



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"... October 2005

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

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THE EDITOR'S NOTES

By Judy "Velcro" Lacey, Editor



It's that time again! Those of you who receive mailed hard copies of the RFTW newsletter must renew your subscriptions. Please fill out the form at the end of this issue and return to the address provided, along with your \$10 donation, before December 1 in order to receive your future printed copies of the newsletter. Also, please remember to let me know if you change your email address, so I can continue sending you reminders of upcoming newsletters in case you want to write an article or report. Email me at judylacey@aol.com.

The word about our POWs and MIAs is reaching further and further across our country—most importantly to Washington, D.C.—and we can pat ourselves on the back for helping to bring this about. Run For The Wall gets more

publicity every year, and because of that publicity, we're helping to wake up our country to the need to bring home the remains of our servicemen from Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and other countries. The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) has had many successes lately in recovering remains of missing servicemen; read about several of them in this issue. And continue to bring attention to our POWs/MIAs by participating in RFTW and other veterans groups' activities. You can also be an important part of spreading awareness by putting POW/MIA flags and magnets on your bikes and cars and by talking to friends and strangers about the issue.

Some of you may not be aware of the many wonderful things that RFTW members do for veterans and military families. You may think that most of us ride across the country to the Wall, then go about our business the rest of the year. You couldn't be more wrong. Most of our vets also belong to other veterans' organizations, and they are involved in helping other veterans on an almost daily basis. Read some of the stories in this issue about groups such as the Vietnam Veterans of America and VFW chapters, and the Sons and Daughters in Touch, all of which provide help and companionship to disabled veterans. Some groups greet servicemen returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with displays of their gratitude in the form of flags and "welcome home" signs. They refuse to allow servicemen who have sacrificed for their country to come home to a silent welcome. The selfless members of these groups spend a big part of their lives bringing cheer to their less fortunate brothers and sisters. They are truly today's heroes, although they probably wouldn't agree. They would say they are only doing what should be done.

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FROM THE HEAD SHED

**By Milo (Nayber) Gordon
President, Run For The Wall**

It's the end of Oct. and I'm behind the newsletter 8-ball again [*Ed. note: I may be known to nag, but I don't have an 8-ball!*] It has been a busy quarter. Since I last wrote this column, we needed to make a Coordinator change. Butcherman called on a Saturday night to let me know that a training program in which he was involved had changed its dates. He would not be available to lead the Central Route. A few calls and discussions later, we appointed Mike (Tanker) McDole as Central Route Coordinator. Mike had been the Assistant Coordinator for the Central Route. He recruited Ron (Hammer) Young as his assistant.

We on the BOD feel sad to lose Butcherman as Coordinator. We feel very blessed to have Tanker and Hammer step up. The Central Route continues to be in good hands.

We had the 2006 tee-shirt design on display at both the Wickenburg and Fredericksburg Reunions. Our plan is to have the new tee-shirts for sale over the web site about the middle of November. The 2006 color will be tan.

Rock and RC did a great job of setting up and hosting the Wickenburg reunion. All had a great time. It was a relaxing weekend of sharing lies, I mean stories, and renewing friendships. We had the new merchandise trailer at the reunion. It was an added bonus.

We held the first-ever joint staff meeting for Run For The Wall. We had all the staff and support people that help both routes in one room. It was a crowded affair. We had a good discussion about how we do various activities to make each route successful. A theme came out of the discussion. "We operate two routes to promote one mission." Thank you Dallas Don for reminding me of that statement.

The BOD also restated its policy on attitudes. When I first connected with RFTW in 1993, there was only one rule to join the ride: "No Attitudes." The rule was added to about 1999 when we stated that there would be no alcohol or drug usage while we were riding. The exception to that rule was prescribed medications, especially if you were taking them for PTSD.

For the past few years there has been an underlying rumbling of negative comments and attitudes by members of one route against the other. The rumbling has occurred on both routes. We on the BOD have attempted to stop the process by resolving problems. It has become obvious to us that this approach is not working. The rift seems to be getting bigger each year.

We have made a decision to enforce a policy of no attitudes about the other route. Henceforth and forthwith there will be a zero tolerance about negative statements about the “other route.” If you have some negative comments about the other route, keep them to yourself. If you can’t, we will talk with you. If you continue to can’t, you will be invited to ride anywhere that you want, except with RFTW. Enuff said.

After a busy Sunday with our annual face-to-face BOD meeting, I headed toward the great state of Texas for the Fredericksburg reunion. I missed the big thunderstorm that hit Texas that week. I guess they do everything big in Texas, including thunderstorms, ‘cause that was a doozy. Rumor has it that three AZ riders iron butted it all the way across Texas in that storm. There is no accounting for some people’s behavior.

Mojo and Puma did a great job of organizing the first annual Texas reunion. From what I heard, there surely will be more to follow. A big thanks to all of the non-RFTW people who lead us on those great rides. The hill country was great to ride in, from what I understand. I had done my share of riding by the time I got there so I just took it easy. I did get out to Lukenbak, TX for lunch and relaxation. There really is such a place. I also learned about “pulled pork” sandwiches. I made a promise to myself. There are two places that I need to return to: The Nimitz Museum at Fredericksburg and the Big Bend Country. Popeye also dragged the merchandise trailer to Fredericksburg.

I’m back home and finally rested. I just don’t spring back from these trips like I use to. We will continue on RFTW XVIII. Hotel information should be on the web site about December 1. That is our target. I’m looking forward to seeing you all again in May.

Nayber

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► EVENTS

MARCH / RALLY TO SUPPORT VETERANS BENEFITS

Where: State Capitol, Sacramento (north steps)

When: Saturday, October 29, 9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

March starts at 9:30, Rally/Program 10:00-11:30

Veterans, Military Families, Service Providers, and Supporters from across Northern California will be participating in a March and Rally to support Veterans Benefits at the California State Capitol on October 29. The rally has been organized as a non-partisan statement of support for America’s more than 25 million veterans, their families, and the service providers who care for them. Veterans Leaders from across California will speak about the myriad of challenges currently faced by veterans nationwide—including healthcare, housing, employment, family support, and mental health. The rally will focus on the need to de-politicize VA Healthcare Funding, protect and improve VA Benefit programs, address service gaps and barriers to care, improve outreach, and the need for all Americans—government, non-profit service providers, families, businesses, and communities alike—to take responsibility for ensuring that “no veteran is left behind.”

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THE MOVING WALL IN AZUSA, CA

October 29-November 3, 2005

On October 29, after it has been set-up by a group of volunteers, the City of Azusa will officially welcome the Vietnam Moving Wall with a solemn ceremony on the south lawn of City Hall.

The half-size Moving Wall will be on display on the south lawn of Azusa City Hall, 213 E. Foothill Boulevard, from Saturday, October 29 to Thursday, November 3, 2005.

For general information and volunteer opportunities, please call (626) 812-5200.

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KNOTT'S BERRY FARM TRIBUTE TO VETERANS

November 1-4, 2005

Knott's annual tribute to our military, past and present, will be held on November 1 through 4. Veterans or current serving military personnel plus one guest get in FREE with proper ID (DD214, Veterans Administration Hospital ID, or Active Military Service ID). Purchase up to six additional tickets for just \$10 each. Please note: Knott's will be closed on Saturday, November 5.

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LONG BEACH VETERAN'S DAY PARADE

November 5, 2005

Mark your calendars for the 2005 Long Beach Veteran's Day Parade followed by the Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 756 Barbecue. Staging for the parade begins at 0830, Saturday, November 5th, on Atlantic Avenue, South of Artesia St. (adjacent to Houghton Park, home of the Long Beach Vietnam Veterans Memorial). The parade begins at 1000 hours. Check in with Wayne Nicholls at the staging area, as you will need to sign a release to participate in the parade.

This year, we will be parading (on motorcycles) along with our brothers and sisters of the VVA, Chapter 756 (this Chapter has a long history of support for RFTW). After the parade, we will assemble at the Long Beach Vietnam Veteran's memorial (Houghton park) for a brief tribute to our fallen brothers and Paul will sound Taps on his bugle. After that, we'll head to VFW Post (2805 South Street, Long Beach) for a "Welcome Home" Barbecue. Designated RFTW motorcycle parking and a vender area will be provided at the VFW Post. All RFTW participants and their guests are welcome.

Note: The Long Beach Veterans Day Parade has been a long-time favorite of RFTW and is mentioned in the movie "Homecoming." Please join us in this parade and experience a true "Welcome Home" and "Thank You" from our citizens of Long Beach and surrounding areas.

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DIGNITY MEMORIAL WALL IN ONTARIO, CA

November 4-6



The Dignity Memorial® Wall Experience is a traveling, three-quarter-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. The exhibit crisscrosses the country each

year, allowing millions of visitors to see and touch the black, mirror-like surface inscribed with the names of more than 58,000 Americans who died or are missing in Vietnam. The faux-granite replica is 240 feet long and eight feet high. Admission is free.

The wall will be at Bellevue Memorial Park, 1240 W. G St., Ontario, CA. Volunteers are needed to help during the three-day exhibition. You can volunteer to help in any of these categories: publicity, programs and ceremonies, ground site and construction, safety, motorcycle escort, hospitality, accounting and administration, email communications coordinator. Also needed are a number of Name Readers, as all names on the wall will be read throughout the exhibition.

If you would like to volunteer, call Bellevue at (909) 986-1131 or visit the website at <http://www.vietnamwallexperience.com>

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OPERATION WELCOME HOME, LAS VEGAS November 11-13, 2005

Put these dates on your calendar—you won't want to miss this event! During Aviation Nation 2005, Nellis Air Force Base and Las Vegas will roll out the red carpet for a rousing patriotic tribute to all our Vietnam veterans on November 11-13, 2005. Operation Welcome Home is a tribute to our Vietnam Veterans and the welcome home they have never received. Co-hosted by Las Vegas and Aviation Nation, Operation Welcome Home is receiving national attention on Fox, CNN, MSNBC, Paul Harvey and G. Gordon Liddy radio shows, and in multiple newspapers through the Associated Press.



This year marks the 30th anniversary of the fall of Saigon and the end of “the Vietnam era.” Operation Welcome Home will celebrate the service and legacy of the courageous young men and women who answered America's call during an especially volatile time in our nation's history. Las Vegas, Nevada has generously agreed to act as host city for this long-overdue celebration. But the festivities shouldn't be limited to Las Vegas. OWH organizers would like cities and towns throughout the country to follow the Vegas lead and hold Vietnam veterans parades at the same time, making it the “World's Largest Welcome Home Parade.”

With 2005 marking the 30th anniversary of the end of America's involvement in Vietnam, there has never been a better time to heal the wounds of that turbulent era. America's Vietnam veterans are still young enough to participate and appreciate the significance of such an event. We need to embrace this vital mission not as one city or state, but as an entire nation. It will only serve to reinforce our appreciation for the challenges faced by today's young men and women in uniform!

Vietnam veterans are invited to march in a special Vietnam Operation Welcome Home unit (no charge). To participate, you must register before November 1. Download the registration form at www.lvvetparade.org. If you plan to participate in the parade, contact Mil Thornton (tthornton@socal.rr.com) ASAP so he can get a head count.

STAGING AREA FOR RFTW PARADE PARTICIPANTS will be at the Cashman Field Center Stadium parking lot north of the 93/95 fwy. It's just past Bonanza Rd. on North Las Vegas Blvd. We will stage at the southwest corner near Harris St. and Las Vegas Blvd. Here's a map link. <http://maps.google.com/maps?q=cashman+park,+las+vegas&ll=36.175054,-115.136418&spn=0.009215,0.017123&t=h&hl=en>

STAGING TIME: Since we will be the last formation in the parade, we will need to stage at 8:30 a.m. We will need to fill out forms such as the one attached. We will leave at 11:00 a.m. from the parking lot to the start of the parade at Fourth Street and Gass Street and fall in behind the formation in front of us. All other details will be coordinated in

Las Vegas on parade morning.

The parade organizers are really looking forward to RFTW participation. We need to show them our thanks by showing up and displaying our commitment to the reason the Run For The Wall exists. This is for all Vietnam Vets, and the City of Las Vegas has gone all out for this event. It will be one to remember and for all of us to participate in. If you haven't done so already, make your reservations and plan to be in the parade and participate in this grand party. If you know of vets who do not ride, there will be a walking formation of Vietnam Vets just in front of our formation. If we have any of the RFTW participants that normally use their 4 wheel vehicles, i.e., Last Man Vehicle, vehicles with the RFTW logos etc., they are also welcome and will parade behind the motorcycles just like the annual run in May. If anyone has questions, please contact Mil Thornton, 714-538-7657 or email at tthornton@socal.rr.com. On parade morning you may use cell phone number 714-335-4557 to contact Mil.

The Fremont Street Experience is the site of the "Patriot's Party" November 11 to 13. A special light show honoring America's veterans will play nightly. The Las Vegas Centennial Air Show is Saturday and Sunday, November 12 and 13, from 8 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. at Nellis Air Force Base. Also, the Moving Wall will be set up between Main Street Station Casino and the Plaza hotel casino adjacent to Fremont Street from 9 a.m. Thursday to 12 a.m. Monday.

If anyone is planning on using an RV or camping, we have reservations November 10-13 at the Oasis Las Vegas RV Resort (800-566-4707; www.oasislasvegasrvresort.com).

For more info on this event, see: <http://www.vietnamwelcomehome.org/05/about/>

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DIGNITY WALL IN PHOENIX

The Dignity Memorial Vietnam Wall will be in Phoenix, Arizona, November 11-13. It will be on display at Steele Indian School Park at 300 East Indian School, Phoenix AZ. A motorcycle escort will be held on Tuesday, November 8th, 2005 to bring The Wall to Phoenix. To register for the escort, go to <http://www.vietnamwallexperience.com/>.

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DIGNITY WALL IN TUCSON

The Dignity Memorial Vietnam Wall will be in Tucson, Arizona, November 18-20. It will be on display at Tucson Memorial Park South Lawn. South Lawn Mortuary, Cemetery & Crematory, 5401 South Park Avenue, Tucson, AZ 85706 (520-294-2603).

For more information and schedule: <http://www.vietnamwallexperience.com/>

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L.A. COUNTY VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY

By Wayne Nicholls

I try to never miss an opportunity to gather at "Fingers'" house to participate in a ride and/or event with our local RFTW Family. As always, it feels good to be with my brothers and sisters and visit with "Fingers," "Lil Lisa," Danny Lopresto, "Pegger," "Pegleg," "Sparks" (aka "Smoke"), and others. We had approximately a dozen-plus bikes and Roland's trike riding in formation to the Los Angeles County Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway dedication. The

event was being orchestrated by the City of Redondo Beach, Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 53, and VFW Wilmington Post 2967.

Participating in the ceremony was Redondo Beach Mayor Gin, VVA Chapter 53, VFW Wilmington Post 2957 Honor Guard and the 42nd Highlanders Regimental Pipes & Drum. Adele Borman, VVA Chapter 53, sang our National Anthem. The guest speakers included Hon. George Nakano, former Assembly Member, and Lt. Col. Thomas Lassen, U.S. Army (ret.) The audience was made up mostly of veterans including WWII and Korea, with the majority being Vietnam Vets.

After Mayor Gin's proclamation and unveiling of the Vietnam Veterans Highway marker, the 42nd Highlanders Regimental Pipes & Drum played "Amazing Grace" that brought tears to our eyes. It was followed by bugler Paul Verner playing "Taps." The ceremony was a rewarding tribute to our Vietnam Veterans and a wonderful display of dedication and gratitude by the City of Redondo Beach and supporting organizations.

After the ceremony, we rode to Reverend Friend's residence, just a few short blocks away. In Reverend Friend's front yard, was the "Empty Chair Memorial" he designed and built in honor of all branches of service, in all wars. His memorial began as a dream and became a reality with a dedication ceremony on May 28, 2005. It is an awesome display of patriotism, and reminds folks passing by to "Never Forget." For more information on the "Empty Chair Memorial," please visit www.emptychair.org

After our brief stop, some riders headed for home or other destinations. Eight of us decided to take the "cooler" coastal route with Danny Lopresto leading the way around the Palo Verde cliffs. We stopped at an old-time and popular café for brunch. With bellies full, we continued our ride down the coast and headed home. It was another rewarding day with the family of Run For The Wall.

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A VISIT WITH GOLD STAR MOTHERS

**By Bill "Monsoon" Mimiaga
(From the "Monsoon Dispatch")**

Members of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 785 joined members of Run for the Wall (RFTW) and enjoyed a luncheon with the "Gold Star Mothers" of Long Beach. Their residence, the "Gold Star Manor," sits off Santa Fe Ave. in Long Beach. Danny Lopresto and Ed "Fingers" Gohn and his beautiful bride Lisa, hosted a luncheon for these wonderful Moms who lost their sons during the Vietnam War. It was a moving and emotional afternoon as we listened to these wonderful ladies tell us all of their loss and how we remind them of their sons and what they might have turned out to be ... what a humbling experience. It was a great afternoon sharing fellowship and "talking story" with so many of "our Moms." One mother spoke of being placed in a nursing home and how terrible it was, the atmosphere, the terrible watered down food, the loneliness—and how happy she was now to be back at the Gold Star Manor with her friends who love and care for her. We all imagined how if her son had not been killed in the 'Nam, he might have taken care of his mom ... only if?



(Editor's note: During the visit Danny Lopresto presented ten Gold Star Mothers with framed etchings of their sons' names taken from the Vietnam Wall)

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► OUR STORIES

THANK YOU FROM AN FNG

By Joseph " Master Chief" Spelman

USN / USNR 1970-2001

San Antonio, Texas

There isn't a day that I don't spend at least a few quiet moments thinking and reflecting on RFTW 2005. It was my FNG run, and I had NO IDEA what to expect. I had met Manny and his wife Pat through a note on the Runs to the Run, and they took me under their wings and gave me all I needed to have for riding my motorcycle to D.C.

What I didn't have, and couldn't have, was the preparation for the emotional onslaught that was to come on a daily basis. I cried tears each and every day of the Run. Tears from sorrow of friends lost, tears from hurt and pain of rejection from friends and family because I had chosen to serve my country, tears of joy when I met other VETS and NON-VETS who grabbed me in Bear Hugs or offered warm, solid handshakes, most with tears in their eyes, who told me "Welcome Home."

I met so many wonderful , super people, who are now my family. I have to publicly thank some of these people: Manny and Pat for the road trip preparations offered AND the warnings of the emotions to come. Rick and Linda for the encouragement to "Saddle Up." Dutch, Brent, Nick, Randy, Larry, and Ron for the great times and your support on the Run and the Fun Tour de Dutch ride back to Texas. John Gana, Helo Pilot Supreme, a very Special Brother. Slammer, 9-Ball, Pocket, NuGuy, FireFly, and so many others who were there to get me and all of us across the Country on our Mission. Most importantly, my wife, Ellen. Without her courage, love, understanding, and support I would have never made the "Trip of a Lifetime." And of course Thank You to ALL who were on the Run.

God Bless All of You
Ride Safe
God Bless America

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PIGGYBACK HERO

By Ralph Kinney Bennett

Recently the remains of Glenn Rojohn were laid to rest in the Peace Lutheran Cemetery in the little town of Greenock, Pa., just southeast of Pittsburgh. He was 81, and had been in the air conditioning and plumbing business in nearby McKeesport. If you had seen him on the street he would probably have looked to you like so many other graying, bespectacled old World War II veterans whose names appear so often now on obituary pages.

But like so many of them, though he seldom talked about it, he could have told you one hell of a story. He won the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Purple Heart all in one fell swoop in the skies over Germany on December 31, 1944.

Fell swoop indeed.

Capt. Glenn Rojohn, of the 8th Air Force's 100th Bomb Group, was flying his B-17G Flying Fortress bomber on a raid over Hamburg. His formation had braved heavy flak to drop their bombs, then turned 180 degrees to head out over the North Sea. They had finally turned northwest, headed back to England, when they were jumped by German fighters at 22,000 feet. The Messerschmitt Me-109s pressed their attack so closely that Capt. Rojohn could see the faces of the German pilots. He and other pilots fought to remain in formation so they could use each other's guns to defend the group. Rojohn saw a B-17 ahead of him burst into flames and slide sickeningly toward the earth. He

gunned his ship forward to fill in the gap.

He felt a huge impact. The big bomber shuddered, felt suddenly very heavy and began losing altitude. Rojohn grasped almost immediately that he had collided with another plane. A B-17 below him, piloted by Lt. William G. McNab, had slammed the top of its fuselage into the bottom of Rojohn's. The top turret gun of McNab's plane was now locked in the belly of Rojohn's plane and the ball turret in the belly of Rojohn's had smashed through the top of McNab's. The two bombers were almost perfectly aligned—the tail of the lower plane was slightly to the left of Rojohn's tailpiece. They were stuck together, as a crewman later recalled, "like mating dragon flies."

No one will ever know exactly how it happened. Perhaps both pilots had moved instinctively to fill the same gap in formation. Perhaps McNab's plane had hit an air pocket. Three of the engines on the bottom plane were still running, as were all four of Rojohn's. The fourth engine on the lower bomber was on fire and the flames were spreading to the rest of the aircraft. The two were losing altitude quickly. Rojohn tried several times to gun his engines and break free of the other plane. The two were inextricably locked together. Fearing a fire, Rojohn cut his engines and rang the bailout bell. If his crew had any chance of parachuting, he had to keep the plane under control somehow.

The ball turret, hanging below the belly of the B-17, was considered by many to be a death trap—the worst station on the bomber. In this case, both ball turrets figured in a swift and terrible drama of life and death. Staff Sgt. Edward L. Woodall, Jr., in the ball turret of the lower bomber, had felt the impact of the collision above him and saw shards of metal drop past him. Worse, he realized both electrical and hydraulic power was gone. Remembering escape drills, he grabbed the handcrank, released the clutch and cranked the turret and its guns until they were straight down, then turned and climbed out the back of the turret up into the fuselage. Once inside the plane's belly Woodall saw a chilling sight, the ball turret of the other bomber protruding through the top of the fuselage. In that turret, hopelessly trapped, was Staff Sgt. Joseph Russo. Several crewmembers on Rojohn's plane tried frantically to crank Russo's turret around so he could escape. But, jammed into the fuselage of the lower plane, the turret would not budge. Aware of his plight, but possibly unaware that his voice was going out over the intercom of his plane, Sgt. Russo began reciting his Hail Marys.

Up in the cockpit, Capt. Rojohn and his co-pilot, 2nd Lt. William G. Leek, Jr., had propped their feet against the instrument panel so they could pull back on their controls with all their strength, trying to prevent their plane from going into a spinning dive that would prevent the crew from jumping out. Capt. Rojohn motioned left and the two managed to wheel the grotesque, collision-born hybrid of a plane back toward the German coast. Leek felt like he was intruding on Sgt. Russo as his prayers crackled over the radio, so he pulled off his flying helmet with its earphones. Rojohn, immediately grasping that crew could not exit from the bottom of his plane, ordered his top turret gunner and his radio operator, Tech Sgts. Orville Elkin and Edward G. Neuhaus, to make their way to the back of the fuselage and out the waist door behind the left wing. Then he got his navigator, 2nd Lt. Robert Washington, and his bombardier, Sgt. James Shirley, to follow them. As Rojohn and Leek somehow held the plane steady, these four men, as well as waist gunner Sgt. Roy Little and tail gunner Staff Sgt. Francis Chase, were able to bail out.

Now the plane locked below them was aflame. Fire poured over Rojohn's left wing. He could feel the heat from the plane below and hear the sound of 50 caliber machinegun ammunition "cooking off" in the flames. Capt. Rojohn ordered Lt. Leek to bail out. Leek knew that without him helping keep the controls back, the plane would drop in a flaming spiral and the centrifugal force would prevent Rojohn from bailing. He refused the order.

Meanwhile, German soldiers and civilians on the ground that afternoon looked up in wonder. Some of them thought they were seeing a new Allied secret weapon—a strange eight-engined double bomber. But anti-aircraft gunners on the North Sea coastal island of Wangerooge had seen the collision. A German battery captain wrote in his logbook at 12:47 p.m.: "Two fortresses collided in a formation in the NE. The planes flew hooked together and flew 20 miles south. The two planes were unable to fight anymore. The crash could be awaited so I stopped the firing at these two planes."

Suspended in his parachute in the cold December sky, Bob Washington watched with deadly fascination as the mated

bombers, trailing black smoke, fell to earth about three miles away, their downward trip ending in an ugly boiling blossom of fire.

In the cockpit Rojohn and Leek held grimly to the controls trying to ride a falling rock. Leek tersely recalled, "The ground came up faster and faster. Praying was allowed. We gave it one last effort and slammed into the ground."

The McNab plane on the bottom exploded, vaulting the other B-17 upward and forward. It hit the ground and slid along until its left wing slammed through a wooden building and the smoldering mass of aluminum came to a stop. Rojohn and Leek were still seated in their cockpit. The nose of the plane was relatively intact, but everything from the B-17's massive wings back was destroyed. They looked at each other incredulously. Neither was badly injured.

Movies have nothing on reality. Still perhaps in shock, Leek crawled out through a huge hole behind the cockpit, felt for the familiar pack in his uniform pocket and pulled out a cigarette. He placed it in his mouth and was about to light it. Then he noticed a young German soldier pointing a rifle at him. The soldier looked scared and annoyed. He grabbed the cigarette out of Leek's mouth and pointed down to the gasoline pouring out over the wing from a ruptured fuel tank.

Two of the six men who parachuted from Rojohn's plane did not survive the jump. But the other four and, amazingly, four men from the other bomber, including ball turret gunner Woodall, survived. All were taken prisoner. Several of them were interrogated at length by the Germans until they were satisfied that what had crashed was not a new American secret weapon.

Rojohn, typically, didn't talk much about his Distinguished Flying Cross. Of Leek, he said, "In all fairness to my co-pilot, he's the reason I'm alive today." Like so many veterans, Rojohn got back to life un sentimentally after the war, marrying and raising a son and daughter. For many years, though, he tried to link back up with Leek, going through government records to try to track him down. It took him 40 years, but in 1986, he found the number of Leek's mother, in Washington State.

Yes, her son Bill was visiting from California. Would Rojohn like to speak with him? Two old men on a phone line, trying to pick up some familiar timbre of youth in each other's voice. One can imagine that first conversation between the two men who had shared that wild ride in the cockpit of a B-17.

A year later, the two were re-united at a reunion of the 100th Bomb Group in Long Beach, Calif. Bill Leek died the following year.

Glenn Rojohn was the last survivor of the remarkable piggyback flight. He was like thousands upon thousands of men—soda jerks and lumberjacks, teachers and dentists, students and lawyers and service station attendants and store clerks and farm boys—who in the prime of their lives went to war in World War II. They sometimes did incredible things, endured awful things, and for the most part most of them pretty much kept it to themselves and just faded back into the fabric of civilian life.

Capt. Glenn Rojohn, AAF, died last Saturday after a long siege of illness. But he apparently faced that final battle with the same grim aplomb he displayed that remarkable day over Germany so long ago. Let us be thankful for such men.

A great story. I wonder how many more stories like this one are lost each day as members of the Greatest Generation pass on.

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By Laurie “Airborne” Clay, Southern Route Coordinator for Virginia

I wanted to pass on the “thank you’s” I received from Spiller Elementary School and Montvale Elementary School in Virginia. I know that everyone at both schools is appreciative of the donations we were able to provide to them. The principal from Montvale Elementary School, Lois Graham, was overwhelmed with emotion when Slammer presented her the funds that our group raised during our journey across this great nation. Lois has told me that they have used the money to purchase the Elmo, a visual presentation device that will assist both educational and fun activities for the student. Montvale was also able to purchase a projector screen, and the supporting apparatuses, and will possibly have enough left over for a laptop computer. My guess is that we will be enjoying a program by the students utilizing this equipment next May.

I was happy to see a couple of local newspapers write about RFTW and those that we meet along our journey. Wytheville Enterprise wrote a wonderful article about our mission and our visit with the children of Spiller Elementary. Pictures of RFTW riders, to include one of our own road guards, graced the front page of the Community section. The Roanoke Times also wrote a great article about our visit with the students of Montvale Elementary School, D-Day Memorial, and the veterans at the Virginia Veterans Care Center. One student told the newspaper that “these people really need to hear this program honoring them, because they risked their lives to save our lives.”

Those of you who sent a picture to Montvale Elementary School for the “Wall of Honor” and have not received it back, send me an email (lkavarep@cox.net) with your address and I will get the school to forward your pictures to you.

I am looking forward to the opportunity to ride with you again next year. Airborne!!

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RUN FOR THE WALL MEMORIES

By James “Gunny” Gregory

(Ed. note: Although these excerpts are from an article Gunny wrote in 1999, its message is timeless. This is the same reaction that is experienced by new riders each year. Those who are new to the Run in the last few years will find it interesting to read about how it was “back then.”)

You may have traveled to Sturgis, done Daytona Beach, even cruised to Laconia, but until you have ridden 3000 miles in 10 days with these veterans on bikes, you ain't shit—as the saying goes. I know, I'm Gunny, the co-founder and guy who planned and led the first three Runs in '89, '90 and '91. I did twenty plus years in Uncle Sam's finest rifle club, did Nam in '69-'70 with I Co, 3/7 and back to SE Asia in May '75 with 2/9 to help rescue the crew of the SS Mayaguez. I have been riding off and on since high school. I bought my first Harley in '75 when I couldn't even ride it aboard base. Five H-Ds and 29 years later I am about to go on The Run of my life.

"How in the hell did this all get started?"

Flashback 1986: My Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) chapter along with just about every other Veteran/military group in California has been invited to LA for a huge "Welcome Home" parade and rendezvous. I ride my new Wide Glide in the parade, hear the Fifth Dimension in concert and listen to guest speakers. I am the only biker, an active duty Marine Corps Drill Instructor, and a combat Vet having a blast. I meet my Vietnam Fireteam Leader, Carl Rice, and visit the "moving wall." Carl tells me about live POWs left behind in Nam. I say "No way." He says "Yes!" and quickly schools me. He is about to walk from Los Angeles to Port Angeles, WA (his home) along interstate highways carrying the POW/MIA flag. He invites me to a breakfast Sunday morning to hear families talk about POW/MIAs. One of these speakers is Marion Shelton, the wife of Col Charles Shelton—the last official Prisoner of War of the Vietnam War. I am shocked, confused, intrigued. She enlists several others and me into her army of POW/MIA

supporters. She and Carl ask, "Can you help? What can the bikers do?"

At this time I am the Chairman of the Board of ABATE of California, San Diego President of ABATE, life member of HOG, AMA, VFW, American Legion, VVA and know Vets and bikers all over the world. "WHAT CAN WE DO?"

Flashback 1987: ABATE receives a letter from Artie Muller and Ray Manzo. These two Nam Vets are planning a rally on Memorial Day weekend of '88 using bikers/Vets as their voice to the government. They call the rally ROLLING THUNDER. It is named after the B-52 strikes that rolled through Vietnam in '72 and '73, breaking the back of the Communist North, causing the Paris peace accords. We talk by phone. It is time to take action.

Flashback 1987: Another Nam Vet, Bill Evans, comes to my home and asks for help planning and conducting a motorcycle run across country to Washington DC. I tell him I too have the same idea and have begun some interest. We agree to "do it." Bill names this pilgrimage RUN FOR THE WALL! Another Nam Vet, Sam, and his wife, Margo, join our core group and away we go.

Flashback April 1988: I fly back to DC to meet with Artie, Ray and Top Holland, our local point of contact. We have a successful meeting firming up plans for Rolling Thunder II. At breakfast, a TV news story breaks. Communist guerrillas in the Philippines murder Col Nick Rowe, former POW/Special Forces/POW Activist. Top breaks down, he served a tour with Col Rowe, knows him well.

Flashback October 1988: I am the S-4 Officer for 2nd Bn, RTR, MCRD, San Diego. This means I am also the Safety Officer and must attend school. Steve Lyons is the Depot Safety Officer and informs me the school is at Indiana University, Bloomington, IN. Would I like to attend? Hell yeah! I take 30 days leave, 14 days travel, two weeks of school and all the money the Corps would give me and take my bike for the longest ride of my life. I recon the routes for The Run. First I travel east on I-8/I-10/I-20/I-40, CA, AZ TX, LA, MS, AL, TN, NC, VA. Then up the coast through DC, PA, NJ, NY and further north to SE Canada and Newfoundland then back west through PA, OH, IN on I-70/I-40/I-25/I-15. I have the route set in my head but need help, support. Finally volunteers start calling and donating time, energy, food, and gas for these routes. Thank you to all the Vet groups, churches, and Motorcycle Rights Organizations who stepped forward.

D-Day—5/19/99: Reveille is 0530 but I'm wide awake already. There's excitement in the air. George and I pack our bikes; grab some coffee and head over to T/A Truck Stop in Ontario. By 0700 our area of the parking lot is filling quickly with bikes and supporters. Several Vet and biker groups are there to see us off. ABATE and VVMC provide coffee and donuts. Deekin starts the morning safety talk on time at 0730 and leads the pack of about 200 out at 0800. They take I-15 to Barstow then I-40 to AZ.

Flashback 1989: Marion Shelton sees The Run off from San Diego with a local police escort. Bill and I are in the lead. Before we reach Ontario Bill will lose some of his gear, blow a tire, then his engine. He will spend the rest of The Run in the back of a pickup. This is tough luck, but Pete comes up and helps with the pack and mechanical needs. This was the first time anyone had ever tried such an event. Everyone said we were crazy. About 115 bikes left San Diego the first year. Most turned back in Las Vegas, but about 15 went all the way.

I'm not ready to ride in the pack yet, so George and I leave last and take I-10 to Arizona then the US-60/S-71/S-89 cutoff to I-40 and Ashfork. In the old days I always stopped at the "oasis" in Blythe, Denny's. No more—have to cross the river. Over the Colorado, we fill up and remove the helmets.

The wind picks up but weather is generally warm and sunny. We arrive at the campground in Ashfork about ten minutes before the main pack. One of the vets I was honored to meet here was Smoke. He served in the Army Air Corps in WW II and is 76 years young. He rode all the way and we had some great talks together. Crash and I spoke about how he earned his nickname in KY in '90. Riders were getting into a routine. New riders (FNGs) were in awe and amazed at the organization of The Run. Deekin and company have radios, cell phones, computer hookups and e-

mail delivered every day to the riders from family and friends. They have backup trucks, several with trailers and once east of the Mississippi, an SUV riding front door with flashing yellow lights. Ten years sure makes a difference.

D-Day plus 1—5/20/99: Morning routine is 0530 reveille. This morning the temperature is 37 degrees. After the hot desert it actually feels good. We Two head back to Ashfork for morning formation. Finally the air warms after coming down the mountain from Flagstaff. Holbrook is hot and clear. We Two cut to the Petrified Forest and Painted Desert while the main pack continues on I-40. That's one of the great things about RFTW. The leaders published a schedule of daily fuel, food and night stops so each individual knows when and where the pack is. This gives you the freedom of going off on your own if you wish.

Flashback 1990: While passing through Holbrook The Run is pulled over by several local and state police officers. The lead cop wants to search my bike. I say not without a warrant. He talks about motorcycle gangs. I ask him when was the last time he saw a "gang" riding Gold Wings flying POW/MIA flags. A large Amazon of a woman, State Police, has her pistol held in her hand by her right leg questioning members of the pack. Another cop carries a shotgun to the pickup truck where Joan Shelton is the driver and scared to death. After awhile, we are released and told to ride with no more than ten bikes in a group. I don't know if there is a connection, but AZ is the only state that has ever given RFTW any trouble and it is the home of Sen. John McCain.

We Two hit I-40 again and pulled over for lunch. A trucker informs us "a whole bunch" of bikers are about 30 miles ahead of us. Damn, that Deekin can really push a pack when he wants. The road guards are doing an outstanding job moving 200 plus riders at 65 mph and keeping cage traffic out of the way.

Now comes one of the best parts of The Run. The Navajo Nation invited the riders to a welcome home in the heart of their sacred land, Window Rock, AZ. We are treated like heroes; the community all comes out to greet us. The Navajo warriors have us join them in laying a wreath. They serve traditional Navajo foods and have us join them in performing ceremonial dances with the drum. The Code Talkers of WW II are a special group, screwing up Japanese intelligence speaking an unknown language on the radio—Navajo! I notice that at least 70% of the Navajo Vets were Special Forces or Marines.

D-Day plus 2—5/21/99: Sun in the eyes, We Two travel east on I-40 only stopping for fuel. We speak with a NM state cop at a gas station. We explain about The Run and how a little help through the road construction would be nice. He says he'll contact local police.

As the main pack continued up I-25 to Cimarron, We (now) Three took the S-68 cut through Santa Fe along the Rio Grande to Taos. This is an important route for me with many memories and Harley riding roads. The pack is too big to try this road but it's a must for a smaller group like we had in "the Old Corps." First stop in Taos is always the town Plaza where the coldest margaritas can be found and sitting outside on the veranda watching the tourists is a favorite past time.

D-Day plus 3—5/22/99: Crossing the continental divide on Hwy 64 between Taos and Angel Fire is an awesome experience, especially the crest just above the Valley with the rising sun just right to the east. We pull into the parking lot and the first thing we notice is the "crashed" Huey just cemented into place a few days before. Angel Fire is a wonderful, special, hallowed ground to all of us. I have just found out though that it is losing its funding from the state of NM. I speak with Dr Westphall. He is frail, but so very smart and quick. We talk about the "first time" in '90 and The Run For the Fire in '92 with the cold rain and General Westmoreland. Man, he has a memory.

Flashback 1991: The Limon vets have promised us a free meal but two weeks before our arrival a tornado hits and destroys most of their town. I tell them not to worry about feeding us. They say no way and serve one of the best meals of the trip. These folks are so loving and caring and have so little left but The Run is a high mark on their calendar. I cry with a local vet who has lost everything. He says even a tornado couldn't stop him from meeting with us this day.

D-Day plus 4—5/23/99: Free breakfast provided by the VVMC woke us up, then east on I-70.

Flashback 1989: As we cross the KS border it seems like hundreds are lining the highway to cheer us on. This is just a beginning. Dick Weston has told me to prepare myself, but pulling into Colby, KS with ladies flying flags, an airplane overhead pulling a Run For The Wall banner, kids singing and a band playing are just too much. I start crying, filling my goggles with tears. I can barely see to park my bike. These Kansas wheat farmers are the best.

Lunch and gas in Oakley was smooth and quick even though a biplane carrying our duty photographer, Snakebyte, flipped and crashed. Both pilot and passenger were OK but shaken. Dick and Kay are still there after ten years with their helpers (VFW/AmLeg) providing the much needed and appreciated support that keeps The Run going year after year. We only have a few minutes to catch up and off we go. Salina was the night stop where old friends from the Salina POW/MIA Assoc. and VVA met us with food, drink, music, and camaraderie. I get to speak with a WW II vet who served with Patton in Germany. Quite a character. Ruth presents MudFlap, Ken, and me with a teddy bear each to leave at The Wall. One tradition here is each service has all of its members join in the center of a large circle when their song is played. The Marines outdo the other services, of course, and I joke with Smoke about no song for the Army Air Corps.

Flashback 1990: Because of the traffic, I'm having trouble getting all the bikes back on the road after the Hayes fuel stop. A tractor-trailer driver sees the problem and pulls his rig across four lanes of traffic and waves. Now that's a road guard!

D-Day plus 5—5/24/99: Leaving the city park in Salina we are once again eastbound on I-70, sun in the eyes but no rain, weather holding. One of the neater events that take place each year in Kansas is the Turnpike. ABATE of Kansas collects money all year to pay for our toll. RFTW has its own lane, slows down for a head count, then moves on through without having to stop at each booth. After the Turnpike, we pull over outside of Kansas City at the "wide spot in the road" where ABATE serves lunch and helmets are placed back on our collective heads for MO. This has been happening since the beginning. Thank you ABATE of KS! You do good work.

Flashback 1990: Denise and the United Auto Workers feed and bed us in Kansas City. The next morning we visit the Vietnam Vet Memorial of KC. Pat Sims, an old DI buddy, has the Marine color guard and firing squad ready. The Mayor gives The Run a key to the city and we lay a wreath. Beautiful memorial!

All the way across Missouri We Five ride. Having an advance "scout" unit about 5-10 minutes ahead has its advantages. At a truck stop in Columbia I speak with the manager about how other locations have donated fuel to The Run. He agrees but only has authority for \$40 worth, which we greatly accept. He says to give him a call next year and he'll do more. Thanks Tom.

Flashback 1989: Somewhere in Missouri The Run passes three highway patrol officers in the median of I-70. They get out of their cruisers and salute the entire pack.

Wentzville is the home of Dave (Reconn Marine/Nam Vet) and Sharon Ambrose and one of the best VFW Posts and the oldest Vietnam Vet memorial in the country. The roads leading to the Post were lined with hundreds of American flags and cheering crowds as the pack pulled up to the Post. The Post and Freedom of Road Riders provided dinner, breakfast, and camping.

D-Day plus 6—5/25/99: The main pack will visit the Wentzville Memorial and take photos, then on to Jefferson Barracks for a visit to the VA hospital.

Tonight's stop is in Corydon, IN at the Harrison County Fairgrounds. J.R. and Billie are long-time supporters of The Run and with the help of the American Legion and others have the fish frying and everything ready. The Indiana Governor even declared today as Run For The Wall Day.

D-Day plus 7—5/26/99: The main pack toured the VA hospital in Louisville and We Five had breakfast. I'm not very fond of VA hospitals, but I'm glad The Run takes time along the route to visit hospitalized Vets.

We entered the grounds of the Kentucky Vietnam Veterans Memorial. This Memorial is unique in that because of the earth's rotation, a large stylus points to the names of the men who died on that date in history. You must see it to believe it. As always, Greasy Belcher of Kentucky Rolling Thunder and KBA is there to welcome us. He and his group of 200 or so will now follow us all the way to DC.

D-Day plus 8—5/27/99: We Six (Preacher has joined us) are leaving for gas when the Hawaiian Crazies; Keoke and June Bug on their Sportster, ask to follow us to a station. After filling up they continue to follow since they don't know where they are. So We Eight jump back on I-64 and blast to Charleston, WV. Of course, with construction, there is no blasting in Charleston. The same area that slowed us ten years ago now stops and goes us this year.

Flashback 1989: At a Charleston truck stop, I am trying to explain to an official of the WV DOT that The Run does not want to pay at each tollbooth on the WV Turnpike. I further try to explain how things were done in Kansas and can we please pay in one large, lump sum. He angrily states that every biker will stop at every tollbooth and pay individually. I try to educate this paper pusher as to how 150 bikers taking off gloves, getting money, etc. would tie up traffic for hours. He doesn't care. Gary Wetzel is standing beside me with several riders behind us. I don't remember for certain if Gary was wearing his Medal of Honor or not but I do remember looking at him, looking at the map and with our eyes in concert making the command decision to take the free road through the mountains—US Hwy 60. With Gary Wetzel riding on my right, we crest the last mountain then spy the town of Rainelle, WV down below in the valley. We slow down and yell at each other, "What the hell?" The town's people are standing in the street, school children are holding American flags and some radio announcer has run into the road with a cord dragging to interview us. This was supposed to be just a fuel stop, but it has taken a whole new meaning. This is one of the most patriotic communities we have been through and we are part of a "welcome home" parade like nothing ever imagined.

Deekin leads the pack down the main street of Rainelle then U-turns at the other end of town so the pack is passing one another. What a sight! The pack turned into the schoolyard then circled the ball field, parking the bikes on the parameter. The children are out for the day to be with us and we have a fun time signing T-shirts and notebooks. Then the 200 bikes of Rolling Thunder entered and a cheer went up. The school principal, Monica Venable, officially introduced the school to us, then Dragon Joe announced local politicians. Dragonrider presented \$2,513.78 to the school as part of the Million Penny Drive, money needed for new playground equipment. Greasy introduced Maj. Mark Smith, a former POW, and Gerald McCullar was placed in a POW cage, very scary. I was honored to help present a POW flag to the school along with other riders. The Moose Lodge put out the food again this year for all riders. Rolling Thunder stayed in the city ballpark with RFTW at the school. Showers and camping were provided at both locations.

D-Day plus 9—5/28/99: Riding down the mountain past Rainelle is bitter sweet. I don't know when I'll be able to return and it is such a beautiful place. Dan and his daughter, Laurie, join us so We Ten catch I-64 again and run for VA. This is such a beautiful stretch of interstate, winding down the mountains, green grass and trees and locals at every turn flying flags and saluting us as we roar by.

Lunch stop at the truck stop in Woodstock, VA is somber. We all realized that this is the last stop on the highway for The Run. It is hot and sticky out and the air conditioning feels sooo good. While talking and joking at the table with other riders, we comment on how quickly the pack refuels 300 bikes, about half an hour. These men and women have the routine down and now work like the team they have become.

Taking I-69 into DC the air is hot and muggy. As I-66 crosses the beltway (I-495), it turns into HOV lanes but traffic is still a problem. The pack receives a motor cop escort that splits the traffic and keeps the riders moving. As the interstate ends, we take a sharp turn into the Marine Corps Iwo Jima Memorial. This is another tradition The Run has maintained over the years. Bikes completely surround the Memorial, causing the tourists some initial anxiety but we

quickly calmed their fears—just another few Marines and friends reporting, Sir.

Time to saddle up and with another escort cross the Potomac into the Nation's capital. This is what we have ridden so hard and so long for. First we assault the steps of the Lincoln Memorial where family photos are taken. We even enlist some lady to take the pictures—about 100 cameras are given to her. She worked like a trooper going down the line one after another. Just another tourist—no one even knew who she was.

Nervously and slowly we walk across the street to the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial—The Wall. Many vets hold back, several step aside, but most take the long walk. It is a personal time, a quiet time to reflect and remember. For me, I visit the very center where the last 17 names are those of my comrades from the Mayaguez rescue, 2nd Bn, 9th Marines. I do not remember the real names of the Marines I served with in '69—only nicknames. But I know the dates; they are all clustered there together, just as they died fighting together. I touch the names of Col. Shelton and SSgt. Jimmy Ray, a POW whose family I have adopted. I speak softly with several vets, cry and embrace. Bill is there by himself. A chopper crewmember in Nam, he is lost in his thoughts. He is an FNG and has never been here before. Another vet needs help. We all stand together, arms around one another, supporting each other, not just physically, but mentally and emotionally. Thanks Run For The Wall for bringing us all here, together.

D-Day plus 10—5/29/99 : We Four (Skipper, Red Lite, George, and I) leave early for Arlington Cemetery so that I might visit the Women In Military Service Memorial. We ride up to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers where Run For The Wall and DC Ramblers M/C lay a wreath.

Flashback 1989: Capt Pete Benton is and old friend from college days at Eastern Carolina University. He is now OIC of the Air Force Honor Guard in DC. He introduces me to the administration at Arlington Cemetery. They agree to a wreath laying at the Tomb so along with other groups, we walk up the hill with Gary Wetzel in the lead. He puts the wreath down and turns to speak. The civilian administrator behind me starts telling me "he can't do that." I tell him that Gary was awarded the MOH and can do anything he wants.

D-Day plus 11—5/30/99: The pack leaves early this morning to get in line for Rolling Thunder. As we enter the Pentagon parking lot by 0730, it is already filling with activity. Artie Muller and company are doing a great job organizing this event again this year and it shows—a far cry from where we were ten years ago. We are led to our spot with more and more riders filing in behind us.

I ride through DC in this parade of 270,000 bikes (official count) and think of all the men and women around me. I "WELCOME HOME" as many as I can. We ride for those who can't but we also ride for the youth of America so that they may never have to go to war and lose their innocence as we did.

* FREEDOM ISN'T FREE *

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MEMORIES OF A VETERAN'S DAY PARADE

By Wayne Nicholls

Returning home from Vietnam was a different experience for me than with most Vietnam veterans. Unlike many of my brothers and sisters, I had my parade.

It was November 9, 1970 when I boarded the civilian jetliner in Tan Son Nhut Airbase outside of Saigon. The cheers and applause were loud when the plane lifted off the ground. I slept most of the way home. We landed in Oakland, California and processed out fairly quickly, passing by bus through the gates where I had suspected the same protesters gathered 10 months previously when I was heading to Vietnam. When our bus arrived in San Francisco, we caught flights to various destinations and for the very first time in a long time, I was alone.

When I arrived in Los Angeles, I caught a “Shuttle Bus” to the Greyhound Bus Station in Long Beach. I was surprised to arrive in downtown Long Beach to a full-blown parade. But wearing my new dress green uniform with all my medals, I seemed to fit right in. I asked a civilian what the parade was for and he said, “It’s Veteran’s Day. Happy Veteran’s Day, son, and welcome home.”

Long Beach has a long relationship with our military. The city once was home to the Long Beach Naval Base as well as the site of construction of Navy vessels and warships at the Long Beach Naval Shipyard. The Army’s Fort McArthur was located in neighboring San Pedro. Long Beach was the home of a large Naval Hospital that cared for many of our Naval and Marine Corp. Vietnam veterans. The Long Beach VA Medical Center continues to be an active and viable veteran healthcare center. Long Beach remains the host city of a small National Guard Unit as well as the “Home of the C-130 Transporter.” Through these, the City has continued a relationship with the military and our veterans.

On November 11, 2000, the Long Beach Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial was dedicated in Houghton Park. The memorial features a U.S. Army helicopter, known by veterans as the “Huey,” which had logged over two thousand combat hours in Vietnam. The memorial also lists 103 Long Beach area soldiers that were KIA or MIA in Vietnam. In 2004, the City also constructed a Navy Memorial located at Ocean Blvd. and Palomar Street. The memorial is a sculpture of the “Lone Sailor.” The sailor with his duffle bag is looking out over the Pacific Ocean.

The City Council formed a committee nine years ago and re-established the Annual Long Beach Veterans Day Parade. Each year, on the Saturday before Veterans Day, Atlantic Avenue is the site where you’ll see American flags waving, proud veterans and families of veterans, marching bands, military units, and entrants from all eras and all branches of the Armed Forces. Each year the parade has gotten bigger and better.

This year, RFTW Participants will parade on motorcycles adjacent to the Vietnam Veterans of America, American Gold Star Mothers, and Sons and Daughters In Touch (SDIT). After the parade, we will gather at the local VFW at 2805 South Street, Long Beach, for a “Welcome Home” barbeque hosted by VVA Chapter 756.

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DEACON’S MOTORCYCLE TRAILER FOR UNDER \$325

By “**Deacon**” O’Keefe, Founder of Rolling Guard

Like most of you I don’t have enough room on my motorcycle for all the things I want to take on the Run For The Wall. If you’re just going from one stop to the next, all you have to carry is an overnight bag. If you have a full dresser and pack minimally, then your bike has enough room by itself. But if you choose to save money, travel as a couple, or camp the entire coast-to-coast route, then you need more room.

I have wanted to go “All the Way” for about 10 years. Next run will be my first year going all the way; I am going Southern Route next year. Like many of you, I am trying to save money by camping. I have to take supplies, clothing, personal items, tent, bedding, and everything else for a trip that will take about 16 days counting my return. I went around locally and on the internet looking for trailers and found out quickly that there was no way on earth I could afford the \$1,000 to \$3,500 that they were selling for at the dealerships.

That’s when a friend told me how to make a very good stable trailer for under \$325. First, you start with a simple trailer frame. If you are fortunate enough to have a Harbor Freight store near you, they have frame-only trailers for \$149 to \$165 depending on which area you are in. They can ship them if you don’t have a store near you. When you assemble the trailer choose the longer neck option on the tongue so you can get more stability and have a place to mount a cooler shelf. When traveling with your cooler make sure the lid opens toward your bike to avoid the wind lifting the lid during a run. When traveling with a cooler, instead of using bungee cords try using a cargo net with six

or more attachment points. A bungee cord is good, but only secures in two places; a cargo net can have up to six or eight hooks, so if one, two, or even three fail you won't spill your cooler in front of the rider behind you. Now so far we have \$169.00 max invested in this trailer.

Next all you do is go to your local hardware store and buy a piece of 48" x 49" plywood for \$12. Also, pick up some nuts and bolts (\$4) to secure the plywood to your frame; pick some that are Teflon coated. Now comes the part where you can really save money if you shop right. The body of the trailer is going to be one of those hard shell luggage carriers you see the cars having strapped to the roof. Sears sells one for \$179 brand new, but I don't recommend buying a new one. You can find one of these at a local yard sale, thrift store, or even in the paper. I picked up a really nice one for \$45. While you're at Lowe's or Home Depot you need to pick up deck bolts and large washers to secure this roof-top luggage carrier to the plywood. Make sure if your carrier opens front to back you arrange to lid to flip toward your bike and not away from it; this will avoid the lid coming open on the highway and losing you skivvies.

Now if you want to get fancy you can buy a can of spray primer at your hardware store and paint your trailer to match your bike. I would recommend painting the trailer frame before installing the luggage carrier. The plastic that the carriers are made from will take paint if prepared properly, but it might take some prepping. Also, the surface will have somewhat of a duller appearance compared to the painted metal surfaces. Something to keep in mind on painting your trailer: I left mine white on top because on a recent trip my friend, who painted his black, opened his trailer and anything that could have, melted, burst, exploded, or was damaged by the sun shining on a black painted surface for three hours. Imagine what two large citronella candles looked like after baking in about 125-degree heat for three hours—yummy!

Now I spent another \$40 on a really nice cooler because I am taking food with me to save even more money. Instead of plywood I am using diamond plate on the frame of my trailer to spruce it up a bit; that cost about \$40 more than plywood.

Here is a website that I used to help me with my trailer; of course I have to add that safety is your responsibility. Any homemade project has the potential to be dangerous and unsafe; I accept no responsibility for accidents or mishaps by building and pulling a home made trailer. <http://www.gadgetjq.com/trailer.htm#roll>

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I AM A PRISONER OF WAR **By Bobby Easton (1995)**

The following is printed from The Connecticut Rolling Flags, Inc.
<http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/Barracks/5481/poem.html>, with the permission of James "Gunny" Gregory



I AM A PRISONER OF WAR **by Bobby Easton "95"**



I am an American Prisoner of War and I am Missing in Action somewhere in the jungles of Southeast Asia, the coal mines of North Korea, or the gulags of the Soviet Union.

I am your father, I am your son, I am your brother, or maybe even your Uncle Sam. I joined the service because I believed in Duty. I served proudly because I believed in Honor, and I fought hard because I believed in God and Country.

As a soldier I was prepared to fight, As a soldier I was prepared to be wounded, and as a soldier I even was prepared to die, but I was never prepared to be Abandoned. Abandoned by my Military, Abandoned by my Politicians, Abandoned so that some one could make a dollar off the ashes of my soul.

You as Americans have the power to bring me home. The power of the pen and the power of the vote. I and many of my brothers are still alive in Southeast Asia. Won't you use you power and bring me home so that I may once again walk the land of the free and the home of the brave. God bless America, I miss you so.



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MY CAGE TIME

By Joyce Chamberland-Reyes (1995)

The following is reprinted from *The Connecticut Rolling Flags, Inc.*

<http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/Barracks/5481/poem.html>, with the permission of James Gregory.



In 1993, I was introduced to the POW - MIA Awareness Vigil when I attended one with my Mother, Sandra Brown, who is President of American Legion Auxiliary Unit 199, and my Dad, George E. Brown III, who is American Legion Post 199 Commander. I had no idea what the purpose of the vigil was, but I became interested in learning more about the vigil and the POW/MIA issue. Since I was born in the early seventies when the Vietnam War was winding down, I was ignorant of what our Vietnam Veterans went through and about the men we left behind. First I'd like to introduce you to a POW/MIA Awareness Vigil.

The POW/MIA Awareness Vigil is just what the name implies. It's a vigil to make the public more aware of the plight of our warriors from World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War who have not returned home. They are listed by our government as either MIA (Missing In Action) or POW (Prisoner of War). The vigil is usually sponsored by a Veteran's Group, e.g., The Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 647, West Haven, CT. The vigil is usually held on a town green so that the general public may participate and is usually eight, twelve, twenty four, or forty hours long. In the center of the vigil area sits a "Tiger Cage," which is a true-life replica of the cages the enemy kept our POWs in during the Vietnam War. It is made of bamboo and is about four feet square and six feet high. Each hour a volunteer, either a Veteran or an issue supporter, sits or stands in the cage for an hour. He or she represents one of the thirty-nine missing Connecticut servicemen from the Vietnam War. Each "Prisoner" is dressed in black pajamas, representative of what our POWs wore while in captivity, is placed in chains around both the hands and feet, and is bare footed. In order to represent, as close as possible, the conditions our men went through, all personal items are left behind, e.g., jewelry, eye glasses, etc. When the hourly "Change Ceremony" takes place, a two-man "Honor Guard" escorts the new prisoner to the cage.

The "Cage Guard," consisting of four Veterans or supporters, lifts the cage so that the old prisoner can be taken out and the new prisoner inserted. The prisoners salute, then hug each other, a symbolic gesture of "The Brotherhood." The old prisoner gives the new one a small American flag to hold onto for the next hour, the new prisoner is placed into position, blindfolded, and the cage is lowered. The Cage Guard then salutes the prisoner in the cage and along with the Honor Guard, escorts the old prisoner to a spot where all those present can welcome him or her home. Those present will form a line and each person salutes, and gives a hug to the prisoner in a symbolic "Welcome Home"

gesture. While this whole ceremony is carried out, a song entitled "Forgotten Man," author unknown, is played in the background. After each person welcomes home the prisoner, they help form a circle. When the last person is through welcoming home the prisoner, all join hands in the circle and sing along with Billy Joel's recording of "Goodnight Saigon." During the hour, music from the sixties and early seventies, mostly rock and roll, some protest music, and some music with military themes, is played in the background. This ceremony takes place once an hour over the entire length of the vigil.

After my first vigil, I knew I wanted to attend more, to learn the background of the POW/MIA issue, and somehow participate in a deeper way. I knew it was emotional from all the tears I saw, and I wanted to be a part of it. After a year had passed and I had a few vigils under my belt, I began to form a bond with the Veterans and their supporters. People whom I had not known before, were now my friends, friends with whom I could share my tears and sorrow, and who were not afraid to share theirs with me.

In June of 1995, I participated in a vigil on the Derby, CT town green, in a way that I had hoped would happen. When I arrived at the vigil, Tim Meade, the vigil organizer, asked if I wanted "Cage Time," and I jumped at the chance. I was given 3:00 to 4:00 o'clock Saturday morning. At 2:30 a.m. it was damp and very cold. I decided to take a walk around the green to settle my nerves and clear my head in preparation for what I was about to do. I went and changed into the black pajamas and handed over all my possessions. Then they shackled me in chains, and "the Forgotten Man" began playing. I was lead to the cage, the chains making an eerie sound in the dark, by the Honor Guard, and stood while the old prisoner was removed. I saluted him and as he hugged me, I could feel him trembling, and could see the tears welling up in his eyes. I thought to myself "Where had this Veteran's mind been during his hour? What would I feel?" I was soon to find out. They placed a blindfold over my eyes, and put me in a sitting position. I then heard the cage lowered, and my hour began. During my hour, several people, who knew it was my first time, came over and asked if I was all right. I really wasn't, but a prisoner cannot talk while in the cage, so I could not answer them. My mind drifted to thoughts of our POWs and how they must feel. I know my ordeal will be over soon, but how do they feel not knowing when and if they'll ever see home again? What more can I do to bring them home? I try to lock my mind into the background music but these thoughts keep coming back. All of a sudden I hear "Forgotten Man" playing and the clanking of chains. I know my hour is over and I'm going home. What about them, will they ever come home? The cage is lifted, I'm taken out and the blindfold is removed. As I embrace the new prisoner, I realize that it is I who is trembling this time. I was now brought before my peers to be welcomed home. Most of the Veterans were in tears and I now understood why.

After experiencing my first hour in the cage, I began to realize the sacrifice our men and women have made to keep us free. All I kept thinking about, more and more, was the men and women who gave their lives for us and those still held in captivity some where in Southeast Asia.

In late summer of 1995, I was offered another "Cage Hour" at a vigil in my home town of Plainville, CT. The first time in Derby, I was nervous and scared because I didn't know what I was facing, or what I would feel. This time I was just plain scared. It was 12:00 noon, August 5, 1995, and I was about to begin my second time in the cage. It was raining, cold, and damp. I don't know if I was shaking because of the weather or my nerves, but I was shaking. Steve Carney and my boyfriend Jim Demato, both Vietnam Combat Veterans, were my Honor Guard. Everyone that I cared about was there to lend me their moral support, and their love. The prisoner coming out was my Dad, and as I saluted and hugged him, I trembled. As tears fell to an already wet ground I wondered, "How would I react to my father being "Missing In Action"? He gave me the small American flag, they set the blindfold, sat me down, and my hour began.

This hour was totally different from my first experience. I went into some very deep thoughts concerning the warrior I was representing. Andre Guillet, U.S. Air Force, missing since 1966 over Laos. What was he like? Was he still alive, and if so how was he coping with being abandoned by his country to rot in a bamboo cage until death? The first time I was in the cage, I could hear the background music and the people talking around me. This time it was as though my mind was in Southeast Asia searching for an answer to the question, Why? The first time, my hour seemed short, this time it seemed to last months, as if I were somewhere else, someone else. All of a sudden, someone is speaking to me, hands are grabbing my arms and lifting me up. It's my Dad and Bert Gray, both Korean War Era Veterans. I'm home!

The man going into the cage was my boyfriend, and again I wondered how I would react to my boyfriend, my fiancée, or my husband, being listed by our government as "Missing In Action," and then forgotten. The first time I didn't shed a tear during the whole ceremony; this time I couldn't stop crying. Though the salutes from my peers seemed crisper, and the hugs seemed warmer and more reassuring, I couldn't shake this empty feeling in my soul, the sadness in my heart, or the question on my mind. Why? After the ceremony, many spoke of their pride for me, and one veteran told me, "It doesn't get any easier." As the day progressed, it got colder with the rain feeling like icicles, and although I was wet, cold, and tired, a fire blazed in my heart for our veterans and the POW/MIA issue.

Now that the season is over, I look back at how I have grown, both in knowledge and compassion. I look forward to next year, the camaraderie of the "Brotherhood," the chance to teach others what I have learned, and the feeling that I can make a difference. I will continue to work alongside of these "Heroes," their families, and the families of the "Missing," like Doris Maitland from Morris, CT, sister to Andre Guillet, until there is a full and complete resolution to the POW/MIA issue.

"Bring 'em Home"

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THE GHOST AND MR. PRESIDENT

Tom "Ghost" Titus, a RFTW rider for many years, and a Southern Route Road Guard, had the honor of personally meeting with President George W. Bush on August 24, 2005, when the President visited Boise, Idaho. Tom's son, SPC Brandon T. Titus, 10th MTN DIV, US Army was killed in action, August 17th, 2004, so "Ghost," along with other families of Idaho soldiers KIA, were each given the opportunity to privately meet with the President, who wanted to personally express his condolences/gratitude for their soldier's sacrifice to this country.



The interesting twist in Ghost's private meeting with the President was that Idaho Governor Dirk Kempthorne (a personal friend of Ghost's and Brandon's) had informed President Bush that Ghost was a single father who raised Brandon for many years, a combat decorated/wounded Vietnam Veteran (Retired US Army), the Lead Volunteer at the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery, Ghost's uncle (Brandon's great-uncle) was a Medal of Honor recipient (US Army) and Ghost was actively involved with the Run For The Wall group. The Governor, also an avid motorcycle rider, had met with Ghost on several occasions in previous years to discuss RFTW's annual ride to DC, involvement with the POW/MIA issue, and to recognize Idaho veterans on the Wall.

The private meeting, which also involved Mrs. Bush and the Idaho Governor, was lengthy, with President Bush's comment to his security people that he was not to be rushed, as his departure time from Boise was already an hour behind schedule.

Said Ghost, "Politics aside, the President and Mrs. Bush are real people; they were emotionally touched by our meeting. At one point the four of us in the room were on the verge of tears, when Brandon's last letter home was read, explaining that he (Brandon) felt no greater honor than to give his life for his country, as he had to earn the freedoms given to him by his family, who had served in the military and the many veterans of this country!"

For the RFTW family, we must never forget our POW's/MIA's and most importantly, we must never forget our family members who gave their lives so that we can continue the mission each and every year."

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► THE LIGHT SIDE

MILITARY ONE-LINERS:

(Editor's note: Thanks to Wayne Nicholls for passing these on.)

"Always aim towards the enemy."—Instruction printed on U.S. Army rocket launcher

"Once the pin is pulled, Mr. Grenade is not our friend."—U.S. Marine corps

"Cluster bombing from B-52s is very, very accurate. The bombs are guaranteed to always hit the ground."—USAF ammo troop

"If the enemy is in range, so are you."—U.S. Army Infantry Journal

"A slipping gear could let your M203 grenade launcher fire when you least expect it. That would make you quite unpopular in what's left of your unit."—U.S. Army's Magazine of Preventive Maintenance

"It is generally inadvisable to eject directly over the area you've just bombed."—U.S. Air Force manual

"Try to look unimportant; the enemy may be low on ammo."—U.S. Army Infantry Journal

"Tracers work both ways."—U.S. Army Ordnance

"Five-second fuses only last three seconds."—U.S. Army Infantry Journal

"Bravery is being the only one who knows you're afraid."—David Hackworth

"If your attack is going too well, you're walking into an ambush."—U.S. Army Infantry Journal

"No combat-ready unit has ever passed inspection."—Joe Gay

"Any ship can be a minesweeper . . . once."—Anonymous

"Never tell the platoon sergeant you have nothing to do."--Unknown Marine recruit

"Don't draw fire; it irritates the people around you."—U.S. Army Infantry Journal

"If you see a bomb technician running, try to keep up with him."—USAF Ammo Troop/sad

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► NEWS

HELP FOR VETS IN LOUISIANA

From the Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — The Veterans Administration set up toll-free numbers for veterans displaced by the storm to call to rearrange their medical care, and for VA employees to check on where to go and what to do for work.

More than 50,000 veterans from south Louisiana and probably more from Mississippi now need to know how they can get their medicines and get to a doctor, said Stacie Rivera, who used to be spokeswoman for the New Orleans VA hospital and was acting as a volunteer on Friday.

Veterans from both areas can call 1-800-507-4571 for the information, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The number for VA employees (1-888-766-2474) will be answered seven days a week, from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

If you know of any vets in the areas hit y Hurricane Katrina, pass this information on to them.

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VA PRAISED FOR KATRINA HELP

VA news release

During Hurricane Katrina, the employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) have been "heroic patriots in a tragedy of unprecedented proportions," the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs told members of four congressional committees Thursday.

"What they have been through defies description," he said. "Even as they endured personal tragedy, their commitment to their patients and to the mission of VA has been unflagging."

Nicholson made his remarks Thursday to members of the House and Senate committees for appropriations and veterans affairs, following a two-day visit to the stricken area. The Secretary told lawmakers about VA health care professionals sleeping only two or three hours a day, and others giving themselves intravenous fluids to preserve water for the patients.

Information for veterans, the families of patients in the affected area and VA employees is available by calling 1-800-507-4571 and on the Internet at <http://www.va.gov/opa/katrina>.

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VA LAUNCHES SURVIVORS WEBSITE

WASHINGTON (Sept. 13, 2005) –The Department of Veterans Affairs has created a new Internet website for the surviving spouses and dependents of military personnel who died on active duty and for the survivors and dependents of veterans who died after leaving the military.

The website is organized into two broad categories: death in service and death after service. It provides visitors with information about a wide range of benefits of the surviving spouse, dependent children, and dependent parents of deceased veterans and active-duty personnel. The site also has information for and links to other federal agencies and organizations that offer benefits and services of survivors and dependents.

The new website can be found at www.vba.va.gov/survivors.

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VA AND GOODWILL INDUSTRIES TO PARTNER

WASHINGTON (Oct. 4, 2005) – In participation with President Bush's Faith-Based and Community Initiative Program, officials from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Goodwill Industries International Inc. recently signed an agreement that will increase opportunities for vocational training and employment-related assistance for service-connected disabled veterans.

"Both VA and Goodwill are committed to providing these brave men and women with opportunities to seek career advancement, job mobility, greater financial security, and economic well-being for their families," said the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

The agreement builds on the achievements of VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program, which assists veterans with service-connected disabilities prepare for, find, and keep suitable employment.

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VA, ABC PARTNER ON OUTREACH TO VETERANS

WASHINGTON (Sept. 30, 2005)—Officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and ABC Radio Networks today announced a partnership designed to enhance VA's outreach to America's nearly 25 million veterans through a public service campaign, a special global broadcast saluting veterans and participation in key VA events. Under the relationship, ABC Radio Networks and American Country Countdown with Bob Kingsley will air a series of public service announcements detailing benefits available to veterans.

In addition, on November 11, 2005, "Bob Kingsley Salutes America's Veterans" will be broadcast on the ABC Radio Networks. The program will feature interviews with and historical pieces narrated by some of country music's biggest names, including Faith Hill, Toby Keith, Trace Adkins, Brooks & Dunn and Trisha Yearwood, among many others. It also includes information on veterans' benefits, and interview segments with the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Nicholson also announced that Kingsley will play a key role in the Department's Veterans Day observance in November. "I am pleased that Bob Kingsley will serve as Master of Ceremonies for the 2005 Veterans Day commemoration at Arlington National Cemetery on November 11, 2005."

"ABC Radio Networks is proud to support the Department of Veterans Affairs in its ongoing effort to support the men and women of our armed forces," said John McConnell, Senior Vice President of Programming, ABC Radio Networks. "We are committed to serving America's veterans through this program with VA."

The agreement announced today by Nicholson and ABC Radio representatives enables VA to work with private industry, in addition to its other outreach activities, to inform veterans of the entitlements they have earned as mandated by Congress.

As part of the campaign, VA has also created The Secretary's Award for Outstanding Service to American Veterans. The award will be presented in early 2006. Details will be announced in late 2005 or early 2006. Audio of the press conference making the announcement is available at: <http://www.va.gov/opa/feature/radio.htm>.

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VA WARNS OF TELEPHONE PRESCRIPTION SCAM

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is warning veterans not to give credit card numbers over the phone to callers claiming to update VA prescription information.

"Some unscrupulous scammers have targeted America's veterans, especially our older veterans," said the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "VA does not call veterans and ask them to disclose personal financial information over the phone."

The latest scam, currently centered in the Midwest, comes from callers who identify themselves as working for the "Patient Care Group." They say VA recently changed procedures for dispensing prescriptions and ask for the veteran's credit card number.

"VA has not changed its processes for dispensing prescription medicines," Nicholson said. "And we've definitely not changed our long-standing commitment to protect the personal information of our veterans."

Veterans with questions about VA services should contact the nearest VA medical center or call, toll-free, 1-877-222-8387

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ANGEL FIRE DONATED TO STATE PARKS

The following letter, dated October 3, 2005, was received from Walter Westphall, son of Dr. Victor Westphall, founder of the Angel Fire Memorial.

Dear friends,

Yesterday the Board of the David Westphall Veterans Foundation approved donation of the Vietnam Veterans National Memorial to the New Mexico State Parks Division. In my view, this is a development that is very favorable for the Memorial. I believe that it is a decision of which my parents would approve. Assuming that there are no stumbling blocks, the effective date for the transfer could be as early as November 1, 2005. However, a ceremonial transfer would probably not occur until Veterans Day.

Under the terms of the donation agreements, the Memorial buildings and the 30-acre site will be transferred along with furniture, fixtures, equipment, art work, and exhibits. The Foundation will retain some equipment and furnishings, as well as corporate records, gift shop inventory, and some memorabilia and archives. The Foundation will have free office and gift shop space for up to 10 years.

State Parks has available \$250,000 for capital equipment at the Memorial and \$100,000 for operating the Memorial through June 30, 2006. In addition, Director David Simon of State Parks has pledged to use \$800,000 in capital improvement funds at the Memorial. The base budget request of State Parks for the next fiscal year, starting July 1, 2006, will include \$100,000 for the Memorial. A supplemental request for an additional \$104,000 will be made along with a capital outlay request for \$700,000.

Because the \$100,000 for operations is not projected to be enough for operations through June 30, 2006, the Foundation has agreed to make available \$30,000 in supplemental funds. In addition, a staff member paid by the Foundation will be available for State Parks duties on a half-time basis starting around December 1, 2005. We hope to be able to persuade Governor Bill Richardson to come up with additional funds yet this year so that the Foundation will not have to provide the \$30,000 in supplemental funds, but that may be an unrealistic hope.

State Parks has hired two individuals for operation of the Memorial as a State Park. They are a Park Manager and a Heritage Educator. By all accounts, these are extremely well qualified individuals who will make a great impact on the Memorial. When I have permission from State Parks, I will make more information about these individuals available. The Foundation will continue to have its own staff to run the gift shop and perform administrative duties. I will provide more information about this when more is known.

This should be a period of great renewal for the Memorial. I am happy with the result and hope that the decision is best for the Memorial and for all its friends and supporters.

Regards,
Walter

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JPAC JOINS INVESTIGATION IN CALIFORNIA

October 2005

Although JPAC usually searches for missing servicemen in Vietnam, Cambodia, and other far-flung places, they are currently in Fresno, California investigating a discovered body. On October 19 two climbers on a Sierra Nevada glacier discovered an ice-encased body believed to be that of an airman whose plane crashed in 1942. The man was wearing a World War II-era Army-issued parachute when his frozen head, shoulder and arm were spotted Sunday on 13,710-foot Mount Mendel in Kings Canyon National Park, park spokeswoman Alex Picavet said.

Park rangers and specialists camped on the remote mountainside in freezing weather for an excavation expected to take several days. The body was 80 percent encased in ice, Picavet said Wednesday. "We're not going to go fast," she said. "We want to preserve him as much as possible. He's pretty intact."

The excavation crew included an expert from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, a military unit that identifies and recovers personnel who have been missing for decades. Park officials believe the serviceman may have been part of the crew of an AT-7 navigational training plane that crashed on Nov. 18, 1942. The wreckage and four bodies were found in 1947 by a climber.

The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command works on hundreds of cases a year, averaging two identifications a week, said spokeswoman Rumi Nielson-Green.

Finding bodies preserved in a glacier is unusual but not unheard of, command officials said. Two years ago, the unit recovered the body of a Cold War-era officer who died in Greenland.

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MIA TEAMS RETURN FROM VIETNAM

August 8, 2005

HICKAM AFB, HAWAII – Five Recovery Teams and one Research and Investigation Team (RIT) from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) returned to Hawaii from a 30-day deployment to Vietnam where they conducted recovery operations of Americans still missing from the war in Southeast Asia. This mission was the 82nd Joint Field Activity in Vietnam.

The Recovery Teams focused on up to eight cases in six provinces during this deployment, excavating possible human remains, life-support material, and personal effects including a wedding ring. On arrival at JPAC's Central Identification Laboratory, these items will be assigned an accession number and stored for later analysis. JPAC scientists will analyze all of the potential remains and evidence gathered at the sites in an attempt to match each set of found remains with a missing American service member.

During excavation operations, several teams discovered unexploded ordnance (UXO). JPAC experts successfully moved the UXO to ensure the continued safe working conditions of JPAC teams. Unexploded bombs, grenades, and other explosive devices are often found at sites during recovery operations.

A JPAC RIT also returned from the 82nd deployment. In addition to the RIT's continued investigation at the Socialist Republic of Vietnam National Library, the team also interviewed a Vietnamese witness to further JPAC efforts in planning future recovery missions. Extensive site surveys and archival investigations typically precede all JPAC recovery deployments. Investigative work builds a base of information that helps to locate new sites, identify new leads, and helps with identification of remains. The RIT investigated up to 15 cases in six provinces during this deployment.

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AIR FORCE OFFICER IDENTIFIED

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced on August 19 that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, MIA from the Vietnam War, were identified and returned to his family for burial with full military honors. He is Air Force Col. Gregg Hartness of Dallas, Texas. He was buried in Arlington National Cemetery on September 14.

On November 25, 1968, Hartness and 1st Lt. Allen S. Shepherd III, took off from Da Nang air base in South Vietnam on a forward air control mission. While flying over Salavan Province in Laos, their O-2A "Skymaster" was apparently struck by enemy fire and began to spin out of control. Shepherd bailed out and was rescued by an Air Force search and rescue team about nine hours later. He did not see Hartness bail out. Between 1993 and 2003, joining U.S.-Lao investigators interviewed more than 60 witnesses in 39 different settlements in Laos before selecting a site for excavation. In January and February 2005, JPAC excavated a site in Salavian province. They recovered human remains, aircraft wreckage, life support equipment, and personal effects.

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REMAINS OF 12 MIA'S RECOVERED

On August 10, 2005, the Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced the identification of the remains of 12 U.S. servicemen missing in action from the Vietnam War. Five of those identified were returned to their families for burial, and the remaining seven were buried as a group in Arlington National Cemetery. The men who were individually identified are: Corporal Gerald E. King, of Knoxville, Tennessee; Lance Corporals Joseph F. Cook, of Foxboro, Massachusetts; Raymond T. Heyne, of Mason, Wisconsin; Donald W. Mitchell, of Princeton, Kentucky; and Thomas W. Fritsch, of Cromwell, Connecticut, all of the U.S. Marine Corps.

Hundreds of other remains fragments that were too small to do DNA testing on were buried in a single casket representing all 12 of the men. The seven servicemen in the group burial were: Privates First Class Thomas J. Blackman, of Racine, Wisconsin; Paul S. Czerwonka, of Stoughton, Massachusetts; Barry L. Hempel, of Garden Grove, California; Robert C. Lopez, of Albuquerque, New Mexico; William D. McGonigle, of Wichita, Kansas; and Lance Corporal James R. Sargent, of Anawalt, West Virginia, all of the U.S. Marine Corps. Additionally, the remains of U.S. Army Sergeant Glenn E. Miller, of Oakland, California, were included in the group burial.

The 11 Marines and one Army soldier were lost on May 9 and 10, 1968, in a battle in South Vietnam's Kham Duc province when their units were overrun by North Vietnamese forces. A ceremonial group burial was held on October 11 at Arlington National Cemetery. The investigation began in 1993, and was aided by American veterans of the battle who provided hand-drawn maps of where they thought their comrades had fallen.

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JPAC SEEKING mtDNA SAMPLES

Thanks to Donna Elliott for forwarding the following list of servicemen. The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) is committed to working with families to identify America's missing service personnel and is searching for family members for mtDNA samples. You may be able to help. If you have a missing family member, you can donate a sample of your DNA to help with the identification of your loved one. To determine if your sample is beneficial to the DNA identification process, please refer to the following list of servicemen who served in Vietnam/Southeast Asia.

Visit <http://www.jpac.pacom.mil/CIL/mtDNA.htm> for more information and for lists of Korean, Cold War, and World War II servicemen for whom DNA is needed. The lists are updated weekly. Contact the appropriate service casualty office:

USAF: Missing persons Branch 1-800-531-5501; Mortuary Affairs 1-800-531-5803; pow-mia@afpc.randolph.af.mil

USA: Casualty and Memorial Affairs Operations Center, 1-800-892-2490

USN: Missing Person Section (POW-MIA Affairs) 1-800-443-9298

USMC: Casualty Branch, 1-800-847-1597

U.S. State Department (for civilian unaccounted-for) 1-202-736-4988

The number of eligible donors of blood (mtDNA) continues to decline, making these samples very important to future identifications. All maternal relatives of WWII, the Korean War, Cold War, and Vietnam War KIA (BNR) casualties are encouraged to contact the appropriate service and arrange blood (mtDNA) donation.

KIA IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:

SSN	Service #	Name	Birthdate	Unit	Home State
547-44-5267	627871	COLLINS, RICHARD F	25-Oct-36	AKTRON 196 (CVA-61)	CA
560-52-2782	680985	MITCHELL, GILBERT L	10-Jul-41	VA 75 ONBD USS KITTY HAWK (CVA 63)	CA
450-48-3825	626423	JOHNSON, ROBERT D	12-Feb-34		TX
555-52-2592	644700	HILL, ARTHUR S JR	20-Aug-37	VF-92 ONBD USS ENTERPRISE	CA
056-28-2338	655602	HOPPS, GARY D	28-Aug-36	ATKRON 145 ONBD USS RANGER (CVA-61)	FL
336-32-8778	668147	BROWN, THOMAS E	26-Sep-41		IL
305-36-6737	5252166	PARKER, THOMAS A	31-Dec-37		IN
526-16-0665	521789	RAWSTHORNE, EDGAR A	3-Oct-25	VF-92 ONBD USS ENTERPRISE	MD
470-36-5395	643832	SWANSON, WILLIAM E	1-Nov-37	ATKRON 95, USS RANGER (CVA 61)	MN
328-38-6720	701580	FRYAR, BRUCE C	28-Mar-44		NJ
274-40-2551	7763701	JUDD, MICHAEL B	22-Aug-45	CO A, 3D RECON BN, 3D MAR DIV	OH
570-24-2136	181318	GRAF, JOHN G	20-Oct-27		CA
398-46-4071	2319998	FISCHER, RICHARD W	15-Jun-47		WI
459-72-1812	2190649	RUNNELS, GLYN L JR	11-Apr-46	CO A, 3D RECON BN, 3D MAR DIV	AL
481-56-0826	2258513	KILLEN, JOHN D III	23-Aug-48	CO A, 3D RECON BN, 3D MAR DIV	IA
001-30-4457	86844	HOUSE, JOHN A II	16-Apr-39	HMM-265 MAG-16	NY
389-46-0474	2163227	ALLEN, MERLIN R	22-Oct-46	CO A, 3D RECON BN, 3D MAR DIV	WI
432-52-5883	98722	GODWIN, SOLOMON H	24-Jan-35		AR
147-34-6358	89846	EGAN, JAMES T JR	31-May-43		NJ
226-50-0591	3135056	CLARKE, GEORGE W JR	28-Jan-41		VA
238-68-1818	3213543	COOK, GLENN R	10-Sep-45		FL
028-28-4039	67827	HOLMES, DAVID H	26-Mar-38	22 TAC AIR SPT SQ	MA
150-32-1828	70177	MITCHELL, THOMAS B	31-Mar-41		NJ
265-64-6925	3149579	HANSON, THOMAS P	18-Apr-41		OH
532-28-6699	30791	ROBERTSON, JOHN L	14-Oct-30		WA
359-26-0689	57401	MARSHALL, RICHARD C	30-Dec-34	DET 10, 1131 USAF SP ACTY SQ	IL
510-36-0507	76810	CLAFLIN, RICHARD A	2-Jul-39	433 TAC FTR SQ	MO
534-46-6500	FR3192157	KINKADE, WILLIAM L	27-Apr-44	555TH TACTICAL FIGHTER SQUADRON	OR
388-18-9460	20868	WILKE, ROBERT F	14-Sep-25		WI
424-26-9130	2228007	BENNETT, WILLIAM G	15-Sep-27		AL
558-60-2382	3157714	MORELAND, STEPHAN C	16-Feb-43		CA
439-60-7285	3177505	STEWART, VIRGIL G	10-Oct-42		LA
237-62-2196	3131645	BORDEN, MURRAY L	2-Jan-41	480 TAC FTR SQ	NC
440-48-6439	3215526	JOHNSTON, STEVEN B	22-Jan-46	8TH TACTICAL FIGHTER SQUADRON	OK
540-48-1834	19781299	DEXTER, BENNIE L	18-Jul-44	633 CMBT SPT GP	OR
029-36-0458	RA 1162249	BIRK, HENRY A III	13-Nov-47		MA
263-44-5403	RA56260076	COACHMAN, WILLIE C	19-Dec-33		
548-88-8246	RA18862075	BAILEY, DANIEL T	16-Mar-51		CA

#EMPTY	#EMPTY	NAME	DATE	UNIT	STATE
421-36-5758	15424446	BAKER, RICHARD A	6-Feb-45		AL
072-38-6498	51614347	WHITE, CHARLES E	18-May-33		NY
271-36-6334	15577686	YOUNG, CHARLES L	4-Apr-46		OH
155-42-3333	11771127	PAYNE, NORMAN (14-Jul-39		NJ
227-58-1162	18732692	KENNEDY, JAMES E	2-Jan-50		TX
231-64-1228	5429985	BINGHAM, KLAUS Y	14-Dec-43		VA
280-42-9374	51879058	MCCANTS, LELAND S III	31-Oct-48	FA BTRY B B DBN 34TH ARTY 9TH INF DIV	OH
385-42-6024	16673314	WILSON, MARION E	6-Dec-47		MI
286-48-5902	11711595	BUCKLEY, LOUIS (JR	20-May-43		OH
232-62-5239	13603548	TURNER, JAMES H	23-Oct-47		WV
258-82-9897	12783894	HUNT, ROBERT W	16-Aug-39	TRP C, 3D SQDN, 4TH CAV, 25TH IND DIV	GA
460-58-4452	US54388132	FOWLER, DONALD R	3-Aug-49		TX
560-58-7901	56382126	WIDNER, DANNY L	24-Jun-42	CO E, 2D BN, 1ST INF	CA
237-52-5368	14580708	DILLON, DAVID A	28-May-42	68	NC
288-32-0581	15517501	LEWIS, CHARLIE G	20-Oct-36		OH
509-46-8523	3152914	BRASSFIELD, ANDREW T	4-Feb-37		KS
434-66-1669	18733095	MCKAIN, BOBBY L	11-Feb-46		LA
123-34-1804	12679153	PHARRIS, WILLIAM V	11-Sep-46	25TH INF DIV VIETNAM	NY
323-38-0321	54818267	DIBBLE, MORRIS F	18-Aug-44	CO B, 2 BND, 2 INF, 1 INF DIV	IL
248-44-3499	53149225	SYKES, DERRI (4-Jul-47		SC
		SALLEY, JAMES (JR	17-Aug-30	ADV TM 22 MACV	

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REUNITING DOG TAGS WITH THEIR OWNERS

In 1994 a tourist to Hue City, Vietnam, purchased more than 1,400 dog tags believing they were from Americans listed as missing in action (MIA). A check of the dog tags revealed that although none appear to be those of an MIA, most are genuine and were worn by Americans during the war. In other words, these soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines served with honor and returned home after the war. Their dog tags, however, didn't.

The JPAC website has a list of servicepersons whose dog tags were among the 1,400 found. The primary goals of this project are to reunite lost dog tags with their owners or family members and to collect some background information on how they were lost. So, if you find your name or the name of a friend on the list of over 1,000, please let JPAC know. Once they verify that they're reuniting the correct dog tag with the correct person, they will send it back to you at no cost. Some people have already been reunited with their dog tags. Visit <http://www.jpac.pacom.mil/CIL/DogTags.htm> to see if you or anyone you know is on the list.

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► TAPS

RUSS OF MESA, ARIZONA

One of our RFTW riders, "Russ" of Mesa, Arizona, while riding alone in Maine in August, lost control of his bike and crashed. Our condolences go to his family and friends.

KAREN BALLWEBER

Karen "Little Foot" Ballweber of Montana passed away August 30 after a long illness. Karen was beloved and admired by many people, and we extend our deepest sympathies to her husband Warren and all of her family.

GLEN "STUDLEY" YOUNG

By Rich "Boomer" Ford - Plano, TX

Saturday started with a very early morning phone call. (This is usually never a good sound and it was true this time

for me as well.) The news was that a very, very close friend, fellow Road Captain of my Harley Chapter and day rider of Run For The Wall during the Texas run out of Weatherford for the last 3 or 4 years was killed in a motorcycle accident while attending the Arkansas Hog Rally with his wife and a lot of our friends and family. We think he may have had a heart attack, as he just drifted down off a curve and he was an excellent rider.

Glenn "Studley" Young was a super husband and father and one of the best friends you could ever wish for. There is no one I would have rather had cover my six. He truly fit the Run For The Wall mold I have come to know since I started riding with you. He has two daughters and his wife Betsy is also a serious rider and always side-by-side. They are as close as any husband wife team I have ever known.

You are one group who I know will understand. I will truly miss this brother.

CRAZY GEORGE PASSES ON

By Scott

Hello family,

I just got home and sitting here checking my email. Each day I am finding more and more people are finding out about my old man. For some of you, you already know the news I am about to bring forth.

I am sorry to say that my dad has passed away 5:45 p.m. today August 29, 2005, after the doctor came and assessed him this morning. The doctor basically said there has been no change in his condition practically since day 1. As I understand it, when the doctor went in and performed surgery on him when he arrived, the damage was extensive to begin with. Since that time, there have been no changes. So it was decided to let my old man go, as it was his wish not to be turned into a vegetable. We also know my dad would have wanted to donate his organs to help another. And that is being done, so now he has been turned into a Pick-a-Part body for a good cause (perhaps someone else will get a craving for JD).

I know that my dad died doing what he loved. With that said, I sense he never stopped riding that day, but is on a new journey. I better not get a call asking me to bring him some fresh clean underwear. He always forgot those—tsk tsk tsk.

I will say this about his stay at the hospital: with all those who came to visit him, my mom, my bro and me ... I thank you. It was as if we were having a party there, making jokes and all. In short, just having fun, and I am stealing all of his hooter hugs! I know my dad would have wanted it that way. Not some dreadful depressed state of seeing him there but rather having a good time with the family (that includes all of you).

I will let all of you know of the services and such we will have in the near future for my dad. And when we do, don't forget to bring a bottle of JD for my old man and some clean underwear as well (smile).

Again thank you and God bless all of you.
Scott

MEMORIES OF CRAZY GEORGE

By James "Gunny" Gregory

Last night Patti and I had a couple of Jack Daniels in memory of Crazy George. George and I rode Rolling The Coast, Run For The Wall, and Route 66 together in three years. For George, this was just a few miles of the thousands he rode in his life. For me it was an opportunity of a lifetime to find another rider who could make every mile an adventure. Those who met George the first time just could not believe one man could have so much life, so much

damn fun in one body. He was there when a tractor-trailer knocked me off the interstate. He was there when my bike broke down in a hurricane. He was there for my 50th birthday getting me so drunk on JD in my own back yard that I couldn't eat so he was there enjoying dinner with my future wife. He was there in the rain, the sun, the hot, the cold. He will always be there in my mind riding the back roads of America with a Jack and soda at the end of the day.

Ride on George, you'll be very, very missed.

JOEL BRATTAIN MEMORIAL SERVICE

By Judy "Velcro" Lacey



Mil presents flowers and a Gold Star Flag to Joel's mother and widow

Joel Brattain, U.S. Army, was KIA in Iraq on March 13, 2004. Mil Thornton, a RFTW member and also a member of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 785 in Orange County, conceived the idea of, and organized, a memorial ceremony to "honor one of our own." The ceremony was held on August 18, 2005 at Joel's gravesite at the Holy Sepulcher cemetery in Orange. The memorial was attended by members of Joel's family, VVA Chapter 785, RFTW, and Sons and Daughters In Touch.

Our group placed a large, beautiful red, white, and blue wreath by the grave. Mil Thornton presented flowers to Joel's mother, Elaine, and his widow, Andrea, and more flowers were passed out for others to place on his grave.

Mil, Bret, and Jumper Jim read tributes and poems that left every one of us in tears, and Mil presented a Gold Star Flag to Joel's mother Elaine. Elaine spoke to the group of Joel's beautiful nature and his pride in serving his country. She also offered her heartfelt thanks to the vets who surrounded their family with love in their time of grief. "You will always be part of our family." Joel's Army buddy and best friend, Paul, told us how much Joe's friendship meant to him and about Joel's positive and uplifting attitude. The ceremony ended with Frank singing "God Bless America," with everyone joining in, and Paul Verner playing taps.

Thanks to Mil for coordinating the beautiful memorial, and also for opening his home to everyone afterwards for a barbecue.

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► SICK CALL

Roland "Pegleg" Marchand had kidney stone surgery October 5. We wish him a quick recovery. Send your get-well wishes to him at RolandMarchand@comcast.net.

Randy Marr, VVA Chapter 785 State Delegate, has undergone two major surgeries, losing his right thumb and numerous toes. He will be returning to the VA in Loma Linda for further evaluation, and has a long road to recovery ahead of him. Randy had stepped on a lava rock, and because of his Vietnam-related blood issue, infection quickly spread. He appreciates the many calls and visits he has gotten. You can reach him at his cell: (562) 756-7318.

Jumper Jim Braga had shoulder surgery in September. According to Danny Lopresto, it seems that Jim still likes to jump out of perfectly good airplanes, and during a formation dive he and another diver collided. The damage to his shoulder was pretty extensive, and he's had a lot of repair done. Danny suggests giving Jim a harassment email at jumperjim2@aol.com. Jim, we hope your shoulder will be as good as new.

Gene Crego, a Vietnam Veteran, RFTW Member, the Commander of the American Legion in Laughlin, Nevada, ABATE Director, and a very close and personal friend of the VVA, underwent surgery for his heart and is slowly on the mend.

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► **TIDBITS**

VP **Ken Snow** of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 785, Orange County, won the 50-50 drawing at the Chapter’s September meeting and donated his winnings to Run For The Wall! Thanks from all of us, Ken.

JR Franklin presented **Joe “Dragon” Lozano** with a pin in recognition of his serving on the Board of Directors and his long, loyal service to RFTW. The presentation was made at the Cripple Creek event in Colorado.



Daemien “Deacon” O’Keeffe wants to let everyone know that he has started a new website for people who want to talk about RFTW. It will be a place where anyone—including FNGs—can ask questions. This is not an “official” RFTW website, but one for those interested in chatting about RFTW. Email Deacon for an invitation to join the group at: wardogupdate@gmail.com.

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► **2005 FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

RUN FOR THE WALL
Profit and Loss Statement
January 1, 2005—October 10, 2005

Income:			
	Donations		\$19,856.77
	Merchandise Sales		
	Run Sales	\$69,372.00	
	Mail Order Sales	\$11,609.80	\$80,981.80
	Newsletter Subscriptions		\$195.00
	Other		\$246.50
Total Income			\$101,280.07
Cost of Goods Sold:			
	Patches & Pins	\$8,029.00	
	Bars	\$1,645.50	
	T-Shirts	\$24,443.50	
	Ball Caps	\$2,369.00	
	Flags	\$5,522.19	
	Bandanas	\$794.00	

	Lanyards	\$2,340.00		
	Other	\$15.00		
	CGS – Other	\$(17.00)		\$45,141.19
Gross Profit				\$56,138.88
Expenses:				
	Bank Charges		\$78.24	
	Administrative Service		\$2,943.96	
	Run Expenses:			
	Discretionary Cash	\$(198.90)		
	Itineraries	\$120.00		
	Bike Flagging Tape	\$53.20		
	Certificates	\$40.95		
	Plaques	\$2,709.04		
	Business Cards	\$83.20		
	FNG Buttons	\$220.00		
	Miscellaneous	\$1,031.28		
	Mdse. Trailer Fuel	\$2,301.99		
	Safety Vests	\$81.90		
	DC Dinner	\$4,007.08	\$10,449.74	
	Chase Vehicles		\$3,435.50	
	Support Vehicles		\$2,224.00	
	Registration		\$3,231.20	
	Road Guards		\$4,127.41	
	Professional Services		\$325.03	
	Route Coordinator's Expenses		\$1,050.93	
	Board of Directors' Expenses		\$2,665.29	
	Newsletter		\$169.20	
	Merchandise:			
	Trailer	\$4,154.85		
	Storage	\$576.00		
	Miscellaneous	\$406.00	\$5,136.85	
	Donations to Supporters		\$2,494.00	
	Shipping		\$2,489.30	
	Refunds		\$71.50	
Total Expenses				\$40,992.21
Net Income				\$15,146.67

RUN FOR THE WALL

Balance Sheet
January 1, 2005—October 10, 2005

Assets:			
	Current:		
	Checking & Savings	\$28,111.82	
	Fixed:		
	24' Mdse Trailer	\$13,500.00	
Total Assets			\$41,611.82

Liabilities & Equity		
	Current Liabilities	\$(33.80)
	Equity:	
	Opening Balance	\$29,357.76
	Net Income	\$12,287.86
	Total Equity	\$41,645.62
	Total Liabilities & Equity	\$41,611.82

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TIME TO RENEW YOUR SUBSCRIPTION

It's time for those of you receiving mailed hard copies of the RFTW newsletter to renew your subscriptions. Please mail your donation of \$10 to help cover the cost of printing and postage before December 1 in order to receive your January issue.

The newsletter will continue to be posted on the Run For The Wall website: <http://www.rftw.org/>. The issues are published in January, April, July and October.

Please fill out the form below, include your check or a money order (no cash!) and mail it to:

Linda Apodaca
P.O. Box 727
Rociada, New Mexico 87742

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone # _____

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* * * * *

THE MILITARY MAN

The average age of the military man is 19 years. He is a short haired, tight-muscled kid who, under normal circumstances is considered by society as half man, half boy. Not yet dry behind the ears, not old enough to buy a beer, but old enough to die for his country. He never really cared much for work and he would rather wax his own car than wash his father's; but he has never collected unemployment either.

He's a recent High School graduate; he was probably an average student, pursued some form of sport activities, drives a ten year old jalopy, and has a steady girlfriend that either broke up with him when he left, or swears to be waiting when he returns from half a world away. He listens to rock and roll or hip-hop or rap or jazz or swing and 155mm howitzer. He is 10 or 15 pounds lighter now than when he was at home because he is working or fighting from before dawn to well after dusk.

He has trouble spelling, thus letter writing is a pain for him, but he can field strip a rifle in 30 seconds and reassemble it in less time in the dark. He can recite to you the nomenclature of a machine gun or grenade launcher and use either one effectively if he must. He digs foxholes and latrines and can apply first aid like a professional. He can march until he is told to stop or stop until he is told to march.

He has stood atop mountains of dead bodies, and helped to create them. He has wept in public and in private, for friends who have fallen in combat and is unashamed. He feels every note of the National Anthem vibrate through his body while at rigid attention, while tempering the burning desire to “square-away” those around him who haven't bothered to stand, remove their hat, or even stop talking. In an odd twist, day in and day out, far from home, he defends their right to be disrespectful.

Just as did his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, he is paying the price for our freedom. Beardless or not, he is not a boy. He is the American Fighting Man that has kept this country free for over 200 years.

He has asked nothing in return, except our friendship and understanding. Remember him, always, for he has earned our respect and admiration with his blood.

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