



RUN FOR THE WALL

Quarterly Newsletter

“We Ride For Those Who Can’t”

April 2013

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- The Editor’s Notes
- President’s Message
- Messages from the BOD
- Insurance on RFTW
- All the Way! What It Really Means
- Message From SR Coordinator
- Message From CR Coordinator
- Rancho Schedule
- VIP Escort for Rolling Thunder
- 25th Anniversary Patch and Coins
- Gifts for the Kids
- Registration Reminders
- Staying Hydrated
- Get Your Bike Ready to Go
- Flag Protocol for Bikes and Cars
- Chase Vehicle Policy
- Fuel Stop Reminder
- What to Pack for the Run
- How We Ride
- Run Q&A
- Missing Man Formation
- Minor Children
- Misc. Reminders
- Evening Parade in D.C.
- May 13th Wounded Warrior Ride
- May 14th Ride to Riverside National Cemetery
- Tuesday Night Dinner
- Washington D.C. Activities
- Some Things to Think About
- A Day at Walmart
- The Road Guard
- Just a Coincidence?
- The Winds of Change
- RFTW Booth
- Wytheville RFTW Documentary
- Iraqi POW to Ride With RFTW
- Operation Homecoming
- Roy A. Benavidez
- VA to Expedite Claims
- Camp Lejeune
- New Distinguished Warfare Medal
- Veterans Death Pension
- Access Card for Gold Star Families
- Events
- Chaplain Who Died in POW Camp Awarded MOH
- U.S. Expedition for Remains Put Off
- Change of Status
- Vietnam Repatriates Remains
- MOH Recipient Returned From Korea
- Soldier Laid to Rest After 63 Years
- Announcements
- Sick Call
- Taps
- Closing Thoughts

THE EDITOR’S NOTES



There are three extraordinary stories about three extraordinary men in this issue. Two men were posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, both died in the Korean War, and both were only returned home recently. One was awarded the MOH after his death, the other just last week.

The third was a man of incredible determination and will power, overcoming unbelievable wounds and doctors’ prognosis that he would never walk again. He refused to accept that fate, and not only forced himself to walk again, but returned to war to earn the MOH.

Be sure to read the stories about these three heroes.

There are heroes all around us, if we only look.

Now I'd like to tell you about a very special dinner I had with friends on April 12. The occasion was the signing of a new bill signed in the Arizona Senate, giving veterans credit for education and experience while in the service. In the past, veterans looking for a job in the field they had experience in while in the service would have to spend sometimes thousands of dollars on classes and tests for a job they had years of experience in already. AZ Rep. Sonny Borrelli, from Lake Havasu City, himself a retired Gunny Sergeant in the USMC, introduced the bill. Under the terms of HB 2076, the Arizona Department of Transportation could waive the driving tests for commercial licenses for recently discharged veterans who can show they have comparable experience while in uniform. The only thing they would be required to do is pass a written exam on state motor vehicle laws. The legislation also permits the state Board of Nursing to consider the experience that a veteran has had as a medic in determining whether he or she has met the requirements for a nursing license.

The bill was signed into law by Governor Jan Brewer on April 12, and that night I joined Sonny, Lake Havasu's mayor, a councilperson, and a few others to celebrate. This is a huge step to benefit veterans, and three states now have passed similar bills. If your state has not yet passed such a bill, keep pressuring your Representative to support a bill so that ALL U.S. veterans eventually will be able to get credit for their service experience when applying for a civilian job.

See you all at Rancho soon!

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

Hope everyone is getting ready to do the ride of a lifetime. We are close now, so everyone should be getting their bikes and gear in shape. A few things to remember are your medications that you will need for the two to three-week trip. I usually lay out all my clothes and then pack half of them and then take it all out and take half of that. There will be places along the way where you can do laundry. Be sure to bring a copy of your insurance for your bike and your motorcycle endorsement, as well.

I know many of you have pre-registered, and that is good. If you printed it out after you completed the form, bring that with you, as well. When you get to Rancho or wherever you will be joining The Run, as you fill out your medical form, be sure to list a contact with phone number who is not on The Run with you.



This is the 25th year for Run For The Wall and there are a lot of new things that will be happening on both routes. This will be an exciting year for all the FNG's and the riders that have done the mission before. If anyone has any questions on anything to do with The Run, please contact me, either of the Route Coordinators or any of the Board of Directors, and we will try to answer any questions you may have. Until we meet in May, be safe and ride safe.

Thanks,

Ray "Too Tall" McDowell
President BOD Run For The Wall 2013

► 2013 RFTW NEWS

MESSAGES FROM THE BOD

Two subjects have come up that need to be addressed.

1. The Board of Directors announces that the rumor that RFTA (Run for Them All) has been dropped is not true. RFTA is a good program, and the BOD has no plans to drop it.
2. Many riders have asked if listening to music while in formation is allowed. While the BOD realizes that a long ride can be monotonous and music helps keep one alert, the BOD prefers that riders be always alert to their surroundings. The ride is not monotonous if you're constantly being vigilant to the bikes and other things around you. If Road Guards notice that riders are unable to be aware of their surroundings because of the music, they will tell those riders to turn off the music. They will also tell them to turn it off if riders around them complain about loud music that distracts them

INSURANCE ON RFTW

John "Wicked" McKee
RFTW Board of Directors
Director of Risk Management/Purchasing

I was just notified by Shirley "Hugs" Scott that she's had several calls from FNGs concerning their insurance coverage on The Run. It seems that, for whatever reason, they contacted their insurance carriers/agents telling them of their participation in Run For The Wall, and were told that Run For The Wall provides insurance for them by virtue of Run For The Wall's insurance provided through American Motorcyclist Association AND that their personal insurance would not cover them while on a "poker run."

First and foremost, Run For The Wall's insurance policy provided through AMA has been purchased by Run For The Wall to protect Run For The Wall, Inc. from lawsuits arising from our activities while traveling from LA to DC. Our policy DOES NOT provide coverage for riders and other participants.

While I cannot speak to the matter of coverage during a "poker run" by their specific policies, I see no such "Exclusions" in my policy provided by AllState, AND Run For The Wall is NOT a "poker run."

I suggest that any rider who has been informed that they are not covered by their "paid-for" insurance because they're on a "poker run" review their policies to determine if any such exclusionary language is part of the policy. Furthermore, they should inform the uninformed insurance agent(s) as to the nature of Run For The Wall.

Bottom Line: There is no need to contact your insurance agent other than to renew your policy if it is due to expire before or during The Run.

ALL THE WAY! WHAT IT REALLY MEANS

As you all know, the 25th Anniversary of Run For The Wall is right around the corner. By now we should all be taking our motorcycles out of the garage (or out of the snow) and getting them washed down, tuned up, and safety inspected. I know I am!

According to what we are seeing from some of the web posts, some people are not clear on exactly what "All The Way" means. It appears that the perception of "All The Way" is that a participant is starting from some point along the route and riding all the way to Washington, DC. This is not the case (unless your hometown is Rancho Cucamonga). Within the Run For The Wall concept, "All The Way" means that you will be registering and starting the Run in Rancho Cucamonga, CA and riding all the way to Washington, DC. So I thought I would post this to eliminate any confusion or misperception.

When it comes to ordering Run For The Wall patches, there is no "patch police." Anyone can order any patches they want. The patch you choose to wear is based on the honor system. I just want to thank you for supporting Run For The Wall.

If anybody has questions about this, please feel free to contact me. I hope everybody has a safe ride to wherever their starting point is. See you on the Run!

Daryl "Top" Neil, Director
Run For The Wall, Inc.

MESSAGE FROM SR COORDINATOR



May is fast approaching and the leadership teams have been working hard getting everything in place to ensure a successful Mission.

I apologize for not contributing to the Newsletter in the past, but check out the Southern Route Coordinator page on www.rftw.org for more information about myself, your leadership team, and our Mission.

This year is Run For The Wall's 25th Anniversary. For some, it's their first Mission, while others have been involved for years—there are even a few that this will be their 25th year participating in RFTW. Run For the Wall has become my family, but wouldn't it be wonderful if we had to change our Mission—change it because all our Heroes were home? There are 83,000+ Americans still on foreign soil and 83,000+ families that still wonder where their loved one is located. Let's all work together to ensure that our Country continues to search for those that raised their right hand to defend the freedom of all Americans, past, present, and future.

As with everything in life, some items have changed in the itinerary. I will have an updated sheet in your packet or available for you to pick up when you register. Additionally, each morning we will go over the day's itinerary as well as discuss the route.

I have so much I want to share with you all so check out the Southern Route Coordinator page often as I will be updating it every few days until we depart.

It's hard to prepare your emotions prior to your participation in Run For The Wall as the journey is different for everyone. Understand that some emotions may surface and know that we are a family and here to assist in any way possible.

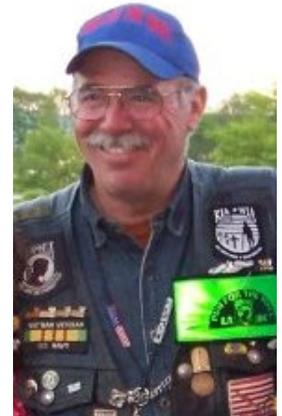
I've talked with many of you already either through email, calls, or Facebook. I look forward to meeting everyone—my team and I are here for you and those that we ride for. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions, concerns, or just want to talk.

How far are we going?!

See you in May,
Laurie "Airborne" Clay
2013 Southern Route Coordinator
"Mission First"

MESSAGE FROM CR COORDINATOR

I would like to take this opportunity to relate to you some things to ponder over during the next few weeks as we commence our Mission to Washington, DC. Like many of you, I have returned to RFTW with conviction and a compassion to serve my fellow RFTW participants—to give back some of what was so generously given me in 2006 my FNG year. Some of you are here because you have some of the same feelings and some to honor those who are personally attached to your life and have to return. Whatever your reason may be, let me say "Thank you for returning." You are the ones who will help the FNGs through this physically and emotionally exhausting and long mission to Washington, DC and the "WALL."



to
yet

Throughout our Run, there will be opportunities to meet some very special individuals: Medal of Honor Recipients, former POWs, Code Talkers, and others, perhaps meet the family members of a Missing in Action (MIA) still unaccounted for. These individuals can and often do relate to us the story of their experiences and what it means to them to have RFTW recognize the sacrifices of so many military personnel who have yet to return. As we visit the VAMCs we will have an opportunity to visit with many of the patients who have given so much for our country. Take the time to thank them for their service and sacrifice.

While at Rancho Cucamonga you may have the opportunity to meet a very unique individual named Karoni Forrester, the daughter of a MIA. She joins the Mission each year, and prepares a number of bios and photos of those MIA and KIA still unaccounted for from all wars. These heroes are escorted across these United States and honored along the way in various ways by those that wish to do so. Additionally, information on who you can contact will be posted at the hotel lobbies. If you are interested in escorting a Hero during the Mission, please communicate your desire prior to Wednesday morning at Rancho or upon your joining the mission.

On Tuesday morning May 14, 2013 there will be a Run to Riverside National Cemetery. This event is a RFTW sanctioned event. Therefore, to participate you must be registered. Additional information will be posted in the lobby of the Hilton hotel with times and location for riders meeting and the KSU time.

As we have done in past years, there will be a gathering in the parking lot of the Hilton on Tuesday evening for a great dinner. During this time together, we will be joined by some special guests as we are enjoying good food and entertainment. This is a great opportunity to meet new family members and get reacquainted with old family members. This time also offers a great opportunity to reflect on just "Why We Ride" and why each and every one of us has joined the Run For The Wall XXV and how we may assist our brothers and sisters as we conduct and draw to a completion of this Mission.

I wish to extend the hand of friendship to one and all that have come to and returned to Run For The Wall. As your Route Coordinator I wish to say a big THANK YOU to all the volunteers who have given so much of their precious time to make this year's Mission a great success.

Respectfully,
 Stan "Ironfish" Handley
 RC/CR RFTW2013
 Honor and Remember

RANCHO SCHEDULE:

RFTW XXV

**Hilton Garden Inn
 Rancho Cucamonga, CA**

**Sunday
 May 12, 2013**

1:00 – 4:00 PM	BOD Executive Session	Courtyard – Small Room	2013 RFTW Board of Directors
7:00 – 9:00 PM	Leadership Registration	Courtyard – Small Room	SR/CR Registration Teams

**Monday
 May 13, 2013**

8:00 - 8:30 AM	BOD & Route Leadership Briefing	Hilton Garden Inn	Board, RC's Hargrove, Gladwill, McDowell RC/ARCs, Registration/ICO Teams, Route Finance Teams, Chase Drivers
8:30 - 9:30 AM	SR/CR/Recon Finance Orientation	Hilton Garden Inn	
9:30 - 10:00 AM	SR Finance	See RC	Kay, Pooh, Karen, Marty, RC/ARC RC/ARC, MMF/HG Coords. Outreach Handley/Ward, Mentor, RGC. PL/APL/TGs, MMF, Finance RC/ARC, RGC/ARGC, PLs, Ambassador Lead, Sr. Chaplin, ATL/AAATL, Chase Team Lead
10:00 - 11:00 AM	SR Outreach/MMF/Honor	See RC	
10:00 - 11:00 AM	CR Leadership	Hilton Garden Inn	
11:00 - 12:00	SR Leadership	Hilton Garden Inn	
12:00 - 1:00 PM	Lunch		
1:00 - 7:00 PM	SR Registration Open	Courtyard – Lobby	McDowell, McKee, Steelman McDowell, McKee, Steelman RC/ARC, PL/APL/TGs, RGC/ARGC Gladwill, Merchandise Teams Recon Leadership Team RC/ARC, Staging/Fuel/MOH/Chase Teams, Leadership Support, Hydration, RGC
1:00 - 7:00 PM	CR Registration Open	Homewood Suites Lobby	
1:00 - 2:00 PM	SR Platoon Leadership	Hilton Garden Inn	
1:00 - 7:00 PM	Merchandise Open	Parking Lot	
2:00 - 3:00 PM	Recon Coordination Meeting	Hilton Garden Inn	
3:00 - 5:00 PM	CR Coordination Meeting	Hilton Garden Inn	
7:00 PM	Registration & Merchandise Close		

Tuesday May 14, 2013

7:45 - 8:45 AM 8:00 - 8:30 AM 8:30 - Noon	Limited Registration (RNC Run) BOD & Route Leadership Briefing SR/CR/Recon Road Guard Orient.	Courtyard – Small Room Hilton Garden Inn Hilton Garden Inn	McDowell, McKee, Steelman Board, RC's Steelman, Clay, Guidry, Handley, Ingram Gladwill, Merchandise Teams McDowell, McKee, Steelman McDowell, McKee, Steelman RC/ARC, Carol, Shirley, Gladwill, McKee
9:00 - 8:00 PM 9:00 - 8:00PM 9:00 - 8:00 PM 10:00 – 11:00	Merchandise Open SR Registration Open CR Registration SR Merch/Reg Meeting	Parking Lot Courtyard Lobby Homewood Suites Lobby Hilton Garden Inn	
12:00 - 1:00 PM	Lunch		
1:00 -2:00 PM	SR Advance Team Orientation	Courtyard – Small Room	RC/ARC, AT Lead & Asst., RGC/ARGC
2:00 - 3:00 PM	CR FNG Orientation	Hilton Garden Inn	RC/ARC, RGC, Sr. Chaplin, Fuel Ldr, Staging Ldr. Tanker, Steelman Clay & All SR Volunteers Clay, Dutch, Sapper + all Leads Chaplain Corps
2:00 - 3:00 PM 3:00 - 4:00 PM 4:15 - 4:30 PM 6:00 PM 6:15 - 7:30 PM	SR All Riders' Briefing SR FNG Orientation Blessing of the Bikes Anthem & Presentation of Colors RFTW Barbecue	Parking Lot <u>behind</u> Hilton Hilton Garden Inn Driveway Hilton Parking Lot Hilton Parking Lot	Olmstead/Scott/Two Guys Grilling
5:00 - 7:30 PM	Dinner & Program Program starts at 5:15. Tables will be called up in order for dinner service.		
7:30 PM 8:00 PM	Interdenominational Prayer Time Registration & Merchandise Close	Hilton Garden Inn, N. Side	Chaplain Corps

Wednesday May 15, 2013

5:45 AM 6:45 AM	Registration Opens Registration Closes	
	(Riders with clipboard "in hand" at 0645 may complete registration.)	
7:00 AM	Riders' Meeting chaired by Ray "Too Tall" McDowell, President, BOD	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (7:00) Opening Prayer • (7:05) Presentation of Colors by American legion Post 262 • (7:10)Pledge of Allegiance • (7:11) National Anthem • (7:15) Why We Ride: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "We Ride for Those Who Can't" ○ "Honoring All of America's Warriors" ○ Remembering the KIA/POW/MIA from Vietnam ○ Remembering the KIA/POW/MIA from Iraq/Afghanistan • (7:18) Taps • (7:20) Welcome to RFTW XXV - 2013 by President Ray "Too Tall" McDowell • (7:21) Recognition of: 	

- FNGs
- Active Duty Military
- Medal of Honor Recipients
- Blue Star Families
- Gold Star Families
- (7:22) Introduction of RFTW Board of Directors
- (7:23) Recognition of Volunteer Leadership
- (7:24) Introduction of SR & CR Route Coordinators
- (7:25) Rider Orientation/Safety Briefing (Steelman)
- (7:33) Closing Prayer

7:35 AM

**Riders Dismissed to Platoon Ldr. briefing; at platoon staging area
15-20 minutes – Guaranteed!!!**

7:50AM

Central Route Departs

8:00 AM

Southern Route Departs

RIDE SAFELY

VIP ESCORT FOR ROLLING THUNDER

Anyone interested in providing VIP Escort (Gold Star Family members) for Rolling Thunder may contact Joseph Baum at 973-670-3671 or email him at jbaum60@hotmail.com. There are a number of requirements that are musts in order to be an escort. You must have a helmet for the rider and passenger, passenger back rest, foot pegs for the passenger, motorcycle endorsement on driver's license, registered bike, and proof of insurance. The most important thing is the desire to give a VIP passenger (whether they be a Gold Star Mom, or Wife, or any other passenger that Rolling Thunder designates as a VIP) a safe ride. Additionally, "NO TRAILERS" are allowed with the escorts.

25TH ANNIVERSARY PATCH AND COINS

25-year commemorative patches and challenge coins are available for this year's Run. Visit the RFTW Store at www.rftw.org, email rftwstore@hotmail.com, or call Trunks at 209-329-9367 or 209-366-0879.



GIFTS FOR THE KIDS

If you are looking for a little something to give out to the kids we encounter as we go across the country, there was an excellent suggestion from someone on the forum. Stop by recruiters' offices and ask for things that you

could give to the kids at the schools we visit on the Run. They often can supply tons of little things the kids would enjoy receiving.

REGISTRATION REMINDERS

Registration fees for RFTW 2013 have been increased. Anyone paying online will pay \$30.00, and those paying in person will pay \$40.00. The \$40 fee includes anyone registering anywhere along either route who hasn't already paid online.

Some who already paid during their online session are shown as NOT PAID in the database. Virtually all of these had some difficulty completing the payment part of the online process. Regardless, if they are in the database, they pay \$30. If not in the database, they pay \$40.

Online registration is only the first half of registration! You must still visit your route's registration table in Rancho to show ID, drivers' license, proof of insurance, etc.

See Rancho Schedule for hours of registration in RC on Monday. Registration will open at 0730 on Tuesday, May 14 for those going to Riverside National Cemetery. Please, if you are not going to RNC, allow that time for those who are.

After Rancho Cucamonga, registration will take place at the morning staging area (closing 10 minutes prior to the start of Daily Riders meeting) and at the evening dinner stop or host hotel if no evening activities.

Required documentation:

Everyone must bring driver's license with MC endorsement, insurance, and registration.

All passengers must have a **photo ID** and register separately – even those riding in a car.

If registering online, please bring copy of paid receipt.

If the bike is borrowed, you need a notarized lettergiving permission to take it on RFTW.

If riding a rental bike, bring the rental agreement.

Minors (under 18) need **both parents'** permission in a notarized letter stating they have permission to be taken on RFTW.

Helmets are mandatory on RFTW, regardless of state law.

Medical form to be worn around the neck at all times when on bike.

If you can have all documents opened, it will speed up the process and those behind you will appreciate it.

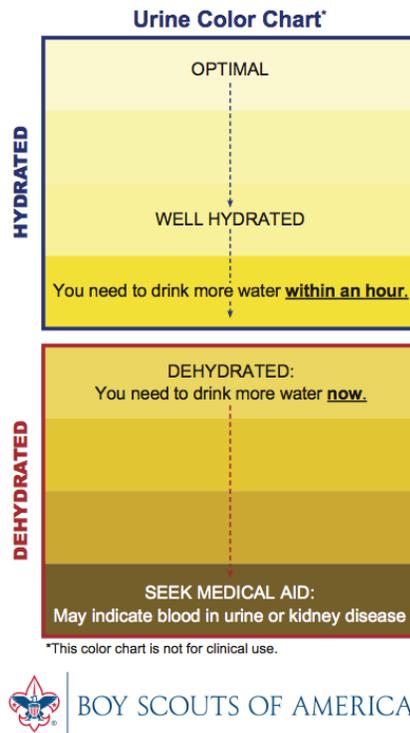
It is our wish to make this a pleasant experience for all; we do have our rules from AMA that we must follow. Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

Shirley and Candy
RFTW Registration Coordinators

STAYING HYDRATED

RFTW always stresses staying hydrated, and each route provides plenty of bottled water, so there's no excuse for you not to stay well hydrated!

The following chart from the Boy Scouts of America is a reminder of how important it is to stay hydrated while we're on our ride this year. Learn to judge how hydrated you are by this color chart:



GET YOUR BIKE READY TO GO

By John "Shooter" McCabe (2009)

- If your tires need changing, change them now. If tires are good, check inflation just before we leave; have a tire pressure gage on hand.
- Change the oil just before leaving.
- Check all lights and have extra bulbs on hand.
- Check suspension air lines (for air shocks).
- Check operation of all switches; make sure things that should work do.
- If you have spoke wheels, get them checked at the dealer for spoke tension!
- Change air and fuel filters.
- Check brake and hydraulic clutch fluid levels.
- Check clutch and brake cables.
- Check every bolt, nut, screw you can get to, make sure things are tight.
- Check your luggage, make sure straps are not rotted or torn. (I have dodged sleeping bags, small luggage bags and other things falling off bikes...not fun for Road Guards at 90+mph)
- Make sure your bike is ready. If nothing else, take it to a dealer and have them go over it for you. The money you spend there will not compare to the funds it will cost you if things go wrong and you are 3500 miles from home.

- Make SURE you are ready, get the bike out and practice speed control at 65 mph by easy throttle movements NOT brakes. Practice slow maneuvering; we all know how to ride at highway speeds but it's those slow maneuvers we will be needing that may need to be honed a bit. Remember, we will be maneuvering in close proximity to other bikes (68 inches between bikes at times)—be ready for it.
- If you plan on riding two up, take a few rides two up and practice rider and driver communications. If you are a rider, your eyes are just as important as the driver's in a close formation ride. You are NOT a sightseer—you are part of the overall bike safety team. Our Road Guards' job starts the morning you all get to the parking lot at the truck stop. When you come into the lot there at Rancho Cucamonga, please go SLOW, and tell the Road Guards which route you will be taking so we can get you to the proper lines. Have your gas tank FULL. Recheck your luggage one last time—make sure it's tight and secured on your bike. There will be a bunch of riders, bikes, media, and normal traffic in that parking lot so be careful and keep your head up.

FLAG PROTOCOL FOR BIKES AND CARS

By Steve "Hawgwash" Hill

As we get closer and closer to RFTW I thought I'd share a little protocol for those desiring to display the American Flag, POWMIA Flag, Service Flags, or even your own State Flags. I hope that all riders will display flags on their bikes in addition to those driving support vehicles and other 4-wheelers.

Let's start with the American Flag. It is always displayed to the Flag's own right in the direction of movement. In other words, if displayed on the back of a M/C it will be on the right side as the M/C is moving. On a 4-wheeler, it will be on the right side of the vehicle. When displayed with multiple flags, the order of precedence is American Flag, POWMIA Flag (a position of honor directly adjacent to the American Flag), followed by State Flags and finally Service Flags in the following order: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard.

In the event multiple flags are flown, the American Flag may be in the center position provided it is on a higher staff than the other flags. If the flag is displayed on a flat surface, the blue field is to the viewer's upper left (whether vertical or horizontal).

Remember, we are on a mission and part of that mission is to proudly display the flags that so many of us have fought hard to protect.

CHASE VEHICLE POLICY

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

1. Chase trailers are provided only as outlined below. They are not to be used to transport personal property including functional motorcycles, motorcycle trailers or luggage.
2. RFTW will make reasonable attempts to assist riders with incapacitated bikes, but there are no guarantees this service will always be available. (There may be times when the trailers are full and the rider will either have to wait or make their own arrangements.)
3. Chase vehicles will provide free service for motorcycles broken down or incapacitated in case of an accident.
4. Oversized trikes or other vehicles exceeding the capacity of our trailers WILL NOT be transported. Capacity decisions rest with the chase truck driver.
5. Where a motorcycle is incapacitated due to an accident, the bike will be loaded on the trailer with approval from authorities and owner/rider release as appropriate.
6. If the motorcycle needs transported and has a trailer attached, the trailer can be loaded onto the chase trailer with the bike.

7. Assuming the rider is not injured, he/she is responsible for ensuring the bike is tied down safely and appropriately. The chase crews will assist, but ultimately the responsibility for securing bikes rests with the rider. The chase crews will not be responsible for bike damage.
8. In addition to item (7) above, the rider shall secure luggage so that it will not become separated from the bike. Should it be prudent to remove the luggage, it shall be secured to the trailer floor or placed in the truck bed prior to chase truck departure.
9. The chase crews will transport the motorcycle forward along the daily route to the next available dealership where it will be unloaded. The chase vehicle will then depart to catch the Run.
10. The Route Coordinator is the final authority on any questions concerning this matter.

FUEL STOP REMINDER

One thing that is unique to RFTW and particularly stressful to FNGs, is our fuel stops. This year both routes will be pumping only premium, high octane fuel during fuel stops. Pumps will be turned on prior to the arrival of the main pack, by members of our Fuel Team. You will pull up to the pumps two at a time side by side. Shut off your bike and have \$1's and \$5's in a pocket or tank bag, easily accessible.

The amount of fuel put in your tank will be rounded up to the nearest dollar, for example: if your bike takes \$6.37 of fuel, the fueler will ask you for \$7; please have the exact amount of bills ready. The excess amount goes to fuel our Chase Vehicles, which you will appreciate if you need them along the way. Do not ask for change, and do not argue with the fueler. If you feel a mistake has been made, after staging your bike, take it up with your Platoon Leader; he will follow up for you.

All bikes must fuel first, then stage, then take any restroom or refreshment breaks. This is a process that has evolved over 20 years and is the safest and most efficient way to fuel this many bikes in a timely manner. Please respect the members of the fuel crew; they have volunteered their time to help make your RFTW experience the best possible.

WHAT TO PACK FOR THE RUN

Lots of FNGs have asked for suggestions on what to bring on Run for the Wall. Tailor your checklist to your own personal needs—you may want to bring additional items, you may want to leave some things at home.

<p>Motorcycles American & POWMIA Flags for bike T-bag and/or saddle bags Water bottle ("sport" bottle or "Camelback") Bungee Cords (lots of 'em) Duct Tape Tool kit Regular & allen wrenches Screwdrivers Spark plugs & wrench Wire ties, zip ties Shop rags WD 40 Clamps Rope Jumper cables Funnel Can of Fixaflat Tire repair kit Replacement light bulbs</p>	<p>Dog tags for emergency identification Emergency info: Next of kin, home and work phone numbers, doctors' phone numbers, list of prescriptions Warm knit cap for under helmet and/or sleeping Heavy jacket Light weight jacket Chaps Warm gloves Summer gloves Rain Gear (jacket, pants and galoshes) Laundry detergent (in heavy ziplock bag) Small sewing kit Money Credit Cards/Traveler's Checks Driver's License Insurance information Padlock Trash Bags for covering T-Bag in rain, laundry, etc. Ziplock bags (all sizes) organizes & keeps stuff dry Extra pair of boots</p>
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<p>Fuses Super glue 6' of 1/4" plastic hose or turkey baster (to siphon gas) Motorcycle oil (however much your bike needs!) Helmet (DOT legal) Bandanna or "do-rag" Jammies (or shorts or sweat pants) Hankies Shower shoes Bath towel Wash cloth (in ziplockbag!) Toilet Kit Toothbrush Toothpaste Soap Deodorant Shampoo Comb and/or brush Roll of TP in Ziploc bag (be prepared!) Sun block (Don't leave home without it!) Chapstick (With Sun Block added) Personal first aid kit Medications in marked containers Prescription glasses</p>	<p>Jeans (2or 3pairs) T-shirts(at least 6) Long-sleevedT-shirt(for the Mojave desert) Ear plugs Warm sweat shirt Underwear & Socks (at least 6 pair) Thermal underwear Sun glasses or goggles (2 pair) Medications, glasses prescription, bank information Cell phone and/or pager Road Maps and Run Schedule Business cards (to exchange with new friends) Note pad & pencil Camera and film Items you want to leave at The Wall List of names you want to locate on The Wall</p> <p>Campers Tent with pegs Waterproof Ground Cloth/Tarp Sleeping Bag Sleeping Mat or Cot Folding chair or camp stool Flashlight with extra batteries</p>
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HOW WE RIDE

By Colin Campbell (2009)

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

The rules are outlined as follows:

Signals:

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

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



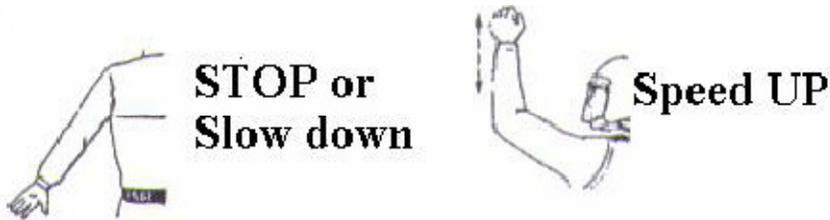
Right turn



Left turn

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

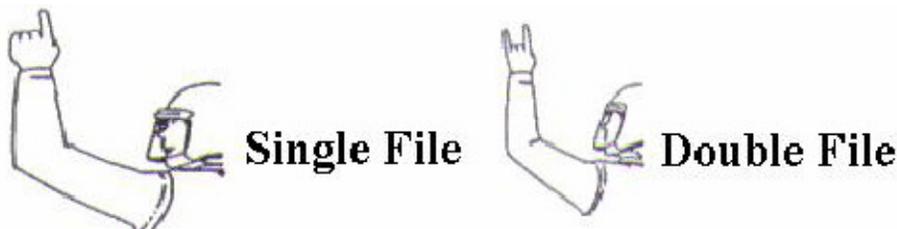
Speed up: Pump left fist up and down.



Hazard: Point at the area on the road with your hand and index finger (left or right side).
Close Ranks: Left hand overhead, *open and close fist*.



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



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

Distance Interval: 2 seconds. Visual marker for distance interval is one empty center stripe between cycles at 50 to 60 mph and two empty center stripes between cycles above 60. When in a *sidebyside* formation, the left side rider is responsible for maintaining the correct interval. The right side rider is responsible for aligning himself with the left side rider. Riders' shoulders should be directly across from each other in the proper configuration. Every rider is responsible for maintaining the correct interval in a *staggered formation*.

Deceleration: Unless a complete stop or an emergency stop is anticipated, riders should decelerate by rolling off the throttle and down shifting rather than braking. The appearance of brake lights in the formation increases the incidence of dangerous "rubber banding". Rubber banding (excessive acceleration and deceleration) increases accidents, wear and tear on equipment and increases rider fatigue. Increasing and decreasing speed should be accomplished utilizing small, incremental throttle roll on and roll off. Maintaining interval and position requires VERY slight throttle adjustments on an almost constant basis. Rapid acceleration and deceleration is very undesirable and should be avoided.

Riding the Zipper: The centerline and the fog line are lovingly called the *zipper*. It's simple: do not have any part of your cycle or body beyond the zipper. If you do, road guards will hate you and semi will kill you. **Just Say No** to hanging foot pegs, handlebars, or anything else over the zipper.

Sky Popping: Whales stick their head out of the sea just to the level of their eye to “take a lookaround”. This is called “Sky Popping.” Sticking out of your lane to see what’s ahead is a great way to shorten your trip. Road guards travel much faster than the columns both in the left hand lane and on the right shoulder. Pulling out in front of one is a disaster for both riders. **Just Say No** to “skypopping”.

Road Guard Courtesy: You may receive signals/directions from road guards during your trip. Please comply immediately with these requests. Please do not take anything personally. Road guards are doing a very difficult job and are protecting our safety: Your cooperation is paramount to their success. At times, road guards need to pull into a column or pass through a column. When a road guard signals he needs in, immediately slow and give them the right of way. If you collide with a road guard, it is your fault—no questions asked.

Dive bombing: Pulling in too close after passing a vehicle is called “dive bombing.” This is a “no-no.” Trucks that are passed by the column should be given at least *one truck length* before riders pull back into their lane. Pulling in too quickly causes the truck driver to hit his brakes and makes them angry with us rather than being our fans. **No dive bombing.** The same situation is true when the column moves into the left lane to pass slower moving traffic. At times there may be vehicles traveling in the left lane preventing the entire column from gaining access to the left lane as a unit. Do not speed around one of these vehicles and dive bomb in front of them just to maintain your position within the column. Slow, pull in behind such a vehicle and rejoin the column after you have successfully passed the slower traffic in the right lane.

Passing Signals Back. Please pass signals from the platoon leaders all the way back down the column. When you receive a signal, check your rearview mirror to make sure it was passed back.

CB Radio Etiquette: There will be a designated communication channel. Please do not talk on this channel unless you are performing an official function. All riders are welcome and encouraged to monitor the communication channel, but please maintain radio discipline.

Misc. Reminders:

Cash: Take extra \$1 and \$5 bills for gas. When we fill up, total is rounded up; the extra money helps gas up the support vehicles.

Throttle rockers will add some comfort to your ride (available at HD dealers).

Morning meetings are mandatory.

Take showers at night so you won't be late for the morning meetings.

If you get sleepy while riding, give a heads up to the riders around you and pull off where safe. You can catch up at the next stop. **RIDE SAFE!!!**

RUN Q&A

Q. How fast does the pack ride?

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

Q. How does the pack enter the highway?

A. We work with local and state authorities to aid our entrance onto the highways. The lead element will slowly enter the highway and maintain a slow speed as the pack follows. There is no reason to ride fast to "catch up" with the pack. The lead element continues a slow speed until the last man vehicle reports he/she is on the highway. At that point the Route Coordinator will slowly increase speed in five mile per hour increments at the

rate of about 23mph increase per minute. This increase is given to the Assistant RouteCoordinator who is leading the 1st Platoon, who will then slowly bring the pack to the assigned speed. ThePlatoon Leaders will follow suit, and are responsible for maintaining the proper distance. As you can see, thereis no reason to ride faster than the speed limit followthese guidelines and the platoons will bring you up tospeed properly and reduce "rubber banding."

Q. When will itineraries be available?

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

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

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

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

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

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

A. Our number one goal is safety of the Run participants and the public. Personal vehicles can travel a fewmiles ahead or behind the pack, but cannot intermingle with the pack at any time. Due to limited space at mostof our gas stops we ask you proceed to another station or skip a gas stop. Our gas stops range are spaced from70 to 114 miles apart so "cages" will not need gas as often as the pack.

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

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

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

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

MISSING MAN FORMATION

The Missing Man Formation consists of five bikes at the head of the pack. The two riders at the front are the Route Coordinator and Asst. Route Coordinator. The rider on the left in the second row is the Missing Man rider; the open space on his right, behind the Route Coordinator, represents the Missing Man. In the third row are the MMF Coordinator and the Head Chaplain.

The Missing Man Formation (MMF) Coordinator for the Southern Route isMonica "Hugs" Sloan (rftwsrmmfc2013@aol.com or 540-220-5274), and for the Central Route is Tom "Bones" Pogue (tomwpogue@comcast.net). If you would like to ride the MMF, contact your route's MMF coordinator to see if any positions are still open.

First priority for MMF is FNGs (first-time riders) or anyone who has not ridden MMF in the past.

MINOR CHILDREN

If you are traveling with a minor child, you must have a notarized letter of consent stating that child has permission to participate in RFTW signed by **both** parents and or legal guardians. RFTW will keep that letter, so you should have two letters so you will have a letter for after the run.

MISC. REMINDERS

Here's a collection of excellent reminders that have been posted on the RFTW website Forum.

Make sure your gear is secure—the riders behind you will be very grateful. Double-check at every stop.

If you'll put together packets of one \$10 bill, one \$5 bill, and four \$1 bills you'll be able to get through any gas stop without the hassle of digging out the right bills. Just put a packet of money in an easy-to-reach place after you stage so it'll be ready for the next gas stop. Remember, we don't give change (we round up to the next \$), so don't hand the fuel crew a \$20 bill and look for change. We use all "overages" to help buy gas for the chase trucks and support vehicles.

If you have patches with bad words, be prepared to cover them up when going into the schools (duct tape works great as a temporary fix).

If there is an accident, unless you are involved in it **do not stop**—proceed around it and continue on; RG, Chaplain corps, and chase will attend to it. If you stop on a freeway, you can cause a bigger accident.

We don't stop to put on rain gear if it starts to rain. If you think that it might rain, put it on now. The weather changes fast; have changes of clothes handy—you can add or remove clothes at gas stops.

It's a good practice to call your credit card company before you leave for the Run and alert them that there may be an unusual volume of activity during the dates you will be on the Run. If you're like me and don't use your card regularly, your Run expenses can look exactly like a card thief on a spending binge. The card companies' computers look for unusual spending patterns and will shut your account down in a New York minute, which, needless to say, could be very inconvenient and embarrassing. The other good thing is if you tell them when you will be back home and someone where you were tries to use the card (like a hotel clerk, etc.) after you arrive home, it will be blocked.

Gators - Tire tread on the road

Zipper - That line that separates the lanes

Snakes - Those nasty asphalt lines on the lanes (slippery when wet)

Fog Line - That line near the shoulder

If you are passing an 18-wheeler and hear thump thump, it means he's running on a flat and soon that tread will start coming off. Trust me, it hurts like heck to get hit by it, so be watchful.

If you see a Road Guard come up, tap the top of his helmet and point down—this means he/she wants to get in the lane of travel in front of you. Let him in!

Practice down-shifting to slow down instead of hitting the brakes.

Don't overpack your bike; you will be tired at the end of the day and have to cart that heavy bag into the hotel. Pack light. You will soon learn this is not a fashion show, it is a mission. Take clothing that dries fast and washes out.

Morning meetings are **MANDATORY!** There's nothing worse than missing an exit because you weren't at the meeting to hear about the route change due to construction.

The one thing that all FNGs have a hard time learning is to SNAKE around a vehicle. It is a simple maneuver but opposite of the way most riders do all of the rest of the time, so old habits are hard to break. To snake around a vehicle, the platoon leader will give a signal, then pull out to the number one lane. Each rider behind will then pull up to the same location behind the vehicle being passed and then pull out into the number one lane, one at a time. Just start thinking of it now. Done right the platoon looks like a great snake going around a fixed object.

While under way, do not leave your Platoon, unless it is an emergency. Road Guards are moving past the pack, and if you pop out in front of them, an accident will happen. In case of a need to exit the pack, signal your intentions, make sure it's clear and move out. Give a thumbs up as you exit so the rest of the pack knows that you are OK. If you need a Chase Truck to pick you up, after you have stopped, wave your hands above your head until you see a Chase Truck. Do not attempt to re-enter the Pack while it is moving, go on to the next stop and join it there.

DO NOT DIVE BOMB ANYONE, especially the Road Guards or a Big Truck (Editor's note: dive bombing a semi is a huge no-no. Some truckers are severely inconvenienced by our long line of bikes; add to that the insult of cutting them off, and RFTW will have blown the good will we have been trying to establish with truckers for years now. Some will honk when we pass—athumbs-up will go a long way in gaining their cooperation!) If you make sharp, almost 60 degree turns in front of trucks or other vehicles, you are actually slowing down a little bit and you can see the results by noticing that the rider behind you is now beside you, to your left! And the vehicle you just passed is now right on your tail. You also have caused the driver to tap his brakes, which may cause some concern by the motorcycles still behind him. And the Road Guards to take great notice of your actions. Extend your return to the right lane over a longer period and keep your speed up.

If you pre-registered that is only part of the registration process, You still must check in with registration wherever it is that you are joining RFTW, show current proof of License with MC endorsement, current Insurance for the bike you are on and current registration. Passengers **MUST have photo ID** and register separately.

If you're an FNG, the FNG meetings are mandatory. It's a big circle of strangers listening to how they are going to be transformed into a ribbon of motorcycle harmony going across the country. And they won't be strangers to each other for very long!

EVENING PARADE IN D.C.

Anyone wishing to attend the Marine Evening Parade at 8th and I in DC on the evening of May 24, 2013 may contact SgtMaj Doug Lyvere(Ret.) at 415-309-2510 or email him at doug@lyvere.com for tickets. Doug will be the lead on setting up the reservations for attendance. This is the famous "Silent Drill Team" performance at the 8th and I Marine Barracks. As last year, everyone is on his own to get there.

If you use GPS to get to the Barracks, be sure to enter SE in "8th and I Streets SE" or you'll end up on the wrong side of town).

Whether you are going to Marine Barracks on your own or with a group, you **MUST** meet at the corner of 8th & I (SE) next to the park. We must go in together, so make sure you get with the RFTW group. And you need to be there by 7:00 p.m. (1900). The parade will be performed in inclement weather (other than lightning). so if it looks like rain, bring your rain gear.

If you go by car, parking directions can be found on the web site for the Evening Parade. It's a short distance away and I believe there is a shuttle from the parking area to the Barracks—please Google that info on your own. If you are going by motorcycle, you can park in the park where we are staging. You literally park **IN THE PARK**—grass and cement. And very tight. Please, no trailers. I will be there by 6:30 p.m. (1830) to help park RFTW. The park is not charging us anything, so please be courteous and take away anything you take there.

No additional noise from the bikes. This is a residential area, and the way the park is built, sound is amplified because of the overhang.

Getting to and from 8th & I can be "interesting," as the traffic can be a pain in addition to just finding it **AND** finding your way back. Mapquest it, put it in your GPS, etc., and ask others that have gone there. This is **NOT** a trip with traffic control. Road Guards can **NOT** and will **NOT** do any kind of traffic control. Groups of more than a half dozen or so bikes will be difficult to move around.

Attire—whatever you want to wear. I wear my leathers. **BUT** you go thru a metal detector. Save time and leave pocket knives, coins, etc. on your bike. Phones **MUST BE OFF** during the performance. Photos are allowed.

► **PRE-RUN ACTIVITIES**

MAY 13TH WOUNDED WARRIOR RIDE

By Doug Lyvere
SgtMaj, Marine, ret
415-309-2510

I am putting together a run down to the Wounded Warrior Bn at Camp Pendleton on Monday, May 13. This is **NOT** an RFTW run—just a side run.

The Wounded Warrior Bn at Camp Pendleton has to be seen to be appreciated. It's an \$80,000,000.00 facility with equipment and buildings that are beyond state of the art. You will see exactly how today's young wounded warriors are being treated and you will be amazed. For Vietnam Vets it will be in stark contrast to what we/they faced when deemed unable to deploy or perform their duties. The facility covers a couple of acres and consists of living quarters, work spaces, a gym (that will knock your socks off), physical and psychological care, transition assistance offices, family areas, etc., and a staff of military and civilian personnel that is picked for their overall expertise in all the areas that you can name. It's a self-supporting all-in-one facility where even the buildings and furniture are helping to "support" themselves. For Blue Star and Silver Star parents it's a reassurance that no matter what, their loved ones will be helped and cared for.

Cages are welcome as well as anyone, with RFTW or not. **BUT**, I must have 20 bikes (and/or cages) to make it a trip.

There will be two staging areas: first one at 0715 in front of the Hilton Garden Inn (I'm easy to spot). We will KSU at 0730 and proceed to the second staging area—visitors' center at the Main Gate at Camp Pendleton (can't miss it—sign says "Visitors" and is literally right in front of the Gate). The second staging point is for any

who want to go straight there or are down in that area to begin with. We will stage there at 0930—I believe it’s a 90-minute run, so it should work fine. We will KSU to the Battalion almost immediately—0935—unless, of course, we get there late.

After the tour you can proceed back to RC or stop at the main exchange or one of the food outlets (which are NUMEROUS). ID is required to purchase at the Main Exchange. I have no problem going in with people who want to purchase and can do it for you (if we don't get ridiculous).

For questions or to get on the list, please email me at doug@lyvere.com.

May 14th RIDE TO RIVERSIDE NATIONAL CEMETERY

“Arlington West”

Jim “The Mayor” Frost

A ride to RNC will take place on Tuesday morning, May 14th. You must register for this ride. Registration for the ride to RNC will be from 7:45 to 8:45 a.m. Tuesday morning at the Hilton, in the small room.

Stage after 0800 on Mission Vista Drive, immediately north of the host hotel, the Hilton Garden Inn in Rancho Cucamonga. Rider’s meeting at 0911, and KSU at 0936 for the half-hour ride.

Riverside National Cemetery is home of the **Medal of Honor Memorial** and one of four recognized as a National Medal of Honor Memorial Site. Dedicated in 1999, its walls feature the names of all MoH recipients. Mike Goldware, chairman of the committee that built the National Medal of Honor Memorial, will give a presentation regarding the Memorial and its significance.

The **Fallen Soldier/Veterans' Memorial**, erected in 2000, is dedicated to all service members who gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

The **National Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Memorial** was dedicated in September 2005. Viet Nam veteran Lewis Lee Millett, Jr., son of MoH Recipient Colonel Lew Millett, sculpted the bronze statue which depicts an American serviceman on his knees with hands bound by his captors. The statue is surrounded by black marble pillars that evoke imprisonment. Lee will be with us to present the Memorial and its design.

Expect to be back to the host hotel by 12:30, unless you wish to spend more time at RNC, or to visit the March Field Air Museum nearby.

TUESDAY NIGHT DINNER

Don’t miss our Tuesday night dinner at 5 p.m. in front of the host hotel in Rancho. We will have entertainment and special guests. This is the chance for participants of both routes to mingle and get to know each other before we go our separate ways the next morning.

► WASHINGTON D.C. ACTIVITIES

FRIDAY, MAY 24

- 6:00 p.m. RFTW BOD ceremony and Awards Presentation at Holiday Inn host hotel.
- 7:45 p.m. Evening Parade at 8th& I Marine Barracks (see details below)
- 9 p.m. Rolling Thunder Candlelight Vigil at The Wall

SATURDAY MAY 25, 2011

- 8:45 a.m. FNGs to Arlington National Cemetery. Stage in Marymount University parking lot across from the Holiday Inn
- 9:45 a.m. Depart for Arlington National Cemetery
- 11:15 a.m. Arlington National Cemetery RFTW XXIV Wreath Laying
- 12:30 PM - RFTW Group Photo Lincoln Memorial - begin to assemble at Lincoln Memorial
- 1:00 p.m. RFTW Group Photo: please follow photographer's instructions
- 1:30 p.m. RFTW Mission Accomplished Plaque presentation at the Vietnam Memorial Wall

SUNDAY MAY 26, 2011

- 6:00 a.m. Rolling Thunder Participants stage in the Marymount University parking lot. Bring cameras, lots of water, and snacks.
- 6:30 a.m. Rolling Thunder Participants depart for the Pentagon North Parking Lot (staging for Rolling Thunder Parade). Volunteers may be needed to assist with directing traffic, parking, and keeping fire lanes open.
- NOON Rolling Thunder Demonstration

NOTE: This schedule is subject to change - check schedule on line or upon arrival in D.C.

► OUR STORIES

SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

By Roger "Cowboy" Mead

Run For The Wall is NOT a party, picnic, or 5-star 10-day cruise. It is a trek that can have various hardships associated with it. Mother nature has in the past thrown lots of her tricks at us, with snow, hail, searing heat, freezing cold, rain, sandstorms, severe thunderstorms, and flooding. But the Run has endured all these years.

The State Coordinators (mostly unseen) do an awesome job planning our route through their areas. They are responsible for, among other things, fuel stops to include a minimum number of pumps to make fueling easy, parking for staging, and rest room facilities. They arrange hotels, not based on 5-star ratings, but on four walls, a roof, clean sheets, and a bed that doesn't move unless you insert quarters. Some arrange and plan wreath-laying ceremonies and visits to local Veterans Memorials, VA Hospitals, and schools. They also contact local communities and groups for fuel and meal donations.

Now with all that said, where am I going? Well, in the past we have had complaints of the hotels not being up to some folks' standards (you don't have to use the host hotels); memorials dropped/bypassed due to complaints by some of a lack of local population attending our visit. Well, the local population built these memorials for the veterans; thus we have an obligation to take these veterans to their memorials whether the local population comes out or not. Some have been dropped because of a few complaining there is no cover/shade and it's too hot or too cold or it's too far to walk. Humans by nature complain, regardless of the situation, as we always feel it can/should be different/better....BUT.....

I am reminded of a conversation I had after RFTW I and RT II. I met a lady, Patty Hopper, and her husband Earl Hopper SR from Task Force Omega. While discussing the POW/MIA issue I was asked why I wasn't wearing a POW/MIA bracelet as involved in the issue as I was. I replied that I had worn one from 1972 until just recently (this was 1989) when I stopped as the nickel plating had worn off and the bracelet had a tendency to turn my wrist green from the copper. Her reply made me feel two feet tall and has stayed with me all these years.

“What do you think a POW or MIA would give to wear a bracelet that turned their wrist green?”

So while riding on Run For The Wall and you're hot, cold, wet, unhappy with the walk to a service, your room, food, or bathroom facilities ... think:

“What do you think a POW or MIA would give to be in your shoes?”

A DAY AT WALMART

By Rknee Swift

If you had the chance to spend a day doing something different, what you do? I can tell you what I did: I spent the day at a Walmart parking lot. Now you might be saying to yourself, why in the world would anyone want to spend the day at a Walmart parking lot? Just so you know, that is a valid question if you were asking a normal person, but many of you know me and you at this point are saying to yourself Arnie's not normal. I accept that. So here is what I did and what I will do it again tomorrow, I hung out with the VVA Chapter 243 Huey and talked with people passing by and welcoming home many vets and telling them thanks for serving.

So for the first hour after arriving it was set up time. UH-1H 66-00970 was already there and Charlie, the Chapter President, was backing the merchandise trailer into position. Amy, a Red Cross social worker who served in Vietnam, was pulling in. It was cloudy and really windy, not the ideal situation for trying to put up the tent and all the things needed to sell product. There was another couple there and with the help of a vet who had received a medical discharge, we got it done.

My dress for the day was my Nomex flight suit, jungle boots, spurs, and Cav hat. Hard to believe the uniform still fits. Forgot how uncomfortable the boots are walking on hard ground. Oh well, feel that you have a Vietnam Huey there and someone should be dressed in proper attire.

Okay, if you were in a parking lot at a Walmart and saw a helicopter setting there, what would be your first thoughts and would you go over and check it out? Well, by noon they were coming by in large numbers. If you had never been up close and personal to one, what would your first question be? Well, there are several groups that ask questions. Kids, they ask pretty much the same questions every time. The questions; Does it fly? Where are the guns? What does this do? Has it crashed? Can I go in it? Parents and young adults; Does it fly? Were you there? What kind of helicopter is it? Veterans: What unit were you with? Does it fly? Where are you from?

I am amazed at the impact that a helicopter made nearly 50 years ago has on people of all ages. For the Vietnam vet it conjures all sorts of responses. Thoughts of friends lost, close encounters for themselves, the wonder of flying in the rain with the doors open and not getting wet. Even the smells and sounds of a war they were a part of. For other vets it is a reminder of the time they were in, regardless of what branch of service they were in, and for our current troops it is a thing of beauty and grace.

But there is another group that appears—the wives and children of vets from all wars. They open up about tales their husbands or fathers shared and how the war may have impacted them. Today there was a very nice lady with a couple of kids who shared a story about her father who fought in Europe in WWII. I have heard a lot of

stories from WWII vets and their families, but never one like this. As her children are sitting in the chopper she asks if I know who Audie Murphy is. Well I do, the most decorated soldier of WWII and buried in Arlington National Cemetery. Been to his grave many times. As she begins sharing more of the story she says that her dad served with him and fought side by side with him many times. She told of one battle where he was firing his B.A.R. and had fired so many rounds at such a fast pace that the barrel actually drooped and was no longer usable. So in order to keep fighting and moving forward he found one in the hands of a fallen comrade, picked it up and kept on. The story could have ended there, but then she shared another bit.

On April 11th of this year, Father (Chaplain) Emil Kapaun was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously in a ceremony. His story is one of true heroism, but it also has a part in this lady's life. Father Kapaun performed the marriage ceremony for her father and mother. I could have sat there and listened to stories from her for hours.

Another vet was there and talked about the fall of Saigon and how he was aboard ship when the people were fleeing and how he helped push the helicopters off of the deck of his ship. Story after story all day long. I cannot tell you how many people came by and looked and shook our hands and thanked us for our service. It tells me that there are still Americans that understand the importance of our warriors and that freedom comes with a cost. To all who came by, thank you and may God bless you richly.

So how did you spend your day? God is good and tomorrow is Sunday. See ya in church and then back out to the Huey for the afternoon.

THE ROAD GUARD

Originally by: Joe "Firefly" Cappel

Updated by: John "Shooter" McCabe

ROAD GUARDS: insanity on two wheels or guardian angels in black? Perhaps it is a blend of both.

These are the people that have accepted a call to place themselves between you the participant, and the rest of the universe to serve as guardians of the pack. Many times a day the Road Guard will voluntarily place him/herself in danger to ensure the pack gets where they have to be, when they have to be there, and get them there safely. The safety of the Road Guard, in his/her mind is secondary.

This is an introduction to the functions of a Road Guard in relation to RFTW. It is hazardous duty to say the least, which is why only the very experienced and somewhat crazy need apply. It is necessary to be riding solo while on duty as well as have two years' experience riding with RFTW, although not necessarily all the way. One cannot assimilate the myriad of experiences and emotions encountered on RFTW without actually riding with the RFTW pack. The Road Guard must understand the type of formation riding that is necessary for the RFTW pack, and that can only come by prior experience riding in the formation.

A Road Guard's duties are similar to those performed by a funeral procession escort with many side jobs thrown in. First and foremost, the R/G must try to the best of his/her ability to get the pack safely from point A to point B. This entails knowing the route beforehand, directing traffic, and constantly monitoring the pack for safety issues such as rider positioning in the pack, erratic behavior, items in danger of falling off bikes, open saddlebags, mechanical problems that the rider is unaware of, etc. Limited instruction must be given to those who need help in learning to ride in the formation properly.

Often they might have to run traffic breaks on the freeway or get the pack around a slow-moving vehicle in such a way as not to impede the progress of that vehicle. Since it is imperative to travel as an unbroken pack at all times, the Road Guard must control the traffic at all intersections that might pose a threat to the group's safety. This may require working closely with the local police escorts. Often the police will block a busy intersection with his vehicle and a Road Guard will take over for him as he moves up to block the next one. This is called

"leap-frogging." Since time is of the essence in these situations, what appears as "maniacal" riding by the Road Guard will ensue. They will also clear a lane of traffic on the freeway so the pack can merge safely up the onramp. They will position themselves to point the way whenever a change in direction occurs to prevent stragglers from getting lost.

Anywhere from ten to fifteen miles prior to a destination exit, the Road Guards will break away from the pack en masse and rush to the proper exit to set up traffic control, make sure all is ready at the gas pumps, clear and set up a traffic path for bikes to enter the staging area from the gas pumps and ensure the staging area is ready to receive riders. This breakaway time usually only gives them a maximum of five minutes to fuel their own bikes and ensure the area is ready, in all respects, for the pack's arrival.

Needless to say, the Road Guard must be constantly briefed as to where the group is going next, route changes, escorts to work with, etc. A "forward observer" might even be sent out occasionally if there may be suspicion of something ahead that might cause a possible rerouting or time delay. Road Guards must stay in communications with one another, either visually or by radio, including the ride leader and the chase vehicles. It is not the intent to leave anyone behind or not to obtain help for an injured rider.

The Road Guard must be able and willing to ride at speeds that allow him/her to get where needed, and often times those speeds are considered *hazardous*. To the Road Guard, those speeds are just part of the job, in good weather or bad.

The Road Guard must be polite and tactful, constantly mindful that the people he/she is dealing with at the moment may not see the reason for what they are being directed to do. Many people come on the run to do a difficult thing for themselves and the Road Guard has to keep in mind the healing mission of RFTW, even when issues arise that make that difficult. The Road Guard knows that everyone deserves respect and consideration for the courage to be a part of the RFTW mission. The Road Guard must extend that same consideration to the public as sometimes an upset cage driver will be encountered when he is being held up for a few minutes while the pack passes. The Road Guard must work with that person, explain the mission, and maybe even give him a mission statement and a pin. It usually works.

At day's end, when everyone else is kicking back, the Road Guard may become a problem solver, because he is visible and has communications. Such is the life of a Road Guard. But also at the end of the day, he might be approached by one or more riders, given a hug and thanked for all his hard work of keeping them safe. This is what drives the Road Guard to do what he does.

We are here to serve.

JUST A COINCIDENCE?

By Tom Cameron

I had told Jimmy V. that I would be on a secret mission today, and would share the details if I was successful. I was!

The UPS truck showed up a few days ago and began unloading boxes. Covered in more than enough duct tape, they had arrived from Canada. My heart skipped a beat- "What is going on??"

This started back in 2011 when a Canadian man who had served as a US Marine decided to come on the Run For The Wall. I had been in a lot of conversation with him on the forum before we left on the ride, and because he took the other route we didn't have much actual contact for those 10 days. But afterward, he accompanied us toward home, going as far as brother Jim's place in Wisconsin before he headed North, and we headed West.

Tim is a really good-hearted guy, but a little complicated and probably a little conflicted, hard to get to know. We never pushed him though, and he felt at ease with us. It was a little sad to see him ride off on his own from Wisconsin, he lives in a small town way west in British Columbia north of Seattle.

I guess his arm and shoulder injuries are not resolving, and Tim announced that he has given up any hope of riding anymore. When he wondered what to do with his riding gear, he thought of me. Yikes- I was the new and proud "owner" of a whole bunch of first class motorcycle gear!

But much of it I didn't need, as I already am blessed with gear of my own. I pondered on this for a few days, then I got a phone call.

John "Hardcharger" Barker, a Run For The Wall board member, called to ask for some help with an unrelated matter. During the conversation I mentioned the gear. He did a little double-take, and told me another story I did not know. Maybe more than just coincidence.

Some guys are building a motorcycle with a sidecar for a triple-amputee Marine who is coming on this year's Run For The Wall. (Southern Route, I might add!) His name is Gunny Brian Meyer, apparently an EOD specialist who ran into a little bad luck disarming a bomb. It took his right arm and right leg, along with most of his left hand. He has his left leg intact, and his face and eyes are good. He is excited about making the ride. More than that he is just an outstanding human being with a gracious demeanor and a quick sense of humor. I just met him today.

Brian, along with Hardcharger and some other RFTW people, were at a booth up at Pendleton, fundraising and gathering interest in RFTW and other projects to help these guys. Brian's unfinished bike was there too- got some serious work to do on that in the next 3 weeks! But I was able to give much of Tim's gear to Brian, to add to the great story of his recovery and continuing adventure.

So that's it—ahappy ending to the motorcycle gear from Canada, and a nice report back to Tim Coburn that his gear is in good...well, hand and hand substitute!

THE WINDS OF CHANGE

By Rknee Swift

The winds of change... Perfect for what the day is to be like. Morning comes early, but then it has been that way for years now. The night was not a restful one as my mind was thinking of a million things and praying for a ton of people. Strange the things you can think about when you should be sleeping. But I guess the truth of the matter is that Roger, Dan and I didn't really come down here for sleep but to be servants. We get directions to the American Legion Hall and we are off.

It is about a 15 minute drive to her place where we are greeted with hugs and tears. All the people there at her house were on the ride that Billie Jo was on. Their hearts are heavy and that is to be expected. We get a look at Billie Jo's bike. It really is in pretty good shape in spite of all things. It is fast approaching 11 a.m., the time of the viewing. So we all load up and head for the funeral home. It is another short ride and as we near the building we see that the Patriot Guard Riders are in place.

Passing by the Guard, some of the faces begin to look familiar. Cliff and his assistant are there. A hug and a handshake, then another and another. Really great to see so many RFTW people there for support. Dadbo and his friend Tom are there; soon Vapors and Barb show up and even Harry Steelman makes it dressed in a sport coat and slacks. Almost no one recognizes him. That will change shortly. There he is, Rocket, my friend and the reason we are there. This hug is going to be rough, but not quite as rough as the next one I will get. Rocket is doing really well considering and I think he pleased with the turn out for his daughter. I see Many Bikes and

Jackie McKinney pull in and head their way. It is at that point that the next hug comes. It is Cruzzler and he is a mess. I hold him in my arms as he just losesit, but that is okay. He moves on and then it is a hug with Ginger. She is holding up okay but really worrying about Cruzzler. Finally Many Bikes is parked and off the bike and so is Jackie. They are cold as it was 21 degrees when they left Albuquerque. A quick hug with Many Bikes and then a long one with Jackie. The hugs are not getting any easier and the emotions are starting to kick in.

It is time to go inside and see what is going on in there. There is a good crowd inside. The band is coming in that is providing the music for the service. It is a three-piece band, a guitar player, sax player, and a keyboard player. The casket is open and Billie Jo looks at rest and peaceful. It is loaded with pictures from her kids and other things. We exit for a little while and then go back in for the service. There are a few more hugs along the way and a few more tears. The service begins with a rendition of Amazing Grace, then a couple of more songs, and then the Pastor gives a short talk and opens with a great prayer. Another song and then the Pastor shares how Billie Jo and her family were involved in the church and how he married them and dedicated their babies. He then opens it up for people to come up and share about their relationship with Billie Jo. One young lady worked with her at the bank, another, an Iraq veteran shared how Billie Jo was there for her. Jackie got up and shared and then the one that got all of us was Billie Jo's daughter. She got up and shared how much she loved her mom and that she missed her and at that point most of us were pretty much done in. Harry even had to get up and stand to catch his breath. The next was one of Billie's sisters. After a good message and a few more songs it was time to leave and head for the hall for the reception. It should have been a short drive but someone had us turn on the wrong street, not naming any names but I hear his road name is PostMaster. After sitting in traffic for cars going to a coffee festival we make a u-turn and head for the hall. We arrive and the place is packed. Some more hugs and greetings. It is time for some food and fellowship. Then there are a few people talking and sharing, a prayer and then Rocket shares some thoughts and words with the crowd. Then I get up and have all the riders who were involved with the accident come up and stand next to Rocket.

The purpose of gathering them was to give to Rocket two display cases. One was for Rocket to keep in honor of his daughter; the other was for him to give someone to take on the Run in Billie Jo's honor. I left that call up to him. I shared a few words with the group and then sat down. We would hang around for a few more minutes and then it was time to head for home. Some quick hugs and a short talk with Ginger and Cruzzler, who was given the other display case, the man I hoped would get it, and we are off.

As I look back on the past two days, first I am honored to have been in the company of Roger and Dan,two great brothers and friends. Secondly, it was awesome to see God move in a really bad situation. I know the healing has begun in all of them. So sleep well as we are on watch.

The winds of change, what a difference a day makes.

RFTW BOOTH

Top Sarge and Sam (SR) set up a RFTW booth at the Whittier, CA Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Event on April 13. They gave out information on RFTW and talked to a lot of veterans, and hopefully some of them will join the Run this year. Good PR job, TopSarge and Sam!



Top

► OTHER STORIES

WYTHEVILLE RFTW DOCUMENTARY

By Jason Burris, Wednesday, April 10, 2013

Veterans Committee at Volvo Truck in Dublin brought his group's Volvo truck designed to call attention to prisoners of war and soldiers missing in action. Peterson talked to the film crew about his group's involvement with Run for the Wall. Each year, members of his committee participate in Wytheville's RFTW activities.

Wytheville Police Operations Capt. Joel Hash was one of many local residents who shared their Run for the Wall memories with a film crew making a DVD to celebrate the organization's 25th anniversary this year.

Thirteen years ago, Laurie Clay came calling.

The route coordinator for The Run for the Wall organization was looking for a place in Southwest Virginia where weary motorcycle riders could rest up for the final legs of their cross-country journey.

Several towns had already turned her down because of the sometimes negative stigma that surrounded motorcycles then, even though the event was in support of veterans, prisoners of war, and soldiers missing in action.

Other towns said no, but not Wytheville. The town laid out its welcome mat, complete with a town-approved invitation letter.

“She said she wanted to bring 150 motorcycles to Wytheville,” recalled Mayor Trent Crewe, a motorcyclist himself. “I said, ‘Your money is as good as anyone else’s.’”

Years later, the group and town share a rich history, making Wytheville one of the top spots along the Run's southern route.

As the relationship between the Run and Wytheville progressed, so did the number of riders. This year, more than 500 cyclists are expected to roll into town May 22 as they make their way to the Vietnam War Memorial in the nation's capitol Memorial Day weekend.

Crewe's story is one of many told Saturday to filmmaker Terry Sharpe, who is filming two DVDs in celebration of the Run's 25th anniversary this year.

Throughout the day, local residents stopped by to share their memories with Sharp. Some of the people interviewed included Firefighter John Eastwood, Wytheville Police Operations Captain Joel Hash, Town Council member Jack Hunley and Spiller Elementary School Principal Kim Ingo.

Crewe offered a unique perspective, speaking about the impact of the Run on Wytheville, both emotionally and financially. He also has participated in the ride.

“From the town's point of view, I talked about how many departments are involved,” Crewe said. “How the fire department and police department prepare for the arrival and escort the riders into town, how the parks and rec department sets up tents and the meeting center helps schedule events and get volunteers.”

Because he participated in the ride several years ago, Crewe got to see how the organization is structured. He said it's like a city on wheels, complete with a police unit, chaplains, road guards, traffic enforcers, platoon leaders and riders who oversee re-fueling the bikes.

As for Clay, she enjoys Wytheville so much that she travelled six hours from Louisville, Ky. to stand in Withers Park and speak about the RFTW.

“The riders look forward to Wytheville,” she said. “One of the main reasons is the hospitality, plus the friendliness and the children. It’s so nice to go into a community have the children say hello and talk about what is going on. And the children are so polite. We love seeing the kids.”

During the Wytheville overnight stop, people from all over town get involved to ensure the riders have a memorable time. School children serenade them, police officers escort them down Fourth Street to Withers Park for a ceremony, the Moose Lodge whips them up a steak dinner, the cooks at Spiller Elementary feed them a hearty breakfast, and church ladies wash up their clothes.

“On the southern route, Wytheville is the big stop,” Clay said. “We get similar greetings in other places, but there is just something about Wytheville and the small-town feeling. And we don’t get a meal like the one served at the Moose Lodge anywhere else, on either route. The Harley shop stays open all night long servicing bikes. Other shops service bikes, but they don’t stay open all night. People feel at home there.”

Sharpe and his crew will ride both routes of the Run this year. He said it will take several months to edit the two DVDs.

IRAQI POW TO RIDE WITH RFTW

Joe Hudson was captured in 2003 in Nasiriyah and held for 22 days before being released. Joe will be riding with CR this May through part of New Mexico. Read his story below.

By Victor R. Martinez \ EL PASO TIMES

Joseph Hudson remembers every single detail about March 23, 2003 -- and the 22 anxious days that followed. Nothing was beneath notice or too insignificant.

"The pain is still there," Hudson said from his Northeast El Paso home. "There isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about what happened to our unit."

Hudson was one of the 33 U.S. soldiers in an 18-vehicle convoy caught in a 60- to 90-minute attack on the 507th Maintenance Company at Nasiriyah during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Nine soldiers from Fort Bliss and two others attached to the convoy were killed in combat or died as a result of injuries, including Chief Warrant Officer II Johnny Villareal Mata, a Pecos native who was in the passenger seat of the wrecker Hudson was driving.

"We never thought we would be on the front lines," said Hudson, who was one of seven U.S. soldiers—including five from the 507th—captured by Iraqi forces.

"We were maintenance; we were supposed to be in the rear with the gear," he said. "We had support jobs, but it doesn't matter if you're a cook, a mechanic or infantry armor: You're in the mix; you are in the battle."

Hudson, 33, and Mata were towing a 5-ton tractor-trailer when they were attacked.

"I fired off a few rounds before my weapon malfunctioned," Hudson said. "It was very surreal, like a movie. It was like 'Holy (expletive), I'm getting shot at, what the hell is going on?' Then you just kick into survivor mode, and you do the best that you can. That's why I admire what Johnny did because he laid down cover fire. He was one hell of a leader."

Hudson, who was shot three times in his upper left buttocks and lower right ribs, was immediately surrounded after the shooting stopped and was captured.

"The first two days of captivity were a living nightmare; we were not treated humanely at all," he said. "From the third day on out, it was sit down and shut up, day and night. But towards the end, we were treated a lot better. What saved us is we were being held by civilian police who really didn't want anything to do with us."

The seven prisoners of war communicated by tap code—a series of tap sounds on metal bars, pipes or the walls inside the cell. The not knowing was the toughest part of being a POW, he said.

The person who kept Hudson's spirits high and his motivation to live was his daughter, Cameron.

"I don't know how many times I pictured my daughter growing up," Hudson said. "My father was killed in an accident in 1991, and I refused to accept the fact that my daughter was going to grow up without her dad like I did."

His father retired from the Air Force and was killed in a motorcycle accident in Florida.

Hudson would occupy his mind remembering the times he sat with Cameron—who is now 15 years old and living with her mother in Alamogordo—watching "Monsters Inc."

"I don't know how many times I watched that movie in my head and laughed and laughed and laughed," he said.

Just as vivid as the memories of his capture are the memories of his rescue on April 13, 2003.

"That was the second-best day of my life, after my daughter's birth," Hudson said. "I've only cried happily two days in my life, the day of my daughter's birth and the day I was rescued. I cried like a little girl."

After 22 days and at least seven moves from several prisons, a city jail, private homes and a storage facility, help had finally arrived.

"At that point, we were held by civilian police and they don't want anything to do with us," Hudson said. "We were in the city of Samarra, and it was a noncombative town. One of the guards, his uncle was the mayor of Samarra, and he literally told us, 'Here are the keys to the van. There are Americans on the other side of the town.' It sounded like a set-up, so we convinced them to go talk to the Marines themselves and bring them back."

After some serious convincing, Marines from the 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, who had stopped in Samarra on their way to Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit, cautiously made their way through the town.

"We heard the vehicles coming in," Hudson said. "American diesel motors have a certain smell and a certain sound, so we knew it was them. Cpl. Curney Russell is something like 6 foot 4 and wears a size 14 boot. He came in and kicked that door down, and told us to face the floor."

The first thing Hudson saw was a U.S.-issued desert boot, and he said to himself, "Hell yeah, I'm going home, dog."

"A Marine yelled out, 'If you're American, stand up,'" Hudson said. "I popped right up."

After three weeks of captivity, Hudson, who stands 5 foot 7 and weighed 160 pounds, had a dark tan and a long beard, so he had started to blend in with the local population.

"As soon I stood up, Cpl. Russell shoved his M4 right in my chest and yelled at me, 'Are you American? Are you American?' And using standard military language, I said, 'Hell yeah, get me the hell out of here, man.' What an awesome day."

The ex-POWs spent time recovering and decompressing, which included debriefings and medical examinations in Kuwait

The first thing Hudson did when he and his fellow soldiers arrived at Fort Bliss on April 19, 2003, was kiss the ground.

"I came off the back of that plane, I leaned down and kissed the ground, got up and started looking for my daughter," he said. "She is the one who got me through it all."

After his experience, Hudson learned to appreciate life.

"When your life gets taken away from you, you learn to appreciate things you used to take for granted," he said. "I don't know how many times in those 22 days that I accepted I wasn't going home. When all that happened, I knew I was going to die."

The past decade has been a whirlwind for Hudson.

After re-enlisting in 2003, Hudson—who first joined the army on Sept. 9, 1999—medically retired in September 2004.

He has suffered extreme back pains which reduced his ability to run and lift heavy items and affected many other daily movements.

"I'm a 100 percent disabled veteran, I get my retirement and I get a decent paycheck to survive," he said. "The thing that bugs me is when people say, 'That must be nice.' Trust me, I earned that money. It took me years to realize that because I felt guilty living off it."

The years after being released were filled with media interviews—including appearances on NBC's "Dateline"—serving as grand marshal of the Sun Bowl Parade and other community events.

Another blessing has been the relationship he has developed with the family of Lori Piestewa, the first woman in the U.S. armed forces killed in the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

"We love him dearly," said Percy Piestewa, Lori's mother. "Even after they came back, we wanted to be there to help the kids move on in a positive way with their lives. I understand how difficult it could be because my husband has been in a war situation. It's hard to come back with that feeling of guilt."

Lori, a member of the Hopi tribe in Arizona, was the first Native American woman in history to die in combat while serving with the U.S. military.

"They feel guilty because Lori didn't come back," she said. "We want them to know that we love all of them and we are proud of them and we're very glad that they are still with us."

Every year on March 23, the Piestewas have a memorial service in Lori's honor atop a mountain in Phoenix renamed for her.

Ten years later, not having her daughter continues to be unreal.

"The pain, the void, it never goes away," Piestewa said. "Just last week we lost a young man from the reservation. Just watching the escorts transferring him through town brought back those memories and feelings."

When Hudson's mother, Anacita, died in September 2007, the Piestewa family was there to support him.

"When Joe lost his mom we told him to come and be a part of our family," she said.

"We just kind of adopted him. He is like a son to us. If we do family portraits and he's here, he'll be in the portrait."

Hudson said he visits the Piestewas about four times a year.

"After my mom died in '07, Percy Piestewa came up to me and said, 'I know I didn't give birth to you, but you are my son and you are welcomed here any time,'" he said. "I don't know if she regrets it now, because she can't get rid of me."

Hudson—who is a 225 bowler and has bowled two perfect games—smiles and laughs a lot. But behind that grin and laughter there is still pain and sadness.

"For many years after I got home, I had many problems mentally and physically," Hudson said.

"I was doped up on pills and seeing different doctors for different reasons, but I finally learned how to deal with it properly without having it bug me all the time."

Riding his 2012 Vulcan 900 Kawasaki is also therapeutic. The bike's kickstand has the last names of the nine fallen soldiers of the 507th Maintenance Company, 3-23 2003 (the date of the ambush), the words "Never Forgotten" and John 15:13 written on it.

"So much happens in a decade," he said. "I was about 50 pounds lighter for one. You don't realize how fast it goes, but yet how slow it seems. My daughter was only 5; now she is 15, talking about a driver's license, cars, high school and boys. Time flies. It's amazing. But I'm still in El Paso, and I love it."

He says that he doesn't have regrets and that he has learned to live life to its fullest by doing things that make him happy, such as bowling, hunting, fishing, being on his motorcycle and volunteering with various veteran organizations.

"I won't say I'm over my POW experience, but I've learned how to deal with it," he said.

"The only thing that hurts me today is that 11 of my soldiers were killed, and I knew most of them pretty personally and I would consider them family. It's their memory that I hold what hurts me. Memories fade, but the pain never goes away. It never goes away."

OPERATION HOMECOMING

Forty years ago, a C-141A Starlifter transport jet with a distinctive red cross on its tail lifted off from Hanoi, North Vietnam, and the first flight of 40 U.S. prisoners of war began their journey home through Operation Homecoming.

Newly freed prisoners of war celebrate as their C-141A aircraft lifts off from Hanoi, North Vietnam, on Feb. 12, 1973, during Operation Homecoming. The mission included 54 C-141 flights between Feb. 12 and April 4, 1973, returning 591 POWs to American soil. By the day's end, three C-141A aircraft would lift off from Hanoi, as well as a C-9A aircraft from Saigon, South Vietnam. In a steady flow of flights through late March 1973 under terms set through the Paris Peace Accords, 591 POWs returned to American soil. Americans were spellbound as they watched news clips of the POWs being carried in stretchers or walking tentatively toward U.S. officers at the awaiting aircraft for the first flight from Hanoi's Gia Lam Airport. Newly freed prisoners of war celebrate as their C-141A aircraft lifts off from Hanoi, North Vietnam. The POWs ranged from privates first class to colonels, all wearing new gray uniforms issued by the North Vietnamese just before their release. Air Force Tech. Sgt. James R. Cook, who suffered severe wounds when he bailed out of his stricken aircraft over North Vietnam in December 1972, saluted the U.S. colors from his stretcher as he was carried aboard the aircraft. Also on the first flight was Navy Cmdr. Everett Alvarez Jr., the first American pilot to be shot down in North Vietnam and, by the war's end, the longest-held POW there. He spent eight-and-a-half years in captivity. Celebration broke out aboard the first aircraft—nicknamed the "Hanoi Taxi"—as it lifted skyward and the POWs experienced their first taste of freedom.

Historian Andrew H. Lipps captured the magnitude of the moment in his account, "Operation Homecoming: The Return of American POWs from Vietnam." "Imagine you're imprisoned in a cage; imagine the cage surrounded by the smell of feces; imagine the rotted food you eat is so infested with insects that to eat only a few is a blessing; imagine knowing your life could be taken by one of your captors on a whim at any moment; imagine you are subjected to mental and physical torture designed to break not bones but instead spirit on a daily basis. That was being a prisoner of North Vietnam," Lipps wrote. "Then imagine one day, after seemingly endless disappointment, you are given a change of clothes and lined up to watch an American plane land to return you home. That was Operation Homecoming." \

Aeromedical teams assigned to each aircraft tended to the former POWs during the two-and-a-half hour flight to Clark Air Base in the Philippines, the first stop on their trip home. Meanwhile, many of the POWs joked and smoked American cigarettes as they caught up on all they'd missed while in captivity: fashion trends and the women's liberation movement, among them. "Everything seemed like heaven," recalled Air Force Capt. Larry Chesley, who, after being shot down over North Vietnam, spent seven years in the notorious "Hanoi Hilton" and other POW prisons. "When the doors of that C-141 closed, there were tears in the eyes of every man aboard," he said.

Air Force Maj. Gen. Ed Mechenbier, the last Vietnam POW to serve in the Air Force, recalled the emotion of his own journey out of North Vietnam on Feb. 18, 1973. "When we got airborne and the frailty of being a POW turned into the reality of freedom, we yelled, cried and cheered," he said. The POWs arrived to a hero's welcome at Clark Air Base, where Navy Adm. Noel Gayler, commander of U.S. Forces Pacific, led their greeting party. Joining him were Air Force Lt. Gen. William G. Moore Jr., who commanded 13th Air Force and the homecoming operation at Clark, and Roger Shields, deputy assistant secretary of defense for POW/MIA affairs. Speaking to the crowd that lined the tarmac to welcome the aircraft, returning POW Navy Capt. Jeremiah Denton—who would go on to earn the rank of rear admiral and later was elected to the U.S. Senate, representing Alabama—elicited cheers as he thanked all who had worked for their release and proclaimed, "God bless America." Air Force Lt. Col. Carlyle "Smitty" Harris, who spent almost eight years as a POW after being shot down over North Vietnam, joined the many other POWs who echoed that sentiment. "My only message is, 'God bless America,'" he said, dismissing assertions in the media that the POWs had been directed to say it. "With six, seven or eight years to think about the really important things in life, a belief in God and country was strengthened in every POW with whom I had contact," he said. "Firsthand exposure to a system which made a mockery of religion and where men are unable to know truth made us all appreciate some of the

most basic values in 'God bless America.'" Air Force Col. Robinson Risner, the senior Air Force officer at the infamous "Hanoi Hilton" honored today by a statue in his likeness at the U.S. Air Force Academy, choked back emotion as he arrived on the second C-141 flight from Hanoi. "Thank you all for bringing us home to freedom again," he told the crowd.

After receiving medical exams and feasting on steak, ice cream, and other American food, the former POWs received new uniforms for their follow-on flights home. Their aircraft made stops in Hawaii and California. The first group of 20 former POWs arrived at Travis Air Force Base, Calif., on Feb. 14, 1973. News clips of the arrival reveal the deep emotion of the freed POWs as they arrived on the U.S. mainland. Navy Capt. James Stockdale, who went on to become a vice admiral and vice presidential candidate, was the first man to limp off the aircraft. Stockdale paused to thank his countrymen for the loyalty they had showed him and his fellow POWs. "The men who follow me down that ramp know what loyalty means because they have been living with loyalty, living on loyalty, the past several years—loyalty to each other, loyalty to the military, loyalty to our commander-in-chief," he said.

Of the 591 POWs liberated during Operation Homecoming, 325 served in the Air Force, 138 in the Navy; 77 in the Army and 26 in the Marine Corps. Twenty-five of the POWs were civilian employees of U.S. government agencies. In addition, 69 POWs the Viet Cong had held in South Vietnam left aboard flights from Loc Ninh. Nine other POWs were released from Laos, and three from China.

Forty years after their release, two of the former POWs serve in Congress: Sen. John McCain of Arizona and Rep. Sam Johnson of Texas. A dinner and ceremony being planned for late May at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library in California will honor the POWs, recreating the dinner the president hosted for them at the White House in 1973. [Source: AFPS | Donna Miles | 12 Feb 2013 ++]

ROY P. BENAVIDEZ

If ever there was a man deserving of the Medal of Honor, it was Roy P. Benavidez. Not only was he a hero in the Vietnam War, he was a man of incredible determination and will power, overcoming unbelievable wounds and doctors' prognosis that he would never walk again. He refused to accept that fate, and not only forced himself to walk again, but returned to war to earn the MOH.

Benavidez was born in Lindenau near Cuero, Texas in DeWitt County. He was the son of a Mexican father and a Yaqui Indian mother. When he was two years old, his father died of tuberculosis and his mother remarried. Five years later, his mother died from tuberculosis too. Benavidez and his younger brother, Roger, moved to El Campo, where their grandfather, uncle, and aunt raised them along with eight cousins.

Benavidez shined shoes at the local bus station, labored on farms in Texas and Colorado, and worked at a tire shop in El Campo. He attended school sporadically, and at the age 15 he dropped out to work full-time to help support the family.

In 1952, during the Korean War, Benavidez enlisted in the Texas Army National Guard. In June 1955, he enlisted in the regular United States Army. In 1959 he completed his airborne training and was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg. In 1965 he was sent to South Vietnam as an advisor to an ARVN infantry regiment. He stepped on a land mine during a patrol and was evacuated to the United States, where doctors at Brooke Army Medical Center concluded he would never walk again and began preparing his medical discharge papers. Stung by the diagnosis, as well as flag burnings and media criticism of the US military presence in Vietnam he saw on TV, he began an unsanctioned nightly training ritual in an attempt to redevelop



his ability to walk. Getting out of bed at night (against doctors' orders), Benavidez would crawl using his elbows and chin to a wall near his bedside and with the encouragement of his fellow patients, many of whom were permanently paralyzed and/or missing limbs, he would prop himself against the wall and attempt to lift himself unaided, starting by wiggling his toes, then his feet, and then eventually (after several months of excruciating practice that by his own admission often left him in tears) pushing himself up the wall with his ankles and legs. After over a year of hospitalization, Benavidez walked out of the hospital in July 1966, determined to return to combat in Vietnam.

Benavidez returned to Fort Bragg to begin training for the elite Studies and Observations Group (SOG). Despite continuing pain from his wounds, he became a member of the 5th Special Forces Group and returned to South Vietnam in January 1968. On May 2, 1968, a 12-man Special Forces team was surrounded by a NVA battalion.

Citation: Master Sergeant (then Staff Sergeant) Roy P. Benavidez United States Army, who distinguished himself by a series of daring and extremely valorous actions on 2 May 1968 while assigned to Detachment B56, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, Republic of Vietnam. On the morning of 2 May 1968, a 12-man Special Forces Reconnaissance Team was inserted by helicopters in a dense jungle area west of LocNinh, Vietnam to gather intelligence information about confirmed large-scale enemy activity. This area was controlled and routinely patrolled by the North Vietnamese Army. After a short period of time on the ground, the team met heavy enemy resistance, and requested emergency extraction. Three helicopters attempted extraction, but were unable to land due to intense enemy small arms and anti-aircraft fire. Sergeant Benavidez was at the Forward Operating Base in LocNinh monitoring the operation by radio when these helicopters returned to off-load wounded crewmembers and to assess aircraft damage. Sergeant Benavidez voluntarily boarded a returning aircraft to assist in another extraction attempt. Realizing that all the team members were either dead or wounded and unable to move to the pickup zone, he directed the aircraft to a nearby clearing where he jumped from the hovering helicopter, and ran approximately 75 meters under withering small arms fire to the crippled team. Prior to reaching the team's position he was wounded in his right leg, face, and head. Despite these painful injuries, he took charge, repositioning the team members and directing their fire to facilitate the landing of an extraction aircraft, and the loading of wounded and dead team members. He then threw smoke canisters to direct the aircraft to the team's position. Despite his severe wounds and under intense enemy fire, he carried and dragged half of the wounded team members to the awaiting aircraft. He then provided protective fire by running alongside the aircraft as it moved to pick up the remaining team members. As the enemy's fire intensified, he hurried to recover the body and classified documents on the dead team leader. When he reached the leader's body, Sergeant Benavidez was severely wounded by small arms fire in the abdomen and grenade fragments in his back. At nearly the same moment, the aircraft pilot was mortally wounded, and his helicopter crashed. Although in extremely critical condition due to his multiple wounds, Sergeant Benavidez secured the classified documents and made his way back to the wreckage, where he aided the wounded out of the overturned aircraft, and gathered the stunned survivors into a defensive perimeter. Under increasing enemy automatic weapons and grenade fire, he moved around the perimeter distributing water and ammunition to his weary men, reinstilling in them a will to live and fight. Facing a buildup of enemy opposition with a beleaguered team, Sergeant Benavidez mustered his strength, began calling in tactical air strikes and directed the fire from supporting gunships to suppress the enemy's fire and so permit another extraction attempt. He was wounded again in his thigh by small arms fire while administering first aid to a wounded team member just before another extraction helicopter was able to land. His indomitable spirit kept him going as he began to ferry his comrades to the craft. On his second trip with the wounded, he was clubbed from additional wounds to his head and arms before killing his adversary. He then continued under devastating fire to carry the wounded to the helicopter. Upon reaching the aircraft, he spotted and killed two enemy soldiers who were rushing the craft from an angle that prevented the aircraft door gunner from firing upon them. With little strength remaining, he made one last trip to the perimeter to ensure that all classified material had been collected or destroyed, and to bring in the remaining wounded. Only then, in extremely serious condition from numerous wounds and loss of blood, did he allow himself to be pulled into the extraction aircraft. Sergeant Benavidez' gallant choice to join voluntarily his comrades who were in critical straits, to expose himself constantly to withering enemy fire, and his refusal to be stopped despite numerous severe wounds, saved the

lives of at least eight men. His fearless personal leadership, tenacious devotion to duty, and extremely valorous actions in the face of overwhelming odds were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service, and reflect the utmost credit on him and the United States Army.

► VA NEWS

VA TO EXPEDITE CLAIMS

WASHINGTON, April 19, 2013 – The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today it is implementing an initiative to expedite compensation claims decisions for Veterans who have waited one year or longer. Effective today, VA claims raters will make provisional decisions on the oldest claims in inventory, which will allow Veterans to begin collecting compensation benefits more quickly, if eligible. Veterans will be able to submit additional evidence for consideration a full year after the provisional rating, before VA issues a final decision.

“Too many Veterans wait too long for a decision, and this has never been acceptable,” said VA Secretary Eric Shinseki. “That is why we are implementing an aggressive plan to eliminate the backlog in 2015. This initiative is the right thing to do now for Veterans who have waited the longest.”

Provisional decisions will be based on all evidence provided to date by the Veteran or obtained on their behalf by VA. If a VA medical examination is needed to decide the claim, it will be ordered and expedited.

“Issuing provisional decisions not only provides Veterans with applicable benefits much more quickly, but also gives them an additional one-year safety net to submit further evidence should it become available. Our door will remain open and if a Veteran has additional evidence, their case will be fast tracked,” said Allison Hickey, Undersecretary for Benefits.

If any increase is determined to be warranted based on the additional evidence received, benefits will be retroactive to the date the claim was initially filed. The initiative protects the Veteran’s right to appeal the decision. If no further evidence is received within that year, VBA will inform the Veteran that their rating is final and provide information on the standard appeals process, which can be found at <http://www.bva.va.gov/>

Throughout this initiative, VA will continue to prioritize claims for homeless

Veterans and those claiming financial hardship, the terminally ill, former Prisoners of War, Medal of Honor recipients, and Veterans filing Fully Developed Claims. More information about filing Fully Developed Claims is available at: <http://www.benefits.va.gov/transformation/fastclaims/>.

Claims for Wounded Warriors separating from the military for medical reasons will continue to be handled separately and on a priority basis with the Department of Defense through the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES). Wounded Warriors separating through IDDES currently receive VA compensation benefits in an average of 61 days following their separation from service.

As a result of this initiative, metrics used to track benefits claims will experience significant fluctuations. The focus on processing the oldest claims will cause the overall measure of the average length of time to complete a claim—currently 286 days—to skew, rising significantly in the near term because of the number of old claims that will be completed. Over time, as the backlog of oldest claims is cleared and more of the incoming claims are processed electronically through VA’s new paperless processing system,

VA's average time to complete claims will significantly improve. In addition, the average days pending metric—or the average age of a claim in the inventory—will decrease, since the oldest claims will no longer be part of the inventory.

While compensation claims are pending, eligible Veterans are able to receive healthcare and other benefits from VA. Veterans who have served in recent conflicts are eligible for 5 years of free healthcare from VA. Currently, over 55% of returning Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans are using VA health care, a rate of utilization greater than previous generations of Veterans.

Veterans can learn more about disability benefits on the joint Department of Defense—VA web portal *eBenefits* at: <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits-portal/ebenefits.portal>

CAMP LEJEUNE

Did you serve on active duty at the U.S. Marine Corps Base at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, from January 1, 1957 through December 31, 1987? You may have been exposed to drinking water contaminated with industrial solvents, benzene, and other chemicals.

The [Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012](#) provided VA authority to treat Veterans who served at Camp Lejeune for not less than 30 days during the covered period. These Veterans are eligible for enrollment in Priority Group 6 or higher and cost-free care VA health care for any of the following illnesses or conditions:

- Bladder cancer
- Miscarriage
- Breast cancer
- Multiple myeloma
- Esophageal cancer
- Myelodysplastic syndromes
- Female infertility
- Neurobehavioral effects
- Hepatic steatosis
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Kidney cancer
- Renal toxicity
- Leukemia
- Scleroderma
- Lung Cancer

Veterans already enrolled in VA health care can contact their local VA medical facility to receive care under the new law. Veterans who are not enrolled should apply for VA health care benefits by completing a VA Form 10-10EZ. The application can be submitted online, by calling toll-free 1-877-222-VETS (8387), or in person at their local VA medical care facility.

Certain Family members who resided at Camp Lejeune will be eligible for health care once Congress appropriates funds to VA and final regulations are published. Family members can call 1-877-222-VETS (8387) to obtain more information.

The VA Office of Public Health website provides information about Camp Lejeune water contamination at <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/camp-lejeune/index.asp>.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) provides information on its website <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/lejeune/>. The US Marine Corps also maintains information at <https://clnr.hqi.usmc.mil/clwater/index.aspx> and encourages all who lived or worked at Camp Lejeune before 1987 to register to receive notifications.

NEW DISTINGUISHED WARFARE MEDAL

April 15 statement by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel on the Distinguished Warfare Medal:

The Department of Defense announced on Feb. 13 the establishment of the Distinguished Warfare Medal to recognize the achievements of a small number of service men and women who have an especially direct and immediate impact on combat operations through the use of remotely piloted aircraft and cyber operations. I agree with my predecessor Leon Panetta that such recognition is justly warranted for these men and women and thank him for raising the level of awareness of their hard work and critical contributions.

When I came into office, concerns were raised to me about the Distinguished Warfare Medal's order of precedence by veterans' organizations, members of Congress, and other stakeholders whose views are valued by this department's leadership.

After consulting with the service secretaries, along with Gen. Dempsey and the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I directed them to review the Distinguished Warfare Medal. The medal was originally conceived to be awarded only to those men and women who, while serving off the battlefield, have an extraordinary impact on combat operations. While the review confirmed the need to ensure such recognition, it found that misconceptions regarding the precedence of the award were distracting from its original purpose.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, with the concurrence of the service secretaries, have recommended the creation of a new distinguishing device that can be affixed to existing medals to recognize the extraordinary actions of this small number of men and women. I agree with the Joint Chiefs' findings, and have directed the creation of a distinguishing device instead of a separate medal.

The Joint Chiefs also recommend further consultation with the service secretaries, the service senior enlisted leaders, and veterans' organizations regarding the nature of the device as well as clear definition of the eligibility criteria for award of the device. I have directed that within 90 days final award criteria and the other specifics of the distinguishing device be developed and presented to me for final approval.

The service men and women, who operate and support our remotely piloted aircraft, operate in cyber, and others are critical to our military's mission of safeguarding the nation. I again want to thank my predecessor, Leon Panetta, for raising the need to ensure that these men and women are recognized for their contributions.

VETERANS DEATH PENSION

The Veterans Death Pension is a benefit paid by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to eligible dependents (surviving spouse and/or child) of deceased wartime Veterans whose deaths were not related to military service.

General Program Requirements

In order to qualify for this benefit program, you must be the surviving spouse or eligible child of an eligible Veteran. Children of Veterans are eligible if they are under the age of 18, enrolled in a VA-approved educational/training institution or became permanently incapable of self-support before reaching the age of 18. Deceased Veterans must have served at least 90 days of active duty with at least one day of wartime service and

died of causes that were unrelated to military service. (Dependents of Veterans whose deaths were caused by military service should view the [Veterans Dependency and Indemnity Compensation \(DIC\)](#) benefit.)

Wartime Service Requirements

World War I	World War II	Korea	Vietnam	Gulf War
04/06/1917 to 07/01/1921	12/07/1941 to 12/31/1946	06/27/1950 to 01/31/1955	02/28/1961 to 05/07/1975 <i>*Between 02/28/1961 to 08/04/1964 had to have served in country Vietnam</i>	08/02/1990 through a date to be prescribed by Presidential proclamation or law

Income limits apply. Higher income limits may apply if the surviving spouse is severely disabled or has custody of any dependent children of the Veteran. In addition, if your medical expenses are high, they may help to offset your countable income.

National Guard and Reserve members who were activated for federal military service and later separated are considered to be Veterans. In most cases, these Veterans need not have served 24 months.

To complete an application, use VA Form 21-534, "Application for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, Death Pension and Accrued Benefits." You can download the form at <http://www.va.gov/vaforms/>.

For more specific information, visit:
<http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/benefits/factsheets/>

▶ OTHER NEWS

ACCESS CARD FOR GOLD STAR FAMILIES

FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas--The U.S. Army Installation Management Command recently implemented a program to ensure Family members of Fallen Soldiers have easier access to Army installations.

On March 14, Army installations began issuing a standardized Gold Star Installation Access Card to parents and siblings of deceased active duty Soldiers to allow unescorted access to the installation, so they are able to receive services and support.

"Surviving parents, siblings and others who do not already have a Military or Family member ID have told us that one of their biggest frustrations is getting onto an installation to attend Survivor Outreach Services support groups, attend events, visit memorials and visit with other Survivors," said Hal Snyder, chief, Wounded and Fallen Support Services, G-9 Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Programs, Headquarters, IMCOM.

This issue was raised to the Department of the Army level through the Army Family Action Plan program, which provides a grassroots forum for members of the Army community to raise quality of life concerns. The Gold Star Installation Access Card was created in response to this feedback after reaching the highest levels of Army leadership.

"Senior Army leadership was listening, and we are pleased to be able to continue to honor the promise that Survivors remain part of the Army Family for as long as they desire," said Snyder.

In addition to providing access to all Army installations, the new identification card also serves as a small way of paying tribute these Family members.

"This card allows Survivors to have a transportable method to not only gain installation access, but it provides acknowledgement that they are Army Survivors, which is very important because of the sacrifices they have made," said Christine Carruthers, Survivor Outreach Services region specialist, G-9 FMWR Programs, Headquarters, IMCOM.

Carruthers said that it is also important for Survivors to have easy access to an installation because many of them are not familiar with how the Army works.

"In many cases, those individuals have no knowledge of the Army lifestyle and culture, so having ease of access is very helpful to them and it means a lot to them to be able to receive the services and support from the Army," Carruthers said.

Many installations were already assisting and recognizing Gold Star Family members with post decals and some were even providing identification cards, but the new installation access card program standardizes these efforts across all Army installations.

The HQ IMCOM Survivor Outreach Services was one of the lead proponents assigned to make the Gold Star Installation Access Card a reality. Army Survivor Outreach Services was established in 2008 as the long-term solution in the causality assistance continuum of care. The program provides services that address the financial, emotional, educational, health and family issues that may arise following the death of a Soldier while continuously linking Survivors to their Army Family for as long as they desire.

"The grief journey is unique to every Survivor and is experienced in its own way and time," said Carruthers. "Our program is there to assist them through their individual journey and make sure they receive all the services, support and benefits they are entitled. For Survivors who are not familiar with the Army system, having somebody already connected and knowledgeable about the agencies and resources available to them helps Survivors navigate through that much easier."

In addition to the installation access card, the Army also implemented a program March 22, which provides reserved parking spaces to Gold Star Family members at various locations on Army installations.

► **EVENTS**

RAYTHEON BBQ

May 4 at 11 a.m.

2000 East El Segundo Blvd.

El Segundo, CA

\$10 – includes lunch and one raffle ticket

Danny Lopresto organizes this barbecue every year at Raytheon to raise money for RFTW. Come and talk story with other veterans while enjoying a great barbecue.

Thank you to Raytheon for supporting RFTW, and thanks to Danny for doing this every year.

OFFICIAL RFTW REUNION

July 26-28

The official 2013 RFTW Reunion will be in Colorado Springs, on the last weekend in July.

Doubletree Hotel
1775 East Cheyenne Mountain Blvd.
Colorado Springs, Colorado
1-719-576-8900

For all CentralandSouthern Route participants. Mountain rides planned, great weather, fun, fellowship, reacquaint, reminisce, Garden of the Gods, USAir Force Academy, Pikes Peak, and more!
Make hotel reservations here <http://tinyurl.com/RFTWReunion2013>.

CRIPPLE CREEK

21st Annual Salute to American Veterans Rally

Cripple Creek, Colorado
August 16 - 18, 2013

<http://www.theveteransrally.org/>

ANGEL FIRE REUNION

Labor Day Weekend August 30 - September 1, 2013

Angel Fire/Eagle Nest, NM

Gook your own rooms

Friday night: Social hour in Eagle Nest

Saturday: Brick Laying Service Project, lunch at noon.

Saturday night: Dinner in Eagle Nest and Riders Meeting with some RFTW Board Members.

Sunday morning: Church service at Memorial Chapel

In addition to reuniting and reminiscing, RFTW Riders lay individual bricks, unit bricks, and Medal of Honor recipient bricks on the grounds of the Angel Fire Vietnam Memorial on the Saturday of the reunion. This is a project that RFTW has adopted and is welcomed by the David Westphall Veterans Foundation.

KERRVILLE, TX REUNION

September 27-29

YO Ranch Resort Hotel - Kerrville, TX

2033 Sidney Baker

Kerrville, TX 78028

www.yoresort.com

(877) 967-3767

Room Rates: \$92.00

Booking Code: RFTW0913

RV Accommodations
Kerrville-Schreiner Park
(830) 257-5392
Buckhorn off I-10
(800) 568-6458

Contact Janice Wentworth (214) 906-5357
Or email stitchnbitch1@earthlink.net for more details.

► BRINGING THEM HOME

CHAPLAIN WHO DIED IN POW CAMP AWARDED MOH

By Chad Groening (American Family News) - April 15, 2013

The nephew of America's latest Medal of Honor recipient is thanking his uncle's Korean War comrades for refusing to allow authorities to forget the heroics of the Army chaplain.

It took over 60 years for it happen, but last week an Army chaplain who died in a prisoner-of-war camp was finally awarded the military's highest honor for his bravery and self-sacrifice during the Korean War. At the White House on Thursday, President Barack Obama bestowed the Medal of Honor posthumously on Captain Emil Kapaun, a chaplain who dodged bullets to provide medical aid and spiritual comfort to wounded soldiers during the Korean War.

During the East Room ceremony, Obama said Captain Kapaun showed uncommon valor in the battle of Unsan, in November 1950, when U.S. troops were surrounded and outgunned by the Chinese. "In the chaos, dodging bullets and explosions, Father Kapaun raced between foxholes, out past the front lines and into no-man's-land, dragging the wounded to safety," stated the president.

"This is the valor we honor today," Obama said. "An American soldier who didn't fire a gun, but who wielded the mightiest weapon of all: a love for his brothers so pure that he was willing to die so that they might live."

In an interview with American Family News, the chaplain's 56-year-old nephew, Ray Kapaun, says his uncle was a very devoted person.

"[He was] devoted to his faith, devoted to his country, devoted to the soldiers that he fought beside, and devoted to those guys in the POW camp – just a very exceptional person," he shared.

Kapaun thanks those comrades who survived the ordeal and convinced authorities that his uncle should receive the Medal of Honor.

"There were just a lot of people talking about it with the prisoners of war. They constantly talked about it; they would never stop talking about it even if people didn't want to hear," said the honoree's nephew. "There have been several books – there's been about three books written, and there's a new one that's just getting ready to come out that has detailed his life."

The Kansas-born Roman Catholic priest contracted pneumonia and died as a prisoner of war in 1951 at age 35. Some of the soldiers helped by Kapaun attended the White House ceremony.

U.S. EXPEDITION FOR REMAINS PUT OFF

By Express News Service

NEW DELHI 16th April 2013 08:19 AM An expedition by the US department of defense to recover remains of over 55 airmen from a World War II plane crash in Tripura in May has been postponed, with India reportedly not yet ready to give the go-ahead.

Sixty-seven years after the C47 43-48308 transport plane went missing, a team from the department's Joint POW/MIA (Prisoners of War/Missing in Action) Accounting Command was reportedly planning to visit Tripura to recover the remains of US soldiers and return them to American soil for burial. The transport plane went missing on May 17, 1946 during a flight from Rangoon to Calcutta. Along with a three-member flight crew, it was carrying eight US military investigators and unusually, remains of 47 soldiers who had died as POWs of the Japanese.

But, as the families of the missing airmen were hoping to finally get a sense of closure, they received a notice from the U.S. Defense Department that the recovery operations had been postponed indefinitely. "Recovery operations in India have been postponed until further notice from the Government of India," said W Montague Winfield, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for POW/MIA Affairs. "We will continue to work with the Indians in hopes of conducting recovery operations there in the near future," he said.

As per the U.S. official, there are around "400 unaccounted-for US service members in India as a result of air crashes in World War II."

According to official sources, the U.S. side had been pushing for the expedition to reach Tripura by a specific date, but since arrangements by Indian authorities were not finished, the expedition was not given the green signal.

Sources said the expedition has only been postponed till a new date is fixed, and can take place this year depending on local conditions. The U.S. first made a request to restart the recovery missions that had been suspended in 2009, during the political-military dialogue in April, 2012. At that time, India had said it was looking into the "possibility of agreeing to the proposal."

The plane crash site was first discovered in 2009 by Clayton Kuhles, founder and leader of MIA Recoveries.

CHANGE OF STATUS

DPMO has posted accounting for the following U.S. personnel previously carried as POW, MIA or KIA/BNR from the Vietnam War: **L Cpl. Merlin R. Allen**, USMC, WI, KIA/BNR, 6/30/67, SVN, RR 6/25/12, ID 8/23/12 Pfc. **Daniel A. Benedett**, USMC, WA, KIA/BNR, 5/15/75, CB, RR 8/25/91, ID 1/23/12 LT **Richard L. Laws**, USN, CA, KIA/BNR, 4/3/66, NVN, RR 11/23/95, ID 1/17/13.

The number of Americans announced by DPMO as returned and identified since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is now 931. Another 63 US personnel, recovered by the US and ID'd before the end of the war, bring the official total of remains repatriated from the Vietnam War to **994**. Of the 1,652 missing and unaccounted-for personnel, 90% were lost in Vietnam or areas of Cambodia and Laos under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam-1,278 (VN-469, VS-809); Laos-314; Cambodia-53; PRC territorial waters-7; 450+ over-water losses are among 630 listed by DPMO as No Further Pursuit.

VIETNAM REPATRIATES REMAINS

Vietnamese officials have sent what are believed to be the remains of an American serviceman killed during the Vietnam War to the US to be identified. The remains and personal items believed to have belonged to the deceased were recovered during the 110th Joint Field Activity conducted from March to April this year.

A joint analysis of the remains by Vietnamese and US forensic specialists concluded that they might be that of a US soldier listed as missing in action in Vietnam, and recommended the remains be sent to Hawaii for further examination.

A repatriation ceremony took place on April 14 at Da Nang International Airport.

The ceremony was attended by representatives from the Vietnam Office for Seeking Missing Personnel (VNOSMP) and representatives from the US Defense Attaché Office, the U.S. Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and the U.S. MIA Office in Hanoi.

Addressing the ceremony, a U.S. government representative expressed appreciation for the steadfast humanitarian policy, goodwill and cooperation of the Vietnamese government and people in repatriating the remains of US servicemen and women.

Recovering the remains of U.S. servicemen killed during the war in Vietnam is a joint humanitarian effort between the governments of Vietnam and the U.S. The latest handover was the 126th such repatriation since 1973.

Vietnamese statistics have estimated that around 300,000 Vietnamese soldiers are still listed as missing in action (MIA).

Of the American MIAs, about 1,300 cases are in Vietnam. Most of the rest, in Cambodia and Laos, were in areas under Vietnamese control.

MOH RECIPIENT RETURNED FROM KOREA

By Fredrick Kunkle and Steve Vogel

In the bleak winter landscape of North Korea more than six decades ago, a small U.S. Army task force trapped on the shore of the Chosin Reservoir was under relentless attack by the Chinese and on the verge of destruction.

The outnumbered task force, part of an American drive to the Yalu River during the first year of the Korean War, had been caught by surprise and overrun by wave after wave of Chinese troops.

Blowing shepherd's horns, spraying burp guns and flinging grenades, more than 20,000 Chinese massed in four consecutive nighttime attacks, swarming over the American foxholes and engaging in savage hand-to-hand combat in such bitter cold that the frozen earth would not allow survivors to bury the dead.

Many Americans had given up any hope of survival, including Arthur Mercier, who was then a 23-year-old Army sergeant.

But then Army Lt. Col. Don Carlos Faith Jr., who had assumed command of the task force when his superior was killed, called his surviving officers together to outline a desperate plan to break out of the trap.

“We’re not through here,” Faith told Mercier and the other soldiers. “We’re going home.”

But Faith's homecoming never came — until now.

The 32-year-old Army officer from Washington, Ind., who was mortally wounded while leading the breakout attempt on Dec. 1, 1950, later was awarded the Medal of Honor for the heroic but largely futile effort to save his men. On April 16, he was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery in a ceremony to be attended by some of his former men and by his daughter, who was just 4 when he died.

For decades, Faith's remains lay in an unmarked mass grave in North Korea alongside members of what became known as Task Force Faith, following one of the grimmest episodes in American military history. His remains, located by a joint U.S.-North Korean team in 2004, were identified last year through DNA testing.

"He's been lying in an unmarked grave, not even buried with dignity, in hostile territory," said retired Army Col. John Edward Gray, who served as a platoon commander. "Now the soldier is coming home."

The burial preparations also come at a tense moment, as North Korea is threatening to reignite the war, this time with nuclear weapons. The recovery of Faith's remains has also renewed debate about a little-known chapter in the Forgotten War, as some have called the Korean conflict. Despite questions about the Army's tactics, few question Faith's valor.

"He was what I call a soldier's soldier," said Mercier, who was Faith's radio man, weeping at the memory. "He's a real hero to me."

Now and then, Barbara Ann "Bobbie" Broyles slips into a way of speaking about her father as if he were still alive, emphasizing the presence of a man whom she has known only through the most poignant absence.

"Father will arrive Sunday morning at 11:15 a.m.," she said last week. "I want to be there to see him off the plane."

Broyles, 66, who lives in Baton Rouge and has a small psychotherapy practice there, has sparkling blue eyes and an earnest, engaging manner. Her voice has a soft Southern twang as she discusses the sense of loss that has shadowed her life, especially after her mother died of cancer when Broyles was a teenager. Faith had wanted to be a soldier like his father. At 6 feet tall, he was lively, fun-loving, fit and athletic, as much at ease astride a polo horse as he was at the poker table. Denied admission at West Point after he failed the physical, he studied at Georgetown, appealed his medical denial and enlisted.

"He just wouldn't take no for an answer," she said.

Faith became an aide to Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway and performed several parachute drops, including on D-Day. After World War II, Faith was stationed with the Army's 7th Infantry as part of the U.S. occupying force in Japan. When U.S. troops were rushed to South Korea after North Korea's surprise invasion in June 1950, Faith went, too.

After reversing the early North Korean advance with a landing at Inchon in September, Gen. Douglas MacArthur moved north toward the Chinese border, hoping to wrap up a quick victory and end the war by Christmas.

Maj. Gen. Ned Almond, commander of the Army's X Corps, ordered an attack to start Nov. 27 along the Chosin Reservoir, about 40 miles from the Chinese border. MacArthur and Almond dismissed intelligence suggesting that China had entered the war.

Even after Chinese forces had appeared in sizable numbers and inflicted serious damage, Almond remained dismissive. Almond pinned a Silver Star on Faith's parka and departed. Faith, disgusted, ripped the medal off and hurled it into the snow.

“What a damned travesty,” Faith said, according to eyewitness accounts.

After four nights of hellish fighting had ground down Task Force Faith and attempts to rescue and resupply it had gone awry, the task force commander, Col. Allan MacLean, ordered a withdrawal. When MacLean was shot by Chinese soldiers and dragged off, Faith took command and tried to rally the men to break out, even calling on the wounded to take up weapons and fight. After a truck convoy carrying hundreds of the most seriously wounded was hit by napalm dropped by American fighter planes, Faith, brandishing a .45-caliber handgun under enemy fire, worked to rally the demoralized unit.

“He just took it upon himself — ‘If I’m going to fight to the death, let it be trying to save my command,’ ” recalled Gray.

Faith also led an attack to clear a roadblock that had stopped the convoy and was hit in the chest by shrapnel from a grenade. Other soldiers put the mortally wounded officer in the cab of a truck to stay warm, but the convoy again was halted at a destroyed bridge. Chinese forces soon overran the column, shooting and bayoneting wounded soldiers. Those who survived found safety by walking across the frozen reservoir to American lines.

“He did his all. He paid the full price, for duty, honor and country,” said Gray.

SOLDIER LAID TO REST AFTER 63 YEARS

By Brianna Smith, CarolinaLive.com

A Conway, SC soldier was laid to rest after 63 years of being missing overseas.

Master Sgt. Ernest Grainger went missing near Chochiwon Korea in 1950 at the age of 25. His remains were found by South Korean officials two years ago.

It's likely Grainger died in the summer of 1950 while in Korea, but he wasn't classified as dead until 1953. Even so, he was never found, and his family was left to wonder all these years.

According to records of Grainger's time in the Army, he was reported missing in action in 1950 after the 24th Infantry Division, 21st Infantry Regiment, K Company was deployed to an area along the Kum River in western South Korea. The unit was ordered to hold its position along the river so that retreating South Korean soldiers could move into more defensible positions further south.

During a fire fight in the middle of July, North Korean forces overran the U.S. positions, destroying the 21st Infantry Regiment. Grainger was reported missing after the fighting ceased.

Grainger's unit had been serving as occupiers in Japan before being deployed to Korea.

During Grainger's time in the military, he also served as a paratrooper in the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment during World War II, where he trained in North Carolina and Georgia before shipping off to the Pacific Theater. While in the Pacific, he made various jumps and engaged Japanese soldiers throughout the Philippines.

After World War II, Grainger signed on as an Enlisted Reserve Corps member before signing on with the regular Army and heading back into the Pacific to occupy Japan.

Grainger was returned to the Charleston airport and laid to rest April 13 at the Bethlehem Baptist Church Cemetery in Conway Saturday, next to other family members.

► ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEED KIA INFO

Moms, dads, wives, husbands of our Killed In Action: please send me your name, the name of your loved one (rank, branch of service), where they were Killed In Action, and the date. Also include whether you will be in Rancho Cucamonga. Email the info to me at doug@lyvere.com.

I will be sending you individual letters explaining why I'd like this info.

Doug Lyvere

SgtMaj, Marine, Ret.

HOTEL IN WILLIAMS

The Quality Inn in Williams, AZ is in the process of renegotiating their contract with new owners. A rumor was going around that our reservations were in jeopardy, but they confirmed on April 22 that all RFTW registrations were safe. But if you're concerned, call them at 928-635-9888.

SHIPPING YOUR BIKE

Some riders fly back home and ship their bikes home after Washington D.C. One of the companies that ships bikes is called Motorcycle Mover. Contact them for more info such as cost, estimated shipping time, and where they will pick up in the DC area. Motorcycle Mover 1-800-410-7499. This is by no means the only shipper; however, it is the one that has been used by many RFTW riders before.

UPDATES TO CR WEBSITE

Bob "Shoreparty" Talley

Most of us ride in memory of someone on RFTW. I am working on the tributes to the Central Route website. If you would like to tell us about who you are riding for, send me your tribute so I can post it on the website. Send tributes to shoreparty@rftwcr.us and put "Tribute" in the subject line. Cutoff for the tributes will be May 6th.

Thank you and hope to see you all on the run.

► SICK CALL

Dave "Timberwoof" Roy, Crestline, CA is recovering from injuries suffered when a car pulled out in front of him. He was thrown 25 feet from his motorcycle and spent days in the trauma center. He broke his left hand (5 fractures), right clavicle, had a contused lung/heart and severely injured right leg.

Jack “Chief” Brammar had emergency spinal surgery April 18. He had a mass pushing against the spinal cord and lost leg motion. He is now walking a little distance with a walker. Chief is disappointed that he won’t be able to drive the SR merchandise truck this year, but hopes to see everyone off at the dinner in Rancho. He requests healing prayers.

► TAPS



Albert Smith, Code Talker: The Navajo Nation is mourning the death of Navajo Code Talker Albert Smith, who walked on April 17. He was 88.

Smith was born on Dec. 13, 1924 and was of the Salt People Clan, born for Black Streak Wood People Clan.

During World War II, Smith lied about his age to get into the US Marines. He enlisted on April 1, 1943 at the age of 15. He served with the 4th Division Battalion, 23rd regiment during World War II, and served in Saipan, Tinian, Iwo Jima and the Marshall Islands. During this time he was selected in 1942 by the US Marine Corps to be a code talker. After World War II, he finished his high school education, but could not find employment, so he joined the US Army and did a tour of duty in Korea.

Upon returning home after the war, Smith was told by elders not talk about the war so that he would not mislead the youth on the reservation. He attained a bachelor's of education degree from Eastern New Mexico University and worked with the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Education Department as a teacher for 38 years before retiring.

During retirement he became involved with the Navajo Code Talkers Association. He served as an advisor to the blockbuster film, "Windtalkers," starring Adam Beach and Nicolas Cage, which highlighted the contributions of the Navajo code talkers during World War II. He was even given a cameo role in the film.

In 2001, Smith received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his service to the nation.

On November 11, 2012 he rode in New York's Fifth Avenue Veterans Day Parade as an honored guest.

Smith was the brother of Navajo Code Talker George Smith, who died in the fall of 2012. The brothers joined the military together.

Smith was a member of the Navajo Code Talker Association and Baahaali Veterans Association, said Emery Chee, secretary/treasurer for the association.

"He was a very quiet person with a lot of knowledge," Chee said. "He's always been very straight with everyone and (had) knowledge of how to survive through good and bad times."

D.C. “Smoke” Murphy: Longtime and beloved RFTW rider Smoke passed away April 22 after a battle with lung cancer. Smoke joined the Army Air Corps in 1943, and in WWII was a B-17 radio operator/gunner with the 397th bomb squadron. He was discharged in 1947 and became a carpenter and worked in that trade until he was 83 years old. Smoke bought his first motorcycle in 1993 when he was 70 years old, and rode with RFTW for 16 years. He had over 240,000 miles on his Harley Davidson Heritage Classic. He was a wonderful human being who never had a bad word for anyone and was loved by everyone. He was a member of American Legion Riders Chapter 149 in Escondido, CA, and they are having a Celebration of Life for Smoke on



June 30 at 1 p.m. at 230 East Park Ave. His remains will be sent to his sister in Carthage, New York for burial on May 5. Arrangements by Lundy Funeral Home & Cremation Service, Inc., 500 State St., Carthage, NY 13619 (315-493-3710).

Thank you for your service and for your friendship, Smoke, and rest in peace. You will be missed by all who loved you.

Billie Jo "Skittles," daughter of Bill "Rocket" Rager, died in a motorcycle accident on March 17 in Raton, NM while riding with other RFTW riders. Skittles rode with her Dad on RFTW XXIV last year, CR. Her death was especially devastating because when she was placed in the ambulance she was alert and talking. Tocket, our hearts go out to you on the loss of your beloved daughter.

► CLOSING THOUGHTS

This is a great documentary of entertainers who went to Vietnam during the war to entertain the troops. One girl stayed for two and a half years because she loved it there so much. Vietnam vets will especially appreciate this—what memories it will bring back.

<http://www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/play/10371/Entertaining-Vietnam>



You Are Not Forgotten



TO SUBSCRIBE TO A MAILED COPY OF THE NEWSLETTER:

APPLICATION FOR NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION

The RFTW newsletter is published in January, April, July, and October. If you would like to have

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

NAME: _____ DATE: _____ 2013

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AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____ FOR 1 YEAR _____ 2 YEARS _____

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