



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

**Official Newsletter of... "Run For The Wall"... January 2007**

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**Quarterly Newsletter  
" We Ride For Those Who Can't "  
January 2007**

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## **THE EDITOR'S NOTES**



I've been so filled with pride lately that I feel like I'll burst! Every day I read emails about what our RFTW people are doing to make our veterans' lives and the world in general better. The average person is too busy to notice there's a war going on, and there are people who desperately need help, and there are veterans who gave so much for our freedoms but who now sit neglected and forgotten. But so many of you are out there helping those people, no matter how busy you are yourselves.

Did I ever tell you how oblivious I was about veterans' issues before I joined RFTW? I'm ashamed to admit it, but they

just didn't enter my mind for years. I never wondered how they felt after returning from war or if there was anything I could do to help them. I was always too busy raising a family and working to worry about anyone outside my family. Now that my eyes have been opened, I regret that I didn't wake up years ago so I could have been helping our veterans all this time.

Many of us belong to veterans' groups and also to the Patriot Guard Riders, whose good deeds are spreading around the country like wildfire. VVA chapters are firmly committed to visiting disabled vets in hospitals on a regular basis; they put together barbecues and parties and spend, not just an hour, but whole days—to make sure that our heroes are not neglected and to make sure they know how much we appreciate their sacrifices. Chapter 785 is so very active, visiting veterans' hospitals, transporting veterans to appointments, putting on parties and barbecues for them. They also do RFTW a great service by traveling with Central Route with their "Water Point." They have fundraisers all year long to collect donations of money for gas and fruit and snacks for our riders along the way to D.C. Read the story in this issue about Bill "Monsoon" Mimiaga, Chapter 785's newsletter editor, who was recently named Teacher of the Year.

Many of our RFTW people are honoring our veterans by belonging to The Patriot Guard Riders, which has expanded from attending military funerals to protect the families from protesters to seeing our troops off to Iraq and welcoming them home. There are so many veterans and supporters who want to show the troops how much they are respected that sometimes hundreds of riders show up for missions. They are also now attending the funerals for veterans of WWII, Korea, and all the other wars. It seems like there is no bottom to the depth of commitment our fellow riders have.

Danny Lopresto, although not a veteran, represents the commitment of supporters of veterans and their causes. In addition to being very involved in veterans' causes, he has become a sort of "clearing house" for veteran-related information. He receives a great deal of information from many sources and passes it on to his huge email list of veterans and veteran supporters, so that we all will know what events are coming up, who needs help, who is ill. Thanks, Danny, for spending so much of your time to keep us informed.

Another of our group is a great example of veterans helping other veterans. Roland "Pegleg" Marchand must never just kick back on a weekend! If he's not on a PGR mission, he's helping at a veterans' event. He's becoming a pro at organizing rides and missions, and is greatly respected by his fellow riders for his dedication. We're all proud of what you stand for, Pegleg! You're a great example of what a good human being should be.

Lots of outstanding information in this issue. I've been grouping items (stories, events, etc.) to make it easier for you to find articles. Last issue I started a group for the 2007 Run. In that section you'll find everything you need to know about riding with RFTW. Old-timers offer suggestions from their experiences with the Run, so that you may be better prepared to ride safely with us. Be sure to carefully read "How We Ride" for our rules of the road, as well as "Ride Q&A." In this section, also, are notices of what may be needed for the Run this year. If you see any area where you may be able to help, please jump in. Many things are needed to put together our Run each year, and they are all done by people like you and me, veterans and non-veterans alike. We all have the same goal—to travel across this great country and spread awareness of POW/MIA and veterans' issues. Together we can do this.

Never forget,  
Judy "Velcro" Lacey

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## **THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

**By John "Slammer" Gebhards**

President, Run For The Wall



Greetings! I hope you've had a good holiday and are going to experience a great 2007. I am looking forward to a successful 2007 RFTW XIX.

For the most significant information/changes when both routes are combined (one day in Ontario, CA and three days in Toms Brook/DC), we have placed one of the Route Coordinators in charge of each day and the other coordinator and staff in support. All Road Guards and the supporting road guard captain will report to the tasked road guard captain.

**Wednesday, May 16, 2007. Ontario, CA:**

**Ron Young**, Route Coordinator

**Kent Markley**, Road Guard Captain

**Friday, May 25, 2007. Toms Brook to DC:**

**Frank Perry**, Route Coordinator

**Dave Cappel**, Road Guard Captain

**Saturday, May 26, 2007. DC:**

**Ron Young**, Route Coordinator

**Kent Markley**, Road Guard Captain.

**Sunday, May 27, 2007. DC:**

**Frank Perry**, Route Coordinator

**Dave Cappel**, Road Guard Captain

The Route Coordinator will have the latest information on events and changes and will communicate that information through his Road Guard Captain who will then pass it on to all participants from both routes.

These will be the **only** people who will have the latest information.

A registration fee of \$10 will be charged for each RFTW registrant. This fee will primarily fund the required AMA insurance coverage and also will provide additional funds for RFTW projects. The registration fee will be exact change in cash (no checks or plastic). Anything over the fee will be considered a donation to RFTW.

If a registrant is requested to leave the Run for safety, behavior or other issues, the registration fee may be returned to that registrant.

Mark Rittermeyer, Director of Risk Management, is responsible for the implementation of the AMA rules and regulations. He will create a team of (ICOs) Insurance Communications Officers (2 each who will be AMA-trained) for each route. The ICO's responsibility includes: monitoring his specific route for compliance with AMA guidelines, ensuring that riders' meetings are conducted each morning' and assisting with accident support.

Due to the necessity of obtaining liability insurance for the organization, our registration process has become more involved and will require additional information. It will save you time if you print the online registration form from the website and bring it to registration fully **completed**. In order to participate in RFTW, proof of a valid driver license with a motorcycle endorsement and proof of current liability insurance for the vehicle that you will be riding will be required of all riders operating motorcycles. This excludes passengers. Documentation will need to be validated at registration before RFTW wristbands will be issued. If your state does not require a motorcycle endorsement on your driver license then this requirement will be waived. The 2007 Registration Form is posted on the RFTW website. You are encouraged to take advantage of being able to complete this form prior to joining either route. Thank you in advance for your patience and understanding regarding these necessary changes.

We have discussed a "Northern Route" for several years. There is a group, "The National Veterans Awareness Ride" made up of some of our past participants. We have approached the NVAR with an offer to them of becoming our "Northern Route." They have their own website, coordinators, and leadership group. They have decided not to join RFTW. We have a highlighted link on our website to theirs and wish them all success. This matter is now closed and we will not pursue a "Northern Route."

You will notice an addition of “End of Days Activities” on our daily itineraries. This is to make clear when the RFTW responsibility ends for that day. We will be watchful again this year and enforce the ban on drinking and use of recreational drugs during the Run. This includes RFTW supporters dispensing alcohol at official Run dinners or at any time prior to the end of the RFTW daily scheduled activities. We are adding an additional requirement of ***no visible display of a firearm***. Even if you have a concealed carry permit, pack the firearm in your bags. Most institutions that we visit prohibit the display of firearms on their property.

All riders need to be responsible for their own actions. They should have sufficient resources to provide for their gas, lodging, food, and motorcycle maintenance on the Run and for the trip back home. In the event of an accident, you are also responsible for getting your bike back home.

Both Routes’ Senior Route Chaplain and the Chaplain’s Corps have been asked to obtain first aid training and provide proof of certification.

Registration will be conducted in the mornings and evenings for riders joining the Run. The morning riders’ meetings are mandatory for all participants. The Southern Route will have two exceptions to this requirement for 2007 and will be in compliance for 2008. For those two exceptions in 2007, we will send an advance Registration Team/ICOs and they will conduct rider’s meetings at both locations.

AMA has a stringent requirement regarding participation by minors. When a parent accompanies a child, the parent will have to sign a waiver as part of registration. There may be an issue with registering a child who accompanies someone other than a parent (e.g., a grandparent) who does not have the authority to sign a waiver on behalf of the child. It is noted that different states observe different ages of majority, ranging from 17 to 21 years of age.

There has been some discussion on the reimbursement policy of RFTW. First, let’s be very clear we do not reimburse any expense without a valid receipt. These are turned in to our Bookkeeper. They are maintained as a historical record by John King, our Treasurer.

1. Board members are reimbursed for gas and motel to participate in our required annual “face to face” meeting. The board member can elect to delay payment or donate the expense to RFTW. We pay only on receipts turned into RFTW. This is the only compensation the Board members receive. No expenses are paid to board members during the RFTW event.
2. RFTW reimburses the Route Coordinators for their motel rooms from Ontario to DC. The route coordinators normally get comp rooms from the motels. Receipts must be submitted by the coordinators for reimbursement. No one else on the Run gets reimbursed for motel rooms. No board member is authorized or has been reimbursed for motels or fuel on the Run.
3. RFTW pays fuel for chase trucks and designated support vehicles. The chase vehicles are paid from Ontario to DC based upon fuel receipts. The fuel expenses for merchandise trailer vehicles are paid from the pickup point in Phoenix, AZ and back to storage. The merchandise trailer carries a lot of other essential items for the Run. Fuel receipts must be submitted for payment.

Thanks for your support of RFTW and I’m looking forward to May.

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## **PROFILES OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBERS**

*(Ed. note: Mike McDole found it necessary to resign from the Board of Directors due to an illness in his family. The Board has appointed Mark Rittermeyer to complete Mike’s term. Following is Mark’s profile and a description of his duties with RFTW.)*

## **Mark “Straightarrow” Rittermeyer, Director of Risk Management**

For those of you I may not have had the opportunity to meet, my name is Mark "Straightarrow" Rittermeyer and I was selected to the Run For The Wall Board of Directors in November 2006 to fulfill the term of Mike McDole. My duties as Director of Risk Management include liability insurance representative for RFTW, establishing registration processes and guidelines, disseminating critical information to participants, ensuring adequate infrastructure exists for riders to share concerns with the route leadership, and any other issues related to risk management.

Please know that I am not a vet, but that I support vets, and all active and retired military personnel. I am the proud father of an Army Chaplain, a faithful husband of over 35 years (MaryAnn), and proud to be an American. I became a part of the Run Family in 1999 as a participant, and have gone all the way every year since. I have served the Run on the CR as Road Guard 01, Road Guard Captain 02, Assistant Coordinator 03, Coordinator 04, Chaplain 05, and Missing Man Coordinator 06. I look forward to serving the Run Family as a Board Member, and assisting with the Mission of RFTW.

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## **RFTW 2007**

### **NEW REGISTRATION PROCEDURES**

The 2007 RFTW Registration and Emergency Information Form is now revised and available online at the RFTW homepage. Please download this document and completely fill it out prior to registering. This will help to reduce the time required for you to register.

Remember that you will be asked to present your current drivers' license with appropriate endorsement, as well as a proof of valid liability insurance for the vehicle that you will be riding on the Run. Without this documentation, you will not be permitted to register and ride with the RFTW. Additionally, there is a \$10 fee required for all registrants for the Run. This is needed to help pay for AMA liability insurance, which we are now carrying, and for additional RFTW projects. Exact change is required at the time of registration; no checks and no credit cards accepted.

Due to these new requirements, there is no online or preregistration for the Run. Registrations must be accomplished prior to the Run in Ontario, CA or in the mornings or evenings at those designated overnight stops for each route.

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### **PRE-RUN EVENT SPONSOR NEEDED**

I am the California Coordinator for the Run For The Wall 2007 event, and I'm looking for a group or company willing to sponsor a Tuesday evening, May 15, 2007. pre Run dinner for the participants at the host hotel on the evening prior to departure for the 2007 RFTW. My idea is a simple hamburger and hotdog barbeque or a cold cuts type affair. This simple dinner is a good way to get participants together prior to departing on the run for a meet and greet. The sponsor could be a motorcycle club or a corporate sponsor to help make this happen.

If anyone thinks their club, organization, or business would be interested in helping in either of these areas, I can be contacted at the information below.

Thanks a lot,  
Mil Thornton, California Coordinator  
Run For The Wall 2007

951-667-5125 Home  
714-335-4557 Cell  
[mcthorntons@yahoo.com](mailto:mcthorntons@yahoo.com)

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## **RFTW FUNDRAISER AT NEW SITE**

**El Segundo, CA**

**April 7, 2007**

As you probably know, the annual RFTW BBQ fundraiser in Highland, CA has been cancelled this year. Danny Lopresto and David “Pegger” McDonald work for Raytheon and discussed having the RFTW fundraiser at their facility in El Segundo. The facility is very large and has a big recreation park, complete with basketball, tennis, softball fields, restrooms, and showers, plus swings and slides for the little ones—not to mention a big parking lot that can hold lots of motorcycles.

Not only does Raytheon support the idea, but Raytheon is going to cater the event with some good grub as well. An admission price will be charged as in Highland, which will include food, entertainment, speakers, and use of the recreation park. ALL the money from the admission price will go toward RFTW 2007. Raytheon has already donated \$1,000 for RFTW and management is very excited about putting on this fundraiser.

Danny said he’s never done anything like this but with the help of some fellow RFTW bro's he believes that we can make this a really great event and fundraiser.

We’ll need some type of head count for the food and beverages. **Let Danny know ASAP if you and/or your family will attend** ([dlopresto@raytheon.com](mailto:dlopresto@raytheon.com)). This is a family event (just like in Highland). The price will be around \$5 or \$10 dollars for adults, children free. If any of you are venders and want to sell your wares, we will charge a fee (not much). More on that issue and other details later. So, pass the word, let’s make this a good time and great fundraiser. Date of event is tentatively set for **April 7, 2007**. All money received from the fundraiser will be split equally between the Central and Southern routes.

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## **WHERE TO GO FOR ROUTE NEWS**

**By Anne Perry, RFTW Public Information Contact**

Riders and those interested in Run For The Wall may now check either route-specific website for 2007: [www.rftwcr-2007.us](http://www.rftwcr-2007.us) or [www.rftwsr-2007.us](http://www.rftwsr-2007.us) for the Mission flier (downloadable in Adobe Acrobat Reader [pdf] format) and the 2007 Mission video (downloadable as a Windows Media file).

If you are a returning rider and are recruiting other riders and/or supporters, please check first with your RFTW State Coordinator (listed under Contacts on the main [www.rftw.org](http://www.rftw.org) webpage). This will help avoid duplication of effort.

Keep up-to-date by reading the Latest News posted by the Route Coordinator for the route you have chosen, as well as the President’s Latest News on the main website. There are many necessary changes being made this year to both routes.

If you need other information for media releases, riders, or supporters, please contact Anne Perry by e-mail at [aperry@flash.net](mailto:aperry@flash.net) or by telephone at (979) 828-4374.



## **RFTW 2007 CALIFORNIA ITINERARY**

**By Mil Thornton, CA Coordinator**

The New Year is here. It signals the time for state coordinators of RFTW 2007 to finalize details and logistics necessary to organize RFTW 2007. Since California is the start of the one run two routes event of RFTW it is important to start out with the best effort possible to make it a successful and fulfilling experience. Not only for the **Fine New Guys/Gals**, but also for those seasoned riders of the event. I think this is the motivation for each state coordinator to accomplish along the route.

Last year a run was organized in the last few weeks on the Tuesday prior to leaving for RFTW 06. The run went to Riverside National Cemetery where the riders all went to the National Medal of Honor Memorial that is located at the Cemetery. Colonel Louis Millet, Medal of Honor Recipient for his heroism during the Korean War, was present for everyone participating to pay their respects to. After leaving the N.M.H.M, the riders visited the newly dedicated POW/MIA Memorial and its architect and sculptor, Lee Millet the son of Colonel Louis Millet. This was a great experience and it will be repeated again this year hopefully honoring more of the heroes that have given so much and have received these very special medals with their bravery.

An added feature that will take place at this year's event will be a meet and greet dinner on Tuesday evening May 15, at the host hotel for everyone to participate in. This will be an opportunity for those participating in the run to get to know each other and pass along good advice to the FNGs and what they should expect on the run. It will also give us an opportunity to thank some of the sponsors and donors to this dinner and other activities of RFTW 07. It will be an informal affair and a good opportunity for participants to get registered early so that the new registration procedures don't tie up all of the Wednesday morning activities that are important for everyone to attend.

The efforts of the state coordinators do not come without a price tag. RFTW is a non-profit organization that depends on donations to make the run and all of its activities successful. There have been thousands of people that have made the run over the years and many have expressed the desire to help out in some way. Those who know and believe in the brotherhood and the healing power of this magnificent experience have an opportunity to help even if they can't make the run. Your donation to RFTW is tax deductible. In California the dinner that takes place Tuesday evening helps in this area to pull it off. Would you please consider donating whatever you can to help send off the riders, coordinators, and all the support people for both routes on this important mission? If you can't make the run this year, then perhaps this is a way for you to feel like you have contributed to the success of the event for 2007. Efforts are being made to acquire corporate sponsorship of the dinner and any proceeds that are not used for the dinner will be forwarded to RFTW 07 for its use as necessary during the run. Perhaps you know a business or organization that would be interested in helping out in this way.

Please make out your checks to "RFTW California 2007" and send it to Mil "Bigdog" Thornton, California Coordinator for RFTW 2007 at 24062 Fawnskin Drive Corona, Ca. 92883. Please send your name and address for a return recognition of the donation.

*(Ed. note: The following guidelines for riding with RFTW have been approved by the Board of Directors. Every rider should read this, not just once, but over and over until following the guidelines becomes automatic. If all riders read this, the journey to Washington, D.C. will be safer and more enjoyable for everyone.)*

## **HOW WE RIDE**

**By Colin Campbell**

Run For The Wall follows a very regimented set of rules developed over the years to provide for the safe travel of this large contingency on its way to Washington DC and The Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Foremost in our desire is that every rider becomes adept and comfortable riding in accordance with these rules. If for any reason you are not comfortable riding in this manner, please discontinue your ride with the column. If you are not capable and comfortable riding “like we ride,” you could pose a danger to yourself and your companions by attempting to ride in a tight formation. Above all, if a maneuver looks too dangerous or awkward for a rider (particularly a new rider) to complete safely, he or she should do what needs to be done to protect himself or herself to avoid an accident.

**The rules are outlined as follows:**

❖ **Signals**



**Right turn**



**Left turn**

**Right turn:** Left arm out and elbow bent up. *Hand making a fist.*

**Left turn:** Left arm straight out from body. *Hand straight out in a fist.*



**STOP or  
Slow down**



**Speed UP**

**Slow:** Left arm down to side. Press flat palm up and down parallel to the ground, imitating a braking motion.

**Speed up:** Pump left fist up and down.



**Hazard in the  
Road**



**Close the Ranks  
open and close fist**

**Hazard:** Point at the area on the road with your hand and index finger (left or right side).

**Close Ranks:** Left hand overhead, *open and close fist.*



**Single File**



**Double File**

**Staggered Formation:** Left arm raised overhead, index finger extended.

**Side-by-Side Formation:** Left arm raised overhead, index and little finger extended.

**Blinker:** Left arm out and elbow bent up. Thumb and forefinger contacting each other to indicate blinker on.

- ❖ **Distance Interval** – 2 seconds; visual marker for distance interval is one empty center stripe between cycles at 50 to 60 mph and two empty center stripes between cycles above 60. When in a side-by-side formation, the left side rider is responsible for maintaining the correct interval. The right side rider is responsible for aligning himself with the left side rider. Riders’ shoulders should be directly across from each other in the proper configuration. When in a staggered formation, each rider is responsible for maintaining the correct interval.
- ❖ **Deceleration:** Unless a complete stop or an emergency stop is anticipated, riders should decelerate by rolling off



the throttle and down shifting rather than braking. The appearance of brake lights in the formation increases the incidence of dangerous “rubber banding.” Rubber banding (excessive acceleration and deceleration) increases accidents, wear and tear on equipment, and rider fatigue. Increasing and decreasing speed should be accomplished utilizing small, incremental throttle roll-on and roll-off. Maintaining interval and position requires VERY slight throttle adjustments on an almost constant basis. Rapid acceleration and deceleration is very undesirable and should be avoided.

- ❖ **Riding the Zipper:** The centerline and the fog line are lovingly called the zipper. It’s simple: do not have any part of your cycle or body beyond the zipper. If you do, road guards will hate you and semi’s will kill you. **Just Say No** to hanging foot pegs, handlebars, or anything else over the zipper.
- ❖ **Sky popping:** Whales stick their head out of the sea just to the level of their eye to “take a look around.” This is called “Sky Popping.” Sticking out of your lane to see what’s ahead is a great way to shorten your trip. Road guards travel much faster than the columns in the left-hand lane. Pulling out in front of one is a disaster for both riders. **Just Say No** to “sky popping.”
- ❖ **Road Guard Courtesy:** You may receive signals/directions from road guards during your trip. Please comply immediately with these requests. Please do not take anything personally. Road guards are doing a very difficult job. Your cooperation is paramount to everyone’s success. At times, road guards need to pull into a column or pass through a column. When a road guard signals he needs in, immediately slow and give him the right of way. If you collide with a road guard, it is your fault—no questions asked.
- ❖ **Dive-bombing:** Pulling in too close after passing a vehicle is called “dive bombing.” This is a “no no.” Trucks that are passed by the column should be given at least one truck length before riders pull back into their lane. Pulling in too quickly causes the truck driver to hit his brakes and makes them angry with us rather than being our fans. **No dive-bombing.** The same situation is true when the column moves into the left lane to pass slower moving traffic. At times there may be vehicles traveling in the left lane preventing the entire column from gaining access to the left lane as a unit. Do not speed around one of these vehicles and dive-bomb in front of them just to maintain your position within the column. Slow, pull in behind such a vehicle, and rejoin the column after you have successfully passed the slower traffic in the right lane.
- ❖ **Passing signals back:** **The Route Coordinator passes signals through Platoon Leaders. Please (all riders) pass the signals all the way back down to the end of the column.**
- ❖ **CB Radio etiquette:** There will be a designated communication channel. Please do not talk on this channel unless you are performing an official function. All riders are welcome and encouraged to monitor the communication channel, but please maintain radio discipline.
- ❖ **Fueling:** During fuel stops on the Southern Route, fueling personnel wear an **orange** arm band and cap which indicates lines for premium grade fuel or a **green** arm band and cap which indicates the regular grade fuel line. On the Central Route, all fueling personnel will be wearing green vests and caps. File in side-by-side, two riders to a pump. Pay to the nearest dollar rounded up. Any excess monies collected will go toward fuel for chase vehicles.

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## SHIPPING YOUR BIKE

By Ron “Hammer” Young, Central Route Coordinator

I have received several questions about shipping bikes to the Ontario, CA area. This topic is a courtesy to those interested, and is not an “official” RFTW guide on the subject.

I ride my bike from near Columbus, Ohio to Ontario, but have researched the subject for some friends. I will not make recommendations, but will share with you what I have found.

1. Shippers: Most motorcycle magazines have advertisements for such services. Check with your brand’s riding club such as HOG, GWRRA or STAR touring, to name a few. Also, check the AMA magazines - there are normally a few shippers advertising each month.
2. Shipping Duration: Varies with origin and company. Most companies “round up” bikes that are being transported to a specific part of the country, then fill up a truck/van to make the trip profitable. You can’t blame them for that, but it does add time and at least a few additional transfers. The last check I made for a trip from the Midwest to

LA was estimated at four to six weeks.

3. Costs: Varies greatly, and is especially driven by your location. When you seek quotes from shippers ask about insurance coverage, and coordinate with your insurance agent, too; you may need a rider for your policy. After all, your bike is “out of sight” for up to six weeks and will be transloaded at least a few times, probably without you present. Consider airfare and ground transportation costs, too. These costs are partially offset by hotels, gas and meals not expensed if you were to ride west.
4. Discounts: If several riders from the same location are considering shipping, check on a group discount. Ask about rider club, AMA or other discounts.
5. Luggage: Most companies will not allow you to ship a bike with luggage on the bike or inside of an enclosed crate. This includes T-bags as well as saddlebags or tour packs.
6. Preparing the Bike for Shipment: Fuel must be drained from the tank. (Some shippers will “unofficially” allow you to leave a bit of gas in the tank if you have a fuel injected motor.) The crankcase and transmissions can remain “wet.” You may want to remove mirrors, for the obvious reasons. Take extensive pictures or videos of the bike and accessories from all angles—again for obvious reasons.
7. Shipping Skids: Harley dealerships used to give away the wooden shipping skids on which new bikes were mounted. Those are long gone since Harley started using metal skids that are reusable and closely accounted for. Some shippers require a full crate, or they will supply one for a fee. Others will simply use tie-downs and shipping pads. Check this closely with the shippers. Also, most shippers will need access to a fork truck or loading dock/ramp. Ask your local dealer to work with you.
8. Receivers: Most dealers will receive a bike for you, but they must agree prior to final shipping arrangements. Harley dealerships sometimes receive and store a bike short term for free. Others will perform these tasks if you have their shop perform basic service like an oil change. Verify with the dealer.
9. Documentation: Keep a log of who you talk with, date, time and accurate discussion notes. If possible, log a backup contact person for the shipper and receiver since employee turnover (or inaccessibility) is often high. In order to claim your bike, bring the shipping manifest, government issued photo ID (with all information matching the manifest), and bike registration papers. Understand – and be thankful - the receiver is unwilling to just turnover a bike without proper proof of ownership. Bring copies of your pre-shipping pictures. Finally, verify arrangements then verify again.

I hope this note helps you get started in evaluating the shipping process.

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## **RUN Q&A**

**By Ron “Hammer” Young, Central Route Coordinator**

I have received several calls and emails with the following questions. This is an update of the FAQs I posted last fall.

**Q. How fast does the pack ride?**

**A.** A general guideline is the pack will ride at about five miles an hour below the posted speed limit. There will be times when the speeds will be less.

**Q. How does the pack enter the highway?**

**A.** We work with local and state authorities to aid our entrance onto the highways. The lead element will slowly enter the highway and maintain a slow speed as the pack follows. There is no reason to ride fast to "catch up" with the pack. The lead element continues a slow speed until the last man vehicle reports he/she is on the highway. At that point the Route Coordinator will slowly increase speed in five mile per hour increments at the rate of about 2-3 mph increase per minute. This increase is given to the Assistant Route Coordinator who is leading the 1st Platoon, who will then slowly bring the pack to the assigned speed. The Platoon Leaders will follow suit, and are responsible for maintaining the

proper distance. As you can see, there is no reason to ride faster than the speed limit - follow these guidelines and the platoons will bring you up to speed properly and reduce "rubber banding."

Q. When will itineraries be available?

A. Daily itineraries will be finalized and posted a few weeks prior to departure. Please understand the incredible amount of work that must be finalized before this information is locked down. The notices and itineraries will be posted to the web site.

Q. How do I reserve my spot in the pack?

There are no reservations of riding spots in the pack. We ride two columns, side by side as conditions allow, and positions in the pack likely adjust as we do fuel stops. If you want to ride near someone ride in front or behind them, not to their side as those positions will adjust if riders fall out of formation.

Q. How much does it cost to go All the Way?

A. Cost of lodging, meals and gas to ride All the Way is largely a matter of personal preference. If you camp, some sites are free or reduced prices. Hotels will be indicated on our Route Schedule (see 1 above) and we often get a modest group discount from the standard rack rate. Gas is sometimes provided by supporters, but given the current state of gas prices the level of future support can not be certain. Most meals are provided free by local volunteers. Also, allow enough funds for emergency repairs and maintenance of your vehicle.

Q. Can I ride with the Run in my car?

A. Our number one goal is safety of the Run participants and the public. Personal vehicles can travel a few miles ahead or behind the pack, but can not intermingle with the pack at any time. Due to limited space at most of our gas stops we ask you proceed to another station or skip a gas stop. Our gas stops range are spaced from 70 to 114 miles apart so "cages" will not need gas as often as the pack.

Q. Do I have to ride a certain brand of bike?

A. No, all bikes are welcome as long as they are safe, licensed and insured in accordance with your state's laws. If you go All the Way you will likely ride more than 5,800 miles depending on your hometown. Be sure your bike is up to a ride of this length, and allow for routine maintenance during the trip. Plan for tire and oil changes as appropriate.

Q. What special skills are needed to ride with the pack?

A. Riding with the pack requires good skills, and you must be a competent, safe rider. Courses such as the Motorcycle Safety Foundation's Experienced (Advanced) Rider's Course will help you sharpen your existing skills.

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## **WHAT TO PACK FOR THE RUN**

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

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

## MOTORCYCLES:

- American & POW/MIA flags for the bike
- T-bag and/or saddle bags
- Bike cover (optional)
- Water bottle (sport bottle or Camelback)
- Bungee cords (lots of them)
- Duct tape
- Tool kit
- Regular and allen wrenches
- Screwdrivers
- Spark plugs and wrench
- Wire ties, zip ties
- Shop rags
- WD 40
- Clamps
- Rope
- Jumper cables
- Funnel
- Can of Fix-a-Flat
- Tire repair kit
- Replacement light bulbs
- Fuses
- Super glue
- 6' of 1/4" plastic hose or turkey baster (to siphon gas)
- Motorcycle oil (however much your bike needs)
- Helmet (DOT legal)
- Helmet (not so legal)
- Bandana or do-rag
- Warm knit cap for under helmet and/or sleeping
- Ski mask
- Heavy jacket
- Light-weight jacket
- Chaps
- Warm gloves
- Summer gloves
- Rain gear (jacket, pants and galoshes)
- Padlock
- Trash bags for covering T-bag in rain, laundry, etc.
- Zip-Lock bags (all sizes) organizes & keeps stuff dry
- Extra pair of boots
- Jeans (2-3 pair)
- T-shirts (at least 5)
- Long-sleeved T-shirt (for Mojave desert)
- Warm sweat-shirt
- Underwear & socks (at least 6 pair)
- Thermal underwear Extra bike key (pack in safe place)

- Small rock to leave at Angel Fire (rock monument)
- Jammies (or shorts or sweat pants)
- Hankies
- Shower shoes
- Bath towel
- Wash cloth (in zip-lock bag)
- Toilet kit
- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Soap
- Deodorant
- Shampoo
- Comb and/or brush
- Roll of TP in zip-lock bag (be prepared)
- Sun block (don't leave home without it!)
- Chapstick—personal first aid kit
- Medications in marked containers
- Prescription glasses Sun glasses or goggles (2 pair)
- Ear plugs
- Laundry detergent (in heavy zip-lock bag)
- Small sewing kit
- Money
- Credit cards/Traveler's Checks
- Driver's license Insurance information
- Dog tags for emergency identification
- Emergency info: Next of kin, home and work phone numbers, doctors' phone numbers
- List of prescription medications, glasses prescription, bank information
- Cell phone and/or pager, charger
- Road maps and Run schedule
- Business cards (to exchange with new friends)
- Note pad & pencil
- Camera & film
- Items you want to leave at The Wall
- List of names you want to locate on The Wall

## CAMPERS:

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

## GET YOUR BIKE READY TO GO

By John “Shooter” McCabe,

RFTW Road Guard

[John@CrucifiedRider.com](mailto:John@CrucifiedRider.com)

1. If your tires need changing, change them now. If tires are good, check inflation just before we leave; have a tire pressure gage on hand.
2. Change the oil just before leaving.
3. Check all lights and have extra bulbs on hand.
4. Check suspension air lines (for air shocks).
5. Check operation of all switches; make sure things that should work do.
6. If you have spoke wheels, get them checked at the dealer for spoke tension!
7. Change air and fuel filters.
8. Check brake and hydraulic clutch fluid levels.
9. Check clutch and brake cables.
10. Check every bolt, nut, screw you can get to, make sure things are tight.
11. Check your luggage, make sure straps are not rotted or torn. (I have dodged sleeping bags, small luggage bags and other things falling off bikes...not fun for Road Guards at 90+mph)
12. Make sure your bike is ready. If nothing else, take it to a dealer and have them go over it for you. The money you spend there will not compare to the funds it will cost you if things go wrong and you are 3500 miles from home.
13. Make SURE you are ready, get the bike out and practice speed control at 65 mph by easy throttle movements NOT brakes. Practice slow maneuvering; we all know how to ride at highway speeds but it's those slow maneuvers we will be needing that may need to be honed a bit. Remember, we will be maneuvering in close proximity to other bikes (6-8 inches between bikes at times)—be ready for it.
14. If you plan on riding two-up, take a few rides two-up and practice rider and driver communications. If you are a rider, your eyes are just as important as the driver's in a close formation ride. You are NOT a sight-seer—you are part of the overall bike safety team.

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

See you all in Ontario...

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## MISC. REMINDERS

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

## GET YOUR PATCHES SEWED ON!

RFTW riders collect a lot of patches each year on the Run, and we're fortunate to have someone who can sew them on for you along the way. Harley Rodger has advised us that he will be taking his sewing machine on the road again this

year. He will be in Ontario Monday morning and will stop working at dark each night. He will be set up every night along the Central Route to D.C., weather permitting and depending on his ability to park close to the group. He will also be set up at the hotel in D.C. on Saturday so the Southern Route riders can also get their patches sewed on. What a great service Rodge provides for us. If not for him, we'd all be riding with our pockets overflowing with newly purchased patches!

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## **RFTW MERCHANDISE PORTION OF WEBSITE REDESIGNED**

The merchandise portion of the RFTW website has been redesigned to be more user-friendly. A couple of new items have been added, with more coming in 2008. Now when you click on RFTW merchandise there will be three steps to help you with your purchase. STEP 1 allows you to print out the new order form with every item and size listed separately. STEP 2 allows you to check for any specials; currently we are running a January Inventory Reduction Sale. STEP 3 allows you to view pictures of all the items, sizes, descriptions, price and order codes. You can fill out your order form as you shop.

Orders can now be sent by mail, fax or email. All orders will be shipped within 10 days from receipt of order for inventory that is in stock. The RFTW 2007 short sleeve shirts, 2007 long sleeve mock t-shirts, 2007 All The Way and Participants bars and the new RFTW Challenge coin are available now, which should give everyone time to get their items and have them sewn on. All items will be available during the "Run."

Thank you for supporting RFTW,  
Don "9-Ball" Morris  
RFTW Board, Director of Merchandising

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## **2007 T-SHIRT DESIGN**

This is the design for our 2007 t-shirt. Shirt is ash gray.  
Visit the Merchandise site on the RFTW website for prices and other merchandise available.

New this year is a RFTW Challenge Coin.



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## **NOTICE OF CHASE VEHICLE POLICY**

*Approved by RFTW Board of Directors*

(Please note that the term "motorcycle" applies to any Run vehicles that can be safely loaded and transported on a chase trailer.)

1. Chase trailers are provided only as outlined below. They are not to be used to transport personal property including functional motorcycles, motorcycle trailers or luggage.
2. RFTW will make reasonable attempts to assist riders with incapacitated bikes, but there are no guarantees this service will always be available. (There may be times when the trailers are full and the rider will either have to wait



or make their own arrangements.)

3. Chase vehicles will provide free service for motorcycles broken down or incapacitated in case of an accident.
4. Oversized trikes or other vehicles exceeding the capacity of our trailers WILL NOT be transported. Capacity decisions rests with the chase truck driver.
5. Where a motorcycle is incapacitated due to an accident, the bike will be loaded on the trailer with approval from authorities and owner/rider release as appropriate.
6. If the motorcycle needs transported and has a trailer attached, the trailer can be loaded onto the trailer with the bike.
7. Assuming the rider is not injured, he/she is responsible for assuring the bike is tied down safely and appropriately. The chase crews will assist, but ultimately the responsibility for securing bikes rests with the rider. The chase crews will not be responsible for bike damage.
8. In addition to item (7) above, the rider shall secure luggage so that it will not become separated from the bike. Should it be prudent to remove the luggage, it shall be secured to the trailer floor or placed in the truck bed prior to chase truck departure.
9. The chase crews will transport the motorcycle “forward” along the daily route to the next available dealership where it will be unloaded. The chase vehicle will then depart to catch the Run.
10. The Route Coordinator is the final authority on any questions concerning this matter.

## **CHASE DRIVER WILL CARRY BIKES HOME**

One of the Central Route Chase Vehicle drivers, Jack “Chief” Brammer, has offered to transport bikes back along his RETURN (only) route in his large, enclosed trailer. He lives in the Ontario area and his return route is flexible. If you want to fly back home, here’s a great opportunity to get your bike home, depending on where you live. He also can do a rideshare for 3-4 personnel in the truck, “out of the weather,” on the way back. He can carry 5 to 8 bikes, depending on their type and size. If anyone is interested, contact Jack at (909) 883-0222.

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## **LOCKS OF LOVE**

The RFTW Southern Route has been contacted about the possibility of donating human hair to the Locks of Love (LOL) organization. Essentially they collect usable human hair and use it to produce wigs and hairpieces for adults and children who are undergoing chemotherapy and have lost their natural hair.

During our fuel/food stop in Terrell, TX on Sunday, May 20, 2007, our riders will have the opportunity to donate hair (or \$\$\$) for this worthy cause. There will be several professional hair stylists set up to quickly cut the hair to be donated and you can be back on your ride before we pull out. The following guidelines need to be followed:

LOL accepts 10” minimum hair length (tip-to-tip), not wigs, falls or synthetic hair.

Please bundle hair in ponytail or braid.

Hair needs to be clean, dry, placed in plastic bag, then padded envelope.

1. LOL needs hair from men, young and old, all colors and races.
2. Hair may be colored or permed, but not bleached or chemically damaged.
3. Hair swept off the floor is unusable.
4. Hair cut years ago is usable if it has been stored in a ponytail or braid.
5. Hair that is short, gray, or unusable for children will be separated from the ponytails and sold at fair market value to offset the cost of manufacturing.
6. You may pull curly hair straight to measure the minimum 10”.

7. The majority of all hair donated comes from children who wish to help other children.
8. Layered hair may be divided into multiple ponytails for donation.
9. Anyone can cut your hair as long as the above guidelines are followed.

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## OUR STORIES

### PRAYER TIES

*Respectfully submitted by Mustang*

*(Editor's note: You've probably noticed little bundles, usually blue or green, tied up and secured to the back of motorcycles on the Run. You may even know that they are Prayer Ties. But you may not know the story behind them. Harry "Mustang" Parmer explains the history of the ties here.)*

Native American Indians made Prayer Ties by wrapping sacred herbs into a cloth while they prayed to the Great Spirit. Once the Prayer Ties were completed they were burned in a respectful and reverent ceremony, ensuring that the prayers the tribe made would be sent up to the heavens and carried to the Creator in the smoke.

Each year in the tradition of our Native Americans, Ed "Fingers" Gohn and J.R. "Cleaner" Franklin, make Prayer Ties by wrapping herbs, tobacco, and soil into a cloth as they pray for the return of our MIA. Included in the ties is wood from Vietnam. They also include the names of each of our 1,805 MIA brothers and make enough ties to carry each name on RFTW.

As we already know, RFTW participants "ride for those who can't" and these Prayer Ties allow Fingers and Cleaner to carry our MIA brother's spirits as they travel across our great nation.

In 2006 a friend and fellow Vietnam Veteran, Jerry Robbins, carried one of Fingers' and Cleaner's Prayer Ties as he rode with RFTW. But when Jerry arrived in Arlington, Virginia, he became ill and could not deliver the Prayer Tie to The Wall. Several of us were with Jerry on the evening of May 25 when he asked if one of us would be willing to carry the Prayer Tie he had carried from Ontario to The Wall for him. I told him that it would be my honor. So, the next day on Friday, May 26, 2006 at about 11:10 p.m. in a pelting rain, I carried the Prayer Tie to the apex of The Wall. As those who were with me that night already know, I decided not leave the Prayer Tie at The Wall, but instead to return it to the place it originated. The practice of returning Prayer Ties to their origin after the completion of their journey is also in the tradition of our Native Americans. Once returned, the tribe would burn the Prayer Tie in a respectful and reverent ceremony, thus ensuring that the prayers that were made during its creation and journey would be sent up to the heavens and carried to The Creator in the smoke.



So, I carried Jerry's Prayer Tie back to California, and at the July meeting of Chapter 785 of the Vietnam Veterans of America, we performed the following ceremony.

The Prayer Tie was placed on four rocks positioned to the cardinal points of north, south, east and west. All of the Chapter 785 veteran's present formed a circle around the Prayer Tie and the following words were spoken:

"According to Black Elk, Hereditary Chief of the Oglala Lakota Sioux the power of the world always works in circles. Everything tries to be round. The sky is round, the earth is round, and so are the stars. The wind in its greatest power whirls. Birds make their nests in circles and even the seasons form a great circle in their changing and always come back again to where they were. The life of man is a circle, from childhood to childhood. And

so it is in everything.”

"I will now read the Service of Prayer and Reconciliation by Alan D. Cutter, Minister Presbyterian Church."

"Cordite, chemical and diesel were the incense lifted up. 'Patrol' was our processional, as negotiated toward the place of sacrifice. Booby traps and land mines were our invocations. Ambush and engagement our call to worship. Explosion and bullet whine our hymns of praise. Blood was our baptism. Inedible food seasoned by fear and sweat our communion. Codes were our scriptures, and our litanies were reports and messages. And the word of the day was: 'death given and death received.' Evacuation was our recessional. In the rising of the sun and in its going down, we remember them. In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter, we remember them. In the opening of buds and in the rebirth of spring, we remember them. In the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer, we remember them. In the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn, we remember them. In the beginning of the year and when it ends, we remember them. When we are weary and in need of strength, we remember them. When we are lost and sick at heart, we remember them. When we have joys and special celebrations we yearn to share, we remember them. When we see our nations young marching behind our flag, or hear 'taps' played, we remember them. So long as we live, they too shall live, for they are part of us. And when we answer the final roll, we know that our brothers and sister will fulfill their duty, and greet us with the words of compassion and friendship, peace and love:

Welcome home!"

The Prayer Tie was ignited. Everyone then faced to the east:

"Red is the east. It is where the daybreak star, the star of knowledge appears. Red is the rising sun bringing us a new day, new experiences. We thank you God for each new day that we are allowed to live upon Our Mother Earth. From knowledge springs wisdom and goodness and we are thankful, Oh God, for the morning sun that rises in the east. Knowledge shall become the beginning for ultimate peace throughout this world."



We then turned to the south:

"The south is yellow. Our Mother Earth gives us growth, Gives us all that sustains us, and herbs that heal us. She brings forth the bounty of springtime from the warm south wind and the yellow hoop. We think of strength, growth and physical healing and a time for planting our energies."

We then turned to the west:

"Black is the color of the west where the sun goes down. Black is darkness, release, spirit protection. In the darkness, the spirit beings come to us. The spirit beings warn us, protect us, foretell for us, and release us. They are the spirit helpers of God. Black is the cup of water. The life-giving rains come from the west, where the thunder beings live. Water is life."

We then turned to the north:

"White is the north. The north stands for strength, endurance, purity, and truth. The north covers Mother Earth with a white blanket of cleansing snow. Courage and endurance, these strengths we seek and wish to be blessed with as we stand here facing north."

Holy Water was then poured onto the ablaze Prayer Tie and as the smoke lifted to heaven:

"Oh, God, the water of life brings forth smoke that rises to you from this symbol of our missing brothers. We pray that one day each of them will return from the east, the south, the west, and the north to be with us again in peace and in

eternal life by your side in Heaven.

Amen."

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## **FREEDOM FLIGHT, INC. – POW/MIA HOT AIR BALLOON**

**By Sandra “Littlebit” McKinney**

It was 6:30am on Saturday, December 2, 2006. The temperature had reached all of six degrees Fahrenheit. We made our way thru the snowy grounds of Red Rock State Park bundled from head to toe in our warmest clothing. What had brought us out at this early hour on this very cold day? We had a date to fly in a hot air balloon; not just any hot air balloon, but the POW/MIA balloon of Freedom Flight, Inc.



We had met our pilots and the chase crew on Friday evening for dinner. Over plates of good food, we got to know each other and got our instructions for Saturday morning. There was an instant camaraderie with them all as we felt the connection of a common mission: spreading awareness of the plight of our soldiers who may still be held Prisoner of War, or are Missing in Action.



On Saturday morning, even under all the warm clothes, and surrounded by hundreds of other balloon enthusiasts, we recognized each other immediately. Warm hugs and greetings abound! Pam and Luke Cesnik would pilot the balloon. Dimitri Brandetsas and Cy and Sundee Hudson would act as set-up and chase crew. Pam, Luke and Dimitri had driven all the way from St. Cloud, Minnesota to participate in the 26th Annual Red Rock Balloon Rally. Cy and Sundee are



New Mexicans and drove over from Albuquerque for the wonders of the annual event. They are all seasoned balloonists. Jackie had one previous balloon adventure under his belt, I was embarking on my maiden voyage. Excitement and electricity crackled in the cold morning air.

We would inflate the familiar look of the black balloon with the white POW/MIA markings right below the huge red cliff at the entrance of the park. Our toes, fingers and noses were feeling the bite of the cold and we kept encouraging the sun to rise high enough to peek over the top of that huge cliff. We were working hard to stretch out the envelope (balloon) and set up the fan to inflate it. The activity helped keep us warm. As the air began filling the balloon, Pam walked Jackie and me inside the balloon. We were standing inside this mammoth black balloon looking out at the folks on the outside, but also seeing the POW/MIA emblem in reverse.



The balloon filled quickly and before we knew it, our turn to launch had arrived. Pam and Luke instructed us on how to climb into the balloon. I had my camera strapped around my neck and Cy gave me warning to be sure to tuck it inside my jacket for protection when it came time to land the balloon. Luke, Pam, Jackie and I made our ascent in that wondrous balloon. We were able to look down on the arena where we hold the ceremonies each May for RFTW.

We were surrounded by almost two hundred other balloons, some had corporate sponsors, some boasted cute shapes, but we were riding high above the red rock formations in a balloon carrying a very important message: The Issue of our POWs and MIAs!



The burner at the top of the basket warmed our faces as it heated the air in the balloon and kept us afloat. We were in the air for about 30 minutes during which time Luke attempted to drop a sand bag on a target below for a chance to win



prizes; unfortunately he did not have a good opportunity to reach the target. We could see all the way back to Gallup at our highest point. We looked down upon the Hogan dwellings and sheep and goats in the area. Our Native American neighbors in the area waved up at the balloonists. The horses were not spooked by the many balloons. They looked up calmly at us and whinnied and snuffled in the cold air. It was 30 minutes of wonder and joy and honor, and it came to an end all too soon! Luke was able to land the balloon close to a dirt road in the area west of the park. He handled that balloon with ease and brought us down to the ground with a very soft plunk and only one small bounce. Cy, Sundee and Dimitri had followed us in the truck and helped walk the balloon over to a clearing where we disembarked. There was still good flying time so Pam, Luke, Cy and Sundee took off for another flight as Dimitri, Jackie and I watched in wonder from the ground below.



When they landed the balloon, we all helped to deflate the air and to stretch out the envelope and get it properly rolled and inserted into its storage bag. We all rode back in the truck to our original launch point.

As you recall, I said this was my maiden hot air balloon voyage...well, Luke directed the ceremonies to welcome me to the world of ballooning. He explained the history of the hot air balloon and they all raised a glass of true champagne or bubbly grape juice in my honor and in honor of a successful flight. Part of my initiation was to be on my knees and pick up my glass with my teeth, without help of hands, and drink down my bubbly grape juice. When I reached the bottom of the glass (without spilling a drop!), I was rewarded with a Freedom Flight, Inc. lapel pin. You can bet that pin will ride proudly on my RFTW vest!



We spent the rest of the weekend with these wonderful folks of the hot air balloon world. They told stories of their trips around the country with the balloon and carrying the word of their mission. We, of the motorcycle world, told stories of our involvement and adventures with Run For The Wall. Two different worlds of involvement; hot air balloons or motorcycles, yet all working for a common cause; spreading awareness for all POWs and MIAs! We all expressed our gratitude for personnel in the military, those who are veterans and those who are currently serving.

This was a wonderful experience and I hope you will have a chance to ride in a hot air balloon, but more importantly, take that ride in the POW/MIA balloon.

If you would like to know more about Freedom Flight, Inc., you can log onto their website at [www.freedomflight.org](http://www.freedomflight.org). You can also log on to [www.redrockballoonrally.com](http://www.redrockballoonrally.com) to learn more about New Mexico's second largest Hot Air Balloon Rally held each year the first weekend of December.

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*(Editor's note: "JP" is an old friend of mine who served in WWII in the 101st Airborne. JP is a great story-teller; following is one of his stories, about one of his flying experiences after WWII.)*

## **DEAD STICK LANDING**

**By Pete "JP" Anderson, Lt. Col., USAF Retired**

I served in the "Army Air Corps" until the "Air Force" became a separate service. As I remember, that was in the late '40s. After the end of the war a large pool of we Air Force members were transferred into a pool at Roswell for discharge or whatever. After working as an administrative officer in the squadron discharging people, I decided to remain in the Air Force so I was assigned to the 509th bomb wing which had returned from its war location to Roswell. I then served as an administrative officer in the "maintenance" function during the "air drop" and "underwater explosion" of test nuclear weapons in the Marshall Islands. I was fortunate to witness the underwater explosion. After returning from

"crossroads project" I was assigned to the 393rd bomb squadron of the 509th bomb wing where this story happened.

On August 12, 1948, my B-29 aircrew was departing Roswell AB (later Walker AFB) on a temporary duty assignment to Goose AFB, Labrador. We were about number six to eight in the squadron take-off order. My crew had several "substitutes" made for this trip, which didn't make me too happy. I was a first lieutenant aircraft commander at the time, and a major (friend of my squadron commander) was assigned as my copilot for the temporary duty mission. He had limited B-29 flying experience. In addition to that substitution, I had a substitute flight engineer plus another one or two aircrew members.

We had a procedure of, after take-off and our climb was established, retracting our flaps from 25% to 10%, then letting our airspeed increase before retracting the last 10% of flaps, as you lost a very noticeable amount of lift from that last 10% of flaps. This copilot was supposed to have flown the "test hop" of our aircraft the day before we were to depart, but he didn't show up. Time was very short so I put my crew chief in the copilot's seat to fly the test hop, without incident.

When we started engines for the flight, I briefed the copilot that after take-off and our climb was established and the aircraft was reacting well, I would call for "flaps 10%". I reminded him to make sure he stopped the flaps at 10% due to the loss of lift during the retraction of the last 10% of flaps. After our take-off and our climb was established, I called for "flaps 10%." Out of the corner of my eye I had noticed that his left hand fumbled as he searched for the flap switch. Then I heard him say "Uh oh, I forgot to play their coast." A slight delay would occur from turning off the switch until the flaps stopped. As I glanced quickly at the flap indicator it was stopping at or almost at, 0%. I was already feeling the loss of lift due to the loss of the last 10% of flaps. I was trying to stop the aircraft settling. About when I thought I had it made, the left inboard prop contacted the ground, followed by a flash of fire. All I could do was to try to keep the wings level and the nose slightly high as we were going back into the ground!

It was 10:33 p.m. mountain standard time and the field elevation was 3,630 feet or so. Field elevation and temperature had quite an effect on our take-off performance. To top all my problems off, I had 21 people on-board instead of just 20, as was our limit. The "playing around with my aircrew list and passenger list" for a couple of days before the scheduled take-off led to them inadvertently leaving one of my aircraft maintenance crewmembers off the loading list. This was called to the attention of the ranking squadron member still on the ground when I discovered it during roll call, and he okayed the addition.

Eight of us were lucky enough to "ride out the crash landing", believe it or not.

When I got back on flying status from my injuries, I had to take a "proficiency check ride" that was administered by a major, squadron operations officer from another bomb squadron. Unfortunately, he was not one of "my dearest friends or respected individuals." After the first part of my proficiency check flight was conducted in the "local flying area," we returned to the airfield for the nitty-gritty pilot proficiency checks. As we were descending to enter the traffic pattern, the check pilot laid his left hand on top of my right hand resting on the four throttles and said, "you have no more power. Let's see you make a landing." After successfully making a "power off" (commonly referred to as a "dead stick landing"), the check pilot's comment was, "You lucky s.o.b." During the succeeding take-off the check pilot reduced the power on the number one engine by pulling the throttle just as I was rotating the nose of the aircraft for take-off. A three engine pattern and landing were completed. After that landing we returned to the ramp as the "check pilot" was satisfied. This same individual later progressed to the rank of four stars (general) and commanded an airlift command. Prior to his retirement he had some charges filed against him by a pilot in one of the flying organizations under his command.

Of the eight survivors, one was killed about two years later in a B-50 crash in Ohio, one died (our maintenance flight chief) probably from the severity of his injuries. A few years later, my radar-navigator was murdered in the Fort Worth area, and the 21st person on board committed suicide several years later. My bombardier, who survived, passed away about a year ago. Ted Wolfe, another survivor, now resides in West Virginia and James Beran resides in Arizona.

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## **ROLLING THUNDER**

**By Larry Ouellette**

Lord watch over these traveling bands of brothers,  
Hailing from far and wide converging on the Capitol  
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.

## **I AM HEALING**

Hi Everyone,

Hope your Holidays were as much of a blessing for you as it has been for me.

As we start this New Year I sat back and thought where I have been this last year.

Of all the volunteering I do, the Patriot Guard Riders has been the most healing experience I have ever been through.

I have told you what an experience and change in my life I had after doing RFTW for the first time in 2004. Well, I have grown so much and healed a lot of pain because I now share my experience through volunteering my services to these young heroes of today.

I have meet a lot of families at the 40 plus funerals I have attended this past year. I think about all the families who stood alone 40 years ago to bury their sons and daughters without the support of this nation during the Vietnam War. Never Again seems to ring into my ears every time I think about it.

Well, I have put a lot on my plate, but this year I have ventured even farther and started working at the U.S.O. in Ontario, CA. What a blessing to meet these wonderful young men and women who for no other reason than being Americans have enlisted to fight this ugly War on Terror.

To see these young heroes go in harm's way so that freedom will always ring here in America is a testimony to the true

spirit of this great generation.

This coming May when we meet in Ontario to get ready for another wonderful experience with this great family of RUN FOR THE WALL friends, I hope we can set a time aside either Monday or Tuesday before we leave for D.C. to take an hour and run over to the U.S.O. in Ontario and see what a wonderful setup we have built to comfort these heroes and their families as they travel to their next duty station, go home, or leave on assignment.

It is only about two miles from where we will be staying and I'm sure you will be blessed at what a operation this has become since Bob Hope started it so many years ago.

I can't wait to see everyone to catch up on the past year and to again embrace everyone with hugs and kisses as we come together again to fulfill the mission set in front of us 19 years ago this year.

Your brother always,  
Roland "Pegleg" Marchand

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## TROOPS TO TEACHERS

*(Editor's note: This article recently appeared in the DAV magazine. Bill Mimiaga—"Monsoon" to us—was chosen last year at the Troops to Teachers Middle School Teacher of the Year. No doubt you met Monsoon on last year's RFTW, as his Vietnam Veterans Chapter 785 was Central Route's "Water Point," providing water, fruit, candy, and snacks to our riders from Ontario all the way to D.C. He's quite an extraordinary man, so when you see him on this year's Run, thank him for all he does, not only for veterans but also children.)*

The motorcycle growls to a stop in the lane next to you waiting for the light to turn green. You glance left. The man straddling the bike is square-jawed, weathered-looking, and his short cropped black hair is streaked with grey. He isn't huge, but he is square shouldered and appears solid. At first glance, you might think him a longshoreman at the nearby Long Beach Docks, or possibly a former boxer or football player, or a retired noncom from one of the Marine Corps bases farther south along the Southern California coast.

The man is actually William R. Mimiaga (aka Monsoon, Baseball Bill, Gunny Mims, Wild William and Bill), a disabled veteran and retired U.S. Marine Corps major with 31 years of service. He is also one of the most enthusiastic and outstanding teachers in the state of California. After being nominated the second time by Diane Brown the principal at William Logan Stephens Middle School, part of the Long Beach Unified School District, in Long Beach, Calif., Mimiaga was honored in a special ceremony in San Diego as the California Troops to Teachers Middle School Teacher of the Year on April 29, 2006. Introduced through the Defense Authorization Bill in 1993, Troops to Teachers is a U.S. Department of Education and Department of Defense program helping eligible military personnel begin a new career as teachers in public schools where their skills, knowledge and experience are most needed. Troops to Teachers provides referral assistance and placement services to interested military personnel and veterans. The program is managed by the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES). The DANTES Troops to Teachers office helps applicants identify teacher certification requirements, programs leading to certification and employment opportunities.



Few meet the criteria of being military personnel more than Mimiaga. He enlisted in the Marine Corps as a private in 1964 and retired wearing the golden oak leaves of a Marine Corps major 31 years later. His career included two combat tours in Vietnam that included a combat promotion to staff sergeant, a stint as a drill instructor that earned him a promotion to gunnery sergeant and other tours of duty throughout the world, including Southwest Asia in preparation and execution of Desert Shield and Desert Storm. In 1975,

he was selected, attended special training and became a warrant officer. In 1978, he was promoted to first lieutenant as a Transportation Limited Duty Officer (LDO (T)), better known affectionately as a “Mustanger.” The Mustanger would have probably never shed his uniform had arthritis not caught up with him. When his knees went, so did his career. But it’s hard to keep a Mustanger down. Mimiaga is a life member of DAV Chapter 23 in Long Beach and numerous other organizations. He knows well how much others benefit from the community service such organizations provide. That, coupled with his career of training, teaching, counseling and leading young Marines, has left him determined to help others. Some of the Marines he served with did not survive the Vietnam War. Many were undereducated and came from broken homes and poverty. Mimiaga wanted their children to have a better chance. “I served with good people who sacrificed so much for our country,” Mimiaga said. “I promised myself I would find a way to help them some day. What better way than to help their kids and the kids some of them would never have a chance to have? Teaching lets me do that.”

When he learned about Troops to Teachers Mimiaga saw a way to keep his promise, and he set to the task. Eligibility for the Troops to Teachers program is open to a variety of retired, separated, active duty and transitioning military members and veterans, including disabled veterans. Troops to Teachers requires a bachelor’s or advanced degree when applying for elementary and secondary education positions. And vocational or technical education teaching positions require an associate’s degree or at least one year of college and six years of work experience in a technical or vocational field. The program also requires the last period of military service to be honorable. Mimiaga used his GI benefits to earn a bachelor and master’s degrees, and he came with several footlockers jammed full of life experiences. The California Troops to Teachers program counseled and placed him at Stephens Middle School as a special education teacher. His students are the hard cases, the disruptive ones, kids from broken homes and gangs, kids with emotional challenges and short tempers—younger, but not too far removed from some of the recruits Mimiaga trained to be Marines. To Mimiaga they are kids ready to learn, and he is ready to take on all the “whys” they can throw at him, because answering the “whys” is when the teaching begins. Armed with enthusiasm, knowledge, determination and a huge smile, Mimiaga traded in his camouflage uniform for a sport coat and tie, and his rifle for a projector and pointer, and started teaching. He hasn’t slowed down since.

With seven percent of the nation’s teaching force leaving the profession every year, highly qualified teachers are needed and specific kinds of teachers are especially needed. There is a need for more male teachers, teachers for inner city schools, special education, mathematics and science teachers, and culturally diverse teachers. The Troops to Teachers program is meeting this need with teachers like Mimiaga. Being disabled is no drawback to being a good teacher as far as Mimiaga is concerned. “Disabled veterans walk the walk,” Mimiaga said. “They have met the challenges of recuperation and lead meaningful lives. What better example to teach and lead children into a successful future. “Think of disabled veterans’ life experiences. They can transform those life experiences into meaningful teaching tools in the classroom. That’s the way you win hearts and imaginations. It’s a win-win for veterans, children and the community. “That’s part of why being a teacher is such a great job.” Coming to teaching may seem a bit unusual for a toughened former Marine, and at 61 golfing in the afternoon might seem more the menu than a sixth, seventh or eighth grade classroom of energetic young people constantly ready to challenge your abilities. But for Mimiaga, teaching is more or less a family tradition. His mother worked for the Head Start Program for 35 years, his brother was a sociology professor at the University of Colorado and two of his sisters were teachers. So, after teaching troops for 31 years, it was a natural transition to teaching children for Mimiaga.



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## **A TIME FOR REFLECTION!**

**By Dave Erickson**

RFTW Oklahoma Contact since 1997

Northwest Oklahoma Ride Captain, Patriot Guard Riders

Canadian Captain, Patriot Guard Riders

The new year gives us all a chance to sit back and evaluate the past year. Did we accomplish all we desired? Did we

keep the promises we made? Did we fulfill the commitments we made?

RFTW 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.

Let's take a look at this one part at a time.

*To promote healing among all veterans and their families and friends.*

*Promote healing* - helping those who have suffered the loss of a family member during service to the United States of America. A family member who values the principles of his country more than his life, a defender of freedoms outlined in our Constitution and Bill of Rights. Give the family a big hug and thank them for their sacrifice. *All veterans* is pretty easy! Did you serve the minimum time required by law and have a non-disqualifying discharge? *Families and friends* is self-explanatory.

*To call for an accounting of all Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action (POW/MIA)*

Twenty years ago this was a very important part of our lives. Through modern science, we can now account for all battlefield casualties through the use of DNA. Well, maybe not the one who shares his foxhole with an incoming 500 lb bomb. As to identification of those MIA/POW from before the implementation of the DNA program, there is progress being made!

No. 942-06 IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 22, 2006

Media Contact: (703) 697-5131/697-5132

Public/Industry(703) 428-0711

First Identification of U.S. Soldier Missing in Action from World War I

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced today that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from World War I, have been identified and returned to his family for burial with full military honors. This is the first time the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) has identified a soldier unaccounted for from World War I. He is Army Pvt. Francis Lupo of Cincinnati, Ohio. He will be buried on Tuesday, Sept. 26, 2006, at Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C.

Representatives from the Army met with Lupo's next-of-kin to explain the recovery and identification process and to coordinate interment with military honors on behalf of the Secretary of the Army.

In 1918, Lupo participated in the combined French-American attack on the Germans near Soissons, France, in what came to be known as the Second Battle of the Marne. Despite heavy Allied losses, this battle has been regarded as a turning point in the war, halting and reversing the final German advances toward Paris. Lupo, a member of Company E, 18th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, was killed in action during the battle, but his remains were never recovered.

In 2003, while conducting a survey in preparation for a construction project, a French archaeological team discovered human remains and other items a short distance from Soissons. Among the items recovered were a military boot fragment and a wallet bearing Lupo's name. The items were given by the French to U.S. officials for analysis. Among other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory also used mitochondrial DNA in the identification of Lupo's remains.

For additional information on the Defense Department's mission to account for missing Americans, visit the DPMO Web

site at <http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo> or call (703) 699-1169.

And add to that the eighty-three (83) MIAs recovered from WW II, Korea and Vietnam in 2006! Not 100%, but its progressing faster now than before.

*To honor the memory of those Killed in Action (KIA) from all wars.*

To honor the memory?how about attending the funerals of those killed in service to this country? After all, it is part of the healing process for the family. Seeing that someone does care about their loss, regardless of what the mainstream media says! Families do appreciate the respect and honor shown by strangers or military contemporaries.

A Mission Statement is a statement of what we do as an organization. How many RFTW members have been to the funeral services of a returned MIA this year? And how many RFTW members have attended the services for a soldier, sailor, marine, or airman killed in action during the same year?

All I am requesting is that you ask yourself if you have lived up to the Mission Statement.

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## **“THE CHILDREN”**

By Shadow

The children, their eyes so wide and bright,  
They could see the bikes in the bright sun light.  
The distant thunder they could hear,  
They stood in awe as they grew near.

And as the vets looked into each little face,  
The smiles they saw helped them keep up the pace.  
The ride had been long and hard,  
but with the children there waving, it was just another short yard.

The children and their freedom—one more reason they ride,  
You know these people will not run nor will they hide.  
Protecting freedom and country as well,  
We all know that some have been through pure hell. .

We pass the torch to this next generation,  
To ensure the survival of this great nation.  
Yes our children are our future and we do swear,  
We will continue our mission year after year.

And if you ask those that ride; if it is worth it riding side by side,  
I'm sure they will tell you—yes it's all very true,  
They ride in freedom for me and for you!!

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**MORE STORIES . . .**

*The following was contributed by Little Big Mike:*

## **THEY'RE NOT MAKING ANY MORE VIETNAM MARINES**

Anonymous (from the First Combined Action Group Cruise Book, Chu Lai, 1970) E Nicholls\ 1stCAG69  
IIMAFCID70

VIETNAM - [a different time, different place, same faces] This may be your finest hour, for you are about to meet a Marine "Grunt." Doff your cap, if you will; wave a flag; choke back a sob in your throat; wipe a tear from your eye, for this is a man who is fighting your war. He is the Marine up front, the one that sees the enemy at twenty-five yards. He is the one who knows what it is like to be shot at close range by small arms, to feel the searing pain and smell of the burning flesh of a wound. He is the one that dies a thousand times when the night is dark and the moon is gone. And he is the one who dies once and forever when an enemy rifle belches flame. If you have ever slogged through sticky rice paddies or waded a stream carrying 200+ rounds of ammunition, two canteens, a rifle and a pack with enough field rations and spare clothing to last a week, you know why they call him "A Grunt"—it is fairly obvious. But look at him well and know him, for he is really something. He wears in dirty dignity, a helmet and flak jacket and faded uniform. His hands are ripped and torn from contact with barbed wire and elephant grass. His wrists are swollen from mosquito bites and his legs bear the scars of leech bites. His pockets are full and his boots are mud-caked and his eyes never stand still; they move and squint and twitch. He is nervous, aware of every sound, for he operates in a never-never world where the difference between death and one more tomorrow often depends on what he sees or does not see, what he hears or does not hear.

A Grunt is the man who lives as close to war as it is possible to get. His rank varies, he may be a Lt. Col., a major, a captain, or a lieutenant, but mostly he is a private, a lance corporal, a corporal, or a sergeant. He likes pilots because the planes give him a measure of protection. He likes artillery outfits because they can knock the bejabbers out of an enemy unit. He cares about supply units because they provide him with something to eat and more ammunition to shoot. He lives first for the day his tour will be up and he can go back to "the World." He lives next for an R&R (Rest and Relaxation). He'd like to get his hands on a cold beer because it would drive the heat from his throat and ease the corroding pain in his gut. He'd like to feel the softness of a woman. But he is a "Grunt" and if he can live through today, then there will be tomorrow. And if there are enough tomorrows, there will be "R&R," the cold beer, the feel of a woman, the end of his tour. The "Grunt," as he stands in dirty, muddy majesty, is as fine a fighting man as the United States has ever produced. He is tough, intelligent and knows how to kill the enemy. But he is a lot more than that—there is something of a builder in these young men. They speak ... sometimes of what must be done to South Vietnam to make it right and workable. They speak of the government and how it must work and, if you are lucky, you may get a "Grunt" to speak his mind about the war. He may tell you things in a language that is largely unprintable. But it may not be surprising to learn that, for the most part, he understands why he is here and believes in the purpose that put him where he is today. He is hard and calloused; he grits his teeth and curses as he assaults the enemy but is also a warm and tender person as he hangs his head and lets the tears roll down his cheeks as he lifts the lifeless body of his buddy into the medevac helicopter for the last ride.

This man is really something, for if you take a "Grunt" out of his muddy, water filled bunker, remove his helmet, his flak jacket, his field uniform, take away his rifle, clean him up and dress him in a sports shirt, slacks and loafers, you've got a kid who was playing on last year's high school football team. He is a national asset to be cherished. He is the difference between freedom and communist slavery. He is a United States Marine and because he has fought for it, life has a special flavor the cowards will never know.

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## **VA NEWS**

### **DISABLED MILITARY VETERANS TO GET MEMORIAL OF THEIR OWN**

**By Gerry J. Gilmore, American Forces Press Service**



WASHINGTON, Nov. 2, 2006—The nation's capital is awash with military-themed statues and memorials. Yet, there isn't a memorial honoring the sacrifices of America's disabled military veterans. That changed when the "Faces of Freedom" photography exhibit featured the work of lensman Rick Steele, who in 2005 spent four months in western Iraq embedded with U.S. Marines.

Lois B. Pope, a noted Florida-based philanthropist, is co-founder and chairman of the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial Foundation. The foundation, she noted, has raised half the money needed to build the \$65 million marble and glass memorial. It will be located on two acres of land adjacent to the National Mall within view of the U.S. Capitol. Pope said groundbreaking is set for 2008, with completion planned in 2010. The American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial will honor America's 3 million disabled military veterans living today, Pope said.

"It's a salute to them, to honor their valor, their courage and their sacrifice," she said. "And, it's a way of educating the American people, that war isn't just about bombs and bullets and death and destruction. It's about human beings, like these young men and women here today, who stand up for the highest values inherent in all of us." Without the efforts of America's military members, "we wouldn't have any of the freedoms that we enjoy today," Pope said.

Army Capt. Leslie Smith, 37, and retired Army Staff Sgt. Christian Bagge, 24, are both disabled veterans and spokespeople for the foundation. Smith was serving on active duty in Bosnia-Herzegovina when she was medically evacuated stateside in March 2002 due to a blood disorder. The condition almost killed the public affairs officer, and part of her left leg had to be amputated. She also permanently lost sight in her left eye. Smith, who's originally from Gettysburg, Pa., is thankful that a memorial is being built to recognize the sacrifices of America's disabled veterans. "We are going to see this memorial being built from the ground up," Smith said. "And each step that is taken is going to represent more recovery that all of us are going to go through." Today, Smith runs, skis and kayaks. She has an active role with the U.S. Olympic Committee's Paralympic Military Program, assisting in the development of future programs and with sporting events for wounded warriors.

Bagge, then an infantry sergeant in the Oregon National Guard, was traveling in a convoy south of Kirkuk, Iraq, when an enemy-emplaced roadside bomb detonated near his vehicle on June 3, 2005. He lost both legs due to the explosion and sustained nerve damage in his left arm. The injured noncommissioned officer was promoted to staff sergeant during a stint on active duty at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, after leaving the Guard. Bagge was medically retired from the Army at the end of July. The memorial will become an important symbol of healing for disabled veterans, Bagge predicted. "It's about hundreds of thousands of people just like me that left a part of themselves on the other side of the world, or were (otherwise) wounded," he said. "It's important to honor their sacrifice."

Steve D. Tough, president of Health Net Federal Services, LLC, said his company is a co-sponsor of the disabled veterans memorial project. Health Net does work for the military's TRICARE health care program, he noted. "When we had an opportunity to support the development of this memorial, and certainly the photographs by Mr. Steele, we felt a good connection to this because we can relate to the (military) beneficiary community," Tough said. "It brings us back home to those we serve."

Photographer Steele's camera's lens captured the comradeship among young U.S. Marines pulling dangerous duty in Iraq. His 100-photo "Faces of Freedom: Scenes of Courage, Sacrifice and Daily Life in Iraq" exhibit depicts his experiences in Iraq from June to September in 2005. The exhibit will run at the Reagan Building until April 2007. "You have a 19-year-old (Marine) talking about how he doesn't have to worry about turning his back, because he knows somebody is there to watch out for him," Steele, 32, recalled. Steele also related his "moments of clarity" after surviving enemy attacks. "You start thinking of everything that could have happened," he noted. The photographer said he was very impressed with the professionalism displayed by the Marines he saw in Iraq. "Marines are really proud to be Marines. They certainly believe in the mission they have out there. "They have a job to do, and they do it," Steele said.

## VA HELPS DISABLED VETERANS TAKE TO THE SLOPES

WASHINGTON (January 16, 2007) - Recently wounded veterans from the Global War on Terror will be among 350 disabled veterans who will ski the Rocky Mountains at the 21st National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic in Snowmass Village, Colo. from April 1-6. "The daily courage and determination of these true American heroes are examples for us all," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. "The men and women of the Department of Veterans Affairs are proud to serve these wounded and disabled veterans on their path to recovery." The annual winter clinic is a rehabilitation program open to all U.S. military veterans with spinal cord injuries or disease, visual impairments, certain neurological conditions, orthopedic amputations or other disabilities, who receive care at any Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care facility. Last year, more than 55 newly injured OIF/OEF veterans challenged themselves against the slopes and joined in fellowship with other veterans at the clinic. During the six-day program, veterans will learn adaptive Alpine and Nordic skiing and be introduced to a variety of other adaptive activities and sports, such as rock climbing, scuba diving, snowmobiling and sled hockey. The U.S. Secret Service will also teach a course on self-defense for people with disabilities. Most notably, however, the clinic will again offer a training and development program designed for top-level skiers. The program has been made possible through an agreement with the United States Olympic Committee and is used to identify potential Paralympic athletes. Jointly sponsored by VA and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), the clinic is hosted each year by the Grand Junction (Colo.) VA Medical Center and VA's Rocky Mountain Network. "Once again, our friends in DAV are lending their compassion and their first-hand experiences to help at this special event," Nicholson said. "VA relies on strong partners like DAV to maintain the high quality of our services." Known for inspiring "Miracles on the Mountainside," the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic shows that the lives of veterans who have a variety of disabilities can be changed forever when they discover the challenges they can overcome, Nicholson added. "The DAV is proud to team with the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide this opportunity for so many brave, wounded warriors," said DAV National Commander Bradley S. Barton. "It is truly a miracle to see the transformation take place on that mountain as these men and women push themselves to the limit and rehabilitate both body and mind."

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## **“AID AND ATTENDANCE” AN UNDER-USED BENEFIT**

By Gerry J. Gilmore, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, December 19, 2006—The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is reaching out to inform wartime veterans and surviving spouses of deceased wartime veterans about an under-used, special monthly pension benefit called Aid and Attendance.

“Veterans have earned this benefit by their service to our nation,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. “We want to ensure that every veteran or surviving spouse who qualifies has the chance to apply.”

Although this is not a new program, not everyone is aware of his or her potential eligibility. The Aid and Attendance pension benefit may be available to wartime veterans and surviving spouses who have in-home care or who live in nursing-homes or assisted-living facilities.

Many elderly veterans and surviving spouses whose incomes are above the congressionally mandated legal limit for a VA pension may still be eligible for the special monthly Aid and Attendance benefit if they have large medical expenses, including nursing home expenses, for which they do not receive reimbursement.

To qualify, claimants must be incapable of self-support and in need of regular personal assistance.

The basic criteria for the Aid and Attendance benefit include the inability to feed oneself, to dress and undress without assistance, or to take care of one’s own bodily needs. People who are bedridden or need help to adjust special prosthetic or orthopedic devices may also be eligible, as well as those who have a physical or mental injury or illness that requires

regular assistance to protect them from hazards or dangers in their daily environment.

For a wartime veteran or surviving spouse to qualify for this special monthly pension, the veteran must have served at least 90 days of active military service, one day of which was during a period of war, and be discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

Wartime veterans who entered active duty on or after September 8, 1980, (October 16, 1981, for officers) must have completed at least 24 continuous months of military service or the period for which they were ordered to active duty. If all requirements are met, VA determines eligibility for the Aid and Attendance benefit by adjusting for un-reimbursed medical expenses from the veteran's or surviving spouse's total household income. If the remaining income amount falls below the annual income threshold for the Aid and Attendance benefit, VA pays the difference between the claimant's household income and the Aid and Attendance threshold. The Aid and Attendance income threshold for a veteran without dependents is now \$18,234 annually. The threshold increases to \$21,615 if a veteran has one dependent, and by \$1,866 for each additional dependent. The annual Aid and Attendance threshold for a surviving spouse alone is \$11,715. This threshold increases to \$13,976 if there is one dependent child, and by \$1,866 for each additional child.

Additional information and assistance in applying for the Aid and Attendance benefit may be obtained by calling 1-800-827-1000. Applications may be submitted on-line at <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>. Information is also available on the Internet at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) or from any local veterans service organization.

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## **OTHER NEWS**

### **PTSD MAY RAISE HEART ATTACK RISK**

From [www.military.com](http://www.military.com)

CHICAGO, January 2, 2007—A groundbreaking study of 1,946 male veterans of World War II and Korea suggests that vets with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder are at greater risk of heart attacks as they age. The new study is the first to document a link between PTSD symptoms and future heart disease, and joins existing evidence that vets with PTSD also have more autoimmune diseases such as arthritis and psoriasis.

A second study, funded by the Army, found that Soldiers returning from combat in Iraq with post-traumatic stress disorder reported worse physical health, more doctor visits and more missed workdays. The Army study is based on a survey of 2,863 Soldiers one year after combat.

"The burden of war may be even greater than people think," said the first study's lead author, Laura Kubzansky of the Harvard School of Public Health, who studies anxiety, depression, and anger as risk factors for heart disease. Her work, with colleagues from Harvard and Boston University, appears in Monday's Archives of General Psychiatry. Their study was funded by the National Institutes of Health and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Army study appears in Monday's American Journal of Psychiatry.

The possible link with heart disease didn't surprise one Iraq veteran diagnosed with PTSD.

"It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out," said John Oliveira of New Bedford, Mass., a former Navy public affairs officer and veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan. "It should also be a wake-up call that the cost to treat those of us suffering from PTSD could dramatically increase as we age."

Medical authorities first accepted post-traumatic stress disorder as a psychiatric condition in 1980 at the urging of Vietnam veterans.

In PTSD, the body's normal hormonal response to stress becomes trigger-happy, scientists believe. Long after traumatic events, people remain edgy, fearful, and prone to nightmares and flashbacks. The continual release of adrenaline prompted by these symptoms may wear down the cardiovascular system, Kubzansky said.

"It's not enough to simply welcome them home and do some immediate evaluation or help with reintegration," she said. "They need to be tracked and watched carefully."

The Harvard and Boston University researchers analyzed data from the Veterans Administration Normative Aging Study, a long-term research project tracking Boston-area vets. They looked at health records of men who completed either a 46-item questionnaire measuring PTSD symptoms in 1986, or a different 35-item PTSD assessment in 1990. Both questionnaires are recognized tools for diagnosing PTSD and ask about symptoms such as sleep problems, nightmares, numbness, a heightened sense of being on guard and intrusive memories of traumatic events.

Over the 10 to 15 years after completing the questionnaires, the vets with more PTSD symptoms were more likely to have heart attacks. For each level increase in symptoms on the 1990 assessment, the risk of heart attack or chest pain rose 18 percent - even after the researchers took into account known heart disease risk factors such as smoking, alcohol use and high blood pressure.

Although the men had different levels of PTSD symptoms, very few had enough symptoms for a true diagnosis, Kubzansky said. The study needs to be repeated to see if the findings hold true for PTSD-diagnosed veterans, and for women, she said. The data also didn't track how frequently the men exercised, so researchers couldn't tell if the men with PTSD symptoms were getting more or less exercise than other veterans.

Dr. Gary J. Kennedy, director of geriatric psychiatry at Montefiore Medical Center, called the study "impressive." He said one symptom of PTSD is avoiding activity, which could account for some of the effect on the heart. Kennedy, who was not involved in the study, said treatment options for PTSD include drugs, talk therapy, and behavioral changes such as getting more exercise and taking action to solve small problems in life rather than shutting down emotionally.

"We've got a whole generation of veterans coming back (from Iraq and Afghanistan) and their health needs are just going to be tremendous," Kennedy said.

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## **VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL COLLECTION**

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and the National Park Service held a press conference on Friday, December 8 at the Museum Resource Center in Landover, MD to announce that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection, the archived gathering of items left at the Memorial, had reached 100,000 items. Since the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1982, visitors have left items including: medals, photos, helmets, notes and, in one memorable case, a custom-built motorcycle.

National Park Service rangers collect items left at The Wall each evening. These items are transported to the Museum Resource Center, where they are cataloged and preserved. The Museum Resource Center is a state-of-the-art, climate-controlled museum facility that houses 44 collections, including the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection, from the National Capital Region. This facility is not open to the public. Objects from the first 100,000 collected at The Wall will be featured in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Center, an educational facility that will be built underground on the National Mall near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

For more information, visit the Memorial Fund's website at: <http://www.vvmf.org/index.cfm?SectionID=517>.

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## **BUSH SIGNS LAW TO BAR MILITARY FUNERAL PROTESTS**

**By Nathan Burchfield**

CNSNews.com Staff Writer

December 27, 2006

### **Federal Funeral Dignity Law now PL 109-464**

(CNSNews.com)—President Bush has signed into a law an amendment to U.S. law protecting military funerals from protests like those staged by a controversial Kansas church that characterizes soldiers' deaths as divine punishment for homosexuality.

The new amendment prohibits protestors from demonstrating within 150 feet of a funeral and within an hour of the memorial service. It provides a year in jail and/or an undetermined fine for violators.

The rule applies to funerals at non-federal cemeteries, joining legislation passed in May 2006 that bans demonstrations at national cemeteries such as Arlington National Cemetery outside Washington, D.C.

The prohibition will primarily affect the Westboro Baptist Church (WBC), a small congregation from Topeka, Kan., that pickets at military funerals because it says homosexuals are taking over the U.S. armed forces and the nation.

The church, led by Rev. Fred Phelps, says it believes God allows soldiers to die as punishment against America for allowing homosexuality to exist. It protests at military funerals across the country with signs featuring slogans like "God Hates Fags" and "Thank God for Dead Soldiers." On its website, the church celebrates the U.S. death toll in Iraq and says it prays for the number to increase 1,000-fold.

Church spokesmen did not respond to email requests for comment Tuesday, and telephone calls placed to the church's headquarters were not answered. In a statement on its website, WBC promises to continue protesting in spite of laws prohibiting the demonstrations.

"We will not go away," it states, arguing that the church members are victims of persecution. "It's only going to get worse. The more you persecute God's people, the more wrath He pours out on you!"

The Law PL 109-464 is below.

To amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit disruptions of funerals of members or former members of the Armed Forces. (Enrolled as Agreed to or Passed by Both House and Senate)

Some pertinent parts of the law are:

*Prohibition- For any funeral of a member or former member of the Armed Forces that is not located at a cemetery under the control of the National Cemetery Administration or part of Arlington National Cemetery, it shall be unlawful for any person to engage in an activity during the period beginning 60 minutes before and ending 60 minutes after such funeral , any part of which activity--*

*takes place within the boundaries of the location of such funeral or takes place within 150 feet of the point of the intersection between--*

*(i) the boundary of the location of such funeral ; and*

*(ii) a road, pathway, or other route of ingress to or egress from the location of such funeral ; and*

*(B) includes any individual willfully making or assisting in the making of any noise or diversion that is not part of such funeral and that disturbs or tends to disturb the peace or good order of such funeral with the intent of disturbing the peace or good order of that funeral ; or*



*(2)(A) is within 300 feet of the boundary of the location of such funeral ; and*

*(B) includes any individual willfully and without proper authorization impeding the access to or egress from such location with the intent to impede the access to or egress from such location.*

The full text of the law is posted at: <http://www.greasyonline.com/article133.html>

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## **BRINGING THEM HOME**

### **MARINE MISSING IN ACTION FROM VIETNAM WAR IS IDENTIFIED**

On November 02, 2006, the Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from the Vietnam War, have been identified and returned to his family for burial with full military honors. He is Pfc. James E. Widener, U.S. Marine Corps, of Churchville, N.Y. He was buried Nov. 10, at Arlington National Cemetery.

On June 11, 1967, Widener was one of 11 passengers on board a CH-46A Sea Knight helicopter that was inserting ground forces into Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam, when the aircraft crashed. Pilots from two nearby helicopters saw the crash and reported that none of the men on board could have survived. Aircraft flew over the site for several hours, but aircrew members did not observe any survivors. A patrol was sent the next day to confirm the status of the 11 crewmembers, but the site could not be accessed due to enemy forces in the area. Later that month, enemy activity prevented a second attempt to patrol the site.

Between 1993 and 1994, U.S. and Socialist Republic of Vietnam (S.R.V.) teams, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), conducted two surveys of an area that was believed to be Widener's crash site. The teams also interviewed several Vietnamese citizens who recalled the crash. Two of the citizens claimed to have seen bone fragments while scavenging the site years earlier. When the teams visited the purported crash site, they found small pieces of wreckage, but found no human remains.

In May 2005, Vietnamese officials notified U.S. specialists that possible human remains were present at a district security compound in Quang Tri province. The Vietnamese claimed to have confiscated the remains and other items, including Widener's identification tag, from a Vietnamese local in 1996. The remains were then buried in the security compound, but the ID tag and other material evidence had supposedly been lost over the years. Later that month, a U.S./S.R.V. team excavated the burial site in the security compound and recovered a box containing human remains.

Among dental records and other forensic tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory also used mitochondrial DNA from two known maternal relatives to confirm the identification of the remains.

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## **EVENTS**

### **IWO JIMA COMMEMORATION – POW / MIA SERVICE**

**Gila River Indian Community, AZ**

February 23-24, 2007



The Ira H. Hayes American Legion Post 84 on the Gila River Indian Community in Sacaton, Arizona, is again commemorating the Iwo Jima Landing and Flag Raising event and cordially invites everyone to attend on February 23 and 24, 2007.

On Friday, a golf tournament is scheduled at 0830 at Sunbird Golf Resort and dinner is scheduled in the evening at 1800 at the Sacaton Boys/Girls Club. On Saturday, the parade begins at 0900 with a military flyover and is followed by ceremonial events at the Veterans/Memorial Park which includes massing of colors, flag raising, POW/MIA service, memorial dedication, and wreath laying. Lunch will be provided by the Women's Auxiliary Unit. Gourd dancing will commence at 1400 and a social powwow/grand entry will be at 1830 at the GRIC District 3 ballfield.

In 2006, a large number of Iwo Jima survivors attended. These veterans were very honored and thrilled, and it was an emotional moment for everyone. The majority of the Iwo Jima survivors present were with the 4th Marine Division, which was part of the first wave on Iwo Jima. WWII veterans and the Navajo Code Talkers were also represented in the parade. Other attendees include color guards units representing Korea-Vietnam veterans and many Native American groups from Arizona as well as many states around the country.

For further information, please call the Post at 520-562-8484 or Josie Kakar-Delsi, Parade Chairman/Committee Assistant at 520-836-1022 or [kakar\\_delsi@cgmailbox.com](mailto:kakar_delsi@cgmailbox.com).

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## **PURPLE HEART RIDE**

Sykesville, MD

April 15, 2007

The Blue Knights MD IX, a law enforcement motorcycle club, is having its third annual Purple Heart Ride on Sunday, April 15, 2007 to honor the wounded servicemen and women who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The police escorted ride travels from Freedom Park, Raincliffe Rd., Sykesville, Maryland, to the Bethesda Naval Hospital. Registration begins at 7 a.m., and the ride begins at 10 a.m. A donation of at least \$25 is requested, which will be presented to the Armed Forces Foundation to benefit these Purple Heart recipients.

For details, visit their website at [www.bkmdix.org](http://www.bkmdix.org) or contact Steven Martin at (410) 804-5721 or [roadkingnmd@yahoo.com](mailto:roadkingnmd@yahoo.com).

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## **SICK CALL**

### **Pato Pato**

Pato Pato went into the hospital on November 14 for open-heart double bypass surgery. On December 29 he was finally released, after being in tripler for 45 days because of complications. The good news is he will be riding this year for his 60th birthday on his 9th consecutive Run. He said he'll be bringing along his new FNG heart! Pato wants to thank the RFTW family for their prayers and good wishes.

We'll be greeting you in Ontario with open and grateful arms, Pato!

**Dennie Georgette**

Dennie Georgette, one of our fuel team members, was riding to work on 13 November 2006 when a lady driving her car made a left turn in front of him which he could not avoid, hitting the car and totaling the bike. Dennie flew over the car and suffered the following injuries: broken pelvis(two places), his shoulder ball was dislocated and broken in five places, arm broken below the shoulder, two broken ribs, a punctured lung and a vertebrae or two broken. When doctors got his shoulder back in place all the pieces went together where they belonged, the arm is in place, his pelvis is pinned and the ribs, lung, and vertebrae will heal on their own. He was expected to be in the hospital about 8 weeks with therapy. There was no head trauma, nor was the helmet damaged. It looks like he will miss the run in 2007, but he has plans already to be back behind a gas pump for us in 2008.

Update: Dennie is in great spirits and very thankful for all the cards, emails, phone calls and prayers. He has been off pain meds for over a week and is on the mend. His arm is in a sling and hopes to soon be able to stand a little so he can get in a wheelchair. In addition to the broken bones that we first heard about he also has ligament damage to both sides of a knee. He is counting on making the 2008 Run. Dennie said he really believes that all the encouragement received from the RFTW fellowship has been a big help in his recovery process.

We'll miss you this year, Dennie; we pray for your complete recovery

## **Rex Rosenberg**

Rex (purple Bugwing) of Kansas recently learned he has prostate cancer. Please keep him in your prayers.

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## **TAPS**

### **Ron "Fidel" Julian**

Ron "Fidel" Julian, a long time member of our RFTW family, passed away on November 6, 2006. His passing leaves those who knew him with a great sense of loss. We will miss his sense of humor and the way that burly exterior melted away to reveal the teddy bear beneath. He was always ready with a helping hand, a hug and a smile.

Fidel was born in 1954 in Purcell, OK. He grew up in Southern California and graduated from high school in 1970. In high school, he joined Army ROTC, where he excelled. His commander offered Ron an appointment to the Air Force Academy. He passed on it when he felt he could not assure Colonel Conway that he was ready to take life seriously. As most of his ROTC buddies enlisted in the Army and went to Vietnam, Fidel, at the age of 17 enlisted in the Air Force. This decision later haunted him, as several of his buddies became casualties of the Vietnam War. After basic, Fidel went to tech school and trained in Weapons Systems. Upon graduation, he received orders for Bentwaters, England. Fidel's class was the first class in ten years to receive orders outside Southeast Asia. His plan was to make the Air Force his career.

As often happens, life takes dramatic turns that alters the direction we have chosen. Fidel was involved in a motorcycle vs. auto accident from which he was not expected to recover. He spent 9 months in traction and additional months attached to Fitzsimmons Army Hospital in Denver, after which he was forcibly retired. He suffered from the effects of his head, spinal, internal, and skeletal injuries the rest of his life.

Fidel and Kay "Lilboss" met at a junior college in the San Diego area in 1975. In April 1978, they were married. In 1985, they moved the family to Colorado.

In 1989, Fidel became involved with Point Man and Task Force Omega after visiting a replica of "The Wall" in Pueblo, Co. He had a great burden for our POW/MIA's, active duty troops and veterans, especially those Vietnam

Veterans. This was also the first year the family was involved in Run For The Wall. They joined the Run for the evening at the state fairgrounds in Pueblo. In 1991, they met the Run in Gunnison in their VW bus, and went with them to Limon. When Fidel learned that five riders were at three different bike shops in Colorado Springs for repairs, he decided to stay at the Springs until the repairs were made, then lead the riders into Limon. This became his personal mission for many years – collecting strays and making sure no one was left behind.

For several years, the “Van Family” joined RFTW along I-25 and went as far as Limon or Salina. Eventually they were able to make the trip to DC three or four times.

Fidel was probably best known for break-downs, losing alternators, the plug to the oil pan, a wheel bearing and axle, computer, etc, etc. Thanks to Wiley E. Peyote, some began to refer to him as “Sparky” and the family as “The Griswolds,” after the Chevy Chase “Vacation” movies. Twice, they joined the Wall To The Wall Run to the North Wall in Canada. In 1998, the Julians did the merchandising for RFTW, with Conman and Lilboss going “All the Way” and the rest of the family joining them in Colorado.

In November 2002, Fidel and Kay’s youngest daughter, Rachel “Ratchet” was killed in an auto accident. In 2003, Fidel, Lilboss, and Jessica “Spots” went “All the Way” in her memory. Fidel and Lilboss were again able to go “All the Way” in 2006.

Fidel recently bought a Goldwing and sidecar, wanting to get back in the saddle again. True to form, he blew a head gasket going to a Patriot Guard Mission.

As a result of the head injury he suffered in his accident, Fidel spent several years on a night-time ventilator due to “failed respiratory drive. Fidel passed away when he fell asleep while disconnected from the ventilator.

Fidel was a member of Patriot Guard Riders, Civil Air Patrol, Task Force Omega of Colorado, a DAV life member. and engineer for Spanish Peaks and Aguilar Volunteer Fire Departments. He was also serving as interim pastor for his church in Aguilar.

Fidel is survived by his wife Kay “Lil Boss,” sons Josh “Hormone” (Casidy), Joseph “Conman” (Catherine), and daughter Jessica “Spots”; also three granddaughters, Jamie “Speedbump,” DeAnne, and Erynn. He was preceded in death by his daughter Rachel “Ratchet.”

On November 6, 2006, RFTW and F-Troop lost a brother. His presence will be greatly missed.

### **Lindsey Raines**

Some of you may know Paul and Vicky Raines, who ride and own the Western Auto in Rainelle, WV. Their 19-year-old daughter Lindsey passed away suddenly about two weeks before Christmas.

If you'd like to send a note, the address is P.O. Box 217, Rainelle, WV 25962. I did send flowers and a card from the Run; they sent a nice note back.

– Denise “Krispy” Ferris, West Virginia Coordinator

### **Jo Ann Swiger**

Run For The Wall expresses its deepest condolences to Linda Stimmell on the passing of her mother, Jo Ann Swiger, on January 31. Linda was very close to her mom, living nearby and watching over her during her illness of the past several years. Linda holds her RFTW family very close to her heart, and her mom wondered how she could possibly feel so close to people she hardly knew. While on the Run in 2004, Linda got a phone call that her mother was seriously ill. Her RFTW friends immediately pitched in, collecting enough money to fly her home,

driving her to the nearest airport, and taking her motorcycle home to West Virginia for her. After Linda's mom recovered and Linda told her what her RFTW friends had done, she finally understood why Linda feels the way she does about RFTW. Our hearts are with you, Linda.

You can send condolences to Linda at the funeral home: [McCulla@labs.net](mailto:McCulla@labs.net) and write "Jo Ann Swiger Family" in the subject line. Or you can write to Linda at [LJSTIMMEL@aol.com](mailto:LJSTIMMEL@aol.com).

### **Master Chief Bob Hunt, US Navy Retired**

Last year, a group of about 25 RFTW riders left the Oak Grove lunch stop early. They went to Columbia, MO to visit Master Chief Bob Hunt, US Navy Retired. He had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. The group visited with the Master Chief and his Family for about 30 minutes. His wife said that he never showed his emotions. But that day he wore them where all could see. The following is from his obituary.

After graduation from Hickman High School in 1957, Robert enlisted in the U.S. Navy and underwent recruit training at Great Lakes, Ill. His first duty assignment after graduation from recruit training in June 1957 was with Attack Squadron 42 stationed at NAS Oceana, Va. While attached to that command, he made two deployments to the North Atlantic, one on USS Intrepid, CVA-11, and the other on USS Shangri La, CVA-38.

Upon transfer in September 1958, he was assigned to Attack Squadron 12 stationed at NAS Cecil Field, Fla. While attached to that command, he made two deployments to the Mediterranean Sea on USS Forrestal, CVA-59, and USS Roosevelt, CVA-42. In May 1961 he was transferred to Naval Station, Mayport, Fla., where he earned his wings as a helicopter search and rescue air crewman.

In May 1965 he was transferred to Attack Squadron 146 stationed at NAS Lemoore, Calif. During that tour of duty, he made two Southeast Asia deployments in support of the Vietnam conflict aboard USS Ranger, CVA-61, and USS Constellation, CVA-64.

While attached to Attack Squadron 146, he volunteered for duty with the elite Navy Seawolves Helicopter Attack Light Squadron 3 stationed in the Republic of Vietnam. After initial training, he was assigned as non-commissioned officer in charge of Detachment 1, flying aboard UH-1B helicopters as crew chief and door gunner. He voluntarily extended his tour in Vietnam and was wounded in June 1969 while flying his 283rd combat mission.

After being released from the hospital, he was assigned to Training Squadron 26 stationed at NAS Chase Field in Beeville, Texas. While at Chase Field, he was screened and selected for undercover duty with the U.S. State Department as a United States Deputy Federal Marshall traveling on U.S. international and domestic flights to prevent hijacking.

Upon completion of duty with the State Department, he volunteered for duty in the Republic of Vietnam, and in October 1971 he was assigned to Fleet Air Support Unit, Republic of Vietnam, as power plants division chief, providing direct support to Helicopter Attack Light Squadron 3.

In June 1972, he was transferred to Attack Squadron 176 stationed at NAS Oceana, Va., and was assigned as flight deck maintenance chief. During his assignment to VA-176, he made three deployments to the Mediterranean Sea aboard USS Roosevelt, CVA-42. On one deployment he was assigned to carrier air group staff acting in the capacity of the carrier air group maintenance chief. Upon transfer in September 1975, he was assigned to Air Test and Evaluation Squadron 4, NAS Point Mugu, Calif., as the maintenance chief. Upon transfer in October 1978, he was assigned to Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron 1 stationed in Agana, Guam, as the maintenance chief and command master chief. He was transferred in July 1981 to U.S. Naval Station, Annapolis, Md., and was assigned to the staff of the office of the commandant of Midshipmen at the United States Naval Academy and held a variety of duties, including working extensively with the Naval Academy Athletic Association, Quality of Life for Midshipmen and as Quest instructor for Midshipmen leadership courses.

Robert retired from the U.S. Navy on Dec. 1, 1986, as a Master Chief Aviation Maintenceman, E-9. His military decorations include the Silver Star, Purple Heart, two individual Action Air Medals and 14 Strike Flight Air Medals, Navy Commendation Medal with Combat "V", three Navy Achievement Medals, Combat Action Ribbon, Presidential Unit Citation, three Navy Unit Commendations, Navy "E" Ribbon, six Good Conduct Medals, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross, Republic of Vietnam Civil Actions Unit Citation and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.

After retirement from the U.S. Navy, he worked for the United States Postal Service in Columbia as a rural mail carrier from October 1987 until his retirement in June 2003.

When the central route passes through Columbia, remember him.

Jim David "Sidecar"  
Missouri Coordinator

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## THE LIGHT SIDE

### A BIKER'S CHRISTMAS

Unknown, submitted by Stump and Mac

Twas the night before Christmas, and not until spring  
Would an engine be running, not even a wing

The Bikes are all sleeping, they're covered and warm  
Batteries are tended, nylon covers their form.

My Bros were all nestled snug in their beds,  
White visions of new chrome danced in their heads.

And I in my doo-rag, bike jacket and boots.  
Out shoveling snow, and dreaming of scoots.

Then from the horizon there came such a clatter,  
My shovel I dropped, what could be the matter?

Away up the hill, I slogged through the snow,  
Looked up at the sky: where'd all that noise go?

A throb from the heavens like straight pipes so hearty,  
Gave summer's good thoughts, like a loud bikers party.

When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,  
But a neat '02 Retro, red trailer in rear.

With a little old rider, so lively and quick,  
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.

More rapid than Crotchies his Retro came on.



And he whistled, and shouted and sang out this song:

Now, Harley! Now, Big Dog! On Honda and Beamer!  
Now Vulcan! Now Injun! On Victory and Trumpet!

To the top of the porch! To the top of the wall!  
Now Ride away! Ride away! Ride away all!

As small bikes that from the semis do fly,  
When they meet with the air blast, mount to the sky.

So up to the house-top that OLX it flew  
With a trailer of goodies, and ole St. Nick too.

And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof ,  
The rumble and thunder of pipes that gave proof.

I ran to the house boots thumping around,  
And in came St. Nick all bearded and round.

Dressed all in black leather, from helmet to boot,  
His chaps were all tarnished with road grime and soot.

A T-Bag of goodies he'd flung on his back.  
And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.

His shades—how they twinkled! His doo-rag how scary!  
With chains intertwined, through skulls that were cherry!

His droll little mouth had done many a row,  
So the beard of his chin was as white as the snow.

The Stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,  
The Smoke had a strange smell: it gave him a relief!

He had a broad face and a large fat beer belly,  
That shook when he laughed, like a bowlful of jelly.

He was tattooed and plump, a right jolly old rider,  
So I offered a cold Bud, thought what could be righter?

In a twinkle of his eye as he downed that cold beer,  
Gave me to know I had nothing to fear.

He spoke not a word, but went straight to my ride,  
And fixed it with chrome, horsepower and pride!

And giving the peace sign with biker's good cheer,  
Took off for his Retro which was rumbling quite near.

He sprang on the saddle, his gloves on the bars,  
A wheelie he threw then off towards the stars!

I heard him exclaim, as my chest swelled with pride:  
"HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL, AND TO ALL A GOOD RIDE!"

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## CLOSING THOUGHTS

The following are from a website (<http://www.vietvet.org/thewall.htm>), a gallery of pictures, stories, and poems written by people who have visited the Wall. Thanks to John King for telling me about the website.

*Observations by Nancy Smoyer, a Park Service volunteer, of the magic of the Wall:*

## PIECES OF THE WALL

By Nancy Smoyer  
1999

A man stands by a panel where he has placed a large picture frame containing pieces of a boy's life-a picture of the young man in uniform, a newspaper article about him as a football star and one about his death, the letter from his Commanding Officer to the family. A couple comes up to look at it, and the man says to his wife, "I knew that man, I served with him." The other man hears him and tells him, "That's my brother."

A vet watches a young man staring at the Wall, touching a name. After a few minutes of hesitation, he goes over to him and finds that it was the boy's uncle whom he never knew. They talk and when the vet starts to leave, the young man asks if he could hug him. Afterwards, the boy's friends come back over to him and one of them awkwardly hugs him too.

Two men see another man doing a rubbing of the same person they are there to visit. When they talk, they find that the man doing the rubbing was his best friend in high school and the other two were his buddies in Vietnam. The vets say that they would like to get a message to his family, that there are people who still care. They tell the childhood friend that they have both named their first child after their buddy-both girls, both named Chris. The vets ask if the friend would like to know more about how Chris died and they off together talking.

A young man with short hair and a fit body asks to do nine rubbings of one name on the last panel. It's his father who was in Special Forces and he too is a Green Beret and will be going to the Persian Gulf in a month.

A woman stands in front of her brother's panel. A man nearby asks a volunteer for six rubbing papers. The woman knows that when her brother was killed, 18 others in his platoon also died and so asks the man if he was a Marine and if he's looking at the same day. He says yes, he was in the same company, but doesn't know her brother or the man who died trying to save him. But he has buddies who are on the Wall with them and he was in the area at the time and so is able to tell her what happened on that day.

A vet is at the information booth trying to locate his buddy's name on the Directory computer. He knows the name should be there because he put him onto a chopper badly wounded, but it can't be found. While they are searching, another man comes up looking for his buddy's name which he too can't find. He had seen his platoon take devastating mortar fire at the LZ as he was being medevaced out. And then the two men realize that they are looking for each other.

A group of Soviet veterans who fought in Afghanistan come to visit their American comrades with whom they have so much in common in the wars they fought, both in foreign countries and at home. They place a folded flag from their country at the base of the Wall, and standing quietly around it, one by one place a red carnation across the flag. Someone speaks briefly in Russian and then they slowly disperse. At another time, Soviet Afghan veteran's leave a cigarette, a shot glass and a piece of bread-the traditional salute to fallen comrades.

A vet sits in the grass on the edge of the sidewalk staring at a panel. A couple of times his friend, a fellow vet, goes over to speak briefly to him. Afterwards when they talk, he says he had gone back to Vietnam in his mind-so far back he didn't know his friend had spoken to him. Before their bus leaves a few hours later to take them back to Iowa, he sits down again with his buddies on the Wall-to say goodbye for now.

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## **THE POWER OF A NAME**

by Valerie

The Castilleja School

Palo Alto, CA

I never really imagined that a name could have so much meaning. Walking along the Vietnam Veterans Memorial I was faced with thousands of names belonging to thousands of people who had each given their lives for our country. I stood there, surrounded by spectators, all quiet in respect and honor, but the personal meaning didn't reach any deeper than the engraved letters on the wall. To me they were just labels, not the true souls that they represented. I had never known the soldiers who had lost their lives; I hadn't even been alive to experience the war.

I slowly made my way deeper into the list, passing flowers and small gifts left in remembrance. I saw a wreath left by Boy Scout Troop #471, and a letter left by a little girl for her "grampa." For some reason it surprised me that people would come to the memorial to pay their respects to their loved ones. Wasn't this just a place for tourists to come take pictures of a very historical monument? Besides, they were, after all, just names.

Soon I began to become tired of the repetitive carvings in stone. Row after row, it became harder and harder for me to imagine that each identity listed had a true character and personality. I began to walk on the less crowded side of the path that was farther away from the wall. After snapping a few pictures with my disposable camera, I thought I had experienced the essence of the memorial.

Then I saw something that made my heart fall silent and my feet freeze in their place. There, standing in front of Section 34 on the right half of the wall, was a woman. Her royal blue outfit and white gloves highlighted her dark chocolate skin, making her stand out from the crowd as it rushed past her. It was as if she were in a completely different world, surrounded by nothing except her thoughts. I watched as she reached her gentle hand up and lightly touched the wall in front of her. Slowly, she traced her fingers over the name "Frederick Holeburg."\* She stroked it with such softness and purity, it was as if she had never felt anything more precious in her life. Closing her eyes, she took a breath, and I could see her imagine him standing there in front of her. She didn't move, as if afraid to lose her husband all over again. Her breathing became so deep and relaxed, she seemed to be in a state of complete solitude. I tried not to make any noise, even though I knew she wouldn't notice. I didn't want to disturb what seemed to be such a placid and tranquil moment.

By looking at the way she held her hand against the stone, I felt I could see back into the many years they spent in each other's arms. I could see her smiling at him and touching his face; not just his name. I saw them taking long walks and falling more in love with each other every minute they were together. I could see him holding her hand as long as he could as he had to leave to go and fight in the war. I could see her sitting at home, barely being able to sit still, as she waited to hear news of him. I could see her crying when she found out he had died.

Then, as if she had suddenly awoken from her dream, a tear quickly ran down her cheek. She opened her eyes and looked at the name of the one who had meant more than anything else in the world to her. She began to cry as she leaned her head against the wall. "I love you," she said. "I will always love you."

With that she stood up and wiped her eyes. She pressed her lips against her hand, making sure that her kiss would be felt, and then she touched her husband's name one last time. Slowly her arm retreated down to her side, and after standing in peace for a minute, she reached into her purse and pulled something out. She placed it on the ground,

glanced at the wall once more, and slowly turned and walked away.

I moved closer towards Fred Holeburg's name. Beneath me I saw a white rose with a maroon red bow tied around it. Next to it lay a white card with calligraphy writing. I leaned over to read what had been written: ***"In honor of the best husband, chef, and friend I have ever met: I love you, Fred."***

I smiled as a tear rolled down the side of my face. I never guessed that a complete stranger could have such an effect on me without even knowing. In those twenty minutes I learned more about life and about myself than I could have ever aspired to learn in months. I learned what it means to truly love someone. I discovered that some people are cherished so much in life and death that the sight of their name can cause great emotion in those they have touched.

Fred Holeburg had made an impact that went deeper than the engraved letters of his name. Fred Holeburg affected the fate of his country; Fred Holeburg affected the soul of his wife; and unintentionally, Fred Holeburg affected my heart. To me he was no longer just a name on the side of the wall. Even though I had never met him, I knew he was a hero, and that he deserved so much more recognition than he received, as did the other thousands of names that stood in front of me. Looking around, I no longer saw thousands of words; I saw thousands of brothers, grandparents, husbands and sons. I saw inspiring people who each had been adored by their loved ones. Only then did I realize the essence of the Vietnam Memorial. It is not a name that needs to be remembered, it is a person.

I then quickly began frantically reading the names on the wall, trying not to miss one of the remarkable soldiers that undoubtedly deserved so much more than just a glance. I wanted to understand and learn about each man who had lost his life, but then I became aware of the amazing magnitude of the memorial.

As it was time to leave, I thought of the countless soldiers' names that I did not even have time to read, let alone get to know. Even though I couldn't get to know each soldier in the war, my eyes had been opened to a new world of perspective.

I walked away from the wall, the names growing smaller with every step I took. Finally they were no longer visible, and I said goodbye to the names I had read, and the heroes I had respected.

\* Name used is fictional.

Valerie is thirteen years old. She visited The Wall while on a class visit to Washington D.C. She is an 8th grade student at The Castilleja School in Palo Alto, California.

### **You Are Not Forgotten**



# 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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