



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"... April 2006

**Quarterly Newsletter
" We Ride For Those Who Can't "
April 2006**

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THE EDITOR'S NOTES



REMEMBER OUR POWS: April 9 is National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day. It is not a national holiday, although each year our U.S. President issues a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to join him in remembering former American prisoners of war by honoring their sacrifices. (The day should not be confused with National POW/MIA Recognition Day, which is the third Friday of every September). Sadly, most of us know someone who was a POW. I have a longtime friend who was a POW for seven years in Korea, so I'm acutely aware of the sacrifices made by our POWs. Our POWs are to be treasured. If you know or meet one, give him a hug and thank him for what he endured. To all POWs and all vets, welcome home and thank you from the bottom of my heart.

The long-awaited DVD on Run For The Wall 2005 is finally available! I received an email from Randall Wilson, producer of *The Long Ride Home—Run For The Wall*, saying that the five-hour version will be available for purchase on the website on Friday, April 8. Go to www.guerrilladocs.com to order a copy. This version contains interviews of many of our riders. Randall said they are working on the broadcast version, which will be shorter, and he will let us know when it's scheduled. Easy Rider saw the first rough cut and wrote a wonderful review.

Can you believe it's almost time for us to leave on the Run again?! Everyone is gearing up, emails are flying, friends are looking forward to seeing each other again, and you can feel the excitement in the air. The Board of Directors, Route Coordinators, and the many other RFTW volunteers have been working hard all year to coordinate the routes, stops, and hotels. RFTW is a massive undertaking, and it takes many people to pull it off smoothly.

We often take for granted organizations we participate in, as though they somehow just run themselves. But there are many people behind the scenes of RFTW: the Board of Directors who must make sometimes very tough decisions for the good of all; the Route and State Coordinators who begin working immediately after each Run on the next year's Run, lining up gas stops, meals for hundreds of participants, hotels and back-up hotels, and coordinate ceremonies; the Road Guards, without whom we'd be a sorry bunch of uncoordinated rag-tag bikers. Sure, they yell at us and sometimes seem unreasonable in their demands—but there's a reason for it: the safety of all of us. If the Road Guards didn't scream at riders to "close up, close up!" cars and trucks could infiltrate our ranks and cause accidents, not to mention that our pack would get separated and many of us would get lost. Pay attention to the hand signals; read the article this month on riding in the pack so you'll know what to do when the guy in front of you holds up two fingers or one finger (no, not THAT finger!).

Our guards take good care of us, keeping us in a tight pack for safety, and also taking up positions at off-ramps to guide us to the next stop. So let's shock the Road Guards this year: instead of complaining about their "bossy" attitudes, try telling them "Hey, thanks for taking care of us!"

Another important job on the Run is that of the Merchandise and Registration volunteers. These dedicated and untiring souls get up at the crack of dawn every morning to set up the Merchandise Trailer so that we can buy patches, flags, t-shirts, and other necessities, then they set up again every evening and often at lunch breaks. The Registration volunteers are right there with them, signing up new participants every day, answering questions, and welcoming FNGs with hugs. They are our goodwill ambassadors, and the "first impression" new participants get of RFTW.

The Chaplain's Corps is there for anyone in their time of need. If you need a shoulder to lean on, someone to listen to your fears without judgment, look for one of the Chaplains. The Run is a very emotional journey, especially for those FNGs who are going to the Wall for the first time. For some, the journey unleashes demons that have been pushed down for many years; some have tried several times to complete the Run, only to turn back because they can no longer bear the burden of facing those demons. If you see someone in distress, ask a Chaplain to talk to that person. We must each work to make every FNG feel safe in our midst, protected and strengthened by their brothers and sisters on their journey to the Wall.

And finally, there is YOU. Without you, RFTW would not exist. Without you, there would be no RFTW and all it does to help veterans heal.

This issue has lots of good info for all of us preparing for the Run. You'll find lists of what you'll need to pack, flag protocol, and some great advice on how to prepare your bike for the long, arduous trip across the country. Unless you already know it by heart, be sure to read the POW Table and Flag-Folding ceremonies—and don't forget to bring a rock for Angel Fire. Hope you enjoy this issue, Welcome Home, and I'll see you in Ontario!

Never Forget,
Judy "Velcro" Lacey

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► GET READY FOR THE RUN!

Editor's Note: We are often asked what Run For The Wall is about. Why are we so passionate about it? Why do we travel across the country year after year? Our own "Pointman" said it perhaps best:



As we move across this great nation of ours, people see that there is something different about us than other large groups of people. At sporting events or concerts it seems like someone or several people can't get along or see eye to eye and a fight breaks out. That's not the way it is with us. We do this with singleness of mind; we ride for those who can't. We are on a mission, if you will, and that is to get everyone to the Wall and to bring healing to the ones who need it. And to let the public know that we have not nor will we ever forget our brothers who were left behind. This is why when people see us in their towns that they see 2006 RFTW T-Shirt Design something they have not seen in such a large group—unity. In PSALM 133:1 it says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." When we visit the VA Hospitals and we see our brothers there, our hearts break with compassion for them. Don't be too proud to bend a knee and say a simple prayer with them. Just 2 or 3 words spoken at the right time in the name of Jesus will do wonders. You may be just what they need to get through the day. Let the compassion that is in your heart come out. When you bless them you are the one who walks away with a blessing. I will leave you with this word that is found in 1 Peter 3:8-9: "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing: knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."

Be a blessing and God bless.

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THOUGHTS

By Cowboy
SR 2nd Platoon Leader
USAF Ret RVN 72-73

While preparing for yet another Mission, these thoughts crept into my head and I can't shake them, so thought it best to share them.

FREEDOM . . .

. . . is the names engraved on the Memorials where we lay wreaths
. . . is the faces of the men and women at the VA centers we visit
. . . is carved on the grave stones at Arlington.
. . . Freedom is not free

MY PRAYER

I pray for my living comrades and honor my dead
I pray to never again declare a brother or sister POW or MIA
I pray if I do not finish, that others will follow my footsteps and complete The Mission.

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SOME THOUGHTS ON GETTING READY FOR THIS YEAR'S RUN

By John "Ice Scout" King, Jr.
Southern Route Road Guard

Riding as part of RFTW is a privilege. Few people have the opportunity to experience it and those of us who go really do "ride for those who cannot."

RFTW says we want "No Attitudes"; but what we really want are the right attitudes.

The most important of these is our respect for the Mission, for the FNGs, for the other riders, for ourselves, and for veterans and their families. This is all about how we conduct ourselves in wreath layings and hospital visits across America and finally at the Wall and at the Tomb of the Unknowns. It is how we show our appreciation to the thousands of volunteers who plan and organize the events that make up the run and who stand in the rain to encourage us on our way. It is about how we honor those who came before us, other veterans and other riders, and how we honor all Americans.

Next most important is our willingness to learn from more experienced riders and from Route leaders. All of us, no matter how long we have been riding, can always learn something new. All of us can always improve our riding habits.

Other Road Guards and Route Leaders have written extensively about this. Read Les Egge's article which is reprinted in this newsletter, and John "Scooter" McCabe's preparation list, printed in this issue as well as on the Central Route's section of the RFTW web site.

Next is our attitude about safety and staying alive on the highway. Is the bike and is our gear ready? Have we been riding and have we practiced our emergency procedures? Are we in shape to ride?

RFTW is an intense, demanding ride. It is dangerous. It is not to be taken casually.

200+ motorcycles and support vehicles make a train one to two miles long. That pack is always in motion, always changing, sometimes suddenly and without warning. If you fail to concentrate, you or other riders can and will get hurt.

Riding conditions vary widely across the country. The roads can be empty or filled with aggressive urban traffic. The Run continues in spite of the weather. And the next mile of riding is just as risky as the last one.

You will want to find a rhythm and a place in the formation that suits your abilities and comfort level. Work to be smoother and more consistent with your throttle controls. Learn to avoid using the brakes.

Once we get back East, traffic becomes more intense. Often the pack will be in situations that would be most challenging even if we were riding alone. On the Southern Route, Chattanooga and Roanoke come to mind. And then there is the entry into DC with all of the emotion, the fatigue, and the rush hour traffic.

RFTW has grown to the point that the pack may easily have 200+ bikes on any day. This means more organization and structure—like the platoon system and the special refueling crew. The morning briefings are mandatory for good reason. You need to know a lot of daily detail. Stay informed and remember there are always the veteran riders who will help you.

And we have Road Guards.

This is my third year in that job, and thanks to a lot of people's help and patience, I'm beginning to understand what it is about. Some parts of the job are a lot of fun. Some are not. It is physically and mentally demanding. You are off and on the bike all day long. And you are always watching the riders and the traffic, assessing the risk and making critical decisions, right now. The riding is always challenging and the responsibility you carry is always on your shoulders.

Take time to get to know the Road Guards on your route. Make friends with them and you will have a better understanding of how and why they make the decisions they do. Road guards are there to help you be as safe as possible. Ultimately, you are the person responsible for your own safety. We cannot control everything. But we try to manage evolutions such as fuel stops so the pack can move on schedule and without problems. We need each rider to help make these evolutions work correctly.

Please listen to what the Road Guard says or signals. Follow their instructions. If you don't understand, do it anyway and ask later. Be respectful of the other riders and remember, your job is to fit into the pack and ride safely. Our job is to earn your trust by being consistent and respectful. If you need help, let someone know.

Sometimes Road Guards are criticized, rightly or wrongly, for being rude or offensive. It could be a situation where the riders involved are not aware of what they are or are not doing. The Road Guard might be tired and stressed. Clear and direct language is usually helpful, but can sound harsh and confrontational. And sometimes, a situation is just so screwed up that direct action has to be taken.

Be patient, try to understand the situation and do what needs to be done. Remember, we are working to help you and every other rider get to DC. And in this hazardous environment, you have to take complete responsibility for the way your riding affects everyone else.

Thank you and be safe. See you in May.

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GETTING READY FOR OUR MISSION

By Mike "Tanker" McDole
2006 Central Route Coordinator

It won't be long now until Run For The Wall participants will depart Ontario, California for our ten day pilgrimage to The Wall in DC. As we travel across our great nation, we will be welcomed home and cared for by the people who make our country great. This will, once again, be an unforgettable journey that promises to forever change our lives. If this will be your first time traveling with us, we say "Welcome to the RFTW family and Welcome Home," We refer to those new to the RFTW family as FNGs. You will be asked to wear a button identifying you as such, which enables our

folks to watch for, and assist you, on your first trip with us. For those of you who are already part of the RFTW family and returning to ride with us again, we say “Welcome Back.” To all of the people in the towns across America who support us we say “Thank You. Without you, it would not be possible for us to complete our mission every year.”

Preparations for this year’s run have been underway for several months and involve dozens of hard working volunteers from across America. The Leadership Teams from both the Southern and Central Routes have been working together to ensure alignment and promote **One Mission, One Run, Two Routes**. Each of our State Coordinators spends countless hours coordinating every detail with people from towns and organizations who support us on our mission. This year the Central Route will have an additional team of volunteers traveling with us for ten days providing us with water, fruit and snacks, free of charge, at every stop. Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) Chapter 785 from Ontario California will provide the van, volunteers and all of the supplies to ensure our riders have access to hydration and basic nutrition at all times. This is a significant improvement to our infrastructure and we want to say “Thank You” to VVA 785 members and volunteers.

The logistics of traveling 3,000 miles, safely and efficiently, with several hundred riders is a daunting task that requires teamwork, focus, and cooperation from everyone. I would like to review just a few of the basic principles that are critical to ensuring our mission is safe and successful:

1. All riders must complete the registration process and attend a Riders Briefing prior to riding in our formation

- Registration will be in Ontario, CA and every morning / evening while the run is in progress
- Riders Briefings will be conducted every morning and **ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY**
- Review riding procedures / formation / hand signals / safety issues, etc.
- Updates on the Southern Route’s progress
- Debriefing from previous day’s ride
- Review of the day’s itinerary and any last-minute changes
- Other critical information disseminated

2. Road Guards are responsible for controlling the formation

- These riders have a significant amount of experience with RFTW—they know what they are doing
- This is a very stressful and challenging job—**please obey directives at all times**—ask for clarification later

3. Missing Man Formation will lead the run at all times—5 bikes

4. We will operate seven platoons (bikes in platoons 1—6, followed by trikes, sidecars and bikes with trailers)

5. Platoons are led by Platoon Leaders and ride side-by-side with an approximate 5-6 second interval between platoons

6. Two chase vehicles pulling trailers capable of hauling four bikes each will be traveling with us every day

7. Fuel stops are controlled by the Fuel Crew who will have the pumps turned on and ready to fill all vehicles

- Have cash ready for the Fuel Crew member—your total will be rounded up to the next dollar (excess funds used for chase vehicles)

8. Friends of Bill W meetings are conducted every night—contact announced at morning Riders Briefings

9. Mentor FNGs—the run can be a stressful / emotional experience and experienced folks can provide much needed support

10. Ride your own ride at all times—don’t focus on how others are riding. **Ultimately you are responsible for your**

own safety.

I want to remind everyone that *this is a mission, not a party*, and that we are representing all of those who are POW/MIA, and our brothers and sisters who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. Please be considerate and treat everyone with respect at all times. Also, as we pass through the towns along the way, remember that we serve as the focal point for many that are unable to make the journey to The Wall themselves, so be sensitive to this fact.

It is a great honor for me to lead the Central Route this year, and my Leadership Team and I will do everything possible to ensure everyone has a safe and rewarding experience. So, finish your final preparations, service and load the bike / vehicle, and we'll see you in Ontario, or wherever you plan to join us along our route. Always remember, **Freedom Isn't Free**.

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RUN FOR THE WALL 2006 – TIME FOR FINAL PREPARATION

By Don "9-Ball" Morris

Southern Route Coordinator 2006

I had an opportunity to read Mike "Tanker" McDole's article and was very impressed with the information he provided. I also read John "Ice Scout" King's article; he will be a Road Guard on the SR again this year and his information was also very impressive. I thought I would provide a little different information concerning preparing for the "Run" this year, especially if you are an FNG (first timer).

For most of us who have been regulars on the "Run" for a few years, we can still look back on our first year: the ride that we looked so forward to, yet there was that apprehension that sometimes overwhelmed us. 2001 was my first experience with RFTW and I got very emotional every time I thought about it. My wife and I planned for six months to make sure we had those hotel reservations, the bikes were ready for the long trip out and back, and of course trying to figure out what to pack. I know I have answered many emails in the last few months concerning all those issues.

The difficulty I had was how could I prepare for the emotions that I knew would be there. When would they show up? What would be the circumstances around which I would react differently? Was I going to be able to handle what was to come? It reminded me a little of the weeks leading up to my deployment to Vietnam. All those uncertainties and situations that I knew I would have to deal with especially knowing that I would be in a leadership position.

You see, I was one of those many Vietnam veterans who came back, went on with life, and thought I had dealt with all the "stuff" that comes with being a combat infantryman. I eventually realized that all I did was cram it into a big can and put a tight lid on top of it. I found out in 2001 that there was no planning that could prepare me for the experience that awaited me. It was the biggest "Welcome Home" I had never dreamed of. The support from great Americans all across the United States was overwhelming. I, like many before me and many that will come after me, cried, laughed, shared, listened, hugged and got hugged, and started a healing process that continues today. My advice is to look forward to all the experiences that RFTW provides and don't worry about the emotions. I don't care how big and bad you are, it will engulf you.

Now, going to the "Wall" if it is your first time. Make many friends all the way across on the ride and let people know that this will be your first time. Many of us have continued to go year after year to be there just for you and others like you. There were many that went with me in 2001 and all the RFTW old timers want to help you start that healing process. In case you don't know it by now, **THAT IS THE REASON WE DO THIS!**

I will see many of you in Ontario and many stops along the way.

Take care and ride safe,

Don "9-Ball" Morris

"All Gave Some, Some Gave All"

SOUTHERN ROUTE REGISTRATION ENDS AT ROANOKE

By Don “9-Ball” Morris, Southern Route Coordinator

Southern Route will not register anyone after the morning meeting in Roanoke. There will be no registration at Tom's Brook or DC. If you plan to ride with the Southern Route and join the combined run into DC you must be signed up no later than Roanoke. There will be no exceptions.

CENTRAL ROUTE REGISTRATION ENDS AT LEWISBURG

By Mike “Tanker” Dole, Central Route Coordinator

The last opportunity to register with RFTW's Central Route will be at Lewisburg, WV on Friday morning, May 26th. There will be no registration at Tom's Brooks or DC. Therefore, if you plan to ride with the Central Route and join the combined run into DC, you must begin with us no later than Lewisburg. Due to concerns related to safety, and being able to manage the group effectively, there will be no exceptions. We are looking forward to having you ride with us in support of our mission.

PLAN CHANGES FOR WASHINGTON D.C.

By Patrick “Dragonrider” McCarthy

D.C. Coordinator

There are a number of changes to the RFTW schedule in Washington D.C. this year. The details for our arrival on Friday afternoon are not complete but as usual, be flexible. On Saturday, the Arlington National Cemetery parade is limited to a representative group of riders who will ride into Arlington National Cemetery for the Wreath Laying Ceremony. The Board of Directors of RFTW has indicated that the first priority for riders in the parade into Arlington will be FNGs. Other riders will be welcome to attend this event as members of the public, but will be required to use the paid-parking area outside the entrance and walk to or take the shuttle trams to the Tomb of the Unknowns. Details will be included in the daily itinerary. Local riders: “D.C. Guides” will be available to lead this group from the HQ Hotel to the parking area.

As an alternate activity, planning is in progress to send a representative group to visit the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH). Originally known as the Soldiers Home in Washington D.C. and the Sailors Home in Gulfport MS, all residents are now in the Washington D.C. facility because of Hurricane Katrina damage. These are the facilities supported by the 50-cent deduction from your military pay and the fines and forfeitures of pay levied by NJP. Maps, directions and “D.C. Guides” will lead interested riders to the AFRH. Information about the AFRH is available at <http://www.afrh.gov/>

The third option is to sleep in on Saturday and join us for the luncheon provided by the DC Ramblers Club or strike out on your own to visit family or friends in the DC area.

At about noon everyone going to the DC Ramblers clubhouse should start heading to Port Washington. Local Riders at the AFRH and HQ Hotel will lead interested riders to the Luncheon. Riders not at Arlington National Cemetery will not be in parade formation and are expected to conform to all traffic signals and regulations.

Saturday evening there will be a “Gathering” celebrating the completion of the Run to DC and an awards ceremony.

TRUCKERS ALERTED TO RFTW ON THE ROAD

By Anne Perry, RFTW Public Information Contact

RFTW has been in contact with the American Trucking Association and the American Independent Truckers' Association, Inc. to make them aware of RFTW's presence on the roads across the country during May. RFTW has always been concerned about safety issues between bikes and trucks. Each year there are very supportive truckers who pass us along the way; however, there are some who would like to avoid our convoys if they could. Our hope was that an early notification to trucking associations of our schedule would give the trucking associations time to relay the information to their drivers so they can avoid delays caused by meeting up with RFTW.

Also, many truckers are veterans or have relatives and friends who are and we think most would appreciate knowing that our convoys are on the roads, too. Our journey will be much easier and safer with truckers watching for us, so give them a wave to let them know you appreciate their courtesy.

RFTW RIDING RULES

By Les Egge (from 2005)

If you are thinking about joining the Run For The Wall, read this and pay attention!!!

THIS RIDE MAY NOT BE FOR YOU!!!

This is a demanding ride that may be above your skill level. This run may well be the largest, fastest long distance ride in the world!!! Of the 300,000 or more bikes that fill the pentagon parking lot for "Rolling Thunder"—RFTW is unique.

- This ride takes teamwork. This is not "your" ride, this is a unit ride with a serious mission.
- If you find it difficult to conform to the rules that are explained at every morning meeting, this ride is not for you.
- If you are not able to develop precise throttle control, this ride is not for you.
- If you are an inexperienced rider or lack confidence in your skills, this ride is not for you.

To get skills every rider must take a rider's course. The only riders who do not think a rider's course is needed, are people who haven't taken one. Lack of skill puts you and everyone around you at increased risk. Your bike must be in good working order, with good brakes and tires. Remember, we are putting our lives in each other's hands.

RIDING INTERVAL

The formation must be tight to maintain safety and group cohesion. Large gaps invite cars and trucks to enter the formation, which creates all sorts of problems. Sometimes you must let cars enter and exit through the pack. If an experienced rider or road guard is present, they will make a hole for the car to pass through, if not you may have to make the decision.

We generally ride two-up. It might be best for FNGs to ride on the right side and experienced riders to be on the left. To ride side by side someone must set the interval and having the left lane set the interval avoids confusion.

Road guards will come along beside you and ask you to get closer. They are not "mad at you," they are just giving you directions for the good of the pack.

RUBBER BAND EFFECT

This is when the rider in front of you accelerates and widens your gap, forcing you to twist your throttle to maintain the interval. This is a normal condition that can and does get out of control. This is where "throttle control" is paramount.

THROTTLE CONTROL

This is the amount you increase or decrease your throttle. To help pace your control, do not watch just the rider in front of you, watch the third rider in front of you in the opposite lane; this way you will get a much better feel for what the pack is doing. Example: the rider in front of you is pulling away and you see three riders ahead in the pack that are actually slowing. What do you do?? You start pacing to the pack farther ahead and either maintain your speed or start slowing gradually. This is all very subjective and the experience you gain as you go makes it easier.

BRAKES

I'm convinced that if we disconnected every brake on every bike we could come very near to stopping the rubber band effect. OK, we can't do that. SO, DON'T HIT YOUR BRAKES UNLESS IT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY! Downshift whenever possible. If you had been paying attention you probably wouldn't have needed either. Remember throttle control?? When you hit your brakes every rider behind you hits theirs or backs off the throttle. Now you just stressed all the riders behind you and if you do this all day long, this ride is beyond your ability. Some bikes don't slow as rapidly as others when the throttle is backed off. Goldwings, in particular, have a tendency to "light up their brakes." If you have this problem, run in a lower gear. This is not going to hurt your bike. I ride a Honda, so I'm not picking on Hondas.

HAND SIGNALS

If nobody hits their brakes and everybody is down shifting, how will you know when to start slowing? The answer is hand signals. The one for slowing is "flapping" your left arm up and down. If the riders in front of you are "flapping" you are to pass the signal back until you can see at least a couple bikes behind you signaling. If you see the slow signal way ahead, hold off until you are sure it's not just a localized event. When in doubt - "flap away." All the other signals will be explained at every morning meeting.

MORNING MEETINGS

Every morning there is a Riders Meeting. All riders MUST attend. If your time is too important to attend you are much too important to ride with RFTW. All riders must sign in and register to ride with us. Sign-in is before every morning meeting; this is where you receive your ID bracelet and your bike identification. This is how you are recognized as an RFTW Participant and how you can enjoy the benefits provided to us. Do not join the pack if you are not signed in. Ride on ahead and join up the next morning. There is much more to learn at the morning meetings and these are mandatory for all riders. BE THERE!

I would like to welcome all new riders and say that I did not write this to scare you into not riding with RFTW, but rather to give you a heads-up on what to expect. Ask experienced riders for tips to help make your ride safer and more enjoyable. You will find a brotherhood in RFTW that is very open and willing to help. Don't be too "macho" or embarrassed to ask for help, we all need help. Remember, this is a team effort. "Never forget."

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PACK ORDER

It's important that everyone know the riding order of RFTW, so that order and safety can be maintained in the pack. Always leading the pack will be the Missing Man Formation (5 bikes), followed by the rest of the bikes (two wheeled), followed by trikes, sidecars, and bikes with trailers; our last man vehicle will fall in behind them. After the last man vehicle are the chase vehicles (for picking up disabled bikes), and following them are the four-wheelers. Platoon Leaders will be placed in the pack about every 30 sets of bikes for added safety.

When you register, be sure to get a handbook; it will give you all the updated Run information, as well as the hand signals that will be used on the Run.

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REGISTRATION FOR 2006 RFTW

By Denise “Krispy” Ferris

We want to welcome all of you who are planning to join the Run this year! Preparations are underway to make sure that we’re ready for you! You can help speed up the registration process by printing the registration form on the RFTW website, filling it out, and bringing it with you wherever you plan to join the Run. Please don’t mail the form, as we don’t have a system to pre-register riders at this time.

You’ll notice that the form is the same for both the Central and Southern Routes. We’ve added a few new items to help us identify first-timers, and how far you plan to ride to help us with planning for stops.

If you have any questions about registration, you can contact us:

Central Route – Denise “Krispy” Ferris wvkrispy@yahoo.com or

Southern Route – Shirley “Top Sarge” Scott vanceshirley@juno.com

We’re looking forward to meeting everyone in May!

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WHAT TO PACK FOR THE RUN

Lots of FNGs have asked for suggestions on what to bring on Run for the Wall. When we thought about it, we decided that a lot of RFTW “old timers” might also find this information helpful. We went through our email and RFTW Bulletin Board posts from the past several years and brainstormed to compile this list. Tailor your checklist to your own personal needs—you may want to bring additional items, you may want to leave some things at home.

Thanks to Mark “Straight Arrow” Rittermeyer, Pup, Ghost, Iron Mike, Doorgunner, Sizzmo, Duct Tape, Deekin, Nuguyabe, Spook, Shadow, Suzanne S., Little Mac, Dragonrider, and others who contributed to this list.

MOTORCYCLES:

- American & POW/MIA flags for the bike
- T-bag and/or saddle bags
- Bike cover (optional)
- Water bottle (sport bottle or Camelback)
- Bungee cords (lots of them)
- Duct tape
- Tool kit
- Regular and allen wrenches
- Screwdrivers
- Spark plugs and wrench
- Wire ties, zip ties
- Shop rags
- WD 40
- Clamps
- Rope
- Small rock to leave at Angel Fire (rock monument)
- Jammies (or shorts or sweat pants)
- Hankies
- Shower shoes
- Bath towel
- Wash cloth (in zip-lock bag)
- Toilet kit
- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Soap
- Deodorant
- Shampoo
- Comb and/or brush
- Roll of TP in zip-lock bag (be prepared)
- Sun block (don’t leave home without it!)
- Chapstick—personal first aid kit

- Jumper cables
- Funnel
- Can of Fix-a-Flat
- Tire repair kit
- Replacement light bulbs
- Fuses
- Super glue
- 6' of 1/4" plastic hose or turkey baster (to siphon gas)
- Motorcycle oil (however much your bike needs)
- Helmet (DOT legal)
- Helmet (not so legal)
- Bandana or do-rag
- Warm knit cap for under helmet and/or sleeping
- Ski mask
- Heavy jacket
- Light-weight jacket
- Chaps
- Warm gloves
- Summer gloves
- Rain gear (jacket, pants and galoshes)
- Padlock
- Trash bags for covering T-bag in rain, laundry, etc.
- Zip-Lock bags (all sizes) organizes & keeps stuff dry
- Extra pair of boots
- Jeans (2-3 pair)
- T-shirts (at least 5)
- Long-sleeved T-shirt (for Mojave desert)
- Warm sweat-shirt
- Underwear & socks (at least 6 pair)
- Thermal underwear Extra bike key (pack in safe place)
- Medications in marked containers
- Prescription glasses Sun glasses or goggles (2 pair)
- Ear plugs
- Laundry detergent (in heavy zip-lock bag)
- Small sewing kit
- Money
- Credit cards/Traveler's Checks
- Driver's license Insurance information
- Dog tags for emergency identification
- Emergency info: Next of kin, home and work phone numbers, doctors' phone numbers
- List of prescription medications, glasses prescription, bank information
- Cell phone and/or pager, charger
- Road maps and Run schedule
- Business cards (to exchange with new friends)
- Note pad & pencil
- Camera & film
- Items you want to leave at The Wall
- List of names you want to locate on The Wall

CAMPERS:

- Tent with pegs
- Waterproof ground cloth/tarp
- Sleeping bag
- Sleeping mat or cot
- Folding chair or camp stool
- Flashlight with extra batteries

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GET YOUR BIKE READY TO GO

By John "Shooter" McCabe,
RFTW Road Guard
Patriot Guard Rider
John@CrucifiedRider.com

1. If your tires need changing, change them now. If tires are good, check inflation just before we leave; have a tire pressure gage on hand.
2. Change the oil just before leaving.
3. Check all lights and have extra bulbs on hand.
4. Check suspension air lines (for air shocks).
5. Check operation of all switches; make sure things that should work do.
6. If you have spoke wheels, get them checked at the dealer for spoke tension!
7. Change air and fuel filters.
8. Check brake and hydraulic clutch fluid levels.
9. Check clutch and brake cables.

10. Check every bolt, nut, screw you can get to, make sure things are tight.
11. Check your luggage, make sure straps are not rotted or torn. (I have dodged sleeping bags, small luggage bags and other things falling off bikes...not fun for Road Guards at 90+mph)
12. Make sure your bike is ready. If nothing else, take it to a dealer and have them go over it for you. The money you spend there will not compare to the funds it will cost you if things go wrong and you are 3500 miles from home.
13. Make SURE you are ready, get the bike out and practice speed control at 65 mph by easy throttle movements NOT brakes. Practice slow maneuvering; we all know how to ride at highway speeds but it's those slow maneuvers we will be needing that may need to be honed a bit. Remember, we will be maneuvering in close proximity to other bikes (6-8 inches between bikes at times)—be ready for it.
14. If you plan on riding two-up, take a few rides two-up and practice rider and driver communications. If you are a rider, your eyes are just as important as the driver's in a close formation ride. You are NOT a sight-seer—you are part of the overall bike safety team.

This will be my 4th year as a Road Guard. Our job starts the morning you all get to the parking lot at the truck stop. When you come into the lot there at Ontario please go SLOW, and tell the Road Guards which route you will be taking so we can get you to the proper lines. Have your gas tank FULL. Re-check your luggage one last time—make sure it's tight and secured on your bike. There will be a bunch of riders, bikes, media, and normal traffic in that parking lot so be careful and keep your head up.

See you all in Ontario...

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MISC. REMINDERS

- Cash: Take extra \$1 and \$5 bills for gas. When we fill up, total is rounded up; the extra helps gas up the support vehicles.
Throttle rockers will add some comfort to your ride (available at H-D dealers).
- Morning meetings are mandatory.
- Take showers at night so you won't be late for the morning meetings.
- If you get sleepy while riding, give a heads-up to the riders around you and pull off where safe. You can catch up at the next stop. RIDE SAFE!!!

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CARRY YOUR EMERGENCY MEDICAL INFORMATION

How many times do we take off on a motorcycle ride with only our Driver's License in our wallet for identification? Often times we are participating in a group ride, but in order to clear out the cobwebs, we might take that solitary ride a long way away from civilization and our known community. Please, please fill out the emergency information form and carry it with you in an easy-to-find location, such as in your helmet, or zip-tied to your handlebars. It could save your life in the event of an accident.

These forms will be available at registration and also on the RFTW website. You will be given a plastic pocket to protect the document. There will also be RFTW Lanyards for sale at the merchandise trailer that you can purchase for \$2.00. You can hook the plastic pocket to the lanyard and wear it around your neck for easy access. Ride Smart! Place one form in your bike and keep one form on your person.

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H-D SERVICE AVAILABLE SUNDAY AND MONDAY IN ONTARIO

From Jim Frost, Accounting Manager, Pomona Valley H-D
USAF SSgt., Bien Hoa Air Base, RVN, 8/67-10/69

Jim Frost has told us that Pomona Valley HD's Service Department will again remain open the Sunday and Monday before this year's Run. Pomona Valley HD is nine miles west of the TA Truck Stop in Ontario. They are normally closed on Mondays and don't service bikes on Sundays.

Jim said, "Our dealership has agreed to staff the Service Department on Sunday, May 14 and open the Service Department at 7 am Monday morning. The manager will take it a step further and provide shuttle service within a reasonable distance while bikes are being serviced.

"I'm very passionate about the Run and will make sure RFTW bikes will be given top priority. I'll be joining the Central Route again this year, riding three days and a wake-up before having to turn back so I can be at work the following Tuesday. Anyone needing to arrange service or having other questions, please give me a call at (909) 981-9500. See you in May"

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SERVICE AVAILABLE FOR METRIC BIKES IN MONTCLAIR

John Woods, Service Manager at Mountain Motorsports in Montclair, CA, said they will be available to service Metric Bikes on Tuesday starting at 9:00 am.

Mountain Motorsports (5 miles from Ontario)
1025 North Mountain Ave.
Montclair, CA (909) 988-8988

They are closed Sunday and Monday, but will be open Tuesday for service beginning at 9:00 am. Please call ahead for reservations.

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NO CELL PHONES WHILE RIDING!!

By Wayne Nicholls

Everyone who's ever been on the Run knows you MUST PAY ATTENTION. We have all had to jockey around bikes that go down, sleeping bags that fall off, and other unexpected road obstacles or just having the pack slow down in front of you.

I've seen riders talking on cell phones while riding on RFTW, and it's extremely dangerous. You need to focus all of your senses on holding your position and watching for hand signals coming down through the pack from the front, and you can't focus while talking on a cell phone—I don't care HOW well you think you multi-task. I'm hoping everyone will remember this and turn off your phones while riding; there's plenty of time to make or receive calls at stops.

RIDE SAFE!! I might be the one riding next to you.

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PAY ATTENTION!

By Tom Lockett (reprinted from 2005)

Well the saddle sores are hardly healed from last year and here it is almost time to load up and hit the road once more on the most exciting, excruciating, heartbreaking, heartwarming, tear shedding and joy filled ride you will ever take. The sense of family that grows from L.A. to D.C. just can't be explained. This will only be my third year, but I can tell you that The Run has made a lasting impression on my life and from day one I have been richly blessed.

Although we really do become like family and build friendships that are real and lasting to us, we usually want to, no, many of us have to be alone. So why are we riding thousands of miles in a group of wild eyed vets and supporters? We ride to heal and we heal by riding for this very just cause. Too many of our citizens don't have a clue as to how many of our brothers and sisters are still unaccounted for. Who can tell them better than those that served with them?

As part of the family, and I do feel like a part of this family; I would like to share a few things I have learned. PAY ATTENTION, PAY ATTENTION, PAY ATTENTION and then PAY ATTENTION once more. The people that ride in the positions of Coordinators, Platoon Leaders and Road Guards are there because some one believes that they have the abilities required to do the job. Watch them and learn from them. Always follow their directions. It just might save you or someone else from serious injury or worse. None of us like to see folks involved in accidents. But I believe that most can be avoided. All we have to do is PAY ATTENTION. Bad things happen to good people. RFTW has a system in place that tries to ensure that all participants make it to D.C. safely. Remember that the Road Guards have to make decisions based on what they see at the moment. Sometimes it is a split second decision. Just Do it! They are there for you. It is a thankless job that deserves a lot of THANKS! Encourage them instead of arguing with them. My first year, J.R. yelled at me so much that I felt like I was in Boot Camp again. But I learned so much from him and the other Road Guards because I didn't take it personal. They were literally trying to keep us not only alive, but safe from harm. Remember that when they are trying to fit hundreds of bikes into a small area, it only takes one to throw the rest behind him out of sync.

Also, remember that as The Run progresses we all get more fatigued. The Platoon Leaders are there to try to keep a safe distance between the groups/platoons; however, we are all responsible for our own reaction time. Don't get hypnotized by the bike in front of you. Be aware of everything and everyone that might be a danger. This should be old news for anyone that has been through Basic Training and surely for combat vets. Reaction or lack of it is what made it a good day or a very bad day. That still holds true on this Run. Use your instincts. If you don't feel comfortable for any reason, get out of the pack in a safe manner. Don't endanger anyone else by being macho. MACHO KILLS!

Folks, it is just real easy to blame others for our weak areas, remember it is possible to fall asleep while riding. Take responsibility for your own actions. The life you save might be mine. The bottom line is, when you are sliding down the pavement, it is not the guys around you that are to blame. You are the only one in control of your machine. If it wasn't so, most of us wouldn't be riding. Because we know who's out there. RIDE SAFE and I will see you in Ontario.

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FLAG PROTOCOL FOR BIKES AND CARS

By Steve "Hawgwash" Hill

As we get closer and closer to RFTW I thought I'd share a little protocol for those desiring to display the American Flag, POW-MIA Flag, Service Flags, or even your own State Flags. I hope that all riders will display flags on their bikes in addition to those driving support vehicles and other 4-wheelers.

Let's start with the American Flag. It is always displayed to the Flag's own right in the direction of movement. In other words, if displayed on the back of a M/C it will be on the right side as the M/C is moving. On a 4-wheeler it will be on the right side of the vehicle. When displayed with multiple flags, the order of precedence is American Flag, POW-MIA Flag (a position of honor directly adjacent to the American Flag), followed by State Flags and finally Service Flags in the following order: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard. In the event multiple flags are flown, the

American Flag may be in the center position provided it is on a higher staff than the other flags. If the flag is displayed on a flat surface, the blue field is to the viewer's upper left (whether vertical or horizontal).

Remember, we are on a mission and part of that mission is to proudly display the flags that so many of us have fought hard to protect.

Editor's Note: At several stops along the Run, either the flag-folding ceremony or the POW Table ceremony is performed for us. For the benefit of our FNGs or those who aren't familiar with the ceremonies, following are explanations of both ceremonies so that you may better understand and enjoy the presentations. There are many versions of the meanings behind each fold. This one is one of the most popular, and is from the U.S. Army's website.

FLAG-FOLDING CEREMONY (U.S. Army version)



The first fold of our flag is the symbol of life

The second fold is a symbol of our belief in the eternal life

The third fold is made in honor and remembrance of the veteran departing our ranks who gave a portion of life for the defense of our country to attain peace throughout the world

The fourth fold represents our weaker nature; for peace as American citizens trusting in god, it is to him we turn in times of peace as well as in times of war for his divine

guidance

The fifth fold is a tribute to our country, for in the words of Steven Decatur.... "Our country, in dealing with the other countries, may she always be right; but it is still our country right or wrong"

The sixth fold is for where our hearts lie. It is our hearts that we pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under god, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all

The seventh fold is a tribute to our armed forces, for it is through the armed forces that we protect our country and our flag against all her enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries of our republic

The eighth fold is a tribute to the one who entered into the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day

The ninth fold is a tribute to womanhood, for it has been through their faith, love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great have been molded

The tenth fold is a tribute to father, for he, too, has given of his sons and daughters for the defense of our country since she was first born

The eleventh fold, in the eyes of the Hebrew citizen, represents the lower portion of the seal of King David and King Solomon and glorifies, in their eyes, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

The twelfth fold, in the eyes of the Christian citizen, represents an emblem of eternity and glorifies, in their eyes, god the father, the son and the holy spirit.

The thirteenth and final fold signified the original 13 colonies upon which this great nation was founded

We fold from the stripes to the stars, for, whereas the stripes represent the thirteen original colonies that founded our republic, they are now embodied in the fifty sovereign states represented by the stars, which cover the stripes

When the flag is completely folded, the stars are uppermost, reminding us of our national motto, "In God we trust". After the flag is completely folded and tucked in, it takes on the appearance of a cocked hat, ever reminding us of the soldiers who served under General George Washington and the sailors and marines who served under Captain John Paul Jones who were followed by their comrades and shipmates in the armed forces of the United States. Preserving for us the rights, privileges and the freedoms we enjoy today.

Step 1: To properly fold the Flag, begin by holding it waist-high with another person so that its surface is parallel to the ground.

Step 2: Fold the lower half of the stripe section lengthwise over the field of stars, holding the bottom and top edges securely.

Step 3: Fold the Flag again lengthwise with the blue field on the outside

Step 4: Make a triangular fold by bringing the striped corner of the folded edge to meet the open (top) edge of the Flag.

Step 5: Turn the outer (end) point inward, parallel to the open edge, to form a second triangle.

Step 6: The triangular folding is continued until the entire length of the Flag is folded in this manner.

Step 7: When the Flag is completely folded, only a triangular blue field of stars should be visible.

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THE POW TABLE CEREMONY

By Larry H. Tassone, USAF (Ret)

Courtesy of the U.S. Air Force Academy

This table set for one is small—symbolizing the frailty of one prisoner alone against his oppressors. The table is our way of symbolizing the fact that members of our profession of arms are missing from our midst. They are commonly called POW/MIA; we call them "Brothers." They are unable to be with us this evening, and so we remember them because of their incarceration.

The table is round—to show our everlasting concern for our missing men.

The tablecloth is white—symbolizing the purity of their motives when answering the call to duty.

The single red rose, displayed in a vase, reminds us of the life of each of the missing, and their loved ones and friends of these Americans who keep the faith, awaiting answers.

The vase is tied with a red ribbon, symbol of our continued determination to account for our missing.

A slice of lemon on the bread plate is to remind us of the bitter fate of those captured and missing in a foreign land.

A pinch of salt symbolizes the tears endured by those missing and their families who seek answers.

The Bible represents the strength gained through faith to sustain those lost from our country, founded as one nation under God.



The POW Table ceremony in Hugo, CO

The glass is inverted—to symbolize their inability to share this evening's [morning's/day's] toast.

The chairs are empty—they are missing.

Let us now raise our water glasses in a toast to honor America's POW/MIAs and to the success of our efforts to account for them

REMEMBER—all of you who served with them and called them comrades, who depended upon their might and aid, and relied upon them, for surely, they have not forsaken you.

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THE GOURD DANCE

Editor's note: RFTW Central Route participates in the Gathering of Veterans in Gallup, New Mexico each year. During the gathering, our veterans are invited to the center of the arena to join Native Americans in the Gourd Dance, a dance honoring warriors.

It is an honor to be invited to participate in the Gourd Dance, and you will enjoy the experience more if you know the history behind the dance. There are two origins of the Gourd Dance, one by the Kiowa and one by the Cheyenne. The Gourd Dance performed at Red Rock Park is the Cheyenne Gourd Dance. This story is submitted by Mr. Larry Anderson, Founder of the Black Creek Gourd Society. Larry Anderson, Sr. and Virgil Gatewood are the Gourd Dance Leaders at the Red Rock Park ceremonies, as well as many other Gourd Dance Sessions around Navajo Lands. For more information on the Gourd Dance, please contact Larry Anderson, Sr. @ (928) 729-2035, or Virgil Gatewood @ (505) 979-1642 or T.J. Anderson or Alta Mitchell @ (505) 0726-0427

The Gourd Dance and Songs have their origin from the Cheyenne Sun Dance. The Sun Dance is a ceremonial dance that is undertaken when a vow is made by a potential Sun Dancer. The vow is usually of a personal nature and once this vow is made, it has to be completed within the lifetime of that person.

The Sun Dance is held during the Spring, when there is a renewal of all forms of life. It is a Thanksgiving to Maheo for the life that he has given. It is a Spiritual Renewal of Life, a rebirth to all forms of Mother Nature.

The dance and songs originated with the Dog Soldier Society. There are four societies; Dog Soldier, Kit Fox, Elks and Bow String. Among the Cheyenne, there are forty-four chiefs and they all have the same authority. There is no one chief of the Cheyenne. These forty-four are the governing body of the tribe, along with the four societies.

There are other tribes that have their own gourd dances, but what we are mentioning here is the gourd dance of the Cheyenne. The following story has been passed on from one generation to the next. This is where the dance and its songs came from.

The story says that in the beginning when there were many different tribes that roamed the Great Plains area and fighting was frequent among them. These tribes roamed the plains area from the Canadian to the Mexican borders. A band of Cheyenne apparently had a skirmish with another tribe. Following the fight, a young warrior was mortally wounded and wasn't expected to live. In those days the tribe had to keep moving. The young warrior knew that he was going to die. He told his mother and father and the others of the tribe to leave him and for them to go on. He knew his condition wouldn't allow him to travel. After convincing his parents and the others, they finally left him behind. Before they left him, they made him as comfortable as possible. He was placed beside an embankment along with food and water. It wasn't too long before he became unconscious. How long had he been in this condition, there was no telling.

Soon after he regained consciousness, he opened his eyes to find himself in a large cavern that resembled a large teepee. The people gave him food and water and nursed him back to health. And throughout his recovery, he would be given some raw meat along with cooked meat. During this time, the people would sing and dance. He indicated to them that he really enjoyed the songs and dance. In turn, the people instructed him on how the songs were to be sung and how the dance was to be performed. There was a large buffalo hide that served as a drum. The gourd rattles were made from rawhide. There were only four songs that were/are sung to the dance. The participants were painted black and red. In the Cheyenne way, the color black signifies death and red signifies blood, the life-giving force. These colors are also used in the paints of the Sun Dance. The black paint comes from charcoal and the red comes from "Ma-eh-dome." This is the red Indian paint.

As he gradually regained his strength and was fit to travel, he was told by the Elders of the group that he would be going back to his people. He told the people that he didn't know the whereabouts of his own people. He was told they knew where his people were and that he would be accompanied by some young warriors of the group.

The morning came when he was to leave. Before he and the others left the group, he was given a meal of raw meat. He was told this would give him strength for the long journey back to his people. He was told to take the songs and dance back to his people, the Cheyenne. It was predicted by the group that these songs and dance would bring people together from all tribes. This has become a reality since other tribes take part in the Gourd Dance. After leaving the camp, they journeyed for several days and finally located his people. Before they left him, they gave him directions as to where his people were. The camp apparently was located over a rise. He was instructed not to look back until he reached the top of the rise. He followed their instructions and when he reached the rise, he turned around and what he saw were wolves. The people had turned into wolves. The songs that are the gourd dance songs are wolf songs. These are the wolf songs of the Cheyenne.

Upon his return back to his people, they were amazed to see him. He was later given the name; One-Who-Has-Returned-From-The-Dead. He told his people how he was taken care of by the Wolf people and how they had nursed him back to health. He also told them of the songs and dance that were given to him and the Cheyenne.

The story goes that the songs and dance were later stolen from the Cheyenne. One of the Plains tribes had taken a warrior captive and they had him perform the dance and to sing the songs. Following this, they later killed him. The young warrior who was first taught these songs and dance was of the Dog Soldier Society. That is why it is deemed as a veterans dance, although one does not have to be a veteran to take part in the gourd dance. As mentioned, it was predicted that these songs and dance would bring people together and it is true. There are many other tribes that take part in the gourd dance. It was also mentioned by the Elders of the tribe that respect be given to this dance. Women may also take part in the dance. They are to dance behind the men, since this is a warrior's dance.

It was predicted that the gourd dance would serve as a purpose for bringing people together. People would use this dance to satisfy whatever needs they might have, whether it be emotional or physical. People would be looking within themselves to satisfy whatever might be troubling them. It could be deemed as a ceremonial dance, but is strictly a social dance.

Following World War II, some members of the tribe requested from the Medicine people that they be given the right to dance the gourd dance. Permission was given with the stipulation that the ceremonial part of this dance not be included. The older people actually do not take part in the dances of the pow-wows - the tempo of the songs are too fast. The gourd dance is stationary and a lot less movement.

Initiations are usually part of the gourd dance. In the societies of the Cheyenne, they are initiated into that particular society. This, in a sense, is the proper way. A person from another tribe would not take part in another tribe's ceremonial dance. Permission would have to be given from that particular tribe. In the Cheyenne Way of Life, we are a humble people. From what has been told of the gourd dance and wolf songs, we want to share this with all tribes and any others wanting to take part in gourd dancing.

Alights On A Cloud
Southern Cheyenne Chief
Arthur Cometsevah

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THE SENTINELS

Editor's note: You have probably seen on the Internet the info about the Guards at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Most of the information is correct, but a few facts are not. The following info is from The Society of the Honor Guard, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier: <http://www.tombguard.org>.

The unknown soldiers buried in the Plaza represent the missing and unknown service members for four different wars. Being buried at Arlington gives these families a place to grieve and pray. They stand watch over their graves in humble reverence, ensuring they rest in peace. These Americans have not only given their lives, but their identities for our freedom and way of life. First and foremost, you must be an enlisted member of the United States Army, between the ranks of Private (E-1) through Sergeant First Class (E-7). The Tomb Guards are selected from only one unit in the Army, the 3d U.S. Infantry (The Old Guard), which is stationed at Fort Myer, Virginia.

How Many Steps Does the Guard Take During His Walk Across the Tomb of the Unknowns, and Why?

Sentinels take 21 steps to cross the Tomb. It alludes to the twenty-one gun salute, which is the highest honor given any military or foreign dignitary. The sentinel marches 21 steps across the black mat, past the final resting places of the Unknown Soldiers of World War I, World War II, Korea, and the crypt of the Unknown Soldier of the Vietnam War.



How Long Does He Hesitate After His About-Face to Begin His Return Walk, and Why?

He does not execute an about face. He stops on the 21st step, then turns and faces the Tomb for 21 seconds. Then he turns to face back down the mat, changes his weapon to the outside shoulder, counts 21 seconds, then steps off for another 21-step walk down the mat. He faces the Tomb at each end of the 21-second walk for 21 seconds. The sentinel then repeats the process over and over until he is relieved at the Guard Change.

Why are his gloves wet?

His gloves are moistened to improve his grip on the rifle.

Does He Carry His Rifle on the Same Shoulder All the Time, and If Not, Why Not?

A crisp "shoulder-arms" movement places the rifle on the shoulder nearest the visitors to signify that the sentinel stands between the tomb and any threat.



How Often Are the Guards Changed?

The Guard is changed every thirty minutes during the summer (April 1 to Sep 30) and every hour during the winter (Oct 1 to Mar 31). During the hours the cemetery is closed, the guard is changed every 2 hours. The Tomb is guarded, and has been guarded, every minute of every day since 1937. Depending on how many Relief Team members are available, the Sentinel will be on guard duty for a 30-minute tour and have two hours off in between. However, in extreme cases, Sentinels have been known to go back-to-back for the entire 24-hour shift.

What Are the Physical Traits of the Guard Limited To?

There are three Reliefs assigned to the Tomb Guard Platoon, each consisting of 9 enlisted soldiers (they use the same break-down as a Light Infantry Squad). The heights are equal on each Relief, with the tallest assigned to the 1st Relief. A Tomb Guard can tell what Relief is working . . . just based on their height. 1st Relief are 6'2" to 6'4"; 2nd Relief are 6' to 6'2"; 3rd Relief are 5'11" to 6'. It is a false rumor that guards must commit two years of life to guard the Tomb, live in a barracks under the Tomb, and cannot drink any alcohol on or off duty for the rest of their lives. The average tour at the Tomb is about a year. There is NO set time for service there. The Sentinels live either in a barracks on Ft. Myer (the Army post located adjacent to the cemetery) or off base if they like. They do have living quarters under the steps of the amphitheater where they stay during their 24-hour shifts, but when they are off, they are off. And if they are of legal age, they may drink anything they like, except while on duty. It is also a false rumor that guards cannot swear in public for the rest of their lives.

Are the Shoes Specially Made With Very Thick Soles to Keep the Heat and Cold From Their Feet?

It is not accurate that the Guards' shoes are "specially made with very thick soles to keep the heat and cold from their feet." The shoes are standard issue military dress shoes. They are built up so the sole and heel are equal in height. This allows the Sentinel to stand so that his back is straight and perpendicular to the ground. A side effect of this is that the

Sentinel can "roll" on the outside of the build up as he walks down the mat. This allows him to move in a fluid fashion. If he does this correctly, his hat and bayonet will appear to not "bob" up and down with each step. It gives him a more formal and smooth look to his walk, rather than a "marching" appearance.

More Facts:



The Tomb of the Unknowns is guarded 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In fact, there has been a Sentinel on duty in front of the Tomb every minute of every day since 1937. And the Sentinel does not change the way he guards the Tomb, even at night when there is no one around. The Sentinels do this because they feel that the Unknown Soldiers who are buried in the Tomb deserve the very best they have to give. In the early 1920s, there were no guards at the Tomb. Soon after, 1925, they posted a civilian guard; in 1926, a military guard was posted during cemetery hours; and on July 1, 1937, this was expanded to the 24-hour watch.

It takes the average Sentinel 8 hours to prep his/her uniform for the next work day. Additionally, they have Physical Training, Tomb Guard training, and haircuts to complete before the next work day.

"The Box" (the green shack) is used primarily during wreath-laying ceremonies for the Sentinel to retreat to while flowers and Taps are being presented. There also is a phone with a direct line downstairs to the Tomb Guard Quarters—this is used in times of emergencies or just to notify the next shift of something.

The accomplishment of the mission and welfare of the Soldier is never put at risk. The Tomb Guards have contingencies that are ready to be executed IF the weather conditions EVER place the Soldiers at risk of injury or death—such as lightning, high winds, etc. This ensures that Sentinels can maintain the Tomb Guard responsibilities while ensuring soldier safety. It is the responsibility of the Chain of Command from the Sergeant of the Guard to the Regimental Commander to ensure mission accomplishment and soldier welfare at all times. It was erroneously reported that during Hurricane Isabel, the Sentinels were ordered to abandon their posts for shelter and that they refused. No such order was ever given. All proper precautions were taken to ensure the safety of the Sentinels while accomplishing their mission. Risk assessments are constantly conducted by the Chain of Command during changing conditions to ensure that soldier welfare is maintained during mission accomplishment. The guards at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (we call ourselves "Sentinels") are completely dedicated to their duty of guarding the Tomb. Because of that dedication, the weather does not bother them. In fact, they consider it an honor to stand their watch (we call it "walking the mat"), regardless of the weather. It gets cold, it gets hot - but the Sentinels never budge. And they never allow any feeling of cold or heat to be seen by anyone.

The Tomb Guard Identification Badge ("wreath pin") is awarded after the Sentinel passes a series of tests. The Badge is permanently awarded after a Sentinel has served 9 months as a Sentinel at the Tomb. Over 500 have been awarded since its creation in the late 1950's. And while the Badge can be revoked, the offense must be such that it discredits the Tomb. Revocation is at the Regimental Commander's discretion. But you can drink a beer and even swear and still keep the Badge. The Badge is a full size award, worn on the right pocket of the uniform jacket, not a lapel pin.

The remains of the Vietnam Unknown Soldier were exhumed May 14, 1998. Based on mitochondrial DNA testing, DOD scientists identified the remains as those of Air Force 1st Lt. Michael Joseph Blassie, who was shot down near An Loc, Vietnam, in 1972. It has been decided that the crypt that contained the remains of the Vietnam Unknown will remain vacant.

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► EVENTS

The Sixth Annual BBQ and fund-raiser for Run For The Wall will be April 22, 2006. The Highland American Legion Post 421 puts this on every year to support RFTW. Enjoy BBQ pork sandwiches, potato salad, beans, and chips, and

meet some old and new RFTW friends. There will be vendors, music, and raffles. Gates open at noon for food; ceremony and special guest speaker at 2 p.m. Located at 28309 Highland Ave., Highland, CA For map or more info, call Jim at (909) 862-0251 or email for2won@aol.com.

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► OUR STORIES

MY FIRST RUN FOR THE WALL

By Ron “Trash” Haley

Editor’s note: Trash wrote this in 2000, just after he completed his first Run For The Wall, but his words are never outdated.

Originally, it was my intent to give a running account of this, my first RFTW, as I experienced it in a brilliant, powerful, epic series of daily stories that would reach out to help non-riding Veterans or those living alone in seclusion, heal their “unseen wounds of war.” Torn flesh is not the only wound suffered in war. The incredible violence of combat can rip the soul out of you. In Viet Nam, this often happened to 18-year-old kids fresh out of high school. The wounds to such young minds run deep. These wounds were left untreated. These wounds have never healed. These wounds cause pain, even now.

Then came the Run For The Wall 2000. There is a power about this run that makes things happen. It is a healing power, a power that has helped me burn away some of the dark clouds of mixed up emotions and memories that I have fought to control since 1966, often unsuccessfully. For too long, mind-numbing flashbacks and violent instincts born of combat have influenced the course of my life. On this run, the flashbacks have become fewer, and the violence has softened. As for my daily “epic” stories ... one day perhaps, but not today. I underestimated the impact that RFTW would have on me, and/or overestimated my own ability to understand and describe the healing forces that have hit me from every direction, on every level, during every moment of this life-giving ride.

Today is June 5, and for me RFTW 2000 is not yet over. I’m at an old scooter tramps place off exit 13 of the Pennsylvania turnpike; it’s roughly 3,000 miles to L.A., I’m almost broke, and it’s raining. But I cannot remember when I have been more at peace with the world, and with myself. I am in no hurry. Much has happened on this run, and I need some time to sort it out before trying to write about it. But there is something I wanted you to know about that cannot wait. If you suffer the “unseen wounds of war” of which I speak, please, don’t wait for my story. You need to start planning now to go on Run For The Wall 2001 next May. Because, though I will try to give depth and insight into what I experienced on this run when I do write about it, I know that nothing I can ever write will help heal those wounds as can actually going on the Run For The Wall!

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HOW RFTW HAS CHANGED MY LIFE AND COMPLETED THE CIRCLE OF LIFE FOR ME

By Roland "Pegleg" Marchand

Joining the Marine Corps at 17 yrs. old and going over the big lake to Vietnam in May 1967 until the day I was hit, January 1968—that alone was a life that seemed to last a lifetime.

Coming home from Vietnam with an artificial leg and all the other medical and mental problems at the end of 1968 was a culture shock for sure. Facing family and friends was a experience I sometimes find hard to understand even today. I had to adjust to being handicapped, feeling I knew more things about the world around me than did my friends and family members. When I found out they did not understand me and looked at me in a different light (yes, you do know what they are thinking), I decided then I would never talk about that War again.

Hey, the party scene was my world and anyone in that world made me feel wanted. So for the next 15 years I did everything under the sun (drugs and alcohol) with the knowledge that I was not long for this life and what didn't catch me in Nam would surely catch up to me in the world. Later I started to realize that I was going nowhere fast and losing my family at the same time. After much thought and turning to a higher power, God showed me that Roland was important and what I experienced was a part of a plan that has brought me to who I am today.

After doing a lot of volunteer work with handicapped adults and children I still felt there was something I needed to do to heal the deep wounds I buried so many years ago. In 2003 I found out about a ride Vietnam vets do every year across the United States on their motorcycles. I found out it was started by Vietnam vets; I thought yes, here is something I relate to, riding motorcycles and doing it with other Vietnam vets who knew what I was feeling.

As time grew closer I knew there was something different about these guys who had gone to The Wall in D.C. I got a call one day from a guy (Jim "Jumper" Braga) who said he was in the Army Paratroopers in Vietnam and wanted to come to my house to show me a VHS of Run For The Wall. I said OK, and thought, alright a ride across the country on a motorcycle with other vets who also ride. I said, I'm in. Little did I know that day my whole life was going to turn in such a way I would have bet the farm 38 Years ago you would have not gotten me to do this more less help people who were worst off then I ever was.

Well not only was it a ride for the issue of POW/MIAs but also was a ride for every vet who needed to deal with the demons of the past, the 60's, the life styles of America and last but not least the Vietnam War. You can say it was a Healing Well Overdue.

When I left May 18, 2003 from Ontario, CA for this journey across America I started to feel a purpose in this Mission. As we crossed this Great Country the feelings of rejection, misunderstandings, and all the rumors of lies from the past became more clear. I realized what we did as boys years ago in Vietnam made us the men we are today. The crying, the hugging, the Welcome Home signs, and the people across this Great Country telling us we were good, we were Americans and thanked us for our service and for the Freedom they have today. I realized then I was HOME and nobody or anything could ever take that away from me again.

In 2005 again the spirit and pride of being a Marine told me "Roland it's time again." I knew this was the total sum of everything that started that cold Monday morning in 1966 at the Induction Center in Los Angeles, CA. Going across the United States for the second straight year opened my eyes to the needs of my Brothers and Sisters who have served and who are serving. They need to be told that they too are good, outstanding Americans, and we appreciate what they have sacrificed. And they need to be welcomed home also.

Well here it is 2006 and I'm getting ready to do Run For The Wall for the third straight year, but now with a pride of letting everyone know we still have heroes in foreign lands that are still waiting for us to bring them home. The Mission of RFTW is to inform the government we will not let it die till all POW/MIAs are Home.

Today I'm involved with the needs of all who have served and are serving today. By serving them, maybe I can make a difference in their lives. Its not a pride "look at me" thing—it's a dream we all had when we got back from our time in Nam, that never happened. It's time we stand up to what we hold so dear to our hearts, the respect and honor we, who served, should had gotten years ago knowing we were willing to pay the ultimate price for the freedom that all Americans have today. Because of that Pride and Freedom I have, I began serving on the Riverside Memorial Honor Guard "Semper-Fi," Riverside National Cemetery, RFTW, and Patriot Guard, visiting wounded Marines coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan, and driving the DAV van at Loma Linda V.A. Medical Center in Loma Linda, CA to transport veterans who have no way to get to the V.A. for their doctors appointments.

I wanted to share this life changing experience with all my Brothers and Sisters and anyone else who reads this, to show that we can make a difference and that we should never let another generation of fine men and women who serve be forgotten again.

Welcome Home my Brothers and Sisters and may God touch you in a way that you too can see you are special and can make a difference in all things you have learned from being fine soldiers yourselves.

Your Brother Always,
Pegleg

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MEMORIES OF RFTW 2005

By Wayne Nicholls

Having gone “all the way” with the RFTW Central Route in 2004, I thought being a “participant” traveling to Raton, New Mexico, would be easier emotionally. How wrong could I be? From my first hug with Sandra McKinney to saluting from an overpass on the New Mexico/Colorado border, our trip was filled with emotions.

On Tuesday, I arrived in the early afternoon at the Fairfield Inn in Ontario, CA. The parking lot was already filled with Run For The Wall participants. I was pleased to see Mark Rittermeyer, JR Franklin, Jim “Jumper” Braga, the “Butcherman,” “Top,” and others. I found Jackie McKinney and he promptly introduced me to Sandra for a long-promised hug. It was like a family reunion. Hard to believe it had been a year already.

While walking around the parking lot I found old friends and made some new ones. There was “Sgt. Rock” grinning ear-to-ear with his new trike. It would be Sgt. Rock’s ninth year with Run For The Wall and his first time riding his own motorcycle. Rock’s one of the great guys on the Run who is always there to offer his shoulder at the same time collecting donations for the kids at Rainelle. He was WIA in Vietnam while serving with the 25th Infantry Division.

“HarleyRodg” was busy sewing patches. He had to update this year with his old “Singer” sewing machine giving out. Seems he even got an upgrade in comfort with a relative lending him and “Becca” a nice motor home to use.

I met a couple of FNGs from Hollister, CA and introduced them to JR. One served in Vietnam with the Air Force. Manny (an American Indian) served in Vietnam with the 101st Airborne. I knew Manny would be in for something special in New Mexico. “Jumper” would see to it that these guys would be okay on their journey all the way to the Wall.

I was riding again this year with my childhood friend and Vietnam veteran Steven Neal (who has since passed away), my brother-in-law Terry Byrnes, and Steven’s brother-in-law “FNG Fred.” We gathered at 0630 on Wednesday before heading over to the T/A Truck Stop.

There were plenty of hugs and excitement at the staging area. Kate Haplin and “Mac” from VVA Chapter 756 were there to see us all off. I was also able to find Roland “Pegleg” Marchand riding his new Honda trike with the Southern Route. I was happy to see the arrival of “Fingers” and Lil Lisa,” Danny Lopresto, “Nacho” and others who rode to Ontario that morning, starting at “o-dark-thirty” from Torrance, CA. “Nacho” would be a “Pacesetter,” while “Fingers” would be his “Wingman.”

After a brief “Riders Meeting” with an awesome prayer by the Southern Route Chaplin, we scrambled to our bikes and readied to begin the 2005 Run For The Wall—riding in freedom for those who can’t. The Southern Route was first to depart, and then it was our turn.

The first day, with a 400-mile ride to Williams, AZ, went well. Most new riders rode like they were “old hands” at riding in formation. A few riders were a bit leery and allowed a little more space between themselves and the next bike. One of the riders had a rear tire blowout but managed to pull over without any additional problems. We made the day’s destination without any major incident and received a heartfelt welcome through town to the American Legion for dinner. It was a great day with the only disappointment being the Jacuzzi not working at the motel we were staying at

(but that's a minor thing).

The second day we awoke to beautiful clear skies. At our "Rider's Meeting" we met the guy with the "blow-out." Steven gave some money to help him out. The money was provided by VVA Chapter 756 for Vietnam vets that needed a little help during the Run. The guy was most appreciative and we all got a little choked up. At the meeting, JR informed us of a car accident up the road and to keep moving. It was much more serious than most anticipated with a car under the back of a tractor/trailer. It reminded us to be careful during our journey to Gallup, New Mexico.

We had "outgrown" Window Rock," but that didn't stop the people from lining both sides of the street in Gallup as the police escorted us to "Church Rock." People waving, holding flags and some with pictures of loved ones that had served in the Armed Forces. These were the people of Navajo Nation. They treat their warriors with love and admiration. They honor all veterans as great warriors. The ride through Gallup is an emotional ride for us.

Church Rock proved to be a great facility for the Run For The Wall. Plenty of parking and restrooms were available. The arena is nestled with a beautiful backdrop of the rock formations. This is a special place and the Navajo Nation provided us with a gathering of Navajo, Hopi, Acoma, Laguna, and Zuni tribes to honor the warriors. The highlight for me and countless others was listening to Gold Star Mother Mrs. Eddy. Her son, Sgt. Eddy, went Missing in Action in Vietnam over 36 years ago. Although many of us could not understand the language, we all could understand her emotions in her voice as it bounced off the rock walls. She wants her son home. We want her son home. And we wept for her.

The next morning we re-grouped at Red Rock Park and were treated to a breakfast burrito, compliments of the Sundance Iron Riders. JR passed out certificates of appreciation to the Sundance Riders and others who did a great job of organizing the events in New Mexico. As we were ready to pull out, a hot-air balloon lifted from the ground displaying a POW/MIA flag. It was a beautiful start of our journey on day 3.

Our final destination for the day would be Raton, New Mexico. But I found myself thinking of our arrival at Angel Fire. Those who have been there before know it's a "spiritual" place for most Vietnam veterans. Last year I noticed the little movie theater in the museum. It was "packed" and I didn't get to go in. This year, I went directly there. I didn't know what to expect, but could only last a few minutes viewing some of the old footage of Vietnam. I love Angel Fire, but watching the films is not for me. When I left the museum, I walked by the "rock monument" and left my small rock I brought from Long Beach, CA. Then it was up to the parking lot to get ready for the final leg of the day to Raton. I "lucked out" this time and got in the First Platoon directly behind our leaders in the "Missing Man Formation." I felt privileged to ride close to the "Missing Man" and it was a comfortable ride to Raton.

The folks in Raton outdid themselves. We paraded through the town and arrived at the Elks Club to a wonderful welcoming and an excellent dinner. People were thanking us for coming to their town and provided us with handshakes and hugs. The Independent Riders Group manned the gas pumps and provided us with free gas. A major computer problem at our motel caused a delay in checking into our rooms. After we were settled in, it was off to the Dairy Queen for a little ice cream before turning in.

We awoke to another beautiful morning and headed over to the staging area next to the Elks Club. This was our chance to say "so long" to our friends with Run For The Wall. Limited vacation time kept us from continuing on. I kept reminding myself to hold back the tears as I said goodbye and wished the riders well. We rode ahead of the group to the first overpass near the Colorado/New Mexico border. There we hung our POW/MIA flag and our Vietnam Veterans flag and waited for our family of Run For The Wall. As they came around the curve, we came to attention and rendered our hand salute. It was an impressive view watching RFTW in side-by-side formation. I prayed for their safe journey to the Wall.

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Editor's note: Provided below is a message from CW4(R) James V. Torney, who escorted The remains of CW2 Kyle E. Jackson home from Iraq. CW2 Jackson and CW3 Mitchell Carver, Jr., were killed in action near Al Sukar, Iraq, on Jan. 13, when their OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopter came under attack by enemy forces using small arms fire. They were assigned to the 1st Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, N.Y.

I was escorting our brother Kyle home the other day. A duty I don't ever want to do again but will not refuse.

Besides all of the attention you get walking around in your A's, I was thanked for my service from civilians, prior service, and active duty personnel in the various airports, some with a passing thank you, some stopped me to shake my hand. This I want to extend and share with all of you.

Delta Airlines was very accommodating. They put me in first class and moved me to the very first seat in each plane. A woman gave me her aisle seat so that I could leave without having to climb over her when the flight was over. After conversing with this woman for a while, I found out her husband was an F4E pilot during the Vietnam era. I was invited to dinner with them when I was finished with my duty. The restaurant manager paid for my rather pricey meal much to the dismay of my new friends who planned to pay for it themselves. I was then invited to stay at their home as long as I was going to be in Florida.

Back to Delta Airlines and the real reason of this post. Prior to backing out of the terminal in Philadelphia the pilot came over the intercom. With a choked up voice he thanked the military for their service and explained that we were carrying the remains of a soldier who gave his life for his country and then asked for a moment of silence. We sat in silence for a few minutes and then backed out for Atlanta. Upon reaching Atlanta, I was met on the tarmac by a man who walked me around the front of the plane where there were more men standing in a row with every branch flag and the US flag. These men had assembled their own honor guard complete with a retired Army chaplain. There was someone from each branch holding a flag. They pulled the crate out of the plane and stopped it on the belt giving the chaplain time to say a prayer. They started the belt and came to attention rendering honors as it passed. They thanked me and sent me with a card they made on the computer and signed with their deepest regrets to the family and shuttled us to the next terminal. They had their reflective vests embroidered with Honor Guard and a US flag across the back. They also told me that they have a dark blue trolley that they use for this but it was missing (we found out it was sent to pick up Mitch at another terminal). They had explained that this was the least they could do to give back to those who had given their lives for them. This was the third toughest thing on my trip (seeing how much some really do care). The second: inspecting Kyle's uniform for the last time. And the hardest thing: seeing his family.

I wanted to share this experience with all of you because none of this was done for me. It was done for all of us. It was something nice out of something so terrible.

Thank You Kyle.

Thank You Mitch.

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AN EXTRAORDINARY COINCIDENCE

Editor's note: the following letter is shared with us by Wayne Nicholls. It is written by Patti Enyedy, sister of George Farawell (KIA 3/18/69, 199th Light Infantry Brigade, Vietnam) and author of "A Redcatcher's Letters From Nam"

This is a note I just received from my second cousin. It made my day, and I wanted to share it with all of you. Best regards to all, Patti

March 18, 2006

Dear Patty,

Hello! I hope all is well with you and your family. We are fine here. I just thought I'd send you a little note about something extraordinary that happened this weekend.

Last year when we went to hear you talk at the Vietnam Memorial, we learned that the Veterans offer two 2,500 dollar scholarships to high school seniors to put toward their college education. Basically, all they are asked to do is visit the Memorial and write an essay about their visit. This year our son Robbie is a senior so I wanted to take him to the Memorial and have him apply for the scholarship.

We had planned to go last weekend but were not able to make it. I gave Robbie your book to read in the meantime, so that he would hopefully have a sense of reality about what can really happen to real people during a time of war. He did read the book and we finally set off to see the memorial early Saturday morning. It was a bright, cold morning. The sky was very blue and pretty, yet the memorial itself at first seemed so desolate. There was a brisk, cold breeze, yet it was very quiet. Bleak, since there is very little color around this early in the spring.

Upon entering the Memorial, we walked over to the statue, which I find so moving. Robbie noticed first the green carnation someone had placed on the chest of the wounded soldier. A bright spot of life on the darkness of the statue, obviously for St. Patrick's Day. Then Robbie saw the little silver angel someone had placed over the heart of the soldier. We stood a long time just looking at the statue; walking slowly around it as I am sure so many have done, trying to take it in. Eventually, however, we moved away from the statue and began to walk along the wall. I knew basically where George's name is, yet I didn't remember how things were organized along the wall. I kept saying to Robbie, "You know, I just can't figure this out." Eventually, we did get to George's name. We read the name, touched it. Robbie took a picture. I read the dates: January 27, 1949—March 18, 1969. March 18. "Robbie," I said, "Today is March 18, isn't it? Today is March 18."

The realization that we had, just by "chance" visited the Memorial on such an important day was a shock. Such an honor for us to be the ones to think of George on that day at that time. And even though, of course, we could never have known him, it spoke to the fact that we are all family, all united in some special, indefinable way. What an incredible privilege for us to be given the opportunity to think of him and honor him that day.

We thought about that, let it sink in. Then I looked at the panel, and the full realization of what the panel meant hit me. All of the names on that panel represented young soldiers who had died on March 18 throughout the different years of the war. I reached up and touched the names. "We'll remember all of you today. You are much appreciated."

Love, Anita Ciano

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► NEWS

NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR DAY

WASHINGTON—March 25 was National Medal of Honor Day. In a salute to the nation's 114 living Medal of Honor recipients, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary R. James Nicholson Saturday offered his praise to those veterans who have received the award.

"As we observe National Medal of Honor Day, it's important that we, as a nation, reflect on the supreme courage demonstrated by those rare individuals in whom duty and honor are so deeply engrained," said Nicholson.

Nearly 3,500 Americans have received the nation's highest military honor, first awarded by President Abraham Lincoln to Union troops during the Civil War. The Navy and Army provided medals for valor in 1861 and 1862, but it was not

until the following year that Congress authorized the Medal of Honor as a permanent military decoration.

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VA NAMES NEW NATIONAL CEMETERY IN FLORIDA

WASHINGTON, March 14—Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs William F. Tuerk today unveiled a model for the new VA cemetery near West Palm Beach and announced the facility would be called the “South Florida National Cemetery.”

The 313-acre cemetery, in Lake Worth on U.S. 441, is expected to open for burial in the winter of 2006-07. More than 350,000 veterans live within the area it will serve.

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DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS (DAV) STEPS UP SUPPORT FOR THE WALL THAT HEALS

Washington, D.C., March 23, 2006—The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) has doubled its support for *The Wall That Heals*, bringing its total donation for 2006 to \$100,000, announced Jan C. Scruggs, founder and president of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, which operates the mobile exhibit.

The Wall That Heals is a half-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. This traveling exhibit enables many thousands of Americans to have the educational, emotional and healing experience of The Wall in their own communities.

A national sponsor of The Wall That Heals since 2001, the DAV Charitable Service Trust has, in years past, contributed \$50,000 a year to help defray the many expenses involved in operating this traveling exhibit. However, normal wear and tear has made it necessary to replace the replica. So, for 2006, DAV has doubled its contribution, donating an extra \$50,000 to help pay for construction of the new traveling wall.

“We feel it is vital for the citizens of this country to remember the sacrifice and service given by the members of the armed forces during the Vietnam War,” said Paul W. Jackson, DAV National Commander. “The brave men and women the DAV represents have served our country and protected our freedoms with honor and pride. It is in their names that we give this donation toward a visible symbol of pride in our nation’s servicemen and women.”

The Wall That Heals is scheduled to visit 20 locations throughout the United States in 2006. At each stop, the Memorial Fund will ensure that the DAV logo is displayed prominently and proudly.

“The Disabled American Veterans organization is not just a national sponsor of *The Wall That Heals*, it is also a long-standing friend to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund,” said Scruggs. “We are grateful to DAV for all the support it has provided and continues to provide to help the Memorial Fund educate the American people about the Vietnam War and continue the healing process that needs to take place.”

The Wall That Heals also features a Traveling Museum and Information Center, providing a comprehensive educational component to enrich and complete visitors’ experiences. The Museum chronicles the Vietnam War era and the unique healing power of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, while the Information Center serves as a venue for people to learn about friends and loved ones lost in the war.

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A MOVEMENT FOR VETERANS TO SALUTE

Editor's note: The following letter from Retired Army MajGen Vern Lewis is reprinted from VVA Chapter 785's Monsoon Dispatch.

I gathered some 16 of my old military friends who agreed to sponsor a movement for Veterans to salute rather than place their hands over their heart when honoring the flag, fallen comrades, and/or the country. I have some from each of the four principal services. Three of them were former Vice Chiefs or Assistant Commandants of their services, and several were former CINCs.

We refer to saluting when we do the pledge to the flag, when the National Colors pass or are presented, when the National Anthem or honors are played, or when taps are played and firing squads or guns render honors. We got MOAA magazine to ask veterans what they preferred, hand over the heart or saluting. When last I looked, some 583 veteran respondents had voted 81% in favor of the salute. In addition, my email address was in the questionnaire and I've had about 150 responses, with all but a dozen or so in favor of the salute. Obviously an overwhelming majority of the veterans want to salute.

There are no regulations telling us veterans what we can and can't do in this matter. If we decide we want to salute, who will dare to tell us "no"?

It is a matter of personal choice. We've earned the right to render a salute. Now the challenge is to get the word out. I believe the unit and branch associations are the best way. The commanders of the American Legion and VFW never answered my emails, presuming they even got them. If we can get this started it will take on a life of its own. Those who object can continue the hand over the heart thing. Gradually the custom will change, as well it should.

Just imagine thousands of fans saluting at NFL, NBA, and Major League Baseball games when the National Anthem is played. It will telegraph a message to all others of how many have served this country in the Armed Forces—it will be a positive and patriotic message.

You can help by putting the word out in your organizations and contact lists, which are made up of patriots like you and me.

Thanks, my friend.

Vernon B. Lewis

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REMAINS OF FOUR U.S. ARMY SOLDIERS IDENTIFIED

Feb 14: WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The remains of four U.S. Army soldiers who died together 35 years ago in Laos during the Vietnam War have been identified and are being returned to their families for burial, the Pentagon said on Tuesday.

The soldiers were lost on March 20, 1971, on a mission to extract troops in the Savannakhet Province of Laos, when their UH-1 H Huey helicopter was hit by enemy ground fire and exploded, the Pentagon's POW/MIA office said in a statement. The remains were identified as those of Maj. Jack Barker of Waycross, Georgia; Capt. John Dugan of Roselle, New Jersey; Sgt. William Dillender of Naples, Florida and Pfc. John Chubb of Gardena, California.

Barker and Roselle were piloting the helicopter with Dillender and Chubb on board, the statement said. Their remains were recovered during investigations by joint U.S.-Lao search teams and recently identified by American forensic experts in Hawaii, the Pentagon said.

REMAINS OF COL. EUGENE HAMILTON RETURNED HOME

WASHINGTON - The remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from the Vietnam War, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. The announcement was made by the Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, or DPMO, Feb. 3.

The Airman is Col. Eugene Hamilton of Opelika, Ala. Final arrangements for his funeral have not been set.

On Jan. 31, 1966, Colonel Hamilton was flying an armed reconnaissance mission over North Vietnam when his F-105D Thunderchief was hit by enemy ground fire over Ha Tinh province. His mission was part of Operation Rolling Thunder, which attacked air defense systems and the flow of supplies along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Airborne searches for his crash site that day were unsuccessful. A radio broadcast from Hanoi reported an F-105 had been shot down but did not provide any details.

Between July 1993 and November 2000, joint U.S.-Vietnam teams, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, or JPAC, conducted four investigations and one excavation searching for the pilot and his plane. An investigation team in March 2000 learned from a Vietnamese villager that an area excavated in 1997 was not the location of the pilot's burial.

A second location was then excavated in August and September 2000, which did yield aircraft wreckage, personal effects and human remains. In 2004, three Vietnamese citizens turned over to a JPAC team remains they had found at the same crash site a year earlier.

In late May 2005, the JPAC team recovered fragments of possible human remains and life support equipment from the 2000 crash site. Personal effects found there also included a leather nametag with the name "HAMILTON" partially visible on it.

Of those Americans unaccounted for from all conflicts, 1,807 are from the Vietnam War, with 1,382 of those within the country of Vietnam. Another 839 Americans have been accounted for in Southeast Asia since the end of the war, with 599 from Vietnam. For additional information on the Defense Department's mission to account for missing Americans, visit the DPMO website at www.dtic.mil/dpmo. (Courtesy of Air Force Print News)

WARRIOR'S KIN GET PEACE

Scott Huddleston, Express-News Staff Writer, 02/28/06

Amid white headstones glistening in the afternoon sun, a husband, father, Vietnam War pilot, and 35 years of unanswered questions were gently laid to rest Monday at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery.

Harold Benton Lineberger was 7 and living with his family at Hickam Field in Hawaii when nearby Pearl Harbor was attacked in 1941. And it was at Hickam, now home of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, where his three sons claimed his remains and brought him home, 31/2 decades after the Air Force pilot's plane disappeared over Cambodia.

"It gives us a sense of peace," said San Antonian Jeffery Lineberger, whose father disappeared when he was 10 years old. He spoke after a 35-minute service that included a gun salute, the playing of taps and a flyover by a B-52 bomber. "Now we can spend time with him" at the cemetery, he said.

For Lineberger's wife, three sons and other relatives, the last few weeks, knowing his remains had been found and

identified, brought peace and relief, tinged by a sense of reliving a loss. It's also been an emotional time for those who served with Lineberger so long ago.

At 24, Don Payne of San Antonio was a first lieutenant with Lineberger at Ubon Royal Thai Air Base, Thailand. Payne was the duty officer when Lineberger took the OV-10A Bronco over eastern Cambodia. He lost radio contact at 6:43 a.m. Jan. 29, 1971. "Spike Zero Seven!" the radio operator said repeatedly, hoping for a response that never came.

Now 59, Payne had only known Lineberger for a few weeks. But his disappearance "affected all of us," he said, referring to the 14 pilots at Ubon. "It brings back emotions—how down we were," Payne said. "At the same time, there's happiness. There's some closure, because it's been a mystery."

It was the first time that the pilots with the 23rd Tactical Air Support Squadron at Ubon had lost a plane. Lineberger, a major who was promoted to colonel after he disappeared, was the unit's operations officer. For 10 months, until they were replaced at Ubon, his pilots flying over Cambodia would look for a crash site, or rock markers he might have left.

Payne said the crash could have been caused by enemy fire or a loss of concentration if Lineberger spotted something on the ground. He was flying in an area with no "friendlies."

"The Khmer Rouge (which then was fighting for control of Cambodia) had a policy of taking no prisoners. They executed them pretty much on the spot," Payne said.

Knowing Lineberger died in a crash is a bittersweet end to the mystery, he said. Despite their loss, Lineberger's family stayed in Universal City, where they'd lived since 1965. His wife, Yvonne, a sculpture artist, never remarried. The boys attended Clemens High School before each pursued a successful career. Robin Lineberger, the eldest boy, was 11 when his father disappeared. He now lives in the Washington area, and has been credited, while working as a partner of KPMG Peat Marwick, with helping privatize Kelly AFB.

Jeffery Lineberger is a civil engineer. Stacy Lineberger, who was 5 when his father vanished, works for Dell Computer Corp. in Austin.

Their father was one of more than 1,000 U.S. troops missing and presumed dead who are actively being sought, according to the Department of Defense. For many Vietnam veterans, especially those who knew him, Lineberger's burial is assurance that the war is over, Jeffery Lineberger noted.

"This is a pretty big event in all our lives," he added. "The people who served over there were people who were performing their duty. To me, the true heroes were the ones who didn't come back."

"Maj. Harold Lineberger is a hero in my eyes," he said.

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FAMILY BURIES REMAINS OF FROZEN WWII AIRMAN

By Patrick Condon, AP

BRAINERD, Minn. (March 24) - Leo Mustonen's closest surviving relatives grew up knowing little about their uncle, other than that he died in a military plane crash. That changed only with the improbable discovery of the World War II airman's body, frozen in a California glacier for more than six decades.

People in this town who remember the handsome blond man shared their memories with Mary Ruth Mustonen and Leane Ross before his funeral Friday. They learned he was an ace student who excelled in science, who played in the school band and in sports, and who dreamed of working in aviation even as a boy.

"It's been pretty incredible," Ross said. "He's become really a person. He really feels like he is ours now, and we've

grown to love him."

Mustonen's nieces were among about 100 people who gathered in their uncle's hometown to bury him. A full military funeral followed at a cemetery overlooking the Mississippi River.

Mustonen was 22 when his AT-7 navigational plane disappeared after takeoff from a Sacramento, Calif., airfield on Nov. 18, 1942. An engine, scattered remains and clothing were found over the following years, far from the plane's intended course. All four men aboard were killed in the crash.

But Mustonen's remains were not found until last year, when two mountain climbers in California spotted an arm jutting out of the ice. Forensic scientists at Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii analyzed bones, DNA samples and the airman's teeth before declaring in February that the body was Mustonen's.

At the cemetery, Mustonen was honored with a three-volley salute and a bugler playing taps. The military paid for the funeral, as it would for any soldier who died on active duty. Mustonen was buried alongside his mother, Anna, who grieved for years over the loss of her son.

"He's no longer out there on a mountain alone," Ross said.

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WAR HERO RETURNS HOME

Western Morning News (UK) February 25, 2006

EVERY battle leads to the building of a tomb for an unknown soldier—an anonymous symbol of the loss of life and a universal focus for grief for those who cannot bury their dead. But modern DNA techniques and forensic expertise mean that, when remains are uncovered, the chances of being able to identify them and return the dead to their family are increasing all the time.

In the summer of 2003, two sets of remains were found by archaeologists in a field outside the town of Soissons in Northern France. Close to the burial site of 15 German soldiers, the spot where two American soldiers fell into craters is uncovered. Their nationality is identified by some of the effects found with them—buttons, medals, and metal uniform parts. The archaeologists date them from the First World War and the search is on to put names to the remains.

The Americans—as you might expect—have an impressive organization to try and identify their soldiers lost in battle.

JPAC is the Joint Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Command and is based in Hawaii from where they use all means possible to identify lost military men. There are 4,000 Americans missing after World War One. This is in addition to 78,000 missing from World War Two, 8,100 from the Korean War and 1,800 from Vietnam.

A team of forensic anthropologists begin work on the bones and a small, badly-decayed leather wallet. Astonishingly, the wallet bears the name of Francis Lupo, who turns out to be a soldier who went missing in July 1918 while fighting in France. His name appears on a war memorial near Soissons as a member of the First Division's 18th Infantry Regiment. He went missing on July 21, the date of the crucial Second Battle of the Marne, which involved American troops.

Lupo was 22 from Cincinnati and unmarried. Of course, finding his wallet isn't enough to formally identify him, but his dental records finally allow the JPAC team to confirm who he is.

What was touching about the search for the identify of the remains is the dedication to their task of the JPAC team, especially their leader, Dr Tom Holland. "We won't give up on it," he said. "Ever."

VETERAN MARINE ENGINEERS AND VVA CHAPTER 785 TEAM UP TO CHRONICLE RFTW 2006

Vietnam Veteran and 9th Engineer Battalion Association (<http://www.9thengineers.com>) member Mike Cummings came up with the great idea of developing an Internet blog site to chronicle the stories, experiences, and pictures of the 9th Engineer Battalion Veterans and members of the Orange County Chapter 785 of the Vietnam Veterans of America (<http://www.vva785.org>) as they participate in this year's Run For The Wall.

The website <http://www.RFTWVVA785.com> should be up and operational by April 15, 2006.

Vietnam Veterans from the 9th Engineer Battalion Association and from VVA Chapter 785 will join together to post daily journals as they ride with RFTW on the Central Route. Each writer will post stories, personal experiences, and pictures of the places they pass and the people they meet as they participate with RFTW. The site will also chronicle the purpose of RFTW—its ability to heal and to return focus to remembering those who are still listed as POW-MIA.

Among the writers will be two former Marine engineers, Terry Porter and Harry Parmer, and two former Navy Corpsmen, Jim "Doc" Finch and Dennis "Doc" Thompson, all having served with 9th Engineer Battalion in Vietnam. Each will have the opportunity to post daily journals on the blog site about their experiences with RFTW and about the 9th Engineer Battalion, known for constructing the longest bridge in the history of the Marine Corps over the Song Ba Ren River located 29 miles south of Danang, Vietnam, in January 1969.

Also posting on the site will be one of the founding members of VVA785, Bill "Monsoon" Mimiaga, a former Drill Instructor and retired officer of the Marines who now works as a middle school teacher at Long Beach Unified School District in Long Beach, CA. Bill was recently named California's middle school teacher of the year and when he told his school principal about the blog site she got so excited she told him to develop lesson plans for the entire trip. So Monsoon is now busy writing lesson plans on the history of the Vietnam War, its impact on America, including the geopolitical issues of the war itself. Other lessons will connect to places along the central route that have historical and cultural interest, geography applications, and math exercises that calculate mileage distances and gas consumption. The students will pull up the blog site on their school computers each day to track the veteran's progress as they cross the nation on their mission of healing, honor, and remembrance. The tremendous learning opportunity the blog site provides to students is almost endless.

Another writer, VVA 785 member Wayne Nichols, who served with the 199th Light Infantry Brigade in Vietnam, will chronicle his experiences and the experiences of the widowed wife and three sons of his boyhood friend, Stephen Neal. Stephen, a Vietnam Veteran and L.A. County Sheriff Captain, recently and unexpectedly died of a heart attack. His three sons, all police officers too, will be taking turns riding their father's motorcycle as they and their mother cross-country on the RFTW Central Route. Wayne's journal will tell their story as they follow the same route their father rode last year on his mission of healing with RFTW.

Also from VVA Chapter 785 are members who are sons and daughters of veteran fathers who were killed in Vietnam (SDIT, Sons and Daughters in Touch). They will go as far as Angel Fire, NM, and will join together to write about their fathers and their respective experiences as they ride with the veterans on the RFTW.

There is no doubt that Mike's idea of developing an internet blog site will provide a magnificent learning opportunity. It will also open a window to a compelling and poignant chronicle as to why veterans ride for those who can't, and why our country should forever honor those we will never forget.

POW/MIA FLAGS FLY IN AFGHANISTAN



We recently heard from Ed Yarbrough of Minnesota, a Vietnam Vet “from long ago but not far away.” Yarbrough has worked on numerous projects in Minnesota as well as with his former units of Special Forces, which he spent twenty years assigned to. He is passionate about the POW/MIA cause and in fact rode in the first RFTW.

Ed, with the help of a friend who was in Afghanistan (State Department Contractor), orchestrated the placement of two POW/MIA flags in Afghanistan, possibly the very first ever. One is at the Embassy in Kabul and the other is at a very remote camp the Special Forces unit he was working with had trained, called Murph’s Brigade, in the Northern Highlands of Afghanistan. The compound houses both Afghanistan SF and US SF personnel.

Job well done, Ed!

Editor’s note: In an update to the above story, Ed reported that one night he was watching television and for some reason didn’t watch his usual program but switched channels. He stopped when he saw an interview of some soldiers at the very same Afghani and American Compound of the Murphs Brigade. When the camera panned the area, it stopped on the flagpoles, and there were the three flags: the American flag, Afghani flag, and the POW/MIA flag that Ed had sent over there! Ed still wonders what made him change channels that night.

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TRIBUTE TO SOLDIERS OF THE THIRD ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT

The 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment has been serving in Iraq (its second deployment there) for the past year. As the regiment prepared to come home, it received the following letter from the mayor of Tall Afar. Many will find it an interesting counterpoise to much of what we read in the press.

In the Name of God the Compassionate and Merciful,

To the Courageous Men and Women of the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, who have changed the city of Tall Afar from a ghost town, in which terrorists spread death and destruction, to a secure city flourishing with life.

To the lion-hearts who liberated our city from the grasp of terrorists who were beheading men, women and children in the streets for many months.

To those who spread smiles on the faces of our children, and gave us restored hope, through their personal sacrifice and brave fighting, and gave new life to the city after hopelessness darkened our days, and stole our confidence in our ability to reestablish our city.

Our city was the main base of operations for Abu Mousab Al Zarqawi. The city was completely held hostage in the hands of his henchmen. Our schools, governmental services, businesses and offices were closed. Our streets were silent, and no one dared to walk them. Our people were barricaded in their homes out of fear; death awaited them around every corner. Terrorists occupied and controlled the only hospital in the city. Their savagery reached such a level that they stuffed the corpses of children with explosives and tossed them into the streets in order to kill grieving parents attempting to retrieve the bodies of their young. This was the situation of our city until God prepared and delivered unto them the courageous soldiers of the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, who liberated this city, ridding it of Zarqawi’s followers after harsh fighting, killing many terrorists, and forcing the remaining butchers to flee the city like rats to the surrounding areas, where the bravery of other 3d ACR soldiers in Sinjar, Rabiah, Zumar and Avgani finally destroyed them.

I have met many soldiers of the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment; they are not only courageous men and women, but

avenging angels sent by The God Himself to fight the evil of terrorism.

The leaders of this Regiment; COL McMaster, COL Armstrong, LTC Hickey, LTC Gibson, and LTC Reilly embody courage, strength, vision and wisdom. Officers and soldiers alike bristle with the confidence and character of knights in a bygone era. The mission they have accomplished, by means of a unique military operation, stands among the finest military feats to date in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and truly deserves to be studied in military science. This military operation was clean, with little collateral damage, despite the ferocity of the enemy. With the skill and precision of surgeons they dealt with the terrorist cancers in the city without causing unnecessary damage.

God bless this brave Regiment; God bless the families who dedicated these brave men and women. From the bottom of our hearts we thank the families. They have given us something we will never forget. To the families of those who have given their holy blood for our land, we all bow to you in reverence and to the souls of your loved ones. Their sacrifice was not in vain. They are not dead, but alive, and their souls hovering around us every second of every minute. They will never be forgotten for giving their precious lives. They have sacrificed that which is most valuable. We see them in the smile of every child, and in every flower growing in this land. Let America, their families, and the world be proud of their sacrifice for humanity and life.

Finally, no matter how much I write or speak about this brave Regiment, I haven't the words to describe the courage of its officers and soldiers. I pray to God to grant happiness and health to these legendary heroes and their brave families.

Najim Abdullah Abid Al-Jibouri
Mayor of Tall Afar, Ninewa, Iraq

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LEGISLATION INTRODUCED TO LIMIT PROTESTS AT MILITARY FUNERALS

On April 8, U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers, MI-08, introduced federal legislation banning protestors from military funerals. Congressman Rogers' petition to ban those who protest at U.S. military

“America honors and respects our soldiers, and none more than those who die defending freedom and our nation,” said Rogers. “We are asking citizens to help protect the funerals of those soldiers and their mourners from the disrespect of protestors who disrupt funeral and burial services and add to the pain of losing a loved one.”

Rogers' legislation, the Respect for America's Fallen Heroes Act, would ban demonstrations at funerals in national cemeteries. It also urges all 50 states to adopt similar laws for all military funerals. The measure bans protests 60 minutes before, during, or 60 minutes after the service, and requires that any such protests must stay at least 500 feet from the funeral site.

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ZACHARIAS IN EFFORT TO UNITE SURVIVING SPOUSES

Karen Spear Zacharias, author of *Hero Mama*, is the daughter of Stf. Sgt David Spear who was KIA July 24, 1966. Zacharias is working with a group, Our Living Legacy, in an effort to unite the surviving spouses and children from today's war for an educational retreat that will enable them to cultivate a community where they can find the support they need. This has come about as a direct result of her work as an author and as a daughter whose father was killed in action. Her new book, *After the Flag Has Been Folded*, will be released May 1, 2006 by William Morrow Co.

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CONGRATULATIONS TO PHIL RITTERMEYER



Mark and MaryAnn Rittermeyer proudly announce their son Phillip's recent graduation from Air Assault School in Fort Campbell, Kentucky. When you see him on the Run, offer your congratulations; he'll be heading the Central Route Chaplain Corps this year. Phillip has been riding with Run For The Wall for several years and has often worked as the first pace-setter for the Central Route group. You couldn't ask for a more steady rider than Phil, but also, when you meet Phil, you will see an aura about this young man. His career path with the Army will put him in position as an Army Chaplain.

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► SICK CALL

Hayden "Pappy" Jones, of the Midland/Odessa area, is on his last mission with an Agent Orange-related cancer. He is and was a supporter of the local vets and also RFTW in that area. He was a chopper pilot in Vietnam. He, his family, and many local friends could use best wishes and prayers in support of his final mission.

If you want to send Pappy a card or letter his address is:

Hayden "Pappy" Jones
4506 Westminster
Midland, TX 79707

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► THE LIGHT SIDE

YOU KNOW YOU'RE A BIKER WHEN . . .

Your best friends are named after animals.
Your best shoes have steel toes.
You have motorcycle parts in the dishwasher.
Your idea of jewelry is chains and barbed wire.
You can tell what kind of bugs they are by the taste of them.
You even bought saddlebags so you can carry more beer.
You're only sunburned on the back of your hands.
You carry a picture of your bike in your wallet.
Any day you ride is a good day.
Your other vehicle is a truck with motorcycle ramps in it.
Your garage has more square footage than your house

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SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE

By Skeater (Nam 65-66)
Semper Fi

Marines are famous for their stories about the time spent in boot camp and about their D.I's (Drill Instructors). I suppose the other branches can relate and have their own twist on their experiences. A few years back I attended a

reunion of Marine aviation types. We spent one afternoon at the San Diego Recruit Depot, attending a graduation ceremony and just looking at a place that for most of us was a terrifying and character building experience when we were younger. On a bus that carried us around the base, lots of good-natured bantering was going on as we laughed, remembered and bragged about "The Old Corps." One fellow was particularly good at imitating the manner, language, and style of a D.I. We spotted an actual D.I. walking as our bus drove near by and as our friend made one singular statement about a lowly recruit, the D.I. spun on his heels, looked towards us to see where this sacrilege was coming from. It was funny, and enlightening, to hear; NOT ONE SOUND! We were still in awe of these guys, still afraid after all these years, that they could still jump down our throats (or much worse). It showed all of us that some things NEVER change. And here we were, one and all, old enough to be his father but still with that fear and respect you never lose for your Drill Instructor.

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► CLOSING THOUGHTS

From Stump:

The RFTW has gone out of its way to welcome all FNGs, but I say it should not be at the expense of ignoring serious safety issues. One of those issues is a lack of a motorcycle endorsement. Yeah, yeah, I know; sure, having one doesn't mean you are one hot rider, but it does give a heads up that, at least, you had some classes showing where the brakes were located. Am I beating a dead horse? Maybe so. I have mentioned this before and repeatedly. Some of the best riders I know have no motorcycle endorsement. Don't mean a thing? Many are old school—yep, been riding for centuries; however, the "new" FNG biker is one who can afford to go out and pay \$20 grand and ride where he or she wants to. That being said, riding fatalities have risen 58% within the last three years according to the national transportation board. The suggestion here is the "new" guy or gal should be checked out before he or she rides two-up in a 100+ rider pack. Put him or her with a mentor for a couple days, see if they know where the front brake is or how to check their own tire pressure, or perform a figure eight, or handle a panic stop. Nothing worse than some newbie locking up his brakes in the middle of a 300 plus pack, ya know? FNGs, take the bull by the horns and get checked out, eh? No such thing as being too safe.

A Highway Song For All Of Us

Watch our backs and light our way
Oh, traveling star!
Watch over all those born St Chris's day
Old road dogs, young runaways
We long for home but cannot stay
We wait by the door, we stand and stare
We're already out of there

Our fathers used to ride the rails
So they say, so they say

Never mind the wind, never mind the rain
Never mind the road leading home again
Never asking why, never knowing when
Every now and then - There we go again

Run before the wind, run before the rain
Over yonder hill, just around the bend
Never knowing why, never knowing when
Every now and then - There we go again

Tie us up and hold us down
Oh, traveling star!
Bury our feet down in the ground
Old road dogs, young runaways
Claim our names from the lost and found
And let us believe this is where we belong
And shame on us for sure
For one more highway song

from James Taylor's "Traveling Star"

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I WAS PROUD OF WHAT I WAS

From Steve Reiger, Patriot Guard:

Below is the motto of the USAF Pararescue Folks, I think it applies to each and every one of the members in all 5 branches.

I was that which others did not want to be.
I went where others feared to go, and did what others failed to do.
I asked nothing from those who gave nothing,
And reluctantly accepted the thought of eternal loneliness...should I fail.
I have seen the face of terror; felt the stinging cold of fear,
and enjoyed the sweet taste of a moment's love.
I have cried, pained and hoped...
but most of all,
I have lived times others would say best forgotten.
Always I will be able to say,
that I was proud of what I was: a (fill in the blank here)

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Editor's note: The following poem is a must-read for all. It was written by Shadow.

RUN FOR THE WALL

The sun is hot upon their back,
these many all dressed in black.
They come from far and wide, to ride to the Wall—
the many miles side by side.
They are on a mission you see:
to share these words from sea to shining sea.
Eighteen years of honor they all cry:
"We ride in freedom for those who can't" with a gleam in their eye.

They are vets—young and old,
supporters and wives too I am told.
Their resolve is strong and clear
as they make this ride each and every year.

To honor those who gave their all,
and to each and every one that answered the call.
To carry the torch and teach our young
that this mission isn't yet done.
Bring them home no matter what,
tell the politicians with a boot to the butt.

We are the RFTW family, strong and true.
Members of the biker nation through and through.
As they pass the line is long,
and suddenly I understand and want to join along.
Yes—these who ride under the red ,white, and blue,
do so for each and every one of you.

These many are family and ride as one,
and will ensure this work will get done.
As the children stand waving—in awe,
we all wonder: will they recall.
Will they understand the words we speak,
and learn of the miles of road we have yet to meet?
Their smiles tell us of hope and cheer,
and we realize it's worth it as we draw near.
For this is the last stop at this mountain station,
as we pick up more family from the biker nation.

Now on to D.C. they head,
to honor our vets both living and dead.
In the distance they see the reason
they have anxiously waited for all the season.
But this doesn't mean our work is done—
in fact, it has only begun.
Not until all the answers are in,
and each every one is brought home again.
Maybe then there will be no need
for the RFTW family to mount their iron steed.

But until that day comes through,
they will continue to ride honor bound and true.
For this event is full of tradition,
and for each who rides it's a conscious decision.
To make a difference and carry the word,
across this great land our voice will be heard.
And as they ride off into the sunset,
again you can hear them call out "NEVER FORGET!!

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RUN FOR THE WALL



WE RIDE FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T

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

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