

# THE VETERAN LEADER

Edition 4-2004



**All Veterans — All Military  
Welcome**

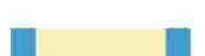
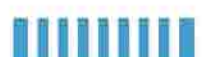
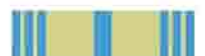


# Serving All Veterans — All Military

FOR U.S.  
FORCES ONLY:



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:**

**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.

All articles submitted are published at the Editor's discretion.

All photos must be originals and will be returned

Submission Deadlines are: February 28, May 31, August 1 & November 30

**VETERAN LEADER AD POLICY:**

Direct inquiries to: 570-603-9740

All ads must be in "Camera-ready" artwork form.

All ads are published at the discretion of the Editor.

**Rates**

Full page: \$400.00

Half page: \$220.00

Quarter page: \$125.00

**COPYRIGHT:**

No portion of the *Veteran Leader* is to be reprinted without prior written permission from the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition.

**Front cover:**

Corporal Catcher Cuts the Rope – See story on Page 42.



## *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.



**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the National Board of Directors and the Staff at the International Headquarters of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition.**



# *National Commander's Column*

*Peter Forbes, National Commander,  
Australian Commander*

G'Day to you all. By now you have all received your first issue of the new style Veteran Leader and we have had many positive comments, emails and calls and we hope you, the reader, like this new format.

This is our second issue and we have picked up a few items we missed on the first issue such as an order page etc., however we will get better and better at putting this together and from next year we will be back on track with four full issues of the Veteran Leader.

An Incarcerated Veteran Leader has been completed and distributed, if anyone knows an incarcerated Veteran who would like to receive an issue please contact the National Office and we will forward copies.

By the time you receive this issue the United Veterans Beacon House in Huntington, WV will have been opened and housing homeless Veterans and providing assistance on their recovery. The Working Bees, although successful, have been attended by mostly the same people as you will see further in the Veteran Leader.

We have United Veterans Beacon Houses underway in Promise, SD, Harlem, MT and Helena, MT as well as focuses on others in Waco, TX, Pennsylvania, Virginia, New Mexico and Kansas. Let us know if and when you can attend a UVBH Working Bee as the on-the-job training is great.

We have a new brochure out for the United Veterans Beacon House project and again if you would like these please contact the National Office. For those who have worked at the UVBH working bees they are sporting their UVBH working bee T-shirt, a much sought after item.

We are looking for Members with cooking experience to support

a Veterans Owned and Veterans Run Restaurant in Helena, Montana called the "Mess Tent". We need YOUR expertise.

We are ever-moving forward and increasing membership and the number of Posts throughout the U.S and the world.

Every Member can help by ordering copies of the Veteran Leader and then placing them in your local VA, Vet Centers, Doctor's office and local businesses. Just call 1800 843 8626 and they will be sent to you. We need to get Veteran Leaders into ALL VA medical and Vet centers.

Be part of the growth and construction of the Veterans or the Vietnam War, Inc & The Veterans Coalition.

Veterans Day in Washington DC went very well. We all stood out well with our Orange Berets and our Information Tent at the Mall was very well attended and thanks to Morris Miller, Mike Murphy, Jeremiah Simpson, Kim King and others it has proved very successful.

Our visit to Bethesda Naval Hospital to see the wounded Marines was very sobering and heart felt. There is a story about this visit later in the Veteran Leader.

You will also notice an increase in membership dues and the National Board of Directors have taken this action to increase the funds we have as an Organization to provide more services to Veterans.

The Harley Davidson Raffle has been drawn and the winners are announced in this issue and again the National-at-Large Members have been the backbone of the raffles success – a very poor showing by the Posts at large. This involvement by the Affiliated Posts



needs to be addressed and be assured it will be. Later in the issue you will see "Supportive Raffles for a Harley Davidson and Ford Mustang" and we would ask everyone to get involved and sell or purchase tickets. It is about focusing on support for Veterans and not about the prizes. National Office has the licenses required.

When you elect new officers to your Post, the National Office needs to be informed of the Officers and their contact details including email addresses.

As always we have been extremely busy at the National Office and we ask any member or non member who has some time on their hands to lend a hand at the National Office in an effort to provide greater services to Veterans and their Families. We need more people to get involved, to care, to provide these services.

In 2005 we look forward to further growth, further involvement and further participation by ALL Members.

Best Wishes for a Holy and Blessed Christmas and a Healthy and Positive New Year.

Yours in Brotherhood,

Peter Forbes,  
National Commander  
Australian Commander



# Nancy Verespy

## International Executive Director

This time of year is when each of us usually looks back and thinks about the things we may or may not have accomplished throughout the year. We would probably not want to have a long list of things not accomplished but if we had not tried in the first place we wouldn't know.

I have been privileged to be involved in many positive Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition projects during this year. One of exceptional fondness to me personally is the United Veterans Beacon House Program. We have multiple locations but the one this year where I have used my very own blood, sweat and tears is in Huntington, West Virginia. We have now been there multiple times and each time we arrive with a gung-ho attitude and leave both physically and mentally exhausted but it will soon be ready to house homeless veterans as they reintegrate into the society they so willingly protected with their service. These are your fathers, brothers, uncles, or cousins. These are people who are where they are because they had nowhere to go or no one who could help them once they have completed the VA programs. They may have alcohol or drug abuse problems they are dealing with or perhaps PTSD is the insidious part of their lives that makes it impossible for them to cope with the stresses of every day life. Whatever the reasons are, we, as their fellow human beings, owe them a great deal because they are veterans. They were there when called and we owe them.

Our most recent trip to the UVBH was in November, 2004. We drove the eight hours from Washington, D.C. after attending the Veterans Day Ceremonies as part of the Veterans Day National

Committee. No matter how many times it happens there is still that sense of overwhelming pride when the VVnW flag and American flag are carried in during the Parade of Colors at Arlington National Cemetery and to hear the National Commander's name and the organization name announced is still a big thrill. This year Michael Breighner and Loy Smith did an outstanding job and looked great in their new jackets and beloved orange berets.

Back to the UVBH. This project in Huntington is the second time that I have been physically at a location the first time was in Shreveport, Louisiana. The Huntington House needed painting from top to bottom of the three floors and that was no easy task it is a big building. Most of my talents were used for painting and cleaning up and just generally doing anything I could wherever I could but it was amazing to see Peter Forbes, Loy Smith, Kim King and Morris Miller working at so many different tasks during this particular trip. Some days their arms and legs were so sore they could barely take showers and then make it up the stairs to go to sleep. That came from ripping up floors and then installing new ones sanding walls, carrying five gallon buckets of paint up three floors, carrying wood up those same flights of stairs and all the while trying to keep up with the energy level of Peter. Some nights after everyone else was settled in for the night you could hear Peter sanding or spackling so that a wall or section would be dry for the next day. I don't know where the man gets his energy but if we could only clone him... and he does all of this with a bad heart and other health problems. He wants this project to be up and running so much so that it



appears at times that he would die trying to do it. Dedication is a word that truly describes everyone who participated not only on this trip but on others. So... I would put this on the list of accomplishments.

Another accomplishment is the Military Support Package Program. We have sent out over 10,000 packages and the requests just keep coming in. The letters and memorabilia we get from soldiers are so heartwarming and seem to have familiar threads throughout all of them they appreciate the packages more so because they come from a veterans organization and they enjoy all the contents but it is not so much about what is in the package as it is about the fact that they got the package at all. These are truly dedicated soldiers who are doing difficult jobs and we are pleased to be able to honor them even in this small way. This is on the accomplishment list.

Each day here at the International Headquarters brings new challenges which range from the easy to what seems like the impossible. The phones are our biggest challenge some days it finds all five lines ringing at what seems the same time and the problems are varied. Just this last week we have had many calls asking for help to find a place to



stay because a veteran can't pay his rent or his company has downsized and he is low on funds, or he wants his medals for Christmas to give to his children or grandchildren (waited thirty years and needs them now), or a wife or husband who is distraught about the disintegration of their marriage or relationship and on and on and then you can throw in the calls about black powder canons and where to get that information and you see that our days are full just with this segment. It is different every day. We do hundreds of referrals to other agencies, we help as much as possible with claims information and we try to get a solution for everyone. We aren't always successful but we do our best so this would be an accomplishment.

At this point I should tell you about a failure we have not yet been able to motivate posts to see the reason to help with the expenses of setting up a United Veterans Beacon House by having a food drive. This is an easy way for a post to host a drive, collect donations and then keep half of the donations for a project in their area and send the other half to National to help with the UVBH program. No matter how we have approached posts it just doesn't get thru to them that this can benefit both the post and National. They haven't felt the commitment to help their brother veterans and this would have to be something we didn't accomplish.

One other thing is that we have had a similar problem with getting posts to sell tickets for any fund-raising raffle that we hold to raise funds for programs. They tell us they have no interest in a motorcycle and trailer, but they forget that it isn't about what is raffled it is about helping veterans. Somehow this would go on that not accomplished list.

Success is much better than failure and that is what we are trying to do for veterans by coming

up with new ideas all of the time. At this point it seems to be that Peter Forbes the National Commander is the one who has all of the good ideas on innovative ways to raise funds but we need your input as well - we need some input from you, our readers. We raise most of our moneys through our Direct Mail Program but find that it is not wise to continue to count on this high dollar form of fund-raising to do it all. Get involved and put your thinking cap on to help us find new ways to raise funds.

Another accomplishment we have seen this year is the fulfillment of a promise made by National Commander Forbes to get Veteran Service Officers to the Native American Reservations in South Dakota and Montana. He got that done and now well over 200 veterans are having their claims processed and hopefully they will receive the benefits they so justly deserve. This segment of the veteran population has been shown so much disrespect and discrimination it is no wonder they do not trust anyone to keep their word but that isn't true of the VVnW and The Veterans Coalition. Peter stands by his word. This is truly an accomplishment.

We haven't been able to entice too many members to volunteer to work on projects such as the UVBH so this would be on the not accomplished list but we hope that with much encouragement this will change this coming year.

There is a bumper sticker that I have seen as we travel throughout the United States "If you haven't been there then shut your mouth!" and it seems more appropriate than I could have imagined. I haven't been to war, I haven't seen and experienced all of the things that veterans have, but I find that if I am willing to listen even for a short time to their stories I have done something to help. I have seen the

faces of young soldiers that we approach and thank with a handshake. I have seen the face on a homeless veteran who we have now employed to finish the work on the United Veterans Beacon House in Huntington, West Virginia when he told us that he couldn't believe that we would give him a chance to do the job that we would trust him. I have seen the sense of accomplishment on the faces of those who have volunteered to help with a project even though they didn't feel they had any skills it is pride.

I know that pride in working with and for veterans. The job may not always be easy, it may not get many kind words, but it is with pride that I provide services to veterans in many ways so the list of accomplishments and those things not accomplished that I wrote about in the beginning of this newsletter have been heavy on the accomplishment side. Perhaps we have to think about what we have accomplished and just work towards accomplishing more as the new year begins.

I am honored to work for and with who I truly consider heroes those who have served in the past and those who are serving now. I hope to do more in the future.

Ask yourself "what have I done for a Veteran today?". You can make a difference.

***"If you tell the truth,  
you don't have to  
remember anything."  
~ Mark Twain***





## ***Loy Smith*** ***National Board Member***

I, along with my wife Pat, had a wonderful time in Washington D.C. for Veterans Day. We worked hard and I wore my orange beret proudly at every event we attended. Pat worked at the VVnW & The Veterans Coalition information booth near the Wall with Morris Miller, Jeremiah Simpson and Mike Murphy and had a great time while working hard!

Michael Breighner and I were honored to be in the Parade of Flags during the opening ceremonies at the Fifty-First Annual Veterans Day National Ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. Mike carried in the American Flag and I carried the VVnW Flag.

We also had the opportunity to visit the Bethesda National Navy Medical Center where we were

able to talk to Marines injured in Iraq. We presented each veteran with a Veterans Coalition thank you hat and card. All of the Marines we talked to said they were ready to go back to Iraq to help their fellow Marines get the job done as soon as they recovered. Their severe injuries will probably make that impossible but the fact that they were ready was something special. That was an experience I will never forget.

After leaving Washington, Peter Forbes, Nancy Verespy, Kim King, Morris Miller and I were off to Huntington, W.V. to work on the United Veterans Beacon House there. After four days of painting, cleaning, installing hand railings to the second and third floors, more painting, putting furniture in place, more painting and installing



flooring, we had the first two floors nearly completed. The word exhausted does not come near to explaining the way we all felt when we left the house. There are veterans ready to move in as soon as the project is completed. The work is hard but we are "PEOPLE WHO CARE".

## ***Veterans of The Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition Veterans Day Weekend in Washington, D.C.***

***From: Nancy Verespy, National Executive Director***



*Nancy Verespy, National Executive Director, VVnW, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition with President George W. Bush and Peter J. Forbes, National Commander, VVnW, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition as they met with the President at the White House for the Veterans Day Breakfast for Veteran Service organizations.*



# ***Veterans of The Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition Veterans Day Weekend in Washington, D.C.***

***From: Nancy Verespy, National Executive Director***



Getting a permit from the National Park Service to put up an informational booth near The Wall in Washington, D.C. was no easy feat and only happened because of the determined efforts of National Commander, Peter Forbes. It took much aggravation and follow up with many letters and phone calls to get the permit just to give away informational materials about the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition. Since no donations can be accepted and no items sold it was purely an opportunity to get the message of the organization out to those people who were in the city for the weekend events.



Morris Miller, Michael Murphy, Pat Smith, Jeremiah Simpson, Gail Hoffmeister, Pam Haines and various members of the organization volunteered to

man the booth which is no easy task it is a long day from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. each day. They were able to answer questions about the mission and vision of the VVnW & The Veterans Coalition and the display was really good looking as you can see from the picture to the left. It took some maneuvering some days to get the banners correctly placed and the photo shows Morris and Jeremiah doing their best to get the job done.

Peter Forbes and I were invited to a formal reception at the Smithsonian for the opening of The Kenneth E. Behring Hall of Military History and the exhibition "The Price of Freedom: Americans at War" and represented the organization there. It is a very impressive exhibit so the next time you are in D.C. make the time to see it.



Veterans Day brings with it many activities for those who represent the organization. Peter Forbes and I attended the breakfast at the White House hosted by President Bush as part of the Veterans Day National Committee. This is always a very impressive affair and provides an opportunity for us to present the organization in a very positive way. The pictures show Peter with Secretary of State Colin Powell and Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Anthony Principi.

From the White House we were transported to Arlington National Cemetery where we were present for the President's Wreath laying at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This ceremony is always done with great precision and is a proud and somber time for everyone who has the privilege to attend.





The group then proceeds to the seating areas in the Amphitheater where the President gives his annual Veterans Day Message. It is always a thrill to see the VVnW and American flags brought in during the parade of flags. You can see Michael Breighner and Loy Smith in the photo as they prepared to march in. Peter Forbes is shown in his orange beret as he proudly represents the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition.



The organization then has the opportunity to present a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and that was done by MSGT Robert Haines, National Board Member, Pam Haines, Gail Hoffmeister, and Major Marc Hoffmeister, National Board Member. They are all military two current and two former and they did the presentation with such precision that we felt as though we should shout out with joy and pride.



The photo shows MSGT Haines, Pam, Gail and Major Hoffmeister as they returned after the presentation and during the presentation. Looking good!

Following all of the ceremonies at Arlington the Board Members went to the reception hosted by the Non-Commissioned Officers Association who were the host organization this year. Dick Schneider, as always, was very welcoming and we enjoyed meeting with old friends and making new ones.



Frank Amalfitano and Michael Murphy made the wreath presentation at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on behalf of the organization.

The next day Peter Forbes, Robert "Kim" King, Jeremiah Simpson, MSGT Bob and Pam Haines, Gail and Major Marc Hoffmeister, Michael Breighner, Pat and Loy Smith, Morris Miller and I went to Bethesda Naval Hospital where we were privileged to meet with Marines who has been wounded in Iraq and returned to the U.S. for treatment at the Hospital and then once stable on to Walter Reed or to somewhere near their homes. The Colonel in charge of these patients was very concerned about too many visitors working up their patients so we were limited to five individuals actually going to the rooms. Peter, Loy, Jeremiah, Kim, and Marc got to go to the ward and talk with the patients for quite some time saw their computer images of their injuries from day one through to the current time, gave them Veterans Coalition embroidered hats with a thank you card that said "Thank You for Your Service and Sacrifice. We Are Proud of You."; gave them Veteran Leader newsletters; encouraged them to join the organization; and listened to them each state quite clearly that once they were patched up they were ready to go back! These are our heroes.

We all got to visit with one of the veterans who was in the office area at Bethesda and he showed us his injuries and told us about the incident in which he was wounded. See photo on folloing page. Shown in the photo from the left are: COL Frank; COL Illa, CPL Jensen-Withey, LCPL Manzanarez, Peter Forbes, Michael Murphy, Jeremiah Simpson, CPL Begin (wounded soldier), Michael Breighner, Major Hoffmeister, Loy Smith, MSGT Haines and SSGT Holland.





Shown in the photo from the left are: COL Frank; COL Illa, CPL Jensen-Withey, LCPL Manzanarez, Peter Forbes, Michael Murphy, Jeremiah Simpson, CPL Begin (wounded soldier), Michael Breighner, Major Hoffmeister, Loy Smith, MSGT Haines and SSGT Holland.

While I didn't get to go to see them a part of me was relieved because this is a very difficult thing to do and something that you would remember for the rest of your life. Don't get me wrong I will be honored to do a visit in the future. It was a privilege to be at the hospital not only to visit with these wounded soldiers but to be in the company of Bob Haines and Marc Hoffmeister who are currently serving, their wives who are former military and then with all of the rest of the people who were veterans and their wives. I am honored to do these projects with veterans from every era and thank them from my heart for their service.

When we make these trips to Washington, D.C. there is some idea that this is a vacation. I suppose if you take into consideration that we have the opportunity to see (from a distance) the beautiful buildings and monuments in Washington, D.C. you would be right. But these trips are truly hard work from manning an information booth, to getting up at 6 a.m. for breakfast so that we will be ready to be where we have to be, to packaging the information that is distributed before leaving for the city, to loading and unloading everything that is needed for every event, to

listening to veterans (sometimes for hours) as they find that they have found someone who is willing to listen, to seeing veterans being sincerely thanked for their service it is all good but truly hard work. Anyone who thinks it is a vacation really needs to find out what a vacation really is supposed to be!

This final photo shows Morris Miller as he wanted to make us feel that he would even serve us our meals at the hotel. That didn't actually happen but at the end of a really long, hard day some humor always helps.



**Life is a series of problem solving situations.  
Are you a problem solver?**



# **Michael T. Breighner**

## **National Vice Commander**

As the National Vice Commander I have traveled to Huntington, West Virginia to work on the United Veterans Beacon House once again. The change in the house is amazing - three new showers and two entirely new bathrooms and a whole lot of painting and plumbing has really made this house look great. We have spent a lot of time on this house but it will be worth it to help our homeless veterans get a better life.

On October 28, 2004 I was in Washington, D.C. along with Peter Forbes, National Commander and Nancy Verespy, National Executive Director, for the final meeting of the 1 Veterans Day National Committee to receive our passes and seating assignments for Arlington National Cemetery before Veterans Day which fell on a Thursday this year. We got all of the many rules and regulations dictated by security concerns.

Then on November 4, 2004, I attended a screening of a movie made by the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the History Channel called "The Story of Veterans Day". This was a great tribute to all our Veterans and was very moving. Later I was interviewed by the VA Internet about the movie and talked about Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition.

On November 6, 2004 I was at Arlington National Cemetery for Color Guard Practice for Veterans Day. Only about 30 people were there but it was very educational. Then on Veterans Day things were as normal and security was the normal mess that it always is in D.C. The Ceremony and the Wreath laying went off real good.



Mike with U.S. flag and Loy with the VVnW flag

Loy Smith, National Board Member and Commander Post LA-04 in Thibodaux, Louisiana and I were honored to present the American Flag and Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. flags during the Parade of Colors at Arlington on Veterans Day. There is such a sense of pride that our organization is part of this great tradition. Major Marc Hoffmeister and his wife, Gail and SFC Bob Haines and his wife, Pam presented the Wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier for our Organization. They did a great, military style presentation looked terrific!

The following day the National Board members visited the National Naval Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland. The Marines there are getting the best of care and have nothing but great praise about the Hospital Staff.

I would like to thank Morris Miller and Mike Murphy for manning our tent along Constitution Avenue so that the Board could attend all of these functions.



On another trip to Bethesda I had the opportunity to visit one of our Post MT-01 Native American Members, Catcher Cuts the Rope, who was wounded in Iraq. Despite being wounded in both arms and legs he was doing great and his spirits were high. He also had great praise for all the treatment he was being given. This man spent four years in the Army and after five



Mike Breighner with Catcher Cuts the Rope

years as a civilian enlisted in the Marines. This just goes to show you what great young men we have defending our great Nation.

We at National are working for the Veterans of the Past, Present and the Future of our Organization and this Country. We asked for help from our posts in making this happen, because without your help it can't happen. Please do the food drives for the United Veterans Beacon House and sell tickets for any fundraiser conducted by National to show our Veterans we are truly "People Who Care."

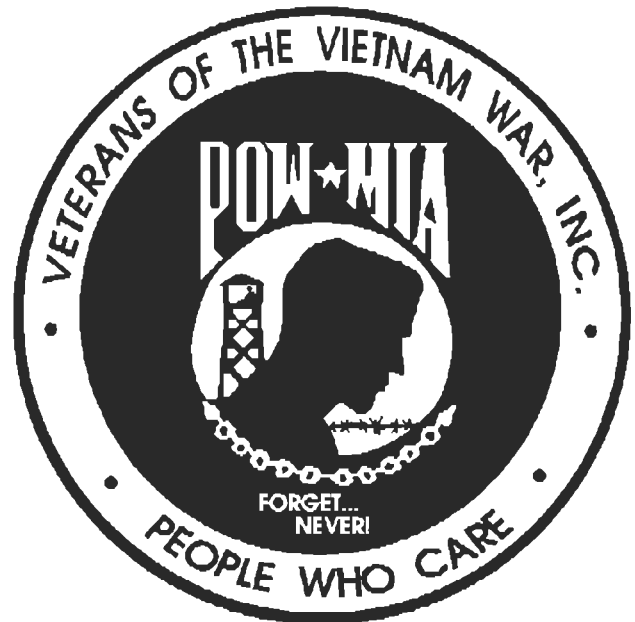


# POW/MIA STATUS REPORT

*From: Michael T. Breighner, National Program Coordinator*

1,845 Americans are still missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War, though over 450 were at sea/over water losses: Vietnam - 1,406 (VN-490; VS-916); Laos - 377; Cambodia - 55; Peoples Republic of China territorial waters - 7.

Live Sighting statistics are provided by the Defense POW/MIA Office (DPMO) Live Sightings: As of September 29, 2004, 1,956 first-hand live sighting reports in Indochina have been received since 1975; 1,942 (99.28%) have been resolved. 1,341 (68.56%) were equated to Americans now accounted for (i.e. returned POWs, missionaries or civilians detained for violating Vietnamese codes); 45 (2.30%) correlated to wartime sightings of military personnel or pre-1975 sightings of civilians still unaccounted for; 556 (28.43%) were determined to be fabrications. The remaining 14 (0.72%) unresolved first-hand reports are the focus of current analytical and collection efforts: 13 (0.66%) concern Americans sighted in a captive environment; 1 (0.05%) are non-captive sightings.



\*\*\*\*\*

## **PFC. MATT MAUPIN**

### **Maupin's Family Fighting Death Declaration**

The Pentagon is considering changing the Matt Maupin's status from "captured" to "deceased, body not recovered." And the missing soldier's family is asking you to help them fight it. Military officials now say they have little reason to doubt the person shown being executed on a tape last summer is the Clermont County native.

The Maupin family fears a change in status would mean the search for their son is over. They're starting a writing campaign to lawmakers to try to keep Matt's case open.

If you want to help, here's where to send your email:

#### **Ohio Residents:**

To email Senator George Voinovich, visit his web site at <http://voinovich.senate.gov>

To email Senator Mike DeWine, visit his web site at <http://www.dewine.senate.gov>

Congressman Steve Chabot, <http://johnboehner.house.gov>

To email Congressman John Boehner, <http://johnboehner.house.gov>

To email Congressman Rob Portman, <http://portman.house.gov>

#### **Kentucky Residents:**

To email Senator Jim Bunning, visit his web site at <http://www.bunning.senate.gov>

To email Senator Mitch McConnell, visit his web site at <http://www.mcconnell.senate.gov>

To email Congressman Ken Lucas, <http://house.gov/kenlucas/>

#### **Indiana Residents:**

To email Congressman Baron Hill, <http://www.house.gov/writerep>

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Military Could Change Spc. Matt Maupin's Status**

The Pentagon could change Spc. Matt Maupin's status from "captured" to "deceased: body not recovered" if no new evidence about his whereabouts is found by next year, military officials said recently.

Maupin was captured by terrorists April 9, when his convoy came under attack near Fallujah. Nearly a week later, Arab network Al-Jazeera received a videotape of Maupin surrounded by his captors. His status was changed from "whereabouts unknown" to "captured".

On June 28, the same day sovereignty was transferred to the Iraqis, a videotape surfaced of a soldier's purported execution. Military officials said they have little reason to doubt the person on the tape is Spc. Maupin. Military officials told Local 12 reporter Joelle Girone in an exclusive interview that usually cases such as Maupin's are given a year. "After a year, if we don't hear anything on Matt there will be



procedures in place. A board of officers will meet to analyze information and make a determination on whether to change his status or not," said Maj. Mark Magalski.

Military officials are nearly convinced that the person on the tape is Maupin. The military has said it continues to search for Maupin and will do so until he is found. Maupin's parents, Keith and Carolyn, fear a change in their son's status could bring the search for him to an end.

"As a parent you always want to know what's happening. What are you doing to find Matt? But you have to rely on someone because evidently, we can't go to Iraq and do it ourselves," said Matt's mother Carolyn. "There's a lot of people looking. I don't know what the answers are, but I know there are a lot of people looking," Keith Maupin added.

The Maupins continue to hold out hope that their son will come home. They are asking the public to help them by writing to lawmakers, including Rep. Rob Portman, asking that Maupin's case remain open and active.

"The biggest status change will be when I see Matt get off that airplane. That will be the only status change I or my family needs to know."

\*\*\*\*\*

## **BELATED TRIBUTE TO SIX FLIERS VIETNAM-ERA CREW'S REMAINS BURIED TOGETHER**

**By: Michael Laris, Washington Post Staff Writer**

On a busy patch of grass at Arlington National Cemetery, where the families of U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq have gathered often, an Air Force honor guard set down a painfully light silver coffin recently, marking a ceremonial end for six Air Force fliers who went down over Laos nearly four decades ago.

## *Looking for Cherokee*

*Carla Evans – Australian Chaplain – e-mail: [grace@netlink.com.au](mailto:grace@netlink.com.au)*

It's a long shot, perhaps one in a million! It would be like looking for a needle in a haystack but unless you have a go, you will never know why?

Australian Digger Robbie Robertson met, while on Guard Duty in Saigon, at the enlisted men's quarters, a United States Native American by the name of CHEROKEE.

Robbie Robertson was with 1st Armoured Regiment and spent a week in Saigon on guard duty. Robbie is a little unsure where they may have met, he thinks perhaps in a bar in China town, but is a little unsure. Wherever the introduction took place a pretty good rapport occurred and Robbie has never forgotten Cherokee.

The crew was on a nighttime reconnaissance mission in 1966 when, according to a Department of Defense history, someone on the AC-47 gunship radioed: "We have a hot fire."

Witnesses said they saw no parachutes before the burning aircraft crashed in a heavily wooded area, according to the Pentagon, which added that a subsequent aerial search found no evidence of survivors.

The coffin held remains excavated in 1995 after a villager directed an American and Laotian search team to the aircraft's wreckage and an ID tag. The identification belonged to Harding E. Smith Jr.'s father.

"It took a long time before anyone was able to go in," Smith said. "There was not a lot left. They had my father's dog tags and his Geneva Convention card... Because there was so little, they decided on a joint burial for the entire crew."

Tearful loved ones stood or sat before the single flag-covered coffin. They were joined by Thomas W. O'Connell, assistant secretary of defense for special operations and low-intensity conflict.

"We're honored to have these remains brought back to bring closure to their lives," said Air Force veteran Lou Garcia. Although Americans were fiercely divided over the Vietnam War, he added, "we're all of one heart to see all Americans be accounted for."

Small green posts with the words "Temporary Grave Marker" stuck up from the soggy turf as rifles cracked a salute. One read: "Name/Group Burial." The six others listed the men memorialized yesterday: Harding E. Smith Sr. of Los Gatos, California; Theodore E. Kryszak of Buffalo, New York; Russell D. Martin of Bloomfield, Iowa; Ervin Warren of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Luther L. Rose of Howe, Texas; and Harold E. Mullins, whose home town was not given.

Cherokee had been in Saigon for some time working on the Mekong Water ways. He kept on volunteering to stay in Vietnam because his family was safe and comfortable back in Hawaii and he knew that when he left Vietnam, he and his family would have to find alternative accommodation.

Robbie is not the fittest of people these days, but he has helped many Veterans in Welfare and Pension work and if it is possible, I'd like to help Robbie find an old friend.

Can you help please?



## ***Report From Robert "Kim" King National Native American Veterans Coordinator***

This was my first trip as the official National Native American Veterans Coordinator for the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition. We traveled to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in Eagle Butte, South Dakota. We spent one week doing claims for the veterans there. We saw 100 people and turned in approximately 80 claims. While there we spoke with the Tribal Chairman on the homeless veteran challenge. We also presented a Global War on Terrorism coin to the family of Sheldon Hawk Eagle, a veteran of the 101st Airborne and tribal member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. He was killed in a Blackhawk crash. The aircraft was shot down in Iraq.

We also participated in a Walk with a Tribal Member who was returning to Iraq. The walk was ten blocks to a service tree called the Tree of Life. Each member of the tribe who is sent to war ties a yellow ribbon on the tree and when they return from war they have another walk and their personally retrieve their ribbon from the tree as a symbol of their return. After each of these events they have a feed and a ceremony for the veteran. The tree of life came about when the war started and the people of the tribe were putting out yellow ribbons. They got together and decided to have this tree in the center of the town in Eagle Butte where they would put yellow ribbons on this tree. The story of the tree is interesting - the tree was cut down, a hole dug and the tree was placed in the center of the town. There are no roots but yet the tree continues to grow and flourish and each person who leaves and then returns has a special ceremony there.

The people we filed claims for on the reservation were very surprised that we would come and do this type of service for them and

a lot of them were cautious. Even when we showed up, even after all of the plans, phone calls and letters back and forth, they still didn't believe we were there when we pulled in in the van with the trailer. Other organizations in the state have not gone out of their way to help these people in this manner.

We were given star quilts from the tribe as a special thank you for our services. There are probably no two star quilts that are identical, either in design or color or in the quilting stitch pattern. The ones made for the military people returning from duty or for those who have done something special for veterans may have eagle feathers on them. A traditional story of the "Give Away" beginning is of the man whose son was gravely ill. The man prayed to the Creator for his son's return to health, promising the Creator that he would show great gratitude if his son were spared. Upon his son's recovery, the man gave away horses, harnesses, farm implements, buggies, tipis and wall tents. People came from miles around to receive these gifts and the man killed several cattle to feed them. Today's Native Americans carry on the tradition of the "Give Away" inspired by the Sioux tradition. The Lakota families are encouraged to remember and honor the elderly, the widows, the orphans and the stranger. We were very honored by these gifts.

After this we left the Cheyenne River Nation at Eagle Butte and we were invited to stop in on our way to attend the Black Hills POW\*WOW. We escorted the outgoing princess of the Cheyenne River Tribe in a giveaway ceremony which is a great honor. We did this with the Lakota Akicita. We also participated in the grand entry at the Black Hills POW\*WOP. We escorted in the new princess along with Senator



Tom Daschle's family members. Jeremiah Simpson carried the VVnW flag and Peter Forbes and I escorted the honored guests while carrying M16 rifles. The Lakota Akicita are members of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition.

After the grand entry we proceeded on our trip on to Spearfish, South Dakota where we arrived after midnight. (This is really some vacation at least a lot of people think that it is they should give it a try). The next day we proceeded on to the Crow Indian Reservation in Montana.

We talked with four Vietnam veterans when we arrived in the area. We could not find any other veterans because the Tribal elections were going on. There were different activities going on with all of the campaigns.

We went to the Big Horn Battlefield where we talked with some young people and found another veteran and asked him to join the VVnW & The Veterans Coalition. After another long day we stayed in Hardin, Montana. Because of the elections there was no facility for us to set up to help veterans file claims so we did what we could by word of mouth and then moved on to Billings, Montana.



We had van trouble so by the time we left there at 11 a.m. we had a call from one of our members in New York that there was a veteran in Lewistown, Montana that needed our services. So we plotted out on the map that we would travel to Lewistown and as we were looking through some of our notes we found that there was an elder lady of the Lakota tribe, a U.S. army nurse who had also served during World War II. She was injured in a truck accident where she was run over and was disabled. She needed our help. We detoured forty miles out of our way to get to Lewistown. We went to Lewistown, took care of the veteran and we also found other Vietnam veterans that we assisted. One of those vets followed the van to the restaurant where we stopped for something to eat and we assisted him there.

We talked to the county sheriff who was also a Vietnam vet. He took us to the lady's house. She lives alone in a handicapped accessible home, is in a wheelchair, 87 years old, and is getting only a 20% disability from the VA. Her son would check on her once a week. She was very satisfied with what she was getting from the VA and didn't realize that because of her injuries she was eligible for more services and possibly a higher percentage rate for complication. We helped her and hopefully she will get an increase before it is too late.

From there we continued on to Fort Belknap, Montana. We arrived there late in the afternoon and we decided that Peter and the guys would go to Chinook to get their room this is probably the closest hotel but it is 50 miles away from the reservation. The next day we started on filing claims for four days. We saw a 100 plus veterans and of those 100 plus people we got 65 70 claims that were submitted.

We left Fort Belknap on Saturday morning. Peter had made contact with a veteran who was having problems because of mistakes made by the VA when he

was in the hospital. On the way we stopped in Havre, Montana and Jeremiah did a claim for this guy. He couldn't believe that we would go out of our way to help him but then he doesn't know Peter Forbes.

We then went on to Great Falls, Montana where we arrived late in the day. The next morning about the 17th of October Peter took Jeremiah to the airport at 4 a.m. for his trip back to New York.

After that we continued on to Helena, Montana where we arrived at 4 p.m. some vacation! We went to the VA Regional Office in Helena, Montana to talk to Bonnie Parrett. She is the homeless veteran coordinator and we talked to her about the possibility of starting a UVBH in Helena and Harlem and she was very supportive of it and told us it was long overdue and would she would be fully supportive of it. Talked with Koryn Arnold and told her about the claims that would be coming her way from veterans in Montana and South Dakota and she agreed to take personal care of the claims that were submitted so that they would be adjudicated correctly and without discrimination.

After we got done with these meetings, I went over to talk with Dr. Lanes the head of psychiatry in Helena and he after consultation he changed my medication and it seems to be helping me a lot. The fog is lifted and I continue on the medication that is really something for high blood pressure (see more information in the newsletter). We then talked about veterans on Native American reservations in Montana and the lack of services provided by the VA. He seemed to want to help.

After that meeting we left on the long trip to go to Huntington, West Virginia to work on the United Veterans Beacon House there for one week. After working on the house in Huntington, we returned to National Headquarters in Pittston, Pennsylvania. Tired just doesn't describe how we all felt

when we got to Pittston but it was a good tired, a tired that made your soul feel good.

After getting some laundry done I then traveled on to the VA Hospital in New York state to work with the VVnW VSO office to work with Mike Ackerfeld and Jeremiah Simpson where I would work on veterans claims and obtain on-the-job training. I spent two weeks with these people and learned a lot.

Also while I was in New York, I visited the Shinnecock Nation on Long Island and did some outreach for the VVnW and Veterans Coalition and also spent a weekend there as the guest of a Vietnam veteran and his family. I met Susan Soto there. She is a veteran and handles some of the veteran's affairs on the Nation. She is the one who set me up to meet the veteran and his family that I stayed with. He ran Johnnies Smoke Shop and I was their guest. They have connections to the Pawnee Tribe. I participated in a traditional healing sweat to pray for all of the veterans and all of the people that are affected by PTSD. I met Bobby Onco, a LRP, Army Ranger and all of that other good stuff and by his being on the cover of a newspaper during Wounded Knee occupation in 1973 by the American Indian movement he was cut off from the VA compensation that he had been receiving. I will explore this further.

After this I left New York on November 10th and went via Amtrak to Washington, D.C. for the Veterans Day Activities. We worked at an information stand for the VVnW & The Veterans Coalition and attended the ceremonies at the Wall.

On November 12th, along with other members of the VVnW & The Veterans Coalition, we visited Bethesda Naval Hospital to see the Marines that were hospitalized there from Iraq. It was a very emotional event as we talked to the wounded Marines.



We gave them a thank you hat and a card thanking them for the sacrifices for our country. I also gave them a special blessing with a special eagle feather that I carry with me while I travel. This eagle feather has been on Memorial relay runs honoring veterans. At one time in 1996 it was on a Memorial run from the Canyon Creek Battlefield to the Custer Battlefield approximately 100 miles. This eagle feather was on a ride that started in Montana to support the victims of 9-11 Montana rides for America. This eagle feather spent three days tied to the horse that I was riding while participating in this ride. It has also been in Baghdad from November 2003 thru April 2004 by my nephew Specialist Mike King who was wounded in action in February, 2004. This eagle feather is a special tool for me to use.

We went back to Huntington, West Virginia to work on the UVBH for one more week. This is my second week working on a UVBH I didn't have any skills at anything when I first got to the house and I finally found out that I made a pretty good pack mule. I could carry two five gallons of paint from the first to the third floor carry sheetrock and all of the other materials that it takes when you are rebuilding a house from the ground floor to the third floor. It was a learning experience for me to be working with people who really care for veterans. I worked with a carpenter who was a homeless veteran. I learned a lot from him, tore a bathroom completely out, installed pipes, helped to lay a tile floor, rolled that floor, painted and on and on to a finished project that will look a hundred percent better when it gets done. Now I know from working with other veterans the dedication that they have to put these things together. We are working for homeless veterans but it also rewarding that our time is donated time and we are volunteers. We are fed, we slept and showered in the UVBH and all we got were meals. All our

services would be worth \$20-\$50 per hour. I would like anybody else, some of the other people who hold high offices in other posts and people in other organizations, I would like to have them come for a week and work with us to see what we are really doing. It gives you a really good feeling to put out your sweat and manual labor into a project for the positive. Any one of us is just two paychecks from being homeless - anyone in America is not too far from being homeless.

We left Huntington exhausted but feeling that we accomplished a great deal. We went back to Washington, D.C. to drop off Loy Smith from Louisiana. We had quite a mixture of people working on the project.

We then went on to Norfolk, Virginia where we presented a charter to Post VA-05 in Norfolk. Lawrence Collins is the commander there and has been working hard to get the post to this point. We were also looking for support and a building so that we can get another UVBH going down there because there is a large homeless veteran population and there is a great need for a UVBH there. We could help a lot of homeless veterans there. We could help a lot of veterans to get back on their feet, get their claims filed and eventually get back to their families.

After the charter presentation we went back to Pittston, Pennsylvania, the International Headquarters of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition where I spent a few days working in the National Office. The experience of working in the National Office found me doing many different things answering the phone, following up on claims we filed in Montana and South Dakota, stringing the Christmas lights on the building, loading the trailer, making dream catchers and on and on.

I celebrated Thanksgiving with Peter Forbes and Nancy Verespy and their family and

friends. I did a blessing before the dinner. A friend was in attendance and she has cancer. She has been desperately waiting for her white cell count to go up so when we passed around my eagle feather she asked that her counts would go so that her treatments could proceed. She didn't say anything about what she prayed for. The next day she called and told us that when she went back to the hospital her counts were good and her treatments could proceed. She credited her prayer with the eagle feather. I was very thankful that I could spend my time with my friends at Thanksgiving.

On Sunday we left for Montana on our way to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe to present the post charter for SD-01. While there we were checking out buildings and things for a UVBH, and a wet shelter for veterans on the street because of alcohol or drugs or just nowhere to go. We were also looking at the possibility of getting a women's UVBH on the reservation. While there Peter and I participated in a ceremonial sweat lodge to pray for VVnW, for the new posts, for the post members and also for the members of the VVnW & The Veterans Coalition National and all its membership. We prayed for unity and strength for the VVnW & The Veterans Coalition. We prayed for people that are trying to destroy the VVnW & the Veterans Coalition.

While we were in there praying one of my prayers was that I don't have the strength to hate people, I don't have the strength to have any enemies, but I do pray for people like that. I pray for people who hold a lot of hate. I pray for people that have enemies. I pray for people who think they are my enemies. The reason I pray this way is so that I can be strong and they can be strong with the hope that one day they will take all of their negative energy and put it into something positive. I pray that one day they will eventually come back and put all of their negativity and hate to some positive so that the



VVnW will grow stronger. I pray that they would be a force in the future for all of our veterans all over the world all the new veterans that are being made every day in Iraq. Every day people are wounded, every day we get new veterans.

My travels started on the 29th of September, 2004 and I have been with the National Commander and other people since that time and on a daily basis and on my travels through many states for many miles but all of these travels 90% of the veterans that we run into in other states veterans didn't know that VVnW & The Veterans Coalition existed and because of the trailer and all of the advertisements we have on our vehicles there are a lot of people who now know we exist. The program of putting the orange bags together is a real help. We make people know of the Military Support Packages for the troops.

I would like to thank Peter Forbes, the National Commander of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition for encouraging me to start a post in 2002. It took a long time to get it going and we got our charger in 2004. I was asked by the National Commander and other people in the VVnW & Coalition what can the organization do for the Native American? How can we help the Native American?

After our trip to the Denver March POW\*WOW we picked up approximately 100 members from the Cheyenne River Tribe. I contacted Peter Forbes, the National Commander, and told him that I would like to do claims on the Indian reservation. Per capita, Native Americans served more than any other ethnic group and per capita they are the most underserved veterans in the United States. With the National Board members giving Peter Forbes and others the okay to go west and do these claims they were able to see

first-hand how underserved these people are. This would fill a need that Indians have.

We did two reservations 160 claims there are nine nations in South Dakota and if we went to these other reservations we could pick up at least 50-60 claims at each place. We just didn't have time to do any more on this trip. We filled a need that no one else was willing to work on.

In the state of Montana they have what they call Tribal Veteran Representatives (TVR) right out of the regional office run by Buck Richardson who started in approximately in 2001. My experience with the TVR program is we have two tribal members, Virginia Cochran and George Snell who is a Vietnam vet, that were appointed by the Tribal Council to be the representatives for veterans. Four or five claims were successfully administered by these people and the VA came to Fort Belknap from Washington, DC in early 2002 or 2003 and they talked about how successful these people were, how much they appreciated them and what a good job they were doing.

After the VVnW & The Veterans Coalition came through and got these 60-70 claims the heat is on now on the Minority Coordinator at the VA regional office because so many claims were put in the VVnW. The secretary of MT-01, Mel Doney whose husband was a Vietnam Veteran who died in a car accident in 2003, has agreed to be the secretary for MT-01. While I was out traveling and getting my experience, the TVR program has asked Mel to become a TVR for Fort Belknap so I think because of what I did because of the VVnW visit and claims taking, the people within the TVR are trying to take my secretary away from the post and I am not really sure what they are trying to do. What is the point? They must be threatened by the

VVnW & the Veterans Coalition. During my visit to the Fort Harrison VA I was also approached by Buck Richardson and offered a position as a TVR.

Also, when we were leaving Eagle Butte, South Dakota there was a notice in the Diamond A café on December 8th that the American Legion was putting on a deal for veterans benefits forum. Benefits, disability compensation, pension, burial benefits, DIOC, health care enrollment, service connection, claims processing and more would be covered and refreshments would be served. We got even the Legion moving in a positive way!

By the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition making its presence in Indian Country we finally, after quite a few years, got an organization that is going to get something done! Peter Forbes was the driving force for this to happen. We are getting something done. I have no ill feelings toward any other organization such as the VA or other organization but if they would do half as much as we did or even a quarter as much as we did maybe we could get some things done here. Get some people taken care of, get some people off the streets.





# WELCOME HOME...

*America's Tribute to Vietnam Veterans*



Check out the web site with a Complete Schedule of Events Including Streaming Video

**June 13-19, 2005**  
THE HOMECOMING YOU NEVER RECEIVED

**OPERATION HOMECOMING USA**

BRANSON, MISSOURI • 888-265-VETS(8387) • [www.operationhomecomingusa.com](http://www.operationhomecomingusa.com)

# *VA'S Lack of Service, Discrimination and Ambivalence to Native Americans in Montana and South Dakota*

Back in October we went to two locations to provide Veterans Service Officer work to Veterans in the Cheyenne River Lakota and Fort Belknap Nations.

This service was prompted and a commitment was given by the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition after a request from Post Commander of Montana 01, Kim King and after meeting with many members of the Color Guard of the Lakota Akicita in Denver, Colorado in March.

We started off at Cheyenne River in South Dakota which is located at Eagle Butte, SD and were received with some disbelief as we actually turned up as we committed and stated we would. It soon became apparent to the VSOs we brought with us that these Native American Veterans were NOT being serviced effectively or fairly.

We set about filling in claims and Veterans came from far and wide to spend time with the VSOs and to provide stories and paperwork in support of their claims and their past denials. It was an eye opening experience for these VSOs and within a few hours they were aghast at the shameful treatment these Veterans had received. Little did they know more horrific stories were to come when we traveled to Montana.

I called and spoke with John Schneider, Secretary Principi's Liaison for the region based out of Des Moines, Iowa. I informed him that we were in his territory and told him what we were doing.

We informed him that there was NO trust at all with any Veteran of the adjudication process from the VA. He told me to send him a copy of the claims we would file and he would keep an eye on

their progress. We did just that.

I called and spoke with Bill Bishop, Secretary Principi's Liaison for the North West Region and again informed him that we were going to travel into his territory and told him what we were going to do. Again I informed him that there was no trust at all with any Veteran with the adjudication process from the VA.

I spoke with the Director of the VAMC in Fort Harrison, MT and when asked by me about the lack of service and discrimination he stated quite clearly that there were NO problems on any of the Montana Native American Reservations and that the Montana minority affairs person, Buck Richardson handled everything.

I met with Koryn Arnold at the VAMC in Fort Harrison and discussed with her that the claims would be coming through and that we needed them to be kept under focus.

I met with the head of psychiatry Dr. Lanes in Fort Harrison regarding Kim King's connection and treatment and in hindsight I should have requested more time and discussed much more. Dr Lanes seemed very helpful and had Veterans as his focus. I will be sure to rectify this situation during my visit in December.

We will see what their attitude is! I can only wonder what their reaction will be, one of ambivalence and unaccountability or one of let's get this right and put the Veterans FIRST as it should be.

It is quite comical that Kim King was treated as a pest prior to our first visit and then after we completed the VSO work on our second visit at Fort Belknap and we visited Fort Harrison, Buck

Richardson chased him down to offer him a position as a Tribal Veterans Representative. What a change in attitude! He also has offered Mel Doney, The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition Post Montana 01 Secretary a similar position - strange how this has all happened after our visits.

If nothing else, apart from all the claims we have filed on behalf of Veterans, we have the VA in Montana shook up and one has to ask if they are in a panic, why are they and what have they got to cover their backsides for?

We will follow these claims to ensure a fair and impartial adjudication is given.

In October I had the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition National Executive Director, Nancy Verespy call Secretary Principi's Office to request a meeting with him to discuss this pathetic situation in South Dakota and Montana at the hands of the VA. Finally on the 24th of November SECRETARY PRINCIPI DECLINED any such meeting and one can only assume from this that he is not concerned with this shameful treatment of VETERANS.

The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition is here with VETERANS first as Our Vision and Mission state and many in South Dakota and Montana have stated we are what the region needs to shake up a system that is not working for Native American Veterans.

**REMEMBER VETERANS!**

Remember in the last Veteran Leader story "Westward HO" when we traveled to Fort Belknap and were involved in a Buffalo



Feast and Charter presentation, several of the VA staff accepted our invitation to attend, however the Director sent Buck Richardson only to check out who these people were and what were they about. They surely know now who we are and that we are here for VETERANS.

We are setting up United Veterans Beacon Houses in Montana after being requested to do so by Neelima Pradham and Bonnie Parrett of the Fort Harrison VA. As they stated there is a great

need for such programs and we will live up to OUR commitments.

During November we had the opportunity to meet up with Wilbert and Barbara Forbes DAV Maryland and we had brunch with them at the Bolling Air Force Base. It was a great time and very informative. While exiting the mess I came across the following quote we all need to live by:

“Whatever happens to me, it is going to be the result of action not inaction and drifting ...”

Col. Raynal C. Bolling 1877-1918

Let us all work together for the betterment and improved quality of life of ALL VETERANS.

The next story will be about further outreach the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition are providing. See You Then!

Peter Forbes,  
National Commander, VVnW, Inc,  
& The Veterans Coalition

## Get involved with a passion

### *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



# OUTPOSTS

## Post LA-04, Thibodaux, Louisiana

Post LA-04 in Thibodaux, Louisiana spent many hours getting ready for the Holiday Season. Decorating the Canal Boulevard bridges crossing Bayou Lafourche is an annual project for our Post. Members who helped with this project were Leroy and Gayle Chenier, Ronnie and Pat Clement with their son Philip, Delmas Durocher, Jr., Robert Foret, Harold and Cathy Guidroz, Johnnie Guillot, Ivy Louviere, Robert Naquin, Tommy Tabor, Edward and Judy Thibodaux and Loy and Pat Smith.



They post also reported that they had a successful food drive at Rouses Eupicurean Market in Thibodaux. The manager, Ron Pitre, was very helpful and told them to be sure and let him know when they were ready to have their next drive. Members on hand to help were Leroy & Gayle Chenier, Ronnie Clement and his son Philip, David Knight, Robert Foret, Johnnie Guillot and Loy and Pat Smith. This drive will benefit the United Veterans Beacon House Project and the foodstuffs will be delivered to the UVBH in Shreveport, LA.



**Ask yourself each day  
What did I do with what I was given?**



## *Post NJ-03, Jackson/Millstone Townships, NJ*



Once again the “little post that could”, NJ-03, Jackson/Millstone Townships, New Jersey came to the support of the Military Support Package Program with a goods drive in the Township of Millstone. Post Commander Rick Brody had his truck loaded up with items that will be put to good use in the packages that continue to be sent to those serving overseas.

Shown in the photo from the left are Maria Dellasala, municipal clerk, James Pickering, Administrator/CFO; and Mayor Nancy Grbelja. Sitting on the truck is Charles Dilfanian (four years old) who will proudly tell you that his Dad is serving in Iraq. Rick Brody, Eva Dilfanian and National Commander Peter Forbes in the background complete the picture.



Over the past two years, this post has come through with thousands of items for the Military Support Packages, letter from school children and has undertaken fund-raisers in the local area.

One of the recent events was at the Christa McAuliffe School’s “Run for Vets”. The young people brought in items (which they are shown loading into the van), the principal and teachers were enthusiastic with many students writing letters to the soldiers that day. Even the New Jersey Devil mascot turned up to show his support! The young people ran, and walked. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting these young people and look forward to future events.



*Teachers, Parents and Veterans  
Who Lead by Example*



## Post VA-05, Norfolk, VA

Post VA-05, Norfolk, Virginia was recently presented their Charter by National Commander Peter Forbes followed by the installation of the Post Officers. The post has big plans for expansion and is very interested in getting a United Veterans Bescon House established in their area. Lawrence Collins has been working for a long time to get things up and running and is to be commended for finally getting the post in place.



Peter Forbes with Lawrence Collins (on the right)



Shown from the left are post officers: Melvin Lee Williams, Master Sgt.-at-Arms; Lawrence Collins, Post Commander; Tom Heflet, Vice Commander; and Bill Booker, Treasurer

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



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

**We want you ... Get Involved!**

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.



# *Loss of Leg Doesn't Deter Carteret GI*

*Published in the Home News Tribune 10/18/04*

**THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

In many ways, SPG George Perez, the 21-year-old Army specialist from Carteret is haunted by the leg he lost to a roadside bomb in Iraq more than a year ago. The phantom pains are a constant reminder that he is not the same man he once was. But Perez is determined to prove to himself – and to the Army – that he is no less a man, no less a soldier, that he is not damaged goods.

He's one of at least four amputees from the elite 82nd Airborne Division to re-enlist. With his new carbon-fiber prosthetic leg, Perez intends to show a medical board he can run an 8-minute mile, jump out of airplanes and pass all the other paratrooper tests that will allow him to go with his regiment to Afghanistan sometime next year.

"I'm not ready to get out yet," he says. "I'm not going to let this little injury stop me from what I want to do."

In the comic strip "Doonesbury," a character's loss of his leg in Iraq has been used to symbolize the costs of the war. But Perez is working toward a comeback that he hopes will become a symbol of America's resolve and resiliency.

On September 14, 2003, Perez and seven other members of his squad were rumbling down a road outside Fallujah when a bomb blast rocked their Humvee. Perez recalls flying through the air and hitting the ground hard. The blast killed one of Perez's comrades. Perez felt surprisingly little pain, but when he tried to get up, he couldn't. When he looked to see what was wrong, he saw that his left foot was folded backward onto his knee. His size-12 1/2 combat boot stood in the dusty road a few feet away, still laced.

A photograph of Perez's lonely boot transmitted around the world and spread across two pages of Time magazine became a stark reminder that the war in Iraq was far from over.

Doctors initially tried to save part of Perez's foot. But as an infection continued its relentless march up the leg, Perez agreed to allow the amputation below the knee joint -- on one condition. "I was going to stay in no matter what," he recalls telling the surgeons. "Do whatever would get me back fastest." Perez was left with a rounded stump that fits into the suction cup of the black carbon-fiber prosthetic leg.

When he arrived at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., for his rehabilitation, he asked a pair of generals who visited his bedside if it was possible for him to stay on with the Army. "They told me it's all up to you, how much you want it," he said. "If

I could do everything like a regular soldier, I could stay in."

He wasted little time getting started. At one point, a visitor found him doing push-ups in bed. He trained himself to walk normally with his new leg, and then run with it. Oddly, Perez says he runs better with the prosthetic leg because he had a bad ankle on his old leg. But he has traded ankle pain for the irritation in his stump, which still is developing calluses to protect the tender, healing flesh.

Perez has to rise at least an hour earlier than his fellow soldiers to allow swelling from the previous day's training to subside enough for his stump to fit into the prosthetic. For all his struggles, it's a comfort for Perez to know he's not alone. At least three other paratroopers in the 82nd have lost limbs in combat during the past two years and re-enlisted. One of them, Staff Sgt. Daniel Metzdorf, who lost his right leg above the knee in a January 27 blast, appealed three times before the fitness board allowed him to stay on. "I think it's a testimony to today's professional Army," said division commander Maj. Gen. Bill Caldwell. "I also think, deep down, it is a love for their other paratroopers." And while still relatively rare, there are other examples of amputees returning to full, active duty.

An Air Force pilot who lost his left leg in a 1998 motorcycle accident was fitted with a computerized limb and cleared for flight status earlier this year. A cavalry officer whose right foot was blown off by an Iraqi anti-tank mine returned to the theater this summer. Last year, a Navy chief petty officer who lost his left leg in a motorcycle accident became only the fifth amputee returned to active duty in the modern Navy's history. He recently was deployed to the Persian Gulf.

In July, amputee program manager Chuck Scoville of Walter Reed told a congressional committee that amputations accounted for 2.4 percent of all wounded in action in the Iraq war – twice the rate in World Wars I and II.

Perez is one of about 160 service members wounded in fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan who have passed through Walter Reed's amputee-patient program. The military says it doesn't track the number who choose to stay in the service. "It isn't something that historically we've had to deal with a whole lot," said Lt. Col. Frank Christopher, the surgeon for the 82nd Airborne. During his stay at Walter Reed, Perez saw firsthand that an amputation doesn't have to mean giving up a military career.

In 1994, Dana Bowman lost both legs – his right one above the knee – and his left below in a midair collision that killed a fellow member of the Army's Golden Knights parachute team. Within five months, Bowman was jumping again; nine months after the training accident, he re-enlisted. He said soldiers such as Perez who want to go back into combat should be viewed as inspirations, not liabilities. "Wouldn't you rather have somebody who wants to be in than not to be in?" the former Ranger asked. "It's an inspiration to have a comrade along with you that is an amputee that is hanging out and doing what you do. Because that's a lot of intestinal fortitude."

Perez has to go before another medical-fitness board in a few months to determine whether he will be allowed to jump again. He also has to pass the fitness test for his age – run two miles in just under 16 minutes and do at least 42 push-ups and 53 sit-ups in two-minute stretches. His quiet determination is conveyed in his simple statement: "I'm going to jump."

His biggest supporter is his wife of three months, Christina, a 19-year-old student at Fayetteville State University. "There was no reason to question," she said of the man she knew for a year before his injury. "He's still George."

## ***Afghanistan's First Elected President Takes Oath in Triumph***

***By: Kathleen T. Rhem***

***– American Forces Press Service***

KABUL, Afghanistan, December 7, 2004 -- The first freely elected president in Afghanistan's 5,000-year history took the oath of office here today.

"Nothing makes me more hopeful to the future of this country and my ability to serve it than the incredible experience of our country's participation in recent elections," President Hamid Karzai said in his inauguration speech, according to an English translation provided by the Afghan government.



It was a day of great pomp and ceremony here in the country's capital. Afghanistan's bright red and green flag could be seen everywhere, and a bold red banner proclaiming "December 7th Celebrates the decision of the Afghan Nation" was hung at the entrance to the Salaan Khana ceremonial building where the inauguration was held.

Tears streamed down the faces of some of the ceremony's 800 invited guests as children from the Rabia-e-Balkhi girls school sang about the country's struggles to move forward.



"I'll rebuild you, oh my homeland, even if my flesh must turn to bricks. I will keep your roof upright even if my bones turn to pillars," the girls sang, according to a translation – visibly moving many in the audience.

Shortly before the ceremony began, Karzai met with U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in the presidential palace here after Cheney and Rumsfeld visited U.S. troops at Bagram Air Base before flying by helicopter to Kabul.

"We're gathered to mark a historic moment in the life of the nation and in the history of human freedom," Cheney said in a joint news conference with Karzai following the meeting. "Scarcely three years ago, a tyranny ruled Afghanistan, and this ancient and beautiful country was a haven for the enemies of civilization.

"Yet the spirit of the Afghan people would not be broken," he said. "Now the tyranny is gone. The terrorist enemy is scattered and the people of Afghanistan are free."



While visiting the troops, Rumsfeld called the peaceful election and today's inauguration a "truly breathtaking accomplishment."

Also while visiting U.S. service members earlier in the day, Cheney said, the whole world -- and the Middle East in particular -- is watching today's events. "Across the broader Middle East, people look to Afghanistan and see something new and hopeful in the world's most troubled region," he said.

In his news conference immediately before the official ceremony, Karzai thanked the United States for helping to make this day possible. He said that because of the help the United States provided, Afghanistan is now at peace, rebuilding, and sending children to school, and is again a respected member of the international community.

"Without that help, Afghanistan would be in the hands of terrorists, destroyed, poverty-stricken and without its children going to school or getting an education," Karzai said. "We are very, very grateful to the people of the United States of America for bringing

us this day, a day of peace, a day of democracy, a day of the empowerment of the Afghan people."

This empowerment, he said, is the United States' greatest gift to the Afghan people.

During the press conference, Cheney praised Karzai as an "Afghan patriot," who has "taken incredible personal risk and made many sacrifices for his country. "He has served his fellow citizens with wisdom and humanity and a sense of duty that have won him the admiration of millions throughout the world," Cheney said.



## *The Afghan Good News Continues* (As of 01 October 04)

### Re-Development

- Radio Ghaznawiyān, the first independent radio station to be launched in Afghanistan entirely by private sector funds, is now operational in Ghazni.
- Construction is underway on the Kandahar to Tīrin Kowt Road. The road is projected to be complete at the end of 2005.
- The Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) has begun a project with the UNHCR to build 36 new water wells in Baghlan. This project will run until December 2004.
- The Sardeh irrigation system and the Zana Khan Dam in Ghazni are completed and are awaiting final inspection.
- Ariana Airlines is coordinating with Lufthansa Airlines to train and certify personnel to international standards.

### Security Forces

- The graduation of Kandaks 23 and 24 added 1,500 troops to the ANA active force.
- As of 12 September 04, 28,876 Afghan National police, 752 Border Police, 200 Highway Police, and 50 Counter Narcotics Police have been trained.

### Health Care

- In cooperation with LIFE, the Wheelchair Foundation, the US Government, UNOPS, and the Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled in Afghanistan, 5000 wheelchairs were distributed to disabled Afghans. The Wheelchair Foundation for Afghanistan through LIFE will donate an additional 5000 wheelchairs through the end of 2004.

### Elections and Voter Registration

- To date over 10.6 million Afghans have registered to vote, of which 41 percent are women.
- The presidential election campaign season officially opened September 7.

### DDR/HWC

- A total of 1,916 heavy weapons have been cantoned in Jalalabad, Gardez, Kunduz, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kabul, Kandahar and Herat.
- As of 29 September 04, the DDR totals stand at 18,129 disarmed, 16,691 demobilized, and 15,585 reintegrated.



## **Education**

- More than 4.8 million children are enrolled in schools throughout the country, the largest number in the history of Afghanistan.
- The Ministry of Education together with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has started a community-based schools program in remote areas of the country, providing learning opportunities for girls who cannot attend formal schools.
- In a joint initiative between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and UNICEF, a nationwide program has begun to educate up to 25,500 mullahs in 2004 on a number of children's issues, including the rights to education, health care and nutrition, early marriage, reintegration of former child soldiers, the dangers of domestic violence and abuse, and HIV/AIDS awareness.
- More than 500,000 children from Afghanistan's southern and eastern provinces are returning to classrooms to study in the second annual phase of the country's Back to School campaign.

## **Economy**

- The United States and Afghanistan signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) a step towards closer trade relations between the two countries, promoting the economic and regulatory reform that will contribute to expanding economic opportunity, development and hope.
- There have been 4,012 international funds transfer payments worth \$1.28 billion this year.
- The Central Bank of Afghanistan (DAB) officially opened its new branch in Bagram this past month.

## **Judicial System**

- 538 justice system personnel have received training to conform to national and international standards.
- Judicial facilities are complete in Gardez, Kabul, Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif, and Paktia.

**I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG, OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, AND TO THE REPUBLIC, FOR WHICH IT STANDS, ONE NATION UNDER GOD, INDIVISIBLE, WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL!**

## ***Saving Waco, Texas PTSD Facility***

Since I have arrived at this Waco, Texas PTSD Treatment facility I was alarmed and surprised to learn that there is and has been talk for some time to close this facility down.

How can we all help to keep it open and to help it survive?

To me the closing of this beautiful and necessary program would be a big injustice and step backwards to the state of Texas and to the thousands upon thousands of veterans who need these types of facilities if any of us are going to help each other and move forward in our work toward recovery.

I cannot believe that anyone would even think of chopping off the lifeblood to recovery for all those of us who gave our heart and souls; lost families, lost jobs, lost "you name it" and put our lives on the line so that those who did not "can live the Great American Dream." What about us? Are we not entitled to recovery, getting our families back, getting our sanity back and anything else we can salvage "to try to become part of the Great American Dream." Or is this U.S. Government going to let us down AGAIN and say "those veterans don't need Waco or anything like it?"

What about all of the "homeless veterans?" This facility, or part of this facility would make a beautiful shelter for the "homeless vets" plus the other part could continue to provide the PTSD treatment program which there are too few of as it is.

I hope I am not "pissing into the wind" because I for one am sold on this program and I will surely go back to Montana and try to persuade any and all veterans who will listen to come to Waco for treatment. This is an outstanding program, the staff are excellent, they really care and they are dedicated and they know what they are doing.

Every veteran that I have heard talk about the one or sometimes up to five different times that they have been in treatment at other facilities claim that Waco is the best and has done the most for them.

Anyway, I am hanging in to the end.

Warren



## *United Veterans Beacon House and Restaurant for Helena, Montana*

This is the latest project being undertaken by the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition in support of the United Veterans Beacon House Program to house, retrain, employ and advocate for homeless veterans. The restaurant called "The Mess Tent Veteran Owned and Veteran Run" will be a barbeque and Cajun set menu restaurant where residents of the United Veterans Beacon House next door will be retrained and will operate the facility.

The décor will be veteran/military memorabilia from World War II to current serving military. We would ask anybody to donate such memorabilia to us to assist in this project.

Both facilities are located two miles from Fort Harrison VA Medical Center on the main highway and the VA has expressed their support for the project.



The proposed Mess Tent Restaurant – Veteran Owned and Veteran Run.

Anybody wishing to travel to assist in any of the following jobs: painting, carpentry, electrical, plumbing and general handyman skills please contact the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition at 1-800-843-8626 for dates and times.



The proposed site for the United Veterans Beacon House.

The UVBH located next door needs renovations including installation of bathrooms, bedrooms, kitchen and facilities. Have any skills? We even project on-the-job training for those without skills but with the interest in helping.

Haven't seen Montana? See it up close and personal through the windows of a Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & Veterans Coalition van and the windows of a Beacon House.

The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition will be traveling to Montana several times to complete the tasks of face-lifting, renovating and sprucing up the restaurant and completing the construction of the Beacon House.

*Get Involved!*

*Do Something  
For Those Less  
Fortunate.*

*You Can Make  
A Difference!*



## Home for the Holidays?

Help us help a HOMELESS VET....  
Donate unused real estate to the Veterans Fund of the United States  
for reutilization as a United Veterans Beacon House,  
*A Veterans of the Vietnam War & the Veterans Coalition Project*



**All Donations are Tax Deductible**

[http://www.theveteranscoalition.org/Veteran\\_Services/Beacon\\_House/uvbh.htm](http://www.theveteranscoalition.org/Veteran_Services/Beacon_House/uvbh.htm)

**Make your Check of Money Order Payable to The Veterans Fund of the United States, 805 So Township Boulevard, Pittston, PA 18640**



# ***The Conflict In Iraq – These Unseen Wounds Cut Deep***

## ***A mental health crisis is emerging, with one in six returning soldiers afflicted, experts say.***

***By: Esther Schrader – Times Staff Writer***

WASHINGTON - Matt LaBranche got the tattoos at a seedy place down the street from the Army hospital here where he was a patient in the psychiatric ward.

The pain of the needle felt good to the 40-year-old former Army sergeant, whose memories of his nine months as a machine-gunner in Iraq had left him, he said, “feeling dead inside.” LaBranche’s back is now covered in images, the largest the dark outline of a sword. Drawn from his neck to the small of his back, it is emblazoned with the words LaBranche says encapsulate the war’s effect on him: “I’ve come to bring you hell.”

In soldiers like LaBranche their bodies whole but their psyches deeply wounded a crisis is unfolding, mental health experts say. One out of six soldiers returning from Iraq is suffering the effects of post-traumatic stress and as more come home, that number is widely expected to grow.

The Pentagon, which did not anticipate the extent of the problem, is scrambling to find resources to address it.

A study by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research found that 15.6% of Marines and 17.1% of soldiers surveyed after they returned from Iraq suffered major depression, generalized anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder a debilitating, sometimes lifelong change in the brain’s chemistry that can include flashbacks, sleep disorders, panic attacks, violent outbursts, acute anxiety and emotional numbness.

Army and Veterans Administration mental health experts say there is reason to believe the war’s ultimate psychological fallout will worsen. The Army survey of 6,200 soldiers and Marines included only troops willing to report their problems. The study did not look at reservists, who tend to suffer a higher rate of psychological injury than career Marines and soldiers. And the soldiers in the study served in the early months of the war, when tours were shorter and before the Iraqi insurgency took shape.

“The bad news is that the study underestimated the prevalence of what we are going to see down the road,” said Dr. Matthew J. Friedman, a professor of psychiatry and pharmacology at Dartmouth Medical School who is executive director of the VA’s National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Since the study was completed, Friedman said: “The complexion of the war has changed into a

grueling counterinsurgency. And that may be very important in terms of the potential toxicity of this combat experience.”

Mental health professionals say they fear the system is not moving fast enough to treat the trauma. They say slowness to recognize what was happening to Vietnam veterans contributed to the psychological devastation from that war.

More than 30% of Vietnam veterans eventually suffered from the condition that more than a decade later was given the name post-traumatic stress disorder. But since their distress was not clinically understood until long after the war ended, most went for years without meaningful treatment.

“When we missed the boat with the Vietnam vets, we didn’t get another chance,” said Jerry Clark, director of the veterans clinic in Alexandria, Va. “When they left the service, they went away not for a month or two but for 10 years. And they came back addicted, incarcerated and all these things. We can’t miss the boat again. It is imperative.”

Experts on post-traumatic stress disorder say it should come as no surprise that some of the soldiers in Iraq are fighting mental illness.

Combat stress disorders named and renamed but strikingly alike have ruined lives following every war in history. Homer’s Achilles may have suffered from some form of it. Combat stress was documented in the late 19th century after the Franco-Prussian War. After the Civil War, doctors called the condition “nostalgia,” or “soldiers heart.” In World War I, soldiers were said to suffer shell shock; in World War II and Korea, combat fatigue or battle fatigue.

But it wasn’t until 1985 that the American Psychiatric Association finally gave a name to the condition that had sent tens of thousands of Vietnam veterans into lives of homelessness, crime or despair.

A war like the one in Iraq in which a child is as likely to die as a soldier and unseen enemies detonate bombs presents ideal conditions for its rise.

Yet the Army initially sent far too few psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers to combat areas, an Army study released in the summer of 2003 found. Until this year, Congress had allocated no new funds to deal with the mental health effects of the war in Iraq. And when it did earmark money, the sum was minimal: \$5 million in each of the next three years.



“We’re gearing ourselves up now and preparing ourselves to meet whatever the need is, but clearly this is something that could not be planned for,” said Dr. Alfonso Batres, a psychologist who heads the VA’s national office of readjustment counseling services.

Last year, 1,100 troops who had fought in Iraq or Afghanistan came to VA clinics seeking help for symptoms of depression or post-traumatic stress; this year, the number grew tenfold. In all, 23% of Iraq veterans treated at VA facilities have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

“And this is first-year data,” Batres said. “Our experience is that over time that will increase.”

In the red brick buildings of Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the “psych patients,” as they are known, mingle, sometimes uncomfortably, with those who have lost limbs and organs.

One soldier being treated at Walter Reed, who spoke on condition of anonymity, walks the hospital campus in the bloodied combat boots of a friend he watched bleed to death.

Another Iraq veteran in treatment at Walter Reed, Army 1st Lt. Jullian Philip Goodrum, drives most mornings to nearby Silver Spring, Maryland, seeking the solitude of movies and the solace of friends.

He leaves early to avoid traffic - the crush of cars makes him jumpy. On more than one occasion, he has imagined snipers with their sights on him in the streets. Diesel fumes cause flashbacks. He keeps a vial of medication in his pocket and pops a pill when he gets nervous.

“You question outside of dealing with your psych injury, which will affect you from one degree or another throughout your life you also question yourself,” Goodrum said. “I trained. I was an excellent soldier, a strong character. How could my mind dysfunction?”

When it began to become clear that what the Pentagon initially believed would be a rapid, clear-cut war had transmuted into a drawn-out counterinsurgency, the Army began pushing to reach and treat distressed soldiers sooner.

The number of mental health professionals deployed near frontline positions in Iraq has been increased. Suicide prevention programs are given to soldiers in the field. According to the Pentagon, 31 U.S. troops have killed themselves in Iraq.

At more than 200 storefront clinics known as Vet Centers created in 1979 to reach out to Vietnam veterans the VA has increased the number of group therapy sessions and staff. Three months ago, the VA hired 50 Iraq war veterans to help serve as advocates at the clinics.

Officials acknowledge that is only a start. The Government Accountability Office found in a study released in September that the VA lacked the information it needed to determine whether it could meet an increased demand for services.

“Predicting which veterans will seek VA care and at which facilities is inherently uncertain,” the report concluded, “particularly given that the symptoms of PTSD may not appear for years.”

The Army and the VA are also trying to catalog and research the mental health effects of this war better than they have in the past. In addition to the Walter Reed study, several more are tracking soldiers from before their deployment to Iraq through their combat experiences and into the future.

If Iraq veterans can be helped sooner, they may fare better than those who fought in Vietnam, mental health experts say. And they note that the nation, although divided on the Iraq war, is more united in caring for the needs of returning soldiers than it was in the Vietnam era. And in the last decade, new techniques have proved effective in treating stress disorders, among them cognitive-behavioral therapy and drugs like Zoloft and Paxil.

Whether people like Matt LaBranche seek and receive treatment will determine how deep an effect the stress of the war in Iraq ultimately has on U.S. society.

Before the war, LaBranche was living in Saco, Maine, with his wife and children and had no history of mental illness.

He deployed to Iraq with a National Guard transportation company based in Bangor. He came home a different person.

Just three days after he was discharged from Walter Reed, he was arrested for threatening his former wife. When he goes to court December 9, he could be looking at jail time.

He lies on a couch at his brother’s house most days now, struggling with the image of the Iraqi woman who died in his arms after he shot her, and the children he says caught some of his bullets. His speech is pocked with obscenities.

On a recent outing with friends, he became so enraged when he saw a Muslim family that he had to take medication to calm down.

He is seeing a therapist, but only once every two weeks.

“I’m taking enough drugs to sedate an elephant, and I still wake up dreaming about it,” LaBranche said. “I wish I had just freaking died over there.”

## **Be attentive, caring and helpful.**



# *Myers Discusses Transformational Effect of Elections*

*By: Jim Garamone – American Forces Press Service*

The October 9 elections in Afghanistan were a “transformation” for the people of Afghanistan, and there are lessons that can be applied to Iraq as its elections approach, said Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff told reporters here that the people of Afghanistan “really get it.” He said they understand the key role that the election of Hamid Karzai has played in the country.

More than 10 million people registered to vote and more than 8 million actually cast ballots. “Afghanistan has gone through a major transformation, but we have to remember it is just one step,” Myers said.

Afghanistan has elections for parliament in the spring and the country faces severe economic problems. A further problem is posed by the fact that opium poppies provide more than 50 percent of the gross national product of the country, Myers pointed out. Still, the elections further discredited the former Taliban rulers of the country to the point that they are considering joining the political process.

“But as far as elections go, that was a very important step for the people of that country,” Myers said. “They showed that democracy was not an alien concept to them.”

While Afghanistan and Iraq are very different places, the elections in Afghanistan can serve as a template. The whole process in Iraq has been toward elections and creating a thriving democracy that respects the rights of all and does not threaten its neighbors. From the Coalition Provisional Authority to the Iraqi Governing Council to the interim Iraqi government, “each step you have a more legitimate Iraqi government,” Myers said. “That’s important.”

He said there are more than 200 parties already signed up for the January 30 election. “There is a lot of enthusiasm in the country for elections,” he said.

He said all ethnic groups should participate in the election because it is important for the country’s future. “(The election) is one more step - but a big step - to ‘delegitimize’ the insurgents and legitimize the Iraqi government,” he said.

Coalition forces are working to provide security for the election, Myers said. Some 6,500 American soldiers have already been extended in the country to help protect the process. He said the Iraqi security forces - while doing better - need the capabilities the coalition brings to the picture.

In addition to protecting the election process, coalition forces are working to maintain pressure on the insurgents. Commanders in the region are looking at the troop-to-task requirements now, Myers said. The number of troops needed to complete these tasks is “to be determined,” he said. There are currently 138,000 U.S. troops in Iraq.

Myers also addressed the immediate future of the reserve components. He said the way the components are structured, “the Guard and Reserve will have to continue to play the role they are playing.”

The reserve components play important roles in combat support and combat service-support roles. They must continue to perform these roles - as well as combat roles - for the war on terror to succeed. Myers said DoD is aware that the reserve component manpower pool is not bottomless.

“We’ve used about half (of the reserve component),” he said. “We’ve got to be innovative in the way we put units together and perhaps retrain units out of their normal specialties to the kind of specialties we need on the battlefield, whether its truck companies or military police.”

More than 9,000 guardsmen and reservists from Indiana have been deployed in the war on terror. “They are very important to the fight,” the chairman said. “We could not be doing what we are doing in Afghanistan, Djibouti (or) Iraq without the reserve component.”

Biography:

Gen. Richard B. Myers, USAF

***“Right is right, even if everyone is against it;  
and wrong is wrong, even if everyone is for it”***

***~ William Penn***



## *Processionary Caterpillars*

Processionary Caterpillars feed upon pine needles. They move through the trees in a long procession, one leading and the others following each with his eyes half closed and his head snugly fitted against the rear extremity of his predecessor.

Jean-Henri Fabre, the great French naturalist, after patiently experimenting with a group of the caterpillars, finally enticed them to the rim of a large flowerpot. He succeeded in getting the first one connected up with the last one, thus forming a complete circle, which started moving around in a procession, with neither a beginning nor end.

The naturalist expected that after a while they would catch on to the joke, get tired of their useless march and start off in some new direction. But not so.

Through sheer force of habit, the living, creeping circle kept moving around the rim of the pot around and around, keeping the same relentless pace for seven days and seven nights and would doubtless have continued longer had it not been for sheer exhaustion and ultimate starvation.

Incidentally, an ample supply of food was close at hand and plainly visible, but it was outside the range of the circle so they continued along the beaten path.

They were following instinct habit custom tradition precedent past experience "standard procedure" or whatever you may choose to call it, but they were following it blindly.

They mistook activity for accomplishment. They meant well but they got no place.

***Improvements are not made by those who follow the beaten path.  
Improvements come from those who believe that every job  
can be improved and then take action to improve it.***

## *Ambassadors*

**The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition are looking for ambassadors to support and promote the organization. We have sent several letters to people like Toby Keith, Alan Jackson, Robert DeNiro and Billy Ray Cyrus, etc. However, we have had no response from these people.**

**If you know a celebrity that would participate in such a program, please contact them and see if they are interested. Let us know and we will take it from there.**

***You can make a big difference with this assistance.***

## ***National Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition 2004 Scholarship Winner***

Michael J. DePaoli, a member of Post NY-14, in King's Park, New York was this year's winner of a \$1,000 scholarship from the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition. Michael attends SUNY College in New York and the organization extends its best wishes for continued success with his educational endeavors.



# A TALE OF SIX BOYS

Each year I am hired to go to Washington, D.C. with the eighth grade class from Clinton, Wisconsin where I grew up, to videotape their trip. I greatly enjoy visiting our Nation's Capitol, and each year I take some special memories back with me.

This fall's trip was especially memorable. On the last night of our trip, we stopped at the Iwo Jima memorial. This memorial is the largest bronze statue in the world and depicts one of the most famous photographs in history – that of the six brave soldiers raising the American Flag at the top of a rocky hill on the island of Iwo Jima, Japan, during WW II.

Over one hundred students and chaperones piled off the buses and headed towards the memorial. I noticed a solitary figure at the base of the statue, and as I got closer he asked, "Where are you guys from?" I told him that we were from Wisconsin. "Hey, I'm a cheesehead, too! Come gather around, Cheeseheads, and I will tell you a story."

(James Bradley just happened to be in Washington, DC, to speak at the memorial the following day. He was there that night to say good night to his dad, who has since passed away. He was just about to leave when he saw the buses pull up. I videotaped him as he spoke to us, and received his permission to share what he said from my videotape. It is one thing to tour the incredible monuments filled with history in Washington, D.C., but it is quite another to get the kind of insight we received that night.)

When all had gathered around, he reverently began to speak... "My name is James Bradley and I'm from Antigo, Wisconsin. My dad is on that statue, and I just wrote a book called "Flags of Our Fathers" which is #5 on the New York Times Best Seller list right now. It is the story of the six boys you see behind me. "Six boys raised the flag. The first guy putting the pole in the ground is Harlon Block. Harlon was an all-state football player. He enlisted in the Marine Corps with all the senior members of his football team. They were off to play another type of game. A game called "War." But it didn't turn out to be a game.

Harlon, at the age of 21, died with his intestines in his hands. I don't say that to gross you out, I say that because there are generals who stand in front of this statue and talk about the glory of war. You guys need to know that most of the boys in Iwo Jima were 17, 18, and 19 years old.

(He pointed to the statue) "You see this next guy? That's Rene Gagnon from New Hampshire. If you took Rene's helmet off at the moment this photo was taken and looked in the webbing of that helmet, you would find a photograph ... a photograph of his girlfriend.



Rene put that in there for protection because he was scared. He was 18 years old. Boys won the battle of Iwo Jima. Boys. Not old men.

"The next guy here, the third guy in this tableau, was sergeant Mike Strank. Mike is my hero. He was the hero of all these guys. They called him the "old man" because he was so old. He was already 24. When Mike would motivate his boys in training camp, he didn't say, 'Let's go kill some Japanese' or 'Let's die for our country.' He knew he was talking to little boys. Instead he would say, 'You do what I say, and I'll get you home to your mothers.'

"The last guy on this side of the statue is Ira Hayes, a Pima Indian from Arizona. Ira Hayes walked off Iwo Jima. He went into the White House with my dad. President Truman told him, 'You're a hero.' He told reporters, 'How can I feel like a hero when 250 of my buddies hit the island with me and only 27 of us walked off alive?' So you take your class at school, 250 of you spending a year together having fun, doing everything together. Then all 250 of you hit the beach, but only 27 of your classmates walk off alive. That was Ira Hayes. He had images of horror in his mind. Ira Hayes died dead drunk, face down at the age of 32 ... ten years after this picture was taken.



“The next guy, going around the statue, is Franklin Sousley from Hilltop, Kentucky. A fun-lovin’ hillbilly boy. His best friend, who is now 70, told me, ‘Yeah, you know, we took two cows up on the porch of the Hilltop General Store. Then we strung wire across the stairs so the cows couldn’t get down. Then we fed them Epsom salts. Those cows crapped all night.’ Yes, he was a fun-lovin’ hillbilly boy. Franklin died on Iwo Jima at the age of 19. When the telegram came to tell his mother that he was dead, it went to the Hilltop General Store. A barefoot boy ran that telegram up to his mother’s farm. The neighbors could hear her scream all night and into the morning....The neighbors lived a quarter of a mile away.

“The next guy, as we continue to go around the statue, is my dad, John Bradley from Antigo, Wisconsin, where I was raised. My dad lived until 1994, but he would never give interviews. When Walter Cronkite’s producers, or the New York Times would call, we were trained as little kids to say, ‘No, I’m sorry, sir, my dad’s not here. He is in Canada fishing. No, there is no phone there, sir. No, we don’t know when he is coming back.’ My dad never fished or even went to Canada. Usually, he was sitting there right at the table eating his Campbell’s soup. But we had to tell the press that he was out fishing. He didn’t want to talk to the press.

“You see, my dad didn’t see himself as a hero. Everyone thinks these guys are heroes, cause they are in a photo and a monument. My dad knew better. He was a medic. John Bradley from Wisconsin was a caregiver. In Iwo Jima he probably held over 200 boys as they

died. And when boys died in Iwo Jima, they writhed and screamed in pain.

“When I was a little boy, my third grade teacher told me that my dad was a hero. When I went home and told my dad that, he looked at me and said, ‘I want you always to remember that the heroes of Iwo Jima are the guys who did not come back. Did NOT come back.’

“So that’s the story about six nice young boys. Three died on Iwo Jima, and three came back as national heroes. Overall, 7,000 boys died on Iwo Jima in the worst battle in the history of the Marine Corps.

My voice is giving out, so I will end here. Thank you for your time.”

Suddenly, the monument wasn’t just a big old piece of metal with a flag sticking out of the top. It came to life before our eyes with the heartfelt words of a son who did indeed have a father who was a hero. Maybe not a hero for the reasons most people would believe, but a hero nonetheless.

We need to remember that God created this vast and glorious world for us to live in, freely, but also at great sacrifice. Let us never forget from the Revolutionary War to the Gulf War and all the wars in-between that sacrifice was made for our freedom. Remember to pray praises for this great country of ours and also pray for those still in murderous unrest around the world. STOP and thank God for being alive and being free at someone else’s sacrifice.

The troops serve and die. They seldom ask why. God Bless.

**Live life as though it is your last day.**

## ***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.**



## ★ *Funding The VVnW & The Veterans Coalition* ★

The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition depend primarily on contributions from the general public to sustain our services and programs and cover basic operating expenses. Currently The Coalition has over 100,000 donors and last year through a series of targeted mailings to donors and prospective donors nationwide – The Coalition received substantial contributions from our successful direct mail fundraising campaign.

However, while the money received last year from direct mail donors was substantial, after expenses, it is inadequate to fund the expanding need for existing programs and services or to take advantage of new opportunities to honor, support and aid our military, veterans and their families who rely on our help.

To meet these growing challenges, we continually explore options to broaden and diversify our funding base. And you – **our loyal members – can help!** We encourage you to consider:

1. Supporting The Coalition by sending a **25th Anniversary contribution** above your annual dues. Your special contribution of \$20, \$25, \$50 or whatever you can send will be greatly appreciated and go a long way to help us reach our goals.

2. **Remembering The Coalition in your Will** – see the article on page 57, Where there's a Will, there's a Way, for details.

3. **Persuading your friends and neighbors to join** you in supporting Veterans of the Vietnam War & The Veterans Coalition.

*Our fellow veterans will thank you for whatever you can do!*

To underscore the significance and importance of your help, following are excerpts from a letter from Peter Forbes being mailed to donors in January asking them to renew their support for 2005:

... whatever power our Coalition has to help America's heroes of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, comes from you. So with hope and optimism, I am writing to urge you to do your part to keep us strong and mark our 25th year of service to veterans, military and their families by renewing your support today.

... our motto is People Who Care. But our ability to make these words real, to give them life, has always depended on caring people like you. . . in a time of escalating violence around the globe and constant threats of terror here at home, your generous support of the VVnW Coalition is more important and more needed than ever.

... You and I have little control over what 2005 will bring in the way of war and peace, terrorism or tranquility. But we can help show those who fought for America, and those willing to fight today and in the future, that you and I and other caring people will be here for them when they need us.

... Only with your ongoing support will we be able to continue and expand our work to:

★ **Strengthen and expand the military health care system...**the number of available inpatient beds in VA hospitals is down by 50%. At home and abroad, U.S. military hospitals are stretched beyond capacity yet, ironically, some are being closed. And cancer patients are being moved out to free up beds for wounded soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan, who arrive by the planeload almost every night at Andrews Air Force base outside our nation's capital.

... we must honor our promise to have a health care system that does justice to our nation and its heroes. But with a soaring federal deficit, and draconian budget cuts on the horizon, we need to put additional resources into our efforts to persuade the White House and Congress to strengthen, not weaken, America's military health care system. So please, make your renewal gift a generous one.

★ **Rescue more veterans from homelessness.** You need only look around you to see that in today's economy of layoffs and skyrocketing housing costs, homelessness is on the rise in America. And of those desperate souls you see huddled on heating grates, living out of shopping carts, and pleading for spare change, more than a third are veterans. Shattered heroes without homes or hope. It's a shameful, seemingly intractable problem.

But, imagine if we could open more Beacon Houses. Thanks to caring people like you, the VVnW Coalition already operates 20 United Veterans Beacon Houses. The success rate for these community-focused havens where homeless veterans regain their physical and emotional health and gain the life and job skills they need to make it on their own is an astounding 80%! Our ambitious goal is 8-10 more Beacon Houses in 2005, which we can only do with your moral and financial support.

★ **Support our troops in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the globe.** They are today's heroes and veterans all doing a great and honorable job in the highest traditions of the military. But as brave as they are, as committed as they are to serving, they can still feel homesick for loved ones and heartsick at the human tragedy they witness each day. I know you agree we must say, "Thanks! Our thoughts, support, and prayers are with you" in every way we can.

One of the best ways to do that is to keep a steady stream of Military Support Packages flowing across oceans and desert sands, into the hands of America's finest sons and daughters. These surprise packages contain small items books, magazines, toiletries, snacks but they bring big comfort to heroes far from home, and your renewed support will keep them coming.

... In you, and the renewal gift you send, is the power to rescue yesterday's heroes, heal today's, and send a message of hope and support to tomorrow's. I promise, the stronger you make us, the prouder we'll make you to be our friend and supporter.



**Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc.  
& The Veterans Coalition  
2006 MUSTANG GT  
Support Veterans • \$10.00 Donation**



Person who sells the most tickets wins \$1000 cash.  
Second highest ticket seller wins \$500.  
VVnW Post that sells the most tickets wins \$1000 cash.  
Second highest post ticket seller wins \$500.

Car package valued at \$30,000  
Car purchased from Tom Hesser Ford, Scranton, PA  
7000 tickets to be sold

**PURCHASER'S STUB TO KEEP  
ALL VETERANS - ALL MILITARY - WELCOME**

**Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc.  
& The Veterans Coalition  
ROAD KING CLASSIC  
2006 Harley Davidson Road King Classic FLHRCI  
in Red and Single Harley Trailer**



**\$10.00  
Donation**



*Artist rendering. Actual trailer design may vary.*



Person who sells the most tickets wins \$1000 cash.  
Second highest ticket seller wins \$500.  
VVnW Post that sells the most tickets wins \$1000 cash.  
Second highest post ticket seller wins \$500.

Bike and trailer package valued at \$23,000  
Bike purchased from Noto Harley Davidson, Plains, PA  
6000 tickets to be sold

**PURCHASER'S STUB TO KEEP  
ALL VETERANS - ALL MILITARY - WELCOME**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL Amt. Sent: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total # of Mustang GT Tix: \_\_\_\_\_ Total # of Roadking Tix: \_\_\_\_\_

**Payment Method:**

Check or Money Order Payable to VVnW Inc. enclosed

Please send to 805 So. Township Blvd. • Pittston, PA 18640 • Ph. 570-603-9740

Please charge my ticket purchase to:  Visa  Mastercard  Discover  AM Express

Card No: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**\$10.00 Donation for Each Ticket**

*Ticket Stubs Should Be Returned By November 20, 2005*

*Winner to be drawn on November 30, 2005*



We accept all major credit cards



# **VETERAN SERVICE OFFICERS**

## **What is a Veterans Service Officer? – Do You Want to Be A VSO?**

### **1. DUTIES:**

- A. Advises and assists veterans or their beneficiaries in presenting claims for benefits under Federal, State or local laws.
- B. Works in cooperation with the Department of Veterans Affairs, other governmental agencies, the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition National Headquarters.
- C. Conducts telephone communication and/or written correspondence with various Federal, State, County and City Governmental agencies concerning problems or questions on behalf of veterans or their beneficiaries.
- D. Submits DVA claims to the appropriate DVA Regional Office. Other claims are submitted to the government agencies involved.
- E. Have a complete working knowledge of DVA requirements concerning the processing of claims for all types of veterans benefits. Must be able to develop a knowledge, where required, to process claims for other governmental benefits.
  1. Compensation: (i.e., claims; aggravation, presumptive service connection; rates, etc.)
  2. Pension: (i.e., applications; aid and attendance; income restrictions; etc.)
  3. Special Service-Connected Benefits: (i.e., automobile; housing; prosthetics, etc.)
  4. Medical: (i.e., hospital eligibility categories; nursing home; domiciliary; outpatient; etc.)
  5. Education: (i.e., vocational rehabilitation; war orphans; dependents; etc.)
  6. Life Insurance: (i.e., NSLI; government; conversions; loans; death applications, etc.)
  7. Death Benefits: (i.e., widow's pension; DIC, burial; grave marker; National Cemetery; Insurance; burial squad; etc.)
  8. GI Loans: (i.e., eligibility; financing; business, etc.)
  9. Records: (i.e., Personnel Records Center, St. Louis; Hospital: Regional Office and office.)
- F. Have a complete working knowledge of other agencies veterans' benefits. VSO must be able to develop knowledge to process claims within the following areas;
  1. Social Security (SSI)
  2. Vet State Loans
  3. County assessor (tax exemptions)
  4. SDI (Job disability)
  5. Employment Development Department (jobs for veterans)
  6. SBA (business loans)
- G. Must be familiar with the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts, and DVA regulations concerning the release of claims information.

### **2. CLAIMS PROCESSING:**

- A. Quality: Claims should be processed in accordance with instructions.
- B. Timeliness: Claims and all supporting documents should be prepared and submitted to the appropriate office within ten (10) working days of receipt of claim this is the case unless two days prior to end of month, then claim shall be processed and date stamped by DVA.
- C. Confidentiality: Be aware of the confidentiality requirements of the position. Information assistance should be appropriate to the needs of the receiving party as well as within the interests of the claimant while maintaining the claimant's privacy.
- D. Public Contact: Contact with the public; employees of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc.; other organizations, and officials at various levels of management must reflect communication skills, tact and patience.

Now that you have read just what a VSO is: **do YOU want to become a Veterans Service Officer?** The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition will train you and have you accredited. However, you will be required to commit your services, in writing, for a period of a minimum of two years.

A VSO is a responsible position taking dedication, time, patience, travel and a commitment to serving veterans and their families. The cost to train a VSO is high and unless you are committed it becomes a fruitless expense for the organization. **You do not have to be a veteran, however, you must be a member of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition.**

If you are interested and committed, contact us at 1-800-843-8626 to discuss the matter. We need your support, involvement and commitment.

**GET INVOLVED! What have you done for a veteran today?**



# *A Father's Last Duty*

*My son, the soldier, comes home for good.*



At last report, he had left Iraq and was waiting a flight in Kuwait. With luck he will be in Germany today and then on to Texas. By the way, he is called "remains" but I know better. He is my son.

I want to tell you about him. Not because he is so great a guy although I think so, but because he represents the thousands of sons and daughters America is sending to far away places to secure our peace and our liberties at home.

Captain Sean Patrick Sims, commanding officer of A Company, 2-2 BN, 1st Infantry Division, was killed in action November 13 in Fallujah, Iraq while clearing insurgent occupied buildings. A tough assignment, clearing an urban area. Dirty, dangerous work. Sean lost his executive officer the day before and I read of the deaths of two Marine Captains who were similarly killed in Fallujah.

It is sad when a father must write his own son's obituary. I don't know what to say. My son, like others falling in that conflict, was a hero who believed in his mission, his unit, and his men. He also believed leaders should be in the front, leading, not following. And that is how he died.

He was well liked and respected by his superiors and the men in his company, who sensed his concern for their well-being. He was also concerned about the well-being of the Iraqi people and did his utmost to guard them from harm.

Sean was a devout Catholic, who lived the tenets of his faith on a daily basis. There is no doubt in our minds that Sean is now in heaven and in the hands of our Lord. We grieve for his loss, which is our loss, but not for his soul. If anything, we ask his intercession

on our behalf as he is now much better placed for that effort.

I don't know what to say or how to describe the sacrifice of your blood for this country. Having served in Vietnam, twice, having a father who spent 36 years as a soldier through two wars, and a brother who served in Vietnam twice and is now 100% disabled from his injuries there, I am encouraged by the awareness of our countrymen for the sacrifices of our children. I am thankful for the realization by our citizenry that freedom is not free.

My son was not a rampant political supporter for any party, although he was probably more Republican by instinct. But he did have an abiding trust and belief in the United States of America. He felt we are a moral nation, steadfast in our principles; this nation does not take its commitment of its sons and daughters to war lightly. But unlike many nations in the world, we do not shirk our duties to commit our blood to just and necessary causes. Because that is what keeps us free.

I think he understood something which seems to have been lost in the debates over weapons of mass destruction and poor intelligence estimates in this particular war. That is that sovereign nations must be held accountable for their actions. We cannot tolerate nations that hide behind borders and provide support to enemies who are intent on our destruction. We can debate on how this war developed and was executed. It cannot be debated that nations now look carefully at their responsibility and accountability before providing such support. America has made its statement. If you support terrorism, we will find you and destroy you, whatever the cost.

My son understood this and believed what he was doing was right. But he also believed that you can't go in and destroy a country and walk away. He was anxious for the insurgents to be quickly defeated so we could start the nation building that Iraq so sorely needs. He chafed at the delays and the debates in implementing aid. He was not a romantic. He understood well the backwardness of the country, the strangle hold of its religion and more challengingly, the social and political pressure of the tribal system. They all looked insurmountable when you add them up. But he had been raised in a tradition of grit and putting one foot forward at a time, so he was not deterred by the challenge. He was faced with a difficult, dirty and seemingly impossible task, but his response was not how do I get out of it but how do I get it done.

I think his sacrifice to his nation can best be summed up in a message I received from a friend expressing condolences for his loss: His sacrifice was made to keep my family, my sons and my grandchildren as well as all Americans safe and free and for that we will eternally be grateful.

That's nice. My son would agree. That's what he thought he was doing.

In retrospect, the true hero here is his wife, who is left a young widow with a young son to raise. She is a woman of grace, and grit. She will do well by her son and her warrior husband.

Regards,

Tom Sims

(Col. US Army Retired)



## *Email From Dave*

*— NOVEMBER 19, 2004*



Dear Dad -

Just came out of the city and I honestly do not know where to start. I am afraid that whatever I send you will not do sufficient honor to the men who fought and took Fallujah.

Shortly before the attack, Task Force Fallujah was built. It consisted of Regimental Combat Team 1 built around 1st Marine Regiment and Regimental Combat Team 7 built around 7th Marine Regiment. Each Regiment consisted of two Marine Rifle Battalions reinforced and one Army mechanized infantry battalion.

Regimental Combat Team 1 (RCT-1) consisted of 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion (3rd LAR), 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines (3/5); 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines (3/1) and 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry (2/7). RCT-7 was slightly less weighted but still a formidable force. Cutting a swath around the city was an Army Brigade known as Blackjack. The Marine RCT's were to assault the city while Blackjack kept the enemy off of the backs of the assault force.

The night prior to the actual invasion, we all moved out into the desert just north of the city. It was something to see. You could just feel the intensity in the Marines and Soldiers. It was all business. As the day cleared, the Task Force began striking targets and moving into final attack positions. As the invasion force commenced its movement into attack positions, 3rd LAR led off RCT-1's offensive with an attack up a peninsula formed by the Euphrates River on the west side of the city. Their mission was to secure the Fallujah Hospital and the two bridges leading out of the city. They executed their tasks like clockwork and smashed the enemy resistance holding the bridges. Simultaneous to all of this, Blackjack sealed the escape routes to the south of the city. As invasion day dawned, the net was around the city and the Marines and Soldiers knew that the enemy that failed to escape was now sealed.

3/5 began the actual attack on the city by taking an apartment complex on the northwest corner of the city. It was key terrain as the elevated positions allowed the command to look down into the attack lanes. The Marines took the apartments quickly and moved to the rooftops and began engaging enemy that were trying to move into their fighting positions. The scene on the rooftop was surreal. Machine gun teams were running boxes of ammo up 8 flights of stairs in full body armor and carrying up machine guns while snipers engaged enemy shooters. The whole time the enemy was firing mortars and rockets at the apartments. Honest to God, I

don't think I saw a single Marine even distracted by the enemy fire. Their squad leaders, and platoon commanders had them prepared and they were executing their assigned tasks.

As mentioned, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry joined the Regiment just prior to the fight. In fact, they started showing up for planning a couple of weeks in advance. There is always a professional rivalry between the Army and the Marine Corps but it was obvious from the outset that these guys were the real deal. They had fought in Najaf and were eager to fight with the Regiment in Fallujah. They are exceptionally well led and supremely confident.

2/7 became our wedge. In short, they worked with 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines. We were limited in the amount of prep fires that we were allowed to fire on the city prior to the invasion. This was a point of some consternation to the forces actually taking the city. Our compensation was to turn to 2/7 and ask them to slash into the city and create as much turbulence as possible for 3/1 to follow. Because of the political reality, the Marine Corps was also under pressure to "get it done quickly." For this reason, 2/7 and 3/1 became the penetration force into the city.

Immediately following 3/5's attack on the apartment buildings, 3/1 took the train station on the north end of the city. While the engineers blew a breach through the train trestle, the Cavalry soldiers poured through with their tanks and Bradleys and chewed an opening in the enemy defense. 3/1 followed them through until they reached a phase line deep into the northern half of the city. The Marine infantry along with a few tanks then turned to the right and attacked the heart of the enemy defense. The fighting was tough as the enemy had the area dialed in with mortars. 3/5 then attacked into the northwest corner of the city. This fight continued as both Marine rifle battalions clawed their way into the city on different axis.

There is an image burned into my brain that I hope I never forget. We came up behind 3/5 one day as the lead squads were working down the Byzantine streets of the Jolan area. An assault team of two Marines ran out from behind cover and put a rocket into a wall of an enemy strongpoint. Before the smoke cleared the squad behind them was up and moving through the hole and clearing the house. Just down the block another squad was doing the same thing. The house was cleared quickly and the Marines were running down the street to the next contact. Even in the midst of that mayhem, it was an awesome site.



The fighting has been incredibly close inside the city. The enemy is willing to die and is literally waiting until they see the whites of the eyes of the Marines before they open up. Just two days ago, as a firefight raged in close quarters, one of the interpreters yelled for the enemy in the house to surrender. The enemy yelled back that it was better to die and go to heaven than to surrender to infidels. This exchange is a graphic window into the world that the Marines and Soldiers have been fighting in these last 10 days.

I could go on and on about how the city was taken but one of the most amazing aspects to the fighting was that we saw virtually no civilians during the battle. Only after the fighting had passed did a few come out of their homes. They were provided food and water and most were evacuated out of the city. At least 90-95% of the people were gone from the city when we attacked.

I will end with a couple of stories of individual heroism that you may not have heard yet. I was told about both of these incidents shortly after they occurred. No doubt some of the facts will change slightly but I am confident that the meat is correct.

The first is a Marine from 3/5. His name is Corporal Yeager (Chuck Yeager's grandson). As the Marines cleared an apartment building, they got to the top floor and the point man kicked in the door. As he did so, an enemy grenade and a burst of gunfire came out. The explosion and enemy fire took off the point man's leg. He was then immediately shot in the arm as he lay in the doorway. Corporal Yeager tossed a grenade in the room and ran into the doorway and into the enemy fire in order to pull his buddy back to cover. As he was dragging the wounded Marine to cover, his own grenade came back through the doorway. Without pausing, he reached down and threw the grenade back through the door while he heaved his buddy to safety. The grenade went off inside the room and Cpl Yeager threw another in. He immediately entered the room following the second explosion. He gunned down three enemy all within three feet of where he stood and then let fly a third grenade as he backed out of the room to complete the evacuation of the wounded Marine. You have to understand that a grenade goes off within 5 seconds of having the pin pulled. Marines usually let them "cook off" for a second or two before tossing them in. Therefore, this entire episode took place in less than 30 seconds.

The second example comes from 3/1. Cpl Mitchell is a squad leader. He was wounded as his squad was clearing a house when some enemy threw pineapple grenades down on top of them. As he was getting triaged, the doctor told him that he had been shot through the arm. Cpl Mitchell told the doctor that he had actually been shot "a couple of days ago" and had given himself self aide on the wound. When the doctor got on him about not coming off the line, he

firmly told the doctor that he was a squad leader and did not have time to get treated as his men were still fighting. There are a number of Marines who have been wounded multiple times but refuse to leave their fellow Marines.

It is incredibly humbling to walk among such men. They fought as hard as any Marines in history and deserve to be remembered as such. The enemy they fought burrowed into houses and fired through mouse holes cut in walls, lured them into houses rigged with explosives and detonated the houses on pursuing Marines, and actually hid behind surrender flags only to engage the Marines with small arms fire once they perceived that the Marines had let their guard down. I know of several instances where near dead enemy rolled grenades out on Marines who were preparing to render them aid. It was a fight to the finish in every sense and the Marines delivered.

I have called the enemy cowards many times in the past because they have never really held their ground and fought but these guys in the city did. We can call them many things but they were not cowards.

My whole life I have read about the greatest generation and sat in wonder at their accomplishments. For the first time, as I watch these Marines and Soldiers, I am eager for the future as this is just the beginning for them.

Perhaps the most amazing characteristic of all is that the morale of the men is sky high. They hurt for the wounded and the dead but they are eager to continue to attack. Further, not one of them would be comfortable with being called a hero even though they clearly are.

By now the Marines and Soldiers have killed well over a thousand enemy. These were not peasants or rabble. They were reasonably well trained and entirely fanatical. Most of the enemy we have seen have chest rigs full of ammunition and are well armed are willing to fight to the death. The Marines and Soldiers are eager to close with them and the fighting at the end is inevitably close.

I will write you more the next time I come in about what we have found inside the city. All I can say is that even with everything that I knew and expected from the last nine months, the brutality and fanaticism of the enemy surprised me. The beheadings were even more common place than we thought but so were torture and summary executions. Even though it is an exaggeration, it seems as though every block in the northern part of the city has a torture chamber or execution site. There are hundreds of tons of munitions and tens of thousands of weapons that our Regiment alone has recovered. The Marines and Soldiers of the Regiment have also found over 400 IEDs already wired and ready to detonate. No doubt these numbers will grow in the days ahead.



In closing, I want to share with you a vignette about when the Marines secured the Old Bridge (the one where the Americans were mutilated and hung on March 31) this week. After the Marines had done all the work and secured the bridge, we walked across to meet up with 3rd LAR on the other side. On the Fallujah side of the bridge where the Americans were hung there is some Arabic writing on the bridge. An interpreter translated it for me as we walked through. It read: "Long Live the Mujahadeen. Fallujah is the Graveyard for Americans and the end of the Marine Corps."

As I came back across the bridge there was a squad sitting in their Amtrac smoking and watching the show. The Marines had written their own message below the enemy's. It is not something that Mom would appreciate but it fit the moment to a T. Not far from the vehicle were two dead enemy laying where they died. The Marines were sick of watching the "Dog and Pony show" and wanted to get back to work.

Dave

## Chaplain's Chatter

I was Junior Nurse on night duty in a small rural hospital and I was only 19! (Sound familiar?)

It was a winter's night and while on 'patrol' checking the patients I came to an intersection of the corridors leading to different wards. Flashing my torch up and down these corridors I came to an abrupt stop.

My heart began an erratic beat and pumped so loud it seemed to deafen my ears. A part of me wanted to run yet I was paralyzed and rooted to the spot. Goose bumps stood up on my arms, head and body, it brought a fresh insight to the words "my skin crawled". Flight or fight was a way out, but I could do neither, I was too frightened.

For there in the dimmed light of the torch was a ghostly vision of an old woman. With waist length white hair cascading down her back and wearing a white night gown decorated with red polka dots she seemed to be trying to climb the wall. Her long boned arms were stretched above her head and her skeletal looking fingers moved back and forth seeking for something that could not be found. For me at the time, it seemed that my torch-light had shone on some kind of spirit performing a dance in the darkness of the night. This was one scared nurse!

When the adrenalin kicked in, I hastily found the Senior nurse and managed to stutter, "K... KK...Karen.....". Well we eventually put the poor soul back to bed and the rest of the shift was uneventful.

What had I experienced though? A fear strong enough to hold me riveted to the spot. A paralyzing fear that I could taste and feel and which traveled with me for the rest of the night shift. And for many night shifts later! It is something I have never forgotten and is something I can laugh about now but at the time it was not too pleasant.

These days there seems to be so much we could be frightened of: fear of terrorists, losing our jobs/wives/partners/children, of dying or of car accidents, of commencing a new career or entering a new phase of our life styles, a fear of being alone or of people. Afraid of the dark or of slipping back into the abyss of drinking or drugs.

However, my bible says in 2 Timothy 1; 7 (New King James Version) that "HE HAS NOT GIVEN US A SPIRIT OF FEAR, BUT OF POWER AND LOVE AND A SOUND MIND."

Have you ever thought how fear can rob us of being able to love, of having a sensible mind and a loss of power to live?

As it says at the end of some Psalms, 'SELAH' which in the English language means to 'pause and think on that', please pause and think on what you have read.

God bless

Carla Evans,  
Chaplain

Want to talk more about fear, please contact me on [grace@netlink.com.au](mailto:grace@netlink.com.au)





# 2005 Harley Motorcycle and Trailer Drawing

The Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition along with its members and posts have been selling tickets for a 2005 Harley Davidson Road King Class and bike trailer with the proceeds to benefit the Military Support Packages that are sent to those who are currently serving overseas as well as the other projects of the organization.

The winning ticket was pulled (shown in the photo) by Major Timothy Crowley, Commander of the Alpha Detachment, Marine Wing Support Squadron 472, Wyoming, PA at the Wachovia Arena in Wilkes-Barre Township, PA as part of the USMC Toys for Tots Program on November 30th. The organization has sent support packages to members of the unit who are serving overseas as well as over 10,000 other packages throughout the last two years.



The prize for the post that sold the most tickets went to the VVnW & The Veterans Coalition National Headquarters with the second highest prize of \$500 to Post OH-10.

A sincere thank you to everyone who sold tickets, and purchased tickets to help us to continue the programs of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition.

Shown in the photo is Nancy Verespy, National Executive Director presenting a check to Jim Waschko as the first place winner for the most tickets sold on the motorcycle.



The grand prize winner was:

**TOM BUCKLER PLAINS, PA**

Tom is shown on his new bike when he came to National Headquarters to pick it up. His ticket was sold to him by a member of VVnW Post PA-56 in Nanticoke, PA - Brian Wiernusz.

Despite cold winds and some rain he rode the bike home. Tom has to be "convinced" that he had actually really won the bike and was very excited!

The prize for the individual who sold the most tickets went to Jim Waschko with a \$1000 prize. The second highest prize of \$500 went to Gary Curran of VVnW Post OH-10



## Support Our Troops!



# Corporal Catcher Cuts the Rope

*Carla Evans – Australian Chaplain*

Corporal Catcher Cuts the Rope, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines, Alpha Company, 3rd Platoon, was frightened, "shit scared" in fact were his words. Around him men were screaming as the house he and his platoon were clearing from enemy forces was burning fiercely. Still to be faced and hidden in the dark recesses of this inferno, waiting to kill or to be killed, remained a small remnant of the enemy.

It was in a town called Fallujah, Iraq, thousands of miles away from the Montana plains where he grew up and years away from the Gros-ventre, (White Clay People) and Assinibione, (Nakota) - and his ancestor's traditions. It was also two years after the invasion on American soil of the Twin Towers in New York, the mitigating force of why Catcher was where he was, this 23rd day of November, 2004, two days before his country celebrated Thanksgiving.

Even though the Iraqi's had been given notice and time to remove from the town of Fallujah, there were some who chose to stay and fight and to cause as much destruction as possible. The Marines mission was to search each building in this town, house-by-house, street-by-street to eradicate the enemy, the aim was to gain access to the top of each dwelling where surveillance was good and it was easier to control the surrounding areas.

Slowly and methodically the Marines moved. Grenades were thrown; tanks were called in to cordon off areas. With rockets, machine guns and grenades, the enemy was flushed out of their hiding places. Some on top of the double or triple storied houses, others hiding in dark rooms, quietly waiting for the Marines to expose their whereabouts. They had already made the choice to die and were waiting for that moment of death when Allah would accept their gift of life to him.

Catcher Cuts the Rope could not be distracted in the knowledge that he had just found and removed the body of his buddy who had walked the walk of the Marine Corps with him. He could not think of himself running, just a short time previously, into the house searching for his buddy and knowing the minute he saw him, that he was dead. He would recall later that amid the screams and shouts of his peers, he had picked up Mike's body and carried him out of that burning place of hell and then returned to finish the allocated job. Mike who had loved the Marines, who was only 21 years old, who did not agree with all America's foreign policies, but believed in doing the best for his country. Mike, his best friend, was dead.

Catcher stood in the entrance room next door to the place where his buddy had been killed; where furniture



burned freely and walls displayed rocket holes or partial destruction, allowing the sounds and scenes of other fierce fighting and the gathering darkness of the night sky to penetrate.

A house, a time and a place that Catcher would never forget. Around him smoke mixed with the smell of cordite and the visible display of the combined shed blood of men of two nations: America and Iraq.

Calling to one of his men, they moved towards the first room to search for the illusive enemy. Catcher, covering his buddy who would make the entrance into the room, was conscious of bloodied handprints on the walls by the stairs and of oozing blood on the rising steps to the next former living area. They knew that a wounded man was holed up somewhere close and while adrenalin pumped through their tense, alert bodies and with still hot rifle barrels at the ready, his buddy stormed into the room and fired into the dark corners.

The dying screams of a man echoed the hail of bullets and hardly infiltrated the minds of the two Marines as they threw a grenade and backed out ready to move on.

Suddenly, amidst the dirt, dust and smoke of the thrown grenade, emerged an apparition of a man wearing a vest or harness draped with grenades. Screaming "ALLAH, ALLAH, ALLAH" he murderously staggered towards the two Marines. Startled, but instinctively backing away, Catcher managed to fire into this man five times before the dying hand pulled the pin on the vest exploding his body and sending fragments of shrapnel into the air - some of which found a sudden resting place in the body of Catcher.

Stunned and shocked, bleeding and with mounting pain, Catcher knew he had to call in for backup support on the radio. His injured hands refused to hold his rifle, but to put it down left him vulnerable for further hidden enemy attacks. Somehow he stumbled to the waiting



radio, removed his rifle and managed to call for that vital backup support. Slumped on the remains of an old burnt couch, fighting to remain conscious, he was aware that members of the 1st Squad, who had themselves suffered injuries and death in an earlier confrontation, came to the answer of his call.

With three other wounded men of his Squad, Catcher was placed on an armored vehicle and transported to a Field Hospital where he was given morphine and his wounds were initially treated. Around him other injured Marines were yelling and hollering to check on each other and their buddies. The call of "It's OK! It's OK!" permeated through the casualty area. The Captain and Lieutenant visited the wounded men telling them they had done a good job and never short of duty or an answer, the Marines yelled back "We got'em Sir, we got'em."

Catcher was placed on a helicopter and flown to Baghdad then onto Germany where it was confirmed that his buddy Mike was indeed dead. In Germany he found himself among other wounded soldiers and Marines from Iraq and Afghanistan. He met a fellow Native American, Yellow Hammer, who had been shot in an ambush and was from Catcher's home State of Montana.

Catcher is now recuperating from his injuries. He finds it hard to walk as his right knee is still incapacitated, but he knows he will walk again one day. His service in the Army and the Marine Corps has allowed him to serve his country in the Philippines, Yugoslavia and Iraq. He knew that after September 11 there would be a war and he wanted to support his country in it. But now his war is ended, he has done his duty. There will be no more shivering through cold nights under starry Iraqi skies or sweating under the burning heat of the noonday sun, neither will he have to suffer the pestering flies or blood sucking mosquitoes. He will no longer have to sight war ravaged bodies and the smell of death will not permeate his nostrils any more. His duty now is to recover from his wounds, to begin his daily fighting of the 'flashbacks' that will threaten to disturb his sleep and to be concerned for the members of his squad who have just learnt that their time in Iraq has been extended.

He will be returning to Hawaii where his wife and one-year-old son, Conan, whose name means 'Rainbow after the Storm' are waiting for him. Our prayer for Catcher Cuts the Rope is that he may indeed find peace in his Rainbow after his Storm.

## *Pictures from Iraq that are Too Shocking & Graphic for the Mainstream Media...*





***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.***





# *What Is A Vet.....*

He is the cop on the beat who spent six months in Saudi Arabia sweating two gallons a day making sure the armored personnel carriers didn't run out of fuel.

He is the barroom loudmouth, dumber than five wooden planks, whose overgrown frat-boy behavior is outweighed a hundred times in the cosmic scales by four hours of exquisite bravery near the 38th parallel.

She (or he) is the nurse who fought against futility and went to sleep sobbing every night for two solid years in Da Nang.

He is the POW who went away one person and came back another - or didn't come back AT ALL.

He is the Parris Island drill instructor who has never seen combat - but has saved countless lives by turning slouchy, no-account rednecks and gang members into Marines, and teaching them to watch each other's backs.

He is the parade-riding Legionnaire who pins on his ribbons and medals with a prosthetic hand.

He is the career quartermaster who watches the ribbons and medals pass him by.

He is the three anonymous heroes in The Tomb Of The Unknowns, whose presence at the Arlington National Cemetery must forever preserve the memory of all anonymous heroes whose valor died unrecognized with them on the battlefield or in the ocean's sunless deep.

He is the old guy bagging groceries at the supermarket - palsied now and aggravatingly slow - who helped liberate a Nazi death camp and who wishes all day long that his wife were still alive to hold him when the nightmares come.

He is the guy you see, but don't really see. He is an ordinary and yet an extraordinary human being - a person who offered some of his life's most vital years in the service of his country, and who sacrificed his ambitions so others would not have to sacrifice theirs.

Though he may be older now and no longer in uniform, he is a warrior still and a sword against the darkness, and he is nothing more than the finest, greatest testimony on behalf of the finest, greatest nation ever known.

So remember, each time you see someone who has served our country, just lean over and say, "Thank You". That's all most people need, and in most cases it will mean more than any medals they could have been awarded or were awarded.

Two little words that mean a lot, "THANK YOU."

It's the warrior, not the reporter, Who gave us our freedom of the press.

It's the warrior, not the poet, Who gave us our freedom of speech.

It's the warrior, not the campus organizer, Who gave us our freedom to demonstrate.

It's the warrior, Who salutes the flag, Who serves others with respect for the flag, and whose coffin is draped by the flag, Who allows the protester to burn the flag.

Who is a Vet? Most likely he's the guy that everyone forgot is a warrior.

***"He who has nothing to die for has nothing to live for!"***

## *Prazosin Treatment for Combat Veterans*

Prazosin is a medication developed some time ago for treatment of hypertension (elevated blood pressure). It lowers blood pressure by acting on the Alpha adrenergic neurotransmitter system part of the "adrenaline system". This same system controls the autonomic arousal system the "fight or flight" command system.

The autonomic arousal mechanism, when over stimulated, or out of control of its governor, causes symptoms that combat PTSD veterans are well familiar with: restlessness, tenseness, difficulty concentrating, difficulty with anger control, anxious panicky feelings, hyper vigilance and excessive startle response in the

daytime as well as nighttime problems including difficulty falling asleep, nightmares, awakenings and sweats.

Prazosin turns down the volume of stimulation in this arousal system, and helps with these symptoms, usually without negative effects. The medication is started at a low dose and over a short period of time is gradually increased to a dose which either brings improvement in symptoms or begins to cause negative unwanted side effects. If helpful, it is continued at the effective dose for maintenance treatment.

Ask your health care professional if Prazosin is something you should try.



# *Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*

My life has been different since I've returned to the states. At first, I was just happy to be home and everything seemed to be ok. But now things have started to change. Now I dream about the things that happened while I was there, and I can't quit thinking about some of the things I saw. It's on my mind all the time.

At night I am frightened to fall to sleep because of the nightmares. The only way I am able to sleep is by taking a few drinks. I know this is wrong, but what am I to do?

My wife and children seem to be frightened of me. I guess this is because I get angry at the smallest thing. I can't even keep a job because I get angry and quit or get fired.

My family and I used to have fun. My wife and I used to go places together and we did things as a family. But now I just want to stay at home. Home, is the only place I feel safe. My family and friends don't understand what's wrong and I can't explain it to them because I don't know.

I don't know why I get nervous when I see a group of people clustered together. I just get this weird feeling in the pit of my stomach. I don't care if it is people on a street corner or people in a restaurant. The few times I have been out with my wife to a place like a restaurant I find myself sitting with my back against the wall. I just feel more comfortable that way.

When I drive I find myself watching every car I meet and every car that is sitting at an intersection. Even if I am driving out of town on a highway I get very nervous when I see a cluster of buildings or a tree line in the distance. I once thought I was having a heart attack because my heart started to beat rapidly and my legs and arms became weak and all those butterflies were in my stomach. I only drive when I have to now; I let someone else drive if at all possible. This way I can watch everything going on around me.

My wife says that I am becoming compulsive. I guess one of the reasons she said this is because I find myself getting up several times a night to check the doors and windows. I do this even though I know that I locked them. I do this because I just feel like I have to. I can't explain the feeling, it's just there.

And now I have even got to the point that I keep a weapon near. At first it was just by my bed, but lately I have been carrying it in my car. This is dangerous, and I know it's wrong and eventually I will get in some kind of trouble. But I feel better when it is near.

My family wants things to be like it was before and so do I. But I don't know what is wrong with me. So, what do I do? Where do I go for help? Who can I talk to?

Many veterans and even some active duty personnel may be able to relate in some form or fashion to the above statement. If so, you may be having the symptoms and associated symptoms of a condition known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

## **Introduction**

The following information was obtained from several different psychological texts. Since the reference materials are written for an individual who works in the mental health field I have changed some of the wording to insure that whoever reads this information will understand it.

## **Definition**

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a psychological condition that reflects the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to extremely devastating traumatic events. Basically, PTSD is a stress and anxiety disorder that occurs to an individual when the individual tries to react in a normal manner to an extreme abnormal event.

## **Symptoms**

According to the definition of PTSD to qualify as having PTSD you must meet the following criteria:

**A.** You have been exposed to a traumatic event involving actual or threatened death or injury, during which you respond with panic, horror, and feelings of helplessness. Note: Some individuals have a tendency to misunderstand this symptom of PTSD. They see the word "panic" and they read no further. This symptom of PTSD includes all individuals, men, women, and children. If you are in the military and involved in a combat situation your training and normal survival instincts allow you to perform.

**B.** You re-experience the trauma in the form of dreams, flashbacks, intrusive memories, or unrest at being in situations that remind you of the original trauma.

**C.** You show evidence of avoidance behavior, a numbing of emotions and reduced interest in others and the outside world.

**D.** You experience physiological hyper arousal as evidenced by insomnia, agitation, irritability or outburst of rage.

**E.** The symptoms in Criteria B, C, and D persist for at least one month.

**F.** The symptoms have significantly affected your social or vocational abilities or other important areas of your life.



## **Associated symptoms**

The above symptoms are basically direct symptoms of PTSD but there are many associated symptoms of PTSD. An individual can have PTSD without having any associated symptoms but in most cases, an individual will exhibit at least one or more of the associated symptoms.

If you demonstrate any of the symptoms below and begin to seek treatment please make certain that the person initiating the treatment is aware that you have been involved in a traumatic event. If not informed, there is the possibility of acquiring the wrong diagnoses and the treatment for PTSD may be delayed. Below you will find a list of some of the more common associated symptoms of PTSD.

- A. Survivors guilt
- B. Self destructive and impulsive behavior
- C. Dissociative symptoms
- D. Feelings of ineffectiveness, shame, despair, or hopelessness
- E. A loss of previously sustained beliefs
- F. Social withdrawal
- G. Feeling constantly threatened
- H. Impaired relationships
- I. A change from the individuals previous personality characteristics
- J. Panic Disorder
- K. Major Depressive Disorder
- L. Substance abuse and related disorders

## **Additional Information**

PTSD is a very complicated condition and there are several forms of PTSD. PTSD can be either acute, chronic, or delayed-onset. Acute PTSD occurs within 3 months after a traumatic event. Chronic PTSD means that the symptoms that a person is demonstrating have been occurring for at least 3 months or longer. With delayed-onset PTSD, the symptoms occur anytime later than 6 months after the traumatic event took place. This can be 1 year, 20 years, or even 40 or 60 years after the traumatic event. Today, when you visit a PTSD clinic at the Veterans Administration you will find veterans from the WW II era up to and including veterans who have served in the current theaters of operations.

As stated, PTSD is a complicated condition and research continues into the symptoms and associated symptoms. There is much to learn about PTSD and there are many things that cannot be explained about PTSD. The mental health community has yet to explain why two individuals can be in the same place at the same time and experience the same traumatic event

but yet, only one experiences the symptoms of PTSD. But there is one thing that the mental health community has realized. They know that if you are experiencing the symptoms of PTSD that it is imperative that you seek treatment as quick as possible. If you are a veteran of WWII, Korea, Vietnam, or one of the current theaters of operations or even still on active duty and are experiencing the symptoms of PTSD seek treatment NOW. After treatment the memories may remain, but the symptoms can be controlled.

## **Treatment Information**

If you are a veteran who served in the theater of operations of Enduring Freedom, or Iraqi Freedom you have the right to two free years of healthcare at the Veterans Administration after discharge. If you were in the Reserves or National Guard and were activated to serve in the same theater of operations or in support of Iraqi Freedom or Enduring Freedom you have the right to two free years of healthcare at the Veterans Administration. This is true even if you never left the states but were activated in direct support. If you are a veteran of another era there is still the possibility that you can still obtain treatment for PTSD but do not linger. The VA is becoming very crowded and the doors are starting to close. And, the VA is the expert concerning combat related PTSD. Remember, PTSD can occur years after the traumatic event so if you have any symptoms that can relate to PTSD go now, even if the symptoms are slight. Once there is a file at the VA recording even these slight symptoms this will allow you to possibly obtain treatment at a later date if these symptoms become worse.

## **Additional PTSD Resources**

Below we have listed contact numbers and additional links to other sources that relate to VA healthcare and PTSD.

**VA Benefits 1-800-827-1000**

**VA Health Care Benefits 1-877-222-8387**

**Main VA website – <http://www.va.gov>**

**Benefit link for Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom – <http://www.vba.va.gov/EFIF>**

**National Center For PTSD war related link  
– <http://www.ncptsd.org/topics/war/html>  
& <http://www.ncptsd.org/index.html>**

**Waco VA PTSD Clinic  
<http://www.texvet.com/PTSD/Residential.htm>**



# Team Veteran Leader Adventure Racing

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 sacrifice of our fallen warriors and the service of 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. 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.

**For more information on the Veterans Coalition, go to [www.theveteranscoalition.org](http://www.theveteranscoalition.org)**

We need your support. If you wish to make a tax deductible donation to help support the many projects of the Veterans Coalition, such as Military Support Packages, Beacon House homeless veteran rehabilitation shelters, and assisting veterans with the reintegration and the processing of claims through the Dept of Veterans Affairs, call 1-800-843-8626, email [vnwnatl@epix.net](mailto:vnwnatl@epix.net), or donate directly to a team member via Cash donations or checks made out to the Veterans Fund of the United States. Receipts are available upon request.

***“Only those who will risk going too far can possibly know how far they can go.”***

***~ T.S. Elliot***



# Soldier Races to Honor Missouri's Fallen Heros

The fourth running of the Midwest's premier adventure race, the Berryman Adventure, took place September 25-26, 2004. Starting deep in the Ozark Mountains near Steelville, Missouri, the 2004 Berryman Adventure took teams through 36 hours of continuous competition in the beautiful and rugged mountains of the Ozarks. Coed teams of four, pairs, and soloists tested their skills, their endurance, and their determination to push them through this grueling course.

For most racers, the event was all about the physical challenge and the thrill of competition. For one racer, who confronted the course alone in solo competition, the reasons went much deeper. Marc Hoffmeister of Team Veteran Leader raced in tribute to the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines of Missouri who have given their lives in the global war on terror.

Hoffmeister dedicated this race to the twenty service members from Missouri who have made the ultimate sacrifice to defend the principles of freedom for which our nation stands. Every step, every drop of sweat, every drop of blood upon the course was a tribute to the memory of our service members.

The race began with a 6 mile paddle around Council Bluff Lake and then a 12 mile trek to navigation points distributed around the perimeter of the lake and on Johnson Mountain. Racers followed the run with a 40 mile mountain bike through the Mark Twain National forest along the Ozark and Berryman trails. A short 4-6 mile orienteering course greeted racers as they emerged from the rigorous mountain bike



Major Hoffmeister participating in the Berryman Race - kayaking is one of his favorite things!

course. Hoffmeister managed a 3rd place finish in his division, completing the course with a time of 16 hours and 36 minutes. Nearly twenty hours later, the last of the teams completed the course.

"Perhaps the greatest reason I do this is to let the families of these men and women know that they are not alone. We share their grief and their pride. The headlines may fade, but our gratitude will not." Hoffmeister is familiar with the sacrifices of war. An active duty Army officer himself, he only recently returned from a year deployment to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

It is a small tribute from a fellow soldier, but Hoffmeister hopes his efforts bring the names of our fallen warriors closer to those who they defended. This race was dedicated to the honorable service and selfless sacrifice of the following service members. Read their names and remember... freedom is never free.

Staff Sgt. Daniel L. Kisling Jr.	31	Neosho	Missouri	30-Jan 2003	Afghanistan
Sgt. Donald Ralph Walters	33	Kansas City	Missouri	23-Mar 2003	Iraq
Spc. Joel L. Bertoldie	20	Independence	Missouri	18-Jul 2003	Iraq
Spc. Joshua M. Neusche	20	Montreal	Missouri	12-Jul 2003	Homburg
Cpl. Dallas L. Kerns	21	Mountain Grove	Missouri	5-Jul 2004	Iraq
Spc. Jonathan P. Barnes	21	Anderson	Missouri	26-Jul 2003	Iraq
Sgt. Nicholas M. Hodson	22	Smithville	Missouri	22-Mar 2003	Iraq
Pfc. Jeremiah D. Smith	25	Odessa	Missouri	26-May 2003	Iraq
Sgt. Ryan M. Campbell	25	Kirksville	Missouri	29-Apr 2004	Iraq
Sgt. Travis L. Burkhardt	26	Edina	Missouri	6-Jun 2003	Iraq
Staff Sgt. Jamie L. Huggins	26	Hume	Missouri	Oct. 26 2003	Iraq
Capt. Benedict J. Smith	29	Monroe City	Missouri	Nov. 7 2003	Iraq
Spc. Kenneth A. Melton	30	Westplains	Missouri	25-Apr 2004	Iraq
Sgt. Philip J. Svitak	31	Joplin	Missouri	4-Mar 2002	Afghanistan
Pfc. Jesse A. Givens	34	Springfield	Missouri	1-May 2003	Iraq
Spc. Michael C. Campbell	34	Marshfield	Missouri	19-May 2004	Iraq
Staff Sgt. Trevor Spink	36	Farmington	Missouri	10-Jul 2004	Iraq
Tech. Sgt. William J. Kerwood	37	Houston	Missouri	Nov. 23 2003	Afghanistan
Sgt. 1st Class Richard S. Gottfried	42	Lake Ozark	Missouri	9-Mar 2004	Iraq
Sgt. Melvin Y. Mora	27	Columbia	Missouri	6-Jun 2004	Iraq

More information about Team Veteran Leader and their cause can be found at:  
<http://www.theveteranscoalition.org/teamveteranleader>





## *US Department of Defense Update* *- Nov. 19, 2004 CENTCOM Fallujah Update*

USMC Lt. Gen. John Sattler, commander of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force in Fallujah, briefed the Pentagon press via satellite about Operation Al-Fajr (Dawn). Following are highlights. (transcript)

- The purpose of Operation Al-Fajr was to eliminate Fallujah as either a perceived or an actual safe haven from which terrorists could operate.

- Based on some of the records and ledgers uncovered during the fighting, commanders believe they have broken the back of the insurgency and eliminated Fallujah as a safe haven. The fighters have been forced to leave for new areas. When fighters are in areas they are not familiar with, it is easier to capture or bring them to justice.

- The Coalition is now operating throughout all of Fallujah. In order to make the town relatively safe so it can be turned over to Iraqi security forces, both U.S. troops and Iraqi security forces are now in the search-and-clear phase, going house to house and building to building. They have found stockpiles of weapons and in one basement, a room with bloodstained walls and tools for what appears to be some type of torture chamber.

- The timeline for opening the town for residents to return will be event driven, based on conditions, rather than time driven. Coalition military leaders will make recommendations to Prime Minister Allawi once they feel the area is fairly safe and secure. The intent now is to phase in the return of the city's citizens by sector. The Iraqi government will make the calls about which sections of town to open when.

- More than 50 U.S. troops and eight Iraqi troops have died in the fighting. It is estimated that 1,200 insurgents have been killed. A process is in place to compensate Iraqis for damage to their residence or business and for restitution for injury or death to innocent civilians.

- U.S. forces will move out as the Iraqi security structure takes hold, but forces will stay as close as necessary to ensure the rule of law is maintained. A curfew is still in place.

- Clean-up operations have begun. The Civil Military Operations Center has been stood up; it will bring humanitarian assistance and construction in coordination with the Iraqi government. The water, sewage, electrical grid and basic essential services are being evaluated. Food and water are being distributed.

- The Coalition and the Iraqis will continue to follow all leads to pursue the individuals who got away and the cowards who left early.

Gen. John Abizaid, commander of U.S. Central Command, has completed a three-day visit to Iraq. Following are some highlights of his remarks.

- Most people in Iraq and the rest of the Arab world do not share the views of the extremists. They want to live in a world governed by their own laws, not one dominated by bin Laden or al-Zarqawi.

- Courageous Iraqi patriots are fighting against the extremists so their country can be safe and secure, governed by elections and a constitution.

- Both Iraqis and Americans must have patience and willpower during the time it will take to train the security forces and find brave individuals willing to lead them.

Published by the  
U.S. Department of Defense  
Office of Public Affairs

### **PACKAGING AND ASSEMBLING CONTRACTS**

**Do you have a company or a need for packaging or assembly of components that homeless veterans going through the transition back to society could participate in? You and your company could support these veterans. Contact us at 1-800-843-8626.**

**Ask yourself how you can help a homeless veteran reintegrate into the society they willingly defended.**



# *Something Positive*

Once a month I meet with some Veterans and their wives for lunch at a local pub. We enjoy each others company without the talk of politics; whether Governmental or Veteran, there are no raffle tickets waved under our noses and the offered menu is on the plus side.

On talking to a veteran he challenged me with the question, "Carla, vets can easily talk about the bad things that have happened to them. The hard time they had in Vietnam, how they had to fight so long to get a pension or how bad their health or marriage is, but how many veterans have done something positive or good in their life and don't know it?"

I scratched my head for a minute to see where this man was coming from.

"Ok, lets see what good you have done," was my response.

"Oh well, I didn't mean me!" he says.

But with a few questions I learned that this man who had not done anything positive since Vietnam had indeed achieved quite a lot. One marriage, two children, one grandchild, renovated his own home, completed a welfare course to aid veterans and was the spearhead in organizing a Welcome Home Afternoon Tea at the Mayor's Rooms for Iraq veterans. He also instigates a Gone Fishin' weekend occasionally for veterans and has also helped me out on more than one occasion by listening to draft copies of written articles.

Not bad for a Veteran that doesn't think he has done much.

I asked another Veteran what he had done on the positive side of life. It turns out that he too has helped friends or neighbors in crises and has achieved his goals in traveling overseas with his wife.

I could share stories of other veterans who don't think they are worth much in this life but who have spontaneously assisted others in a time of crises. Some have built businesses from scratch, others have held a steady job for years, still others work in areas which serve the community such as Volunteer Fire Brigade Work, Ambulance Officers or Policemen.

I even know one Veteran who is a "stay at home Mum" while his wife goes out to work. He can't hold down a job, but he can run a household. He feels secure at home, so it works out to their mutual benefit if his wife works and he does what he can do best the cooking and cleaning, washing and ironing and getting the kids to school.

What about the Veterans who edit their local Veterans newspapers and take the responsibility of publishing and mailing them out every quarter? What about the Veterans who are on TPI yet help out in the Veteran Organizations and other organizations such as Meals on Wheels?

If we take five minutes to look at a Veteran's life, I am sure that we will find positive things they have done to help others around them.

Some of the veterans I spoke to on this matter had to scratch their heads and take time to think what they had done. It wasn't till they started to do some deep thinking that I began to hear the comments, "Well I did..." and "There was the time when..."

Doesn't it make you feel better when you can look back a few years or a month or two and remember when you did do something good for someone else?

Isn't that what life should be about? So many times I have heard the comment, "there is always someone worse off than me." The last time I heard this was the day before yesterday. I had rung a veteran who is dying with cancer, he has lungs full of asbestosis. After losing his hair because of the treatment, after learning that the cancer has spread to his spine and he now finds it hard to walk, he still claims there are people worse off than himself.

Life is what we make it. I think it would be very sad if we came to the end of our life and regret the things we didn't do when we had the opportunity to do so.

For instance; The local Meals on Wheels, Opportunity Shop or some other welfare organisation needs a driver. You have a car and some spare time, why not volunteer your services? Or, you know the old person living across the road? Why not stop and say hello to them or even give them a wave as you drive by. You have no idea how that could brighten up some elderly persons life. Always remember, that we too will be old one day.

Well before I end this 'good works' campaign, let me encourage you to think of the good that you do for others. Remember a big secret in life is to think of others as well as yourself. Try it, it really does make you feel good on the inside.

~ Carla Evans  
Chaplain

***"The greatest pleasure I know is to do a good action by stealth and to have it found out by accident."***



# *A Combat Veterans New Battle*

*By: Dave Konopki – Times Leader Newspaper*

Ann has a horrible premonition about the staircase those 14 high steps linking living room to second floor. Each step is barely able to contain a size 7 shoe, much less the size 10 feet of her husband, John, whose legs are becoming wobbly as a result of Huntington's disease. He has tripped once or twice but hasn't fallen, yet, said his wife.

"I have a vision of ... one day him ... at the bottom of the stairs," said Ann, her voice halting as she described her fear. "It's something I try not to think about, but it's in the back of my head at all times. It's a terrible thought."

The Kingston, PA couple recently moved most of their belongings, including their bedroom furniture, to the first floor. The only thing remaining upstairs is the shower, which John uses daily.

John and Ann want to expand their small half-bath on the first floor to include a wheelchair-accessible shower. They believe the project would extend the time 56-year-old John can stay independently mobile as well as safe. "He seems so much more content and happy since we've been downstairs," said Ann. "I didn't realize how much it meant to him."

As John's disease progresses, he barely resembles the 19-year-old who served 19 months in Vietnam as a Marine Corps combat engineer. He shakes involuntarily and sways while standing. He has difficulty swallowing.

John can't concentrate or think as clearly as he did during his 21 years as an electronics repairman at the Tobyhanna Army Depot. But he is well aware of the ramifications of the debilitating and ultimately fatal disease. Barring a medical breakthrough, John knows he'll one day rely on a wheelchair.

That hasn't kept him from maintaining a positive outlook and keeping his sense of humor. While sitting on the edge of a bed and posing for a photo with Ann, John turned to his wife, held her hand and said, "Do you come here often?"

It's that attitude, said Ann, that has delayed the disease from progressing further. "If he didn't have the mental outlook he has, he'd be in a nursing home by now."

Huntington's disease is an inherited disorder that affects body and mind. It most commonly strikes between the ages of 35 and 50, although the onset of the disease can occur at any time. Symptoms include depression, problems with eating and swallowing, difficulty making decisions and a loss of coordination. There is no cure.

Huntington's has been devastating to John and his family. He watched the disease attack his father, Albert, who died at 52, and sister Carol, who died at 53. It also has left his 62-year-old sister Harriet in a nursing home.

Every child of a parent with Huntington's has a 50 percent chance of inheriting the disease, which is passed down from the father according to the Website for the Department of Neurology at Kansas University. Albert passed the gene to all three of his children.

"I knew I'd get it," said John, who tested positive for the gene when he was 16 years old. The symptoms started in 1998 and John tested positive for the disease in 1999. "I knew I had to fight. I fight this every day, I truly do. I don't feel sorry for myself and I don't want people to feel sorry for me."

The disease has changed Ann's life too.

The everyday family responsibilities cutting the grass, doing the laundry, cleaning have landed squarely on her shoulders. She works part time outside the home, from 6 a.m. to noon, so that she can serve as John's caretaker during most of the day.

It has been emotionally draining watching the disease attack the man she's been with for 15 years, including the last 10 as a married couple. "It's a very, very hard thing to watch," said Ann. "He was someone who was so vibrant. He fixed everything around the house: cars, everything. I've watched that slowly taken away from him."

But Ann has never left her husband's side. "She's great," John said. "I love her. I truly do. It's a hard job, but she does a great job taking care of me."

Receiving a first-floor shower and wheelchair-accessible bathroom would give the couple a big financial boost this holiday season. Perhaps more important, it'd give them peace of mind. "It would be a godsend," Ann said. "He wouldn't have to go upstairs at all, and I wouldn't have to worry about him falling."

Note: John and Ann are both long-time members of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition. John is a life member. If you would like to make a donation to John and Ann Horridge, make your check payable to them and send it to them in care of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition, 805 So. Township Boulevard, Pittston, PA 18640. It is never too late to help a veteran in need.



# *FLT-LT Laretta Webster, RAAF*



Laretta gives the appearance of the “girl-next-door” type of person. A tad above average height, long auburn hair and clear blue eyes with a spontaneous laugh and warm personality, she reflects the image of carefree confidence with the world at her feet. But don’t let that deceive you; this young woman has lived for six months in the theatre of war, she is intelligent, precise and careful in speech and observant. So how did this young woman cope as a member of the Royal Australian Air Force in Iraq? How did she cope with foreign smells, scenes of war and living under the constant stress that a war zone carries?

“On the whole, very well,” she stated.

Sitting at my kitchen table and sipping at a cup of coffee, I listened as she shared events that were still very fresh and vivid to her.

The occasional mental flashback of cruelly inflicted injuries, the casualties that every war has and cannot be escape from stand uppermost. One especially is remembered of a head decapitated from its body because of a bomb blast. There is the remembering of what it is like living for six months with the knowledge that an in-coming mortar or rocket fired from outside the base could cause instant death or catastrophe. It is also understood that one’s specific work is important because other peoples lives, as in any team work, depends on efficiency and that in itself is a continual driving force to keep a high standard in the daily living in war conditions.

It serves as a safeguard against the possibility of a slow lethargy, a kind of acceptance of what war is and does, creeping in and hindering the sharpness of minds and desensitizing the needed intuitiveness to work and survive on the ‘cutting edge.’

Initially, Laretta’s call to serve in Iraq came at a very appropriate time of her career. Signing on the dotted line at 19 years of age at a Recruiting Office in Geelong, graduating from the Australian Defense Force Academy and making steady progress in her area of expertise, things were becoming a little mundane and she was wondering which direction to take within the Royal Australian Air Force system. When asked if a tour of duty in Baghdad would appeal to her, she jumped at the chance and, now able to look back, was so very glad that she did.

There were days in Baghdad when Laretta was homesick. The working days could be up to 16 hours long. However, there were compensations, such as receiving emails and parcels from her family and support from her local RSL in Drysdale, Victoria.

Sometimes, when tiredness and homesickness threatened to overwhelm her she would walk out onto the compound and finding a quiet place, gaze up at the still, clear night. Plainly visible were stars not seen in the Southern Hemisphere and the moon, shining its golden light, would look so big and close. Drinking in this atmosphere, Laretta would find it easier to sleep and to be more at peace within.

What is Baghdad like today? Well, it is like any country or nation that has existed under one regime for many years and now finds itself on the brink of something new. There are factions within the country that are finding it hard to come to terms with the changes of ‘new birth’. There is a struggle for honour, integrity and trust to be heard in the clamour for ‘old things’ that once was a way of life for many Iraqi people.

In all of this upheaval though, many Defense Force Personnel from the Coalition Countries unite their talents and expertise to try and establish a form of democracy to aid those people who have never been free to live their lives in a way, we as Westerners, define the word ‘free.’

The Aussies, moving around their base and working in close proximity to selected Iraqi people show warmth and friendliness and even have learned to give the customary greeting of “Salaam”. It is while working close to the nationals that Laretta found herself thinking, “What would I do if I was captured?” “What would my pain threshold be?” “What would I do if I was shot?” These thoughts were highlighted when a suicide bomber pulled his ‘pin’ to life just outside her compound one day and she heard first hand the tumultuous commotion that resulted.

Word had been passed down to her that her sister, Samantha, a Flying Officer with the RAAF, was piloting a Hercules Aircraft into Baghdad and would have a few hours stop over. The two sisters, having not seen each other for six months were re-united and able to have ‘catch-up’ time to share the latest family news.

Laretta is back in Australia now, her tour of duty completed. The challenge of her work, the closeness of parents and friends are satisfying and stimulating.

She is glad that she was able to experience life at war in Baghdad as it has given her a fresh understanding of the importance of her work, the value of life and perhaps the most important, the freedom of living in a democratic country.

~ Carla Evans



## *Hasta La Vista, Baby!*

Remember when Puerto Rico was raising hell about the US Navy using that nothing little island just off the coast of Puerto Rico for bombing practices, which they had used for the past 75 years? Demonstrations were held, Hollywood left wingers, Al Sharpton, and his fellow demagogues went down there to demonstrate to get the Navy out?

I am sure it infuriated you just as it did me at the time. Well... here is our revenge. Always be careful what you ask for, you just may get it!

One of the many headaches that the U. S. has had was the Puerto Rican Island of Vieques. In the waning years of the Clinton Administration, protesters demanded that the US Navy abandon bombing and naval gunfire exercises that had taken place on the largely uninhabited island for nearly seventy years. Liberal icons bumped into one another to fly to Puerto Rico, boat over to the island, trespass (but never on a day that there was an exercise scheduled) and get arrested for the benefit of the New York Times or Newsweek. They included the Reverend Al Sharpton, Mrs. Jesse Jackson, Joan Baez, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Edward Olmos, Michael Moore and Ramsey Clark, just to name a few.

In 2002, the bombing exercises were transferred to Eglin Air Force bombing range in North West Florida, not far from the Jacksonville and Pensacola Naval Air Stations. In January, many of the protesters were back in Puerto Rico, celebrating the final bombing exercise on Vieques and waved Puerto Rican flags and placards that read "U.S. Navy, get out of Puerto Rico."

The following February, Rumsfeld announced that the U.S. Navy will close the Roosevelt Roads Naval Air Station in Puerto Rico in 2004, eliminating 1,200 civilian jobs as well as 700 military positions. This naval facility is estimated to have put nearly \$300

million annually into the local economy. The next day a stunned Governor Sila Calderon, held a news conference in San Juan, protesting the base closure as a serious blow to the Commonwealth's fragile economy. The governor stated that "The people of Puerto Rico don't now or never did have an interest in closing the Vieques bombing range or the Roosevelt Roads naval base. We are interested in both staying in Puerto Rico."

When asked, the Commander-in-Chief, Western Atlantic Command, said, "without Vieques, I see no further need for the facility at Roosevelt Roads. None."

So, Yanqui go home? Fine. But we'll take our dollars with us. Hasta la vista, baby!

On February 21, the Secretary of Defense also announced that starting this year, the U.S. European Command would begin moving most if not all of its active combat and support units from bases in Germany to others being established in Poland, The Czech Republic, Hungary and Turkey to "better position them for rapid deployment to likely hot spots in those parts of the world."

Immediately the business and government leaders in the German states of Hesse, Rhineland and Wurttemberg, protested the loss of nearly \$6 billion in revenue each year from the bases and manpower to be displaced. A spokesman for the Foreign Ministry speculated that the move may be "what the Americans call 'payback' for the actions of this government in opposing Military action in Iraq."

Does anyone know the German translation for "Hasta la vista, baby?" Oh, ain't it nice to see a government with guts and a good memory.

GOD BLESS AMERICA and George Bush

~ From an interested observer.



*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.*



# *My Vacation with National (Or So I Thought)*

*From: Morris Miller*

Let me start off first, by saying it was anything but a vacation; even so, it was very rewarding and most importantly fulfilling.

I started off on my journey of enlightenment by stuffing informational bags at National Headquarters to later be given out at Washington, DC. We got to DC late on the Wednesday before Veterans Day and that evening after dinner we all went to the park area (just before the Wall) to set up our information tent (the Parks Department finally gave us a permit.) Picture this: a bunch of guys and a few gals who at most probably never put up a tent before (I hadn't) doing so in the dark. The highlight of this experience was watching our National Commander and Executive Director in formal attire (no kilts though) working alongside us in the damp grass and darkness.

On Veterans Day many of us had multiple duties to perform, and mine was to man the information tent from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. How great it would be to meet so many of my brother and sister Vietnam Veterans. I could have never imagined. There were also very many younger veterans and current serving military personnel who wanted to be at the Wall to honor us and I encouraged them to join our organization.

On Friday due to the monsoon rains we opted not to man the tent, instead I went with the rest of the group on a scheduled visit to Bethesda Naval Hospital where I had an opportunity to meet with a few of the casualties of our war on terrorism. The word hero is used very lightly these days in the description of everything from cartoon characters to cars, but in every meaningful sense of the word these current serving men and women of our military are truly heroes.

Their pride in service, dedication to their mission, and devotion to their brothers and sisters still serving in harm's way is nothing short of amazing. The love, respect, honor, and admiration I felt for these brave and heroic men and women reminded me of the greatness of our nation and who makes it so.

Saturday and Sunday I manned the tent again with help (Murph thanks for all the bathroom breaks and putting up with me. I know it was hard, but someone had to do it, and I guess you got stuck with it.)

On Monday, some of us started on our way down to the United Veterans Beacon House in Huntington, West Virginia. Peter Forbes, Nancy Verespy, Loy Smith, and Kim King. This would be my second trip there, the first being about a month prior for a week. I knew there would still be a lot of work to be done before we could open, but little did I know what Peter and Nancy had in store for us.

Well, to say we worked like dogs would be a gross understatement. But the Dynamic Duo, Peter, who I like to call the head of the herd, and Nancy, put us all to shame. I do have to thank them for making me proficient in all forms of painting, windows, doors, moldings, walls and of course, the occasional ceiling. But the highlight was learning how to become a semi-professional carpet cleaner. Thanks for all the great on-the-job training guys. Now I can come out of retirement and get a real job.

Joking aside I had never done any of this type of work (I'm lazy) in my own home of 33 years on Long Island. I always dialed the phone to find someone else and pay them to do the work. I never worked so hard in my life nor had been so tired. But knowing that what you've done may in the slightest way help one of our less fortunate brothers or sisters is the greatest reward anyone can receive. This winter when I'm in my home warm and secure and it is snowing and freezing outside, I will take great comfort in knowing that because of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition and its leadership, a brother veteran who might have been on the street homeless will have what you and I so often take for granted, a bed, a hot meal, a shower, and all the other things that having a home and a place to stay means. We are our brother's keeper and what better than a Beacon House to show our concern and caring for them.

We left Huntington Friday evening going back to D.C. to drop Loy Smith off at Washington National Airport for his trip home to the back country of Louisiana (Thibodaux down in the bayou). For those of you who don't know Loy, he is our newest elected National Board Member and speaks with a real down home accent, not like us perfect New Yorkers who speak with no accent at all. It was indeed an honor and privilege getting to know and work alongside him. But listening to him and Peter rapidly conversing I often felt a translator was needed on my part. Since none was available, I very often just nodded my head and pretended I knew what the heck they were saying.

Then it was off to Norfolk, Virginia where Peter Forbes presented our newest post, Post VA-05, with its Charter. What a great bunch of brothers and sisters. The hard work they did to start the post was very difficult and time consuming. This is the second time I've been involved in the birth of a Post (being there when their charter was presented), the first one was Brooklyn, New York Post 1 and they also showed devotion, dedication, and hard work to get it started.



For the next two days Peter and Nancy and Lawrence Collins (Post VA-05 Commander) ran all over Virginia Beach talking to anyone who could help to get a Beacon House established there. The homeless veteran population there is great and a Beacon House is surely needed and National is doing everything it can to secure a location in the area.

We headed back to Pittston, PA and arrived Tuesday morning before Thanksgiving exactly two weeks after our trip began. I then drove home to Long Island and arrived in the evening.

Well, here I am home, nursing my aches and pains, complaining (bitching is a better word) like an old man

about how much work I did, but you know, now looking back on the past two weeks, it was the best vacation I ever had. I never knew that working hard in the service for others could be so rewarding and fulfilling.

P.S. Even though I hold two National Program Coordinator titles National Education Program Coordinator and National Scholarship Program Coordinator those task masters at National worked me (and everybody else) to the bone, I'd still do it all again in a heartbeat but don't tell them.

## ***Funeral Held for Soldier Who Died in Korean War Battle 54 Years Ago***

FAYETTEVILLE, N.C. - Alma Hodes married Teddy Lilly about five weeks before he was sent to Korea. Teddy Lilly is home at last.

The 22-year-old soldier was reported killed more than 54 years ago in one of the bloodiest battles of the Korean War. But it wasn't until recently that his remains were laid to rest among his family in his hometown. "I had given up hope," said Alma Hodes. "But deep in your heart, you always wonder."

The remains of 2nd Lt. Edmund "Teddy" Lilly III were recovered in South Korea and buried in Hawaii but identified only this summer through DNA testing. His funeral was held at St. John's Episcopal Church, where he once served as an acolyte. Scripture and hymns told of Lilly having already gone home. "From the moment the mortar exploded, his soul soared like an eagle to his God," the Rev. Louanne Loch said. She read a poem written by Lilly's father, Col. Edmund Lilly, who had been held prisoner in World War II: "Word came! Our fears were realized. It stabbed us like a knife. Our boy so loved his freedom that he bought it with his life."

Afterward, Lilly's remains were buried in a family plot at nearby Cross Creek Cemetery. The services were attended by Lilly's widow, two sisters, old friends and younger relatives - only a few of whom were old enough to remember him. Garrett Dale, Lilly's great-

nephew, is in the Air Force. He had researched Lilly's story but learned much more since the DNA match was made in June. "I was rather overjoyed," Dale said. "This is such a rare occurrence. It does hit you with national pride that they're still trying to find remains. To know even in death, he's still one of our own."

Lilly was one of more than 8,100 servicemen considered missing in action from the Korean War. Lilly belonged to the 1st Battalion of the 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division. His company was wiped out at the battle of the Pusan Perimeter, one of the most violent of the war. He was posthumously awarded the Silver Star.

His remains were identified from those of about 1,000 soldiers buried in Hawaii's Punchbowl Cemetery using DNA samples taken from his sisters.

Only a few servicemen from the cemetery have been identified, according to the Pentagon's POW/MIA Office.

Retired Col. William Baxley spent three years as Lilly's roommate at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and graduated with him in 1950. Baxley was supposed to go to Korea, too, but he was sent to Alaska instead. "I wrote him a letter from Alaska, and I got it back," Baxley said. "I think it said 'missing in action.' Just returned, unopened."

***A Man is Not Truly Dead  
Until He is Forgotten***



## Where There's A Will, There's A Way...

We all know that it is important to have a Will, but many people find the process daunting and others simply put it off. But no matter how large or small your estate may be, everyone should have a Will. Only through your Will can you rest assured that your assets whether substantial or quite modest will be distributed as you wish to your family, loved ones, and perhaps also to causes or charities especially meaningful to you.

Where there's a Will, there's a way. . . for you perpetuate your giving to Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition. And we encourage you to consider a lasting gift through a simple bequest which can benefit veterans, military, and their families for generations to come.

A charitable bequest a gift made through your Will can be a convenient way for you to leave a lasting legacy, often enabling you to give more than you might be able to donate during your lifetime. Bequests can be structured in several different ways.

You may choose to leave a specific dollar amount, or a percentage of your estate; a particular piece of real or personal property, all or a portion of the assets left over (the residual) after your family and loved ones have been provided for, or a combination of these provisions. Your attorney can advise you, based on your individual circumstances and wishes, inform you about tax benefits, and properly draft your Will.

We would be happy to provide you with additional information about planned or special gifts to Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition. So we can assist you, please complete and clip the form below and mail it to us, call us at 800-843-8626, or send us an email at [vvwnvatl@epix.net](mailto:vvwnvatl@epix.net).

*Where there's a Will, there's a way. . . your way!* So, please make sure you have an up-to-date Will and please, too, consider remembering the VVnW Coalition through a charitable bequest a truly meaningful and lasting way to honor and support the veterans, military, and families we serve.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Convenient Time to Call \_\_\_\_\_

[All information shared will be kept strictly confidential.]

I would like more information about:  a Gift through my Will  
 a Gift of Securities or Property  
 other Planned or Special Gifts

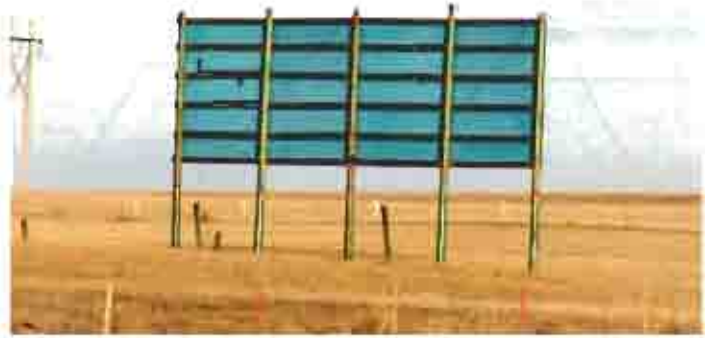
I have already included Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. and The Veterans Coalition in my Will.

Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition,  
805 South Township Boulevard, Pittston, PA 18640-3327



# BILLBOARDS

Do you have one of these or something similar to what is pictured that the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition could take advantage of to spread its message? Perhaps it may need some renovations. Perhaps it is a different size. We can use any size and renovate the one that you have. We are looking for billboards that are along highways so that we can spread the message of supporting our troops and supporting our veterans. Please call us if you have what we are looking for 1-800-843-8626.



## VVnW & The Veterans Coalition Gets into The Holiday Spirit!

National Commander Peter Forbes gets everyone into the act of putting up of holiday lights at the International Headquarters of the VVnW & The Veterans Coalition. Shown holding the ladder is Post MT-01 Commander Kim King with Administrative Assistant Jonathan Curley assisting Commander Forbes (in the orange) shirt with the securing of the lights. You need to a "man of many talents" to keep up with the Commander. Come spend a few days at National Headquarters to find out!



*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.*





# BULLETIN BOARD

## 60th Anniversary – Iwo Jima

*“Uncommon Valore was a Common Virture” – Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz - 1945*

The name Iwo Jima stands shoulder to shoulder with Bunker Hill, Gettysburg, Belleau Woo, Chosin Reservoir, and Khe Sanh in the annals of Military History. Iwo Jima will forever be a symbol of bravery, service, and sacrifice under the most difficult combat conditions imaginable!



### Reunion of the Landing – 18-20 February 2005

Iwo Jima Memorial, Washington, DC

Host: Maj. Gen. Fred Haynes, USMC - 5th Marine Division

### Reunion of Honor – 18-20 February 2005

Main Tour: Guam & Iwo Jima – 7-14 March

Host: Lt. Gen. Larry Snowden, USMC - 4th Marine Division

Pre Tour: Saipan/Tinian – 5-14 March (w/Guam & Iwo Jima)

Post Tour: National Cemetery of the Pacific “Punch Bowl”

Honolulu, Hawaii – 14-18 March



## COMBAT VETERANS OF IWO JIMA, INC.

4600 Duke Street, Suite 420, Alexandria, VA 22304-2517

Telephone (703) 212-0695 • Fax (703) 212-8567 • 800-722-9501 • Email: [CombatVetIwo@miltours.com](mailto:CombatVetIwo@miltours.com) • [www.miltours.com](http://www.miltours.com)

## USS Abanko

A reunion of the USS Abanko, AFT 96 will be held September 21-25, 2005 in Bowie, Maryland. For more information contact: Adolph Channell, RR 1, Box 246A, Marlinton, WV 24954, phone: 304-799-6442, e-mail: [achannell@marlintonwv.com](mailto:achannell@marlintonwv.com)

## 1st Marine Division

An Army reunion of the 1st Marine Division, 7th Regiment, 1st Battalion, D Company, Vietnam 1970 will be held April 20-23, 2005 in Fort Arkansas near Corpus Christi, Texas. For more information contact: Michael H O'Dell, in West Virginia, telephone: 304-295-7296.

## Wyoming Vietnam Vets Welcome at Scottsbluff Reunion

Wyoming Vietnam veterans are invited to attend the annual Nebraska Vietnam Veterans Reunion Aug. 12-15 being held this year just 20 miles outside the Wyoming border in Scottsbluff, Neb. The reunion features workshops, BBQ, golf tournament and dances. Workshop topics include Texas Tech University Vietnam Veterans Archives, Task Force Omega on POW/MIA and the Veterans Service Office Registration is \$50 for adults and \$35 for youth for the entire conference. One-day registration is also available. For registration forms or more information, call Darrell Peterson at (308) 632-1797 in Scottsbluff.

## USS Boston

The USS Boston CA-69, CAG-1, and SSN-703 shipmates, and crew members of all U.S. Navy Ships named Boston are planning a July, 2005 reunion in King of Prussia, PA. For more details contact USS BOSTON Shipmates, Inc., Arthur L. Hebert, Secretary, P.O. Box 816, Amherst, NH 03031-0816, phone 603-672-USSBOSTON and check their website at [ussboston.org](http://ussboston.org).



# *New US Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary*

## *The Honorable R. James "Jim" Nicholson*

Jim Nicholson was born during the Great Depression in 1938, the third of seven children, and raised on a tenant farm in Struble, Iowa. Like most poor American families, the Nicholsons knew that a good education would create opportunity, so Jim worked hard to earn an appointment to the United States Military Academy. He credits his Army service as the defining experience in his life, imbuing him with a sense of duty, honor, and country.

After graduation from West Point, Nicholson served eight years as an Army Ranger and paratrooper, then 22 years in the Army Reserve, retiring with the rank of full colonel. As a Ranger in Vietnam, he earned the Bronze Star Medal, the Combat Infantry Badge, the Meritorious Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Vietnamese Cross for Gallantry and two Air Medals. Nicholson holds a master's degree in public policy from Columbia University in New York and a law degree from the University of Denver. He practiced law with a major Denver firm and became a partner after two years, specializing in real estate, municipal finance, and zoning law.

Leaving the law in 1978, he founded Nicholson Enterprises, Inc., a developer of master-planned residential communities. In 1987, he bought Renaissance Homes, which has become a nationally known, award-winning builder of high quality custom homes. Nicholson's success in business was matched by his contributions to his community. In Colorado, he served three years as Chairman of the Volunteers of America, the largest faith-based social service agency in the Rocky Mountain states. He chaired the Community Concerns Committee of the Denver Bar Association and provided leadership to the Listen

Foundation, dedicated to providing excellence in auditory-verbal services for children with hearing impairment, their families, and the professionals who work with them.

His service on the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission, and many other non-profit endeavors, have earned him the stature of one of Colorado's outstanding leaders.

In January 1986, Nicholson was elected Committeeman from Colorado for the Republican National Committee (RNC). In 1993, he was elected Vice-Chairman of the RNC and in January 1997, took over as Chairman following a nationwide campaign against five other candidates. In his first year as Chairman, he broke all party records for fundraising, helping to win the stunning series of 1997 election victories now known as the "Republican Clean Sweep."

Having firmly established his credentials as a fundraiser and national political strategist, Nicholson next convened a summit of the nation's Republican governors and Congressional leadership dedicated to improving America's schools. He emerged with a mandate to chair an unprecedented party-wide task force on education. Launched in September 1998, "Children First: The Republican Agenda for America's Students" became the road map to improving basic education in America. It's currently underway in the Bush Administration, bringing competition, accountability, and choice to the education system.

Nicholson's tenure as Chairman was marked by record fundraising and flawless adherence to the rules and ethics and culminated in the history-making Republican victories of the 2000 elections. Under Nicholson,

the Republican Party won the Presidency, the Congress, and a majority of governorships and state legislatures. This was a feat not accomplished by Republicans in nearly 50 years.

In 1999, Nicholson was honored by induction as a Knight in the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, one of the highest honors awarded to a Roman Catholic. In 2000, he was given the prestigious Horatio Alger Award, recognizing his climb from humble beginnings to a position of success. This has enabled him to serve others in America who are less fortunate. Among community honors, Irish America Magazine named him one of the top 100 Irish Americans in the country. He was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Public Service, Honoris Causa, by Regis University in Denver in May of 2001.

On August 10, 2001, Nicholson was sworn in as the sixth U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See. He presented his credentials to Pope John Paul II on September 13, 2001. Since assuming his post in Rome, Nicholson has organized an international conference on human trafficking, which attracted over 400 people from 35 different countries to talk about the human rights dimensions of 21st century slavery. He has become a forceful advocate for human rights and American humanitarian concerns worldwide, including religious freedom in Russia and China, as well as for the acceptability of American-grown biotech food to feed the 800 million starving and undernourished people in the world. He works closely with his bilateral partners in the Vatican on these issues, as well as those of war and peace and religious reconciliation.

On May 17, 2002, he was awarded an honorary doctorate



from John Cabot University in Rome, Italy. On January 7, 2003, he was presented with the President's Medal from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. During a ceremony in the Vatican on October 27, 2003, he was named a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of Pius IX, the highest papal award given to a layman or woman who is not a head of state.

In November 2002, Nicholson published a history of U.S.-Holy See relations entitled "The United States and the Holy See - The Long Road." This history, dating from 1788 to the present, was reissued in Italian and English in 2004 to coincide with the 20th anniversary of formal diplomatic relations between the United States and the Holy See.



## *Veterans' New ID Cards Help Battle Identity Theft*

WASHINGTON – With identity theft as the major fraud reported by Americans in 2003, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has designed a new identity card for veterans that will safeguard confidential information.

"The new identification card ensures veterans' personal information is protected," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi. "It also helps prevent the theft of important benefits and services from veterans that they earned by their service to our country."

The card, formally known as the Veterans Identity Card (VIC), will have veterans' photos on the front and identify them as enrollees in the VA's health care system. Encrypted on a magnetic tape on the back of the card will be the veteran's Social Security number, date of birth and a control number. The magnetic strip also records whether the veteran has a service-connected disability.

Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in the nation. The Federal Trade Commission listed identity theft as the number one fraud reported by consumers in 2003. Requests from veterans and their congressional representatives were instrumental in bringing about these latest changes.

Veterans should request the new card at their local medical center. Processing will take five to seven days once eligibility is verified. VA hopes to complete the conversion to the new, safer card as quickly as possible. The existing cards will remain valid until veterans receive their new cards.

**We Are Military  
We Are Veterans.**

## *VA Announces Funding for Gulf War Illness*

WASHINGTON Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi recently announced up to \$15 million in additional research funding for Gulf War illnesses.

"We still don't have a definitive cause for Gulf War illnesses," Principi said. "There has to be a reason why some of our veterans came home healthy, while others serving alongside them did not."

Although the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is still examining the committee's detailed, 143-page report, Principi said he is convinced there is sufficient justification for further scientific research.

The funding commitment represents the department's single largest set-aside of research

funding for a specific area of investigation and could constitute up to nearly 20 percent of VA's new research grant awards for FY 2005. Over the past decade, VA has spent more than \$50 million for research into Gulf War illnesses, and much of that work is still ongoing.

"I appreciate the hard work done during the last two and a half years by my special advisory committee, led by Jim Binns," Principi said. "I know they share my commitment to solve this mystery."

The 11-member committee, formally known as the Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Illnesses, was appointed by Principi in January 2002.



**Congratulations to Nick Murray an 8th grader at the Circle of Nations School in Wahpeton, North Dakota. His is the first submission received for the Veterans Design Competition. Thanks Nick for your enthusiasm and good luck in the contest! Get your designs in before the June 30, 2005 deadline.**







# VETERANS DESIGN COMPETITIONS

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



**Cash Prize for each  
Competition: \$500**

## Parameters:

### First competition:

- \* 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

### Second competition:

- \*Design in full color ~ \*Design to represent veterans of all eras
- 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!***



## ***Can't Work At A United Veterans Beacon House Renovation Project??***

### ***HERE ARE OTHER WAYS THAT YOU CAN HELP:***

Do you own a company or work at a company that produces products needed in support of a United Veterans Beacon House? We need some items that you might be able to help with...

- Things like low-pressure boilers and furnaces, and air conditioners
- Things like – household appliances and refrigerators, freezers, stoves, washers and dryers, etc.
- Things like – Cutlery and crockery, glassware, cookware and housewares
- Furniture, new – couches, chairs, twin-sized bed frames and headboards, new mattresses, four and five-drawer dressers, small wardrobes, end tables, coffee tables, television stands, dining tables and various household furniture
- Linens – new comforters, twin-sized sheets, pillowcases, bathtowels, handtowels, washcloths, afghans and new pillows
- Canned goods – vegetables, fruits, meats, fish, coffee, etc.
- Cleaning goods – Paper products Foil products

Used things that we can use are:

- Good second-hand household furniture including couches and chairs, dressers, small wardrobes, dining tables, chairs, television stands, end tables, coffee tables, etc.
- We want good, working sound systems, color televisions, DVD and VCR players.

Now, what do you do with this information and items when you gather them up? Give us a call at 1-800-843-8626 and we will arrange for pickup or come and get the items during our travels. If you are close to National Headquarters, just drop the items off.

*You can make a difference to your brother veterans –  
not with a hand out, but rather with a hand up!*

## ***Congratulations to New Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. & The Veterans Coalition National Board Members***

Loy Smith of Post LA-04, Thibodaux, LA and Vic Felts of Post TX-06, Waco, TX have been elected to the two open positions on the National Board of Directors. Their term will extend for four years. Best wishes for a successful and productive term of office that will benefit veterans and their families.





**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: [yvnwnatl@epix.net](mailto:yvnwnatl@epix.net)  
Websites: [yvnw.org](http://yvnw.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. and the Veterans Coalition.*

**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:**

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: \_\_\_\_\_

**OFFICE USE ONLY:**

Post Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dues Paid: \_\_\_\_\_  
Member Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**We Accept All Major Credit Cards**



Thank you for the terrific box you sent over here to Iraq. The American flag is flying in our C.P. and the "POW/MIA" flag is proudly planted just outside the camp my soldiers and I greatly appreciate your generosity.

We have been here now for a little over 7 months. The days are long, but that keeps the time moving. Hopefully we will be back soon, but everyone is still very motivated and dedicated to winning the war. I know I have the privilege of being the executive officer to a platoon leader. It is an extremely easy job when I get to work with the finest soldiers that my soldiers are. They continue to amaze me everyday. You should be very proud of the fine young men.

Thank you again for the box, your thoughts, and your prayers. We are all deeply grateful.  
Respectfully,

/// K. H. H. //

"I NEVER HAD A LARGE FLAG OF MY VERY OWN!"

"IT'S NICE TO KNOW THAT WE'RE THOUGHT OF FROM HOME BY PEOPLE WHO CARE."

Once again, thank you for the package, AND for serving our country and paving the way for soldiers like myself.

Army SP4 Bruce Hinds  
(20yrs old, from Berwick)

"WE NEED TO STAY HERE UNTIL THE JOB IS DONE!"

"KEEP THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM GOING."

"WE SOMETIMES TAKE FREEDOM FOR GRANTED."

"IT'S YOUR TIME TO SIT BACK AND RELAX - WE MARINES WILL TAKE CARE OF THIS ONE!"





## 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



### 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, 1-800-843-8626, e-mail: [vvnwnatl@epix.net](mailto:vvnwnatl@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.





A big hallow and a huge thanks to you all,

My name is SPR

Douglas Roberts and I am in the Solomon Islands on Operation ANODE. I am with the Engineer Group consisting of personnel mainly from 1st Combat Engineer Regiment, Darwin.

We received your packages yesterday afternoon Friday 5 March. It is now Saturday morning and the start of the weekend, but of cause were are all still hard at work. This not exactly the hardest field we have ever done (we are in tents and fresh meals) but it still doesn't make up for the fact that we are away from our families for 4 months of the year where families should be together (Christmas & New Year period). Myself personally will be returning home to my wife 2 days before our 1st wedding anniversary and a daughter who will be twice as old as when I left.

No amount writing in an e-mail or saying thanks over the phone will express the gratefulness and the immediate boost in moral these parcel's have given us. All the boys were absolutely speechless. We couldn't believe that there is an organisation in another country who caress enough and has obviously put a lot of time and a serious amount of money into making us feel like we are appreciated and apart of something.

Everything from the hand written cards to the personally addressed letter stickers is proof of the effort that this organisation puts into there work.(Not to mention the mountain of other goodies that were crammed into that fare size box)

I am sorry that not all 38 of us can reply but as you could understand there is only so much computer and telephone access in place's like this.

"CAN YOU SEND  
A PACKAGE  
TO MY BUDDY  
WHO DOESN'T  
GET MAIL?"

"MY GRANDSON  
IS SO FAR  
AWAY AND WE  
WANT HIM TO  
KNOW WE  
CARE."

"IT'S NOT WHAT  
IS IN THE  
PACKAGE - IT'S  
JUST THE TIME  
AND EFFORT  
YOU TOOK TO  
SEND IT!"

"YOU 'OLDER' VETS  
ARE THE 'REAL'  
HEROES!"

"I SHARED WITH  
MY BUDDIES."

I would just like to say thank  
you all for your support that you  
are giving to all of the soldiers over  
here. It is so nice to have the people  
back home supporting us in this war  
as you know Vietnam was a whole  
another story. I am a Vietnamese Vet  
and I guess I am going to be a vet  
of this war. Hard for me to thank  
that at age 53 I am over here. But  
I am still a soldier and I will do  
what ever my country ask me to do.  
I just wanted to thank you for the  
package you sent to me and for all  
your support.

SP4 Dean E Doty  
B-CO 109<sup>th</sup>





# 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: [vvnwnatk@epix.net](mailto:vvnwnatk@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





# America's Best

## Honoring all who have served

The sculptures have been created by award winning and internationally known sculptor Scott Stearman.

The inspired sculptures were created to honor America's Best and who have sacrificed for our freedoms. Cast in hydrostone and finished with bronze patina.

*Life sized bronze monuments have been placed and are available to Veterans organizations. Call 800-433-5858 for information.*



*Lest We Forget*

12" tall x 10" wide x 4" deep  
Veteran pricing \$160 + shipping



*Tears From a Grateful Heart*  
14" tall x 9" wide x 10" deep  
Veteran pricing \$220 + shipping

### To Order:

Call 1-800-433-5858  
Masters Custom Studio  
3440 Astrozon Place  
Colorado Springs, CO 80910  
Email: [sales@masterscustomstudio.com](mailto:sales@masterscustomstudio.com)

Other sculptures to commemorate our military servicemen can be seen on our web site: [www.masterscustomstudio.com](http://www.masterscustomstudio.com)

**Made in the  
USA**

## 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:

[vvwnatl@epix.net](mailto:vvwnatl@epix.net)

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

## POW/MIA MUD FLAPS "DELIVER THE MESSAGE"



Motorcycle	\$20.00 each
SUV/Van	\$28.00 pair
Pick-up Truck	\$30.00 pair

Send check or money order to:

**BILL'S BUNKER**

8066 Bainbridge Road  
Chagrin Falls, OH 44023  
Phone: 440-708-0214

Visit -- [www.billsbunker.com](http://www.billsbunker.com)





**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

Phone: 570-603-9740

Fax: 570-603-9741

E-mail: [vvwnatl@epix.net](mailto:vvwnatl@epix.net)

Website: [vvnw.org](http://vvnw.org) or  
[theveteranscoalition.org](http://theveteranscoalition.org)

Subscription rate: \$50  
Make checks payable to: VVNW, Inc.

*Veteran Leader*  
is included in the cost of membership : \$25  
Advertising rates, check inside cover



***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.***



Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc.  
& The Veterans Coalition  
International Headquarters  
805 So. Township Boulevard  
Pittston, PA 18640-3327



Non-Profit Org.  
U. S. Postage  
PAID  
Wilkes-Barre, PA  
Permit 347

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

DATED MATERIAL