



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"... July 2006

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

Inside this issue:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">· THE EDITOR'S NOTES· RFTW WEBSITE INFORMATION· FROM THE HEAD SHED· POST-RUN THOUGHTS FROM CENTRAL ROUTE COORDINATOR· POST-RUN THOUGHTS FROM SOUTHERN ROUTE COORDINATOR· THANK YOU FROM A PLATOON LEADER· WORDS OF THANKS FROM RAINELLE· STAR TOURING THANKS RFTW· THANKS FOR A GOOD JOB· ONE MORE MISSION· STUDENTS DESIGN VETERANS MEMORIAL· THANKS FROM AN FNG· ONE LAST JOURNEY· WEST VIRGINIA HOSPITALITY· MY FIRST RFTW EXPERIENCE WAS, WELL, A CHALLENGE TO REMEMBER· THROUGH THE EYES OF AN FNG· THE LAND OF THE FREE· THE LONELY ROAD· TO ALL SOLDIERS—THANK YOU· ROLLING THUNDER· VIETNAM FACTS VS FICTION· LETTER TO THE EDITOR· RFTW REUNIONS | <ul style="list-style-type: none">· PERSONAL VA DATA STOLEN· STOLEN DATA RECOVERED· VA TO PROVIDE FREE CREDIT MONITORING· VA ADDS MAPS TO ONLINE GRAVESITE LOCATOR· VETERANS BENEFITS RESOURCE GUIDE- FUNDING FOR POW-MIA SEARCH INCREASED· MATT MAUPIN HONORED· VIETNAM POW EXHIBIT OPENS AT AIR FORCE MUSEUM· FOUR NAMES ADDED TO VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL· BELATED HONORS· CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS TO BE BURIED IN MASSACHUSETTS NATIONAL CEMETERY· TO HELMET OR NOT TO HELMET?· ACTOR BUSEY PROMOTING HELMET USE· CELL PHONES FOR SOLDIERS WINS GRANT· THEATER PROJECT TAKES "THE RIDE" TO NEW YORK CITY· THE MILITARY HISTORY WAR LIBRARY· TWO VIETNAM AIRCRAFT IN NATIONAL MUSEUM· A VIRTUAL MEETING HALL FOR IRAQ, AFGHANISTAN VETERANS SICK CALL· TAPS· THANK YOU ALL FOR REMEMBERING! |
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THE EDITOR'S NOTES



Wow, the Run was great this year, wasn't it?! The weather was good all the way across the country for those of us on the Central Route, except for a little rain in Hugo, and there were few mishaps and even fewer injuries, for which we can all be proud. And for which we can also thank our Coordinators and Road Guards, who worked hard to keep an eye on things and who often risked their own safety for ours. And now, rather than sitting back and forgetting RFTW for another year, they are already working on RFTW XIX. Thank you, Board Members, Route Coordinators, State Coordinators, Road Guards, Fuel Team, and the many other Leadership Team members for working so hard and so long to make the Run possible.



A very welcome and appreciated addition to the Run this year was having the "Hydration Team" on the Southern Route, and "Water Point" with us all the way this year on Central Route. Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 785 was ready and waiting for Central Route at every stop with cold water, fruit, and snacks—and boy, did we appreciate it! They are really a great bunch of people; every single one of them is completely dedicated to service to veterans, and we are blessed that their desire to serve extends to us. A million thanks to all the Chapter members who took such good care of us.

The Southern Route "Hydration Team" was a group of folks based out of the Amarillo, TX area who heard about a need last year—a way to dispense more water, Gatorade, and snacks to more riders more efficiently and effectively. Don "9-Ball" Morris discussed the idea with Gary Burd, who organized the project. Their group provided a 24-foot trailer pulled by a 10 passenger van with a team of five individuals whose goal was to carry, ice down and dispense as much water, Gatorade, and snacks that were needed at every stop.

One of the most exciting points of the Run for me—and for a lot of us—was seeing our friend Robley Rex at the VAMC in Louisville. Now 105 years young, this cheerful World War I veteran, the last living one in the state of Kentucky, still volunteers at the hospital and is an inspiration to everyone there—and to us. Every year Robley is out front waiting for us, wearing the vest RFTW gave him a few years ago. What an incredible human being; he's sharp as a tack and always has a smile on his face. He's truly a national treasure.



Did you get a chance to read Chapter 785's blog during the Run? They set up a blog for the specific purpose of documenting their journey with RFTW 2006. Each night chapter members wrote in their journals about the day's events, or memories from Vietnam. Bill "Monsoon" Mimiaga, esteemed editor of 785's online newsletter "The Monsoon Dispatch," set up lesson plans on the blog for his middle school students. If you didn't get a chance to read the blog during the Run, please take the time now to read it at <http://www.rftwvva785.com/>.

Congratulations to Mike "Tanker" McDole and Don "9-Ball" Morris, who were appointed to the Board of Directors recently. And farewell to Milo Gordon, who retired as President, and Terry "Doorgunner" Clevenger, whose term was up and who decided not to run for another term. We appreciate both of you for the years you put in helping to guide our organization, and hope you'll continue to be involved—please don't leave the family circle.

Our new Leadership Team is John Gebhards ("Slammer"), President; JR Franklin, Chairman; and John King, Secretary/Treasurer. The 2007 Run Coordinators are Ron Young for the Central Route and Frank Perry for the Southern Route. Congratulations to both for their commitment and dedication to RFTW. The other members of the Board of Directors are Sally Marie "Sizzmo" Down, Don "9-Ball" Morris, and Mike "Tanker" McDole.

Now that we're all home from the Run, we need to start posting photos from this year's Run. Please see the following article from Anne Perry.

Next stop: RFTW Reunions in Angel Fire, NM September 15-17, and Yo Ranch in Kerrville, TX October 6-8, 2006. See you there—don't miss it!

Never Forget,
Judy "Velcro" Lacey

RFTW WEBSITE INFORMATION

By Anne Perry

RFTW Public Information Contact

As you probably know by now, two separate websites—in addition to the official www.rftw.org RFTW website—were set up for the 2006 RFTW. The purpose of these websites is to give riders, their families and friends, and our supporters a more personal insight into the actual events and wonderful hospitality experienced by Run For The Wall riders on each separate day of the two routes.

The Central Route website address for 2006 is www.rftwcr-2006.us, and the Southern Route website address for 2006 is www.rftwsr-2006.us.

Photos are needed for the CR. If you rode on the Central Route, please consider sending in your best photos—no more than 10 at a time—to aperry@flash.net. Photos need to be in .jpg format, and resized in your photo software to 300 or 400 pixels wide (about 4 x 6). If you do not know how to resize photos, please send no more than two at a time to avoid clogging my e-mail. **It is important to write the day each photo was taken on and, if possible, the event and/or people.** Photos will be added as received and posted on the website by days.

Southern Route riders, please send your best photos which show riders or events not already pictured on your webpages. **Resize for the web, write the day each photo was taken and, if possible, the event and/or people for each photo,** and send to aperry@flash.net.

For both websites, a note at the end of each day will indicate the date last updated if something has been added since the original posting date.

Also important, we need a separate webmaster or webmistress for the Central Route. If anyone with this training (or if you're willing to be trained) is going to ride in 2007 with the Central Route, PLEASE let me know. We will do what needs to be done to get things ready for you in 2007!

Comments and suggestions for next year's websites are welcome. Statistics have been kept on these websites, and I think our viewers have demonstrated the need for continuing both of these websites.

[top of page](#)

FROM THE HEAD SHED

I will start by thanking the participants, especially the thousands of volunteers who supported us at each of our many stops, for a very successful RFTW XVIII. Without those volunteers, this event would be a very different experience. To paraphrase Martin and Holiday; You participants, when you see an RFTW volunteer, Thank 'em.

I next want to thank all of the many people that I have met throughout my association with RFTW for the many years of support, help, and inspiration. This will be my last column as an official of RFTW. My term on the BOD has ended and I have chosen not to seek reelection. It is time for me to move on to full-time retirement.

I tried to share some of my gratitude for your participation in this event at the end of our Saturday Night Gathering in DC. For those who were there, you will need to hear this again. This is for you and also the many thousands of participants who were not able to be there in person, but who were there in spirit. These are part of the people that we ride for when we say "we ride for those who can't."

My FNG year was 1993; that was before the FNG buttons and missing man formation. I rode the last leg from Rainelle to DC. It was my first time in a two-up formation or with any type motorcycle group of that size. I was anxious about the Wall, anxious about being in that big a group, and confused by all the activity. Bunge was coordinator. I know that many

of you do not know him. He was 2nd Coordinator and he hasn't been with RFTW since about 1999. I was amazed at the size of the group. I was near the back, as all FNGs are, even today. When we broke the top of one of those long Virginia hills, I could see Bunge almost at the bottom. I am not sure of the count, but there were about 60 to 70 bikes in the formation.

What a change. On this trip into DC I had the honor of riding shotgun next to 9-Ball with the Southern Route. We were right behind the Central Route. Only once on the last leg into DC was I able to see the Central Route leadership group. I remember in 2000, I was Road Guard Captain that year, when we got to the Wall I counted the bikes in the parking lot. We had about 200. I do not know the actual count for this year. The numbers provided by the registration people added up to something like about 800 motorcycles, give or take a hundred; with a much larger number of participants. What change; what growth and it still is a positive experience for everyone involved. I know that by the look that I saw on the face of the FNGs as we arrived in DC.

There were some snafus this year. There have been snafus each year that I have participated. RFTW is a dynamic event. It continually searches for more effective ways to do this event. Not every idea works. Most do. The participants of this activity are resilient and that shows in the way they adapt to the snafus. You did an excellent job of adapting this year.

I have been amazed, for many years, that this event actually takes place. It is the only activity of its size, that I am aware of, that is completely done with volunteers. We do not have any paid staff. As a leader of such an event, I am profoundly grateful to all of you volunteers for making each of the RFTWs that I have been involved with an overwhelming success. As leader, I often received the accolades for RFTW. I know that you, the volunteers/participants in each of those RFTW events, deserve the accolades. Without you, we in the leadership group would have been riding a solo formation. Thanks again for the memories.

As I move on, I feel full confidence in the Leadership Group for RFTW. They are some excellent, talented, and dedicated men and women. Their dedication to this event and its goals is absolute. I know that they will continue to develop each event to be better than the last. I hope that you provide them the same support and help that you have provided me over these past 12 years.

My plan is to continue to participate in RFTW as long as I can swing my leg over the scoot and keep it balanced. I know that this Wing will probably out last my riding career.

I hope to see you all on the road. Keep your wheels down and your helmet up. Thanks again and so long.

Milo (Nayber) Gordon
Retired

[top of page](#)

► RFTW 2006 RECAP

POST-RUN THOUGHTS FROM CENTRAL ROUTE COORDINATOR:

After completion of our annual pilgrimage to the Wall, Delores and I are back at home in Texas. I want to thank everyone who rode with the Central Route for staying focused on riding safely. This resulted in the safest Run I can remember. We averaged approximately 300 people with us each day, and traveled approximately 3,000 miles on our 10 day mission. This represents approximately 900,000 miles traveled with only one person injured in St. Louis. While no injuries are acceptable, the rider's injuries were relatively minor. He is recovering well at home in North Dakota and plans to be with us in 2007.

I am humbled by the numerous comments from participants related to how well this year's Central Route functioned, and I thank you for your kind words. This, however, is a collaborative effort, and it is important to remember that our

Leadership Team consisted of more than 100 dedicated individuals. These folks, collectively, worked thousands of hours to make this year a success. Run For The Wall is made up entirely of volunteers who give unselfishly for us to complete our mission each year. My hat is off to each of you for a job well done!

Of special note, VVA 785 from Orange County, CA provided us with water, fruit and snacks, at no cost to RFTW or our riders, all the way to DC. This was a costly endeavor, and no doubt contributed to a safer, healthier and more pleasant ride for everyone. We began our journey calling them our “Hydration Team” but they decided they wanted to be referred to as the “Water Point” (I think it’s a Marine thing). I am supportive of calling them anything that makes them happy, as long as they will consider going with us again in 2007.

It is my belief that we were successful in fulfilling our Mission Statement “To promote healing among all veterans and their families and friends, to call for an accounting of all Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action (POW/MIA), and to honor the memory of those Killed in Action (KIA) from all wars”.

Being able to serve each of you as this year’s Central Route Coordinator was an incredible honor that I will cherish always. It was a tremendous journey with the greatest group of people with whom we have ever been associated. Delores “Girlfriend” and I are already looking forward to next year when, once again, we can travel across our great country on our mission with our RFTW family. God bless each of you, ride safe and stay in touch.

Freedom Isn’t Free – Mike “Tanker” McDole
mmcdole@houston.rr.com

[top of page](#)

POST-RUN THOUGHTS FROM SOUTHERN ROUTE COORDINATOR:

Well it seemed like we planned forever and the “Run” was over in an instant. I don’t know if that is the experience of past Coordinators, but it sure was for me. What another great year for RFTW. About 98% of the comments I received were very positive. Many used those words we have heard so often, “It was the trip of a lifetime,” “It was a life changing experience,” “It has begun a healing in my life,” “It was the most memorable trip I have ever taken,” and of course my favorite, “I’ll be back next year and this time I’m going All The Way.”

The SR Leadership Team would like to thank all of our volunteers for an outstanding effort. There were about 110 of them with various jobs, responsibilities, and challenges. We accomplished our mission even though there were a few little bumps along the way—nothing that couldn’t be handled with the right people in the right places. I said several times during our ten days on the road that I wouldn’t be able to get the SR three feet down the road without all these volunteers. If you are on the “Run” again next year or plan to attend one of the RFTW Reunions, please let these folks know that you appreciated their efforts.

I would also personally like to thank Mike “Tanker” McDole, Ron “Hammer” Young, and Kent Markley for their assistance and friendship this year. It was a pleasure working with them this year and I know the Central Route also had a great “Run.” Just remember, “One Run, Two Routes.”

Even though we were able to get the FNGs to the “Wall” on Saturday after Arlington, I would like to see us make an effort to get the entire pack into DC on Friday as we have in past years. Something to work on for next year. Let’s take some time to reflect on this year before we start making plans for 2007.

Our hopes and prayers are that you all made it back safely.

Don “9-Ball” and Della “Pocket” Morris
donmorris@earthlink.net
“All Gave Some, Some Gave All”

THANK YOU FROM A PLATOON LEADER

To all the SR 2nd Platoon Riders:

I would like to thank you for making my mission of leading you cross-country so easy. The riders who followed me can be proud of their riding abilities. Every time a road guard passed it was thumbs up or on the radio it was "Cowboy 2nd's looking good." That wasn't any of my doing, but yours. Again, thank you and hope to see you next year.

To all the Honor guard participants:

Thank you for making my job as Ceremonies Coordinator go so well. The number of volunteers overwhelmed me. At every stop I had folks telling me if I needed fill-ins to let them know. I am sorry that I couldn't use all of you who volunteered, but be assured your volunteering was heart warming.

Cowboy RFTWSR
2nd Platoon leader
Ceremonies Coordinator

WORDS OF THANKS FROM RAINELLE

Editor's note: If you wonder how much Rainelle Elementary School in West Virginia appreciates our donations every year, the following letter received by Denise "Krispy" Ferris, WV State Coordinator, says it all. Every dollar each of us put in the jug along the Run helps the children of this small town tremendously. This year everyone really dug deep in their pockets, and with an anonymous donor matching all funds up to \$10,000, we were able to present about \$25,000 to the School!

Denise,

I don't know how to begin to thank The Run for all they have done for the children at Rainelle Elementary. Each and every year the veterans come to Rainelle and pour out their love upon our children, but this year no words can express our appreciation for the overwhelming generosity of the members of RUN FOR THE WALL.



A few years ago we wanted to make certain that the gifts from the veterans were spent to benefit all of the children at Rainelle Elementary so we established a committee of teachers and parents to administer the fund. With this year's awesome gift, the committee established a few items that we believe will benefit all of our students. This list includes the following:

1. Playground equipment such as playground balls
2. Two more tether balls
3. Planners/folders for each child
4. School supplies to be distributed to any child who needs supplies
5. More pea gravel on the playground
6. Snacks for the children taking the state assessment
7. More books and furniture for the library
8. More classroom books
9. Correct minor safety items that the county Board of Education will not fix

10. Equipment to facilitate instruction of our students

Although this list is a work in progress, we will strive to spend the Run for the Wall money so that each child in Rainelle Elementary will be best benefited.

I would like to thank the Garners from Missouri who donated a full set of encyclopedias to our library; this year's kindhearted, anonymous donor who donated \$10,000; the bighearted anonymous donors from the past, and all the others like Sergeant Rock (Steve Walker) who have been so loyal for so long. I can promise you that when the new school year begins you will be receiving some thank-you's that the children did themselves to post. I can't thank Run for the Wall enough, but I have faith that our children can. God bless all of our veterans, especially those who Run for the Wall.

Sincerely,
John W. Lewis, Principal
Rainelle Elementary

[top of page](#)

STAR TOURING THANKS RFTW

Submitted by Denise "Krispy" Ferris

The Star Touring and Riding Chapter 197 of Hurricane, WV would like to thank all the RFTW participants who contributed to the "Feed The Children" donation jar at dinner. We just wanted to let you know that \$656 was collected for this fund (Feed the Children is a national Star Touring and Riding charity); and approximately \$400 was collected for the bike wash sponsored by the Hurricane High School Show Choir. We also want to thank Dave Jones, and Randy and Beth Casto for hosting the RFTW stop this year.

[top of page](#)

ONE RUN—TWO ROUTES

By Diann "Mojo Red" Perkins
Central TX Coordinator, SR

My congratulations and heartfelt appreciation goes out to both Southern and Central Routes this year. Thanks to the concern and hard work that "9-Ball" and "Tanker" put into this year's Run to make it TRULY one Run with two routes; it was very evident, to me, at least, that the riders of both routes took it to heart. Yes, I'm sure that conflicts happened among the riders—things that many others didn't see or know about. But this was the first year (out of four on the Southern Route) that I met and made friends from the Central Route. And, as part of the SR leadership team working with Tanker, it was a privilege and honor for me to work with him this year. I sincerely hope that the new camaraderie and friendship that was ignited between the routes will continue to grow—both in the leadership teams and in the riders themselves. Yes, each route does things a little differently than the other, but I think we both learned from each other. And all our hearts have the same purpose—to be there for and with our brothers and sisters. May we all carry that torch into 2007.

[top of page](#)

THANKS FOR A GOOD JOB

By Shadow

I want to thank "Tanker" and his staff (wink), the road guards, and everyone who helped out with this year's RFTW. You all did a wonderful job. I was only able to be in Rainelle this year, but I can tell you it was terrific. I was impressed

with our Road Guards and tried to personally thank as many as I could. I know I couldn't do what they do—just don't have the patience.

I was able to see many old friends and meet some new. The traveling wall was a hit with the local communities as well as our record fund-raising. People are seeing what we are really about and our following what we do. AND—they ask me to say "thank you all." I also got to spend a couple of hours with F-troop at Risers in West Virginia—I live just down the road—and it was great seeing everyone again: a little older, a little heavier—but still a great group by far. Also, the new riders with them I met were great too.

I hope everyone made it home safely and I hope the FNGs were totally impressed with the RFTW family. Again, thanks to all—it takes a lot to pull this off. Here's one for all of you—and to all our men and women who are now serving this country. Remember our two MIAs in Iraq. I pray they are returned safely to us. Never forget.

[top of page](#)

Editor's note: While we were in Angel Fire, NM, the city arranged a program to welcome us. One of the guest speakers was Father Mitchell, Pastor of the San Clemente Church. Fr. Mitchell spoke so eloquently and with such fervor that the veterans among us knew he understood them and was, indeed, one of them. Following is the content of his speech.

ONE MORE MISSION

By Father Mitchell, Pastor
San Clemente Catholic Church
Los Lunas, NM

When Christie first called me to come speak to you my first reaction was 'no'—I've closed the door on that chapter of my life. That's old news and I don't need to go back there. But then something deep down in my gut said 'go'—there's one more mission that needs to be completed'. So I said yes to Christie and went to your website. I began to read the stories, your stories, our stories, and that voice kept coming back, I kept hearing 'there's one more mission.'

When we went to war there were three displacements that took place in us, but they only told us about one of them—the one nobody can ever really tell you about because you have to live it. That first displacement is the displacement of your soul. It happens when you're thrown into the caldron of combat for an extended period of time. It begins with the loss of innocence when you kill your first human being. It grows in you when you fight for your life and the life of your buddies. It creeps up on you—you don't even really know it while it's happening. It's a hardening of the heart, a steeling of the nerves, a firming of the mind. Oh, you still feel the fear when you're getting shot at, but you deal with it. We all did, each in his own way. We built a shell around us to protect us, we didn't let anyone in—you couldn't, you didn't dare. We told lies to each other, blowing off our fear. We'd do the guy thing, mocking death. You know, telling each other we were the meanest sons of bitches in the valley or singing stupid songs like "You're going home in a body bag, Doo Dah, Dooh Dah." Or tell each other knowingly that we believed in the golden BB theory: if it's your time nothing can save you and if it's not, nothing can harm you. We ragged on each other incessantly.

I remember one time on my first tour on a mission over Cambodia. I was only a first Lt. but I was already the 'old man of the outfit' because I had 8 or 900 hours of combat time. That meant I was the one they called for the night landings at a blacked-out runway in Cambodia or the sneaky Pete missions in Laos that 'didn't happen.' I was breaking in a new copilot who had just arrived from the states. We were short on copilots so we rushed him through his combat qual in a week; he hadn't even finished in-processing yet and he was already flying combat missions. We had a lull in the action and he was talking about in-processing—'where is this, where do I go for that'—we kept helping him out. Then, I slipped in, with a perfectly straight face, 'Have you gone down to the morgue to get fitted for your body bag?' His jaw dropped about 6 inches, the Crew Chief just about choked on his coffee and the navigator, not to be outdone, picked up the ball and joined right in 'hey man you gotta do that. It's an article fifteen if you don't.' The Crew Chief jumped in 'Yeah man, you gotta go do that. Uncle Sam wants you to look good if they have to send you home that way.' The guys in the back were dieing to keep from cracking up. Well, a couple of days later I was in ops getting ready for a mission

and he comes in and comes over to me and says “You son of a bitch!” He bought it; he went to the morgue to get fitted for his body bag!

We’d talk incessantly about the “land of the Big BX, where the cars were hot and the women were hotter.” We’d count the days on our short calendar till we could climb on that freedom Bird and go home, back across the pond. But what kept us going, what kept us sane in the middle of all that madness and insanity was not the land of the big BX; it was not hot cars, or even dreams of hot women—that was our fantasy, our diversion, our self-delusion, it wasn’t real. What kept us going was the mission. It was the only thing that was real, it was the only thing that made sense. Even if it was a stupid, dumb ---- mission it was real—nothing else was. Not headquarters, not the generals, not the press—God, especially not the press. For better or worse the mission was our life; it defined us, it made us a member of a band of elite brothers; it made us part of something that was bigger than we were and it gave meaning to our lives no matter how miserable they might be. It made us larger than ourselves; it drew the best we had to give out of us because it gave us a purpose, a focus, and an objective. We were there for others, not for ourselves; our existence had meaning and our life had a savor, a flavor the protected will never know. We didn’t fight for mom, apple pie, or the flag that was Hollywood, not reality. We fought for each other, even when we didn’t know each other. I saw men risk their lives over and over and over for other men they didn’t even know—flying through a hail of flack again and again and again just because some GI’s on the ground were in trouble or an aircrew was down. We rose above ourselves and in spite of ourselves we touched, in some way, the transcendent in the midst of Hell.

And then that bittersweet day finally came when we left our buddies—that hurt—and we went home. But when we got there, it wasn’t the same; it didn’t match the dream, the bubble burst and no one cared. Our families—if we had families—tried, but they couldn’t reach down inside where the pain was, they didn’t have the right, and they couldn’t understand, even if they wanted to. We couldn’t tell them because you had to live it to know it. That’s when we discovered those other two displacements, the ones they didn’t tell us about. The first was the cultural displacement. We didn’t fit in, we didn’t belong. We had gone to war as brash young men; we came home battle hardened veterans. The world wasn’t different; we were different. We dreamed dreams, we had flashbacks, we coped; some well, others crashed. We did it because we had to, but mostly we did it alone. We didn’t fit in anymore; for us the real world wasn’t real. Our culture was not their culture, our values were not their values, and that was the other displacement—the displacement of our values. There was no more mission, no more heart-pounding adrenalin rush, no more camaraderie, no more purpose. We were back in the world, back in the land of the Big Macs and the milkshakes, the land of hot cars and hotter women, but it felt like Disneyland—it wasn’t real. Something was missing.

What was missing was the mission, the purpose, the reality check. Most of us adjusted, but there was an emptiness within, a sense that I am alive but I feel dead. The transcendent was gone, the purpose was gone, and all that had been of value to us meant nothing in the fantasy world we found ourselves in. That is the reason you are here, you have a mission. Not a mission of death and destruction but a far more important mission of healing and unity. The ride to the Wall has a meaning that only a vet can know. You ride for yourselves and you ride for each other. Most especially you ride for those who will never ride again.

I remember my first and only trip to the Wall. It took me ten years to go. I was back for a visit to the Pentagon, but I had some time to kill so I decided to go. I don’t know what I expected, but what I experienced was power—silent, gentle healing power. I stood there, on the grass, looking over the sidewalk to the Wall; I looked at my four years in Nam. I saw the names of friends I had gone to school with, guys I had played sports with, gone through pilot training with. I knew them, I knew their wives and their children; but I had almost forgotten. I stood there in silence. I was not in uniform, just a three-piece suit and a raincoat, a thirty-year-old man aged beyond his years. After a while a group of innocent, high-spirited high-schoolers came along, on a field trip for school I guess. They were laughing, happy; I didn’t mind, but there was a Park Service Ranger there. He saw me, he knew—he must have been a vet. He moved them along gently. I was grateful. He left me there with the silence, with my ghosts. After awhile I turned and walked away. I left my baggage there, never to return.

You, too, will find healing at the Wall. You will find closure, maybe not all at once, but you will recover your purpose. You ride now to heal; not just yourselves, but something larger, something more important, you ride to heal our country. You ride to heal your brothers and sisters in arms, those coming home from Afghanistan and Iraq. After Desert Storm

the country assuaged its guilty conscience with a tumultuous welcome home for the Desert Storm vets, one that was well earned—the Desert Rats of Desert Storm deserved their accolades and some of you got to celebrate with them. But there's a new Nam that no one is talking about, or more accurately, everyone is lying about. The politicians don't care, the news media doesn't care; the public might care a little, but they don't know, they don't understand and it's not their fault. In fact almost no one cares—except us. We care. That's our next mission, to turn to our younger brothers and sisters in arms. As a working pastor I know they are hurting, just like we were hurting. We must reach out to them because no one else can. We passed the torch of war to them and now we must pass the flame of love. That's our real mission—vets helping vets. So when the ride is over, and the bikes are put away, remember that there is one more mission. We must to turn to our younger brothers and sisters in arms; we must to say them 'Welcome home! Well done, soldier. We care because we know'. We must reach out to them and minister to them. We are the only ones who can, because we are the only ones who know. We know the pain, we know the hurt, we know the loneliness, the loss of purpose and the loss of meaning, and we have the power to heal it. So ride for the Wall, and when you come home, roll up your sleeves and make a difference in their lives. Go to the VA and ask 'what can I do'; get your VFW or Legion Post or your local veterans group to reach out and meet the need. Don't let them die inside as we died. Reach out to heal and you will be healed.

[top of page](#)

STUDENTS DESIGN VETERANS MEMORIAL

We received the following note from Colorado Middle School in Texas:

I am sending you some photos of the student-designed Veteran Memorial at Colorado City, Texas.

As always, Colorado Middle School was honored to host RFTW, and the hospital was very proud to have RFTW do a ride by this year. We are looking forward to next year.

Thank you for including us,
Lorena Turnbow
Service-Learning Grant Coordinator
Colorado Middle School
Colorado City, Texas



[top of page](#)

THANKS FROM AN FNG

By Steve Sprowles
Slippery Rock, PA

Just want to say thanks for a great experience. I joined the ride in Lewisburg, WV. I have never been to The Wall. Was afraid to go, to be honest with you. A high school friend John Grimes (Dirt) talked about going to The Wall at our 40th reunion in August. The idea stuck and I'm glad I rode with your group.



There are three events etched in my mind from that experience. A truck driver on the side of the road giving us a salute. A young woman in the lobby of the hotel who gave me a set of "beads" and spoke words of encouragement and hope. And lastingly, the bronze cast statue of the three nurses who looked over The Wall and its warriors. The looks of compassion, anguish, and despair went straight to my psyche.

I now know that I will ride yearly with your group. The process of healing has started and my wounds are sparse.

[top of page](#)

► OUR STORIES

ONE LAST JOURNEY

By Wayne Nicholls

Over his leather jacket, he was wearing his denim vest with Run For The Wall on the back. His chaps moved with the wind and protected his legs. His flat black helmet covered his blonde hair. On the back of the helmet was a sticker “Vietnam Veteran.” The silver Road King sparkled as it rode well above the pavement parallel to me. When I looked to my right and saw him, he was smiling and nodding his head in agreement. When I smiled back, he gave me a “thumbs up” in appreciation of accompanying his family on this journey. It was our tribute in “Riding In Memory of Steven H. Neal.”

Although my original intent was to accompany the Neal family in an effort to “re-live” the photos, stories, and experiences that Steven and I shared during our 2004 “Healing Run,” the above account was very special and not anticipated. It was so nice to see Steven again. Seeing him so happy and providing me with a “thumbs up.” I could feel his presence along the journey as he embraced his family and protected them along the way. I visualized him at the Kentucky Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial looking down at the names in the pavement, reading the Bible scriptures; “A Time To Live, A Time To Die.” Somewhere during our travels with RFTW, I was able to release him and let him go.

I would like to thank all the family, friends, and participants on the Central and Southern Routes who wore the “Riding In Memory of Steven H. Neal” patch. Over eight dozen patches were made and distributed. I would also like to thank the Central Route Road Guards for honoring the Neal family and providing them with a Memorial Flag. To our Leadership Team, thank you for carrying the photos of Steven and allowing his sons to experience the honor of riding in the Missing Man formation. Most importantly, I’d like to thank the Neal family for allowing me the opportunity to accompany them during this honorable tribute to Steven.

The journey has ended, my dear friend. Rest In Peace.



[top of page](#)

WEST VIRGINIA HOSPITALITY

By Judy Lacey

I experienced RFTW from a different perspective this year—as a Chase Vehicle driver. Well, actually, my son, Eddie (“Grumpy”) drove the truck—I just rode along to give him some advice and background about the Run, since it was his first. “Top” (Chase 1) took Eddie under his wing—for which we were so grateful—and gave him guidance in the finer points of loading and unloading bikes and finding Harley shops to take them to for repairs. Eddie caught on quickly and got great pleasure from being of service. It didn’t take him long to understand what RFTW was about, and he hopes to join the Run every year and help provide a service for our beloved veterans.

One of the most memorable experiences we had on this year’s Run was in West Virginia. We were stopped on a bridge near Huntington, I believe, to pick up a disabled bike, and a WV State Police car pulled up behind us to keep traffic moving safely around us. Eddie was trying to load the bike as fast as he could, as he was worried about holding up

traffic on the bridge. The officer, Sgt. Darren Francis, came over and told him “Don’t worry, take your time—the traffic is doing just fine.” After loading, Eddie asked the officer which exit we would need to take off the freeway to get to the shop we were looking for. He did better than just give us directions—he led us right to the door of the shop! And he didn’t stop there; a few hours later he called us to make sure we had been taken care of and had gotten back with the group. We’d like to thank Sgt. Francis for taking such good care of us that day. He truly went above and beyond the call of duty, and gave a few travelers a great example of West Virginia hospitality that day.

[top of page](#)

MY FIRST RFTW EXPERIENCE WAS, WELL, A CHALLENGE TO REMEMBER

Richard (Spokes) Shafer
Phoenix, AZ

I'm that "one very lucky guy" mentioned in the sitreps who had the blowout on my rear tire while heading north on HWY 25 just before Santa Fe, NM. We were heading to the stop at Pojoaque, NM before the ride to Angel Fire, NM. I want to first thank the New Mexico transportation department for creating very wide and soft medians. I want to thank everyone in the heavens who was watching out for me. Two long nails stuck in my new rear tire and that excitement and the six days of dissatisfaction that followed taught me and may teach other RFTW riders some helpful tips.

I call this life story "Two Nails and a week In Santa Fe. "

What a ride! Phoenix to Ontario, to Williams, to Gallup; heading to my favorite stop so far... Angel Fire, New Mexico. I was happy and in the Two Up groove on a smooth surface highway enjoying nice weather while riding my 100 horsepower, 825lb+ cruiser. Pure cranial pleasure... Then... What the heck?

My Vulcan 2000 at 70 MPH twists right, like I'm on hot grease and 1/10 second later twists left, way left. I had bad thoughts and visions then. Seconds took a lifetime. I held on tight and thought of doing something to save my life, like getting off this thing before it crosses the whole dang median and flies into oncoming traffic. I saw and feared a mound of dirt in my path. It looked ten feet high then, but thankfully its real size, maybe a foot high and three feet across became my savior. The bike sank into the soft dirt just feet before the mound and just when I thought I was going airborne on 800 lbs of steel, it hit the mound of dirt and stopped instantly. Cool ... I'm alive!

My first new fear was thinking the RFTW rescue truck would zoom past me while I was sitting on the bike and I would die from the buzzards pecking my flesh off after passing out from heat stroke. I got off and ran for the roadway. The bike was still stuck upright in the dirt, I was still not knowing for sure what sent me into the median. They stopped! We all did a Wow! Flat rear tire! The bike was loaded on the trailer with much effort and off we went to get repairs, somewhere, anywhere. Santa Fe? After much effort and confusion (mine), and travel, guided by a GPS, we arrived at Santa Fe Motorsports near Cerrillos Road and HWY 25.



Now the real horror and cash flow begins! While in the chase vehicle, Friday about 1 p.m. or so I called Santa Fe Motorsports and ordered the rear tire, paying by credit card over the cell phone. They didn't have that size tire (200/60/16) in stock so it had to be shipped overnight express. (\$57.00). The tire cost (\$228.00). Installation (\$125.00). Total \$440.00. The tire that got nails in it was a week old and cost less then \$200 installed in Tempe Arizona. Oh well! I stayed in the Comfort Inn across from the dealership Friday night, while my buddy Charles (we both work at the PHX VAMC) and all the other RFTW riders went to Angel Fire. That hurt! I wanted to see Angel Fire.

Saturday morning I checked on the bike, not done yet. Come back at noon. I get the bike back and settle up the bill. I start to head off to the hotel and ride out of the dealership parking lot. At the first intersection I hit both brakes and oh crap, the rear brake foot pedal goes all the way down to the end of its travel and I freak out, stopping just feet into the

intersection after a maximum squeeze on the front brake lever. Darn, I didn't check the brakes before moving off and the service technician didn't check the brakes either. Back to the dealership. Service manager was too busy to listen or care. "Oh, can I get my valve stem cap back please?" Charles arrives from Angel Fire and soon we're off for Phoenix. I thought! 30 miles south of Santa Fe on HWY 25, Charles, following me on his Yamaha FJ1100 sport bike, pulls up beside me and orders me to pull over quick. I stop, on the side of a busy highway and look down at the rear wheel. The wheel bearing dust cover ring is spinning around on the shaft between the drive pulley and the hub. The bearing was a mess and I could push it back into the wheel with my fingers. Many choice words were expressed and Santa Fe motorsports was called from the side of the road. It's almost closing time and no trailer or tow service can get me back in time, so we ride back north going very slow on the highway. Spooky!

I drop the bike off reluctantly and they look it over. The service manager comes outside where I'm waiting and says "how soon do you need to get back home?" What? Back to the hotel; Saturday... Sunday... Monday... Tuesday. They said I get the bike back Tuesday afternoon. \$104.00 a night and I'm getting, have been, pissed.

Tuesday—thank God I can go home now. I check out of the hotel, again, and head over to the Dealership from Hell about 10:00 a.m. As I pass through the doors and into the huge showroom of metric bikes and assorted money-sucking toys, I realize, feel, something is not right. The employees are not glad to see me and they seem to be exiting through doorways into the back rooms, leaving me alone with my thoughts. The owner comes out and says some of the parts that arrived were the incorrect part and they will have the bike ready tomorrow, Wednesday, for sure. "They just need to order the right parts this time." I was numb, dumbstruck, living in the twilight zone and wondering what to tell my boss. I would miss work Wednesday night. Back to the hotel, again. The desk clerks looked at me funny when I dragged myself into the lobby. I thought they might refuse my stay out of fear that I was a nut case. I just want to go home! I don't sleep well in hotels and I was beyond tired. The shop owner had the gall to offer me a ride to the airport, 50 miles away and ship the bike home—at my expense of course. This is were I began to realize that I could have rented a U-Haul Saturday and brought the Vulcan home, for way less money then staying a week in Santa Fe. That never entered my mind then, though.

Wednesday about 1 p.m. I leave Santa Fe Motorsports not trusting the repairs but not caring to investigate any further, either. I tried to explain to the owner of SFMS before leaving of the importance of technicians doing a thorough inspection of any bike before giving it back to the owner. It could save a life! I felt they cost me some money and some time. He said he would submit my hotel bill to his insurance company to see if I can be reimbursed. We'll see. The ride home had special meaning now. I remembered the wonderful people of Gallup as I flew by that patriotic city. The road was open and I was free at last. The Vulcan knew the way home and we made Flagstaff in 5 1/2 hours and I was home in Phoenix by 8:30 pm.

I can't say when or if I will ever ride with Run For The Wall again. One friend said he believes our fallen Brothers were watching out for me, knowing that one bad crash per year, per lifetime, is enough for me to endure. Others, from Phoenix, said quit crying, you got to hang out in Santa Fe in 80 degree temps. One friend just shook his head and said "Spokes, that is your life, every ride is an adventure."

Thanks Run For The Wall riders, leaders, and support staff for my newest adventure.

[top of page](#)

Editor's note: VVA Chapter 785 created and maintained a blog for their members who participated in RFTW 2006. There, members posted their journal entries during the Run and also wrote of their experiences in Vietnam. Take a little time to read the blog; there are many good stories in it. <http://www.rftwvva785.com/>. The following story is from their blog:

THROUGH THE EYES OF AN FNG

By Bruce Pilch, 2005 RFTW

They told me "it will blow your mind," and "It will be a life-changing experience."

Well, here I am, almost 60-years old and a relatively new "biker" going with my Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) brothers from Chapter 785 in Orange County, California. I thought to myself, would I be able to keep up while not disrupting the flow of the run, or overstepping any boundaries of safety that we had to adhere to on the road?

Questions bounced around in my head along with some self-doubt and apprehension. But then I simply told myself to stuff it! I kept hearing my friends saying, "mind-blowing", "life-changing". I had to do this!

Day 1, the first leg from Ontario, California, to Williams Arizona. Nearly 300 of us entered the freeway—motorcycles of all makes and models, some with sidecars, some with three wheels (trikes) our journey today would take us 420 Miles. WOW! "Mind-blowing?" "Life-changing?" Not hardly ... more like "What a spectacle" ... "An awesome sight and sound" of this "Rolling Thunder" charging down the road ... and I was a part of it ... and it was very cool.

But I thought to myself, what am I missing? Why am I not feeling what they (my VVA brothers) felt last year? Maybe this isn't going to grab me like it did them. I then felt a little sad that I didn't have the depth of feeling for RFTW as buddies. So, I decided to just be open to the experience and to absorb it all, moment by moment.

Day 2 - Williams, Arizona, to Gallup, New Mexico. Today we would travel 230 miles. Early in the morning we all attended the riders' safety meeting, then our 785 group decided to hit the road ahead of the main body. After a short walk to our parked motorcycles, we fired them up and headed down the road to the freeway on-ramp, then onto the Interstate highballing it out of Williams. As we settled into our cruising speed we moved into a staggered bike formation, Mustang at "The Point," followed by Monsoon, Gene Crego and Lisa, myself, Binh Pham, and John "Justice" Boyle anchored at the rear guard position. Wow ... what a beautiful day ... and the scenery was awesome ... and then—tears. I started crying and could not stop. For the next 20-minutes tears flowed from my eyes and down my cheeks. What the Hell is going on, I thought? And then it hit me like a ton of bricks! It was like I was back in Vietnam and our squad was heading out to "the bush" from our base camp, going on patrol once again. We were going because others were not able.

Now I understood the RFTW mission and my place in it. Yesterday I reported for duty ... today I was part of a special squad put together to perform a special mission with and for special people.

It "blew my mind" ... it "changed my life."

With deep humility and honor,
Sgt. Bruce Pilch USMC
Vietnam - November 1967 - November 1968 - 2nd Battalion 26th Marines
SEMPER FI

[top of page](#)

THE LAND OF THE FREE

On Independence Day this year
We'll wave our Flag, salute and cheer
We'll thank all those who've gone before
And those today, we send to War.

We'll think about what Freedom's cost
Those who fought and those we lost
We'll stand tall and proud and say,
"I'm glad I'm from the USA!"

Since it was signed in Seventy-six
There's some who've tried some dirty tricks
To change they way those words are read
To change it to their way, instead.

It has withstood the test of time
Protected Rights of yours and mine
It checks and balances those things
Heard when the sound of Freedom rings.

But hear me loud and hear me clear
There are still those we need to fear
Who would take those Rights away
Little by little and day by day.

Don't let anyone try to change
The way we live or rearrange
The American way of life we know
Born, two hundred thirty years ago.

For, once it starts to slip away
There'll be no Independence Day
And too late we'll look and see
We're not "The Land of the Free!"

Del "Abe" Jones
06-29-2006

[top of page](#)

THE LONELY ROAD

By Harry P. Parmer

"Each face will lose his name, and time will not defer, but there will always be the bond between what we are, and where we were"—Ned Broderick

The deck slowly leaned to port as I walked to the galley. We had been at sea for fourteen days since leaving the Marine base at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, but now we were close to our final destination. The ship's captain said in his morning announcements that we were less than two days sailing time west of San Diego, California.

As I waited in the chow line to get my ration of reconstituted eggs the galley's speakers came to life with the voice of an excited disc jockey: "K-R-L-A, Pas-a-dena! The Beach Boys, California Girls ... 'Well east coast girls are hip, I really dig the clothes they wear' ..."

It was really happening ... after 13 months in Vietnam and another six in Japan, I was finally going home. It was December 1967 and I was returning to the "real world," and if everything went as planned I would be home for Christmas, the first in three years.

Two days later we docked in San Diego ... one journey ending, another beginning. As I walked down the gangplank and stepped onto American soil, my excitement was overwhelming ... I could hardly contain myself, but it didn't take long for my joy to fade. As the days passed into months I sensed a strangeness in my country—everything was different—

things had changed, including me. Like many returning from Vietnam I experienced an America that no longer felt like the home we had left behind.

In his book, "The Nightingale's Song," Robert Timberg writes:

For those who served in Vietnam, the war and its aftermath ushered in troubled times. Unlike veterans of other wars, they came home to hostility, contempt, ridicule, at best indifference. Their experiences were at first disorienting, then alienating. As they saw it, they had fought bravely against a resilient and implacable foe, innocently trusting the leadership of the nation that had sent them off to war. Many saw comrades killed and wounded. Thousands came home maimed themselves. For some of these men, no place was safe enough. You couldn't tell by looking at them, probably not even by talking with many of them, but they were the walking wounded of the Vietnam generation. And down the road there would be hell to pay.

The road I traveled after Vietnam was indeed a long and lonely one. As the years passed I suppressed my thoughts about the war and the controversy that surrounded it. I succeeded at many things as time went by but with little help from anyone, including veteran's groups that historically provided assistance to their countrymen returning from war. It wasn't that I didn't receive invitations to join organizations like the VFW and American Legion, but whenever I responded by showing up at their functions I was treated more like a pariah than a fellow veteran. At one gathering I sadly remember hearing a group of WWII vets commenting about "cry baby" and "whining" Vietnam veterans. Hearing this criticism from the men I so admired, the very ones I tried to emulate through my service caused me to reject veteran's group. Consequently, any invitations I received thereafter simply went unanswered.

But this all changed one weekend when early in 2005 while visiting a Harley-Davidson dealership, I saw a man standing alone away from the group of people that routinely gathered there on Saturday mornings. I watched him as he casually smoked his cigar ... I could see that his thoughts were elsewhere away from the crowd. He was dressed much like the other Harley riders this day, but his erect posture and soldierly bearing set him apart. As I continued to watch him from a distance I finally recognized him—his stare, his intense eyes, his confident demeanor. I had met this man many years before when we were Marines together in a far away place. This was my old friend, Bill Mimiaga, also known as "The Monsoon."

I walked over to where Bill was standing and after a short re-acquaintance we were laughing together and remembering experiences and friends. As we continued our reunion he began to tell me about the many activities that he was involved with in Chapter 785 of the Vietnam Veterans of America. His comments about this group were of admiration and praise; especially when describing the other members he knew and worked with. He encouraged me to attend the next meeting of the chapter and to join with him and the other members to further the cause in helping veterans of all ages. We departed company that day with me saying that I would consider his offer to get involved with VVA 785, but I could see in his eyes that he knew that I was not fully committing.

At first I was skeptical and not interested at all in attending anything relating to Vietnam, let alone joining a veteran's group. My memory of rejection, although old, was still there. But you have to know "The Monsoon" to really appreciate his magnanimous personality and how influential and persistent he can be. To me he's one of the "Old Breed" of Marines, a throwback from days gone by—no nonsense and deadly serious when it counts but also quick and caustic in his sense of humor and friendliness. He also demonstrates a fierce patriotism and love for his country that is deeply engrained in his character. He is the kind of inspirational leader that I remember trusting as a young Marine.

Now in the aftermath of our coincidental meeting I recognized that I was once again lucky to be in his company and was eager to build on our friendship. So, with that motivation I decided to give Chapter 785 a look, and in doing so would set a new course on an old and unfinished journey.

On the day of the VVA 785 meeting, I arrived at the Reserve Center in Tustin thirty-minutes early. I parked on the distant edge of the parking lot and sat alone with my thoughts wondering whether I really wanted to do this. Hell, I said to myself, I was already here, so I may as well see it through. As I entered the main building it didn't take long to hear "The Monsoon's" voice. When he saw me walking alone into the room he immediately yelled my name. As I walked toward him he greeted me with a hug and said, "Welcome home, brother." It didn't take long for me to feel my heart in

my throat.

Then introductions ... Bruce Pilch, Pete Sandroe, Ken Snow, Mike Cassillas, Frank Pangborn, Kenny Pozirek, Eileen Moore, Lew Elliot, The Bear, Sergeant Major Mike Miller, and many, many others ... all with friendly smiles, firm handshakes, and heart felt sincerity as each took their turn in welcoming me home. The meeting was then called to order and each person took their turn at explaining their participation in numerous past events and in the planning of future activities. The chapter's agenda was indeed ambitious but what really impressed me was the enthusiasm and eagerness everyone demonstrated toward helping other veterans.

As the evening came to an end and we said our goodbyes the words "Welcome Home" echoed in my mind. How comforting it was to hear these words spoken with such heartfelt sincerity after decades of painful memories and rejection. The men and women of Chapter 785 exhibited a selflessness to me that night through their profound understanding and caring for the recognition of the untold sacrifices that so many gave of themselves in Vietnam.

As the night came to an end, so did a very old journey on a long and lonely road. My brothers and sisters had also walked alone on this road when they returned from Vietnam but now we were together again, side-by-side on a new path of healing and encouragement. Together we walked with pride and honor. I was happy to be with them again after such a long and lonely journey. At last, I knew that I was finally home.

"Never again shall one generation of veterans abandon another."
(Vietnam Veterans of America Founding Principle)

[top of page](#)

Editor's note: Danica "Little Bit" Henzel is the granddaughter of Roger "Cowboy" Mead. Her first long-distance ride was El Paso to Denver in 1995 for a HOG rally at age 5 1/2. Her first RFTW all the way was in 2004 when she was 13; she went all the way again in 2005. Cowboy tells us that she began writing that poem after the 2004 run. Cowboy didn't let Little Bit ride this year as she is a freshman in high school and he didn't want her to miss any schooling. However, Danica's principal read her poem on the RFTWSR-2006 website and told her that next year he would see about getting her extra credits for making the run. So one way or another, she will be on the 2007 run.

TO ALL SOLDIERS—THANK YOU

By Danica Mead

I saw a man
He looked at me with sad blue eyes filled with pain
Eyes clear as crystal and blue as rain

As I spotted him
I saw his hat
As he wore it proudly it stated "Vietnam vet"

Then I saw
His battle scars
A missing leg and scared up arms

As I thought I thought of him
How he fought for me
For us, our freedom, and our liberty
I felt his pain

For but a second I felt his happiness and pride

And all the fear and sadness he kept inside
He fought for us
When he could have died
But he was lucky because he survived

58,000
That's less than the number that did not survive
And those who remain will always remember those that died

No one knows
The battle that our soldiers still fight
Of being alone night after night

One word
A single word is all it may take
To let our soldiers know that we appreciate

Thank you
That's all it takes to make one cry
For the ones who serve and the ones who die

Today
Our soldiers today most proudly bear
What in the past they would not wear
And as I think
I think of his hat
The one that stated Vietnam vet

Now I see
As I look at him I start to see
That that one little word is all he may need

So to the whole world
I will stand and say loudly
Thank you to all who fought for us proudly
Thank you

If you are a Vet reading this softly or loudly
Always know that you are a hero and you should always stand proudly

Thank you,
"Little Bit"

[top of page](#)

ROLLING THUNDER

In honor of all who ride to the Wall
By Larry Ouellette, Del City, OK

Lord watch over these traveling bands of brothers,
Hailing from far and wide converging on the Capital
Of our great nation.

Give them safe passage and Heavenly weather,
Until all reach the final destination.

Ground and sky reverberate with their thunder,
As onward to pay homage and healing they roll.
Citizens observing this parade filled with awe and wonder,
What force could touch them so deep in their soul?

Names on a black granite wall to them beckoning,
Please come and instill in all a spark of life.
Hold precious our face and memory, letting go our day of reckoning,
Allowing us to eternally rest free from strife.

Touch our names, cry your tears to heal, but leave us with a smile,
Permitting brothers who came and us to marvel in God's splendor.
As you and all travel homeward mile after mile,
We eagerly await re-awakening next year to sounds of Rolling Thunder.

[top of page](#)

► MORE STORIES

VIETNAM FACTS VS FICTION

From Major General (Ret.) David R. Bockel
Director of Army Affairs, Reserve Officers Association

For over 30 years I, like many Vietnam veterans, seldom spoke of Vietnam, except with other veterans, when training soldiers, and in public speeches. These past five years, I have joined the hundreds of thousands who believe it is high time the truth be told about the Vietnam War and the people who served there. It's time the American people learn that the United States military did not lose the War, and that a surprisingly high number of people who claim to have served there, in fact, DID NOT. As Americans, we support the men and women involved in the War on Terrorism. Below are some assembled some facts most readers will find interesting.

Vietnam War Facts: Facts, Statistics, Fake Warrior Numbers, and Myths Dispelled:

9,087,000 military personnel served on active duty during the official Vietnam era from August 5, 1964 to May 7, 1975.

2,709,918 Americans served in uniform in Vietnam.

Vietnam Veterans represented 9.7% of their generation.

240 men were awarded the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War.

The first man to die in Vietnam was James Davis, in 1958. He was with the 509th Radio Research Station. Davis Station in Saigon was named for him.

58,148 were killed in Vietnam.

75,000 were severely disabled.

23,214 were 100% disabled.

5,283 lost limbs.

1,081 sustained multiple amputations.

Of those killed, 61% were younger than 21.

11,465 of those killed were younger than 20 years old.

Of those killed, 17,539 were married.

Average age of men killed: 23.1 years.

Five men killed in Vietnam were only 16 years old.

The oldest man killed was 62 years old.

As of January 15, 2004, there are 1,875 Americans still unaccounted for from the Vietnam War.

97% of Vietnam Veterans were honorably discharged.

91% of Vietnam Veterans say they are glad they served.

74% say they would serve again, even knowing the outcome.

Vietnam veterans have a lower unemployment rate than the same non-vet age groups.

Vietnam veterans' personal income exceeds that of our non-veteran age group by more than 18 percent.

87% of Americans hold Vietnam Veterans in high esteem.

There is no difference in drug usage between Vietnam Veterans and non-Vietnam Veterans of the same age group

(Source: Veterans Administration Study).

Vietnam Veterans are less likely to be in prison—only one-half of one percent of Vietnam Veterans have been jailed for crimes.

85% of Vietnam Veterans made successful transitions to civilian life.

Interesting Census Stats and "Been There" Wanabees:

1,713,823 of those who served in Vietnam were still alive as of August 1995 (census figures).

During that same Census count, the number of Americans falsely claiming to have served in-country was: 9,492,958.

As of the current Census taken during August 2000, the surviving U.S. Vietnam Veteran population estimate is: 1,002,511. This is hard to believe—losing nearly 711,000 between '95 and '00. That's 390 per day. During this Census count, the number of Americans falsely claiming to have served in-country is: 13,853,027. By this census, **FOUR OUT OF FIVE WHO CLAIM TO BE Vietnam vets are not.** The Department of Defense Vietnam War Service Index officially provided by The War Library originally reported with errors 2,709,918 U.S. military personnel as having served in-country. Corrections and confirmations to this errored index resulted in the addition of 358 U.S. military personnel confirmed to have served in Vietnam but not originally listed by the Department of Defense (all names are currently on file and accessible 24/7/365).

Isolated atrocities committed by American Soldiers produced torrents of outrage from anti-war critics and the news media while Communist atrocities were so common that they received hardly any media mention at all. The United States sought to minimize and prevent attacks on civilians while North Vietnam made attacks on civilians a centerpiece of its strategy. Americans who deliberately killed civilians received prison sentences while Communists who did so received commendations. From 1957 to 1973, the National Liberation Front assassinated 36,725 Vietnamese and abducted another 58,499. The death squads focused on leaders at the village level and on anyone who improved the lives of the peasants such as medical personnel, social workers, and school teachers.

Nixon Presidential Papers—Common Myths Dispelled:

Myth: Common Belief is that most Vietnam veterans were drafted. **Fact:** 2/3 of the men who served in Vietnam were volunteers. Two-thirds of the men who served in World War II were drafted. Approximately 70% of those killed in Vietnam were volunteers.

Myth: The media have reported that suicides among Vietnam veterans range from 50,000 to 100,000—6 to 11 times the non-Vietnam veteran population. **Fact:** Mortality studies show that 9,000 is a better estimate. "The CDC Vietnam Experience Study Mortality Assessment showed that during the first 5 years after discharge, deaths from suicide were 1.7 times more likely among Vietnam veterans than non-Vietnam veterans. After that initial post-service period, Vietnam veterans were no more likely to die from suicide than non-Vietnam veterans. In fact, after the 5-year post-service period, the rate of suicides is less in the Vietnam veterans' group.

Myth: Common belief is that a disproportionate number of blacks were killed in the Vietnam War. **Fact:** 86% of the men who died in Vietnam were Caucasians, 12.5% were black, 1.2% were other races. Sociologists Charles C. Moskos and John Sibley Butler, in their recently published book "All That We Can Be," said they analyzed the claim that blacks were used like cannon fodder during Vietnam "and can report definitely that this charge is untrue. Black fatalities amounted to 12 percent of all Americans killed in Southeast Asia," a figure proportional to the number of blacks in the U.S. population at the time and slightly lower than the proportion of blacks in the Army at the close of the war."

Myth: Common belief is that the war was fought largely by the poor and uneducated. **Fact:** Servicemen who went to Vietnam from well-to-do areas had a slightly elevated risk of dying because they were more likely to be pilots or infantry officers. Vietnam Veterans were the best educated forces our nation had ever sent into combat. 79% had a high school education or better.

Statistics from the Combat Area Casualty File (CACF) as of November, 1993 [The CACF is the basis for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (The Wall)]:

Average age of 58,148 killed in Vietnam was 23.11 years. (Although 58,169 names are in the Nov. 93 database, only 58,148 have both event date and birth date. Event date is used instead of declared dead date for some of those who were listed as missing in action).

Deaths Average Age Total: 58,148 23.11 years; Enlisted: 50,274 22.37 years; Officers: 6,598 28.43 years; Warrants: 1,276 24.73 years; E1 525 20.34 years; 11B MOS (infantryman): 18,465 22.55 years

Myth: The common belief is the average age of an infantryman fighting in Vietnam was 19. **Fact:** Assuming KIAs accurately represented age groups serving in Vietnam, the average age of an infantryman (MOS 11B) serving in Vietnam to be 19 years old is a myth; it is actually 22. None of the enlisted grades have an average age of less than 20. The average man who fought in World War II was 26 years of age.

Myth: The Common belief is that the domino theory was proved false. **Fact:** The domino theory was accurate. The ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries of Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand stayed free of Communism because of the U.S. commitment to Vietnam. The Indonesians threw the Soviets out in 1966 because of America's commitment in Vietnam. Without that commitment, Communism would have swept all the way to the Malacca Straits—that is south of Singapore and of great strategic importance to the free world. If you ask the people who live in these countries who won the war in Vietnam, they have a different opinion from the American news media. The Vietnam War was the turning point for Communism.

Myth: The common belief is that the fighting in Vietnam was not as intense as in World War II. **Fact:** The average infantryman in the South Pacific during World War II saw about 40 days of combat in four years. The average infantryman in Vietnam saw about 240 days of combat in one year thanks to the mobility of the helicopter. About 13 out of every 100 Americans who served in Vietnam was a casualty. 58,148 were killed and 304,000 wounded out of 2.7 million who served. Although the percent that died is similar to other wars, amputations or crippling wounds were 300 percent higher than in World War II. 75,000 Vietnam veterans are severely disabled. MEDEVAC helicopters flew nearly 500,000 missions. Over 900,000 patients were airlifted (nearly half were American). The average time lapse between wounding to hospitalization was less than one hour. As a result, less than one percent of all Americans wounded, who survived the first 24 hours, died. The helicopter provided unprecedented mobility. Without the helicopter, it would have taken three times as many troops to secure the 800-mile border with Cambodia and Laos (the politicians thought the Geneva Conventions of 1954 and the Geneva Accords of 1962 would secure the border).

Myth: Kim Phuc, the little nine year old Vietnamese girl running naked from the napalm strike near Trang Bang on 8 June 1972, shown a million times on American television, was burned by Americans bombing Trang Bang. **Fact:** No American had involvement in this incident near Trang Bang that burned Phan Thi Kim Phuc. The planes doing the bombing near the village were VNAF (Vietnam Air Force) and were being flown by Vietnamese pilots in support of South Vietnamese troops on the ground. The Vietnamese pilot who dropped the napalm in error is currently living in the United States. Even the AP photographer, Nick Ut, who took the picture, was Vietnamese. The incident in the photo took place on the second day of a three-day battle between the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) who occupied the village of Trang Bang and the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) who were trying to force the NVA out of the village. Recent reports in the news media that an American commander ordered the air strike that burned Kim Phuc are incorrect. There were no Americans involved in any capacity. "We (Americans) had nothing to do with controlling VNAF," according to Lieutenant General (Ret) James F. Hollingsworth, the Commanding General of TRAC at that time. Also, it has been incorrectly reported that two of Kim Phuc's brothers were killed in this incident. They were Kim's cousins, not her brothers.

Myth: The United States lost the war in Vietnam. **Fact:** The American military was not defeated in Vietnam. The American military did not lose a battle of any consequence. From a military standpoint, it was almost an unprecedented performance. General Westmoreland, quoting Douglas Pike, a professor at the University of California, Berkley as a major military defeat for the VC and NVA: "THE UNITED STATES DID NOT LOSE THE WAR IN VIETNAM, THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE DID." Read on: The fall of Saigon happened 30 April 1975, two years AFTER the American military left Vietnam. The last American troops departed in their entirety 29 March 1973. How could we lose a war we had already stopped fighting? We fought to an agreed stalemate. The peace settlement was signed in Paris on 27 January 1973. It called for release of all U.S. prisoners, withdrawal of U.S. forces, limitation of both sides' forces inside South Vietnam and a commitment to peaceful reunification. The 140,000 evacuees in April 1975 during the fall of Saigon consisted almost entirely of civilians and Vietnamese military, NOT American military running for their lives. There

were almost twice as many casualties in Southeast Asia (primarily Cambodia) the first two years after the fall of Saigon in 1975 than there were during the ten years the U.S. was involved in Vietnam. Thanks for the perceived loss and the countless assassinations and torture visited upon Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians goes mainly to the American media and their undying support-by-misrepresentation of the anti-War movement in the United States. As with much of the Vietnam War, the news media misreported and misinterpreted the 1968 Tet Offensive. It was reported as an overwhelming success for the Communist forces and a decided defeat for the U.S. forces. Nothing could be further from the truth. Despite initial victories by the Communist forces, the Tet Offensive resulted in a major defeat of those forces. General Vo Nguyen Giap, the designer of the Tet Offensive, is considered by some as ranking with Wellington, Grant, Lee and MacArthur as a great commander. Still, militarily, the Tet Offensive was a total defeat of the Communist forces on all fronts. It resulted in the death of some 45,000 NVA troops and the complete, if not total, destruction of the Viet Cong elements in South Vietnam. The Organization of the Viet Cong Units in the South never recovered. The Tet Offensive succeeded on only one front and that was the News front and the political arena. This was another example in the Vietnam War of an inaccuracy becoming the perceived truth. However, inaccurately reported, the News Media made the Tet Offensive famous.

All credit and research to: Capt. Marshal Hanson, U.S.N.R. (Ret.); Capt. Scott Beaton, Statistical Source.

[top of page](#)

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letter to the editor appearing in the Arizona Republic on June 23, 2005: "A wake-up call from Luke's jets." (Bet Mr. MacRae wishes he had not written this letter!)

"Question of the day for Luke Air Force Base: Whom do we thank for the morning air show? Last Wednesday, at precisely 9:11 a.m., a tight formation of four F-16 jets made a low pass over Arrowhead Mall, continuing west over Bell Road at approximately 500 feet. Imagine our good fortune! Do the Tom Cruise-wannabes feel we need this wake-up call, or were they trying to impress the cashiers at Mervyns' early-bird special? Any response would be appreciated. — Tom MacRae, Peoria"

The response:

Regarding "A wake-up call from Luke's jets":

On June 15, at precisely 9:12 a.m., a perfectly timed four-ship of F-16s from the 63rd Fighter Squadron at Luke Air Force Base flew over the grave of Captain Jeremy Fresques. Capt. Fresques was an Air Force officer who was previously stationed at Luke Air Force Base and was killed in Iraq on May 30, Memorial Day. At 9 a.m. on June 15, his family and friends gathered at Sunland Memorial Park in Sun City to mourn the loss of a husband, son and friend.

Based on the letter writer's recount of the flyby, and because of the jet noise, I'm sure you didn't hear the 21-gun salute, the playing of taps, or my words to the widow and parents of Capt. Fresques as I gave them their son's flag on behalf of the president of the United States and all those veterans and servicemen and women who understand the sacrifices they have endured.

A four-ship flyby is a display of respect the Air Force pays to those who give their lives in defense of freedom. We are professional aviators and take our jobs seriously, and on June 15 what the letter writer witnessed was four officers lining up to pay their ultimate respects. The letter writer asks, "Whom do we thank for the morning show?" The 56th Fighter Wing will call for you, and forward your thanks to the widow and parents of Capt. Fresques, and thank them for you, for it was in their honor that my pilots flew the most honorable formation of their lives.

Lt. Col. Scott Pleus
Luke Air Force Base

► EVENTS

RFTW REUNIONS



September 15-17 and October 6-8, 2006

Be sure to put these dates on your calendar. The two RFTW reunions this year will be in Angel Fire, New Mexico, on September 15-17 and at the Yo Ranch Resort Hotel in Kerrville, Texas, on October 6-8. In you plan to attend, you should make your hotel reservations ASAP.

The Angel Fire reunion will be especially meaningful, as September 15 will be National POW/MIA Remembrance Day. RFTW will participate in ceremonies at Angel Fire to commemorate POW Day, and will also be offering some much-needed maintenance at the Memorial site.

See "Latest News" on both Central and Southern Routes on this website for reservation info, schedules, hotels, and other details for both reunions.

► VA NEWS

PERSONAL VA DATA STOLEN *(See update immediately following)*

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The federal government is warning every living veteran discharged since 1975 to watch banking and credit card statements closely after sensitive personal data on all 26.5 million of them was stolen May 3. Monday, Veterans Affairs Secretary Jim Nicholson acknowledged the information was stolen from the home of a department analyst who wasn't authorized to remove it from the office. Privacy experts say the theft is one of the largest breaches of identity security ever. The stolen data include Social Security numbers and birth dates. Information on some veterans' spouses was also compromised. The information could be used to open fraudulent credit card accounts without the veterans' knowledge, said Susanna Montezemolo, a policy analyst with the Consumers Union.

"The Social Security number is the master key to your financial well being," she said. Nicholson said the analyst took the data home to work on a project. He offered few details because of the ongoing investigation. He didn't name the analyst, say where the employee lived or what form the data were in. The analyst has been put on leave. The data also include information on veterans who filed claims before 1975, said Matthew Burns, a Veterans Affairs spokesman. Though he said veterans should closely watch their financial statements for unauthorized transactions, Nicholson said there were no signs criminals have used the data. He said the burglary seemed random. Veterans groups were outraged. "It's an absolute disgrace that the agency put together to assist veterans has done this," said Bob Wallace, executive director for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. "This could ruin some vets' lives." The largest breach in identity security occurred last year when intruders hacked into computers of payments processor CardSystems Solutions. The criminals gained access to 40 million account records for holders of MasterCard, Visa USA, American Express and Discover cards. That theft pales in comparison to the potential loss veterans face because the stolen data in this case contain their Social Security numbers, said Beth Givens, director of the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, a consumer advocacy group based in San Diego. Those in the CardSystems case could close affected accounts, she said, while veterans "will have to monitor their records from now into the indefinite future." Veterans with concerns about the stolen information can call 1-800-FED-INFO or visit www.firstgov.gov or www.va.gov for assistance. Identity Guard has recently announced veterans affected by the recent data theft can have 6 months of Fraud Protection Service free. To learn more about this offer, go to www.fraudprotect.com

STOLEN DATA RECOVERED

Eight weeks after the laptop with veterans' personal data was stolen, it was recovered. It had been taken during a burglary from a VA employee's home. An informant notified the U.S. Park Police after he heard there was a \$50,000 reward for information. No suspects are in custody as yet. The laptop and external drive apparently were not accessed; FBI computer forensic teams said the data base remains intact and has not been accessed since it was stolen.

It is unknown whether the VA will still give veterans a year of free credit monitoring (*see next article*).

VA TO PROVIDE FREE CREDIT MONITORING

WASHINGTON, D.C. (June 21, 2006)—As part of the continuing efforts by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to protect and assist those potentially affected by the recent data theft that occurred at an employee's Maryland home, Secretary of Veterans Affairs R. James Nicholson today announced that VA will provide one year of free credit monitoring to people whose sensitive personal information may have been stolen in the incident. "VA continues to take aggressive steps to protect and assist people who may be potentially affected by this data theft," said Nicholson.

"VA has conducted extensive market research on available credit monitoring solutions, and has been working diligently to determine how VA can best serve those whose information was stolen. "Free credit monitoring will help safeguard those who may be affected, and will provide them with the peace of mind they deserve," he added. The Secretary said VA has no reason to believe the perpetrators who committed this burglary were targeting the data, and federal investigators believe that it is unlikely that identity theft has resulted from the data theft. This week, VA will solicit bids from qualified companies to provide a comprehensive credit monitoring solution. VA will ask these companies to provide expedited proposals and to be prepared to implement them rapidly once they are under contract. After VA hires a credit monitoring company, the Department will send a detailed letter to people whose sensitive personal information may have been included in the stolen data. This letter will explain credit monitoring and how eligible people can enroll or "opt-in" for the services. The Department expects to have the services in place and the letters mailed by mid-August.

Secretary Nicholson also announced VA is soliciting bids to hire a company that provides data-breach analysis, which will look for possible misuse of the stolen VA data. The analysis would help measure the risk of the data loss, identify suspicious misuse of identity information and expedite full assistance to affected people. As part of VA's efforts to prevent such an incident from happening again, Secretary Nicholson previously announced a series of personnel changes in the Office of Policy and Planning, where the breach occurred; the hiring of former Maricopa County (Ariz.) prosecutor Richard Romley as a Special Advisor for Information Security; the expedited completion of Cyber Security Awareness Training and Privacy Awareness Training for all VA employees; that an inventory be taken of all positions requiring access to sensitive VA data by June 30, 2006, to ensure that only those employees who need such access to do their jobs have it; that every laptop in VA undergo a security review to ensure that all security and virus software is current, including the immediate removal of any unauthorized information or software; and that VA facilities across the country—every hospital, Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC), regional office, national cemetery, field office and VA's Central Office—observe Security Awareness Week beginning June 26.

People who believe they may be affected by the data theft can go to www.firstgov.gov for more information. VA also continues to operate a call center that people can contact to get information about this incident and learn more about consumer-identity protections. That toll free number is 1-800-FED INFO (1-800-333-4636). The call center is operating from 8:00 am to 9:00 pm (EDT), Monday-Saturday as long as it is needed.

VA ADDS MAPS TO ONLINE GRAVESITE LOCATOR

WASHINGTON, D.C. (June 20, 2006)—The grave locations of more than three million veterans and dependents buried in national cemeteries can be found more easily now because the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has added maps of burial sections online that can be printed from home computers and at national cemetery kiosks.

The latest improvement builds upon a service begun two years ago, in which a VA online feature permits family members to find the cemetery in which their loved one is buried.

"This new map feature makes it easier for families, friends and researchers to find the exact location of a veteran's grave in all national cemeteries and some state veterans cemeteries," said the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "It enhances VA's service at national cemeteries, already highly regarded, and our commitment to them as national shrines and historical treasures."

The gravesite locator (<http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov>), online since April 2004, helps veterans' families, former comrades-in-arms and others find the cemeteries where veterans are buried. With the new online feature, people enter a veteran's name to search, click on the "Buried At" (burial location) link and a map of the national cemetery is displayed, showing the section where the grave is located.

In a related development, VA recently added to its database the cemeteries in which 1.9 million veterans were buried with VA grave markers. These are mostly private cemeteries. This addition brings the number of graves recorded in the locator to approximately five million. Those with maps are in VA national cemeteries and in state veterans cemeteries and Arlington National Cemetery if burials were since 1999.

Beyond the five million records now available, VA continues to add approximately 1,000 new records to the database each day. VA also plans to add to its online database the exact locations of veterans' gravesites in the remaining state veterans cemeteries.

In the midst of the largest cemetery expansion since the Civil War, VA operates 123 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico and 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites. More than three million Americans, including veterans of every war and conflict—from the Revolutionary War to the Global War on Terror—are buried in VA's national cemeteries on more than 16,000 acres of land.

Veterans with a discharge other than dishonorable, their spouses, and eligible dependent children may be buried in a national cemetery. Other burial benefits include a burial flag, Presidential Memorial Certificate, and a government headstone or marker—even if they are not buried in a national cemetery. Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from the Internet at <http://www.cem.va.gov> or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 1-800-827-1000.

VETERANS BENEFITS RESOURCE GUIDE

Editor's note: listed below are websites that provide information on veterans' benefits and how to file/ask for them. There are also many sites that explain how to obtain books, military/medical records, and information, and how to appeal a denied claim with the VA. Please pass this information on to every veteran you know. Nearly 100% of this information is free and available for all veterans; the only catch is: you have to ask for it, because they won't tell you about a specific benefit unless you ask for it. You need to know what questions to ask so the right doors open for you—and then be ready to have an advocate who is willing to work with and for you, stay in the process, and press for your rights and your best interests. Save this list so you'll have it handy when you need it.

Appeals: http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin21/m21_1/mr/part1/ch05.doc
Board of Veterans' Appeals: <http://www.va.gov/vbs/bva/>
CARES Commission: <http://www.va.gov/vbs/bva/>
CARES Draft National Plan: <http://www1.va.gov/cares/page.cfm?pg=105>
Center for Minority Veterans: <http://www1.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans/>
Center for Veterans Enterprise: <http://www.vetbiz.gov/default2.htm>
Center for Women Veterans: <http://www1.va.gov/womenvet/>
Clarification on the changes in VA healthcare for Gulf War Veterans:
<http://www.gulfwarvets.com/ubb/Forum1/HTML/000016.html>
Classified Records - American Gulf War Veterans Assoc:
<http://www.gulfwarvets.com/ubb/Forum18/HTML/000011.html>
Compensation for Disabilities Associated with the Gulf War Service:
http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin21/m21_1/part6/ch07.doc
Compensation Rate Tables, 12-1-03: <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Rates/comp01.htm>
Department of Veterans Affairs Home Page <http://www.va.gov/>
Directory of Veterans Service Organizations: <http://www1.va.gov/vso/index.cfm?template=view>
Disability Examination Worksheets Index, Comp: <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Benefits/exams/index.htm>
Due Process: http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin21/m21_1/mr/part1/ch02.doc
Duty to Assist: http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin21/m21_1/mr/part1/ch01.doc
Electronic Code of Federal Regulations: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/ecfr/>
Emergency, Non-emergency, and Fee Basis Care: <http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/fedben.pdf>
Environmental Agents: <http://www1.va.gov/environagents/>
Environmental Agents M10: http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1002
Establishing Combat Veteran Eligibility: http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=315
EVALUATION PROTOCOL FOR GULF WAR AND IRAQI FREEDOM VETERANS WITH POTENTIAL EXPOSURE TO DEPLETED URANIUM (DU):
<http://www1.va.gov/gulfwar/docs/DUHandbook1303122304.DOC> and
http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1158
See also,
Depleted Uranium Fact Sheet: <http://www1.va.gov/gulfwar/docs/DepletedUraniumFAQSheet.doc>
VALUATION PROTOCOL FOR NON-GULF WAR VETERANS WITH POTENTIAL EXPOSURE TO DEPLETED URANIUM (DU): <http://www1.va.gov/gulfwar/docs/DUHANDBOOKNONGW130340304.DOC>
Fee Basis, PRIORITY FOR OUTPATIENT MEDICAL SERVICES AND INPATIENT HOSPITAL CARE:
http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=206
Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents 2005: <http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/fedben.pdf>, OR
http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/current_benefits.htm
Forms and Records Request: <http://www.va.gov/vaforms/>
General Compensation Provisions:
http://www.access.gpo.gov/uscode/title38/partii_chapter11_subchaptervi_.html
Geriatrics and Extended Care <http://www1.va.gov/geriatricsshg/>
Guideline for Chronic Pain and Fatigue MUS-CPG:
http://www.oqp.med.va.gov/cpg/cpgn/mus/mus_base.htm
Guide to Gulf War Veterans' Health: <http://www1.va.gov/gulfwar/docs/VHIGulfwar.pdf>
Gulf War Subject Index: <http://www1.va.gov/GulfWar/page.cfm?pg=7&template=main&letter=A>
Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses Q&As: <http://www1.va.gov/gulfwar/docs/GWIllnessesQandAsIB1041.pdf>
Hearings: http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin21/m21_1/mr/part1/ch04.doc
Homeless Veterans: <http://www1.va.gov/homeless/>
HSR&D Home: <http://www.hsr.d.research.va.gov/>
Index to Disability Examination Worksheets C&P exams:
<http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/benefits/exams/index.htm>
Ionizing Radiation: <http://www1.va.gov/irad/>
Iraqi Freedom/Enduring Freedom Veterans VBA: <http://www.vba.va.gov/EFIF/>

M10 for spouses and children: http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1007
M10 Part III Change 1: http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1008
M21-1 Table of Contents: http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/M21_1.html
Mental Disorders, Schedule of Ratings: http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/regs/38CFR/BOOKC/PART4/S4_130.DOC
Mental Health Program Guidelines:
http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1094
Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Centers: <http://www.mirecc.med.va.gov/>
MS (Multiple Sclerosis) Centers of Excellence: <http://www.va.gov/ms/about.asp>
My Health e Vet: <http://www.myhealth.va.gov/>
NASDVA.COM National Association of State Directors: <http://www.nasdva.com/>
National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention:
<http://www.nchpdp.med.va.gov/postdeploymentlinks.asp>
Neurological Conditions and Convulsive Disorders, Schedule of Ratings:
<http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/regs/38cfr/bookc/part4/s4%5F124a.doc>
OMI (Office of Medical Inspector): <http://www.omi.cio.med.va.gov/>
Online VA Form 10-10EZ: <https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez/>
Parkinson's Disease and Related Neurodegenerative Disorders:
<http://www1.va.gov/resdev/funding/solicitations/docs/parkinsons.pdf> and,
<http://www1.va.gov/padrecc/>
Peacetime Disability Compensation:
http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=browse_usc&docid=Cite:+38USC1131
Pension for Non-Service-Connected Disability or Death;
http://www.access.gpo.gov/uscode/title38/partii_chapter15_subchapteri.html, and
http://www.access.gpo.gov/uscode/title38/partii_chapter15_subchapterii.html, and
http://www.access.gpo.gov/uscode/title38/partii_chapter15_subchapteriii.html
Persian Gulf Registry: http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1003
Program now referred to as Gulf War Registry Program (to include Operation Iraqi Freedom) as of March 7, 2005:
http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1232
Persian Gulf Registry Referral Centers: http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1006
Persian Gulf Veterans' Illnesses Research 1999, Annual Report To Congress:
http://www1.va.gov/resdev/1999_Gulf_War_Veterans'_Illnesses_Appendices.doc
Persian Gulf Veterans' Illnesses Research 2002, Annual Report To Congress:
http://www1.va.gov/resdev/prt/gulf_war_2002/GulfWarRpt02.pdf
Phase I PGR: http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1004
Phase II PGR: http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1005
Policy Manual Index: <http://www.va.gov/publ/direc/eds/edsmps.htm>
Power of Attorney: http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin21/m21_1/mr/part1/ch03.doc
Project 112 (Including Project SHAD): <http://www1.va.gov/shad/>
Prosthetics Eligibility: http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=337
Public Health and Environmental Hazards Home Page: <http://www.vethealth.cio.med.va.gov/>
Public Health/SARS: <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/SARS/>
Publications and Manuals: <http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/publications.cfm?Pub=4>
Publications and Reports: http://www1.va.gov/resdev/prt/pubs_individual.cfm?webpage=gulf_war.htm
Records Center and Vault Homepage: <http://www.aac.va.gov/vault/default.html>
Records Center and Vault Site Map: <http://www.aac.va.gov/vault/sitemap.html>
REQUEST FOR AND CONSENT TO RELEASE OF INFORMATION FROM CLAIMANT'S RECORDS:
<http://www.forms.va.gov/va/Internet/VARF/getformharness.asp?formName=3288-form.xft>
Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans Illnesses April 11, 2002:
http://www1.va.gov/rac-gwvi/docs/Minutes_April112002.doc
Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans Illnesses:
http://www1.va.gov/rac-gwvi/docs/ReportandRecommendations_2004.pdf
Research and Development: http://www.appc1.va.gov/resdev/programs/all_programs.cfm
Survivor's and Dependents' Educational Assistance: http://www.access.gpo.gov/uscode/title38/partiii_chapter35.html

Title 38, Index,

Parts 0-17: [http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/textidx?](http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/textidx?sid=1b0c269b510d3157fbf8f8801bc9b3dc&c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title38/38cfrv1_02.tpl)

[sid=1b0c269b510d3157fbf8f8801bc9b3dc&c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title38/38cfrv1_02.tpl](http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/textidx?sid=1b0c269b510d3157fbf8f8801bc9b3dc&c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title38/38cfrv1_02.tpl)

Part 18:

http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/textidx?sid=1b0c269b510d3157fbf8f8801bc9b3dc&c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title38/38cfrv2_02.tpl

Part 3 - Adjudication, Subpart A - Pension, Compensation, and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation:

http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/textidx?c=ecfr&sid=1b0c269b510d3157fbf8f8801bc9b3dc&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title38/38cfr3_main_02.tpl

Pensions, Bonuses & Veterans' Relief(also Section 3.317 Compensation for certain disabilities due to undiagnosed illnesses found here):

http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/textidx?c=ecfr&sid=1b0c269b510d3157fbf8f8801bc9b3dc&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title38/38cfr3_main_02.tpl

Section 4.16 Total disability ratings for compensation based on unemployability of the individual. PART 4 -

SCHEDULE FOR RATING DISABILITIES, Subpart A - General Policy in Rating:

<http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/textidx?c=ecfr&sid=>

U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims: <http://www.vetapp.gov/>

VA Best Practice Manual for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):

<http://www.avapl.org/pub/PTSD%20Manual%20final%206.pdf>

VA Fact Sheet: <http://www1.va.gov/opa/fact/gwfs.html>

VA Health Care Eligibility: <http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility/home/hecmain.asp>

VA INSTITUTING GLOBAL ASSESSMENT OF FUNCTION (GAF): <http://www.avapl.org/gaf/gaf.html>

VA Life Insurance Handbook, Chapter 3:

<http://www.insurance.va.gov/inForceGliSite/GLIhandbook/glibookletch3.htm#310>

VA Loan Lending Limits and Jumbo Loans: http://valoans.com/va_facts_limits.cfm

VA MS Research: <http://www.va.gov/ms/about.asp>

VA National Hepatitis C Program: <http://www.hepatitis.va.gov/>

VA Office of Research and Development: <http://www1.va.gov/resdev/>

VA Trainee Pocket Card on Gulf War: <http://www.va.gov/OAA/pocketcard/gulfwar.asp>

VA WMD EMSHG: <http://www1.va.gov/emshg/>

VA WRIISC-DC: <http://www.va.gov/WRIISC-DC/>

VAOIG Hotline Telephone Number and Address: <http://www.va.gov/oig/hotline/hotline3.htm>

Vet Center Eligibility - Readjustment Counseling Service: <http://www.va.gov/rcs/Eligibility.htm>

Veterans Benefits Administration Main Web Page: <http://www.vba.va.gov/>

Veterans Legal and Benefits Information: <http://valaw.org/>

VHA Forms, Publications, Manuals: <http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/>

VHA Programs - Clinical Programs & Initiatives: http://www1.va.gov/health_benefits/page.cfm?pg=13

VHA Public Health Strategic Health Care Group Home Page: <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/>

VHI Guide to Gulf War Veterans' Health: http://www1.va.gov/vhi_ind_study/gulfwar/istudy/index.asp

Vocational Rehabilitation: <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/>

Vocational Rehabilitation Subsistence: <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/InterSubsistencefy04.doc>

VONAPP online: <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>

WARMS - 38 CFR Book C: <http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/bookc.html>

Wartime Disability Compensation:

http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=browse_usc&docid=Cite:+38USC1110

War-Related Illness and Injury Study Center - New Jersey: <http://www.wri.med.va.gov/>

Welcome to the GI Bill Web Site; <http://www.gibill.va.gov/>

What VA Social Workers Do; <http://www1.va.gov/socialwork/page.cfm?pg=3>

WRIISC Patient Eligibility: <http://www.illegion.org/va1.html>

[top of page](#)

► OTHER NEWS

FUNDING FOR POW-MIA SEARCH INCREASED

By Rick Maze, Air Force Times staff writer

Under pressure from Congress and a major veterans' group, the Defense Department has added \$3.6 million to a program that accounts for service members still missing from the Vietnam War. Pentagon spokesman Army Lt. Col. Brian Maka said the money brings the budget for the office to \$6.1 million over the originally programmed budget.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars and the House and Senate armed services committee have complained that the Bush administration has made funding the POW-MIA program a low priority. While pleased that money was found, VFW spokesman Joe Davis said the money comes so late in the fiscal year that the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, known as JPAC, won't be able to launch postponed operations to look for and identify the remains of missing service members this fiscal year. Maka said the money "was forwarded later in the fiscal year than desired due to competing funding requirements." But, he added, money was made available "in recognition of the importance of the mission of the fullest possible accounting for this nation's missing."

The added money only applies to the fiscal 2006 budget, which ends Sept. 30, and does not resolve complaints about funding for 2007. The VFW wants JPAC to receive at least \$65 million, which would be a significant increase over the \$50 million available this year with the release of the \$3.6 million.

[top of page](#)

MATT MAUPIN HONORED

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 21, 2006)—As the Army Reserve observed its 98th birthday this weekend, the commander of U.S. Army Reserve Command today took the opportunity to honor the only U.S. soldier who remains listed as captured in Iraq, Army Reserve Sgt. Keith "Matt" Maupin.

Army Lt. Gen. James Helmly noted the contributions and sacrifices Army Reservists are making in support of the global war on terror during a birthday commemoration here at the Pentagon. The Army Reserve was established on April 23, 1908.

More than 150,000 Army Reserve soldiers have been mobilized since Sept. 11, 2001, and more than 25,000 have been called to active duty more than once, he noted. "These are clearly hallmarks of heroes," he said.

"But we cannot recognize the call to duty or mention heroes without taking a moment to remember the only American soldier who remains missing in Iraq," the general told an assembled group in the Pentagon's MacArthur Corridor.

Insurgents captured Maupin April 9, 2004, after his fuel convoy came under attack at Baghdad International Airport. Two of the 43 soldiers in the convoy, Sgt. Elmer C. Krause and Spc. Gregory Goodrich, and six civilians were killed in the action that followed. A week later insurgents released a videotape showing the soldier surrounded by five armed men. In June of that year, another videotape showed a man being killed, and an audio track identified the man as Maupin. Pentagon officials have called the second video inconclusive.

The Army continues to list Maupin, a 724th Transportation Company soldier, as "missing-captured." Helmly praised Maupin today and said the Army is committed to bringing him home.

"Matt Maupin answered the call to duty. He continues to courageously answer the call to duty today," Helmly said of the 724th Transportation Company soldier.

Helmly also remembered the Maupin family, who he said "continues to answer the call to duty, serving faithfully and without reservation." He noted the family's tireless work with the Yellow Ribbon Support Center they founded in Ohio to support soldiers and their families. One example of their work was the recent distribution of state-of-the-art computers to Iraq for soldiers to use in communicating with their families and loved ones at home, the general noted.

Maupin's plight serves as a reminder of the Army's warrior ethos, Helmly said. The ethos' four principles are: place the mission first, never accept defeat, never quit, and never leave a fallen comrade.

"We must never forget our brother in arms who is not able to be with his family and celebrate this day with us," Helmlly said. "We will live the warrior ethos daily, praying for his family and fighting to bring him back home."

[top of page](#)

VIETNAM POW EXHIBIT OPENS AT AIR FORCE MUSEUM

DAYTON, Ohio (May 9, 2006)—Visitors can get a rare glimpse into the lives of prisoners of war through a dramatic new exhibit at the National Museum of the United States Air Force. The exhibit, titled "Return with Honor: American Prisoners of War in Southeast Asia," located in the museum's Modern Flight Gallery, is now open to the public.

Visitors enter the exhibit next to a reproduced doorway to the "Hanoi Hilton," the name given by Americans to Hoa Lo Prison. Photographs, videos, dioramas and artifacts tell the story of prisoner torture, political exploitation, filthy living conditions and endless attempts at communist indoctrination.

Visitors can look inside re-created, life-size prison cells for an up-close picture of POW living conditions. Several artifacts, including handmade games, rings, cigarette cases and clothing that were created by the prisoners during their confinement, also are on display.

"We are extremely honored to have an exhibit that pays tribute to the courage and bravery exemplified by these POWs," said museum director retired Maj. Gen. Charles D. Metcalf. "The POW story is one that ignites emotion and this exhibit will give visitors a greater understanding of the inhumane conditions the POWs endured."

The exhibit also features a Son Tay prison camp rescue raid display. Although the raiders in November 1970 found that the prison camp did not hold any POWs, the raid proved a success in other ways. A daring raid so close to Hanoi showed that the United States had the will to carry out exceptional operations to ensure POW well-being. POW morale soared on account of the raid.

The exhibit also highlights the story of U.S. forces' final combat in Southeast Asia, which occurred in May 1975 when the American cargo ship SS Mayaguez was seized by the Cambodian Khmer Rouge navy while it was in international waters. Featured in this display are a life ring from the Mayaguez and a beret worn by one of the pararescuemen who participated in the operation.

The National Museum of the United States Air Force is located on Springfield Pike, six miles northeast of downtown Dayton. It is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. seven days a week (closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day). Admission to the museum and parking are free. For more information about this and other exhibits at the museum, call (937) 255-3286, Ext. 302.

[top of page](#)

FOUR NAMES ADDED TO VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

Washington, D.C.—The names of four American servicemen were inscribed on the black granite walls of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on May 16, announced Jan C. Scruggs, founder and president of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. Work began on Tuesday, May 16, and continued through Thursday, May 18, when a ceremony was held for the press to witness the addition of one of the names. During that ceremony, Mark, Mike and Jon Rumley were on hand to witness the addition of their brother's name to The Wall.

Capt. Robert Patrick Rumley Jr. of the United States Marine Corps incurred combat injuries on September 5, 1966, when the helicopter in which he was a passenger was shot down by hostile enemy fire. He never fully recovered from

those injuries and died on May 18, 1968. His name was inscribed on the 38th anniversary of his death.

The three other names added were: Army SP4 Bobby Gene Barbre of Carmi, Illinois; Marine Lance Cpl. George Bryant Givens Jr. of Robards, Kentucky; and Marine Pfc. Hans Jorg Rudolph Lorenz of Midland, Ontario, Canada.

These additions will bring the number of names on The Wall to 58,253 men and women who were killed in Vietnam or remain missing in action.

[top of page](#)

BELATED HONORS

From the April 30, 2006 Star Telegram of Forth Worth/Arlington Texas

By Chris Vaughn, Star-Telegram Staff Writer

Marine Pfc. Hans Lorenz lay in a hospital bed almost completely shrouded in bandages soaked in silver nitrate, the liquid dripping off his bed and staining the floor black. It was a miracle he'd ever gotten that far, from a base near Da Nang, where a gasoline explosion rocked the April night, all the way to a naval hospital in Oakland, Calif. He had no skin left on 80 percent of his body.

Eleven days after Lorenz arrived in California from his base in Vietnam, bacterial infections ravaged his internal organs, shutting them down one by one. At 2 p.m., April 26, 1966, he died of a cardiac arrest.

Flown in from the war zone in Vietnam, Lorenz was never considered a Vietnam War casualty by the Defense Department, and as a result did not appear on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., when it was unveiled in 1982. Over the years, his mother and her friends made entreaties to the Marine Corps for approval to have his name added. Each time, the Marine Corps denied her. He was ineligible for the Wall because he died in an accident, and, as she was told, the Wall is only for those killed in combat.

Only that's wrong. Dead wrong.

The Wall was never intended to exclude men and women who died of nonhostile injuries during the years of the war. Indeed, the Wall already bears the names of 10,500 people who died with no help from the enemy. But because of what appears to be a misinterpretation of the Wall's criteria, dozens of eligible names may have been wrongly denied permanency on the Wall, according to the expert who discovered the problem. It also means that the services are not always consistent in their decisions, meaning that what will get a soldier on the Wall won't get a Marine on it.

The Defense Department has not asked for a thorough review of the hundreds of inquiries made over the past two decades, nor would almost anyone in a leadership position even agree to be interviewed, including Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England, a longtime Fort Worth resident. However, the Navy and Marine Corps agreed to conduct their own reviews after questions were raised.

"I truly hope that this is an anomaly," said Michael Wardlaw, director of the Navy Casualty Assistance Division at Navy Personnel Command. "But I want to get everything out in the open on this."

Very few people intimately involved in Vietnam-related issues knew that some of the military services were excluding noncombat casualties. One of the principal creators of the Wall didn't know. Neither did the national president of the Vietnam Veterans of America or two past presidents of the American Gold Star Mothers. Based on Star-Telegram interviews and statements from officials with the services and the Defense Department, the rules have not changed since they were written in the months after the dedication of the Wall.

What appears to be happening is that employees in some of the services' casualty offices are confused about the criteria for deaths during and after the war, and no one in the Defense Department is reviewing the rejection letters to ensure the

right decision was made. The result is letters like the one Linda Lorenz received in 2004 from A. Hammers, head of the Marines' casualty section in Quantico, Va.:

"The consensus was that the criteria should not be expanded beyond the original, i.e., to recognize those service members who died as a result of combat with enemy forces. His death was not attributable to combat wounds, therefore he is ineligible to have his name added to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial."

After nearly 20 years, though, Lorenz's mother finally got the letter she wanted. Alerted by a dogged Vietnam researcher in Maryland and his congressman, the Defense Department intervened in her son's case and gave its approval in February for Lorenz's name to go up on the Wall. Maj. Michael Shavers, a spokesman in the Defense Department, called the Lorenz case an "oversight."

"After coordinated review with the Marine Corps ... this case was determined to be an omission," he wrote in an e-mail to the Star-Telegram.

The name of Pfc. Hans J.R. Lorenz will be engraved in time for next month's Memorial Day service in Washington.

To read the above complete story, visit http://www.dfw.com/mld/dfw/news/consumer_news/14466512.htm.

[top of page](#)

CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS TO BE BURIED IN MASSACHUSETTS NATIONAL CEMETERY

WASHINGTON, D.C. (June 12, 2006)—One hundred and forty-five years after their deaths on a battlefield in northern Virginia, six Union soldiers from the Civil War are returning home to Massachusetts. They were buried with full military honors on June 10 at the Massachusetts National Cemetery in Bourne. "These soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice for the preservation of our nation," said the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "We don't know their names. We cannot locate their families. But we are honored to provide a lasting tribute to their service on the hallowed grounds of a national cemetery."

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) buried the remains in a VA-run cemetery, which is maintained in perpetuity as "a national shrine," five weeks shy of the 145th anniversary of their deaths on July 18, 1861, the eve of the first battle of Manassas. VA and the Massachusetts Sons of Union Veterans planned a burial ceremony June 10 at 11:00 a.m. at the Massachusetts National Cemetery in Bourne, Mass. The ceremony included Civil War re-enactors and full military honors. The remains were discovered in 1997 on a construction site in Centreville, VA. Scientists from the Smithsonian Institute identified the remains as soldiers of the 1st Massachusetts infantry who were killed during a skirmish known as Blackburn's Ford. Scientists were unable to establish the identities of the soldiers. The Massachusetts Sons of Union Soldiers, working with Fairfax County, VA, which had legal custody of the remains, arranged for the transfer to their home state.

Like other veterans of the armed forces, the Civil War soldiers are eligible for burial in a VA-maintained national cemetery. Veterans with a discharge other than dishonorable, their spouses and eligible dependent children can be buried in a national cemetery. Other burial benefits available for all eligible veterans, regardless of whether they are buried in a national cemetery or a private cemetery, include a burial flag, a Presidential Memorial Certificate and a government headstone or marker. In the midst of the largest cemetery expansion since the Civil War, VA operates 123 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico, and 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites.

More than three million Americans, including veterans of every war and conflict—from the Revolutionary War to the current war against terrorism—are buried in VA's national cemeteries on more than 16,000 acres of land.

[top of page](#)

TO HELMET OR NOT TO HELMET?

By John Tierney, New York Times

Until his head collided with a windshield, Ben Roethlisberger savored the liberty of riding a motorcycle without a helmet. Now the Pittsburgh Steelers' quarterback says he has "a new perspective on life."

"If I ever ride again, it certainly, will be with a helmet," he announced on Thursday, the day after leaving the hospital.

There's a lesson here for libertarians—and don't worry; it's not that we must pass laws mandating helmets for everyone. There's a better way to protect riders libertarian paternalism, which is not as oxymoronic as it sounds.

The term was coined by a law professor and an economist at the University of Chicago, Cass Sunstein and Richard Thaler. They want to preserve your liberty to make choices, but they'd also like to improve your odds of choosing what you really want.

If Roethlisberger had done a sober cost-benefit analysis, he never would have gotten on a motorcycle. Even a minor accident—a spill that shattered his elbow—could have ended his career and cost him tens of millions of dollars. Now he's got a new perspective, and so do the many motorcyclists who will be wearing new helmets after the publicity about his accident. But their new perspective isn't entirely rational, either. Their odds haven't changed just because of one accident. Why should they start wearing helmets now?

Because they're making decisions the way most humans do—haphazardly. We're guided more by one recent horror story than by reams of statistics. Unless pressed, we tend to avoid thinking about unlikely events, like traffic accidents, or problems in the distant future, like how we'll finance our retirement.

Given all these foibles, Sunstein and Thaler argue it's naive to assume that people are making fully informed choices. Since people's choices often depend on how the options are presented, authorities should practice a mild form of paternalism—point people toward what experts think is best for them, but don't force them to go there.

This might mean simply providing the public with information and advice. Or it could mean changing the options available, as was done in experiments with 401(k) plans. Instead of giving workers the traditional option to enroll in the plans, employers automatically enrolled everyone and gave them the option to withdraw. As a result, far more workers set aside money for retirement.

How would you apply this libertarian paternalism to motorcycle helmets? I consulted Sunstein and Thaler, as well as Edward Glaeser, a Harvard economist who's more skeptical about this approach. He worries that bureaucrats and politicians are prone to making their own bad decisions when they turn paternalistic. But Glaeser does see a role for paternalism when dealing with a problem as clear-cut and serious as motorcycle fatalities. He, Sunstein and Thaler like the idea of encouraging cyclists to wear helmets by changing the options they face. Instead of telling them that a helmet is optional—the default situation in most states—tell them a standard license comes with the requirement to wear a helmet.

If a libertarian cyclist objected, he could apply for a special license to ride without a helmet (along with a decal for the motorcycle so the police wouldn't stop him). He'd have to provide proof that he carried enough insurance to cover the costs of an accident so that taxpayers wouldn't get stuck with the bill.

The class shouldn't be an exercise in fear-mongering. It could include testimonials from intelligent motorcyclists who've weighed the risks and still want the joy of the wind on their faces. But before anyone gets this license, he ought to see a good analysis of the injury statistics and hear about the benefits of helmets—including that new perspective from the Steelers' quarterback.

RFTW Editor's notes:

- *Only four states have no helmet laws whatsoever: Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, and New Hampshire. However, many other states require helmets up to age 18 or 21.*
- *21 states, including California and Nevada, have mandatory helmet laws for all motorcycle riders.*
- *California is the only state in which lane splitting is legal.*
- *Many states do not allow lane-sharing (two motorcycles in a single lane).*

For complete info on all 50 states' motorcycle laws, see <http://motorcycleinfo.calsci.com/PrintLaws.html>.

[top of page](#)

ACTOR BUSEY PROMOTING HELMET USE

Longtime Harley rider, Actor Gary Busey, 62, has been an advocate for helmet use since his 1988 motorcycle accident. Before his accident, he was a staunch opponent of mandatory helmet laws. He was thrown against a curb headfirst, and his head injuries were nearly fatal. After a year of recovery, he announced that he had changed his views on helmet laws. He continues to support those who have suffered debilitating brain trauma, including bicyclists, skiers, and skateboarders.

To not wear a helmet, he said, “goes against the grain of your soul, your truth, your birthright your potential and your destiny. It’s ego, it’s macho-ism, it’s stupidity, it’s having no concern for your family, no concern for yourself,” he said. “It’s a stupid way to live life, riding a vehicle that can kill you in a fraction of a second if you’re not wearing a helmet.”

[top of page](#)

CELL PHONES FOR SOLDIERS WINS GRANT

WASHINGTON, D.C. March 29, 2006—The teenage co-founder of an "America Supports You" organization in Massachusetts that distributes prepaid phone cards to deployed troops has earned a \$5,000 grant and is competing for another.

Robbie Bergquist, 13, who started "Cell Phones for Soldiers" two years ago with his sister Brittany, is among nine "BRICK Award" winners competing for a second \$5,000 grant from "Do Something," a national organization that encourages young people to become involved in community service.

America Supports You is a Defense Department program that spotlights efforts by the Americans to support men and women in uniform.

According to the Do Something Web site, its BRICK Awards program recognizes six outstanding leaders 18 and under each year, as well as three leaders in the 19-25 age category. The winners under 18 receive a \$5,000 higher-education scholarship and a \$5,000 community grant for a not-for-profit organization of their choice. The 19–25-year-old winners receive a \$10,000 community grant.

A poll is under way at the Do Something Web site to determine which 2006 BRICK Award winner will receive an extra \$5,000 grant. Robbie Bergquist is among those competing, and voting is open to all Web site visitors.

The Bergquist youngsters started out trying to raise money to help a deployed Massachusetts soldier who had run up a large telephone bill calling loved ones from Iraq. When they found the soldier's bill had been forgiven, they set their sights on making it possible for as many deployed troops as possible to call home for free.

In addition to cash donations, Cell Phones for Soldiers accepts used cell phones, which are recycled for cash to purchase phone cards. The organization's reach has grown to boast more than 6,000 phone drop-off sites around the country, and

it has raised more than \$1 million.

"All the money that we raise goes directly to purchasing prepaid phone cards for our brave men and women serving our country," Robbie said.

Related Sites:

Cell Phones for Soldiers: <http://www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com>

Do Something: <http://www.dosomething.org/>

America Supports You: <http://www.americasupportsyounil/>

[top of page](#)

THEATER PROJECT TAKES "THE RIDE" TO NEW YORK CITY

West Springfield, MA) 3/15/06 - The original cast of a musical that portrays the emotional aftershocks of the Vietnam War presented staged readings of the show at two New York theaters in April.

The play, titled "The Ride," was written by Danny Eaton, founder of the Theater Project of West Springfield, MA, and Mitch Chakour, who also served as musical director. "The Ride" was originally staged April through June 2005 at the Majestic Theater in West Springfield.

Eaton, who produced the play, was joined by Chakour, director Zoya Kachadurian, and original cast members at the Queens Theatre in the Park on April 15 where they presented a staged reading with musical accompaniment.

Described as "a patriotic love story—with motorcycles!" the story focuses on a successful businessman who decides to take his first Memorial Day weekend journey to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. He is joined by his wife and her best friend, the sister of a soldier classified MIA from the conflict. Along the road, they are joined by three biker/veterans, also en route to the Wall. The group then encounters a mysterious and eccentric former POW who seems familiar to some of them.

A Marine Corp veteran who served from 1965 to 1970, Eaton feels that the story's focus on veteran's issues is as relevant today as it would be in any previous era. His play reflects "the whole issue of why we go to war, and especially what happens to these people when they come back from war. Even if they're seemingly uninjured, you don't come back unscathed. Wounds may not be visible, but they're there. That's why the show has currency. Even though it discusses Vietnam War veterans, it has relevance to today's circumstances."

Eaton participated in his first Run For The Wall in 2003. "I had a friend who did it the year before," he said. "He created a presentation about the trip, which piqued my interest. I went online to track down some riders from Massachusetts, and hooked up with some vets from the Boston area for the ride."

"What happens when you have an MIA.? To clear the books, you declare him dead. But, as I thought when I was writing this story, what if you have a character who refuses to believe that her loved one is dead? A character who just hangs on to the hope that they're still alive? And what if you went to the Wall, and this person—with the same name as the MIA—shows up

Eaton acknowledges what he calls "the unquestioning sense of brotherhood among all military vets," but notes that Vietnam veterans "kept POW/MIA issues top-of-mind more than any other group of vets. This play is a tip of the hat to their nobility."

[top of page](#)

THE MILITARY HISTORY WAR LIBRARY

The Military History War Library and All Nation Personnel Registry was established July 4, 1988. The project collects data, statistics, documentation, and files on all of American's military missions and is accessible 24/7 worldwide through the Internet. Following are some of the sections of the Library:

The G.I. Photograph Museum of Honor is designed to display military-era photographs of veterans and active-duty personnel. Veterans of all eras can submit their portraits or group photographs for permanent, worldwide display. Families of deceased vets or servicepersons killed or missing can display their loved ones. Moms, dads, sons, and daughters of military families can post photographs of missing family members or worldwide accessible messages to the missing. Veterans seeking lost comrades will find this Museum an enormously valuable tool in finding old buddies. Generations of family members living anywhere around the world can instantly access their veteran's photo and history.

The Veteran and Active-Duty Registry will display personal "Looking for..." messages.

Preserving American Military History is devoted to those American veterans whose documentation of war experiences seeks to honor and preserve the contributions of generations of loyal and honorable service.

Other search Wings include veteran and military associations, Who's Who, War Correspondents, Employment opportunities, Glossary of terms and abbreviations, films and books on war/military, over 210,000 Killed- and Missing-in-Action names, Reunion notices up to a year in advance, over 74,000 Associations, Honorary Diploma program, Veteran Organization RetroActive Decorations program, War Wings dedicated to all of America's military missions, ethnic American Wings, Unit and Ship histories, downloadable graphic images, association membership applications, and dozens of other categories.

The Contact Comrade Program invites all veterans who served with a GI who died in uniform or is listed as Missing are invited to list their names alongside their fallen/missing comrade for contact by KIA or MIA families, or for wartime academic researchers working to provide answers.

The Military War History Library welcomes military and military-related items. Books, personal histories, personally owned military items, photographs, uniform parts and other military items can be donated to the following agencies for perpetual storage, display, or for temporary loan to civic organizations. Donated items should include the name, and contact information of the donor. For info on where to send items, visit www.amervets.com or call 1-310-532-0634.

[top of page](#)

TWO VIETNAM AIRCRAFT IN NATIONAL MUSEUM

The first aircraft to return Vietnam prisoners of war to the United States arrived at the National Museum of the United States Air Force at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, at 9:30 a.m. on May 6. The C-141 "Hanoi Taxi" was the first aircraft to arrive in Hanoi in February 1973 to pick up the POWs returning to the United States. The "Hanoi Taxi" was one of several aircraft involved in repatriating more than 500 American POWs held by the North Vietnamese.

The aircraft made several passes before its final landing on the runway behind the museum. Crewmembers from the 445th Airlift Wing commanded the aircraft from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base to the museum.

The B-17F "Memphis Belle," the Eighth Air Force's first heavy bomber to complete 25 successful bombing missions over Europe and return to the United States, was moved to the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force under the terms of an agreement between the Memphis Belle Memorial Association and the U.S. Air Force.

[top of page](#)

A VIRTUAL MEETING HALL FOR IRAQ, AFGHANISTAN VETERANS

U.S. veterans have met for generations in VFW and American Legion halls. Predictably, veterans of the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan are also meeting. But they're doing it online. The site is www.Troopnet.org, created by the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. The site offers social networking, and is built on the model used by Friendster and MyPlace. Veterans are encouraged to share their stories. If you want personal views of the conflicts, there's no better source. You'll find the site at: <http://troopnet.operationtruth.com/profile/community/home.jsp>.

[top of page](#)

► SICK CALL

Editor's note: The following info was sent by Joy, Snake-Byte's wife:



The Teddy Bear Lady from Salina, Kansas, Ruth Holcom, suffered a major stroke on Monday, June 19. Her left side is affected as well as her speech. She will have to spend about a month in the hospital and then will have a long road ahead of physical therapy. Please remember her in your prayers. Ruth has been welcoming and singing for the Run for many years, from the start, and has sent many, many teddy bears to the Wall. If you'd like to send a card or a letter (she claims her room is already filled with flowers), her address is: Ruth Holcom - room 4110 Hutchinson Hospital, 1701 East 23rd Street Hutchinson, Kansas 67502.

[top of page](#)

► TAPS

AL WHITE

Alabama Gunny has reported the death of Al White, retired navy Officer and Vietnam vet. Al was a riding buddy of his from Athens, AL. He was killed on his motorcycle in a freak accident in North Carolina on June 11 when a storm downed a tree across three lanes of the freeway. Al and his wife Sheila were Gunny's FNGs in 2002, and they have gone on RFTW with the Southern Route every year since. He was looking forward to going to Ontario and all the way next year. Our condolences to his wife, Sheila, and other family members and friends.

LARRY "BEAR" HUGHES

It is with profound sadness that VVA Chapter 785 reports the loss of one of its own, Chapter Sergeant at Arms and friend, Larry "Bear" Hughes. "Bear" was involved in a motor vehicle accident on his way home from his unit's Vietnam Veterans reunion in Missouri and died, along with his brother Tim, in this terrible mishap.

His death leaves an empty hole with his family and friends and his loveable nature, boisterous laugh and especially his goodwill for all will be terribly missed. Larry "Bear" Hughes was a recipient of 3 Silver Stars, 5 Bronze Stars and 3 Purple Hearts for his two tours in Vietnam. He was humble about his service and sacrifice serving this great Nation that he so loved but he was also very protective of those veterans that he served with and those that served. He was a Veterans Advocate in the true sense of the word and shared all that he had with those veterans and their families in need. He was the epitome of an American Hero and that of a Mountain Man—with a passion for fishing and hunting, but never taking more than he needed. He was the outdoors man who was at home "in the bush" or on the back of his Harley.

Aloha my friend—and Mahalo for the wonderful times that we shared together...you shall forever be "Bear" the gentle giant who meant so much to so many. God Bless and keep you safe forever in his arms. We will forever keep your memory with all the good works that we do for others in need and the goodwill that we share with each other, your "Band of Brothers and Sisters." You led us by a Christian example my friend and we shall forever be indebted and we will always cherish those wonderful memories we shared together.

Semper Fi,
Monsoon

[top of page](#)

► CLOSING THOUGHTS

THANK YOU ALL FOR REMEMBERING!

At first there was no place for us to go until someone put up that Black Granite Wall. Now, every day and night, my Brothers and my Sisters wait to see the many people from places afar file in front of this Wall, many stopping briefly and many for hours and some that come on a regular basis. It was hard at first, not that it's gotten any easier, but it seems that many of the attitudes toward that war that we were involved in have changed. I can only pray that the ones on the other side have learned something and more Walls, such as this one, needn't be built.



Several members of my unit and many that I did not recognize have called me to the Wall by touching my name that is engraved upon it. The tears aren't necessary but are hard even for me to hold back. Don't feel guilty for not being with me, my Brothers. This was my destiny, as it is yours, to be on that side of the Wall. Touch the Wall, my Brothers, so that we can share in the memories that we had. I have learned to put the bad memories aside and remember only the pleasant times that we had together. Tell our other Brothers out there to come and visit me, not to say Good Bye but to say Hello and be together again, even for a short time and to ease that pain of loss that we all share.

Today, an irresistible and loving call comes from the Wall. As I approach, I can see an elderly lady and as I get closer I recognize her—it's Momma! As much as I have looked forward to this day, I have also regretted it because I didn't know what reaction I would have. Next to her, I suddenly see my wife and immediately think how hard it must have been for her to come to this place and my mind floods with the pleasant memories of 30 years past. There's a young man in a military uniform standing with his arm around her ... My God! ... It has to be my son. Look at him trying to be the man without a tear in his eye. I yearn to tell him how proud I am, seeing him standing tall, straight and proud in his uniform.

Momma comes closer and touches the Wall and I feel the soft and gentle touch I had not felt in so many years. Dad has crossed to this side of the Wall and through our touch, I try to convey to her that Dad is doing fine and is no longer suffering or feeling pain. I see my wife's courage building as she sees Momma touch the Wall and she approaches and lays her hand on my waiting hand. All the emotions, feelings and memories of three decades past flash between our touch and I tell her that it's all right. Carry on with your life and don't worry about me ... I can see as I look into her eyes that she hears and understands me and a big burden has been lifted from her.

I watch as they lay flowers and other memories of my past. My lucky charm that was taken from me and sent to her by my CO, a tattered and worn teddy bear that I can barely remember having as I grew up as a child, and several medals that I had earned and were presented to my wife. One of them is the Combat Infantry Badge that I am very proud of and I notice that my son is also wearing this medal. I had earned mine in the jungles of Vietnam and he had probably earned his in the deserts of Iraq.

I can tell that they are preparing to leave and I try to take a mental picture of them together, because I don't know when I will see them again. I wouldn't blame them if they were not to return and can only thank them that I was not forgotten.

My wife and Momma near the Wall for one final touch and so many years of indecision, fear, and sorrow are let go. As they turn to leave, I feel my tears that had not flowed for so many years form as if dew drops on the other side of the Wall.

They slowly move away with only a glance over their shoulder. My son suddenly stops and slowly returns. He stands straight and proud in front of me and snaps a salute. Something makes him move to the Wall and he puts his hand upon the Wall and touches my tears that had formed on the face of the Wall and I can tell that he senses my presence there and the pride and the love that I have for him. He falls to his knees and the tears flow from his eyes and I try my best to reassure him that it's all right and the tears do not make him any less of a man. As he moves back wiping the tears from his eyes, he silently mouths, God Bless you, Dad ... God Bless YOU, Son ... We WILL meet someday, but in the meanwhile, go on your way ... There is no hurry ... There is no hurry at all.

As I see them walk off in the distance, I yell out to THEM and EVERYONE there today, as loud as I can—THANKS FOR REMEMBERING. And as others on this side of the Wall join in, I notice that the U.S. Flag that so proudly flies in front of us every day is flapping and standing proudly straight out in the wind today. THANK YOU ALL FOR REMEMBERING!

[top of page](#)



Mission accomplished: Don Morris, Milo Gordon, and Mike McDole honor our fallen heroes by placing a plaque from RFTW at the Wall

[top of page](#)

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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