

RUN FOR THE WALL

Quarterly Newsletter

"We Ride For Those Who Can't"

January 2008

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THE EDITOR'S NOTES



I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season! Although Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and other celebrations are over, we should strive to maintain the joy and meaning of the glorious season throughout the coming year. I'd like to share with you a story I recently read in a newspaper. Stories such as this one help us to feel the Christmas spirit throughout the year.

Ala'a Eddeen was a 9-year-old Iraqi boy, strong of will but weak of body—he suffered from cerebral palsy and weighed just 55 pounds. He lived among about 20 kids with physical or mental disabilities at the Mother Teresa orphanage, under the care of nuns who preserved this small oasis in a dangerous place. On September 6, 2003, halfway through his 13-month deployment, Capt. Scott Southworth and his military police unit paid a visit to the orphanage. They played and chatted with the children; Southworth was talking with one little girl when Ala'a dragged his body to the soldier's side.

Black haired and brown eyed, Ala'a spoke to the 31-year-old American in the limited English he had learned from the sisters. Over the next 10 months, the unit returned to the orphanage again and again. The soldiers would race kids in their wheelchairs, sit them in Humvees and help the sisters feed them. To Southworth, Ala'a was like a little brother. But Ala'a—who had longed for a soldier to rescue him—secretly began referring to Southworth as “Baba,” Arabic for “Daddy.” Then, around Christmas, a sister told Southworth that Ala'a was getting too big. He would have to move to a government-run facility within a year. “Best case scenario was that he would stare at a blank wall for the rest of his life,” Southworth said. So he decided to adopt Ala'a.

Before Southworth left for Iraq, he was chief of staff for a state representative. He was single, worked long days and squeezed in his service as a national guardsman—military service was a family tradition. His great-great-grandfather served in the Civil War, his grandfather in World War II, his father in Vietnam.

The family had lived in the tiny central Wisconsin city of New Lisbon for 150 years. Scott attended law school with a goal of public service, running unsuccessfully for state Assembly at the age of 25.

There were so many reasons he couldn't bring a handicapped Iraqi boy into his world. He had no wife or home; he knew nothing of raising a disabled child; he had little money and planned to run for district attorney in his home county. Just as important, Iraqi law prohibits foreigners from adopting Iraqi children. Southworth prayed and talked with family and friends. Southworth's decision was cemented in spring 2004, while he and his comrades watched Mel Gibson's film, “The Passion of the Christ.” Jesus Christ's sacrifice moved him. He imagined meeting Christ and Ala'a in heaven, where Ala'a would ask: “Baba, why didn't you ever come back to get me?”

“Everything that I came up with as a response I felt ashamed. I wouldn't want to stand in the presence of Jesus and Ala'a and say those things to Him.” And so, in his last weeks in Iraq, Southworth got approval from Iraq's Minister of Labor to take Ala'a to the United States for medical care.

His parents had filed signatures so he wouldn't miss the cutoff to run for district attorney. He knocked on doors, telling people he wanted to be tough on criminals who committed injustices against children. He never mentioned his intention to adopt Ala'a. He won office—securing a job and an income. Everything seemed to be in place. But when Southworth contacted an immigration attorney, he was told it would be nearly impossible to bring Ala'a to the United States. Undaunted, Southworth and the attorney started the paperwork to bring Ala'a over on humanitarian parole, used for urgent reasons or significant public benefit. A local doctor, a cerebral palsy expert, a Minneapolis hospital, all said they would provide Ala'a free care. Other letters of support came from a minister, the school district, the lieutenant governor, a congressman, chaplain, a sister at the orphanage and an Iraqi doctor.

He mailed the packet on Dec. 16, 2004, to the Department of Homeland Security. By mid-January, Homeland Security called Southworth's attorney to say it had approved humanitarian parole. Within three hours, Southworth had plane tickets. He hardly slept as he worked the phones to make arrangements, calling the American embassy, hotels and the orphanage. His Iraqi translator agreed to risk his life to get Ala'a to the embassy to obtain documentation. Like a dream, all the pieces fell into place. Southworth returned to Iraq for the first time since a deployment that left him emotionally, physically and spiritually exhausted. His unit had trained Iraqi police from sunup to sundown; he saw the devastation wrought by two car bombings, and counted dead bodies. Mortar and rocket attacks were routine. Some 20 in his unit were wounded, and one died. He knew that nothing could be taken for granted in Baghdad. So when he saw Ala'a in the airport for the first time since leaving Iraq, he was relieved. “He was in my custody then. I could hug him. I could hold him. I could protect him—and forever started.”

Police found Ala'a abandoned on a Baghdad street at around 3 years old. No one knows where he came from. In all his life in Iraq, Ala'a saw a doctor 10 times. He surpassed that in his first six months in the United States. Ala'a's cerebral palsy causes low muscle tone, spastic muscles in the legs, arms and face. It hinders him when he tries to crawl, walk or grasp objects. He needs a wheelchair to get around, often rests his head on his shoulder and can't easily sit up. Physical therapy has helped him control his head and other muscles. He can now maneuver his way out of his van seat and stabilize his legs on the ground.

He clearly has thrived. At 13, he's doubled his weight to 111 pounds. Ala'a's English has improved and he loves music and school, math and reading especially. He gets mad when snow keeps him home, even though it's his second favorite thing, after his father. On June 4, Ala'a officially became Southworth's son. Though he was born in the spring of 1994, they decided to celebrate his birthday as the day they met—September 6.

Life has settled into a routine. Father and son have moved into a new house with an intercom system, a chair lift to the basement and toilet handles. Southworth showers him, brushes his teeth and washes his hands. He has traded in his Chrysler Concorde for a minivan — it was too hard to lift his son out of the car.

In October, the Wisconsin's deputy adjunct general gave Southworth, now a major, permission to change units because of Ala'a. His former unit was going to Guantanamo Bay for a one-year deployment, and he didn't want to leave his son behind, at least for now.

He hopes one day to marry his longtime girlfriend and have more children. He may run for Congress or governor someday—he's already won re-election once, and plans to run again next fall.

Not everything is perfect. Ala'a never encountered thunderstorms in Baghdad, and the flash-boom reminds him of bombs. He is starting to get over it, although he still weeps during violent storms. But Ala'a—who picked out his own name, which means to be near God—knows he's where he belongs. Southworth always says Ala'a

picked him, not the other way around. They were brought together, Southworth believes, by a “web of miracles.”

This wonderful story has moved me tremendously and I’ve resolved to keep such good acts front and center as a reminder that each one of us can make a difference in the world.

A very Happy New Year to you and yours!

Never forget,
Judy “Velcro” Lacey

THE PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

By Mark “Straight Arrow” Rittermeyer
President, Run For The Wall



Well, 2008 is upon us, and it is time to get serious about making plans to participate in RFTW XX. The Route Coordinators, and their staffs are working daily to make sure that the Run will first and foremost promote the Mission, and secondly will see each and every one of the riders safely across the country.

I would ask you to sign up for the notification email if you have not done so already. If you have, then you know that every time there is a “Latest News” posting you get an email letting you know. It is easy to do, and you only have to do it once.

From the Board of Directors, let me wish each and every one of you—the RFTW Family (and all you FNGs)—a Happy and Blessed New Year.

Never Forget!!!
Mark "Straightarrow" Rittermeyer

► RFTW 2008

FLYING THUNDER FLIGHT TO THE WALL—2008

This year is RFTW’s 20th anniversary, and a very special event will mark that milestone. Wings & Rotors Museum will fly three Hueys and one Kiowa with RFTW from California to the Vietnam Memorial.

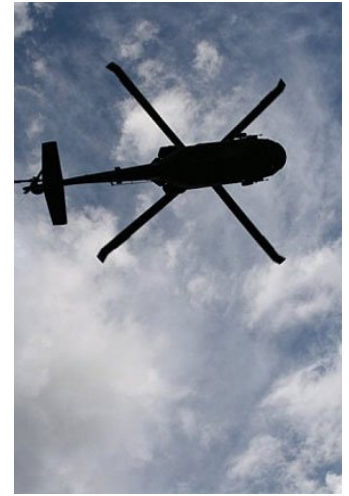
The Museum’s three UH-1 Iroquois Hueys and one OH5 Kiowa will accompany motorcycle riders as they cross America to arrive at the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C. for Memorial Day ceremonies in May 2008. They will send two Hueys to Ontario, CA to follow RFTW; they will also send two to Blythe to follow Rolling Thunder on their *Ride to the Wall*.

The historic Vietnam era helicopters will follow us to our sacred ground at Angel Fire and then they will fly I-40 to Washington, DC where they will link up with us again for “Rolling Thunder.” An emotional and historic “mission” and tribute for our POWs/MIAs and for all those that wore the uniform of this great Nation during the Vietnam War.

They also will have on board an award-winning film production team, with a history of projects that have aired on HBO, The History Channel, Discovery Channel, Disney Channels, and other PBS stations.

This is an historic event—it's never been done before—the flight of combat Vietnam helicopters and their crews, flying across the country to honor those Vietnam Veterans.

Press Release: Murrieta, CA, October 12, 2007; Wings & Rotors Air Museum today announced its most challenging mission. Their four combat-certified, Vietnam era helicopters will escort over 300,000 motorcycle riders from California to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC on the annual Memorial Day Rolling Thunder 2008. Wings & Rotors *Flying Thunder - Flight to the Wall* will accompany two well established groups to the Vietnam Wall – Run For The Wall and Rolling Thunder's Ride to the Wall.



Every Memorial Day Weekend for 20 years, motorcycle riders from every corner of the country have converged on Washington, DC at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, better known as “The Wall.” The numbers have risen, currently reaching many hundreds of thousands riders. They will be joined along the route by Wings & Rotors Air Museum's historic Vietnam era helicopters.

For the first time in the history of the “Ride,” four restored, fully operational and combat-certified Vietnam era helicopters—three UH-1 “Hueys and an OH-58 Kiowa—will fly along with the riders, making layovers along the way at Vietnam Memorials and other Veterans’ memorial sites. The ceremonial stops will be made on both the eastern and western legs of the flight.

Departing California on May 14, 2008, the trip will take riders and helicopters across America on several routes which include both cities and small towns along the way who will sponsor special ceremonies and remembrances. The riders and helicopters will arrive in Washington, DC for Memorial Day Weekend and the ceremonies at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the Mall.

The motorcycles riders and helicopters will take several routes to Washington, DC, stopping in communities along the way that have either Vietnam Memorials or other Veteran remembrances. The cities will also host riders and provide housing, meals and fuel, in what has become a tradition over the years of Run For The Wall and Rolling Thunder's Ride to the Wall. Communities will also seek out local Vietnam veterans to attend these functions.

For the helicopters' schedule and more info on Wings & Rotors, visit <http://www.wingsandrotors.org>.

FROM ANNE PERRY, RFTW PUBLICITY:

2008 Mission DVD and Flier Available

The 2008 RFTW Mission DVD video and flier are now available. Both may be viewed at either www.rftwcr-2008.us or www.rftwsr-2008.us. There are also other interviews with riders from the 2007 RFTW which may be viewed on these web sites.

The main purpose of each year's RFTW mission DVD video and flier is to offer our State Coordinators and Contacts effective public information tools as they seek to communicate about the mission of Run For The Wall.

In the past, the only way in which our other riders could view the mission publications was via the Internet web sites. Anyone can continue to view both the video (via Windows Media File) and the flier (via Adobe .pdf file) on the sites. Last year's video and flier will remain available on the 2007 websites: www.rftwcr-2007.us and www.rftwsr-2007.us.

We know that many of our riders would like to have more information available to use in talking with potential supporters and riders from their own communities. Therefore, while supplies last, you may now acquire a 2008 RFTW Mission DVD and flier package for a donation of \$10 (to cover expenses and postage). Please make your check to RFTW and mail to: Anne Perry, 10965 Clyde Acord Road, Franklin, TX 77856. If you have questions, please call Anne, RFTW Public Information Contact, at 979-828-4374, or email her at aperry315@gmail.com.

HEADS UP FOR WASHINGTON D.C. HOTELS

From Patrick "Dragonrider" McCarthy (rftw.db@gmail.com)

Arrangements are being with the hotels for RFTW XX. The hotels will not accept reservations for the RFTW group rate until the Official Route Schedule is published (usually in December). The D.C. hotel names on the Route Schedule will be Internet links to the appropriate on-line reservation sites. For those without Internet access, the telephone numbers to each hotel will be listed in the notes section below the hotel names. I will remind everyone now that parking at the Holiday Inn is FREE, parking at the Westin Hotel is NOT FREE. Watch the Route Schedule and Daily Itinerary for specific information concerning parking at the hotels (in Arlington). Also, Pastor Rich Neubauer of the Arlington Assembly of God Church has again offered free tent camping and showers to any riders desiring to stay on the church grounds.

SCHEDULE FOR THE RELEASE OF 2008 RFTW MERCHANDISE

Right now the planning calls for the website to be updated by February 1, 2008, which will include all of the 2008 merchandise. Our plans are to have all of the products on the shelf by February 15, 2008. You may begin sending in orders anytime after the 1st of February and they will be filled shortly after the 15th. Orders from the website will be closed as of May 1, allowing us time to get both trailers ready for the "Run."

You can order three different ways: (1) snail mail with a check; (2) email with credit card; or (3) fax with credit card. Please, no phone orders; I'm not retired yet.

There will be a few new items this year that have been approved by the Board of Directors:

A new short sleeve black t-shirt will be offered with an emphasis on the "Wall," our "Flag," the "POW/MIA" logo, and the "Rifle" stuck in the ground with the "Helmet" on top. This was designed by one of our riders and will not be dated. Because of this new offer, we will not have Golf shirts available in the trailers. Those will be available only from the website.

There will also be a short sleeve black t-shirt with the POW/MIA logo embroidered on the front. Many of you saw this at the two reunions. The Board of Directors has decided to donate a portion of the profits from the sale of this shirt to POW/MIA designated charities.

A special "Run" pin will be offered this year with two rockers. "Run For The Wall" will be on the top rocker and "2008—20th Anniversary" will be on the bottom rocker.

A special "Challenge Coin" will also be offered this year. "2008—20th Anniversary" will be in black on the back of the coin. Because we are using the spot normally left for engraving the previous engraveable coins will also be available.

A special picture called “Jungle Boots” will be offered in a limited edition print. They will be autographed by the photographer, a RFTW rider, and there will only be 500 available.

For those of you who use “Pin-keepers” or “Pin-locks” to hold your pins on, we now have them available: \$4 for a package of 10. These usually sell for \$5 or \$6 at the bike rallies.

The Board has picked out the new “Run t-shirt” design and it looks great. It will again be ash and available in both short sleeve and long sleeve mock turtleneck. Everything else that has been on the website will also be available. The only items discontinued are the flashlights.

Thanks for your support of RFTW and we will see you in May,
Don “9-Ball” Morris, Director of Merchandise

► **RFTW HISTORY—FROM THE WRECKAGE OF THE PAST**

by Milo (“Nayber”) Gordon

The RFTW Back Patch Set:

Hey all. I had a request from Slammer this past summer to find out the history behind the RFTW Back Patch set. I sent a inquiry to Deacon in Chicago, the Coordinator responsible for bringing the Back Patch to RFTW. This is his response to my inquiry:

You’re correct, the patch did come to life in 1997. Its origin is relatively simple. We had commissioned the tee shirt manufacturer in downstate Illinois to design the shirts for that year. They sent up a design very similar to what is now the back patch. Strangelove and I were sitting at my house reviewing the design and he commented that the design would make a beautiful patch. We tinkered with things on the design (deleted the year, created the top rocker, punched up a few colors, etc.) and sent the design over to Swisscraft to run up a prototype. What they returned was rather breathtaking, and the patch was born.

An interesting and critical aside: At that particular time in 1% motorcycle club history, there was a heated conflict between the Hell’s Angels and the Outlaws. The strife covered most of the nation with some extreme violence: bombings, murders, ride-by shootings, etc. Both organizations were attempting to take over local, unaffiliated clubs to expand their ranks. We did not want the emergence of a previously unknown backpatch to cause any difficulties for our riders.

I had previously represented high-ranking members of both sides of the dispute. Strangelove was quite familiar with all of the players as a result of his tenure with the Hell’s Lovers. D.C. Danny, the president emeritus of a Chicago club, the D.C. Eagles, put us in touch with the executive representatives of all concerned (a group known as The Confederation) and eventually we had a sit-down with some interesting folks. After some negotiations, and what I considered to be an extreme amount of alcohol provided at our expense, it was agreed that the RFTW patch and all those that wore the patch would be considered “neutral by consent” meaning that the organizations recognized the RFTW for what it was: an event, not a club.

There were a few minor but important concessions that we made. There could never be a bottom rocker with the patch. We had originally proposed a geographic bottom rocker. For example, your bottom rocker would say “Wisconsin,” mine would say “Illinois,” etc. The Confederation would not permit that since the patch then became a three part patch, something that they felt that they had control over. It didn’t seem like too outrageous of a demand so we acquiesced. Another demand was that we allow their members to wear their club colors if they chose to ride with us. We countered with a demand that if allowed to do so, absolutely no club rivalry issues would arise under penalty of violation and expulsion from their own club. They had no problem with that demand. We additionally negotiated an agreement banning all club colors for anyone in a leadership position with RFTW. This included Coordinators and Road Guards. We did not want someone with Hell’s Angels on their back directing traffic and they felt that if they couldn’t wear club colors in that position, then no one could.

Finally, all confederation clubs were given a patch and top rocker to display at their national clubhouses with a “Respect” notation, essentially the 1% equivalent of a safe passage guarantee. Photos of the notated patch were sent to local clubhouses across the nation to ensure compliance.

We then went ahead with what we considered a risky venture. Keep in mind that back then, we were pretty broke. We had one hundred patch sets made up and hoped that we could sell them. I think they cost us \$45.00 per set and we charged \$50.00 for them. Strangelove convinced Swisscraft not to charge us until after the Run. We were quite concerned that the patches would never sell. As you will recall, our fears were unfounded; we sold out before Kansas and had more drop-shipped to Wentzville and sold all of those, also.

The two vendors listed in this document are still the vendors that we use today. They both carried RFTW on the books for many runs. We would order the merchandise (tee shirts and patches), and they would make them and hold our bill until after the Run so that we had money to pay for them. Normally, this type of merchandise requires current payment. Just another note of how people and businesses have supported the development of RFTW.

► OUR STORIES

I NEVER LEFT VIETNAM

Sisto Sandoval is a Vietnam Veteran (1968-1969) who visits classrooms at two schools in Bullhead City, Arizona to talk to the students about our veterans. His hope is that he can help upcoming generations to understand the sacrifices our veterans make so we can enjoy our freedoms. Each year on Veterans Day, he writes a small poem to remind himself of those brave men and the hardships of war. Sisto shares with us the poem he wrote this year.

I dried my tears as the sun rose above the jungle’s canopy. I cried last night for my buddies who left in peace. I stared in numbness as the winds blew off the ponchos from their tangled bodies. The rains cleansed their souls. I reached out to heaven to touch the face of God. I heard the choppers in the distance bringing angels to take home the brave. I sat in silence with sounds still ringing.

I pray today as I did those nights that the fright of not awakening leave my side. I never left Vietnam; I carry her in my heart, my soul for those I left behind. I wonder if the dream will ever leave. If the dragon will fly away or will it devour my mind and cause pain once more.

I dried my tears as the sun rose above the jungle’s canopy. The darkness called my name and knew my fear. The winds carried my prayers. The rain bathed my soul and the sun brought hope once more.

I never left Vietnam; I carry her in my heart, my soul for she took all innocence from me. She took my youth and gave birth to dreams of pain and anguish. I pray for those who did their part, now and then to let me walk alone in this my Country. I am not as free as those who have never seen.

I am not free for in my heart I still dry my tears as the sun raises above the skies each morn. I still cry at night in remembrance of those who fought for freedom’s sake, my brothers who stood with me in the pain of rain, the dust of time, the heat of days and nights.

I reach out to heaven to touch the face of God and ask out Lord to bless our brothers/sisters who do their part.

VIETNAM VET SELLS PLAQUES TO HONOR POW-MIA CAUSE

From a press release from Western Dairyland Community Action Agency

According to U.S. Department of Defense statistics, 1,783 American soldiers still aren't home from Vietnam. They didn't necessarily forget their plane's boarding time or stay because of a girlfriend; they certainly weren't forgotten overseas at the end of the mission. These 1,783 are all declared either prisoners of war or missing in action. Altoona, Wisconsin resident Jim Gordon, a Vietnam Veteran himself, worries Americans will forget these troops as memories and veterans fade away.

Gordon couldn't let that happen. He said he's made it his personal mission to make and sell plaques in honor of POW-MIAs and their sacrifices Americans should never forget. Although Gordon served in the Navy from '63 to '66 and spent time in Vietnam from '65 to '66, he was never a prisoner or declared missing himself. In fact, he doesn't directly know anyone listed as such. Gordon's only slight connection to an MIA is that he went to school in Eau Claire with the brother of an MIA.

Gordon said he really started thinking about POW-MIAs from Vietnam while on the Run For The Wall in 2006. The Run is a motorcycle ride across the country. Its official mission reads, "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, and to honor the memory of those killed in action from all wars."

Gordon said his brother Milo has gone on the Run for fourteen years and encouraged him to go. Jim did go, but drove a support truck rather than a motorcycle.

Because of his steel knees earned from his 40-some years of work at the paper mill, Gordon said that he's afraid that if he was in an accident "it wouldn't be road rash, it'd be pieces." While on the ride, Gordon saw a patch on someone's jacket that said, "To die for freedom isn't bad, to be forgotten is." He said that saying really struck him.

Gordon, with passion in his voice, said, "People don't realize that it's actual people missing. They are loved ones. They are family. They have died for their country or are missing for their country and aren't accounted for." He added, "They aren't all Congressional Medal of Honor winners but they all fought and they all died."

Gordon said all POW-MIAs from Vietnam have been changed to the status of killed in action. It's not right to group them, he said. "You look at the flag and lump them all together. My feeling is that they should be recognized as people." Because of this belief, all of Gordon's plaques come with the name of a POW-MIA with his rank and the date he went missing. The buyer won't necessarily know who the veteran is personally but Gordon includes a biography with each one.

Gordon said he'll make plaques of soldiers from conflicts other than Vietnam as well, including the World Wars, Korea and today's battles in Iraq and Afghanistan, as long as it can be proven that the soldiers actually served.

Gordon's original market of veterans grew to include the general public. Many of his sales come from his two Web sites: <http://wisconsincommonmarket.com/GordonsTributes> and <http://www.gordontributes.com/>.

Ray Ross of Merritt Island, Fla., is one of Gordon's satisfied customers. He and Gordon met on the Run For The Wall.

Although Ross is a veteran from the Vietnam Era, he chose to buy a plaque made for a World War II soldier instead. He said his plaque commemorates his uncle, Bernard Ross, who lived through thirteen months in a prison camp after being shot down over Germany.

Ross' plaque hangs in his home office. He said he likes to have a remembrance of what POW-MIAs went through, no matter what the war. He said, "It's important to commemorate what they did and what they experienced."

Ross said Gordon's idea is wonderful. He added, "He [Gordon] is a real patriot with a heart for veterans. We need to maintain those attitudes."

Gordon said he just wants to help the POW-MIA cause. "I'd like to see a plaque on a wall with a name that brings you aware that there are people involved. It's not just a thing. It's not just a group. They are people that had bad luck."

"I'm not looking to get rich off it. I'm just trying to get people to put something respectful out there that is respectful to people that are missing or dead."

► OTHER STORIES

HIS FINAL DUTY

General Peter Pace USMC, stepped down as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on October 1, 2007. His last act as Chairman was emotional and spoke volumes of this great warrior's character and integrity.

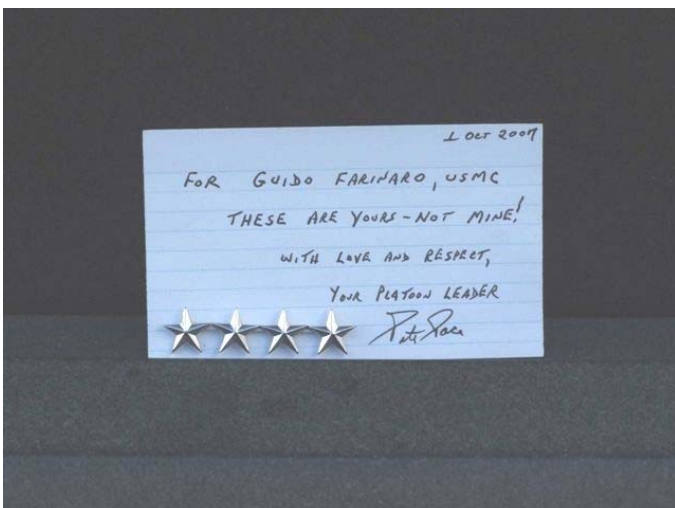
When General Peter Pace finished his official duties on his last day as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he had one more item to take care of.

General Pace went to the Vietnam Wall and carefully placed three index cards side by side against the wall. Each card was hand addressed to an individual Marine, the three who lost their lives in Vietnam during the Tet offensive of 1968 under the command of then-2nd Lt. Peter Pace.

Pinned to each note was the four-star insignia worn by General Pace on his last day of duty. The notes said:

"1 Oct 2007, For Guido Forinaro
These are Yours- not mine!
With Love and Respect,

Your Platoon Leader,
Pete Pace"



TELL YOUR STORY

Greetings to the west coast Vets from Sgt. Bill Kazlauskys USMC 1st Marines in DaNang, FLC and Monkey Mountain 1969-73, now residing in Columbus, OH. I'm working on a book entitled: *Vietnam, The Dirty War, True Stories From the Soldiers Who Served*. I'm also in need of your stories, for those who wish to relay them. Please include name, rank, unit, hometown, year in country, and where you took R&R. I'd also like one or two paragraphs on what you did and what you saw, any photos, maps, or documents you may have saved (copies okay), and an old boot camp photo of what you looked like 30 years ago or so. I'm doing the intro, closing, and notations on the many photos I've accumulated and many will be first time published (obtained these from combat photographer who did three tours. The slides I have will be transferred to paper/cd and the originals will be donated to the Air Force Museum at Rickenbacker AFB here just south of Columbus.

We're a year or two away from publishing and it's looking like one-half text and the other will be great photos. I need to talk to nurses, tunnel rats, seals, special ops, and perhaps a few Aussies who were there also. Any assistance would be appreciated and many thanks to Mr. Sibley Smith from the New Jersey Vets Museum for his help. Believe me, this is going to be a good one.

Please write me with any info or direction or call me at work 12-8 p.m. EST at 1-614-577-0220.

Bill Kazlauskys
1514 Beamen Dr. Columbus, OH 43228.

VIETNAM WAR FACTS

Facts, Statistics, Fake Warrior Numbers, and Myths Dispelled

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

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

Vietnam Veterans represented 9.7% of their generation.

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

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

Davis Station in Saigon was named for him.

58,148 were killed in Vietnam.

75,000 were severely disabled.

23,214 were 100% disabled.

5,283 lost limbs.

1,081 sustained multiple amputations.

Of those killed, 61% were younger than 21.

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

Of those killed, 17,539 were married.

Average age of men killed: 23.1 years.

Five men killed in Vietnam were only 16 years old.

The oldest man killed was 62 years old.

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

97% of Vietnam Veterans were honorably discharged.

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

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

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

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

87% of Americans hold Vietnam Veterans in high esteem.

There is no difference in drug usage between Vietnam Veterans and non-Vietnam Veterans of the same age group. (Source: Veterans Administration Study)

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

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

Interesting Census Stats and "Been There" Wanabees: 1,713,823 of those who served in Vietnam were still alive as of August 1995 (census figures). During that same Census count, the number of Americans falsely claiming to have served in-country was 9,492,958. As of the Census taken during August 2000, the surviving U.S. Vietnam Veteran population estimate at that time was 1,002,511. This is hard to believe, losing nearly 711,000 between '95 and '00. That's 390 per day. During this Census count, the number of Americans falsely claiming to have served in-country is 13,853,027. By this census, FOUR OUT OF FIVE WHO CLAIM TO BE Vietnam vets are not.

The Department of Defense Vietnam War Service Index officially provided by The War Library originally reported with errors that 2,709,918 U.S. military personnel as having served in-country. Corrections and confirmations to this erred index resulted in the addition of 358 U.S. military personnel confirmed to have served in Vietnam but not originally listed by the Department of Defense. (All names are currently on file and accessible.)

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

Common Myths Dispelled:

Myth: Common Belief is that most Vietnam veterans were drafted.

Fact: 2/3 of the men who served in Vietnam were volunteers. 2/3 of the men who served in World War II were drafted. Approximately 70% of those killed in Vietnam were volunteers.

Myth: The media have reported that suicides among Vietnam veterans range from 50,000 to 100,000 - 6 to 11 times the non-Vietnam veteran population.

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

Myth: Common belief is that a disproportionate number of blacks were killed in the Vietnam War.

Fact: 86% of the men who died in Vietnam were Caucasians, 12.5% were black, 1.2% were other races. Sociologists Charles C. Moskos and John Sibley Butler, in their recently published book "All That We Can Be," said they analyzed the claim that blacks were used like cannon fodder during Vietnam "and can report definitely that this charge is untrue. Black fatalities amounted to 12 percent of all Americans killed in Southeast Asia, a

figure proportional to the number of blacks in the U.S. population at the time and slightly lower than the proportion of blacks in the Army at the close of the war."

Myth: Common belief is that the war was fought largely by the poor and uneducated.

Fact: Servicemen who went to Vietnam from well-to-do areas had a slightly elevated risk of dying because they were more likely to be pilots or infantry officers. Vietnam Veterans were the best educated forces our nation had ever sent into combat. 79% had a high school education or better.

Here are statistics from the Combat Area Casualty File (CACF) as of November 1993. The CACF is the basis for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (The Wall): Average age of 58,148 killed in Vietnam was 23.11 years. (Although 58,169 names are in the Nov. 93 database, only 58,148 have both event date and birth date. Event date is used instead of declared dead date for some of those who were listed as missing in action.)

Deaths—Average Age

Enlisted	50,274	22.37 yrs
Officers	6,598	28.43 yrs
Warrants	1,276	24.73 yrs
TOTAL	58,148	23.11 yrs

Myth: The common belief is the average age of an infantryman fighting in Vietnam was 19.

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

Myth: The Common belief is that the domino theory was proved false.

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

Myth: The common belief is that the fighting in Vietnam was not as intense as in World War II.

Fact: The average infantryman in the South Pacific during World War II saw about 40 days of combat in four years. The average infantryman in Vietnam saw about 240 days of combat in one year thanks to the mobility of the helicopter. One out of every 10 Americans who served in Vietnam was a casualty. 58,148 were killed and 304,000 wounded out of 2.7 million who served. Although the percent that died is similar to other wars, amputations or crippling wounds were 300 percent higher than in World War II75,000 Vietnam veterans are severely disabled. MEDEVAC helicopters flew nearly 500,000 missions. Over 900,000 patients were airlifted (nearly half were American). The average time lapse between wounding to hospitalization was less than one hour. As a result, less than one percent of all Americans wounded, who survived the first 24 hours, died. The helicopter provided unprecedented mobility. Without the helicopter it would have taken three times as many troops to secure the 800 mile border with Cambodia and Laos (the politicians thought the Geneva Conventions of 1954 and the Geneva Accords of 1962 would secure the border).

Myth: Kim Phuc, the little nine year old Vietnamese girl running naked from the napalm strike near Trang Bang on 8 June 1972, shown a million times on American television, was burned by Americans bombing Trang Bang.

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

Myth: The United States lost the war in Vietnam.

Fact: The American military was not defeated in Vietnam. The American military did not lose a battle of any consequence. From a military standpoint, it was almost an unprecedented performance. General Westmoreland quoting Douglas Pike, a professor at the University of California, Berkley a major military defeat for the VC and NVA.

THE UNITED STATES DID NOT LOSE THE WAR IN VIETNAM—THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE DID. The fall of Saigon happened 30 April 1975, two years AFTER the American military left Vietnam. The last American troops departed in their entirety 29 March 1973.

How could we lose a war we had already stopped fighting? We fought to an agreed stalemate. The peace settlement was signed in Paris on 27 January 1973. It called for release of all U.S. prisoners, withdrawal of U.S. forces, limitation of both sides' forces inside South Vietnam and a commitment to peaceful reunification. The 140,000 evacuees in April 1975 during the fall of Saigon consisted almost entirely of civilians and Vietnamese military, NOT American military running for their lives. There were almost twice as many casualties in Southeast Asia (primarily Cambodia) the first two years after the fall of Saigon in 1975 then there were during the ten years the U.S. was involved in Vietnam. Thanks for the perceived loss and the countless assassinations and torture visited upon Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians goes mainly to the American media and their undying support-by-misrepresentation of the anti-War movement in the United States.

As with much of the Vietnam War, the news media misreported and misinterpreted the 1968 Tet Offensive. It was reported as an overwhelming success for the Communist forces and a decided defeat for the U.S. forces. Nothing could be further from the truth. Despite initial victories by the Communists forces, the Tet Offensive resulted in a major defeat of those forces. General Vo Nguyen Giap, the designer of the Tet Offensive, is considered by some as ranking with Wellington, Grant, Lee and MacArthur as a great commander. Still, militarily, the Tet Offensive was a total defeat of the Communist forces on all fronts.

It resulted in the death of some 45,000 NVA troops and the complete, if not total destruction of the Viet Cong elements in South Vietnam. The Organization of the Viet Cong Units in the South never recovered. The Tet Offensive succeeded on only one front and that was the News front and the political arena. This was another example in the Vietnam War of an inaccuracy becoming the perceived truth. However, inaccurately reported, the News Media made the Tet Offensive famous.

Researched by Capt. Marshal Hanson, U.S.N.R (Ret.)

► VA NEWS

VA FLAG-FOLDING RECITATION BAN UPDATE

To ensure burial services at the 125 national cemeteries operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reflect the wishes of veterans and their families, VA officials have clarified the Department's policy about recitations made while the U.S. flag is folded at the gravesite of a veteran. "Honoring the burial wishes of veterans is one of the highest commitments for the men and women of VA," said William F. Tuerk, VA's Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs. "A family may request the recitation of words to accompany the meaningful presentation of the American flag as we honor the dedication and sacrifice of their loved ones."

Traditional gravesite military funeral honors include the silent folding and presentation of an American flag, a 21-gun rifle salute, and the playing of "Taps." The clarification includes the following:

- * Volunteer honor guards are authorized to read the so-called "13-fold" flag recitation or any comparable script;
- * Survivors of the deceased need to provide material and request it be read by the volunteer honor guards; and
- * Volunteer honor guards will accept requests for recitations that reflect any or no religious traditions, on an equal basis.

Veterans with a discharge other than dishonorable, their spouses and eligible dependent children can be buried in a national cemetery. Other burial benefits available for all eligible veterans, regardless of whether they are buried in a national cemetery or a private cemetery, include a burial flag, a Presidential Memorial Certificate, and a government headstone or marker.

► OTHER NEWS

MIA HUNTERS

The mission of this group is to locate, recover, and return lost World War II American airmen and bring them back for burial here in the U.S. This is not a profit-making venture, and each mission we undertake is carefully selected based on extensive research and the probability of success based on that research.

MIA Hunters is composed of the Moon family—Bryan, Christopher, Dona, and Cicely Moon—who reside in Minnesota. They do all research (the most important phase in locating missing MIAs) and after that is complete they go into the field to personally try to locate the lost MIA. Usually, this is the recovery of the remains of the MIA.

The Moons believe the "window of opportunity" is closing fast as it is critical to contact people in the areas where the MIA was last seen, and many of these witnesses are at an age that leaves fewer and fewer of them alive each year.

To date MIA Hunters have located 44 MIAs of American, Italian, Japanese and German origin, with recoveries scheduled or completed.

MIA Hunters is looking for a few dedicated people who would be interested in joining their team. They could benefit from research experts (in military records), people to help identify possible search candidates, and more.

If you're interested in helping them, contact their team coordinator Christopher Moon at (952) 440-2226. Visit their website at <http://pro5.com/mia/>

► **BRINGING THEM HOME**

SERVICEMEN MISSING FROM VIETNAM WAR ARE IDENTIFIED

On October 2, 2007, DPMO announced that the remains of two U.S. servicemen, missing in action from the Vietnam War, were identified and returned to their families for burial with full military honors.

They are Capt. Warren R. Orr Jr., U.S. Army, of Kewanee, Ill.; and Airman 1st Class George W. Long, U.S. Air Force, of Medicine, Kan. Long was buried Sept. 30 in Medicine and Orr's burial is being set by his family.

On May 12, 1968, these men were part of a crew on a C-130 Hercules evacuating Vietnamese citizens from the Kham Duc Special Forces Camp near Da Nang, South Vietnam. While taking off, the crew reported taking heavy enemy ground fire. A forward air controller flying in the area reported seeing the plane explode in mid-air soon after leaving the runway.

In 1985 and 1991, U.S. officials received remains and identification tags from sources claiming they belonged to men in this crew. Scientific analysis revealed they were not American remains, but it was believed the Vietnamese sources knew where the crash site was located.

In 1993, a joint/U.S.-Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) team, led by JPAC, traveled to Kham Duc and interviewed four local citizens about the incident. They led the team to the crash site, and turned over remains and identification tags they had recovered in 1983 while looking for scrap metal. During this visit, the team recovered human remains and aircraft wreckage at the site.

In 1994, another joint team excavated the crash site and recovered remains, pieces of life-support equipment, crew-related gear and personal effects.

NINE AIRMEN IDENTIFIED AND RETURNED

The remains of nine U.S. airmen including two from Massachusetts, one from New Hampshire and one from Vermont, missing in action since a World War II mission over Germany, have been identified and will be returned to their families for burial, the Pentagon said.

The B-24 crew took off from North Pickenham, England, on July 7, 1944, to bomb a German aircraft factory near Bernburg, Germany. The plane was last seen by other crews in the target area. Captured records showed that it crashed near Westeregeln, about 20 miles northwest of the target, the Defense Department said.

The New England men whose bodies were recovered are 1st Lt. David P. McMurray, of Melrose, Mass.; Tech Sgt. Hyman L. Stiglitz, of Boston; Staff Sgt. Francis E. Larrivee, of Laconia, N.H.; and Staff Sgt. Robert L. Cotey, of Vergennes, Vt.

Stiglitz's remains were buried with his mother and father in Tucson, Arizona. in December.

On July 7th, 1944 while on mission behind enemy lines south of Berlin, Germany they came under attack by German fighter pilots. There were no survivors on the flight. The plane crashed into the German countryside.

After the war, U.S. recovery crews scavenged Germany, looking for missing air crews, but Stiglitz's crew had gone down in the Soviet sector, which later became known as East Germany. Americans were not allowed to search for their lost crews until after the Cold War.

In 2001 after reunification, German wreck hunters heard about the crash site and called German authorities, who contacted the U.S. military. The Accounting Command took over the crash site in November 2002. His remains were taken to Hawaii for identity determination which took another 5 years. After 63 years TSGT Hyman Stiglitz is going to be laid to rest beside his parents and his sister.

This Unit had quite a reputation of "hard luck." It was known as "the hard-luck crew of the hard-luck squadron of the hard-luck group" in the armadas of U.S. bombers flying out of eastern England during World War II, according to his unit's Web site, and the nine men were known as the "hard-luck crew" because they typically returned battered from their missions. Nine days after D-Day, the crew safely landed because Stiglitz dangled on a small catwalk in an open bomb bay 20,000 feet up and released bombs fused to detonate that hadn't dropped as planned. Three weeks later they were all killed.

The airmen were found after German civilians learned of a potential crash site in 2001 and began excavating. They uncovered human remains from what appeared to be two burials, and notified the U.S. military, which excavated and recovered all the remains.

The other crewmen were 1st Lt. Raymond Pascual, of Houston; 2nd Lt. Millard C. Wells Jr., of Paris, Ky.; Tech Sgt. Leonard J. Ray, of Upper Falls, Md.; Staff Sgt. Robert J. Flood, of Neelyton, Pa.; and Staff Sgt. Walter O. Schlosser, of Lake City, Mich.

A group of German citizens learned of a potential crash site south of Westeregeln in 2001. Later that year and in early 2002 they uncovered human remains from what appeared to be two burial locations. The remains, including identification tags, were turned over to U.S. officials. In 2003, a team from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command excavated the crash site and found additional remains, identification tags and non-biological material evidence.

Relatives of the airmen said they knew for a few years that the remains had been discovered and were asked to provide DNA samples to military investigators. Scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory identified the remains using dental records, mitochondrial DNA and other tools.

MAJ. JOHN L. CARROLL

The remains of Maj. John L. Carroll, an Air Force pilot from Decatur, GA, who died during the Vietnam War, were recovered and returned to his family for burial 35 years after his death.

According to DOD, Maj. Carroll was flying a mission over Xiangkhoang Province, Laos, on November 7 1972, when his small observation plane was hit by enemy fire and forced to land. Once on the ground, Carroll, 32, radioed search-and-rescue helicopters that he intended to stay in the aircraft. Two helicopters attempted a rescue but were turned away by intense enemy fire. Another recovery attempt was also unsuccessful due to enemy fire. That pilot, however, was able to see that Carroll had been fatally wounded.

In 1993, a joint U.S./Laos People's Democratic Republic team led by JPAC, investigated the incident and found fragments of the aircraft wreckage during a site survey. Between 1996 and 2007, JPAC-led investigative teams conducted several interviews concerning Carroll's crash. One witness provided identification belonging to Carroll, and in another interview, a former People's Army of North Vietnam officer turned over some of

Carroll's personal items and told the team that local residents had buried Carroll. Another witness later led a team to the burial site, and earlier this year, the site was excavated and Carroll's remains recovered.

Carroll was buried with full military honors on November 13, 2007 at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, CO.

GSGT. RICHARD W. FISCHER

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced on November 18 that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from the Vietnam War, were identified and returned to his family for burial with full military honors. He is Gunnery Sgt. Richard W. Fischer, U.S. Marine Corps, of Madison, Wis. He was buried on Nov. 19 in Madison.

On Jan. 8, 1968, Fischer was assigned to M Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division, on an ambush patrol south of Da Nang in Quang Nam Province, Vietnam. Fischer became separated from his unit and subsequent attempts by his team members to locate him were met with enemy fire.

In 1992 and 1993, joint U.S./Socialist Republic of Vietnam (S.R.V.) teams, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), conducted three investigations and interviewed several Vietnamese citizens. The citizens said that Fischer was killed by Viet Cong and his remains were buried in a nearby cultivated field.

In 1994, a joint team excavated the burial site and recovered human remains and other material evidence, including uniform buttons.

JPAC HOPES TO COLLECT CALLS

HICKAM AFB, HAWAII, October 29, 2007. The JOINT POW/MIA ACCOUNTING COMMAND (JPAC) unveiled another method to connect with those around the world who may have information about missing service members: an international toll-free telephone number.

This new number, 1-866-913-1286, allows those with telephone access to call JPAC, free of charge, and talk to historians and military intelligence analysts about possible leads pertaining to MIAs. The new method provides another option along with JPAC's online site reporting form and email accessible through the JPAC website.

All calls will initially be routed to JPAC Public Affairs. This office will then forward calls and messages to the appropriate section of JPAC's Intelligence Directorate (World War II, Korean War, or Vietnam War). Information gathered from private citizens is used by the command to hopefully generate new case leads.

JPAC has linguists on staff for most countries where MIAs are believed to be located who are available to interpret for callers who do not speak English.

JPAC's mission is to achieve the fullest possible accounting of missing service members from past U.S. conflicts. There are approximately 88,000 unaccounted-for going back to World War II.

► EVENTS

VETERANS DAY AT THE AVI

(Ed. Note: The Veterans Day program held for years at the Laughlin Ramada Express (now the Tropicana Express) was moved this year to the AVI Resort & Casino. Bill "Monsoon" Mimiaga was the keynote speaker. It was a wonderful event, with better-than-expected attendance considering the venue change. The following article about the event is from the Mohave Valley Daily News.

LAUGHLIN – Major Bill Mimiaga, retired from the U.S. Marine Corps, said the people who care are here while the rest are at weekend barbecues, thinking that a ribbon on a tree will solve the problem.

Mimiaga, keynote speaker at the Veterans Day Program on Sunday at the AVI Resort & Casino, called on the audience to get involved and support veterans causes by reaching out to widows and children of soldiers who died in battle. He spoke about *Snowball Express*, a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a network of support for families of fallen soldiers. With corporate and private sponsors, the organization hosts all-expense paid gatherings and takes the families on trips to Disneyland.

"It was a tribute and an honor just to see these kids' faces having fun," Mimiaga said. "But most importantly it brought widows together to make a connection and it brought children together to make a connection that they're not alone."

Mimiaga said more than 2,000 children have lost a parent in the military since 9/11, and that those who fought battles, and their widows and orphans, should be remembered.

The ceremony, inside the casino's convention center, also included a march of colors and lighting of the POW/MIA candle. Women who have lost their children or husbands in battle were given gold stars. At the ceremony's conclusion, Mimiaga remembered friends lost in Vietnam. He spoke about a school friend who had been awkward and made poor grades, but later died leading his patrol.

"I wish I could go back in time to those nuns, those teachers and those students," he said, "to let them know the kid they picked on was in fact a hero."

Other veterans and family came forward to share their tributes with the crowd. A bell was struck and Mimiaga saluted after each name was called.

One person spoke about a friend who had died from complications after Agent Orange, another said his friend died on a beach minutes after they'd shaken hands, while a third paid tribute to all his "brothers" who died at Vietnam's Hamburger Hill. One paid tribute to a soldier shot down over Germany, while another listed the names of fallen friends and added, "and all the others that I can't remember their names."

A final bell was rung for everyone who hadn't spoken but had on their minds loved ones or family in the military.

SNOWBALL EXPRESS

Snowball Express was founded as a way to thank families of fallen soldiers for their sacrifices and to give them, especially the children, a weekend of fun to take their minds off their grieving for a short time. 2006 was the first event, and its success exceeded all expectations. Corporations donated generously and the 900 family members were treated to all kinds of events, entertainment, and a trip to Disneyland. This year's Snowball Express was even more successful, with 1,500 family members being honored. American Airlines is the official airline of Snowball Express, and they send special flights to pick up the families and return them. The planes

were filled with only family members of servicemen, and the children, especially, loved having the run of the airplane. Actor Gary Sinise is a big supporter of Snowball Express and his band, the Lt. Dan Band, gave a concert for the families on November 30 at The Grove/Anaheim. On December 1 Oakley, a founding partner of Snowball Express, made their facility available all day for food and entertainment for the families. December 2 was spent at Disneyland. All the children were given gifts generously donated by many different companies wanting to help make their lives a little happier.

Snowball Express is making a huge impact on our fallen heroes' families: children smile for the first time since their father or mother died, spouses who cried in the arms of strangers and became bonded for life and realized that people still cared; children who saw other children just like them for the first time and finally those volunteers who shared an experience with a family or other volunteer that put a face to the tremendous sacrifice these families have endured.

The following letter from a widow who attended this year's Snowball Express will give you an idea of the powerful impact the event has on the families of our fallen soldiers.

Hi everyone!

I just wanted to write to thank you for such a wonderful weekend! From the second we got out of our car at Dulles airport, we knew it was going to be a special weekend! The crew at American Airlines was so friendly during check-in, and we felt like celebrities at the gate with all of the amazing things that were waiting for us! My children had an incredible time on the flight, thanks to the wonderful pilots and flight crew—it was amazing! The weekend in California meant so much to us. My 3-year-old, who only knew her Daddy during her first two weeks of life, kept saying “they are doing all of this because my Daddy is a hero.” It was heartwarming. I said this to one of the pilots, but I have to repeat it, this is the first time in a very long time that the smile actually reached my 10-year-old son's eyes! It meant so much to me to see my son really happy for the first time in over 3 years!

The fact that he wasn't the “only one” there without his Dad really helped him have a great weekend. TAPS on Friday was such a cool treat for the kids, followed by a delicious dinner at the convention center with all of the neat surprises (the balloon maker was fabulous!). The kids were so exhausted after an amazing day, we didn't make it to the concert (which is a first in our lives!), but I heard that was really amazing as well. Oakley was incredible- and what can I say about Disneyland?

Just awesome! The gift cards were a huge high—my kids loved being able to pick out whatever they wanted with their own money! We were so blessed to meet such incredible families and volunteers out there- the friendships we made will last a lifetime! Normally, I would have been a little nervous about spending the whole day before a long flight at Disneyland, but knowing we had a chartered flight with such a wonderful crew coming up the next day allowed us to fully enjoy the day at Disneyland. My kids were just as excited to get on the plane on Monday as they were to go to Disney on Sunday! That is quite an accomplishment by American Airlines! Although I don't know how I will ever get my children on a “regular” flight again :). When we got home, we had a package of toys waiting for us—it was like the weekend never ended! Thank you to everyone who helped make this truly unforgettable weekend happen! Have a wonderful and blessed holiday season!

Jackie Syverson

Proud wife of Maj. Paul Syverson

“True love lives forever”

► **SICK CALL**

Dixie Lee McCormick

After two years of hassling with the medical system, Dixie recently had a knee replaced. She is recovering and thanks RFTW friends for their prayers and friendship. We hope you'll be back good as new, Dixie.

Bill Mimiaga

Bill "Monsoon" Mimiaga has finished his chemo and his hair is growing back! He says he's fighting the medication that is supposed to stop the live cancer cells from attaching to the good cells—and it's just as bad as the chemo. He's been in good spirits through it all—and he promises that he'll see us on RFTW 2008.

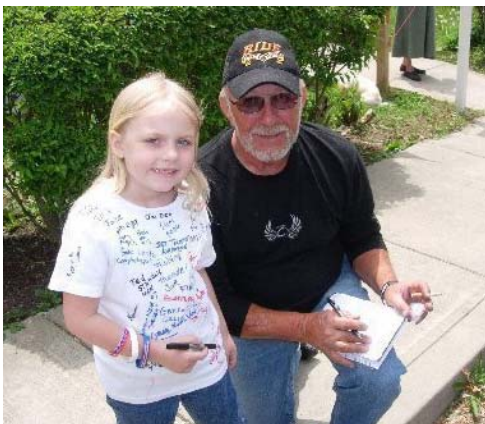
(ED. Note: If you know of someone who is ill or recovering from an accident, please let me know so we can send our best wishes here.)

► TAPS

Jim "Dinky Dau" Doc Finch

Doc Finch passed away on December 14 after a short fight with widespread cancer. Funeral services were held on December 21 in Tillamook, Oregon. Doc was a member of VVA Chapter 785 of Orange County, California and participated in RFTW 2006. Monsoon wrote the following tribute to Doc in the Chapter's *Dispatch*:

I want our Nation's citizens to know that we lost an American hero on Dec 14. Jim "Dinky Dau" Doc Finch, who made his last patrol and passed on to the comforting arms of Our Lord. The naval bell sounded at 0800 hours today. This is another sad moment in our history, for Doc Finch epitomized the sacred word "Doc" through his selfless acts during the Vietnam War rescuing many wounded Marines and after the war helping many troubled Veterans throughout the years. Pray for his family, his friends and for his "Band of Brothers" who will surely miss him.



To "Ole Doc" Dennis Thompson, his "running mate". . . your friendship with "Dinky Dau" is one that we all envied and the fellowship and camaraderie that you both shared with us all on the "Run For The Wall" 2006 will forever cast its warm glow over all the long years after. "Fair winds and following seas my 'brother'—you are now at rest."

*Semper Fi "Ole Doc." A greater friend then you hath no man . . .
Monsoon*

Doc Finch with a student in Rainelle during RFTW 2006

► CLOSING THOUGHTS

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER
by Del "Abe" Jones

They went across the ocean to fight in that Asian war -
On behalf of freedom, justice for peoples of that foreign shore.

More than fifty-eight thousand men faced wars' reality -
Bravely sacrificed their lives so that others might be free.

Most of them were very young - and now, it seems such a waste -
That war accomplished nothing and has left a bitter taste.

Those who did survive came home to a country which turned away -
We didn't know how to greet them - we didn't know what to say.

They came home to a nation that said it didn't care -
Said it didn't want to know about what went on over there.

The tide is finally turning - don't you think it's about time
We gave some praise to all of those who laid their life on the line?

THE DECK OF CARDS

During the North African Campaign, a bunch of soldier boys had been on a long hike. They arrived in a little town called Casino. The next morning being Sunday, several of the boys went to church. A sergeant commanded the boys in church.

After the Chaplain read the prayer, the text was taken up next. Those of the boys that had a prayer book took them out. One boy had only a deck of cards, and he spread them out. The sergeant saw the cards and said, "Soldier, put away those cards." After the service was over, the soldier was taken prisoner and brought before the Provost Marshal.

The Marshal said, "Sergeant, why have you brought this man here?"

"For playing cards in church, Sir," was the response.

The Marshal asked the soldier, "And what have you to say for yourself, son?"

"Much, Sir," replied the soldier.

The Marshal stated, "I hope so, for if not I will punish you more than any man was ever punished."

The soldier said, "Sir, I have been on the march for about six months. I have neither bible nor a prayer book, but I hope to satisfy you, sir, with the purity of my intentions." And with that, the boy started his story ...

"You see, sir, when I look at the Ace, it reminds me that there is but one God.

And the deuce reminds me that the bible is divided into two parts: the Old and the New Testaments.

When I see the trey, I think of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

And when I see the four, I think of the four evangelists who preached the Gospel: there was Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

And when I see the five, it reminds me of the five wise virgins who trimmed their lamps; there were ten of them: five were wise and were saved, five were foolish and were shut out.

When I see the six, it reminds me that in six days God made this heaven and earth.

And when I see the seven, it reminds me that on the seventh day, God rested from his great work.
And when I see the eight, I think of the eight righteous persons that God saved when he destroyed the earth: there was Noah, his wife, their sons and their wives.
And when I see the nine, I think of the lepers our saviour cleansed, and that nine of the ten didn't even thank him.
When I see the ten, I think of the ten commandments that God handed down to Moses on a tablet of stone.
When I see the King, it reminds me that there is but one King of Heaven, God Almighty.
And when I see the Queen, I think of the blessed Virgin Mary who is the Queen of Heaven.
And the Jack or Knave is the Devil.

When I count the number of spots in a deck of cards, I find 365, the number of days in a year.
There are 52 cards, the number of weeks in a year.
There are four suits, the number of weeks in a month.
There are twelve picture cards, the number of months in a year.
There are thirteen tricks, the number of weeks in a quarter.

So you see, Sir, my deck of cards serves me as a bible, an almanac and a prayer book.”

The author and performer of “Deck of Cards” was T. Texas Tyler. He stated at the conclusion: “And friends, this story is true. I know . . . I was that soldier.”

You Are Not Forgotten



APPLICATION FOR NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION

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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)