the essential military service data may be available from a number of alternate sources.

- Branch of Service
- Approximate dates of service
- Service number
- Place of entry into service
- Last unit of assignment
- Place of discharge

The key to reconstructing military data is to give the NPRC enough specific information so the staff can properly search the various sources. The following information is normally required:

- Full name used during military service;
- Branch of service
- Approximate dates of service
- Service number
- Place of entry into service
- Last unit of assignment
- Place of discharge.

***Robert Miller, formerly of Warren, Michigan and now of Las Vegas, Nevada was associated with the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and the Veterans Coalition and the Veterans in Conflict with the Law Program and has ceased to be connected with the above organization and program as of January 29, 2004.***

***The National Organization and the Veterans in Conflict with the Law Program will not accept any responsibility for any of Mr. Miller's actions, whether in writing or orally, allegedly taken on behalf of the organization or the program as of January 29, 2004 and hereafter.***

***If anyone has any questions regarding this matter, please feel free to contact the National Organization.***

# *Veterans Could Lose Health Care Over Government Inaction*

Australian Democrats Leader Senator Andrew Bartlett in the Senate questioned the Government about what they would do to ensure that veterans received essential health care. Defense Minister Senator Robert Hill responded, in part, that he would refer the matter to the Minister.

Senator Bartlett was responding to a report by the AMA President Dr. Bill Glasson that the local medical officer (LMO) scheme did not reflect the special care and time that veterans needed.

In a poll conducted by the Australian Medical Association, 60% of General Practitioners who treat war veterans under a Federal Government rebate scheme are on the verge of withdrawing their services.

"Veterans are being short-changed on the level of health care promised to them," said Senator Bartlett.

"If GP's are going to withdraw from the scheme, this will leave thousands of veterans unable to access health services.

"The Prime Minister is willing to commit Australian service men and women to war without the endorsement of the Australian Parliament; it is short changing returned service men and women on the level of health care promised to them.

"It is an unfair situation that the rebate to GP's for a number of items is actually less than the Medical Plus rebate for non-veterans.

"The Democrats believe that the Government must urgently increase the rebates to GPs for veterans' health services to prevent GPs from leaving the scheme," Senator Bartlett concluded.



## **OPERATION POSTCARD**

**The Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc. are promoting Operation Postcard as a way to show our troops that their country is grateful and proud of them for their service. If one postcard brings a smile to those serving in our Military we have done our job.**

### **To get involved:**

- 1. Contact your family, friends, schools, clubs and organizations asking them to purchase their own postage paid postcards (maybe a card of where they live).**
- 2. Write a message telling our military what town and state you are from thanking them and telling them how proud you are of them, etc. For example: "I'm from Telford, PA and just wanted to thank you for protecting our country and helping me keep my freedom. I'm very proud of you."**
- 3. If you would like to receive a reply include your address in with your message. A response is not guaranteed.**
- 4. Put the postcards in an envelope and mail them to Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc. P.O. Box 64553, Souderton, PA 18964 and they will address them for you.**
- 5. Call Jean Campbell, President at 215-723-4935 if you have any questions or visit their website at [bluestarmothers.com](http://bluestarmothers.com)**

# *Six New Names Added To The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Washington, D.C.*

The names of six American service members were inscribed recently on the black granite wall of names.

The newest Wall additions are:

- Air Force S.SGT. Donald Scott Carson (San Francisco, California) Date of Birth: November 3, 1931; Incident Date: April 12, 1963; Date of Death: April 15, 1963; Wall Location: 8 East, Line 38

- Army M.SGT. Frank Luther Huddleston (Clarksville, Tennessee) Date of Birth: February 19, 1934; Incident Date: May 17, 1966; Date of Death: August 15, 2002; Wall Location: 16 East, Line 109

- Army SPC Kevin John Joyce (Framingham, Massachusetts) Date of Birth: January 21, 1947; Incident Date: July 15, 1968; Date of Death: February 9, 1996; Wall Location: 52 West, Line 34

- Army SFC. Dwaine Usry McGriff (Cullman, Alabama) Date of Birth: December 19, 1935; Incident Date: September 7, 1970; Date of Death: January 7, 1999; Wall Location: 7 West, Line 51

- Army SP4 James Mark Rogers (Waynesville, North Carolina) Date of Birth: January 25, 1948; Incident Date: December 14, 1968; Date of Death: November 14, 1990; Wall Location: 36 West, Line 43

- Army PFC William Joseph Scannell (Forest Park, Illinois) Date of Birth: February 13, 1948; Incident Date: August 28, 1968; Date of Death: September 12, 1970; Wall Location: 44 West, Line 20

Each year, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund brings stone experts from Great Panes Glassworks, Inc. in Colorado to Washington, DC to perform the process of adding names to the black granite panels and changing the status designations of existing names from missing in action to killed in action. The highly technical procedure requires meticulous work matching the stroke and depth of the surrounding names to within one thousandth of an inch.

This year, the status symbols of 32 service members listed on the Memorial will be changed from missing in action to killed in action. Preceding each name on the Memorial is a symbol designating status. The diamond symbol denotes the person remains missing in action. When a service member's remains are returned or accounted for, the diamond symbol is superimposed over the cross.

The Department of Defense makes all decisions about persons who fit the established criteria to be inscribed on the Memorial. The Memorial Fund, which pays for the name additions and status changes, works with the National Park Service to ensure the long-term preservation and maintenance of The Wall.

The new name inscriptions and status changes become "official" at the Annual Memorial Day Observance at The Wall.



# *Denzel Washington*

Did You See or Hear About This? Did you see the Denzel Washington interview with Katie Couric on NBC recently? Not many people are talking about it. They are wishing it would go away and are trying to sweep it under the rug. But it's not going to happen! It basically went like this.

Meryl Streep and Denzel were on the today show "live" with Katie Couric to talk about the movie "Manchurian Candidate." At one point Katie asked Denzel, "have you seen Fahrenheit 9/11?" To which Denzel replied, "No, and I have no intentions on seeing it."

Katie and Meryl were "so noticeably" taken aback! It was so cool! Then, a discourse (or more

preferably, a fight!) began between all three of them with Denzel being barraged with all kinds of anti-Bush, anti-republican comments, but "the man stood his ground" and soon enraged the women so much that they couldn't get a word in edgewise. Meryl Streep turned blood red and she sat with her legs crossed and her one leg shaking up and down, fuming! Then Katie uttered the words that put the final nail in her coffin, she said to Denzel "you see, that's the problem I have with "you people." She of course did not get to finish her sentence because Denzel pounced on her verbally by responding "YOU PEOPLE! YOU PEOPLE! Just what do you mean you people! Do you mean "You People" as in

me as a Christian, or do you mean "You People" as in me as a REPUBLICAN? She then tap danced her way through the next minute of the show. But Denzel went out fighting and declaring that Fahrenheit 9/11 is nothing but propaganda and lies distorted to support a cynical democratic film director's views.

Whoo hoo!! I love the man! There's a celebrity that deserves to wear the uniform in movies and I don't mind at all. Everybody else is a hypocrite!

Craig Floyd,  
Radiology  
PACS Administrator

## *Upcoming Veterans Of The Vietnam War, Inc. & Veterans Coalition Elections*

The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition and its affiliated programs including the United Veterans Beacon House and Incarcerated Veterans is growing steadily and we need to continue with this growth.

We have many new Posts, thousands of New Members and new Beacon Houses providing services to Veterans and their Families, OUR MANDATE.

In the upcoming ELECTIONS and into the future, I wanted to ask you all to look at the candidates nominating for the positions and carefully look at the following:

1. Their past commitment to the VVnW, Beacon House or Incarcerated Veterans.
2. Their past commitment to the programs of the organization.

3. Their past commitment to the VVnW Post they have been part of if not a National-at-Large Member.
4. Their efforts put into the program or projects of the Organization.
5. Their efforts in alternative fundraising in support of the Military Support Package program.
6. Their past commitment to Veterans and their Families.

Remember it is not necessary that the members with the longest history with any organization or the one that is known better is the best one for the job. They are the ones that have put their time, efforts and their hearts into assisting Veterans and their Families. They are the ones who have gone that extra mile to ensure the Veterans we represent get a

better deal and their quality of life is improved.

We need our members, even the ones that cannot provide other than their valuable membership as the Political scene only looks at head count. However, those standing for positions on the Board of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc., & The Veterans Coalition are the future of YOUR Organization. If they cannot see the big picture or will not work for the BETTERMENT of VETERANS and their FAMILIES then they are NOT worthy of representing you and will not assist with the growth and prosperity of the Organization.

We hope that some of the younger Veterans will seek nomination for the future positions and we look forward to receiving those nominations as they will be a great asset to us all.

**VVnW and  
The Veterans Coalition  
NATIONAL  
SCHOLARSHIP  
PROGRAM**

**APPLICATION FOR  
Veterans of the  
Vietnam War, Inc.  
The Veterans Coalitions  
ASSISTANCE IN  
EDUCATION PROGRAM**

**ELIGIBILITY:**

Any member of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition in good standing for at least one year, their spouse or their linear descendants to include adopted children, stepchildren, foster children and their immediate descendants may submit an application.

Applicant must be in or have been accepted to a program of any post-secondary education.

**EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE:**

Payment can be used for anything applicable to getting educated.

Payment will be made directly to the recipient.

**APPLICATION:**

Application must be received by October 31 of each year with the award(s) to be announced in November of each year.

**METHOD OF DETERMINING THE  
INDIVIDUAL(S) FOR EDUCATIONAL  
ASSISTANCE:**

There will be random drawing once a year as long as funding is available.

**OTHER:**

This is NOT a need, merit, course of study, or any other type-based assistance.

**ASSISTANCE AMOUNT(S):**

A minimum of \$1,000 per recipient(s) will be awarded. Assistance amount and number of recipients to be determined annually by the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition National Board of Directors based on available funding and number of applicants.

**Mail completed application to:**

Assistance in Education Program  
Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and  
the Veterans Coalition National Headquarters  
805 So. Township Boulevard  
Pittston, PA 18640

**Must be received by October 31 of each year.**

**PRINT OR TYPE ALL INFORMATION:**

VVnW Member's Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to VVnW Member:

\_\_\_\_\_

(Proof to be submitted with this application.)

Educational Institution Attending:

\_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's Remarks:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Note: It is the responsibility of the applicant for this assistance to determine the effect of this award, if received, on any scholarship, grant or financial aid of any kind that they may otherwise receive. VVnW and The Veterans Coalition will NOT be responsible for any negative impact that this award may have on any scholarship, grant or financial aid of any kind that the applicant may otherwise receive.

# *Wives and Partners*

*Carla Evans, Chaplain*

So, you're the wife of a vet. And for many vet's wives, life has been anything but peaceful. Since the day you both looked into one another's eyes and said the words, "I do" life has had its ups and downs and thrown in an extra curve as well.

Sure you may have known he had a few problems before you married him, you may have had an inkling or premonition that he wasn't quite 100% of all your heart's desires, but you loved him, so what the heck. Besides, after you were married you would be able to help him. Right? You would be there, day in and day out to tend his cares and help mend his shattered emotions; you would be his security blanket, his friend, mentor, lover and wife.

Over the years the pain of just living and trying to exist with all the emotional baggage he carries has slowly eroded that dream of life commitment to him. You are getting tired and your patience is running thin.

Some of your children have suffered physically, mentally and certainly emotionally. You have felt that there was no one on this whole wide earth that knew what you were going through. Who could you tell anyway without feeling you had betrayed your husband. Who could you tell when he had threatened you with 'whatever' if you did tell anyway?

So for such a long time, a life time if you stayed with him, you have gritted your teeth, buried what you could, survived with what you could not bury and tolerated everything else. Even when you went to the Psych with him, you felt like an outsider at times. You cannot cry anymore, there are no tears left. For some of you anyway, he has forbidden you to cry, especially in front of him. So the cries of your heart are revealed when you twist your hands together while talking or screw your handkerchief in knots as you need something in your hands while you do attempt to talk a little. The whimpers that escape your mouth are quieter than a baby kittens mewling and when you speak, the words are guarded in case you let something slip that would give an inkling to anyone about how you really feel.

You cared for your children if they had physical problems because of the Agent Orange factor while he, not being able to cope, hit the bottle or left home for good or for a period of time or times.

You put up with his night-sweats and thrashing around in his little obtained sleep until exhausted yourself, you grabbed a few nights in another bed. His moods were unpredictable unless it was near Anzac Day, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Day, the death of a close mate or an anniversary approached when something pretty serious happened back in Vietnam. You learnt to read the signs of his approaching moods

and gave him a wide berth; but you couldn't escape that volatile anger that exploded without rhyme or reason.

He loved you, but in a way you felt he didn't because in his need of you he despised himself for the way he treated you. You see he had no one else he could be his absolute self with except you, and it was you he took out his frustration and anger on.

You begged him to talk to you about what troubles him but he can't. He says you would never understand. He is frightened to tell you in case you despise him for what a man has to do in the theatre of war.

But in all of this, who was there for you? Good question.

Who looks to your needs of wanting to be loved in the way that a woman wants to be loved and protected? Who do you lean on when everyone else in your house leans on you? Is it easier to walk away from your marriage or to stay and face into it? Will the pattern of your life ever change? Who do you talk to? Who do you explode and be honest with?

Do you still love him? Is he worth fighting for? You see, deep down, there still resides the man you fell in love with and chose to marry. He is buried beneath all the debris that the word VIETNAM encases.

At times there seems to be a tug of war going on the inside of you between love and hate, which one do you want to win?

Do you passively accept life the way it is, have you given up on him and your marriage? Do you want to take up the fight for your husband again?

Does he know your worth in the way that you have stayed with and cared for him?

Be grateful for the good days, remember too, his condition is not your fault.

Can you talk to him and tell him how you feel, in a way that is not seen to be 'nagging.'? Can you let him know that you care for him and ask him WHY he is in pain? He may not know he is in pain, he might just think he is drinking too much or he is feeling miserable. Then again he may know he is in pain but doesn't know how to begin to express it to you. He may think that you would not continue to be with him if you knew the things he did in Vietnam, things that a war calls for yet the life of a civilian doesn't.

You need a goal to work towards, by yourself and together.

**IF YOU CHOOSE TO DO SOMETHING**, take some action. Make an appointment to see your husband/partner's psych and have a good chat, look for Veteran support groups, find a trustworthy friend.

**REMEMBER**, there are people who care for you. Why not find out who they are?

It is your choice to stay or go, please think carefully before making that decision.

# *VA Benefits for Survivors of Military Personnel Involved in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom*



The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a variety of programs to Assist the survivors of military personnel who die on active duty.

## **Summary of Benefits**

Survivors receive certain payments or benefits regardless of whether the in-service death is due to combat, accident or disease, including:

\*Burial benefits for the deceased service member, which include a gravesite in any VA national cemetery with available space, perpetual care of the grave at no cost to the family, a government headstone or marker, and a Presidential Memorial Certificate.

\*Dependency and Indemnity Compensation at the monthly rate of \$967 for a surviving spouse or more if there are dependent children.

\*Life insurance, which most military members carry at the highest level, \$250,000.

More information about how VA services apply in individual cases is available from veterans services representatives at 800-827-1000.

## **Casualty Assistance Program**

VA has a Casualty Assistance Program to give personal attention to surviving family members after in-service deaths, and to help them with benefit information and applications. A casualty assistance officer is designated at each of VA's 57 regional offices. These VA officers work closely with military casualty officers to ensure timely assistance is available to beneficiaries.

## **Reservists and National Guard Eligibility**

When a member of the Reserves or National Guard dies while federally activated or on inactive duty for training, the death is considered service-connected for VA death benefits. Activation of a National Guard unit by a governor alone in support of current security operations does not qualify unit members for these VA benefits, except life insurance.

## **Monthly Payments for Spouse and Children**

When a service member dies while on active duty, the death is considered service-connected unless it was due to willful misconduct. VA pays at least \$967 a

month in Dependency and Indemnity Compensation to surviving spouses. In most cases, survivors' claims are processed within 48 hours.

In some cases VA can pay more than \$967 a month, such as a \$241 benefit for each dependent child who is unmarried and under age 18 or up to age 23 if studying at a VA-approved school. Payments are increased if the surviving spouse is housebound or needs a home aide. The basic rate for survivors is adjusted annually and payments continue generally until the death or remarriage of the spouse before age 57. Remarriage after age 57 does not affect benefits. Additional information about benefits for family members, to include low-income parents of the veteran, is available at [www.vba.va.gov/bln/dependents/](http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/dependents/).

## **Life Insurance**

Most service members and reservists take VA's life insurance coverage, Service members' Group Life Insurance, though a few decline coverage. Most choose coverage at the highest levels and their designated beneficiary receives a payment of \$250,000. VA has paid every claim related to Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom within 48 hours of receiving the necessary paperwork. VA also offers beneficiaries free, personalized financial planning through a financial services company. More information is available at [www.insurance.va.gov](http://www.insurance.va.gov) <<http://www.insurance.va.gov/>> .

## **Burial in a VA National Cemetery**

Members of the armed forces and veterans, their spouses and dependent children may be buried in any of VA's national cemeteries with available space. There currently are 120 national cemeteries across the nation and 83 have available grave space. More information is available at [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov).

## **Burial in a Non-VA Cemetery**

Deaths of active-duty members are not covered by VA's financial burial allowance benefits, since the military services assist survivors with funeral expenses and the cost of burial in private cemeteries. If a family wishes to arrange burial in a non-VA cemetery, VA will provide a headstone or marker for the grave.

## **Burial in a State Veterans Cemetery**

Although not a benefit provided by VA, burial in a state veterans cemetery is an option available in many states for those who die on active duty. Some states have residency requirements and may impose additional limitations.

### **Military Funeral Honors**

Upon request, the Department of Defense will provide military funeral honors. This arrangement typically is made by the funeral director. At least two uniformed service members fold and present the flag and play "Taps" by a recording or a bugler. Additional information about funeral honors is available at [www.militaryfuneralhonors.osd.mil](http://www.militaryfuneralhonors.osd.mil).

### **Military Burial Flags**

In the case of in-service deaths, the Defense Department provides a U.S. flag to drape the casket or to be presented at a memorial service. After the service, the flag is given to the next of kin.

### **Health Care**

Health care benefits for the survivors of service members killed in action in Operations Iraqi Freedom or Enduring Freedom are provided by the military. For more information, see <http://www.tricare.osd.mil>.

### **Educational Assistance**

When an active-duty service member dies, VA's Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program generally provides up to 45 months of education benefits to the un-remarried surviving spouse for 10 years, or for children aged 18 to 26. Currently the rate is \$788 a month for full-time attendance, with lesser amounts for part-time education. This benefit may be used to pursue secondary school programs; associate, bachelor or

graduate degrees; technical or vocational training; apprenticeships; and other types of training, including work-study programs. More information is available at [www.gibill.va.gov/education/C35pam.htm](http://www.gibill.va.gov/education/C35pam.htm).

### **Refund of Service Member's Unused GI Bill Contribution**

If the deceased service member had contributed to the Montgomery GI Bill education program, the designated life insurance beneficiary or surviving spouse is entitled to a refund of the money that was collected through payroll deduction but was not awarded in education benefits during the service member's lifetime. Most active-duty military members participate in this educational benefit program, which deducts \$1,200 from their pay at \$100 monthly during their first year of service.

### **Home Loans**

Surviving spouses of military members may be eligible for a VA-guaranteed home loan from a private lender. The loan may be used to purchase, construct or improve a home, to refinance an existing mortgage or for certain other purposes. As with the program for veterans, VA guarantees part of the total loan, permitting the purchaser to obtain a mortgage with a competitive interest rate. Except for manufactured homes and other select cases, the surviving spouse may obtain a no-down payment loan if the lender agrees.

### **Presidential Memorial Certificate Program**

The service member's next of kin receives a Presidential Memorial Certificate. Additional certificates are available for other loved ones upon request to VA. The gold embossed parchment-style paper is inscribed with the service member's name and bears the president's signature. It expresses the nation's gratitude for the deceased person's military service.

## ***THE RIGHT TO VOTE...***

**You fought for it ... use it!**

**Are YOU registered to vote? No? Well, this is not the time for silence!**

These are the requirements you must meet to register:

- 1. Be a U.S. citizen**
- 2. Be 18 years of age by the next election**
- 3. Not be in prison or on parole from a felony conviction.**

**You fought for your country in war now fight for it in peace.  
The weapon is The Vote.**

**We've seen those who wish they had it. Use your right: register and VOTE!**





# *Military Rules for the Non-Military Personnel*

Dear Civilians:

We know that the current state of affairs in our great nation have many civilians up in arms and excited to join the military.

For those of you who can't join, you can still lend a hand. Here are a few of the areas we would like your assistance:

1) The next time you see an adult talking (or wearing a hat) during the playing of the National Anthem ... kick their ass.

2) When you witness firsthand someone burning the American Flag in protest... kick their ass.

3) Regardless of the rank they held while they served, pay the highest amount of respect to all veterans. If you see anyone doing otherwise, quietly pull them aside and explain how these Veterans fought for the very freedom they bask in every second. Enlighten them on the many sacrifices these Veterans made to make this Nation great. Then hold them down while a Disabled Veteran kicks their ass.

4) (GUYS) If you were never in the military, DO NOT pretend that you were. Wearing battle dress uniforms (BDU's), telling others that you used to be "Special Forces," and collecting GI Joe memorabilia, might have been okay if you were still seven. Now, it will only make you look stupid and get your ass kicked.

5) Next time you come across an Air Force member, do not ask them, "Do you fly a jet?" Not everyone in the Air Force is a pilot. Such ignorance deserves an ass kicking (children are exempt).

6) If you witness someone calling the U.S. Coast Guard non-military, inform them of their mistake...and kick their ass.

7) Roseanne Barr's singing of the National Anthem is not a blooper...it was a disgrace and disrespectful. Laugh, and sooner or later your ass will be kicked.

8) Next time Old Glory (U.S. flag) prances by during a parade, get on your damn feet and pay homage to her by placing your hand over your heart. Quietly thank the military member or veteran lucky enough to be carrying her...of course, failure to do either of those could earn you a severe ass kicking.

9) Don't try to discuss politics with a military member or a veteran. We are Americans and we all bleed the same regardless of our party affiliation. Our Chain of Command, is to include our Commander in

Chief. The President (for those who didn't know) is our CIC regardless of political party. We have no inside track on what happens inside those big important buildings where all those representatives" meet. All we know is that when those civilian representatives screw up the situation, they call upon the military to go straighten it out. The military member might direct you to Oliver North. (I can see him kicking your ass.)

10) "Your mama wears combat boots" never made sense to me ... stop saying it! If she did, she would most likely be a vet and therefore, could kick your ass!

11) Bin Laden and the Taliban are not communists, so stop saying "Let's go kill those Commie's!!!" And stop asking us where he is!!!! Crystal balls are not standard issue in the military. That reminds me ... if you see anyone calling those damn psychic phone numbers; let me know, so I can go kick their ass.

12) Flyboy (Air Force), Jar Head (Marines), Grunt (Army), Squid (Navy) etc, are terms of endearment we use describing each other. Unless you are a service member or vet, you have not earned the right to use them. That could get your ass kicked.

13) Last but not least, whether or not you become a member of the military, support our troops and their families. Every Thanksgiving and religious holiday that you enjoy with family and friends, please remember that there are literally thousands of sailors and troops far from home wishing they could be with their families. Thank God for our military and the sacrifices they make every day. Without them, our country would get its ass kicked.

*– It is the soldier, not the reporter who has given us the freedom of the press.*

*– It is the soldier, not the poet, who has given us the freedom of speech.*

*– It is the soldier, not the campus organizer, who gives us the freedom to demonstrate.*

*– It is the soldier who salutes the flag, who serves beneath the flag, and whose coffin is draped by the flag, who allows the protester to burn the flag."*

*Author: Father Dennis Edward O'Brien,  
Sergeant, USMC*

**GET INVOLVED!**

# *Medal to Recognize Service in Defense of Australia*

The Howard Government recently announced the intention to establish a new medal that recognizes volunteer service in the Australian Defense Force. All relevant approvals are now being sought to allow the award of this medal.

The Minister Assisting the Minister for Defense, Mal Brough, said those who had served for a total of six years in the Australian Defense Force, regular or reserve, would be eligible and the medal would be backdated to recognize past service.

“The Australian Defense Medal also reflects the fact that when serving in a modern Defense Force, it becomes difficult to discriminate between those who serve directly on operations and those who support those operations.”

“The Australian Defense Medal reflects the fact that by serving in the Australian Defense Force individuals make a contribution to the national interest, whether they served the country on operations, or whether they remained in Australia in a support role.”

“The war on terrorism has redefined the notions of a frontline or even an easily definable Area of Operations.”

“Some tasks undertaken by soldiers, sailors and airmen remain invisible to the community at large but are very important to our nation's defense. These may include preparation and planning, intelligence and, indeed, other classified activities that for national security reasons can't be recognized by a specific award.”

“The Australian Defense Medal will recognize all of these circumstances of service.”

Mr. Brough said the Australian Defense Medal would be retrospective from the end of World War Two, in order to recognize that many people in the past had served their nation in a variety of forms, sometimes arduous, but had not been recognized by an operational medal. However, those who completed National Service would not be eligible unless they subsequently volunteered and completed the requisite six years volunteer service. “Six years reflects a length of time that we could be reasonably certain that most people would have completed the requisite training and experience in the Regular or Reserve forces, to be considered fully deployable should they have been called upon,” Mr. Brough said.



“We believe these conditions also give effect to a motion from the Returned and Services League who agree with our desire to further recognize ADF service.” “The implementation of the medal will be a significant undertaking and the issue of medals to past servicemen will take time. It is estimated that up to 400,000 ex-servicemen and women may apply for this medal,” Mr. Brough said. “It is anticipated that once a design has been finalized and the medals have been struck, the issuing of medals could begin around middle of 2005.”

“Operational and other demanding overseas service will still be recognized under the current arrangements. Processing and issuing of operational awards will take priority as the new Australian Defense Medal is being implemented.”

“Nonetheless, the Australian Defense Medal provides the Government and the Australian people the ability to recognize those service men and women who do volunteer and serve the flag in a variety of roles and are prepared, should the call come, to put their lives on the line,” Mr. Brough said.



**IRAQ WAR VETERAN COALITION**

# ***U.S. Labor Department Announces Assistance for Military Returning from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Locations — Washington, D.C.***

The U.S. Labor Department recently released guidance for states advising them that National Emergency Grant (NEG) funds are available to provide employment assistance for National Guard and Military Reserve personnel returning from deployment in Iraq, Afghanistan or other locations.

According to the Training and Employment Guidance Letter, National Emergency Grants will be available for unemployed trade-certified returning military to begin training or continue a training program that was not completed. Workers whose dislocation was not due to trade but whose training was interrupted due to deployment are also eligible for NEG funds. A state may request the NEG if Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) or Workforce Investment Act (WIA) formula funds are insufficient.

State NEG applications for returning military may include a request for income support, to which trade-certified workers are entitled while enrolled in training.

These funds can be used for returning military certified for TAA even if the eligibility time period for income support has run out. Income support may also be requested for returning military personnel dislocated for reasons other than trade even if income support is not provided in a local area's dislocated worker program.

Spouses of returning members of the National Guard or Reserves and widows of military personnel who lost their lives in Iraq, Afghanistan or other locations may also be included in these special NEG applications.

The NEG guidance is part of a larger Labor Department commitment to ease the transition of soldiers returning from active duty as they re-enter the workforce. National Emergency Grants are part of the Secretary's discretionary funds and are awarded following a state request for assistance.

***If you believe in nothing, you'll accept anything!***

## ***SFC Robert Haines***

***National Board Member***

***for The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition***

National Commander Peter Forbes recently installed SFC Robert Haines in as a National Board Member for the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition. Bob is currently serving in the U.S. Army and training urban combat at White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. The connection between currently serving military and those veterans of other eras is proudly encouraged by the organization which now has two currently service military personnel on board. Major Marc Hoffmeister is the other active duty member of the National Board of Directors and has just returned from a year overseas serving in the Global War on Terrorism. The organization is proud to have them both on board. Shown in the photo after installation into his new position is Peter Forbes on the left with SFC Haines on the left.



# ***Labor Department to Post Draft Regulations for Law that Safeguards Guard and Reserve Members' Jobs and Benefits***

## ***– 60-day Window Set to Elicit Public Comments***

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) recently announced that it has published draft regulations in the Federal Register that interpret the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act of 1994 (USERRA). Congress passed USERRA to safeguard the employment rights and benefits of service members upon their return to civilian life.

“This is a major step in ensuring that the brave men and women who are risking their lives to preserve freedom and democracy have their jobs and benefits protected when they return home,” said Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao. “These regulations will spell out the rights of our returning service men and women and the responsibilities of employers to honor their service. This Administration will back up these first-time-ever USERRA regulations with aggressive outreach and enforcement.”

This action by the Department represents the first time regulations have been developed to help enforce USERRA since passage of the law in 1994. It is the latest in a series of proactive steps the department has taken to ensure job security for the largest group of mobilized National Guard and Reserve service members since World War II.

To date, more than 420,000 citizen-soldiers have been mobilized since 9/11. This number includes more than 260,000 of those service members who have been demobilized after generally serving for longer tours of duty than occurred during the last comparable conflict, Operation Desert Storm. Despite these longer tours, the rate of complaints has decreased by almost 30 percent from 1 for every 54 demobilized service

members after Desert Storm to one in 76 in the War on Terrorism.

The regulations interpreting USERRA have been drafted in plain language, and are set forth in an easy-to-read question and answer format. The regulations explain how USERRA protects against discrimination and retaliation because of military service. It also prevents service members from suffering disadvantages due to performance of their military obligations and affords them ample time to report back to their jobs following completion of their service obligations. Most significantly, service members can be assured that the Department of Labor stands ready to render assistance when employment concerns arise.

In addition to the regulations, Secretary Chao and the DOL's Veterans' Employment and Training Services (VETS) have taken other steps to reduce the rate of USERRA complaints including:

- Providing briefings to more than 158,000 service members and others on USERRA;
- Responding to almost 26,000 requests for technical assistance;
- Distributing more than 240 televised Public Service Announcements, with a second announcement to be released shortly; and
- Addressing most of the major human resource and employer organizations.

To find out more about USERRA, visit the Department of Labor website at [www.dol.gov/vets](http://www.dol.gov/vets) or call 1-866-4-USA-DOL.

## ***Press Release:***

Alan “Red” Peers, a DAV Veterans Service Officer and former Veterans Service Officer for the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition was found with twice the legal limit of alcohol proven with a breathalyzer test administered by tribal police of the Lakota Akicita tribe at Cheyenne River, South Dakota. He was arrested for common assault on officers of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition.

Alan Peers resigned from the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition and was returned to New York at VVnW expense.

Alan Peers has done irreparable harm to the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition and offended Native American Veterans of the Lakota Akicita tribe in Cheyenne River, South Dakota.

This sort of behavior cannot and will not be tolerated by any Veterans Service Officer.

For further information on this story contact: Peter Forbes, National Commander, Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition at 570-239-1710 or 1-800-843-8626.

# VETERANS DESIGN COMPETITION

(for use on t-shirts, patches, etc.)



**Cash Prize: \$500**



## Parameters:

- \* Design in full color
- \* Design to represent veterans of all eras
- \* Design to have a Native American/First Nation warrior theme
- \* Design can be modern or ancient

**The size should be approximately 12 x 14 inches.**

**Original artwork to become the property of  
Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition**



***Submit to:  
Veterans of the Vietnam War Inc.  
& The Veterans Coalition  
805 South Township Boulevard  
Pittston, PA 18640***



**Deadline: June 30, 2005**

**Judging to be done by the National Board of Directors,  
Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition**

***GET INVOLVED!***

# *DNA Testing Salvages Reputation of Soldier Branded Vietnam Deserter*

*– By: Ken Thorbourne, Associated Press*

JERSEY CITY, N.J. (AP) – It's been nearly four decades since Army SPC. 4 Carl Wadleigh of Jersey City went missing during the war in Vietnam. Unlike other soldiers in his company, judged to have fought bravely and died for their country, the former student of Jefferson Elementary School in North Bergen his twin sister, Margaret, likens him to Matt Dillon, the handsome sheriff on TV's "Gunsmoke" was branded a deserter.

After 36 years of living with this cloud hanging over their brother's reputation and military career and their family's name, Wadleigh's six surviving siblings were told recently that the Army had it wrong all along.

Military brass now believe that in 1968 Wadleigh, then 21, died fighting on behalf of his country in Vietnam's Ben Tre Province.

DNA tests have definitively proved, Army officials now say, that Wadleigh's remains had been confused with those of another soldier, Master Sgt. Frank Parrish, and were buried in Texas in 1973.

In a stark reversal, the Army now says Wadleigh is entitled to a full military funeral, and family members are planning for a burial at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

Just beginning to digest the Army's revised determination on their brother's disappearance, Wadleigh's siblings say they feel a sense of closure and vindication, but also anger and bewilderment that the government could get things so wrong for so long.

"I was shocked. I was glad it

ended," said older brother Clifford Wadleigh Jr. of Jersey City, an ex-Navy medic who enlisted shortly before Carl was drafted in 1964. "It just felt like part of you was missing."

Carl's parents, Clifford Sr. and Mary, died in the 1980s without that closure. All they knew of their son's last days was what they had heard from FBI agents who visited them inquiring about their youngest son's whereabouts. They said that Carl had gone AWOL absent without leave.

"We all thought he was AWOL," said Michelle Wadleigh, another of Carl's sisters, a religious science teacher who lives in Florham Park. "That was the hard part. There was an absolute stigma."

The Army's reappraisal of Carl Wadleigh's status as a soldier began in 1989 when the Vietnamese government shipped boxes containing the remains of 21 U.S. soldiers to the United States, according to Lt. Col. Jerry O'Hara, a spokesman for the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command in Hawaii.

With the emergence of mitochondrial DNA as an unassailable tool for identifying remains, military forensic experts were able to definitively identify one set of these remains as Master Sgt. Frank Parrish. The discovery was shocking because military officials were convinced they had already recovered and buried Parrish's remains.

Parrish, who worked as an adviser to a South Vietnamese strike force, was believed to have been the soldier found in 1972

alongside the body of Master Sgt. Earl Briggs, according to an account compiled in 1990 by the Homecoming II Project, an advocacy group for families of missing soldiers. Both men were killed in an ambush on January 16, 1968.

Military officials had based their identification of the remains on a comparison done with Parrish's picture and a toothless and jawbone-less skull.

There also was circumstantial evidence, said 1st Lt. Ken Hall, who works with O'Hara. Parrish was a medic, and a set of forceps had been found near the remains, he said.

Parrish's brother Johnnie had long rejected the forensic evidence the government had used to identify his brother, the Homecoming II report stated.

"The Pentagon informed Johnnie Parrish that he could accept it or reject it, but the identification was final," the account states, noting that Parrish's parents accepted the determination and eventually a reluctant Johnnie Parrish did, too.

As it turns out, Johnnie Parrish was right; the government was wrong.

The definitive identification of Parrish in 1989 set in motion a series of events, beginning with the exhumation of the remains in the Texas grave. Then came the time-consuming process of figuring out who that man was. "We went back to Ben Tre," the province where the remains initially believed to be Parrish had been found, O'Hara said.

“We also deduced who the person could be by process of elimination. Who was in the area?... It takes an awfully long time.”

It was November 2001 before military officials contacted two of Carl Wadleigh’s six siblings in New Jersey, asking for blood samples that could be used to compare DNA patterns with the remains unearthed in Texas.

Just recently, Army officials contacted family members and confirmed that the remains that had been buried in Texas were those of their brother Carl.

In a meeting with family members in the Branchville home of eldest sibling Maryjane, Army officials said they still believe Carl went AWOL, but not for as long as originally thought. Rather, they think he went AWOL for 13 days, having run off with a Vietnamese girlfriend. Sent to a hospital near Saigon to undergo a procedure in 1968, Carl never showed up, Army officials said, according to Carl’s siblings.

Army officials failed to return dozens of calls seeking verification of this account, which four siblings said they took away from the meeting.

Family members acknowledge that Carl had sent pictures home of a French Vietnamese woman he claimed to have married. Once, they said, he asked family members to raise \$1,000 so he could send her to the United States.

Army officials told the family they now believe Carl returned to active duty sometime after his unexcused absence. He died fighting for his country, they said, and is entitled to a full military funeral, according to family members.

“He died a hero,” Michelle Wadleigh said.

## ***VA’S ID SYSTEM NOW UNDER FIRE***

***— By: Larry Margasak, The Associated Press***

WASHINGTON — When Willie Buckels applied for veteran’s health care after returning from Iraq, the back and knee injuries he suffered while rescuing a fuel truck during a mortar attack were not enough to guarantee him treatment.

The Mississippi reservist had to bring along Army paperwork proving his combat service because the Veterans Affairs Department still lacks a computer system that tracks a new applicant’s service record.

More than a half-century ago, soldiers who fought in World War II were showing similar paper documents to ensure they got medical care.

“I took my paperwork, showed it to the VA, they got me in the system, got me an ID card and made appointments for doctors,” said Buckels, who did not complain about his experience.

More critical, however, are lawmakers who have pressed the

agency to make amends for the highly publicized problems it had serving veterans of the first Iraq war a decade ago.

“In this technologically advanced age,” proof of service “can’t be a sheet of paper crumbling around the edges,” said Republican Rep. Christopher Smith of New Jersey, chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

Nearly 18,000 soldiers who have returned from Iraq have sought care at VA health facilities, officials reported at the end of March. A separate report in mid-April said 4,000 troops from the war in Afghanistan sought care, although there is some overlap from those who served in both conflicts.

About 60 percent of the Iraq veterans and 84 percent of those from Afghanistan who sought VA care came from the National Guard and Reserves. The most common problems affected joints and back, teeth and the digestive system.

Mental disorders were diagnosed in 16 percent of the Afghanistan veterans and 15 percent of the Iraqi veterans.

The statistics reflect medical conditions regardless of their origin. They are not broken down by causes such as bullet wounds, blast injuries, accidents and illnesses.

With thousands more veterans expected to seek benefits and health care, the VA faces its biggest challenge since the early 1990s. Officials are well aware of the stakes.

“I believe the agency will be defined for generations by how well we take care of these returning troops,” Veterans Affairs Secretary Anthony Principi, a combat-decorated Vietnam veteran, said in an interview with The Associated Press.

The agency has a mixed record in dealing with the crush of new veterans.

The lack of a 21st-century computer operation is a black eye. Recently the VA health care director, Dr. Robert Roswell, resigned after the failure of a \$472 million hospital computer system for veterans in Florida that was supposed to become a national model.

The department, in a statement, said it does not now have an automated way of identifying veterans who served in Iraq or Afghanistan. "We rely on military records provided by the veteran," the VA said.

The Defense Department has compiled a computerized roster of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans for the VA, but the list has many discrepancies, officials said.

Nonetheless, some returning veterans who expected long delays in qualifying for medical treatment say they were surprised how

quickly they entered the VA system.

Sabrina Sue, a reservist from New York City, was told by a veteran of the first Gulf War to expect a year's wait to see a doctor for a service-connected thyroid condition. She waited only two weeks.

"I was amazed," said the supply specialist with the 340th Military Police Company, who also is entering a VA educational program.

Also impressed by his first VA experience was 1st Sgt. Gerry Mosley. He was injured with Buckels when the two members of the Army's 296th Transportation Company freed the jammed air brakes of a truck in their convoy and jumped to the ground as mortars exploded around them.

"They're just awesome representatives," Mosley said.

To address the backlog of cases that delayed disability pay for veterans, the VA has hired 1,500 workers and formed special teams to reduce the March 2002 peak of 233 days for an initial disability ruling. Today, the wait averages 171 days.

The agency also has extended hours at medical facilities, added examination rooms and hired or moved employees to reduce the backlog of veterans waiting for doctor's appointments. There were 176,000 veterans waiting for their first doctor's visit in July 2002, a number reduced to 3,242 currently.

Principi, who worked as the top deputy at the VA during the first Gulf War, is determined to avoid a repeat of the 1990s. Backlogs then led a congressional committee to accuse the agency of having "a tin ear, cold heart and a closed mind" in caring for sick veterans.



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# *An Attorney's Advice*

*Read this and make a copy for your files in case you need to refer to it someday. Maybe we should all take some of his advice!*

A corporate attorney sent the following out to the employees in his company.

1. The next time you order checks have only your initials (instead of first name) and last name put on them. If someone takes your checkbook they will not know if you sign your checks with just your initials or your first name but your bank will know how you sign your checks.

2. When you are writing checks to pay on your credit card accounts, DO NOT put the complete account number on the "For" line. Instead, just put the last four numbers. The credit card company knows the rest of the number and anyone who might be handling your check as it passes through all the check processing channels won't have access to it.

3. Put your work phone # on your checks instead of your home phone. If you have a PO Box use that instead of your home address. If you do not have a PO Box, use your work address. Never have your SS# printed on your checks. (DUH!) You can add it if it is necessary. But if you have it printed, anyone can get it.

4. Place the contents of your wallet on a photocopy machine, do both sides of each license, credit card, etc. You will know what you had in your wallet and all of the account numbers and phone numbers to call and cancel. Keep the photocopy in a safe place. I also carry a photocopy of my passport when I travel either here or abroad. We've all heard horror stories about fraud that's committed on us in stealing a name, address, Social Security number, credit cards, etc.

Unfortunately I, an attorney, have firsthand knowledge because my wallet was stolen last month. Within a week, the thief(s) ordered an expensive monthly cell phone package, applied for a VISA credit card, had a credit line approved to buy a Gateway computer, received a PIN number from DMV to change my driving record information online, and more.

But here's some critical information to limit the damage in case this happens to you or someone you know:

1. We have been told we should cancel our credit cards immediately. But the key is having the toll free numbers and your card numbers handy so you know whom to call. Keep those where you can find them.

2. File a police report immediately in the jurisdiction where it was stolen, this proves to credit providers you were diligent, and is a first step toward an investigation (if there ever is one)

But here's what is perhaps most important: (I never even thought to do this.)

3. Call the three national credit reporting organizations immediately to place a fraud alert on your name and Social Security number. I had never heard of doing that until advised by a bank that called to tell me an application for credit was made over the Internet in my name. The alert means any company that checks your credit knows your information was stolen and they have to contact you by phone to authorize new credit.

By the time I was advised to do this, almost two weeks after the theft, all the damage had been done.

There are records of all the credit checks initiated by the thieves' purchases, none of which I knew about before placing the alert. Since then, no additional damage has been done, and the thieves threw my wallet away this weekend (someone turned it in). It seems to have stopped them in their tracks.

**The numbers are:**

**Equifax: 1-800-525-6285**

**Experian (formerly TRW): 1-888-397-3742**

**Trans Union: 1-800-680-7289**

**Social Security Administration (fraud line):  
1-800-269-0271**

We pass along jokes on the Internet; we pass along just about everything. Pass this information along. It could really help someone you care about.

## **ADDRESS CORRECTION**

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

**Check your address label to ensure that it is correct. If it is not, please contact the VVnW and The Veterans**

**Coalition at 1-800-843-8626**

**with the appropriate corrections.**

**VVnW and The Veterans Coalition**

**e-mail address:**

**[vvnwnatl@epix.net](mailto:vvnwnatl@epix.net)**

**Send us your e-mail address to be included in an e-mail address book.**

# *Women's Overseas Service League*

The Women's Overseas Service League is looking for all women who have served overseas. WOSL is the only national service organization for women who have served overseas in the military, and civilians who have served overseas supporting the Armed Forces. The latter group includes women who have served with any agency working with or for the Armed Forces, i.e., American Red Cross, Department of Defense Dependents School System, the exchange systems, as well as civilian employment with the military departments, such as Army Special Services.

In existence since 1921, WOSL enjoys an illustrious history of advocating women's patriotic service. It provides scholarships and grants to women.

WOSL also sponsors the Youth Awards Program at the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge, PA; it supports the Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Washington, D.C.; and it sponsors the Hospitalized Veterans Writing Project in VA hospitals nationwide.

Local WOSL units throughout the country have monthly meetings, and they contribute funds and volunteer services to a wide range of community and patriotic programs.

Women interested in WOSL can get more information from the WOSL National Vice President, 319 Wickes Street, San Antonio TX 78210-1247 e-mail: [chabgood@world-net.net](mailto:chabgood@world-net.net)

## *2-11 FA Hero*

### *This Story is As Good As Any of those Chicken Soup for the Soul Stories, and it's Closer to Home*

Soon after we arrived here at Ft. Sill, a 2-11 soldier was honored at a post ceremony in which he was awarded the Purple Heart. Most of you will remember SSG Gene Westbrook and/or Peggy Westbrook. (SSG Westbrook's photo is attached here, from a recent Cannoneer article.) Peggy was a vigorous supporter of the Bravo Battery FRG in Hawaii.

SSG Westbrook was wounded by shrapnel in Iraq, and is now paralyzed from the chest down.

Here's the story ... SSG Westbrook, upon arrival home from the VA hospital in July, was trying to operate a special van fitted with a chairlift. It wasn't a new van, and the chairlift shorted out. SSG Westbrook was stuck in the van, his seat locked in the up position, and he was sweltering in the 110+ degree heat, as the air conditioner did not work. It took about an hour before a lawn service worker jury-rigged his drill to move the seat down and release SSG Westbrook. Given that, the Westbrooks decided it was unsafe to continue to use the old van, and would like to purchase a new one. But they can't afford one, and SSG Westbrook will be

medically discharged from the Army in a few months.

The VA will pay \$11,000 toward the \$28,000-\$29,000 van that the Westbrooks are trying to purchase. The local Goodyear plant quickly raised over \$1000 and donated it toward the van.

Recently, when SSG Westbrook was at his church here in Lawton, a young man in his congregation expressed a need for a car to get to work; he and his wife are currently using a 3-wheeled motorcycle. SSG Westbrook immediately offered his own second vehicle, which he can no longer drive. Remarkable, that a man in such need, would react so instantaneously to another's needs, and just plain give him his truck.

**Anyone interested in helping out the Westbrooks can make a donation to:**

**Grace Fellowship Benefit for Gene Westbrook**

**Checks may be sent in care of City National Bank, P.O. Box 2009, Lawton, OK 73502.**

**The account number is #872260.**

## *Think About This...*

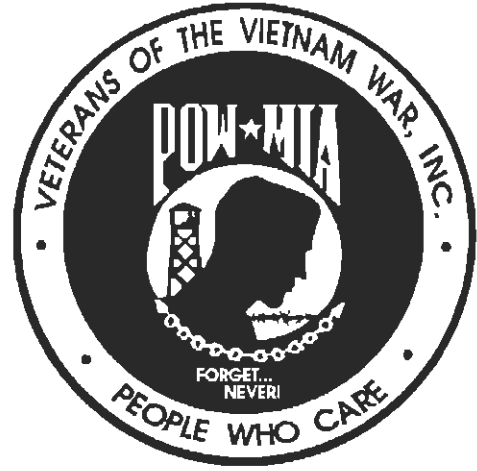
### *Article from Romanian newspaper read to cadets at West Point 2002*

"Why are Americans so united? They don't resemble one another. They speak all the languages of the world and form an astonishing mixture of civilizations. Some are nearly extinct, others are incompatible with one another. Still the American tragedy turned three hundred million people into one hand put on the heart. Nobody rushed to empty their bank account. Nobody rushed to accuse the White House, the Army or the secret services. They placed flags on buildings and cars in every place as if a minister or the President was passing. What on Earth can unite the Americans in such a way? Their land? Their galloping history? Their economic power? I've tried for hours to find an answer. I thought things over but I reached for only one conclusion. Only freedom works such miracles."

# ***POW/MIA Status Report***

## ***From Michael T. Breighner,***

### ***National Program Coordinator***



## **DEAD AGAIN**

Although not official the U.S. government is, once again, preparing to declare Navy Capt. Michael Scott Speicher dead. Three articles published recently, from the Associated Press, the Washington Times and Reuters makes it clear that the conclusion of the Iraq Survey Group is that Speicher is dead.

According to the Washington Times article, by Rowan Scarborough: "Members of the U.S. team investigating the fate of Capt. Scott Speicher have concluded that the Navy fighter pilot is dead, according to sources close to the mission. But his remains have not been found. A promising lead to finally resolving the matter vanished recently when buried remains thought to be Capt. Speicher's turned out not to be of the downed pilot."

The sources said Army Maj. Gen. Keith Dayton, the former director of the Iraq Survey Group (ISG), has told officials in recent days that investigators now believe the pilot shot down in 1991 over Iraq is not alive.

The conclusion is based largely on the fact that all leads to Capt. Speicher's whereabouts have turned up no evidence he is alive. "What I have heard [Gen. Dayton] say is there is no evidence he was ever in captivity," said a senior defense official. ISG officials now believe Capt. Speicher either died in the crash or shortly thereafter in Iraq's vast western desert, a second official said."

The Washington Times article went on to discuss Source 2314, now discredited, saying "The Washington Times previously reported on a secret DIA written report that cast doubt on the truthfulness of the defector who claimed to have seen Capt. Speicher alive in 1998. The report refers to defector No. 2314 who had worked in Saddam Hussein's Special Security Organization (SSO), the branch that enforced loyalty to the Ba'ath Party. Labeled "secret. no foreign," the report states that the military "has debriefed several doctors whom 2314 indicated should have knowledge of Speicher. All denied having any knowledge. Two have passed a polygraph exam. ... None of the information provided by 2314 has proven accurate."

"The June 23, 2003, DIA report adds that the military "has searched every known location associated with Speicher. Other than at Hakimiyah prison, where U.S. forces found the initials 'MSS' carved in a cell wall, no significant evidence of his status has been discovered."

The article ended by saying: "The Iraq Survey Group has devoted a number of personnel to the Speicher search. But its main goal is to find out what happened to Saddam Hussein's stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons."

The Search for Speicher NEVER rated a solely dedicated team. Instead the Speicher investigation came behind the search for WMD's and Saddam, and oh by the way, if you find anything on Speicher..... So, not for the first time or the second but for the third time..... Speicher is about to be declared dead.....

\*\*\*\*\*

## **KOREAN WAR UNKNOWN IDENTIFIED**

Fayetteville, N.C. (AP) - The remains of a soldier missing 54 years have been identified by the military. Edmund "Teddy" Lilly III, 22, of Fayetteville died Sept. 3, 1950 in the one of the most violent battles of the Korean War, the battle of the Pusan Perimeter.

Lilly's remains were identified from those of about 1,000 soldiers in buried Hawaii's Punchbowl Cemetery using DNA samples taken from his sisters. Fewer than five servicemen from the cemetery have been identified, according to the Pentagon's POW/MIA Office.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **REMAINS OF MARINE KILLED IN VIETNAM COMING HOME TO TEXAS**

SMITHVILLE, Texas (AP) - The remains of an American soldier who had been missing since the Vietnam War are coming home after being located with help from a former enemy.

Marine 2nd Lt. Donald John Matocha of Smithville was killed in a firefight in April 1968 on Dong Ma mountain in what was then the Republic of South Vietnam, but his body was not recovered.

The Defense Department had essentially given up trying to locate his remains by 1993, said Hattie Johnson, a case officer with the Marine Corps casualty office in Washington. "They had exhausted all means of looking," Johnson told the Austin American-Statesman.

Then in 1996, Nguyen Van Loc, a 58-year-old farmer who had been a squad leader of the 320th Division of the People's Army of Vietnam, appeared at the Army's POW/MIA office in Hanoi. He said he'd found a dead American on Dong Ma mountain in the spring of 1968 and helped bury him in a bomb crater.

Matocha's grave was found in March, and dental records established positive identification.

Loretta Eiben, one of Matocha's eight younger siblings, said her family will always appreciate Nguyen Van Loc's help. "We owe a debt of gratitude to him and his willingness to make a repeat visit to the site," she said.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **VIETNAM MIA IDENTIFIED, RETURNED - BUT NOT TO WIDOW**

It is an American family's bittersweet story - the discovered remains of a man, unaccounted for since a hellish gun battle at the height of the Vietnam War, returned to and buried by his family in Sherman, Texas, just 60 miles north of Dallas.

But to one woman who read it, it is an utter nightmare.

For 38 years now, Beverly Rose has been waiting for her husband, Chief Master Sergeant Luther L. Rose, to come home. In her Lake Bistineau home, she keeps Luther's medals, a flag from his memorial, and the hope that, one day, she might have the closure - a gravesite - from any identification of his remains.

Every morning she looks for news in the morning paper. Recently, on Luther's birthday, she found it.

The headline read: "Remains of Vietnam MIA returned to Family."

"My eyes just automatically go to any article that says remains or Vietnam," Beverly said. "So I saw that article and, inside, I said, 'Thank God that one more woman will know what happened to her husband, or one more mother will know what happened to her son. And then I read the rest of the article. 'I was that woman.'"

Indeed, the husband she'd prayed about for 38 years had been buried the day before in Sherman. His mother Thelma, and daughter from a previous marriage, Janise Langford, were there to see Luther honored with the playing of "Taps" and a 21-gun salute. Beverly and her daughter hadn't been notified; not about the funeral or

the fact that Luther's remains, excavated from a field in Laos nine years ago, had finally been identified.

"It felt like the Empire State Building fell on top of me," Beverly said. "Everything just stopped. I locked up. I couldn't breath, I couldn't talk, I couldn't function at all."

In the days since, Beverly has been functioning with the help of her family and several boxes of Kleenex. She has called the U.S. Air Force Mortuary Affairs office in San Antonio to find out what happened, how she - the widow who has been receiving Luther's Survivor Benefits Payment and widow's pension for decades - would not be contacted about the discovery of his remains.

"Somebody made a big mess of this," she said. "And I realize, human error is going to happen. And I can forgive that.

"But now that Air Force has to make it right. I want my husbands remains exhumed and brought home to where he belongs. I've waited 38 years to find out something about him. If they'd just let me bring him home, I could be buried next to him. Our daughter would have somewhere to go."

According to Beverly, state representative Billy Montgomery and Congressman Jim McCrery have been contacted and asked to look into the matter. Meanwhile, in Sherman, Texas, another family has no knowledge of Beverly's situation, but only what Beverly so badly wants - closure.

"I thought that the worst thing that could ever happen to me already happened," Beverly said. "But this was worse than when they first told me he was missing in action. 'I am his wife. I understand if he has another daughter from a previous marriage. But I am his wife. He is my soul-mate. He needs to be here, with me. The others can visit. But this is his home.

"I won't give up. I'd given up that he'd be found. But now, he's so close. And I'm going to fight until he's all the way home."

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## **POW RECALLS FEAR, TRIUMPH OF IRAQ WAR**

Confronted with possible execution, Operation Iraqi Freedom prisoner of war Ron Young did the only thing he could think of: Pray.

"I can't truly explain how my time in Iraq has changed my life," Young told an audience of about 180 people at a recent chamber dinner in the Carson Nugget Convention Center. "I have appreciation for my family, and I thank God every day that my life was saved."

His keynote address began and ended with standing ovations from Carson City's business elite and their guests.

Young urged audience members to support the troops defending Iraq, whether they agreed with the war or not. Some wiped away tears during the 45-minute speech, while others beamed with pride at the young former Army soldier.

Young's Apache Longbow helicopter was shot down during his first combat mission on March 23, 2003. He and co-pilot Chief Warrant Officer David Williams went down about 50 miles southwest of Baghdad. They were hostages for 22 days. Young, of Atlanta, is now a CNN correspondent and on the Premiere Speakers Bureau roster.

Young charmed the audience with his Southern drawl while telling anecdotal stories of his imprisonment and boyhood dreams of flying. He said his family and the movie "Top Gun" inspired him to enlist in the military after three years in college. Young yearned for the "highway to the danger zone and, of course, the girl."

But it wasn't until his Iraqi mission that the 26-year-old would face war's realities: chaos, death and fear.

The Army pounded Baghdad with artillery the day Young was sent on his first mission. He said he knew it wasn't a training exercise because people were cursing over the radio.

"The anticipation was unbelievable," Young said. "Adrenaline was just running through my veins."

In the air with the fleet, he realized this was for real, and the people on the ground were trying to kill him. The 18 Apaches were ambushed. All of Young's weapons malfunctioned. When the helicopter started going down, he recalled a female voice over the aircraft's loud speaker, which the Army uses because men react quicker to a female voice.

The audience laughed as Young repeated what the calm female voice said, things like "engine out, fuselage on fire."

After crashing and running through weeds into an irrigation ditch, Young and his co-pilot were confronted with armed men screaming at them in Arabic. Young said he gave his co-pilot, who had been injured in the foot, three options: They could surrender, shoot back with just a 9 mm gun, or run.

They surrendered.

In prison, the men were videotaped, threatened, and nearly blown through the prison's tin roof during the Baghdad air raids. Young prayed for 12 hours straight. His group of seven POWs were rescued by "battle-hardened Marines" in a house outside Tikrit.

"I'm not going to lie to you - it was the greatest moment of my life," Young said.

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## ARMY UNSURE IF TAPED EXECUTION WAS REAL

By JOHN NOLAN, Associated Press Writer

CINCINNATI - The Army said recently it cannot determine whether a video that appeared to show a captured soldier being shot by militants was legitimate, and said the figure in the grainy video could have been a dummy made to look like a human being.

An Arab satellite station broadcast the video in June, reporting that the man being shot in the head was Spc. Keith M. Maupin, 21, who was captured when his convoy was attacked west of Baghdad.

Department of Defense (news - web sites) officials said they were unable to confirm the report despite repeated analysis of the tape. Military officials ended their analysis and regard the tape as inconclusive, Army spokesman Maj. Mark Magalski said recently.

"It was at night. It was very grainy. You never hear the person on the video. You never see the person's face," Magalski said. "Last but not least, there's been no body. There's been no body associated with that video."

Magalski said it could not be determined if the figure purportedly executed in the video was a person or a dummy.

Maupin's family members, who live near Batavia about 15 miles east of Cincinnati, issued a statement saying they hope that the soldier is still alive, although they have received no news about his fate.

"We know that he will return with honor someday," the statement said.

Maupin's parents, Carolyn and Keith Maupin, said they have received 10,000 letters of support from well-wishers.

The statement was released four months after Maupin was taken captive on April 9. A week later, Al-Jazeera television station broadcast a videotape showing the soldier sitting on the floor surrounded by five masked men holding automatic rifles.

In June, Al-Jazeera broadcast another video showing a blindfolded man sitting on the ground. The station said that in the next scene, gunmen shoot the man in the back of the head, in front of a hole dug in the ground. It did not show the killing.

Maupin's family celebrated his 21st birthday by eating cake and raising a POW/MIA flag at the home of his mother.

The Army lists Maupin's status as "captured."

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## VIETNAM MIA'S REMAINS RETURN TO REST IN TROY

By: ELIZABETH WEILL-GREENBERG For the  
Tribune

WASHINGTON -- More than 30 years after he was reported missing after his plane was shot down over Vietnam, funeral services were held for Lt. Col. Randolph Perry Jr. at the Troy city cemetery.

Perry was an Air Force radar navigator when an enemy missile struck his B-52 on Dec. 20, 1972, according to Lt. Ken Hall of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, an organization based in Hawaii dedicated to finding and identifying missing-in-action service members from all conflicts.

Perry was one of six crewmembers, Hall said, adding that two survivors were taken prisoner and later released in 1973.

Remains were returned to U.S. authorities in 1985, but Perry's were not identified until Sept. 10, 2003, said Hall.

Ambrose Goudy, 67, who attended Troy High School with Perry said until then he had not given up hope that Perry would be found alive. "Right up until they found his remains, he still seemed like a part of our big Air Force, and I was right along with him, like partners," he said.

Goudy, who retired from the Air Force in 1978, still has a Missing in Action bracelet bearing Perry's name.

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According to DoD, there are now 1,859 Americans listed as missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War: 1,418 in Vietnam, 378 in Laos, 55 in Cambodia and 8 in PRC territorial waters. Over 90% of all Americans missing from the Vietnam War were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Laos and Cambodia under Hanoi's wartime control. Recently seven Americans have been announced as accounted for:

**Warrant Officer 2nd Class Jack W. Brunson, USA, KIA/BNR, Laos, 5/31/71**

**Major Ralph L. Carlock, USAF, KIA/BNR 3/4/67, LA**

**CPL Kenneth L. Crody, USMC, KIA/BNR 7/11/72, SVN**

**Mr. Charles Dean, Captured 9/10/74, LA**

**SSGT Dennis W. Hammond, USMC, POW 2/8/68, DIC 1970**

**SSGT Jerry W. Hendrix, USMC, KIA/BNR 7/11/72, SVN**

**Captain Raymond H. Hetrick, USAF, KIA/BNR 2/24/66, LA**

## POW ABUSE SNAKES THROUGH MILITARY HISTORY

By Richard Pyle, Associated Press

NEW YORK -- As long as there have been wars, there have been prisoners of war and abuse of prisoners.

From the Confederacy's notorious Andersonville prison of the Civil War to the Hanoi Hilton, where American POWs were held in Vietnam, military history is rife with stories of brutality, starvation and humiliation in captivity.

Few such tales stir such immediate and profound public revulsion and anguish as the recently disclosed mistreatment of Iraqi detainees by U.S. troops at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

A key reason, experts say, is a built-in resistance among Americans to the idea that U.S. troops or other military personnel would do such things.

"We're always the white hats in military affairs, the ones who hand out the Hershey bars and pat the kids on the head, not the ones who sexually abuse POWs, so we don't believe it," says military historian Douglas Brinkley.

In addition, Brinkley said, cameras were not present to record abuses of the past as they were at Abu Ghraib.

The mistreatment has brought to mind other grievous episodes involving prisoners of war. Among them: the slaying of war chief Crazy Horse, who was bayoneted while in Army custody in 1877, the year after he helped lead the American Indian victory over Lt. Col. George Custer's 7th Cavalry at Little Big Horn.

The last time Pentagon officials were at such a loss to explain unsoldierly conduct involving prisoners was in 1969, when eight U.S. Special Forces members, including their commander in Vietnam, were accused of murdering a Vietnamese double agent by shooting him and dumping his chained corpse from a boat. The sensational "Green Beret Murder Case" ended before trial when then-Defense Secretary Melvin Laird dropped the charges.

Another major uproar in Vietnam concerned the "tiger cages" at Con Son island prison, where political prisoners incarcerated by the U.S.-backed Saigon regime were confined and allegedly tortured. While there was no direct U.S. involvement in the reported abuse, the cages themselves had been built by RMK-BRJ, a Texas military contractor and antecedent to the Halliburton Co. subsidiary KBR.

Americans also were subjected to "tiger cage"-type abuse; 29 captured by the Viet Cong were held in primitive jungle camps that included cages. About half were killed or died in captivity, according to "Honor

Bound," the most comprehensive book on the Vietnam POW experience.

The Vietnam incidents pale next to many prisoner-related atrocities of World War II, which including the 1942 Bataan Death March, in which 7,000 to 10,000 POWs died or were killed by their Japanese captors during the 55-mile trek to prison camps, and the Malmedy Massacre of dozens of captured GIs by Nazi troops at Malmedy, Belgium, in 1944.

Years after the war, details also surfaced about the Japanese Imperial Army's Unit 731, which conducted grisly physical and germ warfare experiments on captured Chinese soldiers and civilians, Russians and some Western POWs in Manchuria from 1936 to 1945. About 9,000 were believed to have died before the laboratory's chief ordered it destroyed in the last days of the war.

The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition was invited to participate in the World War II Honor Parade and put together a special Color Guard for the event. Shown in the photo from the left are: Michael Murphy,

VVnW National Secretary; Bob Visakay; Lawrence Collins, Post VA-05 Commander;

Frank Amalfitano, VVnW National Board Member and Charlie White, Post WV-01 Commander.

The van and trailer were also part of the event and thousands of bottles of VVnW and The Veterans Coalition water was distributed to high school bands and other participants in the event. Thousands of U.S. and POW flags were also handed out to those along the parade route.

## *Needed: Homeless Veteran Food Drives*

### *Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc and The Veterans Coalition Honored by the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (T\*A\*P\*S)*

T\*A\*P\*S is a national non-profit organization made up of, and providing support to, the families and friends of military members who have given their lives while serving in the armed forces. At the heart of T\*A\*P\*S is their national military survivor peer support network. They also offer grief counseling referral, caseworker assistance, and crisis information free of charge 24 hours daily. For more information contact them at: Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, Inc., 2001 S Street, N.W., Suite 300, Washington, DC 20009 or visit their website at [taps.org](http://taps.org)

The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition was honored at their 10th Annual Military Survivor Seminar with their T\*A\*P\*S Honor Guard Award. Shown in the photo from the left are: Bonnie Carroll, Founder of T\*A\*P\*S; Peter J. Forbes, VVnW and The Veterans Coalition National Commander;



Michael Breighner, National Vice Commander; Michael Murphy, National Secretary, Nancy Verespy, National Executive Director; Nino Gallone, UVBH-NY; Frank Amalfitano, National Board Member; Michael Ackerfeld, National Master Sgt-at-

Arms and Brian Bauman, T\*A\*P\*S, Chairman, Board of Directors.

The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition is proud of its affiliation with T\*A\*P\*S.

## Twins awarded Silver Stars

Captains Dan and Dave Hibner, identical twins, have both received Silver Stars for their actions in Iraq.

When the 3rd Infantry Division conducted the final attack on Baghdad April 7, 2003 the brothers' units were lead elements attacking from different directions to breach obstacles on the only feasible avenues of approach that led into the city center and Saddam's Palaces.



Capt. Dave (left) and Dan Hibner, identical twins, take a break following the fall of Baghdad

Dave's company with infantry and scouts attached conducted a covert breach in the south, 5 km into enemy territory, while Dan's company conducted a deliberate breach from the west.

Dave's Delta Company "provided the combat power of a fourth maneuver force..." said Lt. Col. Eric Schwartz, commander, Task Force 1-64 Armor. "Though wounded in the final hours of fighting to seize Baghdad, he never left his unit."

## Engineers improve conditions in northern Iraq village

Soldiers from the 133rd Engineer Battalion are working on a series of projects in the rural village of Hamzan in northern Iraq.

The National Guard Soldiers from Belfast, Maine, replaced the village's small mud schoolhouse with a concrete structure. The new school has three classrooms with plumbing and electricity.

As part of an initiative to train former Peshmerga fighters to learn construction skills, the engineers worked with nine former fighters to train them in masonry and carpentry skills during the construction of the school.



2nd Lt. Adam Cote, a Portland native from the 133rd Engineer Battalion, speaks to a group of Soldiers and residents of Hamzan during a ceremony to celebrate the opening of a new school in the village which was built by the engineers.

In addition to rebuilding the village school, the engineers brought in a 20,000-liter water tank and a 75-kilowatt generator which will serve the 17 families in the area who do not have plumbing or electricity. They also improved the local roads which were in disrepair.

"This is why we're here, to make a difference in the lives of the Iraqi people," said 2nd Lt. Adam Cote, a

# SOLDIER

Portland, Maine, native from Company B. "This project will not only improve the lives of the people but also improve the way the people see the mission of Multinational Forces here in Iraq."

## Beating 10:1 odds, Soldier earns Silver Star

In a fight, two against one is bad odds. Ten against one is a recipe for disaster. Yet those were the odds Sgt. Tommy Rieman and his squad faced and beat when they were ambushed by more than 50 anti-American insurgents near Abu Ghraib Prison in Iraq last December.

Rieman, 24, a team leader in Company B, 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, was awarded the Purple Heart and the Silver Star for his heroic actions last December day during a ceremony at Devil Brigade Field August 6. He was also awarded the Army Commendation Medal with a "V" device for valor for a separate reconnaissance mission that took place in March 2003.



Sgt. Tommy Rieman, B Company, 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment is awarded the Purple Heart by Col. Michael Ferriter during a ceremony at Devil Field, August 6. Rieman was also awarded the Silver Star and Army Commendation medal with "V" device for heroism during an ambush in Iraq last year.

Rieman was in charge during the patrol that garnered him the Silver Star because he had scouted the area before and knew the terrain. His eight-man patrol was in three light-skinned Humvees with no doors when the first rocket-propelled grenade hit.

They were hit by three RPGs and a barrage of small arms fire coming from 10 dug-in enemy fighting positions. Staying in the kill zone meant certain death, so the vehicles never stopped moving. Rieman knew he had to return fire. Bullets whizzed after them as the vehicles sped away from the ambush and the Soldiers found themselves caught in another ambush.

There were maybe 50 enemy attackers blasting away at him with small arms fire from a grove of palm trees nearby. Injuries to his men were beginning to pile up. Out of his squad, Sgt. Bruce Robinson had lost his right leg in the RPG attack and Spc. Robert Macallister had been shot in the buttocks. Rieman himself had been shot in the right arm and chest, and had shrapnel wounds to his chest, stomach and ear. Worst of all, they were almost out of ammo.

He began firing away with his M203 grenade launcher, raining round after round down on the attackers. After being battered by 15 of Rieman's 40mm grenades, the enemy's guns were silent.



# STORIES

## Shoe Fly brings hope to Afghani children

Operation Shoe Fly began as a small, simple effort to make a difference in Afghanistan one child and two shoes at a time.

It's is a humanitarian effort by Soldiers and families of Company B, 214th Aviation Regiment

Hillclimbers that deployed to Afghanistan in March. Spearheaded by 1st Sgt. Jim Thomson, Operation Shoe Fly started as a home-grown idea by a small Army unit that mushroomed into a program that now boasts local and national support.

"OPSF is the culmination of an idea born by a group of CH-47 [Chinook] crew members in support of Operation Enduring Freedom," Thomson said.

Noticing that many children were shoeless, Thomson and his "crewdogs" debated how best to help them and Operation Shoe Fly was born.

The company's motto "helping to bring the hearts of America to the soles of Afghanistan," poetically describes the task undertaken by the Hillclimbers.

Thomson reached out to Americans with an Internet letter that has launched the collection of 2,000 pairs of shoes and counting.

"The idea of course, is that there must be many like piles in garages across America and here I am in a country struggling to find itself and stand on its own, barefooted," he said.

## Reserve officer helps teach new Iraqi police

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- Deploying to train Soldiers is nothing new for 45-year-old Matt Breeding, an Army Reserve major and military police officer from Oldtown, Md. After a nearly 27-year career in the Military Police Corps and 22 years as a Maryland State trooper, Breeding had a reputation as of the Army's top cops in security and keeping Soldiers and their belongings safe when he was called back to active duty in November 2003.

Breeding, a husband and father of three from Oldtown, Md., started his deployment with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Anti-Terrorism and Force Protection, working in planning in the agency's



First Sgt. Jim Thomson, Co. B, 214th Avn. Rgt., is surrounded by shoes received from across the United States. Operation Shoe Fly has received more than 2,000 pairs of shoes for Afghani children since June.

Washington, D.C. Provost Marshal's Office. His work drew the attention of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program and prompted a request for Breeding to deploy to Iraq to work on the frontlines of bolstering security for Corps personnel and other U.S. interests.

Breeding, who has taught at the Maryland State Police Academy, soon found himself in Baghdad serving on the Iraqi Ministry of Interior's Civilian Police Assistance Training Team, an interagency and international group of law enforcement officials charged with teaching the new Iraqi police force how to restore and maintain law and order in the newly freed country.

He now works 14- to 18-hour days building curriculum that teaches squads of new Iraqi police the philosophies and principles of democratic policing and human rights. It's a mission he is strongly committed to. "The Corps is spending and managing an incredible amount of money in country to restore the infrastructure and to keep its people here on the ground safe," Breeding said from his Baghdad office. "By investing in teaching the new Iraqi police forces, we will increase security here and allow everyone to further concentrate efforts on building a solid foundation for the Iraqi people to build upon."

## Soldier nominated for Medal of Honor

His unit, the 11th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, was assigned the task of establishing an enemy prisoner of war holding area and was aggressively counter-attacked by a large Republican Guard unit near the Baghdad International Airport. The unit was overtaken and pinned down within minutes.



Sgt. 1st Class Paul Ray Smith cuts the lock of a suspected ammunition storage facility in central Iraq. SGT Craig Zentkovich

Several vehicles were out of action and some Soldiers were down. Smith climbed aboard a damaged armored vehicle, and under intense fire managed to get a .50-caliber machine gun working and provided critical covering fire so the wounded could be evacuated. 1st Sgt. Timothy Campbell said that Smith's actions set the conditions to get control and restore the initiative.

"The .50-cal was the key," Campbell said, explaining that Smith's actions changed the course of the fight. Smith provided cover while wounded Soldiers were evacuated. He lost his life after saving numerous others. Smith was posthumously awarded the Silver Star and he is currently a nominee for the Medal of Honor.

According to his citation, Smith's actions killed 20 to 50 Iraqis, allowing the American wounded to be evacuated, saving an aid station and headquarters, as well as possibly 100 American lives.



Maj. Matt Breeding

# *Veteran of the Vietnam War, Inc and The Veterans Coalition Color Guard*



The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition was invited to participate in the World War II Honor Parade and put together a special Color Guard for the event. Shown in the photo from the left are: Michael Murphy,

VVnW National Secretary; Bob Visakay; Lawrence Collins, Post VA-05 Commander; Frank Amalfitano, VVnW National Board Member and Charlie White, Post WV-01 Commander.

The van and trailer were also part of the event and thousands of bottles of VVnW and The Veterans Coalition water was distributed to high school bands and other participants in the event. Thousands of U.S. and POW flags were also handed out to those along the parade route.



# *Military Support Packages Go To Engineers in the Solomon Islands*



Over the past three years the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition has sent out in the name of our membership over 8,000 Military Support Packages to those who are currently serving overseas.

We received hundreds of thank you letters and the same thread seems to run through all of them it isn't so much what is in the package but rather it is that the package was sent at all! They appreciate everything they get and there is never too much attention paid to our military.

Aussie Troops also received Military Support Packages from the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition in the Solomon Islands and

as they say "a picture is worth a thousand words"! We delight in knowing that we have been able to bring a "little bit of home" to those who are so far away serving as our messengers of peace and freedom.

Do you know of someone who is currently serving? If so, just complete the Military Support Package Request Form that you will find in this newsletter and send it on to National Headquarters. We will see that your request is fulfilled as soon as possible. You can also go on to the website to find the information at [vvnw.org](http://vvnw.org) or [theveteranscoalition.org](http://theveteranscoalition.org)

Let our soldiers know how much we appreciate them!



# ***MISSION STATEMENT UNITED VETERANS BEACON HOUSE***

**A Project of the Veterans of the  
Vietnam War, Inc. and  
The Veterans Coalition**

**The United Veterans Beacon House  
provides transitional, safe housing  
for homeless veterans as they reintegrate into  
the society they willingly protected through  
their military service.**

**United Veterans Beacon House makes a  
difference through advocacy, education,  
retraining and employment.**



## ***Overview***

The homeless veteran problem in the United States is becoming more and more prevalent due to an increasing national socio-economic crisis, a combined draw-down in our nations uniformed services, the “dumping” of psychiatric patients onto our nation's streets as well as a host of other associated reasons.

The Veterans of Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition, in response to the homeless veteran problem, is operating comprehensive projects designed to assist the homeless veteran. This project has been designated by the VVnW and The Veterans Coalition as the United Veterans Beacon House Project (UVBH). The United Veterans Beacon Houses are designed to offer a safe drug/alcohol-free haven, direct the veteran to a multitude of support agencies offering assistance, and provide the veteran with decent shelter while the veteran rebuilds his/her life.

The concept of the UVBH is to provide housing for the veteran to allow the veteran to restructure and rebuild his/her life. The veteran is allowed to stay in a UVBH for a period of six months to two years, a VA requirement. Studies have shown

that with this length of stay, the veteran has the ability to begin a new working career, change jobs as upward mobility dictates and amass the financial resources to become self-sufficient.

During the veteran's stay at a UVBH, he or she will be assisted in obtaining a full range of services including drug and alcohol counseling, PTSD counseling, other psychological and family counseling, life skills training, full employment counseling and have access to a wide range of medical services.

Each UVBH networks with existing community services and the Department of Veterans Affairs resources to insure against a duplication of services.

Currently, the VVnW and the Veterans Coalition is affiliated with United Veterans Beacon Houses in Akron, Pennsylvania; 16 sites in New York; Huntington, West Virginia; and Shreveport, Louisiana; Proposed future sites include Norfolk, Virginia, Waco, Texas, and in the states of New Mexico, Kansas, Montana and South Dakota. The United Veterans Beacon House project also operates food.

**The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition  
have so many different projects that you as a member can be  
involved in or support. Call 1-800-843-8626 for more information.**

# *United Veterans Beacon House Huntington, Va. “Working Bee”*

Building a sign, digging holes, and pouring concrete were just a few of the jobs handled by the small but very capable team that endeavored to get the newest location of a United Veterans Beacon House in Huntington, WV ready for veteran residents. This project of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition is being done in cooperation with the American Legion in Huntington. Over 400 letters were sent out to members, local community organizations, churches and social clubs with the result being that only one National-at-Large member, John Moore, from West Virginia showed up to offer his abilities. The tasks ranged from plumbing, electrical, painting, reconstruction and generally just about anything to get the three-story house into shape. Shown in the photo from the left are: Atty. Steven Berg, KY; Rick Brody, VVnW New Jersey State Coordinator and Commander of Post NJ-03; Loy Smith, National Board Member and Commander of Post LA-04; Michael Breighner, National Vice Commander; John Moore, VVnW member and Peter Forbes, National Commander. Not shown in the photo is Nancy Verespy, National Executive Director.

While the days were long, the water non-existent at times and the heat oppressive, the



feeling of accomplishment was something that those who have never volunteered will never know. Another week-long work session was undertaken by Loy Smith and Peter Forbes and the remaining work was completed by Peter Forbes and Nancy Verespy. The Department of Veterans Affairs will soon be placing veterans in this United Veterans Beacon a place where veterans get a hand up not a handout.

If you would like to assist with the food pantry at the house or have a food drive for their benefit or make a donation you can do so by contacting the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition at 1-800-843-8626.

It is a good feeling to remember that “we are our brother’s keeper”. Try it on for size!

**GET INVOLVED!**

# Westward Ho!

*Nancy Verespy and Peter Forbes*



Well over two years ago, we renewed a friendship with Robert "Kim" King at the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. National Convention in Washington, DC. This quiet, unassuming Native American man was observing all of the convention activities and when encouraged, agreed to begin the efforts necessary to start a post of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition at Fort Belknap in Montana. This was no easy task but Kim took on the job and got to his required twenty-five members for a Charter. We had promised that when he got to the Charter we would make the trip to Montana to make the presentation and we had every intention of making good on that promise.

We had originally planned to make the trip in January, 2004 but the scheduled time found thirty-eight inches of snow, and Kim advised that people could not get out to attend any functions so we waited for a few weeks and re-planned the trip.

We started out on March 7 and went by way of Cleveland, Ohio where we had the pleasure of sharing some time with Bill Curran, Commander of Post OH-10. We were able to have dinner with members of the post and exchanged ideas and information. Gary Curran is continuing his

efforts on behalf of homeless veterans and homeless people in general by his daily pickups of food at various businesses throughout the Cleveland area. He puts an estimated 1100 miles on the post van every week. The post is working closely with veterans who are housed in a local shelter program and these individuals are becoming a part of the brotherhood of the post. The post participates in parades, motorcycle shows and in any area where they can get the message of the VVnW before the general public.

We set out the next morning through the snowy weather to head west. Everywhere we stopped we were approached by veterans to get information about the organization and spend some time with people who knew nothing about our mission. We also stopped about



every thirty miles to put "Support Our Troops" signs along the highway. We need the message to go far and wide and we also know that this works since we have had so many positive comments from people who have seen the signs. It takes a lot of effort but we are continually reminded of the sacrifices of those who are currently serving in the military and this was a small task for us as we went through Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, South

Dakota, Wyoming and finally arrived into Montana.

The differences of each of these states along with the beauty of the landscape made a very long trip enjoyable. Imagine how many signs we put up! In some spots there were cattle watching us as we made our way to the best place to put the signs, in some spots we had to move on because the ground was still frozen, some places it was so windy that we almost lost the door on the van the way it was whipping around! We knew we were making an impression though because when we would stop someone always commented about it and usually asked for a sign of their own.

We arrived at Fort Belknap, Montana to beautiful weather and an exuberant Kim King who we don't think really thought we would live up to our commitment of actually making the trip to Montana. We settled into our hotel (twenty-five miles from Fort Belknap the closest hotel to the reservation) and then went back to Harlem to meet with many people. Kim had set up a meeting with the Tribal Council members and we were amazed at the information they provided us.

It seems that the situation on this Reservation is not much different than it was 100 years ago treaties have been made and not honored, racism is very apparent, unemployment is at 70-80%, veteran services are difficult and sometimes non-existent and generally there is not much hope for the future. We were privileged to meet many young people who have just returned from serving in the military and we were interested to learn that they had been away and had now come back to the reservation where there is no employment and nothing much to do. They want to keep the traditions of their heritage.

We also found, though, that the sense of family and pride is outstanding. The Indians have a real sense of family children, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Some of them have very large families like Kim King and they have a pride in their heritage that is wonderful to observe. They come together and help each other. They also have a great sense of pride for veterans. These men and women are treated as true warriors and given respect.

We were greeted warmly everywhere we went and were privileged to be included in an Indian "sweat". This spiritual ceremony was something that we were honored to participate in and we were invited to come back again. During the "sweat" an explanation of the meaning of the ceremony was provided to show the connection between the universe and Mother Earth.



Montana is called "Big Sky Country" and for good reason it is huge, with wide open spaces and beautiful snow-capped mountains. It must have been part of the inspiration for "America the Beautiful".

Everywhere we went we met veterans signed them up as VVnW and The Veterans Coalition members and made them feel welcome. They are a proud people, steeped in tradition and ceremony.



*The photos show the Charter presentation to Kim King and some of the members of the Post.*

For the Charter presentation on Saturday, the Post prepared a Buffalo Feed. This meant early morning preparation of the buffalo, potatoes and fried bread. The day was supposed to begin with a presentation at 10 a.m. but we found out that specific times don't mean much to the Indians they operate on Indian time if you are scheduled to start something at 10 a.m. it may actually happen any time between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. or when everyone gets there! There



us instructions on how to peel potatoes and when we were done we went off to the Bingo Hall to prepare for the feed. People came in slowly and made themselves comfortable for an afternoon visit.

We had the privilege of hearing of the many traditions of the Assiniboine tribe, of the veteran experiences of their warriors and met the VVnW and The Veteran Coalition POW \*WOW Princess Carmen Mendoza a lovely young woman. She is shown in the photo on the next page with Kim King (on the left) and Peter Forbes.

The photo also on the next page shows Mike Talks Different and Kenneth Tuffy Helgeson, "Singing Eagle", with Kim King after they provided the music for the honors songs of the afternoon.

The afternoon began with a Veterans Honors song, a circle of people who then introduced themselves and told a bit about their background and history. This was a unique way to learn about each of those present and hear of their pride in their veteran service.

The buffalo feed was served and included some good Northeastern Pennsylvania kielbasa and white birch beer soda. We all enjoyed the food.

We exchanged information with many people, talked with Christine, a certified counselor/psychologist. As a contract employee of the VA she is doing an outstanding job of working with the Native American veterans as they try to cope with the



was no need to rush or worry this is a way of life! The ladies, Joyce, Debra and Robin did a great job of getting the food ready and giving



*Shown above is VVnW and The Veteran Coalition POW\*WOW Princess Carmen Mendoza, a lovely young woman. Also pictured, Kim King on the left and Peter Forbes to the right.*



*The above picture shows Mike Talks Different and Kenneth Tuffy Helgeson, "Singing Eagle", with Kim King after they provided the music for the honors songs of the afternoon.*

stressors of PTSD and get their service-connected benefits. There is a real lack of assistance for these Indians from the VA and many just do not pursue what they are entitled to because of the difficulties and disinterest shown to them by the VA. They expect nothing and seem to get what they expect. Kim King has been trained and certified as a Veterans Service Officer for the VA by the VVnW and will continue the process of helping veterans to file claims.

We had planned to travel to Helena, Montana to visit with the Homeless Coordinators there, Bonnie Parrett and Neelima Pradhim but when we invited them to the Buffalo Feed they came back almost immediately with the response that they would meet with us at Fort Belknap and there was no need for us to travel to Helena. The Buffalo Feed seemed to be a unique opportunity for them to meet with veterans and the tribal council people. The morning of the feed they phoned to say they could not make it because of the

bad weather between Helena and Harlem so once again the Indians were not supported. They were not at all surprised, but we were very disappointed since other people managed to make the trip.

Peter Forbes made a presentation on the United Veterans Beacon House to members, community leaders, Buck Richardson, the Minority Veterans Program Coordinator from Fort Harrison, MT, and Ray K. Eder from the Fort Peck Reservation. It was well received and the need for the program is recognized. How to accomplish having a UVBH at Fort Belknap will be pursued.

During our time on the reservation it was apparent that these are a people with pride in their heritage, with needs for veterans services, with a need for a homeless veteran program like the UVBH, with so much to offer in the unique crafts they can produce, but they have no way to showcase themselves. Suggestions will be

made and additional trips will be scheduled to help them.

We had many opportunities while at Fort Belknap. Kim King shared with us the efforts he has made toward constructing a Veterans memorial. He has carved out and placed huge pieces of granite rock to represent each of the wars and continues to add to the memorial as time and money permit; Mike from the Fish and Game Commission took us out on the prairie to get a close-up view of the buffalo; we met veterans everywhere we went.

We are very proud of Robert "Kim" King and all that he continues to do for veterans. We will do all we can to assist him as he continues on this path.

The next stop on the trip was Cody, Wyoming where we met with Chuck and Ruth Forbes who will be doing some grant writing for the Veterans Fund of the United States. They live in a beautiful, small town outside of Cody where there are none of the stresses of big city living. Cody, Wyoming is only about fifty miles from the entrance to Yellowstone National Park so the surrounding landscape is spectacular. We saw buffalo, deer, big horn sheep, cattle, antelope, moose, and various other animals just along the roadways. The words of America the Beautiful kept coming to mind!

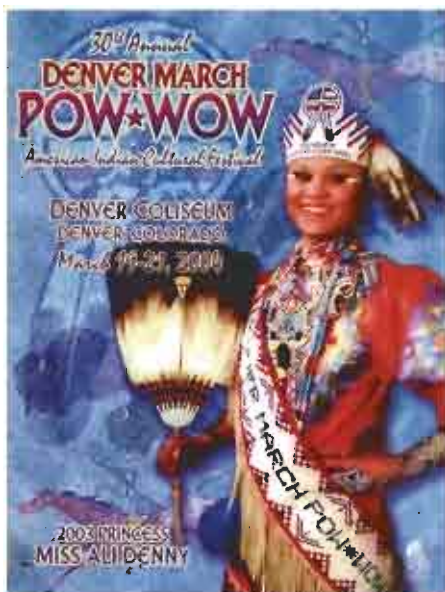
One of the reasons for this trip to the west was to participate in the Denver March Pow\*Wow. We made our way toward Denver, Colorado and collected National Board Member Mike Breighner from the hotel after his flight from





Baltimore, MD. We also had the privilege of catching up with Major Marc Hoffmeister, his wife Gayle and their sons Shane and Robert John, along with SFC Bob Haines, his wife Pam and their son Cody. Major Hoffmeister is the VVnW Webmaster as well as a National Board Member and was home in Colorado for his two weeks of leave before returning to Kuwait. Marc is also the captain of Team Veteran Leader our Adventure Racing Team. Bob is also a National Board Member for the VVnW and The Veterans Coalition and is a member of Team Veteran Leader.

While home on leave Marc and Bob and their families traveled to New Mexico to participate in the Bataan Death March race. They were racing this year in honor of Michael "Bud" Campbell, an Assiniboine Indian, who was a survivor of the Bataan Death March. How proud we can all be of our involvement with these young men and women who are the future generation of veterans. They took first place in their category for the race and we congratulate them!



The 30th Denver March Pow\*Wow is a sight to behold. From the first hours of setting up our vendor booth to the end of the Pow\*Wow we were dazzled by the



The photo shows (from the left) Peter Forbes; Kim King; Ali Denny, the Denver March Pow\*Wow Princess and Michael Breighner at the VVnW booth.

displays and friendship that we experienced. We distributed over 3,000 bottles of VVnW water, gave away hundreds of copies of the Veteran Leader, signed up many new members from a few states, and generally were made to feel welcomed in this Native American setting. Glen Britton, a VVnW Post PA-02 life member who now lives in the Denver area, was a participant in the Pow\*Wow and seeing that VVnW orange beret and VVnW flag was outstanding.

Each day began with the Grand Entry led by color guards of veterans. There was always a Veteran Honors song following the Pow\*Wow song and whenever there were currently serving veterans available they were honored. The drums, the flamboyant colored costumes, the spectacular beading, the beautiful young faces, the dancers of the Northern plains, the Southern plains and everything in between were a sight that could only be captured by viewing it in person. Still pictures just do not do it all justice. We were exhausted from three days of standing on our feet from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. and can only imagine how the dancers must have been feeling after dancing for hours in moccasins! Again the pride exhibited was outstanding.

We had the privilege of meeting two young soldiers who had just returned from Iraq with the 3rd Infantry Division SPC Brian C. Aragon and SPC Damon L. Gray Eagle. For those of you who are veterans you will understand

that they had "the stare" and it caused great concern for those veterans who were around them. Of course, the travel they had just endured was probably part of the scenario but they seemed to still be somewhere else. We are all so proud of all of these young men and women who have answered the call to go to war and will continue to support them with Military Support Packages and Global War on Terrorism coins for currently serving military.



Two young soldiers who had just returned from Iraq with the 3rd Infantry Division SPC Brian C. Aragon and SPC Damon L. Gray Eagle.

All of the crafts sold at the Pow\*Wow must be authentic Native American items so you can imagine all of the wonderful things that you could purchase. It is a place where you need two things your camera and your money! The VVnW and The Veterans Coalition has been invited to participate in many other Pow\*Wows throughout the upcoming months. It is a unique opportunity for the VVnW and The Veterans Coalition to gain new members in parts of the country where we are unknown.

We worked very hard during the four days of the Pow\*Wow but the opportunities we had to help veterans, veteran wives and children was worth the effort.

Mike Breighner flew home and we continued on to Garden City, Kansas to meet with the VVnW Post there. We met with the newly elected post commander Chuck Weston, his wife Linda and Louis and Helen Palacio. Of course, we already knew Dave Hahn and Harry Bristol who had



come to share in the Dagger Challenge that had been held in Colorado and enjoyed meeting other members of the post who took time out of their busy schedules to share some time with us and have dinner. We welcomed the opportunity to discuss with them in more detail the programs of the VVnW and The Veterans Coalition most especially the UVBH program and food drives. They are excited about getting started and now seem to have more confidence in doing what needs to be done.

Shown in the photo from the left in the front are Linda Weston and Helen Palacio; in the back from the left are Harry Bristol, Chuck Weston, Peter Forbes, Louis Palacio and David Hahn.

We then traveled on to Wichita, Kansas where we met with Judy Epperson, the Department of Veterans Affairs Homeless Coordinator who is very receptive to having a United Veterans Beacon House in their area. They have a need for the program but getting the funding is the next piece of the puzzle. We appreciated the time and trouble that Judy went to to set up a meeting with all of the individuals

who would be interested in working with us on a UVBH in the future.

The rest of the trip home was a time for contemplation. It was a trip through terrible weather rain, sleet and hail with hurricane force winds. It was a trip that had been greatly anticipated and when it was completed we had a great sense of satisfaction that we had done the right thing. We need to do more and have made that commitment to

those we met in Montana, Colorado and South Dakota. We provided a great many veterans in Montana, Colorado and South Dakota with services and we will return to those areas to serve those veterans and make the VA honest. We have an obligation to be our brother's keeper and the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition plan to fulfill that obligation.



*Shown in the photo from the left in the front are Linda Weston and Helen Palacio; in the back from the left are Harry Bristol, Chuck Weston, Peter Forbes, Louis Palacio and David Hahn.*

***Do You Own or Have One of These on Your Property that You  
Would be Willing to Donate for Renovation and Use by  
The Veterans of The Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition  
for the Growing United Veterans Beacon House Program  
and for Transporting Veterans to the VA?  
GIVE US A CALL AT 1-800-843-8626.  
We Can Give Your a Receipt for the Tax-Deductible Contribution.***



# OUTPOSTS

## *Post MT-01, Fort Belknap, Montana*



Robert "Kim" King (shown in the center of the photo in the white shirt and hat) uses horses on the Native American Reservation at Fort Belknap, MT to do many mile rides to call attention to veterans, the

POW/MIA issue and generally get the support of those throughout the countryside. The Fort Belknap, Montana post is just the first of many to be established on Native American Reservations.

## *Post IN-11, Madison, Indiana*



Post IN-11 in Madison, Indiana is always busy during the holiday seasons taking care of local cemeteries and making sure that the grass is mowed, and that veterans have flags to be shown the proper respect.

*Shown in the photo on the left in the front row starting on the left are: Don Tingle (deceased in a July 4th car accident); over a bit to Brandon Nolan. In the second row: Nick Schultz, Post Commander; Indiana*



*Lt. Governor Kathy Davis; Herb Nolan and Ricky Craig. In the third row: Alan Campbell, George Schirmer, Raymond Yount, Leon Perry and Tom Ringwald.*

*Shown in the photo on the right are: kneeling, George Schirmer, Don Tingle, Brandon Nolan, Herb Nolan and Larry Jones. The second row shows: Alan Campbell, Leon Perry, Tom Ringwald, Ricky Craig and Ray Yount.*

## *Post LA-04 Thibodaux, Louisiana*

The color guard from Post LA-04, Thibodaux, LA recently participated in the rededication ceremonies at the E.D. White House. Shown in the photo in the front row are: Ivy Louviere, Post Vice Commander; Leroy Chenier, Post Master Sgt-at-Arms; Loy Smith, Post Commander and in the back row from the left are: Peter Forbes, National Commander; Harold Guidroz; Eddie Albert and John Guillot, Post Treasurer.

The post also worked with Boy Scout and Cub Scout troops in Houma, LA showing them the proper way to fold a flag and the proper way to dispose of a flag. These children will remember what proper respect for the flag is and take it into the future.



## *Post PA-56, Nanticoke, Pennsylvania*

The color guard from Post LA-04, Thibodaux, LA recently participated in the rededication ceremonies at the E.D. White House. Shown in the photo in the front row are: Ivy Louviere, Post Vice Commander; Leroy Chenier, Post Master Sgt-at-Arms; Loy Smith, Post Commander and in the back row from the left are: Peter Forbes, National Commander; Harold Guidroz; Eddie Albert and John Guillot, Post Treasurer.

The post also worked with Boy Scout and Cub Scout troops in Houma, LA showing them the proper way to fold a flag and the proper way to dispose of a flag. These children will remember what proper respect for the flag is and take it into the future.



# ***Post NJ-03, Millstone Township, New Jersey***

## ***New Jersey National Guard Troops Serving in Iraq Recieve Flags Signed by Millstone and Jackson New Jersey Residents***

Recently soldiers of the 50th Finance Battalion, New Jersey Army National Guard (NJARNG), serving near Balad, Iraq were presented with "Support Our Troops" flags signed by New Jersey residents. The 50th Fb Bn was deployed to Iraq in February 2004. Major Angelo Capolupo, a Manalapan, NJ resident and Commander of the 50th Finance Battalion presented the signed "Support Our Troops" flags to the Battalion during a "patch ceremony," where soldiers are awarded combat shoulder patches.



According to Major Capolupo: "The patch ceremony is when I award each unit member the combat patch insignia of the unit they support to be sewn on the right shoulder, opposite the unit patch to which the soldier belongs. There is a long heritage and tradition associated with the awarding of the combat patch, some of which is explained during the ceremony. Although we wear the NJ unit patch (Carteret Lion) on our left shoulder, our combat patch is the 336th Finance Command (FINCOM) Patch out of Lake Charles, LA. and is worn on our right shoulder denoting the soldier served in combat." The 50th Fb Bn is currently based at LSA Camp Anaconda near Balad, Iraq. Shown in the photo are some of the soldiers of the 50th Finance Battalion NJARNG. Major Capolupo. Battalion Commander and VVnW member is shown kneeling, lower left

The " We Support Our Troops" flag shown in the left of the photo was signed by hundreds of Millstone Township residents attending Memorial Day ceremonies held at Millstone's Veterans Memorial on May 31, 2004. Major Capolupo and soldiers of the 50th Finance Battalion NJARNG have supported Millstone Township's past Memorial Day ceremonies by serving

as military honor guard. The flag shown in the photo right was signed by students of Christa McAuliffe Middle school, Jackson, NJ where Major Capolupo and some of his solders have volunteered to participate in school lesson programs given by the Veterans of The Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition, Post #3, Jackson-Millstone NJ.

Post NJ-03 Commander Rick Brody has been working closely for many years with the teachers and children at the Christa McAuliffe Middle School through the post's "Dear POW/MIA" program and their many collections of items to be included in the Military Support Packages sent overseas by the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition.

Shown in the photo is the Air Force ROTC Color Guard from Jackson High School during the Support Our Troops rally held recently at the school.

The Christa McAuliffe Middle School once again generously took up a collection of goods to donate to the Military Support Package Program and the kids helped to load all of the goodies into Rick Brody's truck. Show in the photo is Marty Neff with Rick Brody (in the orange beret) overseeing the operation. The generosity of this school, the support of the teachers and the willingness to help of these young people is outstanding!



## *Post KS-01, Garden City, Kansas*

Post KS-01 recently participated in the Beef Empire Days Parade. Shown in the photo from the left are: Tim Babcock, John Johnson, Phil Babcock, and Mike Beck. Not shown in the photo but also participating were Rick Bowman, Louis Balacio and Harry Bristol.



## *Washington State Post Activities*



*Members from Post WA-01, WA-02, WA-03 and WA-04 are shown preparing to form up for the Parade of Colors at Evergreen-Washelli Cemetery.*



*In this photo on the left Nicholas Rock, Southeast Asian Coordinator, is shown with Dolores Alford, Chairperson of the National Alliance of Families for the Return of America's Missing Servicemen at the Redmond, WA Vietnam Traveling Wall in Bellevue, WA.*



*Shown in the photo from the left during the Seattle Vietnamese Army Day observances at Asa Mercer Middle School are Marsha Ledeman; Thuy, wife of Kiet Van Nguyen of BAT-21 fame.*



*The photo on the right shows member Terry Minarcin discussing his counseling activities with a visiting friend at the same event.*

## *Post NY-01, Brooklyn, New York*



Members and friends of Post NY-01 in Brooklyn, NY recently visited Washington, D.C. where they met with their local congressional representatives and went

to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and other sites of interest in the city.

## *Post IN-02, Scottsburg, Indiana*

National Commander Peter Forbes recently visited with members of Post IN-02 in Scottsburg, IN where plans were made for an upcoming United Veterans Beacon House Food Drive and discussions were held with regard to the Military Support Package Program and the UVBH.

Shown in the photo from the left are: Peter Forbes; David East Post IN-02 Commander; his wife, Martha; Don Davidson; Marc Lewis, and Bob Visakay, VVnW National Office.



with the support group for the local reserve unit which has been recently deployed. They presented the families with flags, support our troops signs, Military Support Package request forms, and stickers and



Post Members love to have a good time and shown in the photo sharing that camaraderie are from the left: Don Davidson, Mike Fitzgerald, Penny Smith, Tom McCandless, David East and Martha East.

While in Scottsburg, National Commander Forbes and members of Post IN-02 were privileged to meet



offered the organization's support of the group and their soldiers. The photo shows Beth Nolan on the left with Commander Forbes and a family support group member.



Where have you put your Support Our Troops signs today?





Camp Arifjan, Kuwait So how did you spend your Memorial Day Weekend? 107 hardcore soldiers here at Camp Arifjan willingly braved the blazing heat and darkness of night to complete a 24 hour team relay at the Zone 1 track that resulted in a combined mileage of 645 miles. Why, exactly, would anyone want to run that far on a holiday more often dedicated to rest and relaxation?

The "24 Hour Run for the Troops" was organized to raise awareness and funds for the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and the Veterans Coalition. The Veterans of the Vietnam War Inc. (VVnW) is an international non-profit organization which has been the driving force behind a military support package program that has delivered more than 7500 packages to our deployed troops at a cost in excess of \$300,000. The VVnW ran (literally!) this fund raiser in order to continue the program which has touched so many of our soldiers throughout the world.

Major Marc Hoffmeister spent the last several months organizing this series of 24-hour runs to support troops engaged in fighting terrorism around the world. The "24 Hour Run For The Troops" united over 150 runners in eight different states, Australia, England, and Kuwait on May 29th, by starting simultaneously at 12:00 hours Greenwich Mean Time and running non stop for 24 hours.

Teams and individuals challenged their own personal limits by running the full time period. Each runner's effort was symbolic of the hardships and sacrifices of soldiers combating terrorism and that of the military families who have endured the fears and loneliness that accompany a soldier's deployment to combat.

The Run for the Troops was sponsored by the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and the Veteran's Coalition ([www.theveteranscoalition.org](http://www.theveteranscoalition.org)).

Participants raised money through pledges to help support the organization's Military Support Package program and similar veteran initiatives. "The global war on terrorism has crossed international borders and touched us all. Many of our soldiers have given the ultimate sacrifice or had their lives altered by injuries sustained in combat," says Hoffmeister. Just as the war on terrorism has defied international borders, the 24 Hour Run for the Troops set the ambitious goal of going global.

The event was designed to encourage and enable runners of all ability levels and backgrounds to be able to participate. "All you had to do was want to contribute. With a little creativity, every runner designed their own experience, be it alone or as a team, in order to show their support for the troops". Teams ran the event as a relay in order to encourage more participants to embrace the challenge. Here at Camp Arifjan, the run started out with two teams, Team Coalition Forces-Kuwait had 44 runners and Team 1st Armor Division with 29 runners. During the event, 35 more soldiers joined in to help rack up the mileage and the pledges. Thirteen runners ran over 10 miles during the 24 hr period, several of which ran the Truckville 10K in addition to their laps at the track. The two heavy hitters for mileage were MAJ Roy Sons, CFLCC C35, who ran 31 miles, and Hoffmeister who covered 44 miles.

An outstanding corps of volunteers, led by Major Bob Sutter, CFLCC C35, kept the runners going through the night and kept them hydrated despite temperatures that soared up to 113 degrees. Not only did soldiers volunteer their time to make this event a success, but representatives from MWR, AAFES, and the Zone 1 gym donated critical time, supplies and resources that kept everyone healthy and happy for the long haul.

To date, the teams here at Camp Arifjan have raised \$5668, but its not over.... It costs the Veterans Coalition an average of \$40 per package mailed. Information on these courageous runners and how to donate to the cause can be found online or by contacting the Veterans Coalition at 1-800-843-8626.

***Event Day pictures at Camp Arifjan. The temperature was well over 110 degrees but the guys and girls made a tremendous effort to "Run for the Troops". We are proud of them all!***



***Support Ops were essential.***



***Support Our Troops by purchasing a sign to display proudly in your front yard showing Our Troops we do support them just \$5.00 each. Proceeds from the sales will go to allow many more Military Support Packages to be shipped to our troops overseas.***

# *And Then There Is More... Yesssss, We Did It!!! We Made The Marathon!*

Colonel De Somer and Corporal Scott Samson were the first people I approached about the Marathon and after thinking seriously about the proposal, moved full steam ahead to make it such a successful day.

The elements had shown their strength intermittently during the day as the relay teams pounded the beaches between the Light Houses at Point Lonsdale and Fort Queenscliff. The wind direct from the South Pole, rain pelting down horizontally and the high tide arriving at the same time as the last runners on the final leg of the Marathon all made it an exciting day. The sun did shine occasionally!

Dressed in coats and jumpers we arrived at the base of the cold, old hill in Fort Queenscliff to take photos of the last hour of the marathon and to be there to greet Colonel De Somers as he, one of the last runners for the day, made it back to base.

Red, perspiring faces, sweaty T shirts and the occasional blood nose could not hide the huge grins on the faces of those who had taken part in this event. Our thanks go to Colonel De Somer, Captain Priestley, who is Staff Officer to the C.O. and W/O 2 Meg Moir. Special thanks must go to Corporal Scott Samson, who also did a couple of legs and W/O 1 Heather McKinley both kept the teams running efficiently along with Private Jason Errington, the transport driver.

During their turn to run, a group of Infantry soldiers insisted on their Regiments theme song being played loud and long as they ran up and down on those sandy beaches.

Private Ezara Hawlell who has been in the army four years knew she ran for a purpose to help support those in Baghdad. She had spent most of the day organising drinks for the runners but had run the last leg herself; she had become so enthusiastic in her endeavours that she left four other members of her team way behind her.

These people from the Soldier Career Management base at Victoria's historical Fort Queenscliff had drummed up interest in the business of the town and were given goods to auction at the end of the run to raise further money for Support Parcels for the troops serving overseas.

Trevor Cole from Tuckers Funerals, Pastor Tim Edwards from Bayside Christian Church, Arthur Sofos from Ocan Air Logistics, Kevin Paisley Eyewear, Foggs Mitre 10 and last but certainly not least Carlton United Brewery were all major sponsors. That does not include the little old lady living on a pension who, when hearing what was happening, dived into her purse and gave \$5 or the teenagers and parents donating a



gold coin for every game of Ten Pin Bowls played. Of course, a great tribute must be paid to those who not only ran in the marathon, but also participated in the auction afterwards.

Well done everyone!!! As I watch people like yourselves, my heart swells with pride at out Defence Force Personnel. I only wish those who make life so hard for you all, could witness what I witness. Stand Tall and be proud **YOUAREAUSSIES.**

God bless

Carla Evans, Chaplain VVNW



# *And Then There Was Ivan Davis (Australian)... After Action Report*

**Location:** London U.K.

**Total Funds Raised:** £85 (aprox US \$155)

**Total Distance Covered:** 76miles

**Total Time Ran:** 23 hours 34 minutes

## **Media Coverage:**

Press release issued by my employer Salvation Army London Central Division

## **Event Narrative:**

I chose the site for convenience to my living quarters and to minimize costs as I fully expected that I would pay up out of my own pocket to meet a personal commitment of US \$100. As it turned out I raised a bit more than that by virtue of an entrepreneurial wife. Almost the entire 4 mile loop of the course is on concrete paving and although I knew this could hurt I figured that as I had been running 60 miles/week for 8 months on concrete I would be tough enough. There was extra training sometimes on the weekends but that was always on dirt or grass, which in retrospect may have been a mistake. A personal goal apart from just staying the time was to do 25 laps or 100 miles. This was realistic I thought given good training and even allowing for the crowds of tourists flocking the route. Another factor was that the 4 miles was only a conservative estimate measured by GPS and in reality was almost surely a little longer. This is due to the switchback stairways and pedestrian tunnels I was using.

The first obvious annoyance was the dust blown up into my eyes. This took three days to clear but was really only just annoying. At about 30 miles I realized that the damage being done by the concrete was going to be huge if I wasn't really careful. In the end the pain level was as high as anything I can remember going through and it took a bit of managing. It was an incredible experience though seeing the moods of the city change through the 24 hour period. I didn't really notice the tide go in and out on the Thames as I normally do but certainly noticed people a lot more. Odd little acknowledgements of encouragement came my way from a few folk - possibly brought on by rather outrageous front loading of my pack with bottles and food compartments.



*In the gardens near the start with Parliament House and Big Ben in the background.*

My first lap took just 43 minutes and the last took over 2 hours. That pretty much sums up the whole run. There is no doubt that during the last 6 hours I was thinking that I wouldn't bother running such times or distances again. Three days later and recovery is almost complete so with some small sense of satisfaction for making a statement worth making I'll go for a short run tomorrow.

## **Participant Quotes:**

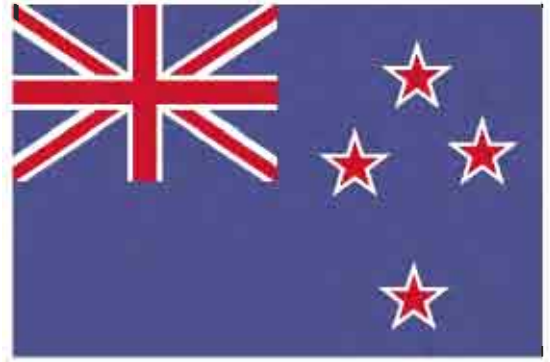
Never ever ever ever run further than 20 miles on concrete.



*Almost at the finish and not so party.*

# Complaint To Attorney General

The Hon. Margaret Wilson. M.P.  
Attorney General of New Zealand,  
Parliament House,  
Private Bag,  
WELLINGTON  
8 October 2004



Dear Madam,

## **COMPLAINT IN RESPECT OF A BREACH OF THE GENEVA PROTOCOL WHICH PROHIBITS THE USE OF CHEMICAL AGENTS AGAINST PLANTS IN INTERNATIONAL AND ARMED CONFLICTS.**

I respectfully require that you as the Attorney General of New Zealand investigate the matter of attempts to supply defoliating agents from New Zealand circa 1967 by then Members of the New Zealand Parliament being the Late David Thompson, the Late Jack Marshall and the Late Air Vice Marshall C. Turner, (and others), for use in the Vietnam War.

As I understand the Geneva Protocol in respect of this matter, there is no Statute of Limitation in respect of a War Crime and that having been reported to you, by rote of the International Convention, you are obliged to investigate the matter.

Evidence is now held by our former Vietnam Veterans' Association of New Zealand which plainly indicate that the former Members of Parliament (and others) conspired to supply defoliating chemicals for use in the Vietnam conflict which caused injury to both combatants and civilians alike as well as long term environmental damage in Vietnam.

It is our strong view that this action contravened the Geneva Protocol which New Zealand had ratified at that time prohibiting such use of chemicals in warfare.

It is also our very strong view that the commissioning of a breach by then Members of Parliament is pivotal in the stonewalling, deceit, cover up and long term denial of justice to our Vietnam Veteran community in New Zealand exposed to chemical warfare agents which led to associated ill health amongst the former servicemen and their families.

I bring to your notice the liability which accrues as a result of that breach of the Protocol in respect of New Zealand citizens and those members of the civilian sector within Vietnam.

As a matter of courtesy I am supplying a copy of this official complaint to you, to The Prime Minister, the Minister of Police and our legal advisers both in New Zealand and overseas. I look forward to your early reply.

Yours Faithfully,

Major (Rtd) John A. Moller QSM  
9 Te Ariki Place,  
KAWERAU.

For Information;  
The Rt.Hon.Helen Clark, Prime Minister of New Zealand.  
The Hon. George Hawkins, M.P. Minister of Police.

Legal Advisers New Zealand and The United States of America.

# ***Thrust Into New Kind of War, Junior Officers Become Army's Leading Experts; Risky Deal with Villiage Sheik***

***By: Greg Jaffe, Staff Reporter Of The Wall Street Journal***



RAMADI, Iraq — In the space of four minutes in May, two Humvees in Capt. Nicholas Ayers's unit were hit by roadside bombs. In the chaos, one vehicle was left alone as soldiers, injured and under fire, took cover in a school and radioed for help.

By the time Capt. Ayers arrived on the scene, Iraqis had looted the Humvee's machine gun and high-tech gun sights. Losing equipment to the enemy is a mistake that can ruin an officer's career. Standard Army practice holds that the area should be searched immediately.

Instead, Capt. Ayers, 29 years old, took a risk. He went to the village sheik's house. As a sign of respect, he said, he wouldn't search the village. But he gave the local leader 48 hours to find and return the equipment. "If we don't get the equipment back, I am going to come back with my men and tear apart every house in this village," he recalls saying. If the gear was returned, he promised to reduce patrols in the area.

The gamble ran counter to Capt. Ayers's training, which states that the longer troops wait to search an area, the less chance they'll find what they are looking for. His bosses told him he had made a huge blunder. Two days later, though, the sheik returned every scrap of looted equipment to the

Army. Later, he would pay a heavy price for that move.

"I was floored," Capt. Ayers says. "The incident made me rethink the tactics I was using, my relationship with the local sheiks. It made me rethink just about everything."

Fighting the volatile, growing insurgency in Iraq is putting increased responsibility on younger, lower-ranking officers, who are learning through improvisation and error. For the Army, the heavy reliance on officers such as Capt. Ayers is a significant change. As the war in Iraq has turned into a far different kind of battle than the Army expected, it is triggering major shifts in how the service uses and equips soldiers and remaking its historically rigid and hierarchical command structure.

In May 2002, before the Iraq war, a study commissioned by the Army's top-ranking general concluded "the reality in the Army is that junior officers are seldom given opportunities to be innovative, plan training or to make decisions; fail, learn and try again."

Earlier this summer, the same team, led by retired Lt. Col. Leonard Wong, concluded: "Junior officers have become the experts on the situation in Iraq, not higher headquarters." The fast-moving insurgency is forcing lower-ranking officers, who spend more time in the field, to take a more prominent role.

Captains are sharing lessons via e-mail and on Web sites such as [www.companyccommand.com](http://www.companyccommand.com). Subjects range from dealing with sheiks to teaching a heavy-armor unit, accustomed to fighting inside 70-ton tanks, how to patrol on foot with rifles. Lt. Gen. William Wallace has told superiors that officers returning from Iraq who attend the Army's elite Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., know more about counterinsurgency than their instructors. The change has forced instructors there to shift from traditional lectures to discussion-oriented classes.

"This is entirely a bottom-up war. It is the platoon leaders and company commanders that are fighting it," says Maj. John Nagl, third-in-command of an 850-man battalion based nine miles from Fallujah.

It's a shift the Army never made in Vietnam -- the last time it fought an insurgency. In that war, the Army fought essentially as it had in World War II, with large formations commanded by senior officers and lots of firepower. Younger officers in the field advocated a different approach, involving smaller patrols and the training of local forces, but the Army rejected such ideas, says Maj. Nagl, who wrote a 2002 book on insurgencies.

Maj. Nagl concludes the Army was "organizationally disposed against learning how to fight and win counterinsurgency warfare." Recently the Army's top officer, Gen. Peter Schoomaker, gave copies of Maj. Nagl's book "Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam," to all his four-star generals.

When Vietnam ended, the Army didn't significantly change its way of operating. Instead, it was eager to return to its roots and prepare for more-conventional battles against the rigid Soviet Army. In 1987, Col. Robert Leicht, then a professor at the Army's Command and General Staff College, set out to teach a class on counterinsurgency warfare. He visited the Army's John F. Kennedy Special Warfare School in

North Carolina, looking for lessons from the Vietnam era. "The old graybeard there told me that in 1975 he was told to get rid of all the Vietnam stuff," Col. Leicht says.

Today, some question whether the Army is changing fast enough. Bruce Hoffman, who served as a senior U.S. adviser in Baghdad on counterinsurgency this year, says the U.S. military has shown an almost "pathological resistance" to adapting to the demands of guerrilla fighting. Like many experts, he says the Army's success in Iraq will depend largely on the ability of officers on the ground to come up with new solutions to defeat the insurgency. Battling guerrilla warfare depends less on firepower, and more on human intelligence, cultural sensitivity and reconstruction.

"The big challenge the Army faces is harnessing the experience of the young field officers and incorporating it into training and doctrine," Mr. Hoffman says.

Army officials say the service is adapting to new demands. Gen. Schoomaker says the Army is in the midst of the most wide-ranging changes since World War II, aimed at better preparing it for the kinds of wars it is fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. "I've compared this to tuning a car engine while the engine is running, which is not only a complex task but dangerous as well," he said recently.

In Capt. Ayers's sector, in the heart of the Sunni triangle, locals nicknamed him "Mosool Kabear" or "Big Chief." In addition to running raids and patrols, his duties have included overseeing a 200-man Iraqi police force and millions of dollars in reconstruction projects. Earlier this year, local guerrillas felt so threatened by him they distributed fliers in town offering a reward for his assassination.

The vast geography of the region is one reason young officers are given such latitude to innovate and make decisions. Capt. Ayers is one of four company commanders who report to Lt. Col. Thomas Hollis, whose battalion is responsible for about 1,500 square miles. In the kind of warfare he was trained for -- using tanks, heavy artillery and air power -- his unit would cover one-tenth of that area.

"I tell my captains you have to understand the inner workings of the communities in your area," Col. Hollis says. "You have to figure out who the key leaders are, you need to know who their relatives are, and what businesses they are involved in."

Capt. Ayers and his peers are far less influenced by the Army culture that has long viewed firepower-intensive, tank-on-tank battles, like the 1991 Gulf War, as the epitome of land warfare. Many of today's captains were in junior high school when the 1991 war

was fought. Capt. Ayers, the son of a Vietnam veteran, grew up in Southern California, and went on to attend the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. Before coming to Iraq in August 2003, the defining event of his career was his deployment to Kosovo.

In Kosovo, Capt. Ayers was in charge of four small towns, populated by a total of about 4,000 people. Based on his experience there, he knew he had to figure out who was in charge of the area. In Kosovo, that was easy. Each town had a mayor. In Ramadi, there is a confusing network of more than 100 tribes, subtribes, sheiks and subsheiks. Loyalties shifted. "I quickly learned that everyone here likes to say they are in charge," he says.

To get a grip on who was really running things, Capt. Ayers sent his men out with a survey. He asked the locals who their top sheik was and then crosschecked the answers against what the sheiks were telling him.

Capt. Ayers also set out to win over his sector's police force. Because local police know the culture, speak the language and are aware of age-old grudges, they are far more likely to spot the enemy. When Capt. Ayers first asked the Iraqi police to patrol with his men, they told him they wanted nothing to do with Americans. After weeks of fruitless negotiations, he cajoled two patrolmen into his Humvee. Between midnight and 1 a.m. they drove through his sector's empty streets, as Capt. Ayers tried to assure them they could work together.

He met with the police chief, Lt. Col. Mohammed Saleh Taher, almost daily, shared meals with his family and got vehicles, guns and body armor for his men. Soon Capt. Ayers convinced the police chief to fire anyone who refused to patrol with the Americans. Desperate for a paycheck, the Iraqi police climbed into the U.S. Humvees.

The public cooperation drew brutal attacks from the insurgents. In January, they murdered Col. Mohammed and three of his bodyguards at the colonel's home. Two days later, they attacked the police station, killing five more Iraqi police officers.

After the murders, Capt. Ayers handed out crisp \$100 bills to the families of Col. Mohammed and the bodyguards so they could bury their dead. Most of the families were poor, some living in houses with broken windows. "Col. Mohammed was a good friend of mine," he said, as he handed out the money and expressed condolences. "We are working to make sure that whoever did this will not get away."

Col. Mohammed's family told him that the police chief's second-in-command had played a role in the chief's murder. Capt. Ayers believed the second-in-command was involved with the insurgency. He felt



safer dealing with the third-in-command, Col. Mohammed's brother -- even though locals and other police officers said the brother had a drinking problem and had been extorting money from his men in exchange for promotions.

"I knew [Col. Mohammed's brother] wouldn't have me killed and I couldn't say the same for the alternatives," says Capt. Ayers. Working with Col. Hollis, he arranged to have the second-in-command transferred to a city near the Syrian border. Despite suspicions, there wasn't definitive evidence that the man had been involved with the murder of Col. Mohammed or the insurgency. No one has been arrested for the killings.

The murdered colonel's brother was promoted to chief of police, even though locals complained he continued to extort money from his officers.

"How much corruption is too much?" Capt. Ayers asks. "That's something they don't teach you before you come here."

Capt. Ayers took lessons from his fellow captains. In April, Capt. Jesse Beaudin convinced a friend from the U.S. to send backpacks, notebooks and pencils for schoolchildren. Kids mobbed troops for the goods whenever they went out on patrol. "The kids provided security. No one attacked us when we were surrounded by children," Capt. Beaudin says. After hearing about this tactic at the dining hall, Capt. Ayers's men also wrote home requesting school supplies.

The battalion's captains also worked together to fashion a solution to attacks on supply convoys. In April, the attacks were so severe that some military fuel sites in western Iraq were down to two days' worth of fuel. Units were running low on water and food.

Most of the convoy attacks began with a remote-detonated roadside bomb. The Army had long assumed most of the bombs were laid at night. Capt. Ayers sent out small teams of snipers with night-vision equipment to pick off people planting bombs. They couldn't find any.

Talking with fellow company commanders, Capt. Ayers guessed that the bombs were being laid during the day. He theorized the locals were too scared to stop the insurgents or to turn them in to the Americans. Capt. Ayers asked his boss, Col. Hollis, if he could pull some his troops out of the villages and post them on highway overpasses around the clock. Instead of trying to catch the insurgents, he would try to deter the attacks with an overt presence.

The roadside bombs stopped almost overnight. In May, Col. Hollis ordered his other company commanders to adopt the same approach. Since then there hasn't been an attack on the 38 miles of highway

overseen by the battalion a huge change from April when the U.S. was losing a service member to injury or death on the stretch every 36 hours.

Although the tactic has been effective, soldiers hate sitting for hours and watching traffic. They worry that cutting back on neighborhood patrols has given insurgents free rein in town.

On a recent day, Capt. Ayers and his troops jumped in their Humvee and raced toward a giant column of smoke rising near the police station. Insurgents in a white Opal sedan had fired into an Iraqi truck that had been hauling equipment for the Americans. When the wounded truck driver pulled over, insurgents set the vehicle on fire.

At the scene, Capt. Ayers picked up the spent shell casings to identify the weapon the insurgents used. He interviewed witnesses and studied the skid marks the truck had left on the road. The Army had never trained him for detective work, but he picked up these skills on the job.

When the fire was extinguished, the charred truck was towed to the police station. The next morning, insurgents launched a rocket attack on Capt. Ayers's base. The barracks' windows were blown open, but no one was hurt. A similar attack in May killed eight soldiers. Later the same day, insurgents lit the charred truck, still parked in the police department's lot, on fire again. The terrified police didn't try to stop them.

Capt. Ayers went back to the police station and confronted the new police chief, Maj. Khalid Ibrahim, who had been appointed by the new Iraqi Interior Ministry. (The previous chief, whose appointment Capt. Ayers had arranged, had been transferred for firing his pistol at one of his officers and demanding money from his officers.)

"How could you let this happen?" Capt. Ayers asked Maj. Khalid, pointing to the still-smoldering truck.

"I am very sorry," the 50-year-old chief said.

"You don't need to apologize to me, you need to do better," Capt. Ayers replied.

The chief promised to step up patrols in the area where the rockets were fired.

Back at his barracks, surrounded by pictures of his wife and two children, ages 1 and 2, Capt. Ayers seemed to be looking for something positive in the day's events. The new chief is an improvement over his predecessor, he said. "Every day that Iraqi police station is still standing is a victory. It is a small bastion of government control," he added.

Recently, after 12 months in Iraq, Capt. Ayers returned to his home in Kansas. He's prepared a tome

full of advice for his replacement. In the book are histories of the local sheiks and tribes, their grudges and fleeting alliances. There is a section on funeral etiquette.

He also wrote a section on the sheik who helped him get the machine gun back. A few days after the incident, insurgents, angry that he had aided the Americans, murdered the sheik's son. "I thought if he had enough influence to get the stuff back, he also had enough influence" to protect his family, Capt. Ayers now says. "I was wrong." Capt. Ayers says he advised his replacement to handle the sheik with deference.

Capt. Ayers, who was recently selected by the Army to teach at West Point, has begun to think about how a young soldier could prepare for what he's been through. Before deploying to Iraq, he and his soldiers fought a giant mock tank battle at the National Training Center. It wasn't helpful.

Instead, he says, "I guess I'd drop soldiers in a foreign high school and give them two days to figure out all the cliques. Who are the cool kids? Who are the geeks?" he says. That would be pretty close to what he has been doing in Iraq, he says, with one big exception: There would also have to be people in the high school trying to kill the soldiers.

***Ask yourself "What have I done for a Veteran today?"***

## ***Taps, The History of Taps***

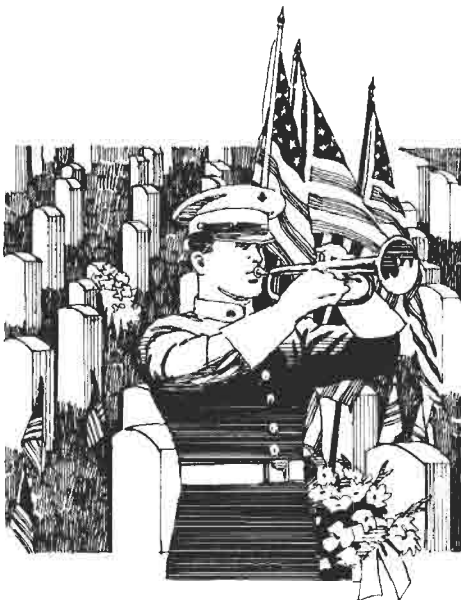
We in the United States have all heard the haunting song, "Taps." It's the song that gives us that lump in our throats and usually tears in our eyes. But, do you know the story behind the song? If not, I think you will be interested to find out about its humble beginnings.

Reportedly, it all began in 1862 during the Civil War, when Union Army Captain Robert Ellicombe was with his men near Harrison's Landing in Virginia. The Confederate Army was on the other side of the narrow strip of land. During the night, Captain Ellicombe heard the moans of a soldier who lay severely wounded on the field. Not knowing if it was a Union or Confederate soldier, the Captain decided to risk his life and bring the stricken man back for medical attention. Crawling on his stomach through the gunfire, the Captain reached the stricken soldier and began pulling him toward his encampment. When the Captain finally reached his own lines, he discovered it was actually a Confederate soldier, but the soldier was dead.

The Captain lit a lantern and suddenly caught his breath and went numb with shock. In the dim light, he saw the face of the soldier. It was his own son. The boy had been studying music in the South when the war broke out. Without telling his father, the boy enlisted in the Confederate Army.

The following morning, heartbroken, the father asked permission of his superiors to give his son a full military burial, despite his enemy status. His request was only partially granted. The Captain had asked if he could have a group of Army band members play a funeral dirge for his son at the funeral. The request was turned down since the soldier was a Confederate. But, out of respect for the father, they did say they could give him only one musician. The Captain chose a bugler. He asked the bugler to play a series of musical notes he had found on a piece of paper in the pocket of the dead youth's uniform. This wish was granted.

The haunting melody, we now know as "Taps" ...used at military funerals was born.



### **The words are...**

***Day is done... Gone the sun...  
From the lakes... From the hills... From the sky...  
All is well... Safely rest... God is nigh...  
Fading light... Dims the sight... And a star...  
Gems the sky... Gleaming bright...  
From afar... Drawing nigh... Falls the night...  
Thanks and praise... For our days...  
Neath the sun... Neath the stars... Neath the sky...  
As we go... This we know... God is nigh.***

# ***Staying The Course... No Surrender, No Retreat***

***From: Alexander Downer, Foreign Minister of Australia***

Without seeking to underestimate the role of domestic issues such as economic management, there can be no mistaking the clear foreign policy choices made by Australia in recent elections. Presented with some tough decisions, the Australian people again demonstrated their robust commitment to international order and common good. With opposition parties promising to bring home Australian troops from Iraq by Christmas, Australians could have taken the easy option to cut and run. Instead, they strongly re-endorsed the government of Prime Minister John Howard and its promise to stay the course in Iraq.

Having been an original, modest but important contributor to the "Coalition of the Willing", Australia is not about to set any arbitrary deadline for leaving Iraq. We will not let down the Iraqi people. We will not let down our allies and we will not let down the international community. Our troops are involved in the important work of training Iraqi security forces, patrolling the waters and skies around Iraq and protecting Australia's diplomatic staff in Baghdad. Our commitment also extends to reconstruction assistance, especially in the fields of agriculture and water management.

Australians hold mixed and varied views about the Iraq conflict and it has been a source of some political controversy and pain for our government. But having successfully participated in the liberation of Iraq from a cruel and brutal dictatorship, most Australians realize it would be folly to withdraw now, just when the Iraqi people are on the threshold of a free and democratic future. Australians also realize that to cut and run from Iraq would be to hand the terrorists a massive strategic and propaganda victory in the battle that Prime Minister Tony Blair has described as the "crucible" in the war against terrorism.

Despite the vicious terrorist bombing against the Australian embassy in Jakarta a month before our election, the poll result should not come as a surprise. Australians have a proud record of standing up for our values, our allies, our neighbors and our national interest abroad. In recent years we have done this in Iraq, Afghanistan, East Timor and the Solomon islands. The Australian government will continue to show resolve and commitment in the war against terrorism, especially in our own region. We have struck counterterrorism agreements with nine of our regional neighbors and co-hosted with Indonesia a regional summit on counterterrorism.

Our leadership and cooperation on counterterrorism capacity-building will continue. We have committed further resources to this task, including a doubling of our commitments to fund counterterrorism strategies in Indonesia and in the Philippines. We will also engage fully in the "battle of ideas" to insure that the war against terrorism is not seen as a "clash of civilizations" but as a battle to root out extremists. We will co-host with Indonesia a regional inter-faith dialogue to encourage understanding and tolerance in these broader issues.

In the lead up to our election, Australians opposition parties argued for a kind of retreat to fortress Australia. We, on the other hand, realize the terrorists threat is a global challenge that must be fought both in our region and with the broader international community. In this struggle, Australia's alliance with the United States is fundamentally important.

We will nurture that alliance rather than downgrade it. The alliance is a manifestation of our shared values and is vital in an era of global terrorist threats, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and failed states. Access to US intelligence resources, leading defense technology and other support provides unrivalled assistance in facing these challenges.

Today, Australia's international standing is high because we pull our weight internationally and do not seek to shirk our responsibilities. The coalition government's foreign policy approach unashamedly puts the security and interests of Australians First - the sacred duty of any government to protect its citizens. But it is firmly anchored in the views and values of Australians and a belief that Australia is a significant country that can make a strong contribution to a better world.

Our approach to the challenges we and other nations face is guided by pragmatism rather than hamstrung ideology. Under the re-elected Howard government, Australia will continue to strive for outcomes that make a real difference to the security and prosperity of Australians and the international community.



**IRAQ WAR VETERAN COALITION**

# Flag Disposal Boxes



It is not often that the National Commander of an International Veterans Organization has the welding responsibilities as well. Shown in the photo is National Commander Peter Forbes welding flag poles for use at National Headquarters. A job well done!

Another out-of-the-ordinary job duty is sanding and then painting mailboxes that will be used as flag disposal boxes throughout the country. Shown in the photo on the left is Peter Forbes and Jonathan Curley on the right as they get the boxes ready and begin the painting process. Hard work but just one more way to get the message of the VVnW and The Veterans Coalition out to the general public.

The final results of the hard work done on those mail boxes is shown here. These flag disposal boxes are available from National Headquarters at a cost of \$200. Why so much? Well there is a great deal of time spent sanding, painting and prepping the boxes and then they are decal'd to look so good. We have one right out in front of National Headquarters and it is a great looking addition.



# Extraordinary Lengths

The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition will go to extraordinary lengths to get the message out as is shown in the photo where Nancy Verespy, National Executive Director practices on "passing" along information to the driver next door!



# *Eagle Butte, South Dakota Pow\*Wow*

When we attended the Denver March POW\*WOW we were invited to return to Eagle Butte, South Dakota for their annual POW\*WOW. We were also developing a VSO visit to the area in the Fall. These events are a wonder to watch because they give Native American veterans and their families the opportunity to celebrate who they are. Every ceremony begins with a veteran honor song and dancing parade. Veterans raise and lower flags, participate as the Color Guard and generally honor those who have served our country with honor.

We signed up many new members, talked with many veterans and tried to assist them with VA claims information, distributed information and hundreds of bottles of water, flags and stickers. We were welcomed as friends and enjoyed the entire experience. One problem in this part of the country was that at the end of the day the closest hotel was 70 miles away and as we crossed a bridge it was even a different time zone!

We were invited and requested to return to the Eagle Butte, Cheyenne River and Fort Belknap reservations with Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition Veterans Service Officers. We made those plans for October and look forward to assisting this group of veterans that have been overlooked by their country and the VA.

Members of the Color Guard meet with National Commander Peter Forbes and National Vice Commander Michael Breighner.

The “dancing” parades take coordination and stamina. The Photo shows Michael Breighner as he carried the VVnW flag in the honors parade.

The VVnW and The Veterans Coalition display area was the best one at the POW\*WOW (at least in our opinion). We provided a welcoming atmosphere for everyone who attended the event and found that there were veterans there who have never been acknowledged for their service and we were privileged to honor them during this weekend.

Presentations were made to the organizers of the Lakota Akicita Eagle Butte POW\*WOW. Shown in the photo from the left are: Peter Forbes, National Commander; Kim King, Commander Post MT-01, Fort Belknap, MT; Michael Breighner, National Vice Commander; Richard Charging Eagle, Adjutant and Carlin Brings Horse President, Lakota Akicita Veterans. This group is also the newest post SD-01 for the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition.



**GET INVOLVED!**



**FIND-A-VET LOCATOR SERVICE**  
**VETERANS OF THE VIETNAM WAR, INC.**  
**AND THE VETERANS COALITION**  
 805 So. Township Boulevard  
 Pittston, PA 18640-3327



Complete this form to be registered in the computerized locator service for veterans who served in Southeast Asia. Your signature is REQUIRED and authorizes the release of your data to other Vietnam veterans who might request it. Return this completed form to the address shown above. Remember to attach a copy of your DD-214. Donations to cover the cost of postage are gladly accepted.

/ /	_____	_____
Social Security Number	Service Number	<u>DD-214 REQUIRED</u>
_____	_____	_____
Last Name	First Name	M.I.
_____	_____	_____
Street	City	State
_____	_____	_____
Area Code - Phone Number	_____	Zip Code
_____	_____	_____

Branch of Service (circle one) – AR NA AF MC CG RC CIV Home State at the time you served in S.E. Asia: \_\_\_\_\_

Served from: First Tour Second Tour Third Tour

To	To	To
Mo. Yr. Mo. Yr.	Mo. Yr. Mo. Yr.	Mo. Yr. Mo. Yr.

**MILITARY INFORMATION – COMPLETELY FILL IN APPROPRIATE UNIT SPACES –**

ARMY AND MARINE – Use separate sheet for each unit you served with.

Division	Brigade	Regiment	Battalion	Company
----------	---------	----------	-----------	---------

**SHORE BASED NAVY OR COAST GUARD**

Name of Shore Station	Division	Department	Battalion	Company
-----------------------	----------	------------	-----------	---------

**SHIP BASED NAVY OR COAST GUARD**

Name of Ship	Ship number	Division	Department	Squad
--------------	-------------	----------	------------	-------

**AIR FORCE**

Base	Major Command	Wing	Group	Squadron
------	---------------	------	-------	----------

<u>CIVILIAN</u>	<u>RED CROSS</u>	<u>ALLIED FORCES</u>	<u>ARVN</u>	<u>MISC. INFO</u>
-----------------	------------------	----------------------	-------------	-------------------

Check this box if you would like a list of those registered from your unit.

I'm looking for: \_\_\_\_\_

_____	_____	_____	_____
His/Her home state was:	Last Name	First Name	M.I. Nickname
_____	_____	_____	_____

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**VETERANS OF THE VIETNAM WAR, INC.  
AND THE VETERANS COALITION**  
805 South Township Boulevard, Pittston, PA 18640-3327  
Phone: 570-603-9740 ~ Fax: 570-603-9741 ~ 1-800-843-8626  
E-mail: [vvwnvatl@epix.net](mailto:vvwnvatl@epix.net)  
Websites: [vvnw.org](http://vvnw.org) and [theveteranscoalition.org](http://theveteranscoalition.org)



*All Veterans - All Military Welcome*

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

### GENERAL INFORMATION:

*I hereby swear (affirm) to uphold the Bylaws  
of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc.*

**PLEASE  
PRINT**

\_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
Social Security Number

\_\_\_\_\_ *Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_ Last Name      \_\_\_\_\_ First Name      \_\_\_\_\_ Middle

\_\_\_\_\_ Street      \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. Number      \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address

\_\_\_\_\_ City      \_\_\_\_\_ State      \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code + 4

( ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number      Date of Birth

**MILITARY DATA: TO CLAIM VETERAN STATUS YOU MUST ATTACH A COPY OF DD-214  
(DISCHARGE FORM) -- CURRENT SERVING MILITARY MUST PRESENT PROOF OF SERVICE**

**Branch:**

- Army
- Navy
- Air Force
- Marines
- Coast Guard
- Other

**Date**

Entered Service \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Discharge Date \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Type Discharge \_\_\_\_\_

Service Number \_\_\_\_\_

**Service:**

- WW II
- Korea
- Vietnam
- Grenada
- Panama
- Desert Storm
- Somalia
- Bosnia
- United Nations
- Enduring Freedom
- Iraqi Freedom
- Peacetime
- Non-Veteran
- All Others

**Choose one option:**

- Annual Membership \$25.00
  - Life Membership \$200.00 or
  - 8 Payments of \$ 25.00
- Current Serving Military FREE**

**PAYMENT METHOD:**

O Check or Money Order Payable to VVnW, Inc. enclosed

*Please charge my membership to:*

O Visa O MasterCard O Discover O Am Express

Card No: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_



**We Accept All Major Credit Cards**

**OFFICE USE ONLY:**

Post Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dues Paid: \_\_\_\_\_  
Member Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# VETERANS OF THE VIETNAM WAR, INC. AND THE VETERANS COALITION

*International Headquarters*  
805 South Township Boulevard, Pittston, PA 18640  
Phone: 570-603-9740 ~~ Fax: 570-603-9741  
1-800-843-8626

E-mail: [vvnwnatl@epix.net](mailto:vvnwnatl@epix.net)  
Websites: [vvnw.org](http://vvnw.org) and [theveteranscoalition.org](http://theveteranscoalition.org)  
All Veterans – All Military Welcome



If you know of somebody who is serving overseas and you think they would like to receive a Military Support Package, please fill in the information below and return to the address shown above.

## SUPPORT PACKAGE REQUEST

Requester's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### Support Package sent to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_



**Commemorative Coin**  
available for currently  
Serving Military – with  
free membership.

You do not have to pay to have this package sent to someone. However, donations are always welcome to help us continue this project. Thank you in advance for your support.

### PAYMENT METHOD:

Check or Money Order Payable to VVnW, Inc. enclosed

Please charge my membership to:

Visa  MasterCard  Discover  Am Express

Card No: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



We Accept All Major Credit Cards







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All Veterans – All Military Welcome



### PRESS RELEASE —

## THE VETERANS COALITION AND VETERANS OF THE VIETNAM WAR, INC.

### MILITARY SUPPORT PACKAGES

The Veterans Coalition and The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc., an international veterans organization with posts throughout the world and with headquarters in Pittston, PA, has been supporting the troops as they are deployed to far away places in support of the Global War on Terrorism with “Military Support Packages”.

The pictures show what the package actually looks like. The boxes contain items to include a 3 x 5 flag, new and used paperback books, non-perishable products like sunscreen, powdered drink mixes like iced tea and lemonade, chap sticks, wet ones towelettes, liquid anti-bacterial soap, small travel packages of tissues, toothpaste, toothbrushes, dental floss, disposable razors, band aids, stick deodorant, combs, q-tips, nail clippers, hard candy, Crème Savers, M & Ms, Hershey Miniatures, gum, playing cards, Pringles potato chips, hot chocolate packets, breakfast bars, ramen noodles and tinned cookies. Of course, the organization would also be happy to accept cash donations to help defray the cost of purchasing the products and covering the postage and shipping. The approximate cost of each package is \$35.

If you would like to get involved in this project contact The Veterans Coalition and The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. at 805 So. Township Boulevard, Pittston, PA 18640, phone: [570-603-9740](tel:570-603-9740), [1-800-843-8626](tel:1-800-843-8626), e-mail: [vvwnatl@epix.net](mailto:vvwnatl@epix.net) or get more information on their websites at [vvnw.org](http://vvnw.org) and [theveteranscoalition.org](http://theveteranscoalition.org) The letter that is enclosed in the package will tell the recipient who requested the package or that it was made possible by a donation from \_\_\_\_\_.



Commemorative Coin  
available for currently  
Serving Military – with  
free membership.

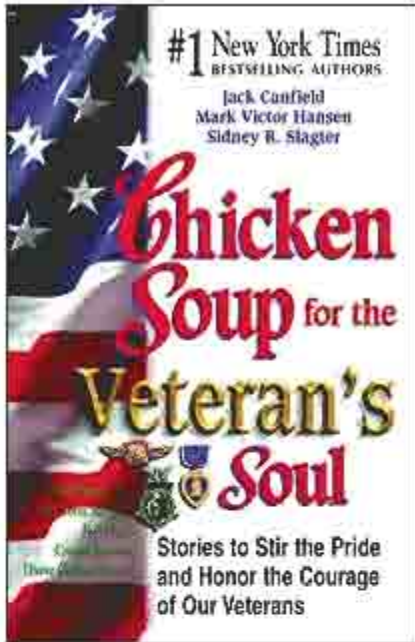


# Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition



## Product Sales Catalog

**BOOKS**



**F-01**  
***Chicken Soup for the Veteran's Soul***  
 ~ Great reading and a good gift  
**\$12.00**



**P-02**  
***VVnW 2005 Pocket Diary***  
**\$5.00**



**P-03**  
***VVnW Notebook***  
**\$7.50**

**MUGS and STUFF**



**P-101**  
***VVnW Plastic Coffee Mug***  
**\$7.00**

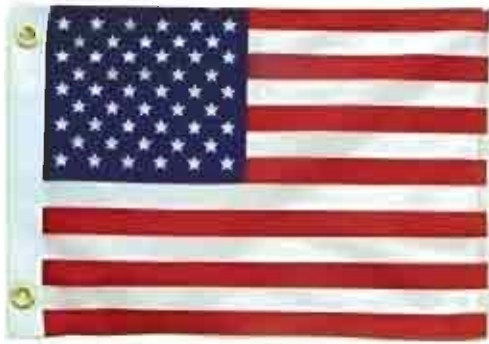
**P-102**  
***VVnW Stainless Steel Travel Mug***

**\$10.00**



**P-103**  
***Foam Beverage Holder***  
**\$5.00**

## FLAGS



### *American Flag*

P-21 ~ 2' x 3' ~ **\$20.00**

P-22 ~ 3' x 5' ~ **\$25.00**

P-23 ~ 4' x 6' ~ **\$35.00**

P-24 ~ 5' x 8' ~ **\$60.00**

~ Nylon with Embroidered Stars



### *POW / MIA Flag*

P-25 ~ 2' x 3' ~ **\$20.00**

P-26 ~ 3' x 5' ~ **\$30.00**

P-27 ~ 4' x 6' ~ **\$45.00**

~ Double Sided



### *Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc Organizational Flag*

P-28 ~ 3' x 5' ~ **\$85.00**

P-29 ~ 4" x 6" ~ **\$ 3.00**



### *American / POW Flags on a Staff*

~ Sold as a Set. Great for Motorcycles

P-30 ~ 12" x 18" ~ **\$15.00**

## FLAGS



### **Blue Star Flag**

**P-31 ~ 8" x 15" ~ \$14.00**

~ For Display by Family or Business  
with an Active Service Member



**P-32**

### **Set of Three Desktop Flags**

~ Set of Three, US/VVnW/POW

**\$10.00**



### **Service Banners**

Please Specify Branch of Service.

*Army*

*Marines*

*Air Force*

*Navy*

*Coast Guard*

**P-33 ~ Light Nylon Fabric ~ \$10.00**

**P-34 ~ High Quality Nylon 3' x 5' ~ \$25.00**

## JACKET



**P-600**

### **Jacket with Back Patch and Left Breast Logo**

When ordering specify back and front  
logos and Sizes (M-XXL)

**\$110.00**

## HATS

**P-41**  
**VVnW Logo Hat**  
 ~ Adjustable  
**\$14.00**



**P-42**  
**VVnW Logo Hat for Life Members**  
 ~ Adjustable  
**\$14.00**



**P-43**  
**Beret with Pin**  
 ~ Please Specify Size: 6 7/8 to 7 7/8  
**\$15.00**



**P-44**  
**Au Slouch**  
 ~ Limited Availability in Assorted Sizes  
**\$50.00**

## MAGNETS AND CLINGS



**P-71**  
**Magnetic "Support Our Troops" Yellow Ribbon**  
**\$5.00**



**P-45**  
**Coalition Logo Hat**  
 ~ Adjustable Size  
**\$14.00**

**P-74**  
**"Support Our Troops" Yellow Ribbon Window Cling**  
**\$2.00**



**P-73**  
**Magnetic "Bring Them Home" POW/MIA Black Ribbon**  
**\$5.00**



**P-72**  
**Magnetic "God Bless America" Red, White & Blue Ribbon**  
**\$5.00**

## LABELS



**P-51**  
***VVnW Logo Mailing Labels***  
 ~ 30 Labels per Sheet  
**\$2.00** per Sheet

**P-52**  
***US Flag Mailing Labels***  
 ~ 30 Labels per Sheet  
**\$2.00** per Sheet



**P-53**  
***VVnW AU/US Logo Mailing Labels***  
 ~ 30 Labels per Sheet  
**\$2.00** per Sheet



**P-54**  
***POW/MIA Logo Mailing Labels***  
 ~ 30 Labels per Sheet  
**\$2.00** per Sheet



**P-55**  
***Veterans Coalition Mailing Labels***  
 ~ 30 Labels per Sheet  
**\$2.00** per Sheet

## LICENSE PLATES



**P-61**  
***VVnW License Plate***     **\$10.00**



**P-63**  
***POW/MIA License Plate Holder***  
**\$5.00**



**P-62**  
***POW/MIA License Plate***  
**\$10.00**

## MISCELLANEOUS



**P-81**  
***POW/MIA Bracelet***

**\$5.00**



***Native American Made***  
***Dream Catcher***

**P-83 ~ Vietnam Colors ~ \$20.00**

**P-84 ~ US Colors ~ \$20.00**



**P-82**  
***Color Map of Vietnam***

**\$10.00**



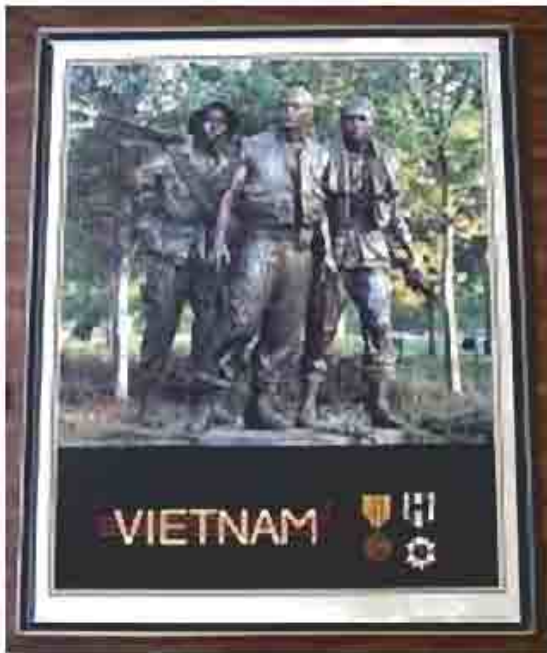
***VVnW Logo Golf Balls***

**P-85 ~ 1 Dozen ~ \$22.00**

**P-86 ~ 1 Sleeve ~ \$ 6.00**



## MISCELLANEOUS



**P-87**  
**Three Soldier Poster**

**\$10.00**

**P-88**  
**VVnW Ink Pen**

**\$5.00**



**P-90**  
**Sun and Safety Glasses**

**\$6.00**



**P-91**  
**"Support Our Troops" Sign**

**\$3.50**



**P-89**  
**Lifetime Member Certificate**

**\$5.00**



**P-85**  
**VVnW Bottled Water**  
~ Support the VVnW. Sold by the Case.  
Plus Shipping  
**\$10.00**

## PATCHES



**P-201**  
***VVnW Logo Patch***

**\$5.00**



**P-206**  
***US Flag Eagle Patch***

**\$5.00**



**P-202**  
***VVnW US/AU Logo Patch***

**\$5.00**



**P-207**  
***POW/MIA Shoulder Patch***

**\$5.00**



**P-203**  
***VVnW Life Member Patch***

**\$5.00**



**P-208**  
***Wes Caton POW/MIA Patch***

**\$5.00**



**P-204**  
***VVnW Embroidered Logo 10 inch Back Patch***

**\$30.00**



**P-209**  
***Agent Orange Patch Sprayed and Betrayed***

**\$5.00**



**P-205**  
***US Flag Shoulder Patch***

**\$5.00**



**P-210**  
***Veterans Coalition Patch***

**\$5.00**

## SHIRTS



**P-401**

***United Veterans  
Beacon House Shirt***

Medium ~ **\$14.00**

Large ~ **\$14.00**

X-Large ~ **\$14.00**

XX-Large ~ **\$16.00**

XXX-Large ~ **\$16.00**

Grey only with VVnW Logo on Sleeve



**P-402**

***Embroidered Golf Shirt***

**P-403**

***Embroidered Golf Shirt for  
Life Member***

Medium ~ **\$30.00**

Large ~ **\$30.00**

X-Large ~ **\$30.00**

XX-Large ~ **\$30.00**

XXX-Large ~ **\$30.00**

P-403 embroidered with Life Member Patch



When the power of love  
overcomes the love of power, then,  
and only then, shall we truly have peace. - Anonymous

**P-404**

***Spirit - Black Angel***

**P-405**

***Spirit - White Angel***

Medium ~ **\$14.00**

Large ~ **\$14.00**

X-Large ~ **\$14.00**

XX-Large ~ **\$16.00**

XXX-Large ~ **\$16.00**

VVnW and POW Logos on Sleeve



**P-406**

***Freedom Will Be Defended***

Medium ~ **\$18.00**

Large ~ **\$18.00**

X-Large ~ **\$18.00**

XX-Large ~ **\$20.00**

XXX-Large ~ **\$20.00**

Two sided shirt with VVnW Logo on Sleeve

## SHIRTS



**P-407**

### ***VVnW Logo Shirt***

Medium ~ **\$14.00**

Large ~ **\$14.00**

X-Large ~ **\$14.00**

XX-Large ~ **\$16.00**

XXX-Large ~ **\$16.00**

Black with POW Logo on Sleeve



**P-408**

### ***I Wasn't There But I Care Shirt***

Medium ~ **\$14.00**

Large ~ **\$14.00**

X-Large ~ **\$14.00**

XX-Large ~ **\$16.00**

XXX-Large ~ **\$16.00**

Black with VVnW Logo on Sleeve



**P-409**

### ***POW/MIA "Forget... Never!" Shirt***

Medium ~ **\$14.00**

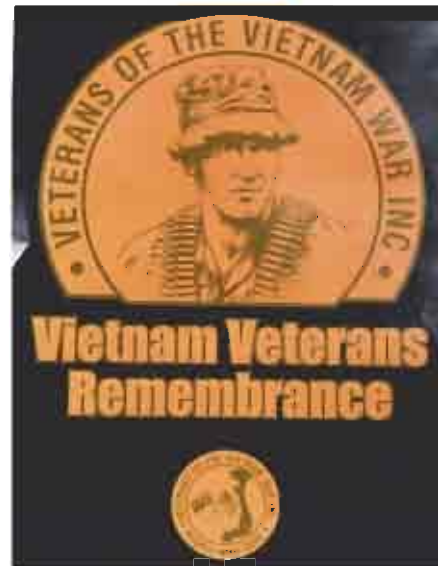
Large ~ **\$14.00**

X-Large ~ **\$14.00**

XX-Large ~ **\$16.00**

XXX-Large ~ **\$16.00**

Black with VVnW Logos on Sleeve



**P-410**

### ***Remembrance Black Shirt***

**P-411**

### ***Remembrance Gray Shirt***

Medium ~ **\$14.00**

Large ~ **\$14.00**

X-Large ~ **\$14.00**

XX-Large ~ **\$16.00**

## SHIRTS



**P-412**

***Veterans Coalition Logo Shirt***

Medium ~ **\$14.00**

Large ~ **\$14.00**

X-Large ~ **\$14.00**

XX-Large ~ **\$16.00**

XXX-Large ~ **\$16.00**



**P-413**

***Tab Collar Dress Shirt - White***

**P-414**

***Tab Collar Dress Shirt - Black***

Please specify neck size and sleeve length, and the Logo and First Name to be Embroidered on the front.

**\$30.00**

## PINS



**P-301**

***VVnW Logo Pin***

**\$4.00**



**P-302**

***VVnW US/AU Logo Pin***

**\$4.00**



**P-303**

***VVnW Life Member Pin***

**\$4.00**



**P-304**

***Veterans Coalition Pin***

**\$4.00**



**P-305**

***VVnW US Beret Pin***

**\$5.00**



**P-306**

***VVnW Life Member Beret Pin***

**\$5.00**



**P-306**

***POW/MIA Lapel Pin***

**\$4.00**



**P-308**

***Wes Caton POW/MIA Pin***

**\$4.00**



**P-309**

***Flag Ribbon Pin***

~ Red, White & Blue

**\$4.00**



**P-310**

***P.T.S.D Pin***

~ Not All Wounds Are Visible

**\$4.00**



**P-303**

***Agent Orange***

***Sprayed and Betrayed Pin***

**\$4.00**

## STICKERS



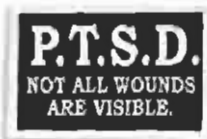
**P-501**  
**VVnW Logo Sticker**  
 ~ Gold Metallic  
**\$1.00**

**ONE THING ABOUT VIETNAM  
 IS - IT KILLED SO MANY  
 WHO SURVIVED**

**P-506**  
**One Thing About  
 Vietnam Sticker**  
**\$1.50**



**P-502**  
**VVnW Logo  
 Life Member Sticker**  
 ~ Gold Metallic  
**\$1.50**



**P-507**  
**P.T.S.D Sticker**  
**\$1.00**



**P-503**  
**VVnW/POW Logo  
 Sticker**  
 ~ Gold Metallic  
**\$1.00**



**P-508**  
**Support Our  
 Troops Sticker**  
 ~ Quantities Limited  
**FREE**



**P-504**  
**POW/MIA  
 "Forget... Never"  
 Sticker**  
 ~ White on Black -  
 Inside Window  
**\$1.00**



**P-509**  
**US Flag Sticker**  
 ~ Quantities Limited  
**FREE**



**P-505**  
**POW/MIA Sticker**  
 ~ Inside Window  
**\$1.00**



**P-510**  
**POW/MIA Sticker**  
 ~ Gold Metallic  
**FREE**



## **IRAQ WAR VETERAN COALITION**

**Donations of money and goods for military support packages has dwindled as the Global War on Terrorism progresses.**

**The need is greater than ever.**

**We need to keep the focus on the military.**

**For posts** – it is coming close to winter.

**You need to now set up Food drives for homeless veterans and goods drives and for Military Support Packages for Spring 2005. Most places need three to four months notice.**

**For individuals and community groups** – we need to keep the focus on supporting our military by raising funds and collecting goods to be included in the Military Support Packages.

**This is a vital program in support of our troops.**

**For more information look at the website at [vvnw.org](http://vvnw.org) or contact 1-800-843-8626.**

***SHOW YOUR PATRIOTISM – DISPLAY YOUR FLAG!***

***ASK YOURSELF ...***

***“WHAT HAVE I DONE FOR A VETERAN TODAY?”***

***GET INVOLVED!***

# THE VETERAN LEADER



A quarterly publication of the  
Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc.  
& The Veterans Coalition

805 So. Township Blvd.  
Pittston, PA 18640-3327

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