



WE HONOR OUR KILLED IN ACTION AND WANT AN ACCOUNTING OR RELEASE OF OUR MISSING IN ACTION OR PRISONERS OF WAR.

Official Newsletter of..."Run For The Wall"...January 2004

Quarterly Newsletter  
" We Ride For Those Who Can't "  
January 2004

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## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 2004

### *We Ride for Those Who Can't*

#### INTRODUCING THE 2004 CENTRAL ROUTE CHAPLAIN

Chaplain Russ Cockrum. I consider it an honor to be asked to serve as Chaplain for the 2004 Run For The Wall. With almost 25 years of ministry experience, I have served as Pastor for two congregations and worked as a hospital, police, and fire department Chaplain. Four years ago my denomination commissioned me as Chaplain to bikers and motorcyclists. My wife, Judy, and I now travel full time in that capacity.



Judy and I have been married 36 years. We rode RFTW for the first time last year, "all the way" from L.A. to D.C. Judy rides a '99 HD Heritage Softail Classic and I ride a '98 HD Ultra Classic.

I served in the U.S. Army Security Agency from 1968-72. As a SPC 5 Signal Intelligence Traffic Analyst, I was attached to the 7th Infantry Division on the DMZ in Korea '69-70.

I look forward to serving as your Chaplain for the 2004 RFTW, and want to be the first to say to all 2004 FNG's, "Thank you for your service," and "welcome home."

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#### RE-INTRODUCING THE 2004 CENTRAL ROUTE ROAD GUARD CAPTAIN

Jerry "Peaches" Simpson. This will be the second year for "Peaches" to hold the position of Road Guard Captain for the Central Route. I guess he did such an exemplary job in 2003, he was invited back to top that in 2004! "Peaches" introduced some new ideas and strategies for the Road Guard position in 2003 and they really worked out well. I bet he has even more ideas for the upcoming Run.



In 1999 Jerry's friend Dale talked to him about Run For The Wall. Jerry was very intrigued, but did not even own a motorcycle at the time. He went home and talked to his wife about the Run and she encouraged him to participate. So, Jerry went out and bought a motorcycle, refreshed his riding skills, and participated in his first Run For The Wall. Jerry first worked as a Road Guard in 2001, then again in 2002. He was quite dismayed in 2003 when Terry "Doorgunner" Clevenger offered him the position of Road Guard Captain. The only previous contact Jerry had with "Doorgunner" was in 2002 when Jerry 'chewed out' "Doorgunner" for a riding infraction. Guess he made an impression!

Jerry Simpson is a Vietnam Veteran, having served in the Marines. He is very quiet and humble about his years in the service, but after receiving four Purple Hearts, he told me he did learn to "DUCK"! Jerry has been married to his lovely wife Kathy for 23 years. They have two children. Their son is a policeman and their daughter just graduated from college and is currently making plans for her up-coming wedding.

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## INTRODUCING THE 2004 SOUTHERN ROUTE ROAD GUARD CAPTAIN

Joe "Firefly" Cappel. Some of you already know me by my road name, "Firefly". I will be your Southern Route Road Guard Captain for 2004. I will be 62 years old by the time the RFTW gets underway. I was a native of Southern California until August of 2002 and I now reside in Prescott, Arizona with my lovely bride of 38 years, Patti. We have four children, all riders. My youngest son is in the Air Force Security Forces.



I enlisted in the U.S. Naval Reserves in January 1965 in order to take advantage of their 16 month deferment from active duty. I needed this time to obtain employment with the Los Angeles County Fire Dept. and get my probation period out of the way. I went on active duty in April 1966 and was sent to San Diego for Hospital Corpsman school. Upon graduation, I was sent to the USS Haven in Long Beach, CA where I became a surgical technician in the Eyes, Ears, Nose and Throat Dept. When the new Naval Hospital in Long Beach was placed into service, I was transferred there. In June 1967, I was transferred to the Naval Weapons Testing Center in China Lake, CA (dry lake). I was placed in charge of medical supply, 5 crash ambulances, 3 metropolitan ambulances and the morgue.

I was discharged from active duty in April 1968 and returned to my position with the Fire Dept. In December 1970, I was sent to paramedic training, where I felt "in my element" for five years before reaching "burnout". I worked my way up in rank to Captain and was trained extensively in wildland firefighting. This became my specialty until I was finally forced to retire after 33+ years due to a heart problem.

After retiring, I didn't want to get bored so I spent the next couple of years getting a degree in auto mechanics.

When my youngest son was in high school and needed transportation to his part-time job, I suggested a motorcycle, to which he readily agreed. After getting him one, I couldn't stand it and had to get one too. I had commuted by bike and raced for ten years prior to the birth of our second child, but gave it up for the sake of the family. I always missed it though so it was easy to get back into it.

I had a retired fire buddy from Long Beach Fire Dept who was going to make his first RFTW in 1999 with some of his co-workers. I thought that sounded like fun but I had no clue what it was all about. I told Patti I would probably just ride to Colorado or so and then head back. WRONGO MONGO! The first day was exciting as I found it challenging learning how to ride "tight". I did get lumps in my throat as we passed people on the overpasses saluting us, some in full uniform. I kept pondering what the heck were these folks doing in the middle of nowhere saluting us and cheering us on.

The second day I started putting two and two together. I'm a slow learner. As we approached Window Rock a couple of miles out, I started noticing Native Americans and their families along the roadside waving us on. The closer we got, the more people there were, hundreds of them. When we reached our destination, I couldn't believe how many folks there were in support of us. As the ceremonies progressed, wave after wave of emotions tore through my body. I realized that I, too, was a VET. I never considered myself one because I never went "in country". I began to have a new appreciation for vets and Native Americans. That evening I called Patti and told her that I didn't know what was happening to me for sure, but I couldn't come home without going all the way. I could hardly talk.

As the ride progressed, I found I was on an "E ticket" emotional roller coaster I would never forget. I think that all my tears were shed for those who were wounded, either physically or emotionally or were unable to return home. It was my way of saying "I understand just an iota of what you had to endure and I'm so sorry".

When I returned home, I found it extremely difficult to share my experiences. It is truly one of those things you have to experience to fully understand. I wanted to share that experience with my children so that they would know the real meaning of freedom and what it takes sometimes to achieve it.

In 2000, I took my daughter with me and became a road guard in Salina, KS under the direction of Milo Gordon. I found my niche in life! In 2001, I took my oldest son on the Southern Route and road guarded again. He got hooked and has ridden ever since. We took the Central Route in 2002, where I was also a road guard. In 2003, we went back to the Southern Route, where we both road guarded.

I was approached and asked if I would be Road Guard Captain for the 2004 Southern Route. I never envisioned myself in this capacity and tried to weasel out. I was asked how I enjoyed having knee caps that work properly, so I reconsidered and accepted. It is a great honor to have been asked to assume the position and I know I have some big boots to fill. I want to thank all those who have gone before me, as I realize what a huge task and awesome responsibility it is. Thank you for the chance to serve you. See you soon.

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## **INTRODUCING THE 2004 SOUTHERN ROUTE CHAPLAIN**

Buddy “Aloha” Haskell. I joined the United States Marine Corp. in 1964. I volunteered for reconnaissance training during boot camp. After extensive training, states side and in Okinawa and Thailand I was sent to Vietnam, serving with the 1st Recon Force Company, Alpha Platoon, later being reassigned to 1st Recon Battalion, Delta Company: MACV-SOG 1965-67, I & II CORPS South East Asia.



In February of 1965, I received my first purple heart and the bronze star medal w/ Combat V. By May of 1967 the Purple Heart count had moved to five, it was an honor to be awarded the Silver Star w/ Combat V and promoted to Sergeant by General Walt, US Commanding General of all Marines in Vietnam. It was great being a war hero and spending my 21st birthday in the hospital recovering from injuries, yet disappointing to have to take a medical retirement. I studied at the University of Massachusetts, where I received my Master’s Degree in Education in May of 1986.

God has blessed me with the opportunity to live in many beautiful places, one including Hawaii, and on my first Run I was dubbed “Aloha”. After the death of my closest friend and fellow recon marine, I turned to RFTW for healing. I have always loved the Lord, but it was in 1997 in the Chapel at Angel Fire [New Mexico’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial] that God spoke to my heart and embraced me with his love. It was then that I knew I had a mission to embrace my fellow comrades and veterans with the love of God, be it a “welcome home brother” with a hug, a listening ear, prayer, or simply a smile. I have enjoyed RFTW and was blessed in 2002 for my wife Debbie “Faith” and stepson Isaac “short-round” to come along and share in the wonderful blessing this “healing ride” has been for me. I am excited to have the opportunity to give back what has been given to me, God’s Blessings and I consider it an honor to serve and be a part of this year’s ride.

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## **PTSD....a Continuation**

Where have you been, we’ve missed you...?

In the last article there was a question asked of you similar to this: Just how many people do you know suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder? Besides the Vet that tells his story over and over again, how many other people do you know? Some who’ve been able to manage their disorder walk next to you on the street, you’d never guess. You bet ya.

When I look out at the rest of the world's PTSD survivalists, (oh, yes it is an ongoing thing) I see an array of lifestyles, personalities, ages, and a multitude of other mixes that I hadn't even considered once upon a time. Think your (PTSD) is worse than anyone else's, then maybe you aren't one of the survivalists, yet. But you aren't alone.

Pointing a finger at this menace PTSD isn't managing it, it is only taking the blame. No, no one asks for it, but no one asked to be born either, yet we are dealing with that. Perhaps that is pushing it a bit, but you get my point. Our POW's didn't ask for capture and our MIA's didn't want to be left behind. And I didn't want PTSD.

There is no saying goodbye to it during our lifetime and I seriously doubt that our race will wean itself off it anytime soon. We are forced to reconcile with it, catch ourselves before we fall and that is where we shall remain until then. VA offers an array of help programs for veterans, each addressing a separate subject with only one objective, and that is to help us manage our issue: PTSD.

Does PTSD give anyone the right to be violent, belligerent, self centered, alcoholic, short tempered or a massive number of other agendas? No! Do we have to like it? No! Does PTSD have any rights at all? NO! It doesn't even have the right to be in my head, but it's there and managing it is the current treatment. If you've fried the egg, then you are not going to be able to return to its original form.

It really is a crappy disorder and in no way am I suggesting that anyone with it should just "suck-it-up"; that is impossible. But what I am suggesting is allowing help to penetrate that flack jacket and work with a professional to minimize the effect in order for us to understand ourselves and others, general population included.

I'd like to hear from you regarding your feelings and questions about PTSD, so write me here [at: melkahl@columnist.com](mailto:melkahl@columnist.com).

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## **THE STRANGER**

By Douglas L Stanek: 11-25-96

Halloween day, the fall of 1996, a perfectly warm day on campus at Clark College. Kneeling down on one knee, my mind was thinking back to twenty-seven years ago today, when I was honorably discharged from the Army. Suddenly I was brought back to the here and now by a strangers voice. The stranger asked me a very peculiar question. Puzzled, I glanced up to see a young lady standing beside me. The stranger asked if I was planning a strategy for rolling a marble down the sidewalk and into a rust pipe, fifty feet away from us. I thought for a brief few moments about being young and playing marbles with my friends. That was a very pleasant thought. Like thousands of times before when asked what I was thinking, I evade the question again by answering "nothing". I really wanted to say, as I've wanted to a thousand times before, " Viet Nam, that's what I think about, just as I have every day since August 1967 ". I've watched the same movie in my head, for nearly thirty years and it never changes. It never goes away. I shall continue to watch this horror filled movie for the rest of my life. PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) and its effects take a huge part out of a Viet Nam combat veterans life. These rippling affects of PTSD are a very high price to pay for those who want to be close to the forgotten veteran.

It should be noted and understood that (PTSD) is not a mental illness. It is a reaction to the extreme stress the combat soldier survived under during combat and after his return from South East Asia. The list of major responses is many. I will highlight some of the more serious and most often Encountered responses. The three I have chosen are anger, intimate relationship, and drug and alcohol abuse.

First comes anger to the combat veteran. Anger and hate were simply fuel for him to continue on with his day to day task of stalking. The combat veteran each day would relentlessly walk through the jungle, to assail and subvert other human beings, to attack violently then destroy the enemy completely. Our anger and hatred breed unimaginable

violence into each man's heart and soul. This makes his job of dirty deeds, much easier for him, so very much easier. With so much violence and anger flowing through him like a fast freight train, the incensed combat soldier does not have to deal with the remorse for the dead. He also does not need any empathy for the living; as this would only hinder his performance in battle. This helps him to survive in the insane world that he is trapped in and grown accustomed too. This is what anger truly is, this is what anger is to a combat veteran.

In addition to anger, violence and hatred is another serious problem constantly bothering and interfering in the veteran's daily survival in an intimate relationship. With this added to the mind, you also get emotional numbing. The emotional numbing is the easy part to get comfortable with; as this also was learned on the killing fields. Surviving with little or no feelings equals surviving with little or no pain. The combat soldier cannot forget the losing of a close friend who fought by his side. Just to be left dead lying in his blood soaked fatigues, on the cold wet jungle floor. Ambivalent, the soldier must fight back the tears once more. Standing vindictive holding his rifle, looking at his friend being laid next to the others in the clearing waiting for their final helicopter out of hell. Intimate to a nineteen year old man in Vietnam, was his M-16, helmet, a warm can of beer, and a five dollar whore along the side of a hot dusty road. Or perhaps in a thatched hut doing dope with a buddy to escape their personal reality. What can a man feel, when this is also learned at such a young age? Emotional numbing continues long after the war has stopped. This also helps reduce the pain inside his heart that is locked deep inside. This survival skill also keeps additional pain to a minimum from anymore loss of friends or loved ones.

Meanwhile as this is going on inside the exhausted veteran, he realizes he has a series of major problems building up inside his already mixed up world. As an illustration the combat veteran has a fire inside him. The fire continues to grow and finally explodes out of control, even for him. He desperately tries to extinguish the flames by throwing alcohol and drugs on the sea of fire in which he swims. He is slowly drowning in what was his life, and there is no escape. The rolling thunder approaches even faster, like a raging tornado inside his mind. He is trapped in a crossfire, another ambush. There is no escaping this time. Like before, there is little ammunition, nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. He has fought until there is no more fight left inside his warrior's heart. What does he do? Can he escape his living hell by suicide? Can he surrender to the doctors, and let fear be medicated into oblivion? Prison is not an option for most veterans as they choose to be carried off on their shield, rather than surrender.

The confusion continues to mount and escalate even faster than the veteran can keep up with. All his survival skills are at full throttle as he spins out of control. The world he has survived in collapses around him. He must do even larger amounts of drugs and alcohol at a much faster pace. The fire now burns white hot, the thunder slams against his soul. The life he fought so hard to save has now turned on him. For many combat veterans this is how they end their insanity, either by some form of suicide or locked up in an institution. Freedom taken away, the very same freedom he risked his life for is now gone.

These are just several of the many payoffs for being a combat soldier. This is what goes on in his life everyday. Can you imagine torment, disillusion, and being anguished at this degree for nearly thirty-five years?

Last of all, and finally, if the veteran you know is your brother, father, husband, or even a friend; remember this man only wants your love and understanding. This is what the man is so desperately searching for.

Now you know what I was thinking about when the stranger approached me, and asked me the peculiar question. Quiet please the movie is about to begin.

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## **FRUITCAKE OF SALVATION**

By Buddy "Aloha" Haskell

....a few days before Christmas 1967....

A young American Marine had returned from patrol at Christmas time during the Vietnam War. An intense patrol in the hostile jungle area was over and he had hoped to find at least one Christmas card from home when he returned to camp. But there were none, just a tiny package wrapped in silver foil.

He relaxed after a shower putting on clean clothes. Now sitting on his bunk looking at the foil package he fell asleep. Later awakening to a darkened quarter with no one to be found he was feeling hungry, angry, lonely and still very tired. But he opened the package finding a fruitcake and to his surprise with the cake was a handwritten note. The note read something like this: Dear U.S. Serviceman, I am a teenage girl from a small church in Southern California. Our congregation has been given your unit's name and address to provide Christmas gifts for this year. I have made this fruitcake just for you even though I do not know you. God knows and loves you, and He will be sure you get this gift. God Bless you, I will pray for your safety and please have a Merry Christmas, it's Jesus' birthday you know.

This fruitcake and letter prompted the Marine to begin writing to the girl on a regular basis. She and her church adopted him with prayer for his continued safety. God blessed him in a way he would not fully know for many years to come. It is true God does listen to and answer all our prayers but in His time.

Several months passed and the Marine was wounded several times. He did not thank God for sparing his life rather he egotistically boasted of his own superiority. Then a time came when he was critically wounded. The young Marine died on the battlefield, alone and so far from home. That young fruitcake girl and her church prayed without knowing the events of that day. The Marine died feeling surely God and prayer were nothing but another deception. Yet unconditionally God sent an angel to the Marine's side, to breath life back into his body sparing him for another day.

After being brought home he was filled with anger and fear. The young girl sought him out with all of God's love and compassion. Yet he rejected the girl, her church, and most of all God who had given him life again. He wandered about life searching for a cure to all the pain bundled up inside of him. With alcohol and drugs doing nothing but causing greater pain, he watched as those who loved him were pushed farther away. Now the world seemed to be ending for this once so gallant and heroic young man. But rather than the end it all right there God had yet a new beginning for him.

One day, this now older man, met another man who shared much of the same pain. This man reintroduced him to the Man of all men. He realized this was his savior, the one who had sent the angel so many years ago. Now the hurting wounded man found salvation. Healing had begun, made possible because this Man gave His life on the cross for all so we could find salvation and be born again through His unconditional love.

I am the wounded man and today it is clear that God always knew and patiently waited for me. My fruitcake girl was His true gift (an angel of God) that Christmas. She unconditionally gave her love with prayers for me and God heard those prayers. I received the gift of salvation through Jesus. What a glorious gift, salvation is because of Jesus Christ who was born on Christmas Day and died on the cross for all to be saved. There is no greater love than for a man to lay down his life for another.

My gratitude is for the fruitcake girl whose gift came with God's grace for me that Christmas in 1967. Angels are all around us, not all come with fruitcakes. Each offers salvation, peace and healing.

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## **WELCOME HOME**

Welcome home soldier,  
the circle's now complete;

the time has come to lay your head  
and rest your weary feet.  
I'm sorry in your journey  
that you have walked alone;  
that's why I'm standing here today  
to tell you "Welcome Home".  
The place that we are standing on  
is sacred ground indeed;  
it is no coincidence that  
you and I should meet.

(c) Rudy Ann Gunneson-Poling

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## **2004 – FIRST STOP IN D.C. WILL BE THE WALL**

The decision to go straight to The Wall instead of Iwo Jima, first, was not a Board decision, nor was it made by the president; this decision was made by the Route Coordinators. Once the Coordinators are appointed to this position, we give them the authority to make all decisions concerning the Run, as long as they do not make unsafe decisions or violate our by-laws. Their decision, I am told, to go straight to The Wall has many variables which influenced the change.

Your President,  
RFTW  
Larry "SkyPilot" Flenniken

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There has been considerable discussion on the change of NOT going to the Iwo Jima Memorial as our first stop in DC. The following is an explanation of why the change was made:

In the past, this stop before the Lincoln Memorial and the Wall gave us a chance to regroup. However, it also was a parking problem and a safety issue getting off and back on I-66. For 2004, that weekend is also the dedication of the new WWII Memorial and considerable additional traffic is expected, particularly at the Iwo Jima Memorial. But the main reason we made the decision not to go to Iwo Jima, was that the Park Police said they would give us a one car escort to Iwo Jima, or six cars escorting RFTW to the Wall. We chose the six. Iwo Jima also created a parking mess for the Run and the public. Thank you for understanding this decision.

There is no reason you cannot form your own small groups to travel to Iwo Jima after our stop at The Wall.

The Run Coordinators:  
John "Slammer" Gebhards – Southern Route  
Mark "StraightArrow" Rittermeyer – Central Route

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## **RFTW MAKES DONATIONS**

The past 2 years have been very good financially for RFTW due to the merchandising efforts of those who have volunteered to take on this relatively thankless task. We offer up a HUGE THANK YOU to all who have helped with



controlling, packaging, selling the merchandise. This is a time-consuming job and a difficult one.

At the end of 2003, the board authorized contributions based on recommendations of past and current Central and Southern Route leaders, and made donations to the following:

#### CENTRAL ROUTE

Window Rock Veterans Memorial  
Angel Fire Vietnam Veterans Memorial  
Veterans Homeless Program in Davenport Iowa

#### SOUTHERN ROUTE

Homeless Program at the Phoenix VA  
Volunteer Services Program at the Tuscaloosa VA  
D-Day Memorial for WWII Vets in Virginia

Thank you to all members of RFTW and our many supporters for purchasing our merchandise and helping us make these donations possible.

Again, a great big atta-boy / atta-girl to all of you who have helped in any way to make our merchandising efforts a success, and thanks to all who continue to support Run For TheWall and its mission.

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#### **"DON'T WEAR IT UNLESS YOU WANT TO GET INVOLVED"**

With those words the POW/MIA bracelet was born. "A simple metal band engraved with the name of a POW or MIA and the date he was lost... Don't wear it unless you want to get involved. When one assumes the one-to-one bond with a stranger who is unable to even ask for your concern, and to enter the pain of his family, something happens to you... You are taught new lessons about old concepts. Unity. Caring. Brotherhood... The bracelet is worn with the vow that it will not be removed until the day that his real status is determined or that he returns home... The bracelet is distributed by VIVA, a non-profit, non-political volunteer student organization."

And so it began.

Prior to VIVA (Voices in a Vital America), there was no public awareness other than the occasional POW picture across the cover of LIFE, LOOK and the 6 o'clock news. There was no organization for caring citizens. There was no issue for those untouched by the knock of a Casualty Officer at midnight with a telegram in hand and the words, 'we regret to inform you...'

The families were not formerly organized, most weren't even able to meet with other family members of a loss incident, they were separated. While they were working day and night trying to contact one another, meet, plan and create the original telephone tree, students and returning veterans began a grassroots movement that ultimately reverberated throughout the country and the decades.

Returning veterans wore Montagnard bracelets... hand hammered bands that reminded them of the suffering of war and its cost. On a local level a handful of POW MIA bracelets were worn, all of them simple metal bands with a hand drilled name across the front.

In Los Angeles, VIVA organizers met with returning veteran, Bob Dornan, a close friend of POW David Hrdlicka

(Laos) and yet to be Congressman, and worked on the idea of a public awareness campaign based on the bracelets. The original core group was made up of Dornan, VIVA members Kay Hunter, Carol Bates, Steve Frank and VIVA advisor Gloria Coppin.

With no income or loans available, the original 1970 bracelets were made from donated brass and copper... enough to make 1,200 bracelets. Originally it was believed that only students would want to wear the bracelets, as adult interest in the issue was nonexistent. Students were turning schools and campuses upside down with protests, sit-ins, blackout class days and sadly riots and bombings. The bracelets were a peaceful means of bringing about awareness of the humanitarian tragedy that was unfolding in what would be America's longest war.

After an invitation to attend the League of Families September conference in Washington, DC, VIVA became aware that families wanted 'Their Guy's' name on the bracelets for distribution. With an official launch on Veterans Day, 1970, the interest in POW MIAs was staggering. Thousands of requests a day filtered in and along with it the small donation of anywhere from a 'buck for luck' to the requested bracelet price of \$2.50 which permitted the public awareness program to author and print brochures, stickers for cars, buttons, pins and info sheets. VIVA worked with the families allowing them to keep a percentage of the monies generated so they could use it for their own POW MIA groups and activities.

By 1976, with Operation Homecoming 3 years in the past, the Carter Administration issuing Presumptive Findings of Death by the hundred the public interest in an 'old' and ugly issue died. The public was war weary and wanted to believe 'all the men are finally home' and shunned POW MIA families, activists and Vietnam veterans... and VIVA, who lit a spark that raged like an inferno, closed its doors. But not before over 5 million bracelets and untold millions of brochures, info sheets, buttons, badges and bumper stickers flooded the nation for 5 years and its conscience forever.

Over the years the original bracelet has morphed into a variety of styles... red bracelets, the original color of the POW MIA movement and the ribbons worn, became available, as well as silver, silver plated, solid brass, copper, aluminum, clear, plastic and anodized bracelets of various colors to denote status such as POW, MIA and KIA. States issued their own styles with state flags and state listings of the missing. Once the League became a National organization, the official POW MIA logo was stamped into some bracelets as well.

Some of us wear solid gold bracelets... some wear simple stamped bracelets, battered and worn, scratched and ugly... but its an ugly issue... and, some of us wear no bracelet, as the name and face of 'our guy' is stamped forever into our hearts.

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## **MAY THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN**

They wouldn't let me have one,  
they told me "NO!" for no good reason.  
It made them uncomfortable I think.  
I mean, what would the neighbors think?  
Who lets a little girl wear a POW/MIA  
bracelet to school that she saw  
in the Reader's Digest?  
So, I dug in my heels  
and I did the next best thing-I prayed.  
I prayed every night for those  
Vietnam veterans.  
And one of these days,

I'm gonna buy me one of those bracelets!

(C) Rudy Gunneson-Poling  
12 January 2004

### **THE BIGGER PICTURE**

I wanted to wear a name  
around my wrist.  
But my parents wouldn't let  
me for some reason.  
So, I wore those names around  
my heart instead.  
I'd offer them up to the One  
with the All Seeing Eyes.  
I'd ask Him to keep them safe;  
to hold them in the palm of His hand.  
And somewhere out there  
someone's glad I did...

(C) Rudy Gunneson-Poling  
12 January 2004

Poems by Ruth Ann "Rudy" Gunneson-Poling. Rudy has just accepted an Intern Position with the new Michigan Military Air, Land and Sea Museum in Grand Rapids. ( <http://www.mmals.org> ) As an assemblage artist she will be making art pieces of veteran's memorabilia for the new military museum. Rudy will also be responsible for interviewing veterans of all eras, cataloging their memories into the data bank at the Library of Congress.

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### **PAKA "WILDMAN" WIENSTIEN**

On December 20, 2003, Paka and Sheryl Wienstein were riding home on their Harley from a Christmas Toy Run on the island of Maui, Hawaii. They were hit by a drunken hit-and-run car driver. Some other bikers chased the car and apprehended one of the occupants, but the other three got away into the bush.

Sheryl, miraculously, was not hurt. Even though Paka's leg was nearly severed, he had the strength and love for Sheryl to get the bike off the road---without brakes or steering and ran head first into the trees to stop then from hitting other cars, etc. Although the car hit Sheryl's left boot and her leg flew backwards she kept holding onto Paka. God & ALL the Guardian angels protected her - she didn't even get a scratch!!!!



Paka was evac'd to O'hau. The doctors worked valiantly to re-attach his leg, but it could not be done and Paka underwent amputation surgery on Saturday, January 3, 2004. Paka and Sheryl need your prayers and support during this difficult time. Their address is: PO Box 866, Haiku, HI 96708.

Paka worked several years as a Road Guard on the Central Route. In 2003, he and his new bride Sheryl traveled the Southern Route so that they could visit her family in Tennessee.

Please send out thoughts and prayers and support to these beloved RFTW Family members.

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## **THE ROLLING GUARD**

In the November issue of the Newsletter, we introduced you to the developing idea of The Rolling Guard. They are a non-profit organization whose purpose is to raise awareness of the still unaccounted for MIAs from each state.

Instead of painting names on the bikes, as previously stated, we came up with the idea of making flags with each MIA's name on them. We will hand-make approximately 200 flags that represent MIAs from all 50 states. Each flag will contain 10-12 names and pictures, if available, and an image of the State Flag. We will group the MIA names by state. We are asking for volunteers from each state to carry a flag. It is our preference that each volunteer carry their designated state's flag All The Way. If not All The Way, we would like to have volunteers again in Salina, KS that will carry the flag on into Washington, DC. It is very important that each flag makes it to DC.

The flags will be made like typical car flags of the same size. We are probably going to put eyelets in them, also, so people can tie them to their bikes/trikes (plastic ties will be made available). Cars can just carry them the normal way in their windows.

Anyone wishing to carry a flag will need to contact Deacon PRIOR to the run, so we will know what flags we have committed for each destination (Ontario or Salina). We have some states that are already spoken for, Illinois, Missouri and West Virginia, but all others are open. We also have Puerto Rico.

If you are interested in carrying a flag, please make contact ASAP:

e-mail: [rollingguard@aol.com](mailto:rollingguard@aol.com)

Daemien "Deacon" O'Keeffe

10801 St. Xavier Lane

St. Ann, MO 63074

Web-site: <http://www.rollingguard.com>

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## **FOURTH ANNUAL HIGHLAND COOK-OUT**

On April 17, 2004, the Fourth Annual Highland Cook-Out will be held and you should be there to join in the festivities. There will be food, music, booths, raffles, shirts, POW/MIA Remembrance.

The guest speaker will be "Lil Big Mike" Mike Hodge. Mike served in Vietnam in the Marines in 1968. He lost both legs due to an explosion while under heavy enemy attack. He was medically retired on November 30, 1968, because of the severity of his injuries. Lance Corporal Hodge was awarded the following citations; Bronze Star Medal w/ Combat "V" for Valor, Purple Heart Medal, Navy & Marine Corps Commendation Medal, Combat Action Ribbon, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal w/Bronze star, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation, Republic of Vietnam Presidential Unit Citation, and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal. Mike is known for his out-going, positive attitude and his dynamic speaking.

So don't miss out on this great event. It is a big gathering of RFTW Family members and a good opportunity to start making plans for the Run.

It will be held at the:  
Highland American Legion Post 421  
28309 Highland Ave  
Highland, CA

For additional information you may contact Jim Nonnemacher at (909) 862-0251 or [for2won@aol.com](mailto:for2won@aol.com)

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## **DISABLED VETERANS GET HEALTH CARE PRIORITY FROM VA**

WASHINGTON (Jan. 2, 2004) - All veterans with service-connected medical problems will receive priority access to health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) under a new directive.

"Caring for veterans with service-connected medical problems is a major reason VA exists," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi. "This directive should ease the minds of veterans who no longer have to wait for health care appointments."

The new directive provides that all veterans requiring care for a service-connected disability -- regardless of the extent of their injury -- must be scheduled for a primary care evaluation within 30 days of their request for care. If a VA facility is unable to schedule an appointment within 30 days, it must arrange for care at another VA facility, at a contract facility or through a sharing agreement.

The directive covers hospitalization and outpatient care. It does not apply to care for medical problems not related to a service-connected disability. However, veterans needing emergency care will be treated immediately. The new provision is an extension of rules that took effect in October 2002 for severely disabled veterans. Under the earlier rule, priority access to health care went to veterans with disabilities rated at 50 percent or more. For the severely disabled, the priority includes care for non-service-connected medical problems.

The number of veterans using VA's health care system has risen dramatically in recent years, increasing from 2.9 million in 1995 to nearly 5 million in 2003. Although VA operates more than 1,300 sites of care, including 162 hospitals and more than 800 outpatient clinics, the increase in veterans seeking care outstrips VA's capacity to treat them.

"VA provides the finest health care in the country, but if a veteran cannot see a doctor in a timely manner, then we have failed that veteran," Principi said.

"I will work to honor our commitment to veterans," he said. "But when it comes to non-emergency health care, we must give the priority to veterans with service-connected disabilities."

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## **CONTRIBUTED BY LITTLE LISA:**

I love you, my Vietnam Veteran. God Bless You and Comfort You. You have nothing to be ashamed of; which is more than I can say about the people (like the women in the following story) who have no clue as to what their words and actions do. I truly believe with all my heart, that most of the people supported, if not the war, at least the men and women who fought in the Vietnam Confrontation and War. What they didn't realize is ONE voice makes a difference. Each and every one of us that did believe in all of you, needed to STAND UP and SAY SO. For that I am very sorry. Our Country cannot change its past, sometimes regrettably, however, the best we can do is see that the Service men

and women of this country NEVER get treated that way again in their Homeland. I believe that's what makes the RFTW so special, although it certainly by no means makes up for the Country's past indiscretions. It is one of the few ways left that true Americans can show how much they did support our men and women of the Vietnam War. Too little, too late. Possibly. But at some point we must go on and make better on the past and the RFTW certainly does that. And that makes me PROUD to be an AMERICAN. I know through personal experience the only way to heal yourself is through service to others. And I believe you and other participants of the RFTW demonstrate that to the utmost.

God Bless You and Your Brothers and Sisters,  
One Day at a Time WE CAN make a difference.  
and I WILL NEVER FORGET, Lisa

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## **AN ARMY WIFE SPEAKS HER MIND**

I was sitting alone in one of those loud, casual steak houses that you find all over the country. You know the type--a bucket of peanuts on every table, shells littering the floor, and a bunch of perky college kids racing around with long neck beers and sizzling platters.

Taking a sip of my iced tea, I studied the crowd over the rim of my glass. My gaze lingered on a group enjoying their meal. They wore no uniform to identify their branch of service, but they were definitely "military": clean shaven, cropped haircut, and that "squared away" look that comes with pride. Smiling sadly, I glanced across my table to the empty seat where my husband usually sat. It had only been a few months since we sat in this very booth, talking about his upcoming deployment to the Middle East. That was when he made me promise to get a sitter for the kids, come back to this restaurant once a month and treat myself to a nice steak. In turn he would treasure the thought of me being here, thinking about him until he returned home to me.

I fingered the little flag pin I constantly wear and wondered where he was at this very moment. Was he safe and warm? Was his cold any better? Were my letters getting through to him?

As I pondered these thoughts, high pitched female voices from the next booth broke into my thoughts. "I don't know what Bush is thinking about, invading Iraq. You'd think that man would learn from his old man's mistakes. Good lord. What an idiot! I can't believe he is even in office. You do know, he stole the election."

I cut into my steak and tried to ignore them, as they began an endless tirade running down our President. I thought about the last night I spent with my husband, as he prepared to deploy. He had just returned from getting his smallpox and anthrax shots. The image of him standing in our kitchen packing his gas mask still gives me chills.

Once again the women's voices invaded my thoughts. "It is all about oil, you know. Our soldiers will go in and rape and steal all the oil they can in the name of 'freedom.' Humph! I wonder how many innocent people they'll kill without giving it a thought? It's pure greed, you know."

My chest tightened as I stared at my wedding ring. I could still see how handsome my husband looked in his "mess dress" the day he slipped it on my finger. I wondered what he was wearing now. Probably his desert uniform, affectionately dubbed "coffee stains" with a heavy bulletproof vest over it.

"You know, we should just leave Iraq alone. I don't think they are hiding any weapons. In fact, I bet it's all a big act just to increase the President's popularity. That's all it is, padding the military budget at the expense of our social security and education. And, you know what else? We're just asking for another 9-11. I can't say when it happens again that we didn't deserve it."

Their words brought to mind the war protestors I had watched gathering outside our base. Did no one appreciate the sacrifice of brave men and women, who leave their homes and family to ensure our freedom? Do they even know what "freedom" is? I glanced at the table where the young men were sitting, and saw their courageous faces change. They had stopped eating and looked at each other dejectedly, listening to women talking.

"Well, I, for one, think it's just deplorable to invade Iraq, and I am certainly sick of our tax dollars going to train professional baby killers we call a military."

Professional baby killers? I thought about what a wonderful father my husband is, and of how long it would be before he would see our children again. That's it! Indignation rose up inside me. Normally reserved, pride in my husband gave me a brassy boldness I never realized I had. Tonight one voice will answer on behalf of our military, and let her pride in our troops be known.

Sliding out of my booth, I walked around to the adjoining booth, placed my hands flat on their table. Lowering myself to eye level with them, I smilingly said, "I couldn't help overhearing your conversation. You see, I'm sitting here trying to enjoy my dinner alone. And, do you know why?"

Because my husband, whom I love with all my heart, is halfway around the world defending your right to say rotten things about him. Yes, you have the right to your opinion, and what you think is none of my business. However, what you say in public is something else, and I will not sit by and listen to you ridicule MY country, MY President, MY husband, and all the other fine American men and women who put their lives on the line, just so you can have the "freedom" to complain. Freedom is an expensive commodity, ladies. Don't let your actions cheapen it."

I must have been louder than I meant to be, because the manager came over to inquire if everything was all right. "Yes, thank you," I replied. Then turning back to the women, I said, "Enjoy the rest of your meal."

As I returned to my booth, applause broke out. I was embarrassed for making a scene, and went back to my half eaten steak. The women picked up their check and scurried away. After finishing my meal, and while waiting for my check, the manager returned with a huge apple cobbler ala mode. "Compliments of those soldiers," he said. He also smiled and said the ladies tried to pay for my dinner, but that another couple had beaten them to it. When I asked who, the manager said they had already left, but that the gentleman was a veteran, and wanted to take care of the wife of "one of our boys."

With a lump in my throat, I gratefully turned to the soldiers and thanked them for the cobbler. Grinning from ear to ear, they came over and surrounded the booth. "We just wanted to thank you, ma'am. You know we can't get into confrontations with civilians, so we appreciate what you did."

As I drove home, for the first time since my husband's deployment, I didn't feel quite so alone. My heart was filled with the warmth of other diners who stopped by my table, to relate how they too, were proud of my husband, and would keep him in their prayers. I knew their flags would fly a little higher the next day. Perhaps they would look for more tangible ways to show their pride in our country, and the military who protect her. And maybe, just maybe, the two women who were railing against our country, would pause for a minute to appreciate all the freedom America offers, and the price it pays to maintain it's freedom.

As for me, I have learned that one voice CAN make a difference. Maybe the next time protestors gather outside the gates of the base where I live, I will proudly stand on the opposite side with a sign of my own. It will simply say, "Thank You!"

(Lori Kimble is a 31 year old teacher and proud military wife. A California native, Mrs. Kimble currently lives in Alabama.)

To those who fought for our Nation: Freedom has a flavor the protected will never know.

GOD BLESS AMERICA!

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## **DONOVAN CHAPMAN dedicates Country Music Song to JASON CUNNINGHAM**

Donovan Chapman, a former U.S. Air Force staff sergeant and elite “para-rescue” special forces member, has a debut single, “There is no War” out on the country charts, dedicated to the memory of fellow special unit member Jason Cunningham.

As many of you will remember, Jason Cunningham was killed in the line of duty in Afghanistan in March of 2002. His memory was honored at a special ceremony at the RFTW dinner held in Gallup, New Mexico in 2002. Cunningham’s parents and family were in attendance at that dinner. Also, a small group laid a special wreath at the burial site of Cunningham at Arlington National Ceremony, following the RFTW visit to The Tomb of the Unknown.

Donovan Chapman is only 29 years old, he left the military after 11 years of service, having enlisted at the young age of 17. Chapman’s Pararescue training culminated at Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where Jason Cunningham also trained.

So, watch the country music charts to see if young Chapman doesn’t become a rising country music star.

As a footnote, Pararescueman Jason Cunningham was posthumously awarded the Air Force Cross in ceremonies at Kirtland Air Force Base in September, 2002.

<http://www.donovanchapman.com>

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## **ROUTE COORDINATORS SEND OUT CALL FOR ASSISTANCE**

### ***Southern Route***

John “Slammer”Gebhards is sending out a request for past road guards and anyone interested in being a road guard for 2003 on the Southern Run to contact:

Joe "Firefly" Cappel, Southern Road Guard Captain

Phone: 928-771-9239,

e-mail: [firefly@commspeed.net](mailto:firefly@commspeed.net)

### ***Central Route***

Mark “Straightarrow” Rittermeyer states that the Central Route is in need of a Merchandise Sales Person/s. This is a very big job as it requires dedication and commitment to the sales of the RFTW Merchandise. This position will require the use of your personal vehicle and a trailer that is equipped to carry a considerable sum of boxes. You must also be prepared to “go all the way” from Ontario to Washington, DC. This job is also great fun, as it gives you an opportunity to meet many of the RFTW ‘family’, as well as, many local folks.

If you are interested in this very important position, please contact:

Mark "Straightarrow" Rittermeyer at



Phone: 863-816-9898

e-mail: [rftwstraightarrow@Juno.com](mailto:rftwstraightarrow@Juno.com)

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## **WALL TO WALL RUN**

Hal and Maddy Laffin a/k/a Salt & Pepper

e-mail: [laffin@scsinternet.com](mailto:laffin@scsinternet.com)

Hi everyone. Hal and I are a bit behind in making our arrangements for the Wall To Wall Run. We would like to get an estimate of people who may be interested in going this year. Since 9/11 people are nervous about crossing the border, we want to find out who would like to go again this year before we make arrangements for our stops.

The Run leaves DC after Rolling Thunder and in two days we arrive in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. We will visit the VFW in Point Place, OH and have a great meal there. Not to forget the great hospitality from all. The Run spends the night in Monroe, MI. The next morning we visit the Monroe Vietnam Veterans Memorial and get a guided tour. They have UH-1M "Huey" and "Cobra" helicopters. On top of a pole is the 250 pound, wooden, chainsaw carved eagle to represent all our POW/MIAs. They have two memorials there; one for the living (Listing all those that served in Vietnam from Monroe County) and one for their KIAs. The Monroe VVA chapter will greet us there with coffee, donuts and hugs.

After visiting with them we head across the border to Canada. We will then visit the Canadian Vietnam Veterans Memorial (The North Wall) and pay our respects to the Canadian KIA/MIAs. The Canadian Vietnam Veterans Memorial Association will have a small ceremony. After the ceremony we are off to the Royal Canadian Legion for a meal provided by the CVVMA and fellowship.

The VFW, Monroe VVA and CVVMA, look forward to welcoming you and each Run is special. Please consider joining us this year. You do not have to ride a motorcycle to come. And you can join us en-route, too.

For more information please check this web-site:

<http://members.tripod.com/RunForTheWall/Wall2Wall.html>

If you would like to view the Canadian Vietnam Veterans Memorial (The North Wall), check this web-site:

<http://www.geocities.com/SouthBeach/Marina/9680/C.V.V.M.html>

For the names inscribed on the Canadian Vietnam Veterans Memorial (The North Wall), check this web-site:

<http://www.geocities.com/SouthBeach/Marina/9680/Northwall.html>

If you would like to view the Monroe Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Heck Park the web-site is:

<http://members.tripod.com/~trmn8r/heckpark.htm>

If you have any other questions, please contact us.

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## **RFTW PACKING LIST**

Lots of FNG's have asked for suggestions on what to bring on Run For The Wall. When we thought about it, we decided that a lot of RFTW "old timers" might also find this information helpful. We went through our e-mail and RFTW Bulletin Board posts from the past several years and brainstormed to compile this list. Tailor the checklist to

your own personal needs – you may want to bring additional items, you may want to leave some things at home:

- Motorcycle
  - American & POW/MIA Flags for the bike
  - T-bag and/or saddle bags
  - Water Bottle (sport bottle or Camelback
  - Bungee Cords (lots of them)
  - Duct Tape
  - Tool Kit
  - Regular and Allen Wrenches
  - Screwdrivers
  - Spark Plugs and Wrench
  - Wire Ties, Zip Ties
  - Shop rags
  - WD 40
  - Clamps
  - Rope
  - Jumper Cables
  - Funnel
  - Can of Fix-a-flat
  - Tire repair kit
  - Replacement Light Bulbs
  - Fuses
  - Super Glue
  - 6' of 1/4" plastic hose or turkey baster ( to siphon gas)
  - Motorcycle oil (however much your bike needs)
  - Helmet (DOT legal)
  - Helmet (not so legal)
  - Bandanna or do-rag
  - Warm knit cap for under helmet and/or sleeping
  - Ski mask
  - Heavy Jacket
  - Light weight jacket
  - Chaps
  - Warm Gloves
  - Summer Gloves
  - Rain Gear (Jacket, pants and galoshes)
  - Padlock
  - Trash Bags for covering T-Bag in Rain, laundry, etc.
  - Zip-Lock bags (all sizes) organizes & keeps stuff dry
  - Extra pair of boots
  - Jeans (2-3 pair)
  - T-shirts (at least 5)
  - Long-sleeved T-shirt (for Mojave desert)
  - Warm Sweat-Shirt
  - Underwear & Socks (at least 6 pair)
  - Thermal Underwear
  - Jammies (or shorts or sweat pants
  - Hankies
  - Shower Shoes
  - Bath Towel
  - Wash Cloth (in zip-lock bag)
  - Toilet Kit
  - Toothbrush
  - Toothpaste
  - Soap
  - Deodorant
  - Shampoo
  - Comb and/or brush
  - Roll of TP in zip-lock bag (be prepared)
  - Sun Block (don't leave home without it!)
  - Chapstick
  - Personal first aid kit
  - Medications in marked containers
  - Prescription glasses
  - Sun glasses or goggles (2 pair)
  - Ear Plugs
  - Laundry detergent (in heavy zip-lock bag)
  - Small sewing kit
  - Money
  - Credit Cards/Traveler's Checks
  - Driver's License
  - Insurance information
  - Dog tags for emergency identification
  - Emergency info: Next of kin, home and work phone numbers, doctors' phone numbers. List of prescription medications, glasses prescription, bank information
  - Cell phone and/or pager
  - Road Maps and Run Schedule
  - Business cards (to exchange with new friends)
  - Note Pad & Pencil
  - Camera & Film
  - Items you want to leave at The Wall
  - List of names you want to locate on The Wall
  - YOUR OWN STUFF:
- CAMPERS
- Tent with pegs
  - Waterproof Ground Cloth/Tarp
  - Sleeping Bag
  - Sleeping Mat or Cot
  - Folding chair or camp stool
  - Flashlight with extra batteries

Thanks to: Pup, Ghost (The Idaho Original), IronMike, Doorgunner, DuctTape, Deekin, NuGuyAbe, Spook, Shadow, Suzanne S., Little Mac, DragonRider, and others who contributed to this list.

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## **A LITTLE HUMOR....WHERE DID HE GO????**

Thirty-eight years ago, Herman James, a Tennessee Mountain Man, was drafted by the Army.

On his first day of boot camp, the Army issued him a toothbrush. That afternoon, an Army dentist yanked out several of his teeth.

On his second day, the Army issued him a comb. That afternoon, an Army barber sheared his head.

On his third day, he was issued a jock strap....The Army is still looking for him.

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## **THE RAINELLE FLOOD OF NOVEMBER 19, 2003**

By Chuck "Shadow"

In November of 2003, the rain poured, and poured and the creeks rose and then they overflowed causing more than 300 homes and 50 businesses sustained damage in Rainelle, West Virginia. Many structures were damaged beyond repair. Many families had to relocate, with low income families feeling the brunt of the storm and flooding. Rainelle had asked the Federal Emergency Management Agency for about \$30,000 to compensate the town for repairs and cleanup work at the city park, the water treatment plant and streets throughout town. Separate applications were submitted for flood damage at the city golf course and library. The volunteer fire department is also seeking reimbursement for extra costs.

"Some residents have applied for FEMA funding as a result of the flooding. Already, FEMA inspectors have visited many of the residents to verify and assess damage. Some victims have already received money. "We're here to get people back on the road to recovery".

Rainelle Mayor Pete Adams said he plans to seek money to dredge and straighten some of the creeks in town to try to prevent future flooding. While the residents continue to recover from the flooding, the Mayor wants to take steps to ensure this doesn't happen again. Adams said he plans to talk to officials of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers about the need to realign and dredge some of the creeks that flow through town. One tributary of Meadow River is "just like a worm - real crooked". Another trouble spot is where Sewell Creek enters Meadow River at a 90-degree angle, backing up water. "If we could tilt the angle downstream more, the hydraulics would pull the water down the creek," the Mayor said. Other creeks need to be dredged to improve flow, he said. Rainelle has not had any creek dredging for 30 years. Adams said he thinks the town's street drainage is adequate. The flooding was simply the result of the "tremendous volume of water" the city received in a short period of time. The creeks just overflowed their banks."

Several spots between Rainelle and Hines were under water. Some Rainelle residents had to detour through Beckley or Summersville to get to the other side of the county. Although the highways can be traveled, "the shoulders were washed away" in places, "so many roads and shoulders will need repair. State highway inspectors were called in to check out roads and bridges to be sure they were safe before school buses could travel on them again.

The Mayor of Rainelle stated that they are a community of survivors and vowed Rainelle would recover with the assistance of the surrounding communities and FEMA's help.

As of the first of the year many families had relocated to other areas, such as Lewisburgh; just down the road from Rainelle; or with families that live near by, until they can rebuild or repair.

As many of you know that have participated with RFTW in years past; Rainelle is a sleepy little town up in the mountains with not a lot going for it. Mining is down next to nothing. After I-64 was completed, traffic that use to pass thru Rainelle now travels I-64; thus a big loss in revenue to the area. They now depend on tourism to make ends meet and look forward to RFTW each year. But not just for the monetary benefits RFTW brings; but because they truly care! They opened their hearts and homes and town to RFTW and all of us that ride on our mission each year. I hope this year when we arrive in Rainelle -- we will take a "little extra care" in expressing our appreciation and "thank" this community for what they contribute. They have mighty big hearts and they have taken quite a blow, but they are not down for the count just yet. I have been over in Rainelle and talked to a few people and I can tell you that despite all the problems the flooding created; they are looking forward to May and showing RFTW, once again, Good ol' West 'by God' Virginia hospitality!!

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## **POEM - RUN FOR THE WALL**

I left home to Run For The Wall  
I rode my bike, but I was standing tall.  
I shed so many tears, there was still a deep well  
Crying for those who died, my brothers who fell.  
I'm riding my motorcycle to try to make you understand  
Some of my brothers remain in that alien land.  
I'm yelling with anguish for those with no voice  
Left behind, with no freedom of choice.  
My heart, My soul, will forever roam  
Until I know my brothers have been brought home.

~author unknown~

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## **ORDER OF THE SILVER ROSE MISSION STATEMENT**

Agent Orange, a chemical defoliant, is and was a weapon of war deployed by American Forces against the enemy during the Vietnam War. Accidentally, many of our own servicemen and women were also wounded and killed by it. For those wounds, according to statutory law and military specifications and regulations, as with all other wounds received in a combat zone, our Agent Orange heroes qualify for the Military Order of the Purple Heart. However, no Military Order of the Purple Heart has ever been awarded to a Vietnam veteran for Agent Orange wounds. This is a grave injustice. We, the Selection Committee of The Order of the Silver Rose, believe that the people of the United States need heroes, and we have been overlooking too many of them. It is the mission of this organization to recognize the courage, heroism, and contributions of American service personnel found to have been exposed to Agent Orange in a combat zone, and who have been identified under the 1991 Agent Orange Act of Congress. Personal sacrifices have gone neglected by the very nation for whom those sacrifices were made. We refer specifically to The Military Order of the Purple Heart (herein frequently referred to as "the Purple Heart"), and the

capriciously inconsistent methods by which its requirements, which are simply and clearly stated in military regulations, have been used to exclude, rather than include, American Agent Orange combat heroes.

We believe that the Purple Heart, our most venerable military decoration, should be awarded to ALL combat veterans wounded or killed in action against an enemy of the United States; although at this time we focus our attention specifically on the Vietnam War and the defoliant Agent Orange which was deployed there.

We are aware that many other injustices have been perpetrated on Vietnam veterans, but at this time, the matter of Agent Orange is the only injustice for which we have court decisions and federal legislation to back our claims. Therefore, we choose to fight one dragon at a time, in hopes that our example may eventually light the way for those who will one day take up the remaining gauntlets of injustice. Purple Hearts should be dispensed thoughtfully and evenhandedly. A combat veteran who is wounded or killed in action is entitled to the Purple Heart, regardless of the source of the wounds.

In our Quest for the Purple Heart, we have learned that ignorance is contagious, and misery knows no fatherland. There is no copyright on pain, and no statute of experience garnered through wading through miles of red tape, trying to find someone with the courage necessary to force the President to enforce existing law and give our armed forces all they ask for ... simple Justice.

There can be no doubt that Vietnam veterans exposed to this deadly defoliant and identified under the Agent Orange Act of 1991 deserve Purple Hearts. Executive Orders, Public Law, and Military Regulations specify it in black letter law. Only Presidential Policy stands between the service personnel and their medals. The President is the only person who can change Executive Policy, but he can, indeed, do so, with a single stroke of a pen. The President of the United States, at this time, is in violation of Executive Orders and Public Law, and even the Military Regulations to which he is subject as Commander in Chief. Purple Heart Law, specifically U.S. Naval Regulations, contains no discretionary clause by which personnel can be excluded. It MUST be awarded to a combat veteran who has been wounded or killed in a war zone. Those service personnel whose lethal exposure to Agent Orange resulted in internal, invisible wounds, which are revealed only by the passage of time, are nonetheless eligible to receive Purple Hearts. Unfortunately, at this time, Agent Orange exposure is NOT considered an eligible wound, because that is the President's present political policy. Unlike the other military decorations, the President of the United States alone is responsible for its dispersal and standards. Although President Kennedy, in Executive Order #1016, authorized the Secretaries of each of the Armed Forces to bestow it on his behalf, the standards for awarding Purple Hearts remain in the hands of the occupant of the White House, unless they are uniformly altered across all branches of the Armed Services, as approved by the Secretary of Defense. Regulations at this date are NOT uniform.

Any existing regulations that require that the Enemy inflict an injury are in direct conflict with both the letter and the spirit of Executive Orders concerning "friendly fire". Any regulations that require that a wound be treated and recorded at that time have lost touch with the realities of modern chemical warfare. Americans who were exposed to mustard gas in World War I received Purple Hearts. Ask any wounded survivor of Hiroshima or Nagasaki today (many of whom are American Service personnel), and they will tell you that they were wounded by a bomb, a weapon so insidious that its results could be impossible to detect at the time.

It is for these reasons that we have created The Order of the Silver Rose. We will never stop praying that the doors to the Purple Heart will someday swing open wide enough to admit all service personnel who have earned it. Until that day comes, we cannot allow our particular demon to continue to run unchallenged in America. We battle the Dragon of Prejudice armed only with a Silver Rose, desiring to win simple honor and respect for these heroic personnel who have already earned it. That honor and respect is embodied in The Military Order of the Purple Heart. However, if the Armed Services refuse to recognize and reward these American heroes, then we will do it. As our pleas to the White House go unanswered by the President, we solicit a Joint Resolution of Congress to bring pressure upon the Commander in Chief to Right this thirty-year-old Wrong. We do it proudly, because we are the children of American Heroes. Web-site: [www.silverrose.org](http://www.silverrose.org) .

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