



# RUN FOR THE WALL

## Quarterly Newsletter

### *“We Ride For Those Who Can’t”*

### October 2008

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#### THE EDITOR’S NOTES



Veterans Day will be here soon—November 11. For many years that day was ignored or at the least taken for granted by a lot of Americans, but there has been a surge of patriotism in recent years and a renewed respect for veterans, with a great many average Americans stepping forward to honor our Veterans. There will be many Veterans Day celebrations in most of our cities. If you've never been to "Branson's Veterans Homecoming" you might want to grab a few friends and head out there for their week-long festivities. This is their 12<sup>th</sup> year, and the event is billed as the nation's biggest Welcome Home for Veterans. Read the information on it under Events in this issue.

I was so disappointed that I had to miss the Angel Fire Reunion this year—especially when I learned that a marriage was performed during the Reunion! Buffalo and Angel were married in the Angel Fire Veterans Memorial amphitheater by RFTW President Mark Rittermeyer. Congratulations to two wonderful people, and may you enjoy many, many wonderful years together. Be sure to read Harry "Attitude" Steelman's account of the Angel Fire Reunion, and Mojo's account of the Kerrville Reunion.

I've had numerous questions from readers who have trouble accessing the message board on the RFTW website. Our webmaster, Nathan Olson, said he has noticed that some people have not verified their account by

clicking on the link in the email they receive when they sign up. Please remember when you sign up for the forums to pay attention to the confirmation email you receive—and click on the link to complete the process.

*They are not forgotten ...*  
Judy “Velcro” Lacey

## **THE PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE**

By Mark "Straightarrow" Rittermeyer



Well by now hopefully, all of you have gotten home from one or both of the reunions. I want to thank Monte Apodoca, and Janice Wentworth, and all of those who assisted them in making both of the reunions a huge success. In Angle Fire there was a great deal of fun, and food, along with the work that was done Saturday at the Memorial. I would like to say a special thanks to all of those who participated in the laying of the memorial bricks. This is an annual event for RFTW, and the Memorial greatly appreciates our efforts, and wants us to continue. We also removed a tree, and planted a new one at the grave site of Dr. and Mrs. Westphall.

In Kerrville, we held the annual Board of Directors face to face meeting on Friday, and then joined in on the fun of catching up with friends, and meeting some FNGs. There were several leadership meetings, and lots of time to hash out old run adventures. The highlight of the reunion was the Saturday night banquet. There was great food, and recognition of several special riders (with gag gifts), and then there were more door prizes than you can imagine. Again, thanks to Janice and her team.

I would like to encourage everyone to make plans to attend one or both reunions next year, as I believe you will find the time rewarding. Also please know that the Board of Directors face to face meeting will be at Angel Fire in 2009.

Never Forget!!!

Mark "Straightarrow" Rittermeyer

## ► **OUR STORIES**

### **ANGEL FIRE REUNION, 2008**

By Harry "Attitude" Steeman



Last weekend (Sep 5th to 7th) Martha and I attended the RFTW Reunion in Angel fire, NM. We flew to Albuquerque on Thursday and then drove up to



Angel Fire in a rental the next day. Because of an unplanned stop along the way, we arrived late in the afternoon and checked into our room at the Laguna Vista Lodge in Eagle Nest and proceeded immediately to visit with friends who had arrived before we did. The evening meal was at Zebadiah's Bar and Grill in Angel Fire, a very nice Mexican buffet was served. Mark "Straight Arrow" Rittermeyer hosted the program, which consisted of recognizing the RFTW officers who were present and the presentation of Certificates of Appreciation to all those present who assisted in making RFTW the success that it was.

Following the meal everyone retired to their respective lodging further socializing and resting in preparation for tomorrow's work. Martha and I spent the evening with the McDoles, the Rittermeyers, "Krispy", "Angel" and "Buffalo" enjoying a banana pudding prepared by "Girlfriend" at the insistence of the President. Finding the ingredients was somewhat of a challenge in the Angel Fire/Eagle Nest area

The next morning found most of us at the Memorial ready to start putting down another round of bricks and even replacing a tree at Dr. & Mrs. Westphall's gravesite. The bricks are purchased by family members of veteran's to memorialize their service. Veterans of all wars are included and the years of their service are included on the brick as is their branch of service. Stars on the bricks indicate that the veteran was KIA. The tree was pretty much planted before lunch and the brick areas were pretty much prepared for the placement of the bricks.

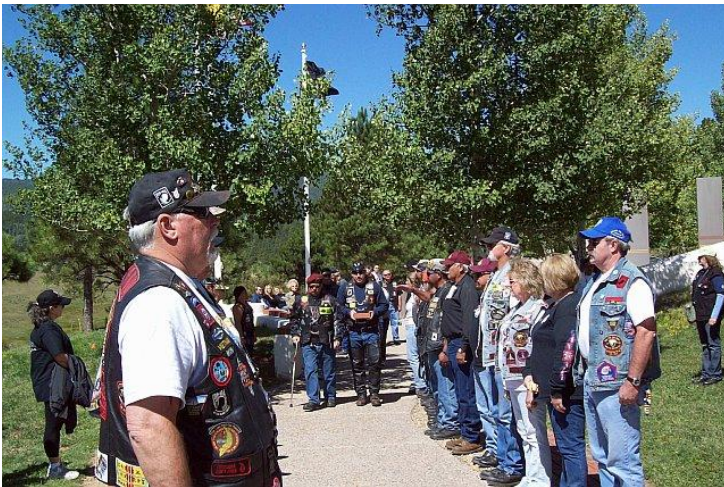


A break during the morning's work was observed for recognizing the work of the volunteers, honoring Dr. Westphall and the presentation of a brief history of the Memorial. This past year quite a bit of research has been done regarding the "Huey" and the result of this history was shared. A surprise event was also included. President Rittermeyer, acting in his spiritual capacity, was honored to join "Buffalo" and "Angel" in holy matrimony. It was a spur of the moment event for the good pastor who had to "wing it" without the benefit of his preacher's handbook, but it was nevertheless a very joyous occasion. They are now formally Mr. & Mrs. Rhett and Linda Bryson. Following this Kate Halpin's family held a memorial for their fallen brother who

was MIA in Vietnam for many years prior to the positive identification of remains at the crash site in 2003. Just before lunch we gathered for a group photo.



Lunch was a delicious BBQ offered by the Foundation. It was very much appreciated by all who spent the day working on our most sacred Memorial. Martha made the acquaintance of a very nice woman who lost her husband this past year to cancer. She was Cathy Curtis and her husband, from Britain, served in the USN in Vietnam. He was very proud of his service, having brought her to Angel Fire several times in the relatively short time that they had together. She came to Angel Fire this year in his honor and to place his brick along the walk, helping to bed the brick with some of his ashes.



After lunch the brick laying continued in earnest. The name, branch of service and dates of service for each brick were read off, then reverently carried to the volunteers responsible for tamping them into place. The person carrying the brick was given the option of placing the brick himself or having the volunteers do it for him. A very rewarding experience; it was our honor. The Patriot Guard held a special ceremony honoring one of our own who passed the past year. The brick was placed by Cruiser while everyone observed appropriate silence. At the conclusion of the laying of the bricks, the piper played "Amazing Grace" and after finalizing the cleanup, everyone left to prepare for a Riders Open Forum and Dinner.

The Riders Forum was hosted by President Mark "Straight Arrow" Rittermeyer and Chairman of the Board Mike "Tanker" McDole and lasted for about 45 minutes. The purpose was to give anyone who may have an issue they wanted addressed by the board an opportunity to put that issue on the table for open discussion and consideration. The discussions were good ones and were concentrated on safety issues—mostly about how we ride and control the pack. Some very good points were made and I'm sure that they will be taken into

consideration when planning next year's Run. Dinner was at the Eagle Nest Community Center (where we had breakfast during the Run this year). They served up lots of full pound steaks which were enjoyed by all. Some "door prizes" were presented and closing remarks made by Tanker and Straight Arrow. Copies of "Nam Vet" and "Down Range" were also distributed to all who wanted them. Another rewarding weekend and healing experience was brought to a close.

Sunday morning saw all departing for points far and near. Martha and I, as is becoming our custom, stopped by the memorial one last time before we pointed our wheels down the mountain.

What a wonderful, beautiful place.

ON TO KERRVILLE!

Honoring All Who Serve,  
Harry "Attitude" Steelman

PS. I apologize if I have misspelled anyone's name or Road Name!

To see all of Harry's photos from Angel Fire:

[http://www.kodakgallery.com/L.jsp?c=3q2w6fnf.bbdcv84r&x=1&y=b71rt2&localeid=en\\_US](http://www.kodakgallery.com/L.jsp?c=3q2w6fnf.bbdcv84r&x=1&y=b71rt2&localeid=en_US)

The following two photos at Angel Fire are from John McKee:



Above: Mark "Straight Arrow" Rittermeyer and Angel Fire Reunion Coordinator Monte Apodaca presented a check for \$2,000 from RFTW to Chuck Howard (center), President of the David Westphall Veterans Foundation. The \$2,000.00 was the remaining funds from the Big Dog motorcycle raffle held in 2004. This was a project to start a scholarship fund, but there were not enough funds remaining to start, so the BOD made the decision to give the funds to the Foundation.

Right: The newly planted tree at the Westphalls' gravesite



## KERRVILLE: TWO REUNIONS—ONE HEART

By "Mojo"

Once again, the anticipated RFTW reunions have come and gone—the traditional and inspiring one at Angel Fire, NM, and then the casual one in Kerrville, TX. Regardless of which route we're accustomed to riding in, both reunions offer so much to all of us! Even though I'm a SR (Southern Route) rider, I've had the opportunity to attend the Angel Fire reunion several times. And I can tell you without a doubt that it's worth every mile and minute spent. Since the SR doesn't get to experience the powerful healing that CR gets from this magnificent stop on the route, it's hard to tell you just how much you can get ... out of giving! Because that's what RFTW



does during this reunion—we give our time, manual efforts, money, our thinking and planning at a moment's notice, our love—all to the Memorial while we're there. We help the Memorial Park with small projects or do clean-up and repairs that need to be done. We place Memorial bricks (which we can buy in honor or memory of our brothers or family) along the sidewalks. Monte Apodaca spearheads this every year in coordination with the Park Service, so we always know what we'll be doing. What fulfilling and healing work is done when we're through! I've watched, in admiration, so many men working hard—with their hands and backs, yet never complaining. Angel Fire Memorial is like one of our children—nurtured, cared for and loved so much.

If we get there a little early, Monte has a ride set up for us, so that we can zip (or like me—piddle!) through the curves in the beautiful New Mexico forest. Our weekend ends with a great Saturday supper and the satisfaction of, once more, accomplishing what we set out to do.

Then I'll go the Texas reunion, where it's a slower paced weekend with hill country riding or shopping in nearby towns. It's held at a wonderful, large hotel and conference center that has no problem accommodating us. Janice Wentworth does a superb job in coordinating everything—it is a great time. Plus, it's the chance to hear from the route coordinator—sometimes SR, sometimes both SR and CR, about the next year's Run.



As has been done this year and last year, each reunion has an open forum, hosted by the Board of Directors—and that forum is for us! This is another good time for us to express concerns, or praises, of how things went on the Run—directly to the Board. And the Board welcomes these forums and takes all issues and concerns seriously.

I wish the SR riders could experience the fulfillment and camaraderie that the Angel Fire reunion gives, by coming to and participating in it. And I wish the CR riders would come to Kerrville to enjoy a southern hospitality weekend with the SR riders. They are BOTH so worth it. You'll not only see and visit with your own route's family, but also meet some of your extended family, too. And we are one family, with one mission and one heart—to help each other along.

## 5<sup>TH</sup> BATTALION 7<sup>TH</sup> CAVALRY REUNION

By Eddie Ratcliffe

US Army Pathfinder, Vietnam

1 Cav. Div. Airborne

VFW, DAV, MOPH, 5/7 Cav. Assoc.

The 5th Battalion 7th Cavalry Association held Reunion IX in Jacksonville, Florida from 29 June through 5 July 2008. 390 veterans and loved ones from the Vietnam Era renewed and strengthened friendships that started as far back as 1965 at Ft. Carson. The reunion was further enhanced by the presence of thirty young officers, soldiers, and wives who are currently serving in 5th Squadron 7th Cavalry at Ft. Stewart, Georgia.

5/7th Cav was activated in 1965 under the command of Lt. Col. Trevor Swett at Ft. Carson in order to give the First Team a ninth infantry battalion. The battalion traveled to Vietnam in 1966 aboard the USS Gaffey, which created the bonds that have grown into the sixteen hundred member association today. Our members run from Pfc's like Bill Purdy who, along with Jasper Cantanzaro, envisioned and thus founded this association, to a Four Star General, John Wickham, who commanded in 1967. But rather than military rank, the association's underlying strength is the sharing of one common experience—combat in defense of freedom with 5/7th Cav.

The 5/7th Cav served a crushing defeat to the NVA in its very first engagement, and went on from there in many platoon and company sized battles throughout the Central Highlands. 5/7th Cav moved north to the Que Son Valley in October 1967 and were victorious in several major actions against the 2d NVA Division. 5/7th Cav fought in battalion strength against the 5th NVA Regiment in the northern suburbs of Hue during Tet '68, kicked off Operation Pegasus along with 1/7th Cav on April 1, 1968, and led the Division into the A Shau Valley on April 19th. Moving south to III Corps in the fall of 1968, 5/7th Cav continued to set high standards in battles throughout 1969, 1970, and into Cambodia in 1970. Lt. Col Maury Edmonds commanded the battalion during the Cambodia operation.

5/7th Cav was inactivated in March 1971 and remained so until 21 July 2004, when Lt. Col. Jody Petery received the uncased colors from the Association's President, Colonel (Retired) John Long. 5/7th Cavalry was organized as a cavalry squadron assigned to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, and the troops sang both songs at the Reactivation Parade - *Sgt. Flynn* and *Dog Face Soldier*.

The Reunion Banquet was held on the 4th of July. MG (Ret) Maury Edmonds, who has assumed the mantle of leadership, presented awards to members of the battalion. Man of the Year for 2007 was Eddie Ratcliffe, "recognized for his tireless efforts toward the sponsorship of our young soldiers in Iraq."



## **“THE TEDDY BEAR LADY”**

By Joe "Dragon"

I first had the opportunity and honor to meet Ruth Holcom, AKA “The Teddy Bear Lady,” in 1995 when riding with RFTW from Angel Fire, N.M. to Washington DC. At our stop at Thomas Park, in Salina, Kansas there was Ruth, the “Sundusters” band, and a whole bunch of local folks waving American flags and roars of support as RFTW was welcomed upon arrival.

In 1996 there was Ruth, the Sundusters, and even more folks at Thomas Park when RFTW arrived. What had followed the past year was that Ruth had found her mission. She had started making these cute little Teddy Bears. She would find three veterans that were riding to DC and give them a mission, to carry with them these little bears and leave them at “The Wall”. I was one of the first three veterans selected to receive one of her special bears. That teddy bear sat on my handlebars all the way to Washington DC looking out and watching over me. A remarkable fondness and attachment grew between that teddy bear and me as the miles and days passed. That little bear represented a past life when I was still a kid, free from the scars of war, of growing up and getting older. As I rode I could not get that tune Ruth sang and we three warriors sang with her out of my head: “I wish I was a Teddy Bear.” Upon arriving in DC, my visit to our “Wall” and with my Teddy Bear pressed close to my heart I walked down to Panel 4 East where I would leave him. That is the panel where my brother's name is etched into that black granite. I told him about this Teddy Bear and how it came to be and as I

lay it down the tears started to flow, just as they do now. As I walked away I felt a sense of overwhelming loss. But just now as I write this I've learned of the immense and magnificent power of that little Teddy Bear's power to heal.

I miss my brother and my teddy bear, but both are still with me in my heart just as are those 58,000 plus brothers and sisters whose names are written on our Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. A lot of healing has come to me from that Teddy Bear. Thank you, Ruth.

In June 2006 Ruth suffered a severe stroke and with it other complications. But she has never stop loving and caring for her veteran brothers and sisters.

If you have ever received one of the Teddy Bear Lady's bears or just know her or of her or haven't yet, please take a moment to write or call her. She would love to hear from you. If you were honored to have received one of Ruth's Teddy Bears maybe you would write a story about when you were given your Teddy Bear and how it has enriched and changed your life.

Ruth has asked me to send you her poem:

## RUN FOR THE WALL

### TO MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS; MY HEROES

To you my brothers and sisters, to those who came home and those who have not.  
I follow you on the Run To The Wall in spirit and my bears ride along with you.  
They go to the wall to a new home to someone on the wall.  
They sit in silence with their hats and sunflowers flowing in the breeze.  
They will sit there until the battles are over and the tears have been cried.  
They whisper in my ear, they will help end the wars and they have already tried.  
They put their arms around the boys and girls and they tell them to hang on and they will go to heaven together.  
Their sister in Kansas will pray for them all.

Take the World War I, II, Korean, Vietnam, and Iraq and Afghanistan heroes and all others and watch over the men, the boys and girls, and pray that we don't have to do it again.  
Pray for all the baby boys and girls that are born, that they don't have their names on the wall.

This is to you my heroes.

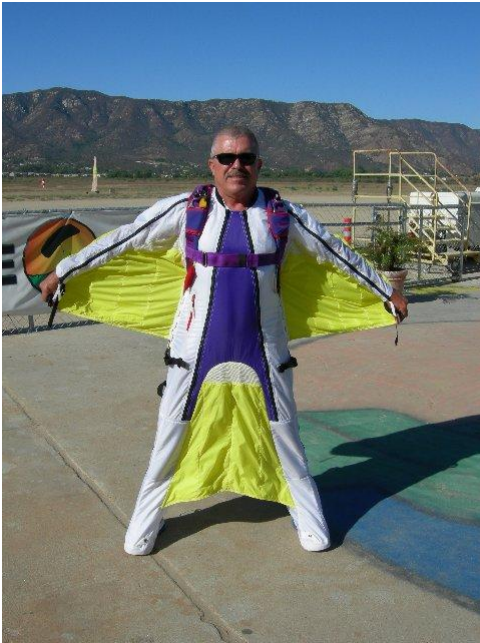
I love you all

Ruth Holcom  
"The Teddy Bear Lady"  
P.O. Box 3182  
Salina, KS 67402  
Phone: 785-826-1727

## **JUMPER JIM FLIES!**

Some of you may have heard that Jim "Jumper" Braga has recently taken up flying—but not in a plane!





Jumper Jim in his new wingsuit

This kind of flying is not for the faint of heart! To see these wingsuits in action, watch <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ttz5oPpF1Js> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEeVQNKwLNM>

## **THANK YOU, RFTW FAMILY**

I want to thank my RFTW family for your support and love throughout the past nine years.

I remember the first time I heard about RFTW. It was in 1996, while living in Colorado, that Dragon talked with Bob and me about RFTW. Being veterans, we knew this was something we had to get involved in. Our first year was '96 and I rode with Bob to Cimarron, NM. However, in 1997-98, I rode my own bike and we met RFTW again in Cimarron. Each year we would go just a little bit farther east. We were determined to go "all the way" and in 1999, that dream came true for us. Throughout our first few years with the Run, we were asked to and jumped at the opportunity to help out in any way possible—road guard, gas, advance party, whatever helped to get the group to our next destination.

In 1999, Bob, the girls, and I moved to Virginia. It was here that I jumped in with my whole body and soul. I was asked if I would take on the coordination for the new Southern Route. I remember riding the highways and byways of Virginia to identify the best route for our Southern riders. This included not only, Virginia, but Tennessee, West Virginia, and DC. I've enjoyed the lessons I've learned, the people I've met, and most of all, the opportunity to continue to serve our nation's veterans. This continues to be my life's work as a member of the Department of Veterans Affairs, first in Colorado, then Virginia, and now in North Carolina. Now in North Carolina, I have passed on the fulfilling position of State Coordinator to Bob Atwell of Wytheville. Wytheville is one of our most supporting overnight stops along the ride. I know that Bob will continue Wytheville's tradition of doing whatever is necessary to make RFTW's journey a success. I thank everyone that I've met throughout the years for your support, guidance, and patience. As some of you know, handing over the route was difficult for me. But I know you're all in good hands. Keep the mission strong and remember: freedom isn't free.

If you're ever in North Carolina, drop me a line. PS: for those of you that have wondered why I haven't called—I lost my phone with all my numbers. So email me your phone number or call!!

With all my love and support, Airborne

## OUR CONSTITUTION'S BIRTHDAY

(September 17, 2008)

by Del "Abe" Jones

09.16.2008

In the year, Seventeen eighty-seven  
Those thirty-nine, changed our History  
They signed that piece of parchment  
Said, we were the Land of the Free.

In more than two hundred twenty years  
It has gone through a few changes  
That's not an easy thing to get done  
For all of our lives it rearranges.

The First through Tenth Amendments  
Are known as our Bill of Rights  
And many times, they were in danger  
But, the People, usually won those fights.

Sometimes, those people in power  
Try to change them, for their gain  
Sometimes they will just ignore them  
Like we've seen, time and again.

They are our only, real protection  
With a high and terrible price to pay  
If we don't keep fighting for them  
There's some would take them all away.

Other Amendments, Thirteen and Fifteen  
Abolished Racial Suffrage and Slavery  
Supposed to give promised Rights  
To all of those promised Liberty.

The Sixteenth, allowed for Income Tax  
And as we know, it has many a flaw  
Some say, that it was never Ratified  
That, it was never made, a Legal Law.

The Eighteenth, Prohibition of Alcohol  
Which was, another legal blunder  
With organized crime borne of it  
And, the Rule of Law torn, asunder.

The Nineteenth, said Women could Vote  
After a very long, contentious fight  
Just look at what those Ladies have done

Then, a Repeal of Prohibition  
Came with the Twenty-first  
In most places, booze flowed freely  
To quench America's, hearty thirst.

The Twenty-second said, Two Terms  
Was, all a President could serve  
But, as we know, for some, one  
Was one more, than they deserved.

The Twenty-sixth said we could Vote  
When reaching Eighteen years of age  
Since they could fight and die for us  
Every time, we had a War to wage.

Those great words of our Constitution  
Have served our Country long, and well  
Will they withstand the test of time  
Or will History show, our Nation, fell?

If we don't protect them with our life  
If we bow to those powers that, be  
If we let them twist those words around  
One sad day, we'll be no longer, Free.

We can't let our precious Bill of Rights  
Fail, to protect us all, as they must do  
We can't let one man, or group of men  
Twist them into something, they construe.

Though, our Constitution is not perfect  
Our Founding Fathers knew, this so  
And, "In God We Trust", is not enough  
Our Freedom depends, on where, we go.

We must each, defend those Freedoms  
From outside foes, and those, within  
It's, We, the People, wield the power  
To lose this battle, which, we must, win.

So, On this Constitution Day  
Let's each, pay the price we owe  
To uphold those words of Wisdom

Since, they got their, American Right.

Penned upon that parchment, long ago.

## ► **POW/MIA UPDATES**

### **POW/MIA ISSUE DESERVES FULL INVESTIGATION**

By Ron Havens, President Chapter 1, Sioux Falls, South Dakota Rolling Thunder  
For Sioux Falls ArgusLeader.com - July 28, 2008:

It's time for the American public to know about the prisoner of war/missing in action issue.

For years the National Alliance of Families of POWs/MIAs, Rolling Thunder Inc. and many other veteran organizations have been pressing our federal government for full disclosure about our POW/MIAs - not just those in Iraq but those from the Vietnam War, Operation Desert Storm, the Cold War/Korea Conflict and even World War II.

As late as 1979, U.S. officials became convinced that there still were live POWs in Southeast Asia. In his book "An Enormous Crime" published in 2007, former Rep. Bill Hendon, R-N.C., chronicled the fact that when the U.S. withdrew from Vietnam, it knowingly left behind hundreds of POWs. Hendon used thousands of pages of public and previously classified documents to make his case.

There is enough evidence to warrant further investigation. Almost 18 months ago, Rep. Peter King, R-N.Y., introduced House Resolution 111 to establish a House select committee on POW/MIA affairs. The committee would "conduct a full investigation of all unresolved matters relating to any United States personnel unaccounted for from the Vietnam era, the Korean conflict, World War II, Cold War missions, or Gulf War, including MIAs and POWs."

In June 2007 the resolution had more than 60 co-sponsors. Rolling Thunder decided to aggressively pursue the remaining co-sponsors needed to move the resolution out of the House Rules Committee and onto the floor for debate and a vote. By last month we had 279 co-sponsors representing more than 60 percent of the House membership who, in turn, represent more than 200 million Americans. Almost 50 percent of the 50 states have 100 percent co-sponsorship. Yet the measure is stalled in the Rules Committee. Why? Because of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's reluctance to allow any additional select committees.

We would like to know, along with the American public, for whom does Pelosi work? We believe it's the American people and all veterans who serve this country.

Despite her public rhetoric about restoring accountability to the Congress, Pelosi has ignored the obvious will of more than 60 percent of her peers in Congress. It is unheard of for a measure to have this many co-sponsors and be stuck in the Rules Committee.

If this resolution is not enacted within two years after its initiation, which would be March 14, 2009, it will die. So, please, I ask you, the American people who vote, to stand up and voice your concerns to Congress about this issue.

Our POW/MIAs and the families left behind deserve nothing less.

## ► **VETERAN AND VA NEWS**

## **AGENT ORANGE AND PROSTATE CANCER UPDATE**

RAO Bulletin - 15 August 2008

Veterans exposed to the herbicide Agent Orange are twice as likely to get prostate cancer as other veterans, UC Davis researchers found in a study published online by the journal *Cancer*. Prostate cancer in those men also comes on earlier and is more aggressive, said Dr. Karim Chaime, chief resident in urology at UC Davis and the study's lead author. The findings are a clear signal that men who worked with Agent Orange should be cared for differently, getting earlier biopsies and more aggressive treatment, he said. "This is a high-risk group." Chaime described the study of more than 13,000 Northern California veterans over eight years as "the biggest study ever done" on Agent Orange effects. It will be published in the 15 SEP print edition of *Cancer*, after online publication last week, and Chaime hopes it soon could lead to new Department of Veterans' Affairs treatment standards.

For Vietnam vet James McKasson, who participated in the study, the findings are a reminder that no one exposed to Agent Orange should delay prostate-cancer testing. McKasson, 62, a retired auto mechanic, said he's doing well after being diagnosed with prostate cancer last year—40 years after he helped load Agent Orange onto planes in the 1960s. He worked with both liquid and powdered forms of the chemical, and "this stuff would slop around; it would drip on you," he recalled. "You'd walk through it and get it on your shoes, on your clothes, on your hands. . . . They didn't give us any protective clothing at all." For decades, McKasson didn't worry much about studies that linked exposure to diseases ranging from diabetes to soft-tissue cancer to birth defects in veterans' children. "I'm an advocate now," he said, telling his "stubborn" friends to have regular checks for prostate cancer.

The chemical was used widely during the Vietnam War to defoliate jungle areas where U.S. forces believed enemies were hiding. It also was used around U.S. military facilities at home and abroad as early as the 1950s, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs. About 375,000 men nationwide are on the military's Agent Orange registry of those exposed, and roughly one-third can be expected to develop prostate cancer, Chaime said. "This has huge implications for men, especially in the VA," but also for those treated by private insurance, whose primary care doctors and urologists may not have seen the latest data, he added. Of the 13,000 men followed by the study, just under half had been exposed to Agent Orange. Among the 6,214 exposed, 239 were diagnosed with prostate cancer over eight years, compared with 124 of 6,930 unexposed veterans.

## **VA ANNOUNCES \$36 MILLION IN GRANTS FOR HOMELESS**

WASHINGTON (Sept. 23, 2008) - Homeless veterans in 35 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico will get more assistance, thanks to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) grants providing \$36.7 million to community groups to create 1,526 beds for homeless veterans this year. "These grants provide a helping hand to veterans who have served our nation in uniform," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "Our partnerships with community-based organizations provide safe, temporary housing while these veterans return to productive lives." VA has identified public and community non-profit groups eligible to receive payments for housing and supportive services to homeless veterans, including 49 grants for vans that will transport homeless veterans to health care and training programs. The grants are part of VA's continuing efforts to reduce homelessness among veterans. VA has the largest integrated network of homeless assistance programs in the country. In many cities and rural areas, VA social workers and other clinicians working with community and faith-based partners conduct extensive outreach programs, clinical assessments, medical treatments, alcohol and drug abuse counseling and employment assistance. VA's Grant and Per Diem program helped reduce the number of veterans who are homeless on a typical night last year by 21 percent to about 154,000 veterans. VA also provides health care to about 100,000 homeless veterans, compensation and assistance in obtaining foreclosed homes and excess federal property, including clothes, footwear, blankets and other items. More information about VA's homeless programs is available on the Internet at <http://www.va.gov/homeless>.

## **VA ESTABLISHES ALS AS PRESUMPTIVE COMPENSABLE ILLNESS**

WASHINGTON (Sept. 23, 2008) - Veterans with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) may receive badly-needed support for themselves and their families after the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today that ALS will become a presumptively compensable illness for all veterans with 90 days or more of continuously active service in the military. "Veterans are developing ALS in rates higher than the general population, and it was appropriate to take action," Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake said. Secretary Peake based his decision primarily on a November 2006 report by the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine (IOM) on the association between active-duty service and ALS. "We are extremely grateful to Secretary Peake, Congressman Henry Brown and Senator Lindsey Graham for standing on the side of veterans with ALS across the country," said Gary Leo, president and CEO of The ALS Association. "Thanks to their leadership, veterans with ALS will receive the benefits and care they need, when they need them. Thanks to their efforts, no veteran with ALS will ever be left behind." The report, titled Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis in Veterans: Review of the Scientific Literature, analyzed numerous previous studies on the issue and concluded that "there is limited and suggestive evidence of an association between military service and later development of ALS. ALS is a disease that progresses rapidly, once it is diagnosed," the Secretary explained. "There simply isn't time to develop the evidence needed to support compensation claims before many veterans become seriously ill. My decision will make those claims much easier to process, and for them and their families to receive the compensation they have earned through their service to our nation." ALS, also called Lou Gehrig's disease, is a neuromuscular disease that affects about 20,000 to 30,000 people of all races and ethnicities in the United States, is often relentlessly progressive, and is almost always fatal. ALS causes degeneration of nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord that leads to muscle weakness, muscle atrophy, and spontaneous muscle activity. Currently, the cause of ALS is unknown, and there is no effective treatment. The new interim final regulation applies to all applications for benefits received by VA on or after September 23, 2008, or that are pending before VA, the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, or the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit on that date. VA will work to identify and contact veterans with ALS, including those whose claims for ALS were previously denied, through direct mailings and other outreach programs.

## **HOUSE LEGISLATION UPDATES**

VA COLA 2009: The House cleared a cost-of-living bill Wednesday that would provide an increase for veterans with service-connected disabilities, as well as dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) for families of deceased veterans. The Senate passed the veterans' COLA measure in July. The COLA bill, S 2617, provides for a Dec. 1 increase in disability compensation, dependency and indemnity compensation, and pensions that will match whatever increase is provided in Social Security benefits. The increase, which applies to about 2.8 million veterans and survivors, would first appear in January paychecks. The Social Security increase won't be known until mid-October, but is expected to be a minimum of 6 percent. The Social Security COLA automatically applies to military and federal civilian retired pay, but veterans' disability and survivor benefits and pensions increase only through the enactment of new legislation. The COLA bill now awaits the President's signature.

SBP DIC OFFSET UPDATE 11: The Senate, by a vote of 94-2, added an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (S. 3001) that would totally eliminate the SBP/DIC offset that some 57,000 widows now suffer from. Thanks to the efforts of Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL) and the support of numerous veteran and military associations, this is the fourth year in a row the Senate has taken this action. Unfortunately, every previous year this legislation has been removed in conference with the House. Last year, in an attempt to give the widows something, a new benefit for those affected by the SBP/DIC offset was passed. This token payment of \$50 per month starts 1 OCT this year and will increase by \$10 yearly increments until it reaches \$100 per month.

**VET JOBS UPDATE 04:** The Internal Revenue Service has met its goal of hiring a minimum of 1,000 additional veterans in fiscal 2008. With three weeks to go before the fiscal year ends on 30SEP, IRS officials said they had hired 1,052 veterans. "We are not going to stop there," IRS Commissioner Doug Shulman said in a statement. "We will continue to recruit from this talented pool of people who already have demonstrated their leadership, work ethic and dedication." To hire the veterans, the IRS worked with major advocacy groups like the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Blinded Veterans of America and Paralyzed Veterans of America. The IRS also worked with the Pentagon and Veterans Affairs Department, which have veteran's employment programs. The Treasury Department, which oversees the IRS, ranks among the worst federal agencies in terms of veterans in its work force. According to an Office of Personnel Management report on veterans' hiring, only 10% of Treasury Department workers are veterans. Only the Education Department, with veterans making up 8.2% of its workforce, and the Department of Health and Human Services, at 7.8%, did worse. The Defense Department — led by the Air Force, which has veterans in 48.6% of its civilian positions — topped the list. The VA and Transportation Department also ranked high in the OPM study.

**MILITARY STOLEN VALOR UPDATE 10:** Former Army serviceman Randall Moneymaker was sentenced to three years in prison September 5 for embellishing a brief military career into that of a decorated combat veteran. Moneymaker is part of the growing problem of "phony war heroes," across the nation, Assistant U.S. Attorney Craig "Jake" Jacobsen said. "As the wars drag on in this country, you have more and more wannabes" who make claims of sacrifices never suffered and medals never earned, Jacobsen said. Unlike other imposters who seek only bragging rights or political gain, Moneymaker was motivated mostly by greed, the government contended—making his false claims to collect more than \$18,000 in disability and military benefits. Moneymaker was sentenced by Judge James Turk following a March trial in U.S. District Court in Roanoke. After hearing testimony that Moneymaker made up tales of firefights, Ranger missions and hundreds of parachute jumps, a jury convicted him of six charges of fraud and theft. "I'm sorry for what I've done," Moneymaker told the judge, apologizing to his family, his country, his fellow soldiers and "anyone else that I've done wrong."

After spending just two years in the Army in the mid-1980s, Moneymaker would later claim to be a decorated Army Ranger with more than 20 years of service that included tours in Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Panama and Grenada. But during the years when he told of suffering post-traumatic stress disorder from seeing his fellow soldiers killed beside him, Moneymaker was actually attending college and working in the telecommunications field. And the scars on his back that he attributed to shrapnel wounds were actually the result of liposuction, federal prosecutors said. Moneymaker was "someone who obtained respect, sympathy and benefits based on the sacrifices and the blood of other veterans who went through what he claimed he went through but didn't," Jacobsen said. Although Moneymaker wore Ranger badges and a Purple Heart he never earned, the charges he was convicted of were limited to the paperwork he filled out to receive benefits from the U.S. Army and Veterans Affairs. The charges included five counts of making false statements on forms he filed or in claims he made while applying for disability benefits or inquiring about a military pension. He also was charged with theft for receiving \$18,449.32 in disability payments to which he was not entitled.

**VA RETRO PAY PROJECT UPDATE 14:** The Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax Act of 2008, signed into law on 17 JUN 08, changed the federal income tax filing deadlines and the length of the look-back period for amended tax returns when retirees are affected by a retroactive VA disability compensation determination. Amended tax returns usually are required when you have paid income taxes on past retirement income that later becomes tax-free income as a result of the award of retro-VA compensation. For retro-VA compensation determinations as of 18 JUN 08 or later, retirees have up to one year to file their amended return from the date of the VA determination. The retiree now can amend tax returns going back five years. It used to be a three-year look-back. There also is a transition period allowed in the tax code change. For retro-VA compensation determinations from 1 JAN 01 through 17 JUN 08, retirees have until 17 JUN 09 to file amended returns for tax refunds for tax years 2001 to the present. Consult your tax specialist for more detailed information about how these changes affect you. Refer to H.R. 6081, Section 106, which amends the IRS Tax

Code Section 6511(d) by adding a new paragraph (8). For a technical explanation of H.R. 6081 on the House of Representative's Web site refer to [www.house.gov/jct/x-44-08.pdf](http://www.house.gov/jct/x-44-08.pdf). Additional reference can be located at [www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=h110-6081](http://www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=h110-6081).

**GREYHOUND MILITARY DISCOUNT:** Greyhound Bus Company is offering a fare discount to active duty and retired military personnel and their family members. The offer is a 10% discount off the Greyhound walk-up (unrestricted) fare and a maximum fare of \$198 round trip anywhere in the continental U.S. The following terms apply:

1. Fares are valid on Greyhound schedules and those of participating interline carriers. Not available on Greyhound Canada routes.
2. This fare applies only to active and retired members of the United States Armed Forces, which includes the U.S. Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, and Navy; members of the National Guard, reservists and bonafide identifiable spouses and dependents of the above. A valid military picture identification card must be presented upon request.
3. A 40-percent discount for children of military personnel is available. This discount not available with \$198 maximum military fare. No other discounts apply.
4. Only totally unused tickets may be refunded to the location of the original purchase. A 15% penalty fee applies upon refund. No refund will be allowed if any portion of the ticket has been used.
5. Departure date and time may be changed for a charge of \$10 per ticket provided that the advance purchase requirement is not violated.
6. Advance purchase tickets purchased over the phone require a minimum of ten days for delivery by mail and for online orders.
7. Casino, commuter, Discovery Pass, student or other special military fares do not qualify for the military discount.
8. Fares are subject to change until purchase and may be higher during peak holiday travel periods.
9. Ten-percent discount may not be used in conjunction with the \$198 maximum fare.

**DOD VET BETRAYAL CLAIM:** In a letter sent to members of Congress in early SEP, the directors of two major veterans' groups say the Pentagon's personnel chief has intentionally withheld benefits from wounded service members. "We need your immediate assistance to help end the Defense Department's deliberate, systemic betrayal of every brave American who [dons] the uniform and stands in harm's way," states the letter, signed by David Gorman, executive director of Disabled American Veterans (DAV), and Paul Rieckhoff, executive director of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA). "Sadly, the 2007 Walter Reed scandal, which resulted mostly from poor oversight and inadequate leadership, pales in comparison to what we view as the deliberate manipulation of the law" by David S.C. Chu, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, and his deputies, the letter states.

Kerry Baker, legislative director for DAV, said Chu sent out a memorandum in March redefining which injuries qualify as "combat-related." The definition is important because Section 1646 of the 2008 Defense Authorization Act said service members with combat-related disabilities no longer must pay back any disability retirement severance they receive from DoD before they become eligible for disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs, as has been the case under longstanding policy. The policy affects service members who receive a disability rating of 20% or less from the Defense Department, and thus receive a severance payment rather than lifetime disability retirement pay. Baker said he has seen cases in which, for example, a veteran receives a \$30,000 severance payment from the Pentagon, uses it for medical care or education, and then, even if subsequently awarded a full 100% disability rating by VA, must pay the \$30,000 back first before he can draw any VA compensation. Baker said this leaves many veterans who may not be able to work in a quagmire of debt. DAV and IAVA think no veteran should have to pay back money he or she earned before becoming eligible for VA benefits, but they still see the new law extending such waivers to veterans with combat-related disabilities as a step forward.

Under a separate program called Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC), which eliminates the offset in retired pay required of some retirees who also receive VA disability compensation, “combat related” is defined as any injury or illness incurred in a combat zone or performing tasks related to combat, such as training for deployment or hazardous assignments like jumping out of airplanes. But according to Chu’s memo, the definition of “combat related” for the purposes of the new severance pay waiver is limited only to those injured in a combat zone in the line of duty or as a direct result of armed conflict. In June, DoD spokeswoman Eileen Lainez told Military Times that Chu did not remake the definition to save money, as Baker has charged. She also noted that the law on repaying severance money left it to the secretary of defense to define “combat related.” But three lawmakers have told Military Times that their interpretation puts Baker in the right and Chu in the wrong—that they expected the Defense Department to adopt the existing definition used for the CRSC program. “The Department of Defense appears to be interpreting this law in the most narrow and tightfisted way possible,” said Rep. Timothy Walz (D-MN) a House Veterans Affairs Committee member. “I am disappointed that [the department] is implementing this policy in a way that makes as few veterans as possible eligible for the benefit.”

After Walz weighed in, DAV sent a letter to Chu asking for an explanation. William Carr, one of Chu’s senior deputies, responded in a letter dated 14 AUG by saying the intent “was to direct the enhanced benefit to those hurt in combat. Such an approach is consistent with our strong belief that there must be a special distinction for those who incur disabilities while participating in the risk of combat, in contrast with those injured otherwise,” Carr wrote. But Baker, and the authors of the new letter, continue to insist that congressional intent was not to make a special distinction that leaves out service members hurt in activities defined as “combat related” under other programs. “The law defines such disabilities as those caused by armed conflict, instrumentalities of war, hazardous service and conditions simulating war,” Gorman and Rieckhoff wrote. “The [Defense Authorization Act] did not change these definitions; in fact, it reinforced them, and it added disabilities incurred in the line of duty in a combat zone. The letter states that Chu “lacks the authority to change the will of Congress.”

## **VA ANNOUNCES NEW SPORTS CLINIC FOR NEWLY INJURED VETERANS**

WASHINGTON (July 16, 2008)—One hundred recently injured veterans from around the country will participate in a unique rehabilitative sports experience this September in San Diego, the National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic, sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). "This new rehabilitative event is a therapeutic extension of the superior health care veterans receive in our medical centers each day," said Dr. James B. Peake, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "The sports clinic will strengthen veterans battling back from injury, improving their mental and physical well-being."

The event is open to recently injured veterans who have spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, certain neurological conditions, amputations, other mobility impairments, or post-traumatic stress disorder. For many injured veterans, this event will provide their first exposure to recreational sports and other activities after being injured. The National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic will take place Sept. 28 through Oct. 3 at several venues in the San Diego area. Events include sailing, cycling, surfing, kayaking and track and field events. Admission for the public is free. Sea World and the San Diego Marriott Hotel and Marina will be the site of the opening and closing ceremonies along with some of the week's events. Other events will be held at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Chula Vista, Kellogg Park in La Jolla Shores, the Embarcadero Marina Park and the Mission Bay Yacht Club.

Recreational sports can be an important part of the therapy for many disabilities. VA is a recognized leader in rehabilitation, with therapeutic programs available at VA health care facilities across the nation. The event will become the fifth national rehabilitation event offered by VA to promote the healing of body, mind, and spirit, joining the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, the National Veterans Golden Age Games and the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. The VA San Diego Healthcare System is hosting the 2008 Summer Sports Clinic. Specific event activities offered will change each



year. For more information about the National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic or to volunteer during the week, visit the clinic Web site at [www.summersportsclinic.va.gov](http://www.summersportsclinic.va.gov).

## WWI VETERAN WATCH

Very soon there will be no living veterans of World War I. At this time there are only 12 verified veterans in the world alive from WWI, 1 unverified, 3 WWI-era veterans, for a total of 16 WWI veterans in the entire world. Distribution: 3 in Australia, 2 in France, 1 in Italy, 4 in the UK, and 2 in the U.S. Of WWI-era veterans, there are only 3: 1 in Finland, 1 in Poland, and 1 in the U.S.—our own Robley Rex of Kentucky.

### WWI veterans In the United States:

**John Henry Foster Babcock (Jack)**, 108, was a Canadian, but moved to the U.S. in 1924. He currently resides in Spokane, WA.

**Frank Woodruff Buckles**, 107, U.S. Army, is the last U.S. veteran. He enlisted at 17, served overseas, and now resides in Charles Town, WV.

### WWI-era veterans in the United States:

Robley H. Rex, 107, U.S. Army. He claims to have enlisted in 1918, but other sources cite 1919, at the age of 18. He lives in Louisville, KY.

Rex turned 107 on May 5, 2008. On May 23, 2008 (the day RFTW arrived in Washington, D.C.) Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY) gave the following tribute to Rex in the Senate:

"Mr. President, today I rise to recognize a very special individual from my home State of Kentucky, Mr. Robley Rex. Earlier this month, Mr. Rex celebrated his 107th birthday. To live 107 years in and of itself is an achievement by anyone's standard. In the case of Robley Rex, those 107 years have been especially full of accomplishment and patriotic service. He has filled his lifetime with loyal service to our Nation's Armed Forces, to the U.S. Postal Department, to local businesses, to the Methodist ministries and, perhaps most importantly, to his family and his fellow veterans.

"Robley Rex was born in Hopkinsville, KY 1901. Upon turning 18, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and proudly served our Nation. He returned to Kentucky after serving with 5th Infantry in Germany in 1922. Mr. Rex then joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars, VFW, and married Ms. Grace Bivens. He held jobs with local Kentucky businesses before beginning his career as a U.S. Postal Department railroad mail clerk. At the spry, young age of 86, Robley Rex began volunteering through the VFW and was honored by the group for having performed more than 13,600 hours of service over a 20-year period. He also volunteered his time at the VA Medical Center in Louisville, KY, helping the hospital staff and inspiring the patients and their families. He also found time to become an expert in proper flag etiquette. Mr. President, I don't know of anyone who knows more about how to properly care for an American flag than Mr. Rex.

"I am proud to represent such a remarkable model of honor and duty and I am pleased to have the opportunity to recognize Robley Rex in front of this distinguished body. I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking him for his continued service to our Nation and to Kentucky, and to wish him all the best on his 107th birthday and in the future."

## ► OTHER NEWS

### WORLD WAR I MEMORIAL PLANNED

More than nine decades after driving ambulances on the battlefields of Europe, 107-year-old Frank Woodruff Buckles is the nation's last known survivor of World War I. Now he's also become the face of an ambitious campaign to erect a national memorial honoring the 4.6 million Americans who endured "the war to end all wars." Buckles was the celebrity participant at a news conference September 9 to unveil plans for a National World War I Memorial on Washington's National Mall. It would be midway between memorials already there to World War II and the Korean War. Planners envision refurbishing and expanding an existing memorial that President Herbert Hoover dedicated in 1931 to honor World War I veterans from the District of Columbia. That circular open-air Doric structure, ravaged by time and neglect, is tucked among trees at the southern edge of the Mall and often is ignored or overlooked by tourists. It was named as one of Washington's most endangered places in 2003 and 2006.

Rep. Ted Poe (R-TX) has introduced the Frank Buckles World War I Memorial Act to renovate the memorial and rededicate it as a national shrine in 2018, when America observes the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. Buckles said the 21st-century commitment was needed to make the memorial "what it should be" by honoring all who'd gone before him. "I just feel there should be some recognition," he said. Buckles was born in 1901 in Harrison County, Mo. He lied about his age to enlist, telling a skeptical recruiter that Missouri didn't keep birth records when he was born. He was dispatched to England, then France, where he served as an ambulance driver. After the armistice, he delivered German POWs back to their home country. Buckles spent the next 20 years as a merchant seaman before he was entangled in another world war. He was working in the Philippines in 1941 and was captured by the Japanese shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. He spent the next three and a half years in Japanese prison camps. After World War II, he returned to the United States, married and settled down on a 33-acre West Virginia farm, where he still lives. His wife died in 1999.

The D.C. Preservation League and a newly formed World War I Memorial Foundation will take the lead in planning, designing, and raising money. Refurbishing the monument is expected to cost just under \$1 million but planners said it was too early to project a total cost. The circular memorial, composed of Vermont marble, was intended as a bandstand for memorial concerts to World War I participants. It stands on a 4-foot-high circular marble platform around which are inscribed the names of the 499 Washington residents who died in the war. Planners said they hoped to pay for much of the work through private donations. One priority, they said, will be to preserve and improve the existing monument as a "place of peace and reflection" without trying to rival or surpass the scope of more opulent monuments such as the World War II Memorial.

## **KOREA, U.S. SIGN PACT ON RECOVERY OF WAR DEAD**

By Jung Sung-ki, The Korea Times Staff Reporter, Sept. 13, 2008

South Korea and the United States signed an agreement August 5, 2008 on expanding joint recovery and identification of their soldiers killed in action during the 1950-53 Korean War, an official of the Ministry of National Defense said Sunday.

Col. Park Shin-han, head of the ministry's Agency for Killed in Action Recovery and Identification (MAKRI), will sign a memorandum of understanding on bilateral cooperation with Maj. Gen. Donna L. Crisp, chief of the Joint Prisoners of War (POWs), Missing in Action and Accounting Command (JPAC) in Hawaii, the official said.

Under the agreement, the two agencies will share information related to the recovery and identification of the remains of fallen soldiers and conduct joint operations on a regular basis, he said. JPAC will also help train officials of the South Korean agency.

JPAC is a standing joint task force within the U.S. Pacific Command whose headquarters is located at Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii. Its mission is to account for all U.S. prisoners of war and those missing in action from all past wars. JPAC's operations are divided into four areas: analysis and investigation, recovery, identification, and closure.

Since 2005, both agencies have held meetings on bilateral cooperation twice a year. They have also carried out joint recovery and identification operations in South Korea since 2006.

South Korea has found and handed over the remains of five U.S. soldiers and three British Commonwealth soldiers to the United States, while the United States has recovered the remains of three South Korean soldiers, according to MAKRI.

South Korea's Army launched operations to recover the remains of war dead in 2000 and the mission was transferred to MAKRI in 2003. MAKRI now has 134 members, including forensic and archeological specialists.

The remains of some 1,900 soldiers killed in the war have been recovered since 2000.

Remains of about 130,000 South Korean soldiers are believed to be buried on the Korean Peninsula, while 8,100 U.S. military personnel are still missing from the war.

The Korean War, often called the "Forgotten War," resulted in a devastating death toll. According to the ministry, some 137,000 South Korean troops lost their lives, with a further 20,000 listed as missing in action.

Foreign records show that at least 400,000 South Korean troops and two million civilians were killed, and up to 1.5 million troops from communist North Korea and China were killed.

The two Koreas remain technically at war because the conflict ended in an armistice on July 27, 1953, rather than a formal peace treaty.

## **TOMB OF THE UNKNOWNNS TO BE REPAIRED**

The National Trust for Historic Preservation today commended Arlington National Cemetery, the Department of the Army, and the Department of Veterans Affairs for changing course and agreeing to conduct much-needed repairs to, rather than replacement of, the authentic Monument at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery. However, the report also says officials have not foreclosed a decision to replace the Monument with a replica.

In the report delivered August 11, 2008, Congress was informed that Arlington National Cemetery anticipates the repairs, the first to the two cosmetic, non-structural cracks since 1989, will last twelve years with proper maintenance and cost just \$65,000 (as compared to an estimated \$2,200,000 for a replica). The new repairs are imperative to address any aesthetic concerns and to stem further deterioration due to water infiltration where the old repairs have failed. Arlington National Cemetery has turned for technical advice to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the National Park Service's National Center for Preservation Technology and Training. The Cemetery also has committed to conduct the repair work in compliance with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Unfortunately, the report also indicates that Arlington National Cemetery has not entirely abandoned its long-term goal to replace the Tomb Monument with a replica quarried "from the original quarry and from the same marble vein." The original 48-ton monument, carved of Yule Marble in 1931, has since cracked along its natural grain. Cemetery officials continue to explore replacement because they believe high-quality white marble is in short supply: "The impetus for considering the replacement of the Tomb Monument now, rather than later, is the uncertainty of obtaining suitable marble in the future."

## **Background**

When the National Trust for Historic Preservation sounded the alarm about plans to replace the original Tomb with a replica solely because of repairable cosmetic imperfections, there was a huge public outcry. Thousands of Members and supporters emailed Congress and the Superintendent of the Cemetery, asking that all options for the 1932 monument—which is nationally significant and eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places—be considered, including repair.

Preservationists raised awareness that the two nonstructural cracks in the 48-ton marble block pose no threat to visitors or the historic structure. They also successfully raised the point that replacement proponents want the replica carved from a particular type of marble that will inevitably crack along its grain as this marble does naturally over time. Repair and proper care of the Tomb (re-grouting the cracks and using only gentle cleaning methods instead of high-pressure power-washing) is possible and is the preferred method for fixing the existing cracks, as other marble monuments such as the Lincoln Memorial were repaired.

In testimony before Senate Armed Services Committee staff last September, stone preservation expert Mary Oehrlein explained this method of restoration saying, "The existing monument can easily be repaired, as was done 17 years ago, using conventional conservation methods to re-grout the cracks. Once repaired, the fault lines would be virtually invisible from the public viewing areas."

The repairs, necessary to stop further damage due to water infiltration, will last 12 years and cost \$65,000, as compared to an estimated \$2,200,000 for a replica.

## **► BRINGING THEM HOME**

### **REMAINS OF KENTUCKY WWII PILOT IDENTIFIED**

**Son born 3 months after pilot disappeared “a little shell shocked” by news**

LOUISVILLE, Ky. - AP, Aug 13, 2008—Howard "Cliff" Enoch Jr. disappeared over what would become East Germany near the end of World War II, three months before his only son was born. Six decades later, that son, Howard Enoch III, is getting to know his father while planning a funeral and memorial service for a man he never met.

"For 63 years, I had no reason to believe I would ever find out what happened to my father," Enoch said. "It's been remarkable."

The Department of Defense announced Wednesday it had identified the remains of 2nd Lt. Howard Clifton Enoch Jr. of Marion, Ky. He was buried September 22 at Arlington National Cemetery. A memorial service was planned for western Kentucky in October.

### **Shot down in 1945**

Lt. Enoch was a 20-year-old pilot of a P-51D Mustang, a long-range single-seat fighter aircraft, that was shot down near the village of Doberschutz, Germany, on March 19, 1945. Lt. Enoch's remains were not immediately recovered and the crash site fell behind Soviet lines when the war ended in May 1945.

His son, Howard Enoch III, grew up in Marion, about 66 miles east of Metropolis, Ill. His mother remarried and he was eventually told about his father's disappearance. Enoch, 63, went to the University of Kentucky, then later to Boston College to get a Ph.D. He now lives in Framingham, Mass. and directs The E. Paul Robsham Jr. Theater Arts Center.

In 2007 he got a call from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, asking him to attend a meeting in Hartford, Conn., of families with relatives who went missing in World War II. After the meeting, members of

the command pulled Enoch aside. The military representatives had news: The remains of Lt. Enoch had been found in 2006 and initially identified in 2007. Officials said the ID was confirmed this year using DNA submitted by relatives of Lt. Enoch's mother to a missing soldiers database.

### **Recovery crew sent to Germany**

A German researcher, Hans-Guenther Ploes, who searches for historic crash sites, found the spot where Lt. Enoch's plane crashed and notified the Department of Defense. The military said it sent a recovery crew to Germany, where it found the remains.

"It's a tremendous amount of information," Enoch said. "I wouldn't say I've processed it. I think I'm still a little shell shocked by it all."

Since then, Enoch has been busy making arrangements to bury the father he never knew and trying to explain all the commotion to his two young daughters, ages 8 and 6. The process also brought him in touch with relatives he never knew. One of them is R.C. Hamilton of Marion, Lt. Enoch's second cousin. Hamilton, 82, and the elder Enoch played together as children and both ended up serving in the U.S. Army in Europe near the end of World War II. Hamilton thought his cousin would never be found.

For a son who never knew his father, it's one more step in the right direction.

"I'm just so proud of him and what he did for his country," Enoch said. "Anything I can do to see he gets the honors he deserves, that's what I'm working for."

### **FAREWELL TO AN AMERICAN HERO**

By Joseph L. Galloway | McClatchy Newspapers, Aug 22, 2008

For the better part of 60 years, two old Army pilots who loved each other argued over many a meal and drink as to which of them was the second best pilot in the world.

The two shared the cockpits of old Beaver prop planes and Huey helicopters; they shared rooms in military hooches all over the world; they shared a love of practical and impractical jokes and they shared an undying love of flying and soldiers and the Army.

They also shared membership in a very small and revered fraternity of fewer than 105 men who are entitled to wear around their necks the light blue ribbon and gold pointed star that is the Medal of Honor, America's highest decoration for heroism above and beyond the call of duty.

Their story was told in a book my buddy Lt. Gen. Hal Moore and I wrote 15 years ago titled "We Were Soldiers Once . . . and Young" and in the Mel Gibson movie, "We Were Soldiers," released in the spring of 2002. Too Tall and Old Snake were ably portrayed in the movie.

Their argument over which of them is the Best Pilot in the Whole World sadly came to an end this week when our friend and comrade-in-arms Maj. Ed (Too Tall to Fly) Freeman slipped the surly bonds of earth and headed off to Fiddler's Green, where the souls of departed cavalymen gather by dispensation of God Himself.

Too Tall Ed was 80 years old when he died August 20, 2008 in a hospital in Boise, Idaho, after long being ill with Parkinson's disease. He turned down a full dress hero's funeral in Arlington National Cemetery in favor of a hometown service and burial in the National Cemetery in Boise, close to the rivers he loved to fish and the mountains he flew through in his second career flying for the U.S. Forest Service.

A few days before the end, his old buddy Lt. Col. Bruce (Ancient Serpent 6) Crandall came to the hospital to

say his goodbyes to Too Tall Ed, and to enjoy one last round of arguing with Ed over that question of which of them was the best pilot in the world.

In a fine display of the sort of gallows humor that's always helped men who know the horrors of war keep some of their sanity, Bruce told Ed that he intended to settle the question once and for all by borrowing a helicopter, sling-loading Ed's coffin below it and then lowering it into the grave where Too Tall will rest - something that only the Best Pilot in the World could do. Something that only the best friend in the world could tell a dying man.

These two men received their Medals of Honor long after the deeds that earned them in the furious battles of the Ia Drang Valley in November of 1965 at the dawn of our long, bitter war in Vietnam. President George W. Bush presented Too Tall Ed with his medal in 2001 and hung the medal around Old Snake Crandall's neck in 2007.

When their friends in the 1st Battalion, 7th U.S. Cavalry were surrounded and fighting for their lives near the Cambodian border and needed ammunition and water and helicopters to carry out the gravely wounded, Bruce and Ed flew their Huey helicopters, again and again, into a small clearing swept by North Vietnamese machine gun and rifle fire.

I rode into Landing Zone X-Ray sitting atop a case of hand grenades on one of Bruce Crandall's missions after dark on November 14, 1965, wondering if one of those bullets might turn us all into a puff of greasy smoke. I rode out of X-Ray after the battle ended on November 16, again on Bruce's helicopter.

In later years, he and Ed and I would joke about the love-hate relationship that I and the infantrymen had with the chopper pilots: Hated them for flying us into Hell and dumping us off; loved them for coming back to get us when it was time to leave.

Mostly we laughed ourselves silly as first Ed, then Bruce recounted tales of one escapade after another; of moonlight requisition raids against the U.S. Air Force for needed or merely desired goodies unavailable from the Army supply chain; of the time Bruce was caught trying to sling-load a 10 kilowatt generator off its pad on an airbase.

Now Too Tall Ed Freeman, a much larger than life-size hero at 6 feet 7 inches tall and a much better friend than we deserved, is gone, and we are left with too large a hole in our hearts and in our dwindling ranks.

Cleared for Takeoff, Ed!

## **SAILOR MISSING FROM VIETNAM WAR IS IDENTIFIED**

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced that a U.S. serviceman, missing from the Vietnam War, has been identified. He is Hospital Corpsman 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Manuel R. Denton, U.S. Navy, of Kerrville, Texas.

On Oct. 8, 1963, Denton was one of six men who crewed a UH-34D Choctaw helicopter that was on a search-and-rescue mission. While over Quang Nam Province, Vietnam, the helicopter came under intense enemy ground fire and crashed. There were no survivors. Over the next several days, the remains of four of the crewmen were recovered; however, the remains of Denton and one other crewman, U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Luther E. Ritchey, Jr., were not recovered.

Between 1991 and 2000, several joint U.S./Socialist Republic of Vietnam (S.R.V.) teams, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), traveled to Quang Nam Province to investigate the incident and interview witnesses. Teams also surveyed the crash site and found wreckage consistent with a UH-34D.

In 2000 and 2001, human remains associated with this incident were turned over to U.S. officials. In 2002, a joint team excavated the crash site and recovered human remains.

As a result of the remains turned over in 2000 and 2001, and of those recovered from the crash site in 2002, Ritchey's remains were identified in 2003. Some of these remains could not be individually identified, and they are included in a group representing the entire crew. Denton's remains are in this group, which were buried together in Arlington.

JPAC used forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence in Denton's identification.

## **SOLDIERS MISSING FROM VIETNAM WAR ARE IDENTIFIED**

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced today that the remains of two U.S. servicemen, missing from the Vietnam War, have been identified and will be returned to their families for burial with full military honors.

They are Chief Warrant Officer 2 Bobby L. McKain, of Garden City, Kan.; and Warrant Officer Arthur F. Chaney, of Vienna, Va., both U.S. Army. McKain will be buried on Aug. 11 in Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C., and Chaney will be buried Sept. 16 in Arlington.

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

On May 3, 1968, these men flew an AH-1G Cobra gunship on an armed escort mission to support a reconnaissance team operating west of Khe Sanh, in Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam. Their helicopter was hit by enemy anti-aircraft fire, exploded in mid-air and crashed west of Khe Sanh near the Laos-Vietnam border. The crew of other U.S. aircraft flying over the area immediately after the crash reported no survivors, and heavy enemy activity prevented attempts to recover the men's bodies.

In 1985, an American citizen with ties to Southeast Asian refugees turned over to U.S. officials human remains supposedly recovered from an AC-130 aircraft crash in Laos. While subsequent laboratory analysis disproved the association of the remains to the AC-130 crash, some of the remains were those of McKain and Chaney.

Between 1989 and 2003, Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) investigative teams working in Laos and Vietnam made five attempts to locate the crew's crash site, but could not confirm the location.

Among other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory also used mitochondrial DNA and dental comparisons in identifying the remains.

## **JPAC ARRIVAL CEREMONY**

Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii -- The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command conducted an Arrival Ceremony September 26 at Hickam AFB, to honor fallen U.S. military personnel whose identities remain unknown.

There were three flag-draped transfer cases. The cases are associated with the Vietnam War, Cold War, and World War II: one from the Lao People's Democratic Republic, one from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and one from the Solomon Islands (Guadalcanal).

Following the ceremony, the remains of these fallen service members were transported to the JPAC Central Identification Laboratory where the forensic identification process begins. Once identifications are established, the names will be announced following the notification of next-of-kin.

*Welcome home—may you finally rest in peace.*

## ► EVENTS

### **BRANSON'S VETERANS HOMECOMING**

**November 5-11, 2008**

From former Prisoners of War, to history making Army Nurse Corps Veterans or Chosin Reservoir Survivors, there is no doubt that you'll find them at the Chateau on the Lake in Branson on November 9, 2008.

Over the years, the now 12th Annual GALA has grown into a wonderful collaborative effort with dozens of individuals helping to get it all organized. The Branson's Veterans Homecoming week is held annually from Nov 5-Nov 11. Branson has long celebrated Veterans Day as a week-long Veterans Celebration.

During the GALA, guests enjoy a beautiful evening of military camaraderie. From the initial notes of the dance band during the cocktail hour, through dinner and the special salute and show, veterans enjoy a world-class event. Last year, more than 525 veterans, spouses, family, and friends from 31 states attended the event.

The GALA has numerous corporate sponsors and several private donors, but the POW NETWORK will coordinate the event. They expect a full house due to the event's nationwide popularity, even with high gas prices.

NETWORK Chairman, Chuck Schantag stated, "We expect veterans and friends from all eras, enlisted as well as retired officers, to attend the event. In addition, we will be seating 50 young JROTC cadets for the first time. There is no greater chance to learn military history than in a hall that will host a 97-year-old veteran military officer through our active duty personnel to these young cadets. For many, this is an annual pilgrimage of sorts—to see and spent time with those they served with."

The evening will encompass a candlelight POW/MIA ceremony, traditional military toasts, an outdoor fireworks show, dinner entertainment, with the dance band returning after dinner.

One of the evening highlights will be the awarding of MOZARK MOAA's True American Hero award to a veteran from the Branson area for extraordinary effort on behalf of all our veterans. That will be followed by the awarding of the PATRIOTISM AWARD by the POW NETWORK.

For information or tickets, please call the POW NETWORK at 866-481-GALA or visit [http://www.pownetwork.org/branson/./pownet.secure.2/2008\\_gala\\_invitation.pdf](http://www.pownetwork.org/branson/./pownet.secure.2/2008_gala_invitation.pdf)

For information on the Homecoming, visit <http://bransonveterans.com/veterans-homecoming.htm>

Mary and Chuck Schantag, POW Network  
[www.pownetwork.org](http://www.pownetwork.org)



## ► SICK CALL

**Bob Gilles** has been with RFTW almost since the beginning. In July, he spent a day removing tires – Harley, Jaguar – and then complained about lower back pain. The pain continued and he checked into Kaiser in Harbor City on Aug 18. He was found to have a compressed fracture of the L1 (1<sup>st</sup> lumbar in his spine) – and a lesion was found, which later proved to be cancerous. He was transported to Kaiser Hospital on Sunset Blvd in LA on Aug 22 for tests and evaluations. On September 6 the tumor and bone were surgically removed and the spine stabilized. If you would like to send cards or well wishes, mail to: Robert (Bob) Gilles, 23905 Arlington Ave, Torrance Ca 90501-6162. For those of you who have included Bob in your prayers, his family thanks you very much and he “accepts them” abundantly.

**Jack “Chief” Brammer** tells us he is healing fairly good from his motorcycle accident and his cancer treatment looks very positive. He wants everyone to know how much he appreciates their prayers, calls, emails, and thoughts. Although he wasn't able to go with RFTW his year, he said he was there in spirit, following our journey through the SitReps. He's looking forward to rejoining RFTW next year.

*We wish our friends speedy recoveries and good health hereafter. Please keep them in your prayers.*

## ► TAPS

### HAROLD SCHARFE, WWII POW



Harold Scharfe passed away on September 26, 2008. He was a beloved member of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 785 of Orange County, CA. Hal was a gifted speaker and as a member of the Freedom Committee, he visited many schools throughout Orange County lecturing on the greatest generation and of his own personal exploits.

Hal was a hero of the World War II landing at Dieppe with Canadian and American Forces. He was captured and spent the next three years as a Prisoner of War and was held by the Germans in various POW Camps. Hal captured the imagination of all

Chapter 785 members with his stories of Dieppe, his years as a POW, and of his great escapades through France after his liberation by U S Troops. Hal was also a featured guest on "War Stories" with Ollie North.

The following account by Hal is from "POW Stories" on [www.pegasusarchive.org](http://www.pegasusarchive.org).

#### **Corporal Harold G. Scharfe**

Unit :The Essex Scottish Regiment, 2nd Canadian Division.

Served : France (captured)

Army No. : A21293

POW No. :25842

Camps : Stalag VIII B/344, IID, 357

Life in Stalag VIII B as experienced by Cpl. Harold G. Scharfe, taken prisoner August 19, 1942 at Dieppe France. The camp is located at Lamsdorf Germany near Breslau, and was occupied by more than 10,000 men. Served with the Essex Scottish Regiment Sept. 6/39 - Sept. 12/45, Canadian 2nd Division.

I enlisted at 17 and father threatened to take me out of service but I convinced him to allow me to stay because I would be with those I went to school with. July 1940 arrived on Empress of Australia at Gurock, Scotland, and by rail transported to Aldershot, England. Later stationed in Brighton and other south coast locations to defend against German invasion, who were only 22 miles away in France. Later trained on the Isle of Wight as a commando and on Aug. 19, 1942 participated in one of the biggest blunders of the entire war: the Dieppe Raid. We were told that the element of surprise was the key to this raid being a success. The opposite occurred as we became the fodder for the Germans who were positioned in cliffs overlooking the beaches of Dieppe and in other strategic defensive positions. Before landing we encountered a German patrol and the defenders were advised of our presence in the English Channel. After 9 hours of German fire on an open beach with little or no cover, 907 of my buddies gave their lives and I was lucky and became the guest of Hitler's Third Reich. The next 4 days and nights were spent standing up in boxcars with little food or water and no toilet facilities. After being treated like animals and putting up with the unbearable stench we arrived at our final destination, Stalag VIII B, Lamsdorf, Germany in the Polish corridor. Oct. 8 we were tied with rope every day and eventually we were shackled with chains each day for a total of 13 months and were told we would not be treated as soldiers because we were commandos.

As I recall my arrival date was August 26, 1942. After standing up in box cars with little food or water for 4 days and nights we were glad to get on real ground and were welcomed in great style by the British Tommies who already had been prisoners since being captured at Dunkirk, France in 1940. They gave us cigarettes and food from their Red Cross parcels and after we were assigned to the Canadian compound they helped us to learn how to adjust to our new way of life.

The Germans divided the compounds of 4 double barrack rooms so that generally each nationality was put in the same compound. Each barracks was made of concrete on a concrete floor with poor lighting and a poorly planned heating system, which consisted of a huge oven fueled by coal, which was in very short supply, which meant the barrack rooms were continually cold. The Germans issued us with 1 blanket and some were very badly worn which meant that we slept in our clothes to keep warm. Our beds were 3 tier bunks made of wood and put together with bed boards to hold a straw mattress. Each room held 120 men. We were provided with 3 tables and 6 benches and the washing hands facility was between the barracks and the other building attached. Water was in very short supply so we were very careful to use water sparingly. The small area between rooms was called the ablution room and was also used to do personal laundry when water was available. Our latrine facility was a 40-holer in another building beyond the 4 barrack room double buildings. It was very primitive and the excrement was hauled away each day by a German workman with the assistance of a horse and a wagon which we referred to as the Honey wagon. It was pumped out of a large hole at the rear of the Out House.

Roll Call was done twice each day in all kinds of weather. The Germans always counted us in fives and many times we were detained for as long as 3 to 4 hours and this took place in the middle of winter and winters in Germany and Poland are very, very cold. Our day began with roll call at 6 a.m. At 8 a.m. we were served a ration of ersatz (artificial) hot tea. Many of us used the tea to shave with because we had no hot water. For 13 months we were shackled with chains by the guards prior to roll call. In good weather we would walk and exercise during the morning and at approximately 11 a.m. we were served bed board soup which did not vary very much during the year. At around 3 p.m. a ration of 4 potatoes, fish, cheese, very small ration of sausage, artificial jam, margarine and we had to divide a loaf of heavy black bread between 8 men. Thank God we had Red Cross parcels because we would not have survived on German rations alone. The Red Cross also provided us with sports equipment so that in good weather we were able to play softball, soccer, rugby football, volleyball and other activities. In the early part of my captivity I found we could survive on Red Cross parcels but later in the war when the Allies gained supremacy of the air space over Germany our help from the Red Cross dwindled because of the bombed out railroads. All of the supplies from Red Cross came from Switzerland

via rail.

Even our parcels from home as well as letters were gradually cut off. All letters were censored and any food in cans in parcels were punctured in order to avoid being used for escape purposes. Softballs and bats were cut into pieces at random to make sure a compass could not be placed inside. From a dozen we would end up with nine. The only music we heard were recordings sent to us by friends. The only time I heard the voice of a woman was on a record. We were continually hearing the voice of Lord Ha Ha over the P.A. system spouting out German propaganda. Stalag VIII B also had a tunnel completed from an end barrack room, under an in camp road and out into German guard territory under the sentry box he was in. This was in the Canadian compound.

We had an escape committee to screen prisoners to be certain they spoke German, Polish, French, or Dutch and had the proper documents. Everyone wanted to escape but once you were outside the barbed wired fence you could be treated as a spy and be shot for no reason. I am told we had 3 get back to England. It took about 9 months to build the tunnel and each Canadian in the compound contributed bed boards to shore up the sides and everyone helped to disperse dirt. Bellows were homemade to provide air while one man dug dirt. Finally the enemy discovered this great piece of engineering and did congratulate us on our efforts.

The Geneva Convention states that POWs can be made to work as long as their rank is below corporal. This includes all private soldiers. Work parties were sent out of the camp regularly but the Germans broke the Geneva rules and had men working in mines and doing many other jobs that did not qualify. Our guards were young soldiers recuperating from wounds. Older more understanding veterans of the great depression, who knew Adolph was losing but had to keep silent and a group of very arrogant S.S. troops. The head guard was nicknamed Spitfire because he was very fast and he appeared to be of Mongolian origin and had no decorations on his chest but he was very tough on us and did not bend much.

Because of a shortage of fuel to cook with, it was necessary to have a blower. It was constructed of flattened tin cans from the Red Cross parcel. A firepot was made of screen to hold the fuel. A wooden wheel was made and attached to a string and when it was turned it would increase the air flow and in the end conserve fuel. So as long as the wheel is turning very little fuel is required to have a successful brew. This was our only means of cooking and it worked wonders. Someone somewhere in the camp had a radio and we got the news regularly at lunchtime when the guard took a break for his lunch. It was BBC and not the German version, which was about 2 weeks behind the truth. We also had our own school, theatre, band, hospital and library. Even though Jews and Arabs were in the same regiments in the British Army they would fight one another and in some instances would be found stabbed to death.

Once a month we were marched to a shower building and were allowed about a 10 minute shower while the bed bugs and lice were being gassed with cyanide.

The medium of exchange was cigarettes and the German soldier was getting a ration of 3 per day. Sometimes from home or the Red Cross we might have as many as 200 cigarettes. Now we have the power to barter with the guards and because I took the trouble to learn a little German I was the one who did the negotiating. We would sometimes pay 10 cigs for a loaf of bread. In any case all items had a value in cigarettes and supply and demand determined the true values of everything. German guard dogs were brought into the compounds each evening to sniff around before (Lights Out). Eventually the Germans stopped bringing the dogs in because one of our POW's slipped a small piece of chocolate to the dog and from then on he became of no value because he was looking for more chocolate. 3 items in Germany were practically non existent during WWII. They were cigarettes, coffee, and chocolate.

My War Log Diary tells me the chains were no longer put on us as of Nov.22/43 and I was moved to Stalag IID near Stettin, Feb.25/44 and then later moved to Stalag 357, Torun, Poland and from Poland I was on a forced Death March for 10 weeks in the latter stages of the war, all the way to a camp near Hannover.

En route we were constantly strafed by our own airmen who did not know we were POWs. On May 2 1945, thanks to both American and British troops, I became a free man and it was time to get even with those who treated us badly. Instead of being assisted back to freedom by Allied troops my buddy Whit Coulter and I decided to take a car from the German doctor who was attached to the defeated division and we headed for the nearest autobahn and were soon caught going too fast by American MP's. Once we convinced them that we were ex-POWs they provided us with maps, food, and gasoline. Our intention was to sell the car in Belgium to have party money, but the American authorities had other ideas and they took the car from us and did get us proper transportation by truck to Brussels where we spent 7 days in a dream of freedom and were eventually picked up by our own Military police for being AWOL. After 30 days in hospital in England, I boarded the Queen Mary and arrived in New York Harbour to a great welcome on July 12, 1945. The next phase of this adventure was the longest train ride of my life but when it ended the girl I left behind me was there waiting at the station to greet me. Edith and I were married the following year in February and have since enjoyed 2 wonderful sons, Larry and Raymond, as well as 8 grandchildren. In Feb/2006 we will be married 60 years and I might add that we have never had a cross word.

In conclusion, being a POW is an embarrassing experience and you are always being threatened with the uncertainties and you know the end is going to come sometime and you hope that it will end in your favour. Every day I am reminded how precious freedom is and am also reminded that it is not free. My motto is "Every Day Is A Bonus."

Harold Scharfe, POW No.25842

**(CNN)**—James Hoyt delivered mail in rural Iowa for more than 30 years. Yet Hoyt had long kept a secret from most of those who knew him best: He was one of the four U.S. soldiers to first see Germany's Buchenwald concentration camp.

Hoyt died August 11, 2008 at his home in Oxford, Iowa, a town of about 700 people where he had lived his entire life. He was 83. His funeral was Thursday at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Oxford, with about 100 people in attendance. The Rev. Edmond Dunn officiated and recalled time he spent with Hoyt and his wife.

"I used to go over to have lunch with Doris and Jim, and I would sit across from Jim at the kitchen table and think, 'Before me is a true American hero,' " he said.

Hoyt had rarely spoken about that day in 1945, but he recently opened up to a journalist.

"There were thousands of bodies piled high. I saw hearts that had been taken from live people in medical experiments," Hoyt told author Stephen Bloom in a soon-to-be-published book called "The Oxford Project."

"They said a wife of one of the SS officers—they called her the Bitch of Buchenwald—saw a tattoo she liked on the arm of a prisoner, and had the skin made into a lampshade. I saw that."

Pete Geren, the secretary of the U.S. Army, said the sacrifice Hoyt made for his country so many years ago should never be forgotten.

"It's important that we don't allow ourselves to lose him," Geren told CNN by phone. "It's the memory of heroes like James Hoyt and the memories of what they've done that we must ensure that we keep alive and share with the current generation and future generations.



"Mr. Hoyt, as a young man, saw unspeakable horrors when he was one of the soldiers to discover the Buchenwald concentration camp, and those are experiences as a country and a world we can never forget.

"You think back on a young man 19 years old and to have the experience that he had," Geren said, his voice dissolving before ever finishing his thought.

The discovery of Buchenwald on April 11, 1945 began the liberation of more than 21,000 prisoners from one of the largest Nazi concentration camps of World War II. The official U.S. military account of the liberation called the camp "a symbol of the chill-blooded cruelty of the German Nazi state," where thousands of political prisoners were starved and "others were burned, beaten, hung and shot to death."

"There is reason to believe that the prompt arrival of the 6th Armored Division ... on the scene saved many hundreds and perhaps thousands of lives," it said.

As a private first class in the U.S. Army, Hoyt was just 19 when he and his three comrades—Capt. Frederic Keffer, Tech. Sgt. Herbert Gottschalk and Sgt. Harry Ward—found Buchenwald in a well-hidden wooded area of eastern Germany. Hoyt was driving their M8 armored vehicle.

## ► WORTH READING/VIEWING:

The mission of the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University is to support and encourage research and education regarding all aspects of the American Vietnam experience; promoting a greater understanding of this experience and the peoples and cultures of Southeast Asia. Its functions are threefold: collection and preservation of pertinent source material; education through exhibits, classroom instruction, educational programs, and publications; and encouragement of scholarly research through exchanges, publishing of noteworthy research, symposia, and financial support.

<http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/index.php>

Flag in the Pawnshop

<http://www.whatkindofworldyouwant.com/videos/view/id/706270>

He's Coming Home

<http://www.trenna.com/army.html>

HAVE YOU HEARD?: Harold was an old Retired Navy Chief Engineman. He was sick and was in the VA hospital. There was this one young nurse that just drove him crazy. Every time she came in, she would talk to him like he was a little child. She would say in a patronizing tone of voice, "And how are we doing this morning, or are we ready for our bath, or are we hungry?"

Harold had had enough of this particular nurse. One day, Harold had received breakfast, and pulled the apple juice off his breakfast tray, and put it on his bed side stand. He had just been given a urine bottle to fill for testing. So.....you know where the juice went.

Well, the nurse came in a little later and picked up the urine bottle. She looks at it. "My, but it seems we are a little cloudy today....." At this, the Chief snatched the bottle out of her hand, pops off the top, and drinks it down, saying, "Well, I'll run it through again, and maybe I can filter it better this time." The nurse fainted..... Harold just smiled.....Typical Chief!

## ► CLOSING THOUGHTS

*This was written by a friend of mine, Sisto Sandoval, Chaplain for VVA Chapter 975 in Mohave County, AZ. He offered the prayer during the ceremonies when the Wounded Warriors visited Lake Havasu City in September. Sisto is a gentle soul and a gifted poet who writes from the heart. He was very moved by the Wounded Warriors and wanted to let them know how much their visit meant to him.*

*Judy*

### TEARS IN MY SOUL

I glanced at the sunset as it brought darkness. The sun hid behind the lake and entered the mountain's shadows. I waited patiently for the bus to arrive carrying the Wounded Warriors. As the bus entered the parking lot I felt my heart beat faster. In the darkness I saw shadows of movement that grasped my soul. Boys who became men and fate had brought us together. I was there to honor the brave men who made the sacrifices for my freedom, escorting them to their destination. I stood proudly waving my flag and shouting, "welcome home soldier and thank you for your service."

The day ended, my heart glad, my soul fulfilled with a portion of my mission accomplished. I still needed to hold my brothers and thank them personally.

A new day, a new memory, I went to the welcome home for our Wounded Warriors. I prayed for them. At the end of the ceremony I gathered my strength and walked toward my brothers. I began thanking them for their service. Without limbs, yet hearts full of compassion, they acknowledge my presence. I went to one soldier, extended my hand, and before I could open my mouth he spoke. "I don't want your hand, give me a hug." I turned to another soldier who stood on legs of metal, I said, Thank you...and again I was interrupted, "No, you're my hero," was spoken, my eyes filled with tears. How could I be this soldier's hero when he had given so much for my freedom? He continued to honor me by saying, "Welcome Home, you never got a true welcome home. Our country closed its doors on you and all Vietnam Veterans. You are the heroes; we have gotten our welcome home—you haven't. With that he hugged me and said "Thank you for your service."

I felt my face flush, my eyes filled with tears, and my heart full of emotions that he understood me. He saw my deep inner hurt, my fears, and my solitude and opened his heart for me. He brought back the memory of my coming home to protesters who threw rotten tomatoes and raw eggs at me. My welcome home was abusive. My country's educated elite from Berkley University stood over me and broke my spirit. I hid in my solitude and loneliness, covered my face . . . until today.

Today a soldier saw me as his hero and gave me back my pride. Thank you Wounded Warriors, thank you for your compassion. I was there to help you heal; but you gave me the healing, and I thank you. May God bless you and heal your wounds, for your heart and soul are comforting. You have given me the perfumes of gardens once again. You have placed the colors of a rainbow in perfect order; you have entered into my tattered heart and brought forth the true spirit of being an American. Thank you. And thank you for your service; you will never be forgotten.

May God keep each of our Wounded Warriors ever so close to His loving heart.

Sisto Sandoval  
Vietnam Veteran (1968-69) TET Survivor  
Secretary/Chaplain VVA 975  
Sept. 24, 2008

## *You Are Not Forgotten*



### **TO SUBSCRIBE TO A MAILED COPY OF THE NEWSLETTER:**

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The RFTW newsletter is published in January, April, July, and October. If you would like to have printed copies of the newsletter mailed to you, a one-year subscription is \$10, which covers the cost of printing and mailing. If you subscribe or renew by October 31 you will receive all four issues for that year. If you renew between October 31 and January 1, your subscription will begin with the January issue of the next year.

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Please mail this form with your check or money order (made payable to Run For The Wall) to Judy Lacey, 4249 Comstock Drive, Lake Havasu City, AZ 86406.

## **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)**