



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 2005

Quarterly Newsletter
" We Ride For Those Who Can't "
January 2005

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ORCHESTRATING RUN FOR THE WALL XVII – 2005

By Sandra "LittleBit" McKinney

The New Year has arrived, the starting fresh, starting over, starting anew. But for some, it is a continuation of the previous...those people who are responsible for the behind-the-scenes work to make Run For The Wall a success. 2004 bore the numerals of XVI-16, well, now with the arrival of the New Year 2005, the numerals have changed to XVII – 17. Yes, Run For The Wall has been active now for 17 years.

The RFTW Board of Directors is in the background, setting policy and procedure, making “tough decisions” or making “easy calls”. The Board votes upon the Coordinators for each Route and then it is the responsibility of the Route Coordinator to choose the path across the U.S. with the guidance of the State Coordinators, for their respective Route. With the position of leadership of each Route, comes the task of difficult decisions.

Milo Gordon, the RFTW President, is having various meetings with the Route leaders; J. R. Franklin for Central Route, and John Gebhards for Southern Route. J.R. and John are having meetings with their Assistant Coordinators; appointing Chaplains, Missing Man Coordinators, merchandise and registration staff. Road Guard Captains are coordinating their Road Guard staff for the Run XVII. Constant contact is happening between the Route Coordinators and the State Coordinators. Conference calls, cell-phone tag, e-mails flying back and forth...as each Route gets its fine-tuning.

We have out-grown some of the towns and facilities where the Run has previously stopped. To accommodate that growth, those responsible for getting us safely across their state must make decisions as to where to move the events in that state. A change in one state can affect the activities in the next state, as well. It is an orchestrated procession that travels across the United States in the name of Run For The Wall. The State Coordinators arrange all the hospital and memorial visits, the gas stops, lunch stops, over-night stops, they arrange for discounted group rates at chosen motels, negotiating rates and sometimes encountering a Patriot who desires to support our Veterans and their cause. Major contact with law enforcement agencies must be made in each state to coordinate the safe passage on freeways, smaller country roads, thru cities and towns. Citizens in the towns we pass thru are notified so that they may gather friends and neighbors to wave flags and greet us on the streets. RFTW never goes about with their hand out requesting donations, but thru the generosity of many businesses, veterans' groups, civic leadership organizations, community service groups, motorcycle clubs, and patriotic individuals, just to name a few, we receive countless blessings during our travels.

Communications with our web-master runs constant this time of the year; changing names, e-mail addresses, phone numbers. Setting up the Calendar of Events; the schedules for each Route are generated by the State Coordinators and the Route Leadership, then it is placed into a format suitable to send to the Web-master where she posts it to the RFTW web-site www.rftw.org for each respective Route. Review and review again is done on the schedules and fine-tuning items are once more submitted to the web-master.

It is, at times, a daunting task full of labor, but it is a labor of love. We volunteer our time, talents and knowledge to make this Run a success. We welcome your input. We welcome your help. Take a look at the list of the Board of Directors, Route Leadership, State Coordinators; phone numbers and e-mail addresses are available for all. If you wish to help or have input, call the appropriate person and volunteer your abilities to keep this Mission successful.

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CHANGING PATHS ON THE RUN

We have already mentioned the growth of Run For The Wall. But I have to stress the importance of keeping up with the changes that are being made for 2005. There are many changes being made this year on the Central Route, with a few changes happening on the Southern Route. You cannot assume that the motel or campground you stayed at last year is going to be the designated stop for 2005. Please review the calendars below and make sure you have the correct reservations. It is also very important that you visit the “Latest News” section on the RFTW web-site for your designated Route. Your Route Leadership is posting important information there for your use in preparing for your trip. If you have questions about a particular change, get in touch with that State Coordinator.

The complete Detailed Daily Itinerary for each Route will be published on the RFTW web-site in mid-April. It is of great importance that you also review the step-by-step itineraries at that time. There will be changes made on gas stops, lunches, special ceremonies, etc. When you register at your starting point on the Run, you will receive a printed

booklet of the Detailed Daily Itinerary for your designated route.

Central Route

- No Change in Ontario, CA
- No Change in Williams, AZ
- BIG Change in Gallup, NM – All New Motels and Camp-Site
- BIG CHANGE – we will overnight in Raton, NM – NOT Cimarron – All New Motels and Camp-site
- No Change in Limon, CO
- No Change in Salina, KS
- No Change in Wentzville, MO
- BIG CHANGE – we will overnight in Corydon, IN – NOT Carefree – All New Motels and Camp-site
- No Change in Hurricane, WV
- BIG CHANGE – we will overnight in Lewisburg, WV –NOT Rainelle – All New Motels and Camp-site
- BIG CHANGE – at Alexandria, VA– All New Motels and Camp-site

CENTRAL ROUTE

TUESDAY MAY 17	WEDNESDAY MAY 18	THURSDAY MAY 19	FRIDAY MAY 20	SATURDAY MAY 21	SUNDAY MAY 22
Ontario, CA	Williams, AZ	Gallup, NM	Raton, NM	Limon CO	Salina KS
Camp Prado Park 909-597-4260 Fairfield Inn 909-390-9855	Camping KOA Days Inn 928-635-4051 Fairfield Inn 928-635-9888	Camping Red Rock Park - Free La Quinta Inn 800-642-4239, Sleep Inn 505-863-3535, Red Rock BW Inn 505-722-7600, Road Runner Motel 505-863-3804	Camping-KOA - 505-445-3488 Motel 6 - 505-445-2777 Super 8 - 505-445-2355 Budget Host - 505-445-3655	Camping KOA Preferred Inn 719-775-2385 Tymes Square 877-900-8963	Camp FREE Mid-America Inn 785-827-0356 Salina Inn 785-827-0292
MONDAY MAY 23	TUESDAY MAY 24	WEDNESDAY MAY 25	THURSDAY MAY 26	FRI/SAT MAY 27/28	SUNDAY MAY 29
Wentzville, MO	Corydon, IN	Hurricane, WV	Lewisburg, WV	Alexandria, VA	Washington, DC
Camp FREE Days Inn 636-625-1711 Super 8 636-327-5300	Camping - Harrison County Fairgrounds Baymont Inn 812-738-1500 Hampton Inn 812-738-6688 Holiday Inn Express 812-738-1623	Camp FREE Holiday Inn Exp 304-757-7177 Super 8 Motel 304-562-3346	Camping - State Fair Campgrounds Brier Inn 304-645-7722 Hampton Inn 304-645-7300 Relax Inn 304-645-2345	Holiday Inn Arlington, 703-243-9800 Hilton Arlington & Towers 800-695-7487 or 703-528-6000 Comfort Inn Ballston 800-787-6589 Lake Fairfax Cmpgrnd	ROLLING THUNDER PARADE

Southern Route

- No Changes in Ontario, CA
- BIG Change in Phoenix, AZ – All New Motel – Note there is no designated camping site in Phoenix

- BIG Change in Las Cruces, NM – All New Motel and camp-site
- No Change in Odessa, TX
- BIG Change in Weatherford, TX – All New Motel
- BIG CHANGE – we will overnight in Monroe, LA – NOT Minden – All New Motel and Camp-site
- No Change in Meridian, MS
- No Change in Wytheville, VA
- No Change in Roanoke, VA
- BIG CHANGE –at Alexandria, VA – all new Motels and Camp-site

SOUTHERN ROUTE

TUESDAY MAY 17	WEDNESDAY MAY 18	THURSDAY MAY 19	FRIDAY MAY 20	SATURDAY MAY 21	SUNDAY MAY 22
Ontario, CA	Phoenix, AZ	Las Cruces, NM	Odessa, TX	Weatherford, TX	Monroe, LA
Fairfield Inn 909-390-9855 Camping - Prado Park 909-597-4260	Holiday Inn Midtown, 602-200-8888 No Camping Available.	Best Western 800-327-3314 Camping - RV Doc's, 888-2RV- DOCS	Airport Plaza Inn 432-561-8000 Camping-Midessa Oil Patch RV 432-563-2368	Best Western 817-594-7401 Motel 6, Exit 408 817-594-1740 Camping - Ft. Worth Campground 817-594-8801	Days Inn, 318-345-2220 Best Western Airport, 318-345-4000 Camping, Shiloh RV Park
MONDAY MAY 23	TUESDAY MAY 24	WEDNESDAY MAY 25	THURSDAY MAY 26	FRIDAY / SATURDAY MAY 27/28	SUNDAY MAY 29
Meridian, MS	Chattanooga, TN	Wytheville, VA	Roanoke, VA	Alexandria, VA	Washington, DC
Baymont Inn 601-693-2300 Econo Lodge 601-485-3254 Camping - No Charge @ Ag Pavilion	Comfort Inn, 423-499-1993 Best Western 423-899-3311 Camping - No Charge Thunder Creek Harley	Holiday Inn 276-228-5483 Camping KOA 276-228-2601	Quality Inn, (540)-562-1912 Holiday Inn Express, 540-986-1000 Camping - No Charge Salem VAMC, Facilities Available.	Holiday Inn Arlington, 703-243-9800 Hilton Arlington & Towers 800-695-7487 or 703-528-6000 Comfort Inn Ballston 800-787-6589 Lake Fairfax Cmpgrnd	Rolling Thunder "Ride for Freedom XVII"

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RIDING ON THE RUN FOR THE WALL

From J. R. "Cleaner" Franklin

Many participants just get on their motorcycle, fall into the procession, and ride for the camaraderie, ride for the healing it brings, ride in the memory of their fallen brothers, they ride to support the Mission, and that is great, that is what this Run is all about. We welcome veterans of all wars, we welcome patriots, we welcome the common citizen who has concern for the reasons of the mission. We welcome YOU! But it is not just about riding a motorcycle across the United States, it is also about concern for yourself and your safety during the ride.

Some participants do not ride with the large pack. We are not saying that we encourage you to leave the main pack. If you are riding behind the pack and behind the chase trucks, if you should have a break-down or run out of gas, you will likely be on your own, because we will probably be unaware of your difficulties. All riders register as a

participant of RFTW, but for some, for their own personal reasons, they ride in a small pack or even individually, away from the main horde. Many of our Veterans suffer from issues with PTSD and cannot abide the confines of the large group, needing the ability to more freely make their own decisions, they find it extremely uncomfortable to ride within the main pack. Some riders may not have the confidence in their riding skills to maintain the rigors of pack-riding.

But this does not make them any less a part of RFTW. They are a registered participant and deserve any of the generous benefits afforded to the rest of the group as we travel across the country. Just the same as the main pack, the individual riders deserve any meals provided, to participate in ceremonies, to receive the precious free gas benefits, and to be recognized as a PARTICIPANT OF RFTW. These non-pack riders are supporters of the Mission, just the same as every rider who commits to travel the full length of the trip, or only across one state.

This movement across the Great United States called Run For the Wall is larger than any one person. Set aside your concerns about who rides where, and remember WHY WE RIDE!!!!

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FROM THE HEAD SHED – JAN. 2005

By Milo “Nayber” Gordon

I am often asked about Run for the Wall. The primary question is, what is Run For The Wall? What the questioner wants to know is what we do on this motorcycle ride. I will describe the various stops that we make. I will talk about some of the experiences that occur in our journey of healing. I share the tears and joyous exaltation that occurs during the Run. What I find most difficult to explain is the process of the Run. No matter, which route that you ride; you experience the same process. No matter how many times that you ride RFTW, you experience the same process. And each time it has different results. After having experienced this process on the Southern Route for the first time this past year, I can honestly say that if you want to truly experience the process of RFTW; then you need to ride both Routes.

We have some changes coming again this year. The Run may change; the process will stay the same. One of the changes that the BOD has discussed for the past four months is related to emergency personal and medical information. Over the past several years our registration forms have become more complex as we attempted to provide data for emergency needs. We have decided that we will not collect emergency data beyond bare necessity. It is the rider's responsibility to have that information available. It is also a good idea to have a copy of your living will as part of your emergency information kit. Some of us are responsible for ourselves and some of us are not. I fall under the “are not”. I plan to change that practice for myself. When I think of the miles that I ride solo and the lack of emergency information that I have with me, I realize that I am utterly irresponsible for my own self-care. RFTW will help me to rectify that matter. RFTW will not provide that service for me any more. We will address this further this spring as we approach RFTW XVII.

Another change for 2005 will be the snail mail newsletter. Again, after much discussion, the BOD has decided to stop free distribution of the newsletter. If you would like to receive a printed copy of the newsletter, please send your subscription fee of \$10.00 for the year to Sandra McKinney, Newsletter Editor. We will continue to publish the newsletter on our website.

I attended the fall reunion that was organized by Sgt. Rock and RC. The City of Wickenburg did themselves proud by their hospitality. It seemed to be a consensus of the riders present that we will be back at Wickenburg next year. Rock and RC are already starting to make plans. If you can make it, I encourage you to put that date in your schedule (likely October 7, 8 & 9, 2005).

Another issue that continues to be rumored is the development of a Northern Route. Several people have e-mailed me

about this rumor. Some people seem to be working on its development, as if the BOD has approved the idea. We on the BOD have had some discussion about the idea. We do not think that we, as an event, are ready to expand beyond our current commitments. We do not plan on doing any type of reconnaissance work in the immediate future and have not authorized anyone to do any recon work on our behalf.

Over the past several years State Contact People have organized several Runs to the Run that come across the northern USA. We hope that these efforts continue. However, there is no official recognition of those efforts. We also do not authorize anyone to solicit funds in support of those efforts. Runs to the Run are meant as means for those of us who travel distances to get to the Route of our choice and have some fun by riding with others who want to do the same thing.

Run for The Wall does not solicit donations from anyone for any reason. We will accept donations that are offered to us. All donations go into our general fund to be distributed for Run expenses.

That's it for now. I am looking forward to seeing ya'll in May. We are currently having our third day of sub-zero weather. Man, I surely wish that May were here now.

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RFTW 2005 – BACK TO THE BASICS

By Chuck “Shadow” Gyurek and Mitchell “Wings” Cook

RFTW 2005 - Soon the month of May will be upon us. And as we prepare for another Run For The Wall, it may be the perfect time to reflect on what this mission is about. Perhaps it is time to re-focus and get back to the basics of what the founding members hoped to accomplish by starting this pilgrimage across this great country and on to D.C. and The Wall. This describes it best; the following Mission Statement, Philosophy and Goals are the vision and theme for Run for the Wall:

Mission Statement:

To promote healing among all veterans and their families and friends, to call for an accounting of all Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action (POW/MIA), and to honor the memory of those Killed in Action (KIA).

Philosophy:

We strive to maintain a safe, supportive and private atmosphere in which all participants can reflect and heal on their journey to the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. in the hope that they can return home to a new beginning.

Goals:

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

Thru the years we have grown considerably; some have come and gone; and we have lost others who have gone on to that big ride in the sky. We have made new friends and lasting memories. And WE have made a difference!!!

Some choose to ride independently, others ride with the main group; but we all contribute to the mission in our own way. We may not always agree with the way things are done or with each other, but we all have the same desire: To see that the ‘Mission’ remains the focus and the reason we continue year after year. Each of us has something to

contribute and the “old hands” at RFTW can pass on their knowledge and experience to the new crop of FNG’s . The next great generation must be taught that we cannot take our freedoms lightly and to keep our freedoms intact ---we must practice and exercise them each and every day. Too many have paid dearly for our right “to ride in freedom” as we do! We of the Vietnam era know the suffering and trauma that war caused, not only to those that served, but to the families that sat around the TV each evening watching the news reports on the war. Mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters all holding their breath and praying their loved ones would be spared. Just as it is now!!!!

Some of us that participate in RFTW each year have served in our military and some of us have not. But the fact remains: we all believe in the fundamentals that this annual event hopes to accomplish. We need each other and we need to recruit new blood to carry on the mission. To pass the torch, there must be some one there to stand tall and hand it to the next representatives of RFTW. We set the example! We carry a great responsibility, not only to those who have served, and those who have paid the ultimate price, but also to those who serve our country today and are at this minute in harms way.

Yes, perhaps RFTW 2005 is the year we rededicate ourselves and get back to the basics, back to our roots and make RFTW XVII a tribute to those founding members who had a dream and acted upon it. We carry a very big responsibility but I believe, no, I know, we are up to the task.

May God Bless us all.

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INTRODUCING THE 2005 CENTRAL ROUTE COORDINATOR

J. R. “Cleaner” Franklin - As a youth growing up in Illinois, between the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers, I learned the skills while hunting and tracking that would later serve me well in Vietnam. I moved to the middle of Kansas my junior year and finished high school in 1965. In less than a year I was drafted. I became part of the 9th Infantry Division and trained for eight months with my unit at Ft Riley Kansas. I shipped over in January of '67 as part of the advance party for my unit. At that time I was a Buck Sergeant Squad Leader and was sent to the 1st Infantry Division at Di-an, South Vietnam. I was immediately assigned to a Unit in the field. My first two weeks in-country I saw ambushes blown on them as well as their ambushes blown on us. I was in the thick of it. I was then sent back to Bear Cat, 9th Infantry Division Headquarters to rejoin my regular command which was just getting to Vietnam. Shortly thereafter in early 1967, the 2nd Brigade moved south and became part of the Mobile Riverine Force made up of joint Army/Navy units. Having fired batallion high on the rifle range at Ft Riley, I was made a sniper and my M-16 was taken away and I was given an M-14. I continued to serve as a Squad Leader and as a sniper for the next few months becoming an E-6 at 15 and one half months service time. At one point I served as platoon Sergeant. After being wounded twice, I became a supply sergeant for the 9th Division Officer’s Club System. In January Of '68, I returned to The states and was made a Platoon Sergeant again. I received a hardship discharge after 22 months service.



In December of 1999, I put the money down on a motorcycle and told the people I had heard of a Ride from LA to DC promoting awareness of the POW/MIA issue. I found out more about it through the web-site and made my first all the Way Run in 2000. In 2001 I again made the Run as part of the Road Guard Team and continued to work as a Road Guard in 2002 and 2003, making many friends and knowing that I wanted to continue, I had found a family that loved me and a Nation that did, also.

In 2004, I served as Asst. Coordinator to Mark Rittermeyer on the Central Route. I am now looking forward to leading the 2005 Team as your Route Coordinator. We will work together to make 2005 - RFTW XVII - safe, rewarding and healing once again, as we carry the message to Washington that our POW/MIA’s are not forgotten. We want an accounting!

INTRODUCING THE 2005 CENTRAL ROUTE ASSISTANT COORDINATOR

Ed “The Butcherman” Grinde - I started with the Run in 2001. Like most of us, I had no idea what to expect. I was over come with the support and brotherhood of RFTW. I was in the Navy from 1969 to 1972 and did not talk about my service until I went for a long ride in May of 2001. I owe a lot to RFTW and will be of service as long as I am able.



I have been a Butcher, a Baker and, yes, I have even made a Candle Stick in my time. I am presently a Federal Officer with USDA. I have been with them for 14 years and enjoy my job very much. I ride with the Choir Boys, (a law enforcement motorcycle group whose sole purpose is to raise money for the families of fallen officers). My wife Lynda and I have two Daughters and two Granddaughters that we are very proud of. I have a Son-in-law that is serving in the Navy. He is an IDC (Independent Duty Corpsman). I am very proud of him. He takes care of the Marines, so you HooRaw's out there need to take it easy on me.

I am honored that I have been asked to serve in this position. I pray that I don't let anyone down. We have a purpose of healing and a purpose to RIDE FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T. I look forward to showing support for America and our troops. The ride to me is like a shot in the arm that I need once a year. We are part of what builds the attitude of this country. We won't let anyone throw anything at our Sons and Daughters like they did at us in our day. I would like to thank the many of you who did not serve but have given as much to this country. It is an honor to ride with you.

Thank you and God Bless All.

RE-INTRODUCING THE 2005 SOUTHERN ROUTE COORDINATOR

John “Slammer”Gebhards - After graduating from college in 1967, I enlisted in the Army. I completed BCT/AIT in 11B at Ft. Dix, NJ and was assigned to the Infantry School and Center. I attended Airborne School and was assigned to their cadre. I am a graduate of Infantry OCS, Signal Advance Course, Engineer Construction Course, PsyOp/SF Operation Course, Command and General Staff College and other courses. My top three awards are the Bronze Star (Achievement), Purple Heart and Meritorious Service Award (2). I am a Senior Parachutist and Fallschirmspringer (30268)-Fallschirmjager. My last assignment was as Assistant G-5 (PsyOp), 1st SOCOM. I served in Vietnam and Persian Gulf War and retired (medical disability-GSW to neck) with 25 years service in 1993. I retired again in 2002 from 3M.



I received a rather strange call late one night in the spring of '99 from an old team-mate telling me about a ride he wanted to make to DC called "Rolling Thunder". I took the bait. It was good seeing Don Canaday, and once again I was back among brothers. We traveled the Central Route and had a great experience. My '85 BMW ran well and I was hooked. I ride a black Ultra now, but for 2003, I had to use a Ford F-150, because my old bike sold fast and my new '03 Ultra (black) got pushed back. I helped Jim David in 2000 as road guide in Missouri. In 2001, I switched to the Southern Route and helped with communication and stuff for Center Punch. In 2002 and 2003 I was Assistant Coordinator for Kent Wilson on the Southern Run. 2004 was my first year to lead the Southern Route across the United States and I am excited to be holding this position for a second time for RFTW XVII.

I am involved with the VFW National Motorcycle Run and American Legion Riders of Missouri. I am somewhat of a loner and don't like crowds, so I try to go the Wall on Friday night or Saturday after Arlington, less people. I have made several good friends on the Run and have put ghosts to rest. John "Slammer" Gebhards

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RE-INTRODUCING THE 2005 SOUTHERN ROUTE ASSISTANT COORDINATOR

Don "9-Ball" Morris - I graduated from High School in 1963 in a small Iowa farming community. After a couple of years working I attended the American Institute of Business in Des Moines and graduated with an Associate Degree in Business Administration. Shortly thereafter I was drafted into the Army. Basic was at Fort Campbell and AIT was in Fort Polk (Tiger Land). I then attended NCO Academy in Fort Benning graduating with honors. I received my E-6 stripes, sent back to Fort Polk for OJT and then in July of 1968 I left for Vietnam. I was assigned to Delta Company, 1/7 Cavalry (Recon). I spent the first five months in I Corp out of Camp Evans then they moved the entire 1st Cavalry Division closer to the action in III Corp. After a few months of real training I became Platoon Sergeant of the Second Platoon. I left Vietnam in July 1969 returning to Iowa. I have lived in Phoenix, AZ for 22 years and that is where I met "Side Pocket" 10 years ago. We own a small business and hope to retire in a few short years.



I learned about RFTW in Sturgis 2000 from Don Weaver. Those of you that knew him were very fortunate. He was responsible for Della and I being on the 2001 run. In the three years we have made the run we have made "life long" friends. In 2003 I shadowed Kent Wilson, learning as much as I could about the administrative duties. I also worked as a Road Guard in 2003 observing that very important aspect of the Run. When "Slammer" asked me to be his assistant for 2004 I didn't hesitate, and here I am in that position for a second time in 2005.

RFTW has provided a lot of healing for me and I have seen the results through other participant's experiences. It is now time for me to give back. In 2001 many of you were there for me, now it is time for me to be there for those that are going to the "Wall" for the first time. I look forward to renewing old friendships and making new ones in 2005 along with keeping the POW/MIA issue in the forefront.

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THANK YOU VIETNAM VETERAN

By Pat Driscoll

Dear Vietnam Veteran, A letter of thanks to those of you I haven't thanked personally over the years.

You chose, at a time when your decision was largely unpopular, to step up, defend freedom and support a people who wanted to live a democratic way of life. For those of you inclined to exclude yourselves because you were drafted – don't. You still had choices and you made a difficult one.

Any other time in our nation's history (including the present), the men and women who have served, have at least been appreciated by the majority of their peers. Unlike them many of you were abused here at "home". You were treated as outcasts; left to attempt to defend and heal yourselves with what little mental and emotional reserves you had when you returned home.

Thank you for walking through the fire. Thank you for living with the scars that have been visited upon you, both physical and emotional. Thank you for being heroes and living your lives gallantly in a time when valor was, for the most part, unappreciated. Thank you for coming home and participating in our society when we didn't deserve you.

And a special thank you to the families of those who didn't make it home, those left to live with the memories of heroes unacknowledged.

At some point (now?), the majority of our society will realize that our true shame, as a nation, was not yours for serving in Vietnam or our government's for sending you. Our true shame was our unwillingness, as a people, to embrace you, to recognize your spirit and courage, and to provide whatever small comfort we could upon your return.

Your nobility has given me something to strive for and, more than once, your very presence has literally saved my life. I can't imagine justification for giving up when you haven't.

You have embodied the spiritual principles of love and courage for more than a generation.

With a heart full of appreciation, I close, wishing you peace and grace for the rest of your days.

Pat

(Patricia Driscoll is a patriot. A few years back, Pat was diagnosed with a life-threatening disease, prompting her to recognize her own mortality. Within this recognition, she started making a list of the things she wanted to accomplish before her death; at the top of her list was to write this letter to Vietnam Veterans. It took her several months of editing to reach all the suitable words. Her initial audience was four veterans that she knew. Those four men shared it with other Veterans that they knew and before long, her letter was being read by many people that she did not even know.

Pat is from Albuquerque, New Mexico and she received a phone call from a friend back east. He told her that he had just read a great letter from someone with the same name as her. When he read the letter to her, she was astonished to find that it was HER letter! Pat's letter is being read by Vietnam Veterans all over the United States, and it is even more wide-spread now with publication in our RFTW newsletter.)

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FIFTH ANNUAL HIGHLAND COOK-OUT

On April 16, 2004, the Fifth 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.

Roland Marchand, Jr. will be the featured speaker for the event. Roland served in the United States Marine Corps from 66-68, spending his time in Vietnam from April 67 to January 68. During his service in Vietnam, Roland took a direct hit from a mortar round, receiving severe internal injuries and the loss of his right leg just below the knee. He spent eight months in the hospital receiving 24 operations and over 3200 stitches.

Upon his discharge from the hospital, Roland proceeded to get on with the business of living, altho, not always with the best of attitude. He married Pat in 1969 and has enjoyed 35 years of togetherness and has two grown daughters, Beth and Dawn, and four grandchildren. He had a good home life and was even able to ride a motorcycle. His life was going well, but something was always missing.

In 2004 Roland decided to go on his first trip with Run For The Wall. What an eye opener for him!!! Upon his return from the Run last year, he realized what was missing from his life; involvement with veterans, volunteer work at the VA, reaching out to the young veterans now returning from Iraq. Roland drives WWII vets to their VA appointments, he serves on a Memorial Honor Team for Marine burials at the National Cemetery at Riverside, wearing full dress uniform. He and Bob Hatcher spend many days at Camp Pendleton with Iraqi Freedom Vets. Roland wants to change things that will make their lives better for when they return home. He is giving a positive attitude, living a more

positive life and recognizes his value to others....so much better than just sitting at home. Roland didn't know he could care this much and he owes it all to his first trip with RFTW.

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 Run For The Wall XVII.

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

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EXPERIENCING RUN FOR THE WALL

by Dave (Scooby) Schubert

The RUN FOR THE WALL has made a lasting impression on me and I continue to feel a strong bond with my fellow members.

My first experience with the run began in Wentzville, Missouri as I was introduced to Marla Brundies, the Iowa Contact, whom I had been communicating with the last ten months prior to the `01 Run. It was exciting to be on hand when the pack came in from California under the large American flag hoisted between those fire engines. I was of course an FNG along with my riding partner, Tom Walker, also from Ames, Iowa. We began to learn about the rules and protocol of the Run from staff. To me it appeared the tougher the riding conditions became, the more this group dug in and actually became closer. I was impressed and felt that I was beginning to be part of something special. I actually became a better rider on the Run, however, as soon as I got home, I enrolled in a motorcycle safety class because I still had limited skills. But my Softail Standard made it to D.C. and home.



It was emotional to go into Rainelle, West Virginia, and I felt compelled to drop a \$100.00 bill in the jar and others did, as well. My friend Jake Jacobs "Crazy Jake" met and gave a ride to one of the kids, and she was beaming all the way. We had a dinner that I will always remember, with a cake that one of the ladies made that took her three days to complete. There are so many memories that I treasure.

We were cut off by a semi near D.C., not the fault of the Road Guards, but we had to take the shoulder for about 600 feet, and then we got back safely with the pack. There are so many things that happen on the Run and so many relationships formed, and much healing and help to fellow vets and, also, teaching of young people. Tom and I had met up with families on the Run to the Run. We met one man who confided in us that he never spoke to his family about Vietnam. We invited him to join the Run sometime and come with us. We WELCOMED HIM HOME. That was a special meeting that I will always remember. It was just one of many experiences that had value and purpose and I want to continue to reach out to other vets to help them discover the strength of the RUN FOR THE WALL supporters.

In `02 I rode all the way and Tom went to Ontario to Wentzville and home. I am proud to say that I made it all the way and was kind of tired but happy to get to D.C. Also in '01 I was able to take my son in the parade riding double in D.C. This was a special experience to share, and as he is currently serving in Iraq and is now in harms way, I always tell him that the RUN FOR THE WALL SUPPORTS HIM AND ALL THE SERVICE MEN. I think that he is very happy to know that there are folks out there in America who really care about the vets and are looking to get all combatants home.

Prior to the '04 Run, I became disabled but was able to fly out and go part way on the Central Route and part way on the Southern Route. I was able to ride Missing Man formation into the Navajo Nation and also into Calendar City, Texas. This was a unique experience. Next year my daughter Stephanie has expressed that she wants to go on the Run. I am looking forward to sharing this new experience with her and we are praying that her brother Michael and all service men and women come home safe.

People ask me "Why do you ride 6337 miles with the RUN FOR THE WALL?" I say that there is no way that I could not do it!!!

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CHICK HANCOCK GIVES GENEROUSLY TO WOUNDED SOLDIER

by Sandra "LittleBit" McKinney (special thanks to Sandra O'Rear)

Chick Hancock, owner of Chick's Harley Davidson in Albuquerque, New Mexico has long been a supporter of Run For the Wall and of our Veterans. Chick has generously provided lunch for the Central Route RFTW riders when we have stopped in Albuquerque. But this past Christmas 2004, Chick showed an even greater generosity to U.S. Army Pfc. Robert Ruiz.

December 28, 2003, Pfc. Ruiz tripped a booby trap set by insurgents in Iraq, having spikes tear thru his boot and turn his right foot into mincemeat. Ruiz earned the Purple Heart last year for his injuries. Ruiz is currently on leave and is undergoing rehabilitation for his foot injury and nerve damage to his back.

Despite all this, Ruiz had a dream. He told his father before leaving for Iraq in 2003 that he wanted to get a bike so that he could ride with his father. On Christmas Eve 2004, Robert's father took him to Chick's on the premise of taking pictures of motorcycles. Robert's father asked him to wear his dress uniform.

To Robert's surprise, he was greeted with applause and an Infantry Blue Harley-Davidson Sportster that had been customized just for him. Chick Hancock said that Ruiz's selfless patriotism deserved to be rewarded.

This huge generosity was hatched by a simple inquiry to Chick from Robert's wife, Andrea. She knew Robert really wanted a motorcycle, and she inquired of Chick about financing options. She wasn't asking for any special treatment, but after learning of Ruiz's plight, Chick and the rest of the employees decided to get Ruiz a Harley. Chick Hancock recognized Private Ruiz's selfless contribution, a guy who is 28-years-old with a wife and three kids who just wanted to do right by our country.

The doctors had wanted to amputate Robert's foot, but he told them he was going to need that foot! He recognizes he has some work to do before he is able to ride, but he will soon be proudly astride an Infantry Blue Harley-Davidson Sportster...compliments of Chick Hancock and his wonderful staff.

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LONG BEACH VETERAN'S DAY PARADE

Saturday, November 6, 2004

By Wayne Nicholls

I rolled out of bed at 0400 on Saturday in anticipation of getting to the Veteran's Day Parade early. As it turned out, I was there by 0700 and had to wait on the Parade Organizers to get the staging area laid out. The Run For The Wall group would be number "47" out of over 200 entries & displays. Behind us would be the Long Beach Park Rangers.

Thanks to Chief Park Ranger Neal, they would be carrying a couple cases of bottled water for RFTW.

Around 0800, Patrick Armstrong arrived with his grandson. Most folks on the Central Route will recall Patrick (retired Policeman). He rode a beautiful black/white H-D Police Special, complete with saddlebags and siren. His bike also displayed large American and POW-MIA flags. For the Long Beach Veterans Day Parade, he outfitted his bike a little different, adding what appeared to be a 10-foot flagpole. It was a very impressive display of our flags, bringing spectators to their feet and some giving a hand salute as the RFTW group paraded by.

Before the parade was underway, we had a nice visit with the Vietnam Veterans of American, Chapter 756. They were instrumental in the creation, installation and dedication of the Long Beach Vietnam Veterans Memorial. They also brought us a surprise visit of a couple of Gold Star Mothers. One Gold Star Mom hitched a ride in the parade on "Nacho's" bike.

A few thousand people lined both sides of the street as we paraded down Atlantic Avenue on our motorcycles. Some folks were shouting and waiving to us as we rolled by. I think I had a smile from ear to ear. Sometimes I felt my lower lip quiver when I'd get choked up with a spectator yelling "thank you" or "welcome home". Likewise, I noticed tears in some of their eyes.

After the parade we took time to visit the Long Beach Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The restored Huey helicopter had seen action in Vietnam and was mounted on a pole to represent it being in flight. At the base of the pole was a small monument listing 103 Long Beach area soldiers listed a KIA or MIA.

After visiting the Memorial, we were invited by Kate Halpin, Director of the VVA, Chapter 756 to the local VFW where they cooked-up a "Welcome Home" bar-b-que lunch especially for us and provided us with a true sense of brotherhood.

In a letter received from the Long Beach Veterans Day Parade Committee to the Run For The Wall participants, it says "Your participation contributed immeasurably to the over all success of this year's 'Salute To Those Who Served.' The 2004 parade was the best yet! The committee is truly grateful for your presence at this event and we look forward to your return next year."

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My HealthVet

Contributed by James "Gunny" Gregory

The following web site is for any veteran using the VA. Register yourself on the main page and then surf through the pages for useful information. In the future...maybe next Veteran's Day? - you will be able to pull up your own medical history. Register now at this web-site: <https://www.myhealth.va.gov>

My HealthVet is a web portal for veterans, their family members and those interested in helping them become more informed about their health status and take a more active role in maintaining and improving their health.

Benefits of registration:

- Personalization of the My HealthVet site based on your interests and needs.
- Read any of the 18 million pages of health care information available in the Health Education Library.
- Interact with the self-assessment tools and health calculators available to help you learn more about your own health.
- Enter your current prescription in the Rx Checker tool to learn more about your medication and possible conflicts with other prescriptions.
- Read health information and news specific to your interests, age, and/or condition.

- Take advantage of an online calendar to set and track your appointments

The VA has developed this health portal for veterans and their families -- to provide health information and tools to achieve their best health. My Health_eVet is being developed in stages. As we continue to grow, we will be adding new things, and we expect some problems to surface. We ask for your earnest observations as you make use of this website. This is your opportunity to make a difference in the way the Veterans Health Administration takes care of veterans. Please do not hesitate to contact us by email about anything regarding the My Health_eVet web site. However, please refer any questions about your health care or interpretation of health education materials to your health care provider, not the My Health_eVet web site. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday between 8:00am and 8:00pm Eastern Time. In this first phase, you can use many of the functions on My Health_eVet without becoming a member. However, if you want to use the HealthGate health education library or establish a My Health Care page, you will need to register.

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VIETNAM VETERANS HOMECOMING TRIBUTE

Contributed By Walter New

There is a Vietnam Veteran Homecoming Tribute this year in Branson, Missouri scheduled for June 13 thru June 19, 2005. Our Run For The Wall will end on June 1 in Washington, DC, so maybe some of the participants of RFTW will want to head to Branson for this "Welcome Home". Just some of the activities scheduled; Military Demonstrations and Displays, a Vendor Village, Unit Activities, Golfing and Fishing Tournaments, Memorial Services, and, of course, Branson Shows and Entertainment.

Wally called their registration phone number (1-800-768-3913) and was given all of the help he could have asked for. This organization has taken over all the hotel booking for all the hotels within 80 miles of Branson. They are offering some pretty good rates. He was told that the room rates go from \$45.00 up to \$150.00 per night, depending on hotel, of course. In March 2005, the hotel reservations go back to the hotel's control and the hotel's original rates, so make your reservations NOW if you are interested in attending.

They are trying to put the different branches of services together; Air Force with Air Force, Army with Army, etc. The event reservation fee of \$100.00 per person was collected by credit card over the phone, but if needed, cancellation is possible.

The full schedule of events and registration form can be found at the web-site:

<http://www.operationhomecomingusa.com>.

Mike Jackson, a Vietnam Veteran and the author of "Naked in Da Nang" is spearheading a similar tribute "Operation Welcome Home", a four-day celebration to be held Veterans Day weekend in Las Vegas, Nevada. A highlight of both celebrations in Branson and Las Vegas, will be a parade.

There haven't been many ceremonies and parades over the years for the 7.9 million Vietnam veterans, though there was a homecoming parade 20 years ago in New York City that drew about 25,000 former soldiers.

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ONE MORE...YOU MIGHT BE A REDNECK IF

It never occurred to you to be offended by the phrase, "One nation under God. . ."

You've never protested about seeing the 10 Commandments posted in public places.

You still say "Christmas" instead of "Winter Festival."

You bow your head when someone prays.

You stand and place your hand over your heart when they play the National Anthem.

You treat Vietnam vets with great respect, and always have.

You've never burned an American flag.

You know what you believe and you aren't afraid to say so, no matter who is listening.

You respect your elders and expect your kids to do the same.

You'd give your last dollar to a friend.

We have enjoyed the redneck jokes for years. It's time to take a reflective look at the core beliefs of a culture that values home, family, country and God. If I had to stand before a dozen terrorists who threaten my life, I'd choose a half dozen or so rednecks to back me up. Tire irons, squirrel guns and grit- that's what rednecks are made of. I hope I am one of them.

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LET DANICA RIDE IN 2005

By Roger "Cowboy" Mead



On my way home from the RFTW Reunion in Wickenburg, I was reviewing the weekend and couldn't help but smile at the number of Southern Route riders that asked about my Little Bit (granddaughter Danica) and where was she and was she riding in 2005.

All Southern Route riders that remember Little Bit (Cowboy's granddaughter) and would like to see her ride along again in 2005, I have a favor to ask:

Little Bit wants to do the Run in '05, but her parents say she misses too much school; the last three weeks. Little Bit is an A-B student. On the Run last year she learned about WW II, Civil War, Korean War and of course our Vietnam experience. None of these things have been taught in her school system. The Lovely Karen and I have been trying to convince them to allow her to ride along, but have run into a brick wall. So I am proposing a unique approach, and that is that if any of our RFTW family would like to see her ride with us again, drop a short e-mail to her mom and step-dad: dhenzel@dsl-only.net . Let them know you want Danica to ride again in 2005!

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POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY

Until July 18, 1979, no commemoration was held to honor America's POW/MIAs, those returned and those still missing and unaccounted for from our nation's wars. That first year, resolutions were passed in the Congress and the national ceremony was held at the National Cathedral, Washington, D.C. The Missing Man formation was flown by the 1st Tactical Squadron, Langley AFB, Virginia. The Veterans Administration published a poster including only the

letters "POW/MIA" and that format was continued until 1982, when a black and white drawing of a POW in harsh captivity was used to convey the urgency of situation and the priority that President Ronald Reagan assigned to achieving the fullest possible accounting for Americans still missing from the Vietnam War.

National POW/MIA Recognition Day legislation was introduced yearly, until 1995 when it was deemed by Congress that legislation designating special commemorative days would no longer be considered by Congress. The President now signs a proclamation each year. In the early years, the date was routinely set in close proximity to the League's annual meetings. In the mid-1980's, the American Ex-POWs decided that they wished to see the date established as April 9th, the date during World War II when the largest number of Americans were captured. As a result, legislation urged by the American Ex-POWs was passed covering two years, July 20, 1984 and April 9, 1985, as the commemoration dates.

The 1984 National POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremony was held at the White House, hosted by President Ronald Reagan. At that most impressive ceremony, the Reagan Administration balanced the focus to honor all returned POWs and renew national commitment to accounting as fully as possible for those still missing. Perhaps the most impressive Missing Man formation ever flown was that year, up the Ellipse and over the White House. Unfortunately, the 1985 ceremony was canceled due to inclement weather, a concern that had been expressed when the April 9th date was proposed.

Subsequently, in an effort to accommodate all returned POWs and all Americans still missing and unaccounted for from all wars, the National League of Families proposed the third Friday in September, a date not associated with any particular war and not in conjunction with any organization's national convention. Most National POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremonies have been held at the Pentagon. On September 19, 1986, however, the national ceremony was held on the steps on the U.S. Capitol facing the Mall, again concluding with a flight in Missing Man formation.

National POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremonies are now held throughout the nation and around the world on military installations, ships at sea, state capitols, at schools, churches, national veteran and civic organizations, police and fire departments, fire stations, etc. The League's POW/MIA flag is flown, and the focus is to ensure that America remembers its responsibility to stand behind those who serve our nation and do everything possible to account for those who do not return.

POW/MIA Recognition Day will be September 16, 2005. National POW/MIA Recognition Day is one of the six days specified by law 36 USC 902 on which the black POW/MIA flag shall be flown over federal facilities and cemeteries, post offices and military installations.

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NATIONAL LEAGUE OF POW/MIA FAMILIES UPDATE – AS OF DECEMBER 1, 2004

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. The League seeks the return of all US prisoners, the fullest possible accounting for those still missing and repatriation of all recoverable remains.

The League's highest priority is resolving the live prisoner question. Official intelligence indicates that Americans known to have been alive in captivity in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were not returned at the end of the war. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, it must be assumed that these Americans may still be alive. As a policy, the U.S. Government does not rule out the possibility that Americans could still be held.

Unilateral return of remains by the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) has been proven an

effective means of obtaining accountability, as have joint field operations in recent years, though the first joint excavation in northern Vietnam occurred in 1985. A comprehensive wartime and post-war process was established by Vietnam to collect and retain information and remains; thus, unilateral efforts by Vietnam to locate and return remains and provide records continue to offer significant potential. Hanoi's recent commitments to expedite interviews to obtain intelligence information and move forward on coastline cases, including working out a bilateral agreement for use of a US recovery ship, are welcome and appreciated. These topics were stressed during the League Delegation in February 2003 and have now been raised by US officials at the highest levels. Archival research, also a high priority with Vietnam, has produced thousands of documents and photos, but to date all except 1+% pertain to returned POWs and Americans previously accounted-for.

Joint field operations in Laos are very productive. Over the year, the Lao regularly increased flexibility and the number of US personnel permitted in-country in an effort to improve field operations. Recently, the Lao approved an archival research program that will begin implementation this summer. Agreements between the U.S. and the Indochina governments now permit Vietnamese witnesses to participate in joint operations in Laos and Cambodia when necessary, but it is a time-consuming, expensive process that could be at least partially alleviated with a decision in Hanoi to unilaterally provide relevant documents, as President Bush stipulated in his certification to Congress, March 20, 2002, and Secretary of State Powell September 7, 2004. POW/MIA research and field activities in Cambodia have received excellent support, including a full-time DIA Stony Beach representative working out of the US Embassy in Phnom Penh . Over 80% of US losses in Laos and 90% in Cambodia occurred in areas where Vietnam 's forces operated during the war, but Hanoi has not responded to countless US requests for case-specific records on our losses in these countries. Records research and field operations are the most likely means of increased accounting for Americans missing in Laos and Cambodia .

U.S. intelligence and other evidence indicate that many Americans can be accounted for by unilateral Vietnamese efforts to locate and return remains and provide relevant documents and records. Despite this reality, President Clinton regularly certified to Congress that Vietnam was “fully cooperating in good faith” to resolve this issue. The League disagrees, but recognizes that legislation requiring the certification includes punitive measures that would reverse political and economic relations to the level in place in 1994. The League supported steps by the US to respond to concrete results, not advancing political and economic concessions in the hope that Hanoi would respond. The Clinton administration lifted the trade embargo, established the US Embassy in Hanoi, normalized diplomatic relations, posted a US Ambassador to Vietnam, signed a bilateral trade agreement and established normal trade relations. President George W. Bush also issued the required certification that Vietnam is “fully cooperating in good faith,” but added language to outline steps Vietnam should take to improve cooperation, stating:
“As we look to further strengthen cooperation, Vietnam's unilateral provision of POW/MIA-related documents and records should be improved, focused initially on archival data pertaining to Americans captured, missing, or killed in areas of Laos and Cambodia under wartime Vietnamese control. Vietnam should also focus greater attention on locating and providing information on discrepancy cases, with priority on those last known alive in captivity or in immediate proximity to capture, and to locating and repatriating the remains of those who died while in Vietnamese control that have not yet been returned.”

Senior officials from the Departments of State and Defense regularly press Hanoi for answers.

<http://www.pow-miafamilies.org>

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JOINT POW/MIA ACCOUNTING COMMAND (JPAC) AND ROLLING THUNDER

Washington D.C. – Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command members attended Rolling Thunder’s Annual Fall Conference in Washington D.C. Nov. 5-6.

JPAC, whose mission it is to achieve the fullest possible accounting of all American missing as a result of America’s military campaigns, attended the meeting to educate the Rolling Thunder community members on JPAC’s mission.

Rolling Thunder's mission is to publicize concerns about prisoner-of-war/missing-in-action service members. The national non-profit organization named after the boisterous sound of the 1965 bombing campaign of North Vietnam, also wants to help American veterans from all wars.

The Rolling Thunder organization has more than 8,000 members in 81 Chapters in 26 states in United States and Canada. Together, the Rolling Thunder members donated more than \$50,000 in financial support, food, clothing and other essentials to veterans' groups, veterans and veterans' families in need.

"Now that JPAC and Rolling Thunder have gotten together it can only enhance the full accounting and recovery of POW/MIA's," Rolling Thunder president Gary Scheffmeyer said. In the long run that will allow JPAC to keep the search and recovery efforts ongoing."

Throughout the conference, JPAC personnel handed out information and took time to speak with Rolling Thunder members about JPAC's mission and history.

The president of each chapter was given information to provide the Rolling Thunder members about JPAC efforts. JPAC is made up of military men and women of today's services, along with civilians, who work together to search for, investigate, recover and identify POW/MIAs who have not returned home.

JPAC also had a table set up that displayed how search, recovery, and identification operations are carried out worldwide in search of service members who served in U.S. conflicts from World War II to the Gulf War.

JPAC and Rolling Thunder missions were underscored during the weekend when conference attendees met at a memorial service held at Arlington National Cemetery. The memorial service was held to honor six sets of remains that were recovered from a 1995 recovery in Laos. The former Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii and Joint Task Force-Full Accounting spearheaded the recovery. Today's JPAC is formed from the merging of CILHI and JTF-FA units.

Dickie Hites, JPAC's special advisor to the commanding general, was a featured guest speaker at the conference. Other JPAC members were honored along with wounded veterans returning from Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

TSgt Les Schneider, noncommissioned officer in-charge and life support wreckage analysis/investigations said that attending the Rolling Thunder National Convention was good experience to better understand what they are doing to help educate the public on POW/MIA issues.

"I think it's also important to let as many people know what JPAC is doing to bring Americas' heroes home," Schneider said, ". . . and to bring closure to families."

<http://www.jpac.pacom.mil/index.htm>

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MILITARY MORTUARY AFFAIRS AND FORENSICS TEAMS DEPLOY TO ASIA

HICKAM AFB, HAWAII - Two specialized teams from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command- JPAC - will deploy from Hickam AFB, Hawaii to Southeast Asia to assist in humanitarian needs caused by the tsunami disaster.

The JPAC teams are comprised of military and civilian specialists in the fields of mortuary affairs and forensic science. The team is capable of assisting in mass casualty requirements such as recovery, sorting, and identification of

remains.

The JPAC teams were ordered by the U.S. Pacific Command, based at Camp Smith, Hawaii, to augment a larger military relief operation headed by the Third Marine Expeditionary Force, based in Okinawa, Japan.

Initially, the teams will deploy to Thailand but may be moved to other areas as needs are assessed.

New Mexico native, SFC Robert Bryson, a team leader with JPAC, received his orders to deploy to Thailand on December 29. Given 12 hours notice, Robert called his father, Rhett “Buffalo” Bryson to tell him of his latest assignment. SFC Bryson spoke to the RFTW Central Route contingent in Gallup in 2004 about the ongoing work of JPAC to bring home our MIA’s, now he has an even more daunting task of aid in the devastating losses from the tsunami in Asia.

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THE LIGHT

A True Story

By Trash Haley

This is about an experience I had for which I have no explanation. I've told only a few people this story; the first was my mother on her deathbed. She was terrified of dying, terrified of the unknown. A few minutes after I told her this story, she died with a calm smile on her face.

This story takes place in the Mekong Delta during one of the bloodiest battles of the Viet Nam war. On the Easter Sunday weekend of 11 April 1966 during Operation Abilene, I was the team leader on an M-60 Machine Gun with Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion of the 16th Infantry Rangers, 1st Infantry Division. Near the village of Xa Cam My, a short distance from the Courtenay Rubber Plantation, about 40 miles east of Saigon, Charlie Company was drawn into an ambush by an NVA Battalion called D-800. We were completely surrounded, outnumbered three to one. We lost. Of 134 men in Charlie Company, we had 106 casualties. I was one of just 28 men not to be either killed or wounded in that battle. Dead or wounded soldiers of both sides of this carnage lay all around me.

Late in the night, several hours after the fighting had ceased, while lying in the quiet and pitch-black darkness, I suddenly found myself being pulled into a bright light. This light was amazingly... overwhelmingly beautiful. I haven't the words to truly describe it. Within this light...this place...at this moment...I felt at peace; Totally at peace. I didn't see any people within this light, nor did I see my dead relatives or winged beings, but I was not alone. All around me were other lights similar to the one that surrounded me. They were of many different colors, hues and sizes. We were all moving toward an even more beautiful field of light in the distance. For lack of a better description, “The light at the end of a tunnel” will do. But it was more than just a light at the end of a tunnel. Much more. I had no feeling of this being a religious moment, nor did I seem to hover above the scene. I was being carried by the light toward a new level of existence, a new beginning. From the first moment of this journey I knew something of its destination. The closer I came to the distant light, the more feeling I had of this being...right. I was going to where we will all go when we die. I don't know how, or by what means I gained this feeling...this knowing what will be, but I know it is true. It is a truth to me. I was given another truth that night as well. I know that when we die, every one of us will go to where I was going...except suicides. I had the strong feeling that the taking of ones own life...to give up on the life we have...without good reason, will somehow prevent us from going where all others will go. Suicides may go somewhere, but not there. I don't know how long this experience lasted, but I suddenly found myself back where I was before, laying in the darkness, surrounded by the carnage of battle.

I was just a 19 year old kid fresh out of High School when this happened and I remember little of the battle. But the light, the journey...the feeling of it being so right...these things I remember as though they just happened. I know this story sounds crazy, that's why I've rarely told it. But I know that what I saw was real. I had never done drugs before,

I had never had hallucinations, and I was not wounded. Why I was privileged to see what I saw...I do not know. But from that moment on I have not feared death. I fear suicide. I fear six months of agony lying in some hospital all shot up waiting to die, but I do not fear death. Death is easy...die'n is hard! I tell this story as I saw it. I make no guesses why I saw it, or what I saw. But it is true.

ON THE LOSS OF BOBBY, A MUDSOLDIER

To The Mudsoldiers family:

To most people, the passing of Bobby so near to the coming of Christmas, a universal time of joy, would put their belief in a bright hereafter to the test. Most people, but not all. My belief is unshaken. I believe that Bobby has gone into The Light, as we all one day will. In that, I can feel only joy. I do not mourn his passing. I rejoice instead in that he lived, but I will miss him. I rejoice in that I was privileged to know him, and even with my faulty memory, I know I will never forget him. I am proud to know that I have fought beside him, though I must leave it to others to say how well. There is no name I can give to how I feel, after so many years of thinking I was alone in the world with my scattered memories... and vivid flashbacks...of a war long past, to have found Bobby, and all the rest of my extended family we call The Mudsoldiers. I know we will all pass into The Light one day...unless we pass by our own hand ... even then I have hope...but do not know for sure. Bobby has gone into The Light, and I will miss him, always.....
Trash, A Mudsoldier

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MISSING MAN FORMATION

By R.C. Busha, Corp. of Marines

I will once again be coordinating the Missing Man Formation for Central Route. Most of you know what this formation is all about, but for the rest of you, let me tell you what it is, and why we have MMF.

If you have ever been to a military parade, or ceremony, etc., you have most likely seen a flyover where one of the planes pulls out of the formation and leaves an empty spot. This is called a Missing Man Formation. This formation is to honor someone who has died or is missing. For our purposes, it is for POW's, MIA's, and KIA's and those who can't ride with us for what ever reason.

When on the road, RFTW leads the way with our Missing Man Formation, this formation consists of the National Coordinator, State Coordinator, the rider who volunteers, the Chaplain and the Missing Man Coordinator, the empty space, of course, is for the missing.

The rider who volunteers will receive a pin, but most importantly, receive the honor to ride "For Those Who Can't". I have been doing this for eight years now, and consider it a great tribute.

If you are interested in riding the Missing Man Formation for a leg of the trip on Central Route, please contact RC Busha at harleyrcb2@msn.com or find RC on the Run in May.

Della Morris is the Missing Man Coordinator for the Southern Route. You can contact Della by e-mail: donmorris@earthlink.net or by telephone at 623-486-9433.

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SPECIAL INTERMENT CEREMONIES FOR BILLIE "TROUBILLIE" HALL

By Sandra McKinney

In late June of 2003, I received an e-mail from “Troubillie” requesting permission to send me an article for the next issue of the RFTW Newsletter. She had just participated in her first Run with husband, David, and was so moved by the experience, she felt she had to share her story with the readers. About two weeks later I received her story and, believe me, I cried the whole way thru it. I know that her story affected readers the same way, as I have received numerous comments on that story. You can read Billie’s story in the July 2003 issue of the newsletter: “A STORY OF EMOTION AND THANKS”.

You see, Billie had grown up with an abusive father, a father who had returned from Vietnam with many problems. Billie grew up being afraid of her father, he had not been a good person. As an adult, she had gone thru therapy and learned a lot, but the most tremendous healing that she received was from the veterans she met during RFTW 2003. She knew that she had met “family” and appreciated the way the Vietnam Veterans had treated her on the Run. She found upon her return from the Run, that her outlook on life had changed, she was more at peace, was able to sleep better, was now a stronger person. She had gained growth and calming. (Pictured: David and Billie at the Pentagon Parking Lot in 2003.)



Tragically, Billie was killed in an auto accident on November 5, 2003. But her husband David agrees that Billie went to be with the Lord with more peace in her life than she had ever previously enjoyed, all because of her experiences with Run for the Wall. David, a Desert Storm Veteran, traveled on the Run in 2004 with their two daughters and continued to gain strength from the “family of RFTW”. The RFTW family supported David and the girls as they carried Billie’s remains to the Wall. In 2005 David will make the trek with Billie to take her to her final resting place. David invites all of her RFTW family to her internment in Arlington National Cemetery on May 31, 2005 at 11:00am. David and Billie understand that many of you cannot stay the extra time in the DC area, but for anyone who wishes to attend, you are family and you are more than welcome to participate. David believes it is fitting that the people who helped Billie the most in understanding her life should be the ones who protect her on her last ride.

MAY YOU REST IN PEACE, BILLIE

Biker Angel be my guide As I climb upon my scoot to ride.

Let your halo guide the way and keep me safe from harm today.

Let your wings provide me wind and air and send it coursing through my hair.

Find for me a sunny place and let it shine upon my face.

Keep the clouds and rain at bay and keep me dry throughout the day.

Watch over my brothers who ride with me. Keep them safe and close to thee.

Keep my wheels upon the ground, so I'll return here safe and sound.

But should disaster be my fate, guide me through to Heaven's gate.

If I must join my fallen brethren, please show me the way to Biker Heaven

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HEALING COMES IN STRANGE WAYS

By Doug “Blinky” Beckman

New Mexico State Coordinator – Southern Route

It was in May, 41 years ago, that I was mustered out of the Army and went home to my hometown and experienced a shock. I had grown up in that town and had gone to school there. After school I went to work for a local family owned company. It was a good job for the local scene. I became a crane operator for the company and an assistant foreman.

Then there was talk of war. One day while at work I stopped by the local draft board to see how I stood with the draft. Now both my brothers had been in WWII and the Korean War, so I felt if there was going to be war I should do my part as they had done. I volunteered for the draft and 30 days later I began my basic training at Ft. Knox, Kentucky

As fortune would have it I was sent to Ft. Lee, Virginia as a crane operator for the 596th QM (petrol depot). That set the stage for the next two years. The war was heating up and men from my outfit were going TDY to Vietnam. Some were being killed and others that came back told us of the war that was going on over there.

My two-year commitment was about to be completed, so I went home on leave to find out about going back to work. The company manager said, "We don't have a place for you anymore." I was crushed and went back to base hoping that I would get extended because I did not know what I was going to do if I got out. I didn't get extended. I also never went back to my hometown again. I could not believe that the town I grow up in and the kids I went to school with did not want me back because I had served our country in the military.

For many years I never could find a place I fit. I moved around a lot and was divorced twice. Finally when I was old enough to retire, I moved to Las Cruces, New Mexico. I purchased a motorcycle without telling my wife. That didn't go over very well. I went to see the Veterans Affairs office to see if they could help me with a direction on a part time job. The fellow, Frank, I spoke with had a motorcycle. He told me about a ride that went to Washington, DC every year to honor the veterans.

My son was in the Marines at the time serving in Kosovo. I started to think, "What is going to happen to him when he comes home?" I began looking for information on the internet on this ride to Washington, DC. I started to think about the veterans of the recent wars and how they have been treated. My oldest daughter was an Air Force fighter pilot. Operation Iraqi Freedom began and she was sent into combat the day of the invasion.

I found Run For The Wall on the Internet and began searching out how to get involved. A veteran friend of mine and I decided to ride with RFTW from Deming, New Mexico to Sierra Blanca, Texas to get a feeling of what this ride was about. Passing through Las Cruces, NM, my hometown now, there was only one person on the interstate waving to us and that was my wife. I could not believe this. On our way back from Sierra Blanca we rode with Cowboy and his wife.

My heart was broken to know that in Las Cruces there were thousands of veterans and none had shown support for RFTW. I went to work talking to veteran organizations and local folks about RFTW. The next year RFTW was invited and welcomed to Las Cruces in a big way. This year RFTW will again be welcomed and the town will come closer to understanding those who ride for "those who can't".

Finally, I have some healing in my heart from the hurt that I felt 41 years ago when I was not welcomed home to my hometown.

PS: My wife has a motorcycle now, too, and we ride together in RFTW. Also, we presently have five children on active duty in the military.

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A THANK YOU TO VIETNAM VETS FROM A MARINE IN IRAQ

From Veterans of Foreign Wars post newsletter Reveille

A guy gets time to think over here and I was thinking about all the support we get from home. Sometimes it's overwhelming. We get care packages at times faster than we can use them. There are boxes and boxes of toiletries and snacks lining the center of every tent; the generosity has been amazing. So, I was pondering the question: "Why do we have so much support?"

In my opinion, it came down to one thing: Vietnam. I think we learned a lesson, as a nation, that no matter what, you have to support the troops who are on the line, who are risking everything. We treated them so poorly back then. When they returned was even worse. The stories are nightmarish of what our returning warriors were subjected to. It is a national scar, a blemish on our country, an embarrassment to all of us.

After Vietnam, it had time to sink in. The guilt in our collective consciousness grew. It shamed us.

However, we learned from our mistake. Somewhere during the late 1970's and into the 80's, we realized that we can't treat our warriors that way. So, starting during the Gulf War, when the first real opportunity arose to stand up and support the troops, we did. We did it to support our friends and family going off to war. But we also did it to right the wrongs from the Vietnam era. We treated our troops like the heroes they were, acknowledged and celebrated their sacrifice, and rejoiced at their homecoming instead of spitting on them.

And that support continues today for those of us in Iraq. Our country knows that it must support us and it does. The lesson was learned in Vietnam and we are better because of it.

Everyone who has gone before is a hero. They are celebrated in my heart. I think admirably of all those who have gone before me. From those who fought to establish this country in the late 1770's to those I serve with here in Iraq. They have all sacrificed to ensure our freedom.

But when I get back, I'm going to make it a personal mission to specifically thank every Vietnam Vet I encounter for their sacrifice. Because if nothing else good came from that terrible war, one thing did. It was the lesson learned on how we treat our warriors. We as a country learned from our mistake and now treat our warriors as heroes, as we should. I am the beneficiary of their sacrifice. Not only for the freedom they, like veterans from other wars, ensured, but for how well our country now treats my fellow Marines and I. We are the beneficiaries of their sacrifice.

Semper Fidelis,
Major Brian P. Bresnahan
United States Marine Corps

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TAPS FOR BRUCE CAMERON

From HarleyRodg Michael

Bruce Cameron was born in San Jose, California in 1947, and stayed in San Jose to graduate from James Lick High School and then joined the Army. After his boot camp, and a short stateside duty station he was shipped overseas. His memories of Vietnam were about the "Rock Pile". A small outpost on the DMZ, the rock pile had the big guns, and it was Bruce's job to keep them firing between attempts by the NVA to overrun that position. He survived the Tet Offensive, and their big push south over the "Z" to coincide with the other attacks on Quang Tri, and Hue. After his 13 month "over the pond experience", he returned to Northern California, and the demonstrators at Travis. What a welcome home for this and other heroes that had "Just did their job over there".



Soon after his return he met the love of his life; Alice. Bruce and Alice were married in August of 1969 and went to the business of raising a family of four children; Jennifer, Bruce Jr., Jackie, and Kathy. Bruce was a good husband, father,

provider, and was well loved by a large extended family.

In 1998 Bruce found RFTW, and began to figure out what had been bothering him since his return from Nam. “The Run” does wonders for healing old, but invisible wounds, and Bruce got caught up in that healing. He made RFTW the most important part of his life-after his family.

Bruce went on every run with Alice “napping” on the back of his red Harley Softail since that first one, but had to turn back about half way last year due to a foot injury.

The Cameron’s made all the local events including the reunions, the Ford Motor Company Tribute, and the BBQ in Highland, California every April for the past 4 years. He loved RFTW and all you guys!

Bruce passed away at the Burn Center in Fresno, California on December 14, 2004 from a non- motorcycle related injury. He was laid to rest in Bakersfield, California. His family picked the location just down the street from his favorite restaurant. He will be sorely missed by us all.

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FORGOTTEN HERO

By Mom (Brenda Jo) Kramer

When I hear the chopper blades rotating over head
Young men and women injured in my arms the fallen dead

It was a war no one wanted but they answered the Nation’s call
They gave their best finally their all

Serving their country in difficult times will always be with me
My heart breaking in a million pieces from all that I see

Freedom is brought with a price look at all the names on the black granite wall
That's the reason ole' glory can fly high and all so tall

One doesn't know what freedom is until you lose it as a prisoner of war
America is still the greatest country of all because of these soldiers and comrades gone before.

Written for SFC Donald Kramer, a Vietnam Vet
by Mom (Brenda Jo) Kramer

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ARMY LOOKS TO RETIREES TO BOLSTER FORCES

By Gregg Zoroya, USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — The Army, stretched thin by the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, is dipping into one of its last resources for wartime duty: retirees on a military pension.

The Army is expanding a little-known program to bring back retired officers and enlisted soldiers who expressed a willingness to join again, particularly after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

At least 320 retirees signed up last year under this program. Probably more than 500 will go back on active duty this

year, says Lt. Col. Karla Brischke, an Army personnel manager. Ages range from mid-40s to late 60s and possibly older, and each has at least 20 years of military service.

"It doesn't mean that we're scraping the bottom of the barrel," says Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty, a spokesman for the Army personnel department. "It means that we're doing a prudent thing with American resources."

After 9/11, about 15,000 retired soldiers contacted the Army to offer their services. From that group, the Army last year assembled a list of 4,500 who completed the application process.

In a separate program, Hilferty says, the Army compiled a list of 3,000 retired soldiers and began asking whether they would volunteer to be recruiters or civil affairs officers. The Army has found 616 retirees willing to fill 442 jobs as civil affairs officers in and around Iraq. They would help rebuild schools, hospitals and roads. At least 10 agreed to rejoin as recruiters.

The Marines has a similar program and has rehired 66, 1st Lt. Darlan Harris says.

Activating retired soldiers is the latest step by the Army to bolster troop levels. Other efforts include extending overseas tours from 12 to 15 months, tripling bonuses for new enlistees and National Guard members who re-enlist, and mobilizing about 4,000 soldiers from the Individual Ready Reserve. The IRR is an infrequently used pool of former troops who still have contractual obligations to the military.

"I'm no spring chicken," says James Barren, 54, of Detroit, who is rejoining the Army to train Iraqi police. "I think training is something that I can have some impact on. If I can do something to save one person's life, that's my motivation."

The Army told the retired Detroit policeman last month that his skills are valuable now in Iraq. "If they have that much confidence in me, I thought I would give it a shot," Barren says. He could be in Iraq as early as February.

"I think it's just another signal that the Army is stretched very, very thin, if not overextended," says Bob Scales, a retired Army major general and former commandant of the Army War College in Carlisle, Pa. "It's amazing how creative everybody has been lately in trying to sort of patch this Army of ours together."

The 4,500 retirees fall into three categories. The most valuable to the Army are 1,000 healthy retirees who have been out of service less than five years. A second group of 2,000 are in good health, out of the military no more than 10 years and 60 or younger. The third category of 1,500 retirees are older than 60 or have disabilities.

Retired soldiers who rejoin would serve up to a year, although they could agree to more or volunteer for another assignment.

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TAPS FOR LYNN C. "MUD MARINE" BURNETT

Contributed by HarleyRodg Michael

Lynn lived in Southern California, about half way between Los Angeles, and Palm Springs. He was a member of the Vietnam Veterans MC, but had just started riding with them in 2004. His first trip across the United States with Run For The Wall was also in 2004.

Lynn spent most of October, November, and December at the VA Hospital at Loma Linda, California from an eye infection. A very bizarre situation; he was riding his scoot one day and got some bird crap in his eye, and a viral infection developed, that had him on intravenous antibiotics all that time.



Lynn was released from the VA hospital on December 10, but developed some riding difficulties on his way home. Another Vet saw him and tried to get him to stop his bike, but like most of us, he paid no heed. Shortly thereafter he had a fatal head-on crash with an RV.

He was interred at the Riverside National Cemetery with full military Honors on January 10th just two days after a memorial ceremony again in the Riverside National Cemetery, in front of the National Medal of Honor monument at the pavilion.

Another rider lost, another veteran in heaven to help carry on our cause. Lynn will be missed on the Run.

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AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS ON RFTW

By "HarleyJoe" Watt

The American Legion Riders were started in Michigan in 1993 when a group of American Legion members, who all liked to ride motorcycles, got together and formed the ALR (American Legion Riders) at their Post. Since then the Riders have been the fastest growing activity in the American Legion, bringing in new members to the American Legion, as well as, supporting their respective local Posts. The ALR has grown to have members in 38 states. They are now being recognized at their District and State levels. We have a National advisor to help members with anything that pertains to the American Legion. They participate at their local Posts in many types of activities pertaining to motorcycling and the American Legion. They put on fund raisers, do poker runs, help recruit new members and become leaders in their Posts & Districts.

The RFTW has seen an ever growing number of American Legion Riders go on RFTW and to DC for Rolling Thunder. This year is no exception. We are planning on making the RFTW trip starting in Ontario and picking up ALR riders all across the nation. After we visit the Jefferson Barracks in Saint Louis, we plan on splitting off from RFTW and going to our National Headquarters in Indianapolis for a visit, then rejoin RFTW in Rainelle for their visit with the school kids. We will then go on DC with RFTW. On our little detour, we will be stopping at the Frankfort, Kentucky Vietnam Memorial for a visit and keep abreast of what RFTW is doing.

On Saturday, May 28, 2005 at 2:30 PM, The American Legion Riders will lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown just after RFTW does the same. All American Legion Riders are invited to join us. Following the wreath ceremony, there will be a get together at a place to be announced. All RFTW riders are welcome, too. We will introduce you to The American Legion so you can work with them on various Veterans programs and in your respective communities year round, as well as, RFTW.

For more information go to our national web site, <http://www.americanlegionriders.net/>

For information about our detour, contact "HarleyJoe" Watt at HARLEY-JOE@COX.NET and I will put you on my mailing list and send you dates as we plan on this RFTW ride.

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OAKLEY, KANSAS – RICH IN HISTORY

By Myla and Deveron Dawes

The first stop in Kansas is Oakley, located in Logan County. The military history is very rich here, with General Custer, Charles Fremont, and Buffalo Bill Cody having been through this area. The counties' heroes begin with a Dough Boy statue in the Oakley City Park, this is a WWI Memorial – 1914 -1920 Honor Wall.

The Oakley cemetery has a small area for veterans and plaques with veterans' names engraved on flag poles lining the way to the veterans' area.

The Oakley High School has a wooden engraved plaque in memory of James E. Heskett. Many of you have had the pleasure of meeting the Heskett family over the years with RFTW, they support our cause and have sent items to be carried to The Wall for them. It is a sad duty to inform you that Mr. Leonard Heskett passed away this winter.

In May of 2004, the community had the honor of hosting the Moving Wall here, with Logan County recognizing and honoring the supreme sacrifice of two Logan County fallen heroes of the Vietnam War, James Earl Heskett and Eugene Francis Jordan. Mrs. Leonard (Merna) Heskett is Oakley's only living Gold Star Mother, having recently lost Mrs. Jordan, Mrs. Weber, Mrs. Park, Mrs. Kost and Mrs. Ray Arie.

The lunch stop in Oakley is provided by the local V.F.W. post and surrounding area V.F.W. posts and Auxiliaries. The Oakley fire department is a huge support system for this annual stop. The mayor of Oakley has presented the Key to the City to RFTW and has made this annual stop Oakley's official RFTW Day.

The history of Logan County continues with local loved ones serving this Nation and also continues with the devotion and recognition of all our VETERANS. God Bless The United States and all of us.
We hope to see you in Oakley, Kansas on May 22, 2005.

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