



RUN FOR THE WALL

Quarterly Newsletter

“We Ride For Those Who Can’t”

July 2011

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THE EDITOR’S NOTES



Although there are still a few stragglers making their way home from RFTW 2011 to various parts of America, most of us are home safely now—with still more memories to add to the years before.

I don’t know if anyone kept count, but it seemed there were more FNGs this year than ever before. And that’s a good thing, because FNGs are the lifeblood of Run For The Wall. We need leaders with experience, and I’m thankful for our many leaders who give so much of themselves every year to make sure every veteran who travels on our journey finds healing. But without FNGs, RFTW would not be able to fulfil one of its purposes.

Healing, after all, is one of the main purposes of RFTW. Our veterans who have served our country so well are changed when they come home. It’s not possible to be in war and not be changed. And those of our men and women who served in Vietnam were inarguably changed forever by the way they were treated when they returned. RFTW seeks to raise those veterans up, to help them be, not ashamed, but proud of their service. As long as there is one veteran who has not healed, RFTW will continue. And as long as there is one POW, KIA, or MIA who has not been brought home, RFTW will continue.

Please be sure to read the stories in this issue about some of this year's FNGs' experiences.

Judy "Velcro" Lacey

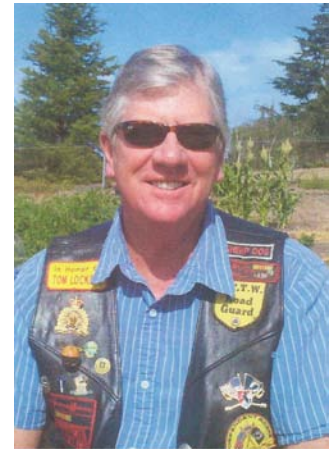
*Freedom is never free. It is paid for with the blood of the brave.
It is paid for with the tears of their loved ones. It is up to us to
preserve and defend that which they have paid so dearly for.*

► **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Hello folks!

It is truly an honor to be the 2011-2012 President of the RFTW Board of Directors. Our board is made up of a group of individuals that I have the highest respect for. We are all dedicated to the RFTW and in making our runs, Central & Southern, the best they can be for the riders.

I, like many of you, find myself standing in my garage each year around March all ready to go. The Run for the Wall is a vital part of many of our rider's lives. The healing and support provided to the participants each year is very real and very emotional. Those of you who have experienced the magic of RFTW, as well as our future riders, owe a debt of gratitude to the thousands of people each year across America who work to make our passage through their towns an unforgettable experience.



I think the work by all the volunteers on every level is amazing. Consider all of the meals prepared; the tables and chairs being set up; ceremonies in dozens of locations on two routes thru approximately 22 states, all set up by volunteers. Each route has more than 120 volunteers who take on specific route responsibilities to make our mission a success for all of us. For 23 years our history and mission remains the same and every year more riders experience that amazing mission.

Every year of my 12 years has had for me a specific event or individual who made that run a new and important personal experience. It can be as simple as being at the Wall and giving a tourist who is having a hard time a hug, a welcome home and a pin. That was my moment this last year. Other years it has been the heroes I have met and can call my friends. Every year I am able to honor friends gone now but still riding at my side.

The Run for the Wall is not easy. We ride long days in tough conditions. We deal with our emotions. We must ride well so as not to endanger ourselves or others. This takes practice and instruction. I encourage all riders, regardless of years of riding experience, to take a riding course. These courses really tune up your skills and they are actually fun!!

Next year's Run is already shaping up to be great. The new coordinators are hard at work, the Board of Directors is on task and we are focused on RFTW 2012.

Please try to attend the upcoming 1st Annual RFTW Reunion in Tulsa, OK. It would be great to have as many riders as possible attend and we are hoping some of our East Coast RFTW family will be there too. Other get-togethers are coming up in Angel Fire, NM and Kerrville, TX. Please make your reservations so you can join in these reunions.

Again, I thank you for your support of RFTW. It's the best 20 bucks you'll ever spend. If you would like to contact me please feel free to call or email. I am sincerely honored to be this year's President of the Board of Directors.

► 2011-2012 RFTW BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ross "Compass" Currie: President

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I have been a member of the Run For The Wall family since 2000. In 2003 I became a pacesetter. This was the first year the Central Route developed the platoon formation. The following year I became a Road Guard and have been a Road Guard for 8 years. I have been on the advance Road Guard team for 5 years. This will be my 12th year "All the Way".

I enlisted in the US Army in 1970 with a draft lottery number of 1! I went through basic training at Fort Ord, CA, took Advanced Infantry Training in Fort Polk, LA, went through Non-Commissioned Officer's School in Fort Benning, GA (School of the Americas), and was given an MOS of 11 Foxtrot Long Range Recon, Operations & Intelligence. I was sent to Viet Nam in 1971 and received an early out in May, 1972.

My wife Joanne & I operate a café in Pismo Beach, CA and one in San Luis Obispo, CA called Splash Café. We have owned and operated these cafes for 20 years. We have a daughter, Christina, who is a RN and is married to a local police officer.

Ted "Oscarbear" Riedel: VP/Chairman of the Board

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Hello, my name is Ted "Oscarbear" Riedel. 2012 will be my tenth Run. I started in 2003 and was only going to do it one time, but after the first year I was hooked and have been doing it every year since. I have been all the way on both the Central and Southern routes, just to be able to say I did them both and I did enjoy each route. I have been a road guard, led the bike and trailers, road captain for the advance team, and then the Advance Team Leader for the Southern Route.

I was in the military from 1969 to 1978 and stationed in Nam in 1971. After that I spent time in Louisiana, Ohio, and three years in England.

I have made many friends on the run over the years and yes we are just one big family regardless of which route we take.

I look forward to serving all the members of the run and seeing my friends and making new ones.

John "Hardcharger" Barker: Secretary/Treasurer

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I'm retired as an attorney. I built and ran California's largest criminal defense firm. I also taught criminal law at police academy and law school. I was in law enforcement for 10 years before becoming an attorney. I also taught SCUBA, did search and rescue, and ran a cattle and horse ranch.

I started with RFTW in 2007 with my wife. We each rode all the way SR. Since then I have served as Tail Gunner, and two years as Platoon Leader. My wife has served as chase truck driver and now serves as head chase truck driver and chase team coordinator, all on the SR.

I joined the US Marines in 1965 and was stationed at Camp Pendleton and then at Marine Barracks NAS Alameda, mainly as military police. I was honorably discharged in March 1969 and went into Alameda County Sheriff's Department during the Berkley riots.



I'm married to Dee "Shortstack" Barker, and we have six kids, I have no idea how many grand kids, and one great grandchild. We still run horses.

Ray "Too Tall" McDowell: Director of Risk Management/Purchasing

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I was born in Snyder, Texas, August 23, 1947, and moved to Midland, Texas, and then to Odessa, Texas and graduated Permian High School in 1966. I attended Odessa College before entering the Army in 1967 where I served in the 572nd Combat Engineers as a heavy equipment operator and worked with explosives, proudly serving in Vietnam from 1968-69.

When I returned from Nam, I was assigned to Ft. Hood in Killeen, TX until I was discharged from the Army as an E-5. Odessa has always been my home even though I spent many years away working in the oilfield. In 1991, I married Kay "Too Small" McDowell. We have a blended family of six children and twelve grandchildren. In 2004 we started our own business, Ray's Equipment, LLC.

Community Organizations:

Permian Basin Fair & Exposition. Past President, Executive Director

Odessa Chuck Wagon Gang

Heritage Holiday Lighted Christmas Parade

CrossRoads Fellowship Church - Member

In 2004 we did RUN For The Wall for the first time and were hooked. We have made the Run every year since. I have served as Tail Gunner, Asst. Platoon Leader, Platoon Leader for three years, Asst. Route Coordinator in 2009 and Southern Route Coordinator in 2010.

This mission is very close to my heart and we will continue to work and do what we can to help it grow and become an even safer ride and to spread the word that we will "NEVER FORGET." *We all ride for those who can't.*

Greatest Honor: Laying a wreath at the TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER May 23, 2009

Daryl "Top" Neil: Director of Public Relations/Communications

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I am a retired Army First Sergeant with 22 years of military service. I served with the 25th Infantry Division and the USACIDC. I have one daughter who is an Elementary Education teacher. For recreation, I enjoy motorcycling, ocean cruising, snow skiing, motorcycling, fishing, scuba diving and oops, did I mention motorcycling!

I have been involved with Run for The Wall for the past six years. In that time I have served in numerous positions, to include, Tail Gunner, Assistant Platoon Leader, Platoon Leader, Road Guard, and Assistant State Coordinator. I firmly believe in the Run for the Wall Mission Statement and support is wholeheartedly. I am honored to serve you on the Board of Directors.



Daryl "Top" Neil

American By Birth, Biker By Choice, Patriot Forever!

Harry "Attitude" Steelman: Director of Operations and Training

San Juan Capistrano

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I joined the Army in March of 1968 after receiving a "less than honorable" recommendation to terminate my educational endeavors at the University of Mississippi. Once in basic training, having two years of college studies under my belt (successful or not), I was invited to attend OCS with instructions to choose three potential branch assignments, two of which had to be combat arms. And, oh by the way, since I wear glasses, one of them must be Infantry. RIGHT! After graduation from OCS, which I was assured was a "gift" because I was in no way "qualified to be a leader," I served almost a year stateside as a senior instructor on the machine gun range at Ft. Benning. In

March of 1970 I was on my way across the Pacific. Initially assigned as an Assistant Mobile Advisory Team Leader (MAT), I was located in Minh Duc District of Vinh Long Province in IV Corps for about six months. I was then assigned to my own team in Vinh Long District and worked out of the Province Capital for the remainder of my tour. My tour was a relatively quiet one and I was lucky enough to come home with all my body parts and no holes. I was honorably discharged from the military in April of 1971

Since 1971 I have earned a degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Delaware (my home state) and pursued a career in Railroad Engineering. I first went to work for the Union Pacific Railroad in Omaha NE and worked my way up the ladder in various capacities and in various locations until deciding to leave the RR and do some consultant work in California, building Light Rail Systems in several major cities in the West. In 2005 I returned to the "real railroad" world in accepting a position as Division Engineer with Amtrak, a position that I still hold. In this capacity I have a staff of about a dozen engineers and two dozen craft employees located up and down the west coast looking after and improving the infrastructure that is used by Amtrak employees and riders west of the Rocky Mountains.

2012 will be my sixth year with RFTW and again I will go All the Way. Riding as an FNG on the Central route in 2007 I was “hooked” early on and volunteered to be an APL in 2008. In 2009 I was privileged to ride in the “Six Pack” to learn how the pack operates from a more visible vantage point. In 2010 Arnie offered me the CR Assistant Route Coordinator’s position and then I was honored to be asked to lead the Central Route to the Wall last year. This year the blessings continue as I will be serving on the Board of Directors as the Director of Training and Operation.

We, as Americans, have one great big beautiful country at our disposal and, while I prefer to experience it from the saddle of my HD, I also enjoy the view from the upper level of one of our lounge cars. Try it sometime!

Dave “Wahoo” Hampton: Director of Merchandise

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I was born and raised in Norman, OK and have been an Okie all my life. I currently live in Muskogee. After graduating from Central State University, Edmond, OK, I entered into private business as an owner-operator for over 30 years in the Funeral Industry. Having sold my business in 2010, I now have time to fully enjoy my off time. Watching baseball, basketball, and football are part of my highlights as well as spending time watching the cork on the end of a fishing line disappear. All of that happens as soon as I get off my bike.



I am a member of the Choctaw Indian Nation of Oklahoma. Up to the time I enlisted in the US Navy, almost all of the men in my family and clan had served with different branches of the US Armed Services. My father was an Air Force veteran and my Grandfather, Ben Hampton, was a code talker with the US Army in WWI. In November of 2010, he and all the code talkers were awarded the DRUM Award for Patriotism by the US Government. I am proud of the heritage my family has with our military.

I proudly enlisted in the US Navy to follow the standard set by my father and grandfather, and became a Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class serving independently at various overseas stations and working hand in hand with the fleet Marines. Upon my honorable discharge in 1976, I could not have been prouder than any person in the world for serving with some of the finest and bravest men in the world. And it is with that pride that I approach my service with the RFTW. With RFTW, I have ridden with some of the most honorable men and women our country has to offer and I look forward to each May, rejoining all my brothers and sisters of the RFTW.

It is a pleasure to serve the riders and participants of RFTW as a member of the Board of Directors beginning in the year 2011. I have been with RFTW for seven years and have served in various leadership roles, including stints as the Staging Team leader, the Advance Team leader in 2011, and the leader designate for the Advance Team in 2012. Our mission statement for RFTW is never taken lightly, and daily I will “Never Forget.”

► **2011 RFTW**

THANK YOU FROM CR COORDINATOR

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Well, by now I would suppose that most everyone has returned home, safely I trust. Some may have taken an extended vacation and may still be on the road. We got home on Tuesday evening and were back at work on

Wednesday. The bike got in on Thursday evening. So, like most everyone else, we spent the weekend unpacking, cleaning up the vehicles and generally relaxing and "decompressing." Now it's time to tie up the loose ends from this year and get to work on the planning for next year.

What an experience this year was! I can never express how much of an honor it was to lead you-all across our great nation on the Central Route. Thank you for the opportunity and even more, Thank you for following me and not losing faith in the Run. We didn't make it easy. Rain, Fog, Sleet, Snow, Hail – and that was just the first day! The next day was a little better, some rain and snow – OK we got drenched, but not until we were parked. We really couldn't put a check in the "Sunshine" box until day three and that started out on a chilly note in Angel Fire. From there we encountered a little wind, a freight train just outside of Limon, CO and then proceeded to push a major storm half-way across the state of Colorado. That night tragedy struck Joplin, MO, but we were safe and sound a few hundred miles away. Nevertheless, the threat of tornadoes was very real as we continued eastward into tornado country. Then the beautiful state of West Virginia hit us with rain that seemed like riding through a waterfall and hail the size of ping-pong balls. Luckily most riders were in for the evening, but some adventurous souls did get caught. And speaking of adventure, I still am embarrassed by the wrong turn that has come to be known as the "Topeka Turn Around." Apologies to all for the detour, but we did avoid a rainstorm at our lunch stop because we were late in arriving.

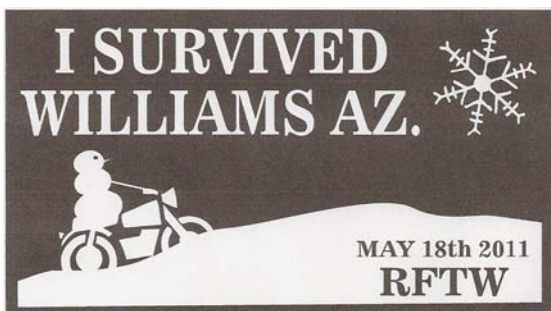
I want to thank each and every one of you for a job very well done, indeed. I couldn't have asked, or even dreamed, of a more dedicated, committed, hard working and understanding group of people with which to work. You all are just wonderful folks. All in all I believe that this year's Run was rather successful. Our Road Guards, without a doubt, accomplished a remarkable feat, given all of the above and more, to ensure that everyone reached their planned destination safe and sound. Only two accidents and one minor injury will stand as evidence of that. Thank you Rocket and the RG Team!

That, my brothers and sisters, describes what the Run did for me this year. That's why I do this. The commitment that I have made is to you all and I will honor it until the day that I die. Once again, THANK YOU for letting me lead you. THANK YOU for following me through thick and thin.

Now as I prepare to work with my successor, I will need some feedback from you all. I encourage everyone to either fill out the "After Action Report" from the website or otherwise drop me an email (rftwattitude@gmail.com) with your thoughts on what we did right and what we need to do to improve the experience for those that follow. Good and/or bad – we need to know!

Enough for now, take care and stay well!

Thanks again!
Harry "Attitude" Steelman



NEW PATCHES FOR CENTRAL ROUTE

Unusual circumstances on the Central Route in this year's RFTW led to the creation of two new patches.

"I Survived Williams" – Black/white, with snowman riding a motorcycle. CR encountered snow in Williams, AZ for the first time in RFTW's history. Not just a light dusting of snow, but two inches of it and fresh snowfall during the overnight stay. You can

order the patch from Doug Hunt, P.O. Box 512, Washington, Utah 84780. The cost is \$10. Make check payable to Doug Hunt.

“Topeka Turnaround” – While in Topeka, Kansas, a wrong turn was made and the pack ended up having to make a U-Turn. The rear end of the pack waved to the bikes riding by, thinking it was another large motorcycle group, before they realized it was the front end of RFTW. Someone had a “Topeka Turnaround” patch made for CR Coordinator Harry “Attitude” Steelman, and word has it that there will be more patches made for those who participated in the “Turnaround.”

There was much joking on the RFTW website Forum. Legion Rider said, “I think it should become a regular part of the CR. Every year. It was fun seeing the front and back of the pack at the same time. The only problem is, can they figure out how they did it?” Dadbo denied there was a “Turnaround”—just the opportunity for “Attitude to do 30 minutes more side-by-side riding training for the pack before heading east.”

GROUP PHOTO IN D.C.



Copies of the RFTW 2011 group photo in Washington D.C. is now available from KZ Ric. Please use the below form to order a copy. It takes 4 to 6 weeks for shipment.

2011 Group Photos by "KZ" Ric White

(One size only: 12"x 25")

\$15 each plus \$5 for S&H = \$20

(Up to 3 photos per shipping tube; for more than 3,
add an extra \$5 for shipping.)

Name or Initials of group: RUN FOR THE WALL Date: _____

How many: _____ Total cost: \$ _____

Please mail to:

Name _____

Address _____

City, State & Zip _____

Email or phone (In case of problems) _____

Method of payment: CASH (in person), Personal check, or U.S. Postal Money Order

Payable to: Ric White and mail to: P.O. Box 180789, Dallas, TX 75218

703-445-8538 or pikzr@aol.com



PLEASE ALLOW 4 TO 6 WEEKS FOR
DELIVERY

God Bless America



► FNG STORIES

AN FNG'S EXPERIENCE RIDING MISSING MAN

By Jim "Commo Dog" Olenski

On May 22, 1997 my father died from Agent Orange. One of my missions this year was to take some items of his to The Wall. I applied for a Missing Man Formation slot by sending Pocket an email explaining that my father had died at age 57 due to Agent Orange. I was given a leg on the SR. I was to ride the MMF on Sunday, May 22, the same day that my father had died fourteen years previous.

I joined up in Grand Prairie and was met by Ben Garganus. I had first talked to his wife Cynthia about my situation and she is the one who put me in contact with Della "Pocket" Morris. Ben welcomed me in a way that only someone from RFTW can. I instantly knew he was the real deal, he got it and he cared just as his wife had on the phone and email.

Sunday comes and I ride the MMF formation from Terrell to Longview. I know that the MMF people ride this the entire way but my turn was not just another number. Every one of them genuinely cared. The MMF Chaplain asked if I would like to pray before we started and we did. We prayed about fathers and he got choked up. Again, he got it and he cared as did Pocket and everyone else. Ben got to ride in the front right spot. It was nice to share this with him after all he and his wife had done for me.

We rolled out of Terrell and my wife and six of my grandkids and all but one of my kids and their spouses are on the side of I-20 to support me. To ride beside my father was very healing in so many ways. We get to Longview and I fuel the bike. It does not start! Before I know what has happened my bike is stripped and loaded on a chase trailer and no one seems to be put out by the guy with the broke bike, they are simply helping a brother and glad to do it.

We get to Monroe and the HD dealer there was pretty much useless. They tell me I need a battery and they do not even install it. After riding back to the hotel the engine light comes on. The dealership does not open until 9 in the morning, That is where I will be. RFTW rolls out and I am standing on the side of I-30 saluting them and proud to do so. I will get repaired shortly and catch up. NOT. Monroe HD is too busy to help me. I call Jackson HD and they tell me what to do so that I can limp into them. I do it and ride like the wind to get to Jackson. I think I know how to get there but no need to worry as I had made good time and there, like angels, are still Road Guards flagging me to turn here and turn there. (Other than my wife, the most beautiful angels I have ever seen!) I get caught in the traffic that has been blocked for RFTW and the bike runs out of electric juice about half a mile from the exit. Not one minute later here comes two angels, aka Road Guards, and again my bike is stripped and loaded into a different chase trailer. Again, no one is frustrated, just glad to help a brother in need.

My stator was bad and my bike was not charging. To say that this was not frustrating for me would not be telling the truth. However, receiving the treatment that I did, being helped by strangers that were in fact my family was an experience I would not have passed up. Looking back, my bike could have quit at any time. It could have not started the fuel stop prior to it breaking down which would have prevented me from riding with my Father. As it did a half mile from the HD dealer in Jackson, it could have broken down on the road while I was riding with my Father. When it did finally break down, my family was there to pick me up and take care of me.

I finally get into the Jackson HD shop and after the get my bike on the rack and get things underway I go inside and sit down to eat. The presentations and speeches were over and Raven comes up and asks how things are going and I explain. She tells me that if my bike is not ready when the pack rolls that she would stay with me and ride with me to Meridian when my bike is finished. My family, how awesome they are.

The entire experience was more than I could have hoped for. I had several tough issues that used to kick my behind. "We strive to maintain a safe, supportive and private atmosphere in which all participants can reflect and heal on their journey to the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. in the hope that they can return home to a new beginning." Mission accomplished RFTW. Thank you and ... I love all of you.

RUN FOR THE WALL 2011, CENTRAL ROUTE

By Don Burns, Folsom, CA

How far????! All the way!!! My name is Don Burns, USN Vietnam Vet, 69-73, serving 2 tours in 70 and 71. I was an "FNG" this year and wanted to thank all the "Brothers and Sisters" that I had the privilege of meeting on this year's Run For the Wall. It's the people like you that make me proud to be an American, proud to have served my country, and have given me something in my heart that can never be explained unless you have experienced what I did this year, as I'm sure those who have returned, year after year, also know.

To be involved with a mission with such importance meant a lot me. To have the opportunity to visit childhood and high school friends at "The Wall," who "gave their all" in Vietnam, was more moving than I could have ever imagined. Nothing seemed that important back in the late 60's and early 70's as we would hear of those who joined or were drafted. It was the way it was. Even when we got home, it was like we moved on with our lives

and were sorry to hear that Marshall, Larry, and Jon didn't make it back. Now after all these years it seems so very important to me. Personal feelings I cannot explain,

Thank you Vets and supporters across the country. It's so good to see America still has patriots and supporters who realize "Freedom isn't Free." Thank you all who "welcomed me home," Thank you Ed "Hound Dog" Hocking for posting a run to the run. You made me commit and watched out for me from day one until I got back home. Thank you, Dave "Trunks" Gladwill and Leslie Gladwill, for your friendship and guidance. The first day, as we rode to LA together and throughout the entire trip, you were there for me. Thank you, Mike and Delores McDole, "Tanker" and "Girlfriend." You two made me a part of your "family" when I got off my bike after arriving at Rancho Cucamonga. You kept track of me on a daily basis and helped me understand truly why I was there. Tanker, you and Trunks understood what I was feeling about myself, my personal guilt, thinking I did not give enough, and the friendship and brotherhood that you Tanker, gave to me, I will never forget. Thank you, Roger "Pops" Hagerman, for your leadership of Platoon #2. Thank you for your friendship to me and others who looked up to you. Thank you, Ray "Chief" Chan, you and Ed always kept track of me. Thank you, Jay and all who rode with me across country; you will always be brothers and sisters. Thank you, Harry "Attitude" Steelman for your leadership and guidance taking us across country. I am proud to have met you, and got to know you as part of the Browning clan in West Virginia. Last, but not least, I would like to thank all the RFTW crews that made it possible for us to cross our beautiful country.

No longer an FNG, and having "survived" Williams, AZ, I am looking forward to next year's run. Whatever I can do to welcome home our new Vets, raise awareness of all POW/MIA, and honor all who didn't come home, I will do.

Thank you RFTW 2011.

ANOTHER FNG STORY

By Gary C ("LegionRider") (*from the Forum*)

So you wake up the morning of your 60th birthday and for some reason this thing pops into your mind, time is running out and its time to go to the Wall. How are you going to get there? So you jump on the Internet and see if any groups do trips to the Wall. You discover a site called Run ForThe Wall. Interesting. So after doing a lot of reading you decide this is how you have to go. Next step, since you sold your bike many many years ago, is to head to the Harley dealer. Mission accomplished. Riding out on a Super Glide. Being a member of the American Legion you join some of their Riders. Take some trips and soon discover you need a bigger bike (It was a rear end thing—need a bigger seat). Back to the dealer. Upgrade to an Ultra Classic. Perfect. Now it's October 2010 and time to start planning for the RFTW.

When I joined the Army in 68 several of my high school buddies also joined. One of them was Gregory Vogler. When he joined he wanted to be a Helicopter Mechanic and tried to talk me into doing the same. I took another path and went to Track School. Greg left for Nam about four weeks before I did (I was on leave). He was there about three weeks when he was KIA. Man, what was I heading for. So time passes quickly, I get back and out of the service. Life happens and before long it's your 60th birthday and you never made it to the Wall.

So I started communicating with some of the folks on the RFTW website. Before long I find out I am going to be an FNG. I was one of those when I got to Nam and I made it back so it should not be too bad. I talk to more people and get hooked up for the Missing Man Formation (thanks, Tom Pogue) riding in memory of Greg. Here is where some of the tears start, damn. Then some guy named Sidewalk says he can make me some Purple Heart Patches with Greg's name and date. He failed to tell me just how awesome they would look. So they arrive and I know they will be left at the Wall.

More reading on the website and I soon discover some folks that are going to ride from Louisville KY to Junction City KS to meet up with the Central Route folks coming from RC. A few emails later and they agree to stop in St Louis and pick me up on the way to Junction City. Turns out to be one of the best decisions I ever made. These people are the real deal. In Junction City we watch the Pack arrive. I get the feeling this RFTW thing is going to be a true life-changing experience. We get signed up. Hugs all around. Now, I have never been the hugger type but I quickly see this is going to have to change. It does. Luck is on my side and I get in the same platoon with what I now call the Kentucky Crew. So we are all set for the RFTW. Meet many more great people who all are truly sincere. The stops at the VA hospitals are just totally moving experiences. I have to tell you it is really, really hard to give one of the Flag Stars to a Vet there and read the little passage and not get emotional.

So we get to Mt. Vernon and its time to ride in the MMF. I find Tom "Bones" Pogue and get ready. Well, I thought I was ready. Riding this position is a little more than I bargained for. But Tom and his group helped me make it. What an honor. Tom asked me if I had any contact with Greg's family. I told him that I had not in the last 40 years. His advice was that when I get back home I try to contact them. Well, life is strange. I am the Athletic Director for my Legion Post and last week I was entering the Roster for our Legion Baseball teams. One of the names on the freshman team was Drew Vogler. Since the last name was the same as my buddy Greg I thought they might be related. I went to a game two days ago and talked to Drew. It turns out his dad was Greg's brother. His dad was only one year old when Greg died in Viet Nam. I asked Drew if his dad was OK with it to give me a call and that I would like to tell him about the RFTW and the ride in Greg's Honor. Hope I get a call.

Then we get to Rainelle WV. I think I left a part of my heart there. Now I have done a lot in my life but I have never had a kid ask me to sign their shirt. Yep, I WILL be going back there.

Now I am really starting to wonder what it's going to be like when we get to DC. As emotionally moving as it has been so far, will I be able handle it? Then I remember that I am with a group of people who get it, have done it before, and will not let me fail. On to DC.

We get to DC and luck is still on my side. I am going to get to ride into Arlington. If you have done it you know the feeling. If you have not, I hope some day you get the chance. On my walk up to the Tomb of the Unknown I happened to be walking behind a Vet who was a double amputee, a true hero. The most moving thing was that nobody and I mean nobody tried to walk around him. I was truly honored to walk behind him all the way to the top.

Then a quick ride over to the Lincoln Memorial. Seeing the steps full with the RFTW group was special. People from every part of the country and even some from outside the USA was really special. Then the walk to the Wall. I am still trying to put those thoughts together. Don't think I can even describe the feelings. I will just say that I completed my mission and left some things at the Wall. Guess I will have to go back next year and see if they are still there.

A special Thanks to "Girlfriend" for flipping my FNG Pin over when we got to the Wall.

A BIG thanks to the people who organized this Run. The Road Guards, Fuel Crews, Staging Crews, Registration Team, Support Teams do an unbelievable job in getting us there safe. Thanks to all of you.

A special Thanks to the folks in the First Platoon. Mike "Tanker" McDole, our Platoon leader, awesome job. His wife Delores "Girlfriend" thanks again. And the Kentucky Crew Lyle, Lee, Nic, Craig, Dana, Jim, Shannon, Jeff, and of course Melba. Thanks for treating someone you never met before like family. The Run ForThe Wall people are truly like family. I rode most of the way home with these guys. We stopped at Dano's in West Virginia and had a really great dinner and breakfast. You should meet his grandkids Grace and Daniel, real special. Then it was on to a BBQ in Louisville with the "Bush Pilots."

From Louisville to home in St. Louis it was a solo ride. Lots of time to reflect on everything that had just happened. I pulled into the driveway at home and was ready to go do it all again. See everyone next year. Only about 334 days to go.

A GLIMPSE OF RFTW

By Mile Hadbavny, 1VP VVA Chapter 780

I heard of RFTW many years before joining the Low Country (Charleston SC) Chapter 780 of Vietnam Veterans of America where I quickly got to know its President, James "Biker Gunny" Gregory, a RFTW co-founder. My 70 Honda, acquired in Vietnam being too small to safely drive on even rural highways, prohibits even the wildest dream of participating. Consequently, I shifted the date of my Oregon visit to cross the RFTW path on the Chattanooga to Knoxville TN portion. My Dodge named "Dall Ram" (named to distinguish it from its predecessors White Ram, Whitey, and Grey Ghost) was the mode of transportation for this journey.

Arriving at the Thunder Creek Harley Dealer, the Chattanooga muster point, I had a chance to wander the various booths and buy patches and pins for my pig-humper brother and chat up a couple of people I saw. The open and friendly people participating are simply amazing. Doo rags, patches, or shirts, I met two Seabees and a couple from the Big Island in Hawaii. With the pack of 450 starting to arrive, I quickly found some friends from VVA 780, Patti and Biker Gunny and their son Chad and saw Melanie and Allen "AJ" James. Then the real "grip and greet" began since they introduced me to a plethora of people, so many I cannot recall, but can remember Hugs and sister Hoops from Mt Pleasant along with Red Light, Flame, Bullets (a 9-year-old with a linked belt of 100 for feeding a pig who was riding with her grandfather), and many others. For some reason, I can remember the gals' names but not the guys'!

The organization is a marvel with the riders participating with Ambassadors, Road Guards, three Chase Trucks/Trailers (rescue vehicles) and seven packs or platoons of riders each with Platoon Leader, Assistant, Tail Gunner, and Chaplain. I suspect the organization resulted from many years of experimentation to produce a combination of training and hierarchy (where the Indy Racers have a yellow stripe), RFTW has its FNG Buttons (Friendly New Guys) to allow them to learn and others to recognize they are new to the ride. Getting ready to depart on Wednesday, the group first stood for the Pledge of Allegiance and a prayer from the head Chaplain. Instructions were provided to remind riders to pull well off the shoulder if they should have a breakdown and wave their arms when a Chase Vehicle came along. The group then walked next door through a gap in the trees to the Silverthorn Cemetery where a group presented a wreath, not in honor of the Confederacy, but rather as a tribute and honor to 155 unknowns. While the RFTW pays homage to POW/MIA, these 155 are there, with present remains, but their names are lost. The presentation was made to a mouth organ presentation of "O' Shenandoah."

Engines were started and the pack departed with Road Guards first followed by the seven platoons and three Chase Vehicles. It was quite a sight to see the departure of the pack then reported to be at 500, heading to the next stop at Wytheville VA, at the junction of I-77 and I-81, with numerous motorcycle police escorting them. After waiting awhile. I proceeded up past them on the highway passing each platoon which was approximately 1/10 mile apart so as to let traffic merge and exit. It was quite a sight, passing each overpass in rural areas to see cars stopped on the bridges with a police car protecting them and men and women holding flags waving and saluting the riders as the procession ran up the highway. Stopping further up the road ahead of the pack, it is even more impressive standing there watching the long trains of cycles in two staggered files pass beneath you on their way to Washington.

RFTW FATHER AND DAUGHTER

By Tisha Sloan

I boarded a plane for LAX to meet up with my dad for the 23rd annual Run For The Wall, a motorcycle ride from L.A. to DC made up of military vets and supporters, arriving the weekend of Memorial Day. The purpose of the ride is to raise awareness of veterans' issues, and of POW/MIAs still unaccounted for. I come from Humboldt County, CA, and did not think of myself as a "patriotic" person—I am not a fan of the war machine. But being on this ride, and meeting these men and women, I am learning that many of them aren't either. Many of them had no choice in the matter. And they have told me their stories. Grown men have shed tears telling me how much this ride means to them. It has changed their lives to be able to ride together and share their grief, and let go, and heal.

My father, Jim Sloan, CVA-43 USS Coral Sea, US Navy '61-'63, has participated in the run for six years. For the last four as a chase truck following the hundreds of bikes across the country towing a trailer to pick up any bikes that break down and get them to the next bike shop for repairs. They call him "Sweeper." Over the years, he's been telling me stories of the ride and the amazing things that happen, and I kept finding parallels to my Burning Man experiences. Both events bring together people who feel, on some level, that they are not accepted in mainstream society and offer them a sense of connection, of family. Both events create a harsh survival environment which brings the participant to the brink of exhaustion, and therefore more able to drop the walls keeping them from expressing their true selves. Both events seem infused with an inordinately high degree of kismet or synchronicity. Both groups take on nicknames and have their own sets of rules, mores, and traditions. Both help people grow and change by breaking them out of the normal constructs of society.

After flight delays at SFO, I arrived later than expected and went straight to the hotel. The next morning the place was crawling with older bikers in their vests covered with patches and pins, and the parking lot seemed filled with bikes. I admit that I had a few moments of "Oh my god, what have I gotten myself into.... 10 days of this??" but after meeting some of my dad's friends and receiving very warm welcomes and lots of hugs, I found myself in the lobby after lunch speaking with Terry, a biker and veteran from Las Vegas. He told me that the ride had made a different person out of him. He'd never been able to talk about his experiences in Vietnam. Then he paused. He was crying. We'd been talking for about two minutes. He showed me a Medal of Honor that another vet had given him on a previous run. Said it was one of the proudest things he had. Then he said that he wouldn't be going "All The Way" (a RFTW battle cry) because he had to go home for medical treatments. He told me very matter-of-factly that he had cancer due to Agent Orange. Whoa, I thought. This is going to be intense. Then, while explaining how much the run meant to him and how amazing it was that they were all there for each other, he admitted that on his first run in '03 he couldn't bring himself to go down to the wall when they arrived in DC. It was too much. The second year, two other riders, "Ghost" and "Spook," took him by the hand and led him down to it. His voice caught, and as he wiped away a tear he said, "See?" I was beginning to.

My plan was to ride with my dad in the chase truck and just take in the experience. Maybe get on a bike if the opportunity presented itself. We got up at 5:30 a.m. (a time I'd rather see at the end of my day, not the beginning) and headed for the staging area.

Approximately 500 bikes were signed up to start the run. Hundreds more would join in along the way. The group split into two packs, one would take a southern route, and we were on a more central route. A few dozen people were there to see us off, and the local fire department hung a giant American flag from their ladder trucks for the bikes to pass under. This was a mild sendoff compared to what I'd see further east.

It had been raining in California, but by the time we got to our first rest stop in Barstow the rain had stopped and bikers were shedding rain gear. An older gent was sitting on a curb having trouble getting his rain pants off and said, "Excuse me miss, would you take off my pants?" I responded, "Of course, sir. Day one and I'm

already taking off some guys pants!" I'd worried a bit about dirty old bikers, but in truth, these were some of the most respectful and kind people I'd ever met. This moment was about as raunchy as it got. And it was the beginning of a theme ... the next day we picked up a broken-down bike and the rider got in the truck. When we dropped him at a shop, he left his rain pants in the truck. So my dad thought it would be funny for me to get on the microphone at the morning meeting and announce that I was looking for this guy because "I have his pants." That got a good laugh. Later we picked up Tim, a Canadian vet who had taken ill. He had to ride in the truck for a few days, so he loaned me his leather chaps and jacket and sent me off to find a ride on a bike. Dealing with three pairs of pants in the first few days earned me a road name. Just call me "Pants."

As we start, the pack goes on for two miles. Our first night was spent in Williams, AZ, and we were greeted with something the Run had never seen: snow. Amazingly none of the bikes had any trouble riding in it, although a few fell over while parking. It was a bit nerve-wracking for everyone, but seemed to exhilarate the group, too. In the morning, everything was covered in a couple of inches of fresh snow, and we got an early start, as it would be slow going. It took the bikes a while to clean off the snow and warm up, so I got a chance to chat with some of the other chase truck drivers about their experience and why they do this. One turned it on me and asked why I was doing it. I said that I was just along for the ride to share my dad's experience. He then explained, "We do this so that what happened to us when we got back from 'Nam does not happen to another vet. You have no idea what this means to us. To feel supported. You are doing that for us." Just by being there, I began to feel that I owed more to this experience and to these people than just going along for the ride. I got that they were hurting, and that this was a mission of healing. I also saw that these were mostly older guys sitting on bikes all day every day through sometimes grueling conditions. So I got online and found some massage therapists near our next stop and sent a note explaining the run and asking if anyone would be willing to meet us at dinner and offer the guys a few minutes in a massage chair for free. Darcy from Red River, NM responded and was there. She worked on the guys for almost 3 hours, and the effect it had on them was visible. I plan to start early next year and hook up therapists for every stop on the run.

The next stop was at Angel Fire, NM, a beautiful memorial that looks like a white sail rising up out of the hills of New Mexico. A father started building it five days after he lost his son in Vietnam in '68. Years later the father brought a handful of New Mexico soil to Vietnam. He walked in the places his son walked, and spread the soil near where he was killed. He then scooped up a handful of Vietnamese soil and brought it back to spread around the memorial. Everyone was feeling it there. This was the first really emotional stop on the run. Had a chat with Jaime from Santa Clarita who I ended up riding with for a few days later. He said that he never even told anyone he was a vet. No one wanted to hear about it. He was raised in the JFK era, "You know, ask not what your country can do...", so when he joined up, he thought he was doing the right thing. He then extended his tour so his little brother wouldn't get drafted, since he had a wife and kids. When he came home, he left his uniform in the airport bathroom after changing so no one would know he was a soldier. The last time he had come home on leave he was greeted at the airport by protesters who called him "baby-killer" and spit on him. He never talked about it again, until he came on the ride. "Now," he said, "I'm not alone. I travel with a pack." This allows him to talk about it. And get over it. I told him I was writing about this and trying to explain to the folks at home what I'm starting to understand; that these guys aren't the ones to blame for what happened. It's wrong for me to hate the soldiers for what the politicians made them do. They didn't want to be there either. That I can be a liberal hippie and still appreciate and respect these guys, and feel their pain and maybe help the healing. He grabbed my hand and, with tears in his eyes, said "That's it. That's exactly it. Thank you."

By day three on the road, I had friends—people that I looked forward to seeing, and who made a point of checking in with me each day. There was Scott. Since we had a police escort we just flew through Missouri with no traffic, and he just looked as happy as a pig in shit the whole time to just be cruisin' down the highway. Nice guy who saw some gnarly stuff and has managed to get over it and be happy to be alive. On the last day, he gave me a big hug and said that I had "made the ride" for him. As in 'made my day.' All I did was say hi. I am so glad I did this.

Freeway overpasses were often packed with greeters waving flags and saluting. The schedule was fairly tight, but these people must have arrived hours before we did to set up and wait to see us.

Goodland, KS was a town that went all out with the flags and an amazing meat and potatoes dinner. Boy scouts helped serve the dinner and cleared our places. They had a BIG ASS flag covering an entire wall.

The further east we went, the more enthusiastic the welcome. Junction City, KS is a very patriotic town, and literally hundreds of people lined the streets holding flags as we entered. There'd been a wrong turn on the way, sending us on a detour around Topeka (the now infamous "Topeka Turnaround"), so we were about an hour late. These folks had been standing in the hot sun for 2-3 hours waiting to greet us.

There were often vets in the crowd who were visibly moved by our presence. One of the riders reminded me that they are part of why they do this. "We ride for those who can't" refers to soldiers lost in battle, MIAs, POWs, and those who can't or just don't ride. He also explained that as we moved into the smaller towns in the midwest, the percentage of the population involved in the military went up. For the youngsters in these little towns, military service is one of the only ways out of Podunk, USA, so they have more enlistees. Because they have more soldiers, they have an inordinately large number of soldiers missing, wounded, and killed in action. They have to be patriotic to believe that their losses meant something and to remind each other that they remember.

On the way out of Wentzville, MO we stopped at their Vietnam Memorial (the first in the nation). There was a white-haired grandma in a white USA sweatshirt standing up at the curb for our arrival, held up on either side by younger family members. She was trembling with emotion as we parked, and the bike I was on ended up parking right in front of her. She was so moved to see us (and I her, apparently) that I got off the bike, didn't even take off my helmet, and went to her to shake her hand and say thank you. She brushed my hand aside and embraced me like she was my own grandma and said into my ear, "No, thank you. Thank you so much for coming here." And she kissed my cheek. Turns out she was one of the last two people alive who worked to create the memorial. I can't imagine what she must have lost in that war. There was a ceremony to lay a wreath at the base of the memorial. The officers standing guard on either side had been there, at attention, for hours. The pack lined up ready to leave our lunch stop yesterday in Concordia, MO. They really pack 'em in for staging, then they roll out in rows of two ("2 up").

I met Josh at the VA hospital in WV. He was in Iraq for 10 years. Told me they used to get equal time off for time served in active duty. After putting in a year, they changed in to half time. So he got to see his daughter born, then got shipped out. When he got back she was walking and talking. He offered me a ride the next day into Rainelle—one of the more impressive receptions. Josh was riding for his cousin, killed in action in Iraq 9th of Jan. '08.

We stopped at several VA hospitals along the way. They wheeled guys out in wheelchairs and on gurneys to talk to us. It was mostly chitchat, or biker talk, but it was clear they were stoked. As we left they lined up on the sidewalk to see us go. As we rolled by I saw an older man alone in a wheelchair in hospital jammies with his army cap on. I saluted him. His head followed me by, then his lip began to tremble. I was stunned. Then it struck me just how much it means to them to know that what they went through mattered and is remembered. In a way I don't feel worthy of their gratitude. I was so anti-military, and I'm really having a blast on this trip. I've said as much to some of the ones I've gotten to know—that all I'm doing is going along and chatting with them and enjoying the ride. They say that's the point. Just being here with them and listening to them is good for them, even if it's just about the weather. Or just a simple salute as we pass.

Platoon leaders. The pack is split up into 8 platoons with their own leaders, assistant leaders, and 'rear gunner' at the back. Keeps the pack organized and provides breaks in the pack for trucks and cars to get thru if necessary. They also act as camp counselors when problems come up.

At the Charleston WV Memorial, WWII KIAs outnumber other wars by an insane number. Two of my grandpas were there. My dad's step-dad was a 101st airborne paratrooper who was at Normandy. My dad's dad was a Medic in WWII, awarded the Bronze Star because he went out into an active battlefield to retrieve a wounded soldier that three other medic teams had died trying to get. He got him. He never talked about it until his last years. Came home a shut-down man. Became an accountant and played golf. He died of a heart attack while I was directing "The Laramie Project" in '02. I dedicated the show to him. There were several times during this trip that I felt their gaze.

The WWI wall is opposite the Vietnam wall. I noticed that most of the guys that were able to go into the middle stayed as far away from the Vietnam wall as they could. One guy only made it to the railing outside the circle, and was leaning on it white-knuckled and trying to contain himself. As we were walking out, my dad stopped and put a hand on his back. The man exhaled, turned and accepted my dad's hug. I hear my dad say, "It's all right..." before I left them. He later said, "THAT is why we are here."

We finally arrived in DC. After a few well-deserved drinks and a good night's rest, we prepared for our ride to Arlington and the wall. I got to ride with Bud, a friend of my dad's who was leading the pack as the flag man, with his custom made, full size flag pipes on the back of his bike. He was a road guard. They help to control traffic as we move through towns and down highways, and position the bikes at the staging areas. Bud is a retired L.A. cop. He kind of adopted me on the run, and took me around to see the White House, and the Pentagon as well.

As we rode through Arlington National Cemetery, one thought kept repeating in my mind, "So many. There are just so many."

The arch over the entrance to Arlington reads, "On fame's eternal camping ground their silent tents are spread, and glory guards with solemn round, the bivouac of the dead." The west face of the arch is inscribed with the words: "Rest on embalmed and sainted dead, dear as the blood ye gave, no impious footsteps here shall tread on the herbage of your grave."

Unfortunately, I let my memory card fill up at that point and didn't get other photos I wanted of the final experience. It seems anti-climactic, but it also reinforces a lesson that I am often reminded of... it isn't about the destination. It's about the journey. I feel I learned more about our country and about patriotism and about politics than I could post in several essays. I learned a few things about myself, about my dad, and about my beliefs. And I think I was there to help a few of these guys. I am still reeling from all of it. I can only sum up the entire experience in a few words: honor. gratitude. loss. grief. family. debt. pride.

And the words of a trucker somewhere in middle of the ride upon seeing the pack of bikes flying the colors, in his mid-west drawl, "Now *that's* America - right there on those bikes."

Mission accomplished.

Tisha has two daughters and lives in Blue Lake, CA. She produces and directs TV movies and commercials.

AN FNG'S LONG AND MEMORABLE RIDE

By Taildragger, Susanville, CA *(from the Forum)*

Well, I guess I'm not sure how to start this what with all the thoughts, memories, and emotions still fresh in my mind from one of the greatest rides of my life! It all started with following the General Discussion Forums and all the Welcome Homes and Welcome to the RFTW family that came with each log on. You all kept telling me how great the trip will be and how many new friends I will meet. It was hard to believe all this until the first day at sign in at RC. My hand was sore, my back pounded raw and I have never had so many tears in my eyes for so

long a time in my entire life! Then everyone said just wait—it gets better. What?? How can it get better than this? Damn if y'all weren't right again. It did get better every day. I don't know how everyone did it. I know we owe a lot to the citizens of each community we stopped at along the breadth of this great country, but I truly believe that a great deal is owed to the organizers and staff of RFTW. Preacher—I wanted to thank you for every thing you did. What an accomplishment logistically getting all of this together.

From my Platoon 4 Leader JC and the Assist P.L. "Tin Man" to our great Tailgunner "Casper," thank you all. You were there every time checking on us FNGs, giving advice and praise and were there with a shoulder and understanding when the emotions became too much to bear. I am in awe of the Road Guards in the mission they undertook and completed with professionalism. After retiring with nearly 30 years as a Highway Patrolman in CA, I understand the intricacies of riding in such conditions. It brought back some fond memories with y'all whipping past us (I'm sure and will swear to it that you all were within 5 mph of some posted speed limit some where in the world). You guys were up way before most of us thought about getting up and didn't get to bed until way after we all did. You made sure us FNGs found our way to the staging area and breakfasts each day. To each of you—thank you. As for the fuelers, what can I say but - damn you're good! NASCAR has nothing on you!!!! My first fueling came with more than a touch of trepidation. Actually my first thought was what a Cluster ****. Was I proved wrong. You all have my utmost respect and admiration. No matter what time of day or weather conditions, you all meet us with a smile and asking how the ride was so far. Thank you for all you did. The Chaplain Corp was always nearby, ready to lend a shoulder or a private moment with us as the emotional roller coaster during the ride continued. Being selected to ride the "Missing Man Formation" was a special opportunity that I was proud to be involved in. What an emotional moment. Almost 100 miles of riding and looking to my right and realizing what this mission meant. Y'all were right, I could hear the voices from the missing and there was pride in their voices at what we, the RFTW, were accomplishing—Riding For Those Who Can't.

Last and not least were ALL the new friends made during the ride. Every one of you during the trip has made a lasting impression on me that will last my lifetime. Listening to Gary Wolf rendering Reveille every morning to Taps each night on his bugle was a special treat those of us on the Southern Route got to enjoy. I must also take this opportunity to thank a very special individual from the Central Route—Chaplain Russ Cockrum. Without you, my friend, I know I would not have been able to make that long walk down to the Wall. Even now, I am sitting here with tears in my eyes and crying like a baby with thoughts of the Wall running through my mind. Your kindness and compassion you showed to me on that day will be forever in my mind and heart. Thank you brother.

It was a privilege to ride with my friend 83PGR Rider from here in Susanville—Southern Route's very own WWII Veteran who braved the trip and completed ALL THE WAY on his Yamaha. What an inspiration to us all. I can only hope I am in half as good a shape as Ray is now, when I get to his age. Happy trails, my friend. Hopefully you can shock and awe more people next year by going all the way in 2012!!

Well, I finally made it home after six weeks and some 9,460 miles of traveling across this wonderful Nation. I saw some beautiful sights and have memories that I never believed I would have. Thank you all and hope to see all of you again next year as we again make our way "ALL THE WAY."

YOU KNOW YOU'RE AN FNG ...

You know you're an FNG when you have to ask what FNG means.

You know you're an FNG when you are stressing out every day about whether you can survive the RFTW ride.

You know you're an FNG when you wonder where all of those road names came from and should you really ride with someone with a name like "Tipsy." Grumpy, Killer, etc...

You know you are an FNG when you cannot believe that you have found a group of people that get it and feel the same about things so important to you.

If you run out and buy a high dollar GPS and enter the route from RC to DC and ride with the group such as this.....you might be a FNG

You know you are an FNG when you hear them call "5 minutes" and really believe that you have five minutes to get ready to go.....

You are an FNG when you care enough to want to participate for the first time, take action, show up, and learn, committed enough to ride no matter what is thrown your way (weather, road conditions, experiences), and surprised when, no matter how you prepared, you realize this is not a motorcycle ride but a mission.

You know you're an FNG when you don't know about the pink button....

You know you're an FNG when you're ashamed to let others see you cry.

► OUR STORIES

WALL MOMENTS

By Richard "Skeater" Skeate

There was an excellent article in the American Legion magazine about the millions of "offerings" left at the Wall (Vietnam Veterans Memorial). On page 31 of the May 2011 issue, there is a picture of an ammo box, holding the remains of a helicopter blade. Donna Elliott (sister of Jerry Elliott) made this beautiful tribute to her brother who was MIA. The JTF-FA team (our people sent to Vietnam to search for remains) discovered a farmer using the blade as a fence post, and searched the area for remains of the crew.

The box contained pictures of Jerry's life. My brother Dennis (aka *Tracker*) and I were privileged to carry this many of the miles across this country on the Run For The Wall in 2000. I had made the trip three times prior in my 1994 Jeep Wrangler (famously remembered on the Run as "*that little green Jeep*") I sort of became the **Last Man** vehicle behind hundreds of motorcycle riders who cross the nation each year to remember our POW and MIAs. This year was very special. That Sunday after the Rolling Thunder parade that Memorial Day weekend, we solemnly carried the box like a coffin to its final resting place under Jerry Elliott's panel on the Wall, Panel 35E, Line 5.

There are many stories about "Wall Moments"(special happenings). I experienced many on this trip. Donna told of when she first approached members of RFTW about bringing Jerry's "box" with us. One of the group from Colorado where she joined us asked who the soldier was, and she told him Jerry Elliott. After some silence, the man softly spoke that he had been wearing Jerry's MIA bracelet for many years. Later in the Pentagon parking lot where we gathered before the Rolling Thunder parade, Donna came up to Dennis and me crying and holding a t-shirt she had bought from one of the vendors there. It just showed a picture of a Wall panel with many names on it. But the name in the center was Jerry Elliott (what are the odds?).

Top led us down to the Wall panel, I had the US flag and my brother had the POW/MIA flag, followed by two others carrying the box. Donna and her friend Cat followed the box, along with a large group from the Run, as you would expect. Later, after leading the procession to his panel, I stood holding the American Flag with my back to Jerry's Wall panel. I asked Cat where his name was on the panel. She responded she didn't know but thought it was near the upper section. I stole a look over my shoulder. I'll never forget it; the whole panel looked

blurry to me except one name that stood out in clarity, Jerry Elliott. Very special day and a very special trip to the Wall.

One of our Run members is a tribal medicine man. He did a blessing ceremony prior to us leaving the blade at the Wall, and he stopped almost as soon as he started. I think he said something like, "*There are no bad spirits here*", which I think really says something about the feelings that people get when they are at the Wall. It really is a Healing Wall.

Donna has been to South Vietnam twice to try to find more about her brother. She is one very special person.

Run For The Wall is a family. I meet these people once a year (this is my 15th), and I love them like the brothers and sisters they truly are. I know there are many groups that make the journey each year to the Wall for the Rolling Thunder parade, but this is mine. First sight: just a bunch of bikers, but talk to them and you will hear their mission and share their love. We will never forget our POWs and MIAs from Southeast Asia, or let our current returning warriors not be welcomed home, like those of us from the Vietnam era were ignored, or worse.

To all you veterans, and those who support them. Here is a virtual hug; and WELCOME HOME!

THE BRACELET

By Harry "Attitude" Steelman

Run For The Wall XXIII, 2011. Mission complete, but is it over? I don't think so. I have made the Run five times now, but this one became the most significant spiritual and emotional experience of my life. I am not discounting my marriage to my wife, Miss Martha, which has, of course blossomed into a relationship more meaningful to me than I ever could have imagined, but this year's Run has reached deeper into my mind, deeper into my heart and deeper into my gut than anything else that I have ever come across. And it is the riders that have made it so. Every day was full of challenges of leadership as well as challenges of healing, both for myself and for each of you. Each day had its' moments that moved my soul through interaction with the people of the Run. I will not share them all with you as they are deeply personal to myself as well as those with whom I share the experience. Some of them have been evident to others in the pack and some are not, but I do need to share the one that has hit me the hardest and the one that proves to me that the work of the Run is never done.

On the morning that we left for Arlington, I was, once again, nearly late for the morning meeting. I arrived just in time to join Preacher in introducing those who we had selected to place the wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown. That was an emotional moment in and of itself as I realized that together Preacher and I had made the right choice in those that we selected. Of course there were others just as deserving and equally situated to make the presentation, but we had selected well. At some point I was approached by one of the CR riders who, with a few meaningful words, removed a bracelet from his wrist and placed it on mine. I was quite moved by the gesture, but the timing was such that I had to keep moving as the mission was not yet completed. I was acutely aware of the presence of the bracelet as I rarely wear jewelry outside of a wrist watch, my wedding ring and a necklace that my wife gave me many years ago. This bracelet is made of parachute cord and has a button type clasp with the message "From Soldier To Soldier" in relief. I remember hitting it on the concrete handrail at the Tomb and quietly cursing that I had scratched the clasp. Unfortunately I cannot remember exactly who gave me the bracelet. I have some ideas, but I'm not quite sure. I am deeply sorry and apologize to that rider for reasons you will see in a moment. I wore the bracelet for several days and now off and on since I have been home.

Of course, there is more to this story. Fast forward two weeks and I am this evening sitting in an abbreviated Chili's at the Oakland Airport where I have stopped for a bowl of chili and a beer while I wait for my flight up to Seattle. I am wearing the bracelet on this trip and in looking at the clasp I ponder the message "From Soldier

To Soldier” which seems to haunt me and decide to do a Google Search to see what I can find out about the bracelet. And then there it was, staring me in the face, the story that the rider told me when he gave it to me and a message that is so very meaningful to me:

“The Struggle for survival didn't end in Iraq, Afghanistan or Vietnam. For many of us, it continues right here at home. In the field, we rely on each other and build unbreakable friendships. This bracelet symbolizes the commitment we must all continue to have to each other.” —**Marine Sergeant Joshua Bouchard**, *wounded in Afghanistan*

THANK YOU, MY BROTHER, for the gift that, in its anonymity, allows this bracelet to acknowledge and represent the change that all of you have made in my life. I realize that you meant it as a personal gift, and I still see it as such, but it has turned out to be so much more. You have no idea what it means to me.

Attitude

THE RUN AND SCRIPTURES

By Arnie “Kawpoke” Swift

For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanishes away (James 4:14).

When you spend over twelve hours in the saddle you have a lot of time to reflect and pray. Today was no exception. The run is over and today was just ride, ride, ride. So not much to share except for the family we talked to in Corydon. Neat family, with a boy scout and a cub scout. Shared with them about the Run and gave them all a Run pin. So tonight I would like to share my thoughts on the Run based on the scripture above.

The Run really parallels life. So let's take a journey through the Run and see if it really is a vapor? Life itself begins at conception and takes a certain amount of time to be brought into the world. The run is just like that. Somewhere a seed is planted within the person. It may happen in June or maybe December or even in May. The seed grows and on a certain Monday in May the labor pains begin. You know, the meetings and registration and all the headaches and mishaps. Then that Wednesday the birth arrives. Usually around 8 a.m. A new life begins. That first day the infant is found crawling and just trying to make sense of it all. Eyesight is not great and listening is even worse. By the end of the day the infant is trying to stand.

The day seems to last forever, but it finally ends. Only this year it catches a virus, a common cold. It will recover. The second day will find the infant beginning to walk. The child is a little more composed and seems to be overcoming the virus. The child is also beginning to make new friends but at the same time finds some to be unruly and unsocial. He might even want to fight back. That evening there is a set back as the virus shows up again, this time not so powerful.

The third day will start like the others, but there is something different, emotions take shape. Who would create such a thing? Causes eyes to water and the heart to beat fast. Is this natural? Late in the day those emotions will be pushed to the limit. How can this be; how can one hurt like this and yet feel so alive? It will take a night's rest to help calm the emotions. But will they really go away? Maybe they will just subdue.

What would day 4 bring? Maybe boredom? Maybe a new environment. The child is now following instructions and growing in knowledge. Still curious but being cautious. Life seems to be good and even exciting.

Something takes place on day 5. It is a spiritual awakening. There is a time of worship and even a time of learning. This time will change everything for the youth. He will find the strength to carry on. But day 5 will also bring about a midlife crisis. The youth has spent half of his life learning and experiencing but has not really contributed to the journey.

Day 6 will be the beginning of the end. The youth is now grown and beginning to age. He will experience something else on this day, confrontation. It is not a pleasurable feeling. As a matter of fact it upsets the man. He tries to reason with the situation, but to no avail and so the option is to remove the infection. He is not happy with that solution and tries desperately to fix it and only seems to make matters worse.

Day 7 will still find the problem unresolved. The man is becoming more tired as he finds himself caught in another place with another situation. This time it is a health issue. Heat he discovers can be an enemy. He finds help for the issue and resolves to see it through. He makes progress in one and not the other. Is this what life is really like. He seeks wisdom from the one who changed his life. Christ is His name. The answer will come but not today.

Day 8 begins and the man becomes more tired and weary. He along with all the others visits a second home for those like himself that are in need of repair or love. He finds some solace there but it will be fleeting because the original problem seems to worsen, like an illness that lingers.

The answer he has been seeking will come that night. It will come in a way he does not see coming. He chooses to confront the problem one more time and mentions that it is a choice to live in bitterness or live in peace, but it is a choice.

Day 9, something happens today that will change everything for good. The problem isn't there in the morning; oh, the person is there but he is not the same. What happened? How can this be? The old man now has seen even his prayers answered. But another emotion has moved in. the end is near.

Day 10 will find that the journey of his life has been accomplished. He has arrived and relief sets in. He is tired and worn out. Life is passing by and the end is just around the corner. But he has at least two more missions to accomplish before his time ends. He will accomplish one this night. (Pat, thanks for allowing me to share your husband even if but for a moment).

Day 11 will the end of the journey. As the life begins to ebb for the man he helps one last person. It makes him feel good to help one last time and see the change that only God can make. The old man looks into the wall and sees his own reflection. It is there in the Wall looking back at him. In the very next instance the man moves and the reflection is gone. And so is the man. He has passed away.

In eleven days the Run is now nothing more than a vapor, a memory. One cannot go back and change a thing. But God was able to change many things. Thank you Steve Duke for letting me experience the change in you because you made a choice and it was the right one. The Run is in the books and only God knows what the future will bring.

WHY WE MUST NEVER STOP LOOKING

By James "Gunny" Gregory

My good friend Charlie Ray died Sunday (June 9). He rode in RFTW many times.

Charlie was a WWII Marine whose son, Jimmy Ray, was born on the Marine Corps birthday. Jimmy was captured by the NVA on March 18, 1968 and held prisoner for many years and may still be a prisoner today. Jimmy was never returned to his family. He was alive but in poor health when other POWs were released in 1973. There are no remains, no news, no anything. Charlie died not knowing what happened to his son. To this day I still wear Jimmy's POW bracelet.

I visited Charlie at a nursing home in Biloxi MS last November. I gave him my Marine Corps hat I was wearing, since he had lost his own. We said our farewells; we both knew it would probably be our last reunion. I'll miss Charlie; he was a great member of the greatest generation.

MUCH REMAINS TO BE DONE

By Jim Lenz, Las Vegas, NV

Throughout its long history our country has fought many wars, starting with the Revolutionary War which freed us from English rule, and this has continued right up to the present day. Right now we have troops scattered around the globe, risking their lives so that others may know some of the freedoms you and I take for granted. I tip my helmet to these fine young men and women and pray for their safe and timely return.

Among those many wars was one that proved to be the longest-lasting and most controversial in our nation's history. Little did any of us at the time know of the huge consequences it would bring to our country, our military, and our society as a whole. Its repercussions were felt in every corner of America as it ripped the fabric of our society apart, ended the age of Camelot begun by one President and indirectly led to the downfall of another. It led to the deaths of over 58,000 American men and women and left over a million more with wounds that were physical, emotional, or psychological in nature, many of which haven't healed to this day. Many of our people came home changed in ways that were completely unimaginable at the time.

What was worse was that they came home to a country that didn't want them, didn't recognize their efforts and sacrifice, and in general despised them for fighting an unpopular war. It was a war that none of them wanted to fight in a land that few of them had even heard of—yet they did so simply because their country said they must. They fought, they bled, and all too often they died. Those who survived the meat grinder known as Viet Nam didn't know it at the time, but their biggest battles awaited them when they finally came home again.

Unlike previous wars in which our troops returned home to cheering throngs of people, parades complete with marching bands and plenty of smiles all around, the returning Viet Nam vet faced hostility instead of a homecoming, fistfights instead of handshakes, and looks of horror instead of happiness. He was called every repulsive name in the book and a few that weren't. His friends and neighbors who had been so proud of him when he first donned his uniform now wanted nothing at all to do with him. In many cases he was treated as a pariah by the very country he had fought and bled for. The only ones who didn't experience this horrendous treatment were the politicians who sent him there in the first place and those who made the Supreme Sacrifice, giving up their tomorrows so that others could have their todays.

For many Viet Nam vets the war continues right to this moment. It's a sad truth that many turned to drugs and alcohol in a vain attempt to deal with the horrors they experienced in Southeast Asia. Here at home their divorce rate skyrocketed, cases of mental illness soared far above the national average, and many turned to a life that was akin to that of a hermit, having little to do with anyone except their fellow vets, their true and only brothers.

They tried turning to the government for the help they so desperately needed. In many cases they were told that little or no help was available or to deal with their problems on their own. In some of the more extreme cases they were simply locked away in mental health facilities as the government forgot about them, hoping that the problem would disappear by itself.

Worse yet was the plight of those left behind. When the Paris Peace Accords were signed back in 1973, one part of them included a promise that all, and I mean ALL, of our POWs:and MIAs would be accounted for and brought home. As is the usual case among politicians, this so-called "promise," coming at the end of the war, wasn't kept. The Vietnamese government used it as leverage to gain both political and economic concessions from the US and this policy continued until President George W. Bush stopped it during his first term in office. It is indeed ironic that the United States has spent far more money in economic aid to our former enemy than it has in searching for those who fought them.

Again our people came out on the short end of the stick. Incredibly, a few short years after the Accords were signed OUR OWN GOVERNMENT, in its haste to bury this issue once and for all, tried to take the drastic step of declaring all of them legally dead. Fortunately their families, along with numerous veterans' organizations and many Viet Nam vets themselves, combined their efforts and resources in Congress to prevent this tragedy from happening.

For the Viet Nam vet, the war still wasn't over. After first fighting in the hell that was Viet Nam, he came back to "the world" and found himself engaged in another kind of conflict, one for which he was totally unprepared. Despised by many of his fellow citizens and ignored by his own government, treated as a social outcast by all except his brother vets and with the horrors of the war and buddies lost still fresh in his mind he sought a way, a means, of somehow healing the wounds and once again gaining the respect and acceptance of the country he had once so proudly served.

A small group of people led by Viet Nam vet Jan Scruggs came up with an idea. In Washington, DC are monuments and memorials of every possible kind dedicated to presidents, battles, wars, and every branch of our Armed Forces. As you know, it's also the site of the Tomb of the Unknowns and Arlington National Cemetery, the final resting place for many of our nation's heroes dating back to the Civil War. Everything was there except for something to represent Viet Nam.

The idea that Mr. Scruggs and his group came up with was unique. What they had in mind was a Memorial that wouldn't be dedicated to a particular battle, branch of service or even the war itself, but which would clearly reflect in an unmistakable manner the human cost of any such war. Funds were raised from private donations for a design competition. Little did anyone at the time realize exactly how profound the results of that competition would be.

There were 1,421 designs submitted to be judged anonymously by an international field of architectural experts, and the winner was Maya Lin, at the time a 21-year-old student at Yale University. Stretching 493 feet 4 inches long and standing just under 10 feet 2 inches tall at its highest point, it was in a "V" shape and cut into the side of a small hill. It tapered gracefully from small beginnings at each end until it rose to its full height in the middle in one easy manner that's both pleasing to the eye and which complements the surrounding area. It would consist of 74 black granite panels, the two smallest being blank and the rest having lines of names inscribed on them. The smallest would have but one line, while the tallest would have 137, each name being listed in the order that they fell. These names would give the Memorial its reason for being, indeed its very soul.

Almost immediately this award-winning design became the center of controversy. Detractors called it the "black gash of shame," among other things, while it brought to others the very human face of war itself.

Another battle ensued, this time in the halls of Congress. The legislators there agreed that the Memorial should be built, but due to the strong sentiments still running through the country at the time about the war, they didn't want to spend any taxpayer money on it. On the other hand, the vets and their supporters, recognizing the tremendous need for it, offered a compromise. "Give us the land" they said "we'll build it ourselves."

A three-acre site on the National Mall between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial was finally obtained.

Groundbreaking and construction, funded entirely by private donations, began on 26 March 82 and it was completed in October of that year. The final cost of the project, including fighting the battles in Congress and the actual construction itself, was almost \$9,000,000, not one cent of which came from taxes of any kind. The vets said they'd do it and they did. Over 250,000 people from all over the country and around the world turned out for the official dedication on 13 November 82 and President Reagan paid it a visit in May of 1983, in so doing giving it the official blessing of the Commander-In-Chief's office, an act long sought by the vets. Then a remarkable thing happened.

Much to the dismay of many who had been against it right from the start, it quickly became THE most visited Memorial in the entire country, known around the globe and seen by everyone from world leaders to the humblest of common citizens.

The Memorial had another and much more immediate effect, perhaps the most important of all. To the vet it quickly became known as "the wall that heals" or, more simply, "The Wall." It rapidly became a place where he or she could go to in order to reflect, to remember and, most importantly, to heal.

Singly and in groups they come at all hours of the day and night and regardless of the weather. Slowly they walk "The Wall" as they read the names. Every so often they stop and reach out with a hand to tenderly, even lovingly, touch one name or another, this act triggered by the events of so long ago. In so doing, the past meets the present, memories fill the mind and the tears, often held back for decades, begin to flow. That's okay, for at "The Wall" crying is the rule rather than the exception and nobody ever says a word about it. Instead they gather around to offer whatever help they can in whatever way they can.

This isn't just limited to the vets, either. People of every generation, including those either too young or old to have fought in the war, all feel it in some manner. Mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, daughters and sons, aunts and uncles, friends and complete strangers are all touched somehow and in some way. "The Wall" shows no partiality in the way it affects anyone.

At the western end of the grassy knoll that faces "The Wall" is a statue of three soldiers. Their eternal gaze is directed toward "The Wall" as if searching out the names of lost friends. Their Viet Nam-era uniforms bear neither rank nor branch of service, since they represent all who fought and died there.

Also up on that knoll amid a stand of trees you'll always find at least one solitary figure. Invariably he's a vet, afraid to approach "The Wall" yet drawn to it for reasons he alone knows. He seldom says anything but the look in his eyes speaks volumes about a time he'd like to forget but never will. While it's not always the same man there all the time, there's always at least one, seemingly "standing watch" while his buddies rest. He too is healing, in his own way and in his own time.

During Viet Nam, our country was torn apart by social and racial unrest and political dissension. It suffered wounds that are visible to this very day. Perhaps the greatest miracle that "the Wall" has performed was bringing our country back together again and starting the healing process, especially among those to whom it matters the most, the vets themselves.

Still, much remains to be done. Over 1,700 of our citizens are still listed as MIA in Southeast Asia and our country, our people, MUST NOT REST until each and every one of them is found and brought home again. Then and ONLY then will their families and our nation have closure.

Finally there is one more vitally important thing to be done, and this is perhaps the simplest yet most eloquent of all. The next time you meet a Viet Nam vet, you ladies might want to give him a hug while you gentlemen might want to shake his hand. Together you might want to say to him something like "thank you and welcome home."

After all, folks, he's waited more than 37 years to hear those words. Don't you think he's waited ... long enough?

► OTHER STORIES

THE LAST SIX SECONDS

... in the Lives of Two Marines

On Nov 13, 2010, Lt General John Kelly, USMC, gave a speech to the Semper Fi Society of St. Louis, MO. This was four days after his son, Lt Robert Kelly, USMC, was killed by an IED while on his 3rd Combat tour.

During his speech, General Kelly spoke about the dedication and valor of our young men and women who step forward each and every day to protect us. During the speech, he never mentioned the loss of his own son. He closed the speech with the moving account of the last six seconds in the lives of two young Marines who died with rifles blazing to protect their brother Marines.

"I will leave you with a story about the kind of people they are, about the quality of the steel in their backs, about the kind of dedication they bring to our country while they serve in uniform and forever after as veterans.

"Two years ago when I was the Commander of all U.S. and Iraqi forces, in fact, the 22nd of April 2008, two Marine infantry battalions, 1/9 "The Walking Dead," and 2/8 were switching out in Ramadi. One battalion was in the closing days of their deployment going home very soon, the other just starting its seven-month combat tour. Two Marines, Corporal Jonathan Yale and Lance Corporal Jordan Haerter, 22 and 20 years old respectively, one from each battalion, were assuming the watch together at the entrance gate of an outpost that contained a makeshift barracks housing 50 Marines. The same broken down ramshackle building was also home to 100 Iraqi police, also my men and our allies in the fight against the terrorists in Ramadi, a city until recently the most dangerous city on earth and owned by Al Qaeda.

"Yale was a dirt poor mixed-race kid from Virginia with a wife and daughter, and a mother and sister who lived with him and whom he supported as well. He did this on a yearly salary of less than \$23,000. Haerter, on the other hand, was a middle class white kid from Long Island. They were from two completely different worlds. Had they not joined the Marines they would never have met each other, or understood that multiple America's exist simultaneously depending on one's race, education level, economic status, and where you might have been born. But they were Marines, combat Marines, forged in the same crucible of Marine training, and because of this bond they were brothers as close, or closer, than if they were born of the same woman.

"The mission orders they received from the sergeant squad leader I am sure went something like, 'Okay you two clowns, stand this post and let no unauthorized personnel or vehicles pass. You clear?' I am also sure Yale and Haerter then rolled their eyes and said in unison something like, 'Yes Sergeant,' with just enough attitude that made the point without saying the words, 'No kidding sweetheart, we know what we're doing.' They then relieved two other Marines on watch and took up their post at the entry control point of Joint Security Station Nasser, in the Sophia section of Ramadi, Al Anbar, Iraq.

"A few minutes later a large blue truck turned down the alley way—perhaps 60-70 yards in length, and sped its way through the serpentine of concrete jersey walls. The truck stopped just short of where the two were posted

and detonated, killing them both catastrophically. Twenty-four brick masonry houses were damaged or destroyed. A mosque 100 yards away collapsed. The truck's engine came to rest two hundred yards away knocking most of a house down before it stopped. Our explosive experts reckoned the blast was made of 2,000 pounds of explosives. Two died, and because these two young infantrymen didn't have it in their DNA to run from danger, they saved 150 of their Iraqi and American brothers-in-arms.

“When I read the situation report about the incident a few hours after it happened I called the regimental commander for details as something about this struck me as different. Marines dying or being seriously wounded is commonplace in combat. We expect Marines regardless of rank or MOS to stand their ground and do their duty, and even die in the process, if that is what the mission takes. But this just seemed different. The regimental commander had just returned from the site and he agreed, but reported that there were no American witnesses to the event—just Iraqi police. I figured if there was any chance of finding out what actually happened and then to decorate the two Marines to acknowledge their bravery, I'd have to do it as a combat award that requires two eye-witnesses and we figured the bureaucrats back in Washington would never buy Iraqi statements. If it had any chance at all, it had to come under the signature of a general officer.

“I traveled to Ramadi the next day and spoke individually to a half-dozen Iraqi police all of whom told the same story. The blue truck turned down into the alley and immediately sped up as it made its way through the serpentine. They all said, ‘We knew immediately what was going on as soon as the two Marines began firing.’ The Iraqi police then related that some of them also fired, and then to a man, ran for safety just prior to the explosion. All survived. Many were injured, some seriously. One of the Iraqis elaborated and with tears welling up said, ‘They'd run like any normal man would to save his life.’

“What he didn't know until then” he said, “and what he learned that very instant, was that Marines are not normal.” Choking past the emotion he said, “Sir, in the name of God no sane man would have stood there and done what they did. No sane man. They saved us all.”

“What we didn't know at the time, and only learned a couple of days later after I wrote a summary and submitted both Yale and Haerter for posthumous Navy Crosses, was that one of our security cameras, damaged initially in the blast, recorded some of the suicide attack. It happened exactly as the Iraqis had described it. It took exactly six seconds from when the truck entered the alley until it detonated.

“You can watch the last six seconds of their young lives. Putting myself in their heads I supposed it took about a second for the two Marines to separately come to the same conclusion about what was going on once the truck came into their view at the far end of the alley. Exactly no time to talk it over, or call the sergeant to ask what they should do. Only enough time to take half an instant and think about what the sergeant told them to do only a few minutes before, ‘Let no unauthorized personnel or vehicles pass.’ The two Marines had about five seconds left to live.

“It took maybe another two seconds for them to present their weapons, take aim, and open up. By this time the truck was halfway through the barriers and gaining speed the whole time. Here, the recording shows a number of Iraqi police, some of whom had fired their AKs, now scattering like the normal and rational men they were—some running right past the Marines. They had three seconds left to live.

“For about two seconds more, the recording shows the Marines' weapons firing non-stop the truck's windshield exploding into shards of glass as their rounds take it apart and tore in to the body of the (deleted by author) who is trying to get past them to kill their brothers—American and Iraqi-bedded down in the barracks totally unaware of the fact that their lives at that moment depended entirely on two Marines standing their ground.

“If they had been aware, they would have known they were safe because two Marines stood between them and a crazed suicide bomber. The recording shows the truck careening to a stop immediately in front of the two Marines. In all of the instantaneous violence, Yale and Haerter never hesitated. By all reports and by the

recording, they never stepped back. They never even started to step aside. They never even shifted their weight. With their feet spread shoulder width apart, they leaned into the danger, firing as fast as they could work their weapons. They had only one second left to live.

“The truck explodes. The camera goes blank. Two young men go to their God. Six seconds. Not enough time to think about their families, their country, their flag, or about their lives or their deaths, but more than enough time for two very brave young men to do their duty into eternity. That is the kind of people who are on watch all over the world tonight—for you.

“We Marines believe that God gave America the greatest gift he could bestow to man while he lived on this earth—freedom. We also believe he gave us another gift nearly as precious—our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Coast Guardsmen, and Marines—to safeguard that gift and guarantee no force on this earth can ever steal it away.

“It has been my distinct honor to have been with you here today. Rest assured our America, this experiment in democracy started over two centuries ago, will forever remain the "land of the free and home of the brave" so long as we never run out of tough young Americans who are willing to look beyond their own self-interest and comfortable lives, and go into the darkest and most dangerous places on earth to hunt down, and kill, those who would do us harm.

God Bless America, and SEMPER FIDELIS!”

Editor's note: This was written in 2004, but is worth reading again ... and again.

A THANK YOU TO ALL VIETNAM VETS FROM A MARINE IN IRAQ

A guy gets time to think over here and I was thinking about all the support we get from home. Sometimes it's overwhelming. We get care packages at times faster than we can use them. There are boxes and boxes of toiletries and snacks lining the center of every tent; the generosity has been amazing. So, I was pondering the question: "Why do we have so much support?"

In my opinion, it all came down to one thing: Vietnam Veterans. I think we learned a lesson, as a nation, that no matter what, you have to support the troops who are on the line, who are risking everything. We treated them so poorly back then. When they returned was even worse. The stories are nightmarish of what our returning warriors were subjected to. It is a national scar, a blemish on our country, an embarrassment to all of us.

After Vietnam, it had time to sink in. The guilt in our collective consciousness grew. It shamed us. However, we learned from our mistake. Somewhere during the late 1970's and on into the 80's, we realized that we can't treat our warriors that way. So ... starting during the Gulf War, when the first real opportunity arose to stand up and support the troops, we did. We did it to support our friends and family going off to war. But we also did it to right the wrongs from the Vietnam era. We treat our troops of today like the heroes they were, and are, acknowledge and celebrate their sacrifice, and rejoice at their homecoming ... instead of spitting on them.

And that support continues today for those of us in Iraq Our country knows that it must support us and it does. The lesson was learned in Vietnam and we are all better because of it.

Everyone who has gone before is a hero. They are celebrated in my heart. I think admirably of all those who have gone before me. From those who fought to establish this country in the late 1770's to those I serve with here in Iraq . They have all sacrificed to ensure our freedom. But when I get back home, I'm going to make it a personal mission to specifically thank every Vietnam Vet I encounter for THEIR sacrifice. Because if nothing else good came from that terrible war, one thing did. It was the lesson learned on how we treat our warriors. We as a country learned from our mistake and now we treat our warriors as heroes, as we should have all along. I

am the beneficiary of their sacrifice. Not only for the freedom they, like veterans from other wars, ensured, but for how well our country now treats my fellow Marines and I. We are the beneficiaries of their sacrifice.

Semper Fidelis,

Major Brian P. Bresnahan
United States Marine Corps

MARINE HONORS MILITARY AT ROLLING THUNDER

BY TISHA THOMPSON/myfoxdc

WASHINGTON - In a city dedicated to monumental sacrifices, there's one that stands strong and never surrenders.

"It just gives me chills," says Jennifer Phillips of Virginia Beach. "I can't believe he's out there."

Retired Marine Staff Sergeant Tim Chambers has stood at this post since 2002.

"It's an extremely long time to hold a salute that long," says Air Force Master Sergeant Russ Ware of Columbia, MD. "Takes a lot determination and a lot of discipline. This guy does it every year."



With a stiff spine and straight shoulders, this lone marine stands at attention as the Rolling Thunder rumbles by...for more than three hours.

"They zoom by me and I'm getting an eyeball at them," says Chambers. "I'm trying to give every one of them that 'Welcome home' they didn't get."

Chamber says it started as a spontaneous 'Thank you' nine years ago but has now become his moral obligation.

Retired Marine Major Larry Carmon was one of thousands who came to watch Chambers. "I did 28 years in the Corps," Carmon says. "I was a drill instructor. I'm totally impressed with this young man. Totally impressed."

Carmon says holding a salute this long is nearly impossible for a healthy Marine. It's unthinkable for a wounded warrior.

"He has a broken wrist? God Bless him."

Only the slightest of a tremble gave Chambers away. A broken wrist that should have been in a cast was instead held high in a salute.

"I knew something was wrong!" Ware says. "He started to waver a little bit today. That's dedication! That's service before self."

But as one hour bled into the next, the temperatures started to soar.

"If you actually watch him right now, he's in distress," says Dave Macedonia. The veteran says he started ferrying water and aspirin to Chambers when it became apparent the soldier was in pain. "You know, veterans help each other," Macedonia says. "If he falls down out there, we're going to help him."

But Diane Hoge says she knows her son would never let that happen. "He was always very determined," Hoge says. "Everything he does, he puts 150% into it."

She says her son got it from his grandmother Anne DeSanis. Every year, the 81 year-old quietly stands on the sidelines and refuses to sit down until her grandson finishes what he started.

"It's real emotional," she says. "Real emotional."

The Lone Marine has now become a bit of a celebrity. People flock to this corner just to get a picture with of him. But rather than let it go to his head, Chamber says he hopes others will follow his example.

"I'm doing this because America needs to see this," he says. "I want them to emulate it any which way they can across the country."

Because, for Staff Sgt. Tim Chambers, when it comes to remembering the men who serve, you never give up. You never surrender.

SSGT Tim Chambers rode to The Wall with RFTW this year.

► VA NEWS

HOMELESS GRANTS

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced on July 26 the award of nearly \$60 million in homeless prevention grants that will serve approximately 22,000 homeless and at-risk Veteran families as part of the new Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. This initial \$60 million award will serve Veteran families at 85 non-profit community agencies in 40 states and the District of Columbia under VA's new homeless prevention initiative.

"This new homeless prevention program will provide additional comprehensive support to Veterans who have served honorably, and now find themselves in a downward spiral toward despair and homelessness," said VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki. "This program expands our capacity to act before a Veteran becomes homeless and to target the problem of family homelessness. These grants would not have been possible without the extraordinary partnerships forged with community organizers who are firmly committed to making a positive difference in lives of Veterans and their families."

The SSVF Program, a critical element of VA's plan to prevent and end homelessness among Veterans, will promote housing stability among homeless and at-risk Veterans and their families. Under the SSVF program, VA awards grants to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives that can provide a range of supportive services to eligible very low-income Veteran families. Supportive services include outreach, case management, assistance in obtaining VA benefits, and assistance in obtaining and coordinating other public benefits. Grantees will also have the ability to make time-limited temporary financial assistance payments on behalf of Veterans for purposes such as rent payments, utility payments, security deposits, and moving costs.

More information about VA's homeless programs is available online at <http://www.va.gov/homeless>. A list of award recipients and details about the Supportive Services for Veteran Families program are available online at <http://www1.va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp>.

VA REACHING OUT TO WOMEN VETS

VA has embarked on a major initiative to reach out to women Veterans in order to solicit their input on ways to enhance the health care services VA provides to women Veterans. Representatives at VA's Health Resource Center (HRC) are placing calls to women Veterans nationwide, asking them to share their experiences with VA and suggest potential enhancements that will further VA's mission to provide the best care anywhere. "We are taking a proactive approach to enhancing VA health care for women Veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We are seeking the input of women Veterans so VA can continue to provide high quality health care to the growing numbers of women Veterans." Women Veterans are one of the fastest growing segments of the Veteran population. Of the 22.7 million living Veterans, more than 1.8 million are women. VA estimates by 2020 women Veterans will constitute 10 percent of the Veteran population. The HRC, which started placing calls on June 1, is contacting women Veterans who have enrolled, but have not begun using VA services. For more information about VA programs and services for women Veterans, visit: www.va.gov/womenvet and www.publichealth.va.gov/womenshealth.

THE AMERICAN VETERANS AND SERVICEMEMBERS SURVIVAL GUIDE

By Veterans for America

Copyright © 2007, 2008 Veterans for America

Everything you need to know to battle the VA for your benefits. How to cut through the bureaucracy and get what you need—and are entitled to. <http://www.lawyerservingwarriors.com/images/survivalguide.pdf>

You can also access The American Veterans and Servicemembers Survival Guide through the National Veterans Legal Services Program at <http://www.nvlsp.org/>

► OTHER NEWS

FIVE NAMES ADDED TO THE WALL

In May, the names of five American servicemen were inscribed on the black granite walls of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and the status designations will be changed for eight others whose names are already on The Wall.

The five names being added this year meet the Department of Defense (DOD) criteria for addition to The Wall: all of the men died as a result of wounds sustained in the combat zone during the Vietnam War.

SPC Charles J. Sabatier, U.S. Army

Galveston, Texas

July 19, 1945 – June 11, 2009

Date of Casualty: Feb. 3, 1968

Wall Location: Panel 40E, Line 72

Spec. Sabatier was severely wounded in combat during the Tet Offensive. A bullet severed his spinal cord and left him paralyzed. His death in 2009 was a result of his wound and paralysis.

SPC Charles Robert Vest, U.S. Army

Lynchburg, Ohio

Jan. 14, 1943 – Oct. 7, 1974

Date of Casualty: July 26, 1967

Wall Location: Panel 24E, Line 30

Spec. Vest was mortally wounded in combat during the Vietnam War. However, he remained in a coma for seven years before he passed away in a nursing home in Ft. Thomas, Ky.

Sgt. Henry L. Aderholt, U.S. Army

Birmingham, Ala.

May 20, 1947 – Dec. 12, 1972

Date of Casualty: Feb. 14, 1970

Wall Location: Panel 12W, Line 83

Sgt. Aderholt was a door gunner who was wounded in action on Feb. 14, 1970 and died of those wounds on Dec. 12, 1972.

ETR2 Richard Lewis Daniels, U.S. Navy

Washougal, Wash.

Sept. 6, 1947 – March 1, 1971

Date of Casualty: March 1, 1971

Wall Location: Panel 4W, Line 108

ETR2 Daniels died as a result of gunshot wounds at Dong Tam, South Vietnam, while on board an APL-30 Navy barracks barge.

BT3 Peter Otto Holcomb, U.S. Navy

Grandy, Minn.

Jan. 26, 1946 – March 13, 1966

Date of Casualty: March 13, 1966

Wall Location: Panel 15E, Line 60

BT3 Holcomb died as a result of an accident aboard the U.S.S. Mahan.

Status Changes

Beside each name on the Memorial is a symbol designating status. The diamond symbol denotes confirmed death. The cross represents missing in action. When a service member's remains are returned or accounted for, the diamond is superimposed over the cross. In addition to the five names being added this year, eight designation changes will be made as well. They include:

- Sgt. 1st Class Douglas Edward Dahill of Lima, Ohio, Panel 27W, Line 99
- Army CW3 George Andrews Howes of Knox, Ind., Panel 14W, Line 23
- Army Master Sgt. Charles Vernon Newton of Canadian, Texas, Panel 27W, Line 102
- Marine Corps Sgt. Samuel Eugene Hewitt of Walkerton, Ind., Panel 6E, Line 41
- Air Force Maj. Thomas John Beyer of Fargo, N.D., Panel 50W, Line 34
- Air Force Col. James Eugene Dennany of Mattawan, Mich., Panel 16W, Line 63
- Air Force Maj. Richard Gene Elzinga of Shedd, Ore., Panel 12W, Line 45
- Air Force Maj. Robert Leon Tucci of Detroit, Mich., Panel 16W, Line 68

Adding Names

These changes will bring the total number of names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to 58,272 men and women who were killed or remain missing in action.

PETRY AWARDED MEDAL OF HONOR

Sergeant First Class Leroy Arthur Petry, US Army (born 29 July 1979) was nominated for The Medal of Honor for his actions during a firefight in Afghanistan as a Staff Sergeant in the 2nd Ranger Battalion. Upon his Medal of Honor presentation ceremony on July 12, 2011, he became the second living recipient of the award for actions occurring since the Vietnam War.

At the time of his actions in Afghanistan, Petry was assigned to Company D, 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington. His actions came as part of a rare daylight raid to capture a high-value target. On the day of the actions that would earn Petry the Medal of Honor, 26 May 2008, he was to locate himself with the platoon headquarters in the target building once it was secured. Once there, he was to serve as the senior noncommissioned officer at the site for the remainder of the operation



Special Operations forces typically conduct their missions at night, but this mission was conducted during daylight/ The operation involved about 70 Rangers, who encountered about 40 enemies, 12 of them armed. Almost immediately after getting out of their helicopters, the Rangers came under strong fire. Petry provided additional supervision to an assaulting squad during the clearance of a building; afterwards he took PFC Lucas Robinson to clear the outer courtyard that had not yet been cleared.

Three enemy fighters were in the courtyard, which had a chicken coop within it. The enemy fired on them; Petry was wounded by one round which went through both his legs, and Robinson was wounded, being hit on his side plate. Wounded, Petry led Robinson to the cover of the chicken coop and reported the contact and their wounded condition. Petry threw a thermobaric grenade from cover. There at the chicken coup, they were joined by SGT Daniel Higgins, who assessed the wounds of the two soldiers.

An enemy threw a grenade at their position which landed 10 meters from them; it detonated, knocked them to the ground, wounded Higgins, and Robinson was further wounded. Shortly thereafter the three were joined by SSG James Roberts and SPC Christopher Gathercole. Another grenade was thrown by an enemy which landed a few feet from the wounded Rangers Higgins and Robinson; Petry, knowing the risk to his life, threw the grenade back in the direction whence it came.

Petry later recalled his immediate reaction was "get it out of here, get it away from the guys and myself. And I reached over, leaned over to the right, grabbed it with my hand, and I threw it as hard as I could, what I thought was at the time. And as soon as I opened my hand to let it go, it just exploded instantly. And I came back, and the hand was completely severed off." The detonation amputated his right hand, and sprayed his body with shrapnel. In throwing the grenade away, it saved the lives of the two others with him.

Petry placed a tourniquet on his right arm. Roberts began to fire at the enemy, suppressing the enemy in the courtyard. An additional enemy on the east end of the courtyard fired, fatally wounding Gathercole. Higgins and Robinson returned fire, killing the enemy.

They were then joined by SFC Jerod Staidle, the Platoon Sergeant, and SPC Gary Depriest, a medic. Directing the medic to treat Gathercole, Petry was assisted by Staide and Higgins to the casualty collection point.

Petry lost his right arm below the elbow. He was evacuated to a U.S. hospital in Germany, where he spent several weeks in recovery before being transferred to Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center in Foot Hood, , Texas. He now uses a prosthetic in place of his right arm. On the prosthetic is a small plaque listing the names of the fallen Rangers of his regiment. After recovering, Petry did not seek a medical discharge; rather he remains in the Army, and had a deployment to Afghanistan between recovering and receiving the Medal of

Honor on 12 July 2011. He has served in a series of combat tours, totaling 28 months within 8 deployments, in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Petry is currently stationed at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, where he assists injured Rangers. In 2010, he re-enlisted in the Army for an indefinite term of service. As of July 2011, Petry is attending Pierce College.

Petry received the Medal of Honor from President Barach Obama on 12 July 2011 in a ceremony at the White House. He is the second living recipient of the medal, after Salvatore Giunta, for actions occurring after the Vietnam War and the ninth recipient for actions in Iraq or Afghanistan. SSG Giunta was in attendance at the awarding ceremony

Petry and his wife Ashley have four children: Ashley's three children from a previous relationship (Brittany, Austin, and Reagan), whom Petry is raising as his own, and one son, Landon.

MEYER APPROVED FOR MEDAL OF HONOR



A third living soldier will receive the Medal of Honor. He is Marine Corporal Dakota Meyer, 22, a scout sniper who left active duty in June 2010, and now resides in Austin, Texas.

Meyer was on a mission to meet with tribal elders in Afghanistan, in a village close to the Pakistani border, on September 8, 2009. They came under attack from heavily armed insurgents who outnumbered them more than four to one. Frantic pleas for artillery support were refused, leading to letters of reprimand for several of the officers in charge of the operation.

The officers might have been negligent, but Cpl. Meyer was amazing.

Meyer, then 21, went into the kill zone on foot after helicopter pilots called on to respond said they could not help retrieve the four missing service members because the fighting on the ground was too fierce, according to a witness statement he provided the military. He found his buddies in a trench where pilots had spotted them.

Meyer was born in Greensburg, Kentucky, and after completing training to be a United States Marine he deployed to Fallujah, Iraq, in 2007 as a Scout Sniper with 3rd Battalion 3rd Marines. He gained national attention for his actions in Afghanistan during his second deployment in Kunar Province with Embedded Training Team 2-8.

On June 9, 2011, the Marine Corps announced that two other Marines on Meyer's team in Ganjgal would receive the Navy Cross, the second-highest valor award a Marine can receive. Capt. Ademola D. Fabayo and Staff Sgt. Juan J. Rodriguez-Chavez were recognized for their roles in retrieving the missing Marines and corpsman. Before Meyer went looking for them on foot, Rodriguez-Chavez also drove a gun truck into the kill zone while Fabayo manned its machine gun.

On July 18, 2011, President Barack Obama called Meyer and informed him his case for the Medal of Honor had been approved. No date for the White House ceremony has been announced.

Corporal Dakota Meyer will be the first living Marine to receive the Medal of Honor since Vietnam.

MISSING WORLD WAR II SUB FOUND WITH 42 ENTOMBED SAILORS

In May an exploration team led by Tim Taylor aboard the expedition vessel "RV Tiburon" located and documented the wreck of the World War II submarine *USS R-12* (SS-89).

The *R-12* was lost on June 12, 1943 in 600 feet of water, sinking in less than 15 seconds. She sank nearly 70 years ago taking 42 US servicemen to their deaths off the coast of the Florida Keys, USA. The reason for her loss remains unknown.

R-12 began its career as a World War I era sub that was re-commissioned for service in World War II. At the time of the sinking *R-12* was engaged in war time patrol operations near Key West. Only two officers and 3 enlisted men survived the disaster that claimed 42 lives. In making the discovery, the team deployed a state of the art autonomous underwater robot which collected first ever imagery of the remains of *R-12*.

They are collaborating and sharing their findings with the US Navy. RV Tiburon is launching an expedition in the Spring of 2012 to further investigate the possible causes of the sinking, and collect detailed archeological baseline data.

VVMF BEGINS SOIL TESTING ON EDUCATION CENTER SITE

Geotechnical and soil testing, the first step in the construction process for the Education Center at The Wall, began in late April and will continue for several weeks.

The work is being done by Schnabel Engineering of West Chester, Pa., and is supervised by Tishman Construction Corp., the construction manager for the Education Center.

VVMF President Jan Scruggs and other organization officials have been spending time on the site surveying the progress and talking to those involved. To see photos of Jan Scruggs' onsite visit from April 29, click here: <http://vvmf.org/701.cfm>.

► BRINGING THEM HOME

AIR FORCE PILOT MISSING FROM VIETNAM IDENTIFIED

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced today that the remains of a serviceman, missing in action from the Vietnam War, have been identified and returned to his family for burial with full military honors.

Air Force Maj. Richard G. Elzinga of Shedd, Ore., will be buried on July 8 in Arlington National Cemetery. On March 26, 1970, Elzinga and his co-pilot went missing when their O-1G Birddog aircraft failed to return to base from a familiarization flight over Laos. Fifteen minutes after the last radio contact, a communication and visual search showed no sign of the men or their aircraft. Search and rescue missions continued for two days with no results.

Between 1994 and 2009, joint U.S.-Lao People's Democratic Republic teams led by Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, analyzed leads, interviewed villagers, and surveyed possible crash site locations. During several joint field surveys, teams recovered human remains, aircraft wreckage, and crew-related equipment.

Among other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory also used mitochondrial DNA—which matched that of his aunt and cousin—in the identification of Elzinga's remains.

REMAINS OF AIR FORCE 1ST LT. DAVID A. THORPE IDENTIFIED

More than 40 years ago Air Force 1st Lt. David A Thorpe was declared missing in action from the Vietnam War. Now his family will finally receive some closure.

Thorpe's remains were identified by forensic anthropologists and returned to his family. He was buried in Arlington National Cemetery on June 23 with full military honors.

On October 3, 1966, Thorpe and four other airmen failed to arrive at Nha Trang Air Base after their departure from the Tan Son Nhut Air Base in South Vietnam. Eight days later, their remains were recovered by rescue personnel at a crash site some 40 miles west of Nha Trang. The cause of the crash is not known.

For years, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, or JPAC, lacked the advanced procedures needed to compare and test DNA for individual identification. Most of the remains recovered at the crash site were buried as part of a group in Arlington, while other remains associated with the group were saved for future testing. Forensic anthropologists with JPAC used dental records and a sample of Thorpe's DNA to discover a match with his sister, the Department of Defense said.

Since 1973, the remains of more than 700 Americans killed in the Vietnam War have been returned and identified, according to the Defense Prisoner of War/ Missing Personnel Office. More than 1,600 service members remain missing from the Vietnam War.

Since late 1973, the remains of 938 Americans killed in the Vietnam War have been accounted for and returned to their families, with more than 1,600 service members still missing

JPAC TEAMS SEARCH FOR MISSING WWII AMERICANS

Several archeological recovery teams and investigation teams from the U.S. Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) deployed in June to the Federated States of Micronesia (Yap), Wake Island, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the Kingdom of Belgium searching for Americans missing from World War II.

About 50 JPAC team members deployed. Recovery teams will search for human remains, life support items, and other material evidence (personal and military issued items) that may lead to the identification of Americans missing from past U.S. conflicts. Investigation teams will authenticate leads from eyewitnesses, conduct field research, and gather information throughout the various locations to determine whether or not there will be a return visit for excavation at a later date.

The Federated States of Micronesia (Yap): The cooperation between the United States and the Federated States of Micronesia on accounting for Americans missing from World War II expanded this week with the arrival of a specially trained U.S. investigative team.

"The people of Yap are excited to support JPAC," said Tammy Weese, JPAC Policy & Negotiations Officer. "Everyone I've spoken with has given their strongest support to our investigation mission and wants it to be a success."

During the month-long investigation, team members will interview eyewitnesses and families of eyewitnesses for clues to the location of aircraft crash sites and isolated burials for up to 30 American servicemen. The team will also conduct site surveys in order to gather enough evidence to determine if there is any correlation to the World War II-era aircraft losses. These investigations will help set the groundwork for future recovery teams by clearly defining the work that will be required to properly and efficiently recover the site.

Federal Republic of Germany and Kingdom of Belgium: more than 40 JPAC recovery team members will excavate three aircraft crash sites in search of six missing Americans during the approximately 45-day deployment.

Wake Island: A recovery team deployed to the island to conduct recovery operations at a possible mass grave location.

► EVENTS

OFFICIAL REUNION – TULSA, OK

August 4, 2011

RUN FOR THE WALL'S 1ST Annual Official Reunion for both Central and Southern Routes

Friday, August 5th - Sunday, August 7th, 2011, In TULSA, OKLAHOMA

This is your chance to get acquainted with those you don't get to see on the "RUN". Also, attend the "Rider's Meeting" and *put your two cents worth in!* Ride some new roads, and have some great fun!

The Wyndham (\$89) Host Hotel

(formerly The Radisson Hotel) -

10918 East 41st Street, Tulsa, OK, 74146 (918) 627-5000.

(Includes Breakfast Buffet; Rooms available Thursday when the BOD will be arriving)

La Quinta, (\$60)

10829 East 41st Street, Tulsa, OK, 74146 (918) 665-0220

Camping: Mingo RV Park

801 North Mingo Road, Tulsa, OK, 74116 (918) 832-8824

Friday the BOD meeting 8-5.

- A planned lunch ride around the lake.
- This evening is free

Saturday morning /afternoon –

- Morning group ride
- Riders meeting in the afternoon, FNGs PLEASE PARTICIPATE.

Saturday evening –

- A dinner (included in registration cost) is being served in a private room for the group.

Sunday morning-

- Time to head home.

PLEASE FILL OUT AND RETURN TO ADDRESS BELOW, PRINT CLEARLY

REGISTRATION COST: Pre-Registration - \$40, Day of Arrival Sign-Up - \$50

(No Guarantee That You Will Be Fed Without Prepayment)

Name(s) _____

Phone _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Refer to RFTW website (rftw.org) for complete details on rides, meetings, dinner, etc.

Mail registration and payment to: David Hampton, PO Box 3899, Muskogee, OK 74402

David "Wahoo" Hampton - E-Mail: wahoortw@hotmail.com

“UNOFFICIAL” REUNIONS

KERRVILLE TX:

Where: YO Ranch Resort Hotel, Kerrville TX
2033 Sidney Baker - 877-967-3767

When: September 23-25, 2011

Ready for a great time in the Texas Hill Country to catch up and reminisce on the recent ride? Here is your opportunity to see old friends and make new ones with riders attending from both central and southern routes.

The YO Resort is a full-facility hotel with restaurant, lounge, and conference rooms. This hotel provides us with everything we need for a relaxing fun weekend with our RFTW friends and family. A block of hotel rooms is being held until 7 a.m. on August 22, 2011. Ask for the RFTW group rate. 877-967-3767. The YO Ranch Resort is located off Interstate 10, take exit 508. Hotel is south of I-10, approx. 1/2 mile on the left. To check out the hotel amenities and accommodations, go to www.yoresort.com.

Room rates per night available for 8/17-8/20/09:

Single/double rate \$92.00

Family suite \$159.00

1 bedroom suite \$185.00

2 bedroom suite \$260.00

Those needing RV accommodations:

Kerrville-Schreiner Park: call 830-257-5392 (closest to the hotel, city park, call for reservations)

Buckhorn off I-10: call 800-568-6458

Friday – Arrival day is open for those interested in the Friday rides or catching up with friends.

Saturday morning /afternoon -Various rides and meetings are being planned.

Saturday evening - A buffet dinner is being served in a private room for the group. The dinner will include coffee and tea service. Adult beverages will be available from the lounge.

Sunday morning is open for breakfast and coffee with friends before heading home.

Saturday's dinner and a RFTW 2011 Reunion rocker are included in the, non-refundable, registration fee. For first-timers to YO RFTW Reunion, a reunion patch is included.

Registration cost: Now until September 3rd - \$30.00

Registration cost: September 4th – September 12th - \$45.00

For additional information, contact Janice Wentworth at 214-906-5357 or email stitchnbitch1@earthlink.net

Deadline for the registration is September 12th paid in advance. The deadline is required by the hotel to confirm head count for Saturday’s dinner. So tell your friends. Prior registration and payment is required.

(Please print clearly)

Name(s)_____

Road name(s)_____

Number of Attendees:_____

Full Address:_____

Email:_____ Phone:_____

Send checks payable to: Janice Wentworth, PO Box 192, Gorham, KS 67640 (paypal payment is available – call or email for details. \$1 extra for paypal registrations) Your email receipt will be your dinner/ticket confirmation.

ANGEL FIRE, NEW MEXICO:

Where: Angel Fire/Eagle Nest, New Mexico; mention RFTW Reunion for Group Discount

When: September 2-5, 2011

- Friday, Sept. 2, 3 to 4 p.m.: Meet & Greet with light refreshments at Eagle Nest Senior Center
- Friday, Sept. 2, 4 to 5 p.m.: Riders Meeting (Q&A with board members & Route Coordinators) at Eagle Nest Senior Center
- Saturday, Sept 3, 9 a.m.: Brick-laying (including Medal of Honor bricks) at Memorial
- Saturday, Sept 3, noon: Lunch provided by the Westphall Foundation
- Saturday, Sept 3, 6:30 p.m. Dinner at Eagle Nest Senior Center. Chicken parmesan on a bed of angel hair pasta; sautéed veggies, salad, hot roll, coffee, tea, lemonade, or water, and dessert. Cost is \$13 for adults and \$7 for children, and includes gratuity. **Reservations for dinner must be made by Aug. 24.** Call Barbara Moreno at 505-250-6495.
- Sunday, Sept 4: Possible ride, weather permitting.

All other meals are on your own.

We need experienced bricklayers to help with the bricklaying on Saturday. If you have experience, especially with laying bricks in sand, and can help, please call Dave Gladwills at 209-329-9367.

The Angel Fire Reunion Coordinator is Dave “Trunks” Gladwills. If you have questions, you can email him at gladwills@sbcglobal.net or call him at 209-329-9367.

HOTELS/MOTELS (Be sure to request RFTW rate):

HOST HOTEL: LAGUNA VISTA LODGE—800-821-2093 or 575-377-6522

Room with 2 queen beds	\$76.49
Room with king bed	\$76.49
Cabin (2 units share porch)	\$76.49 (each has 1 queen bed & full-size futon, frig.)
King Cabin (king bed)	\$76.49
Sportsman Cabin (sleeps 4)	\$112.49 (Queen bed & full-size futon, frig, range, oven)
2-Bedroom Apartment	\$112.49 (queen bed in ea. room & queen sleeper sofa; kitchenette)
2-Room Suite (sleeps 6)	\$94.49 (3 queen beds, frig)
Historic Residence (sleeps 8)	\$179.99 & up for 4 people; \$20 ea. additional person. (2 bdrms w/queen beds & 2 full-size futons; full kitchen, washer & dryer)

OTHER HOTELS:

Angel Fire Resort

One North Angel Fire Road, Angel Fire, NM
575-377-6401 or 800-633-7463

Standard Room:	\$78.00 per night plus tax
King Room:	\$78.00 per night plus tax
Deluxe:	\$99.00 per night plus tax
Condo:	20% off rack rate with a 2 night minimum

D & D Motel and Country Kitchen

116 West Therma Drive. Eagle Nest, NM
575-377-2408 575-377-2408

Scenic, comfortable motel and dining. Dining open 7 days a week 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Econo Lodge, Eagle Nest \$69.99 plus tax
715 Hwy 64 East - 575-377-6813, 575-376-2035

www.choicehotels.com

Rooms with a view of the lake. Game and conference rooms

Elk Horn Lodge

3377 Mountain View Blvd. Angel Fire 575-377-2811

Golden Eagle Rv Park and Country Store

540 Therma Drive, Eagle Nest, NM
575-377-6188 575-377-6188

goldeneaglernv@msn.com, www.goldeneaglernv.com

Horse Shoe Motel and Cabins

350 E. Therma Drive, Eagle Nest, NM
575-377-6961 575-377-6961 Fax: 575-377-6964

Dah1874@aol.com

www.horseshoe-eaglenest.net

Motel and cabin rentals. Restaurant on site.

Log Cabin On Willow Creek Road

169 Willow Creek Road, Eagle Nest
580-688-2362 580-688-2362 or 580-381-0444 580-381-0444

cabinonwillowcreek@live.com, www.vbro.com/261504

Rustic log cabin with the comforts of home. Heated by propane/wood burning stove. Furnished with linens, towels, and dishes.

Lost Eagle RV Park

155 E. Therma Drive, Eagle Nest, NM
575-377-2374 575-377-2374 Fax: 575-377-2566

tsangster@hughes.net

43 sites, full hook-ups, center of town location. Walk to restaurants and shops. Games, cookouts, pot luck dinners.

Mountain View Cabins and RV Park

28386 Hwy 64, Eagle Nest, NM
575-377-6941 575-377-6941 Fax: 575-377-3543

snow@afweb.com www.cti-excursions.com

Cabins and RV park.

Cabins 1 thru 5 sleep 2 people w/kitchenette and only a shower \$75.00 + tax

Cabin 6 newer \$135+ tax sleeps 6, porch, wood stove, 2 full bath/shower, queen & full bed in each room Cabins

7, 8, 9 \$85.00 + tax sleeps 5, kitchen equipped \$5.00 each additional person

Cabin 10 \$115.00 + tax sleeps 4 people each additional person \$10.00 2 queens and a couch

Cabin 11 \$115.00 + tax per night, sleeps 6 each additional person \$10.00, fireplace

Cabin 12 \$160.00 + tax per night HUGE kitchen, Living room, fireplace, 2 full baths, queen & twin

Also available are RV hookups @\$28.00 + tax per night or weekly rate of \$100.00

Pepper Sauce Camp

28358 Highway 64, Eagle Nest, NM
575-377-2567 575-377-2567

emily@embler.net www.peppersaucecamp.com

Cabin rentals

Weathers' RV Park

1200 E. Therma Drive (Hwy 64), Eagle Nest, NM
575-377-2276 575-377-2276

weathersrvpark@qwestoffice.net

www.weathersrvpark.qwestoffice.net

Full service park, 30 and 50 amp hookups, indoor and outdoor facilities, laundry, planned activities

West Lake RV Park

Hwy 64 at Fisherman's Lane, Eagle Nest, NM
575-377-7275 575-377-7275 or 870-782-4760 870-782-4760 (winter)

Gplenz2@yahoo.com

RV park with group pavilion and covered tables

If you have trouble finding lodging, call **Discover Angel Fire**, central source for lodging in Angel Fire and Eagle Nest: 575-377-6062 575-377-6062

reserve@discoverangelfire.com, www.discoverangelfire.com

► SICK CALL

Luis “Watching Wolf” Tijerina

Luis, of the Comanche Nation, does the Indian Blessing every year for the RFTW Southern Route. He had a motorcycle accident in Midland, TX on April 29 and suffered eight broken ribs and a collapsed lung. Because of his proactive gear he had no other broken bones. He



was fully awake when the doctors were forced to cut into his chest and rib cage to force a tube into his lung—with no anesthesia, just a topical anesthetic. Luis had two Code Blue episodes.

Although everyone expected that he would not be able to attend RFTW in May to offer his annual blessing, he was indeed there. A miraculous recovery.

Cowboy

Roger Mead was hit head-on by a drunk driver making a bad turn. She left the scene, but an off-duty Customs agent saw it and chased her down. Cowboy's bike's front end was destroyed. He had gashes across his nose, eyebrow, and left thumb, but no stitches.

Big E

Get well wishes to Big E of Topeka, KS, who is recovering from a motorcycle accident on his way home from RFTW. His right elbow was broken and right ankle was broken in two places. He also may need surgery on his left thumb. He's healing well and expects his bike to be ready about the same time as his ankle heals. He thanks everyone for their thoughts and prayers.

► TAPS

Joe Morris, Sr. – Navajo Code Talker

Joe Morris, Sr., longtime resident of Daggett, passed away July 17 of a stroke at the VA Loma Linda Healthcare System. He was 85. He had been in the hospital for nearly a year recovering from a stroke and had broken his hip a month ago. He was one of more than 400 American Indians who used the language of their ancestors to relay secret battlefield orders during World War II



He was born April 19, 1926 on the Navajo reservation of Indian Wells, Ariz. As the oldest of his siblings, Morris was responsible for tending the family's horses and sheep. Life on the reservation was harsh. With no electricity or running water in the family's hogan, Morris and his three brothers and sister slept on a dirt floor with sheepskins for warmth and comfort. At the age of 12 he received his only formal education when he attended a residential school 70 miles from the reservation. Two years later his education came to an abrupt end when the school was converted into an internment camp after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

When he was 17, he lied about his age to obtain a military draft card. After marrying his wife, Charlotte, they moved to Daggett and raised a daughter, Colleen Anderson, a Marine, and two sons. Following his service, he took a civilian job at the local military base in Barstow, Calif.

After spending five months training at Camp Pendleton learning the Navajo code and terms for military hardware, battlefield sites, and key officials, he spent two years in the Pacific with the 6th Marine Division 22nd Regiment as a code talker making stops in Guam, the Guadalcanal, Saipan, Okinawa and Tinstao, China until he was discharged as a corporal in 1946.

Morris and the rest of the Navajo Code Talkers received the Congressional Silver Medal in 2001 in recognition of their contribution to the war effort. The original 29 code talkers received the Congressional Gold Medal for their work in creating the original code.

Morris frequently spoke about the Code Talkers at schools, the College of the Sequoias, and the Tulare Historical Museum in Tulare County.

Morris was buried at Riverside National Cemetery. He leaves behind his wife of 61 years, Charlotte, three children, Joseph Morris Jr., Colleen Anderson, and Elliott Morris, along with three grandchildren, Christopher, Stephanie a US Marine, and Nolen. His parents were Charley and Alice Morris.

There is only one of the original 29 Code Talkers remaining, Chester Nez. About 10 of the other 400 Code Talkers remain.

Craig “Bart” Bartholomew

Craig "Bart" Bartholomew passed peacefully at home on May 24, 2011. Born May 31, 1951 to Ladd and Jean Mary Bartholomew in St. Johns, Michigan he graduated from St. Johns High School in 1969 as a standout athlete. He was a RFTW Central Route Road Guard.

Bart joined the United States Marines in 1969 and served in Vietnam. He later moved to Ft. Collins, Colo. where he met Kim Ilene Morrison, later marrying on September 21, 1978. He took a job as an engineer with Sprint Telecommunications, working for them until 2009. During his time in Ft. Collins he actively participated as a soccer coach and referee within the local community. He enjoyed fishing, camping, riding motorcycles, traveling, and the time spent playing with his grandchildren.

Bart is survived by his wife of 32 years, Kim, two sons and six grandchildren, a sister, brother, and numerous nieces and nephews.

David Fitzgerald

PGR Ride Captain David “Rat Bastard” Fitzgerald died May 19, 2011 in a motorcycle accident in Albuquerque. He was on his way to Las Cruces to join RFTW. RFTW sends its condolences to Fitzgerald’s family. He will be missed.

► CLOSING THOUGHTS

From the closing lines of Michael Norman's *These Good Men*:

These Good Men. I now know why men who have been to war yearn to reunite. Not to tell stories or look at old pictures. Not to laugh or weep. Comrades gather because they long to be with the men who once acted their best, men who suffered and sacrificed, who were stripped raw, right down to their humanity. I did not pick these men. They were delivered by fate and the U.S. Marine Corps. But I know them in a way I know no other men. I have never given anyone such trust. **They were willing to guard something more precious than my life. They would have carried my reputation, the memory of me.** It was *part of the bargain* we all made, the reason we were so willing to die for one another. I cannot say where we are headed. Ours are not perfect friendships; those are the province of legend and myth. A few of my comrades drift far from me now, sending back only occasional word. I know that one day even these could fall to silence. Some of the men will stay close, a couple, perhaps, always at hand. As long as I have memory, I will think of them all, every day. I am sure that when I leave this world, my last thought will be of my family and my comrades. :

....such good men.

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