



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

Official Newsletter of..."Run For The Wall"...Spring 2000

Quarterly Newsletter  
" We Ride For Those Who Can't "  
Spring 2000  
Page One

**Inside this issue:**

[RFTW Newsletter Page 1](#)

- [A Message To State Coordinators From The RFTW Board Chairman](#)
- [A Word From The Editor](#)
- [The Hunt For Those Missing Gets Harder](#)
- [Ron "Beanie" Valandra Takes Leave of Absence](#)
- [From the Front](#)
- [Road Guards for RFTW 2000](#)
- [THINK OF ME](#)
- [RFTW Support Groups](#)
- [Run For The Wall's Organization](#)
- [Chase Vehicles Wanted](#)
- [Attention State Coordinators](#)
- [FNG'S Don't Worry!](#)
- [Nikki's POW-MIA Vigil](#)
- [POW-MIA Flag Law](#)
- [Americans Still Unaccounted For From Vietnam War](#)
- [Legislative Update](#)
- [Your Opinions Count!](#)

[RFTW Newsletter Page 2](#)

- [Remembering](#)
- [Dress Right & Cover Down; Preparing for the Run](#)
- [A Real Sharp Project](#)
- [Cold War Recognition Certificate](#)
- [Example; Sleeping Warm on the Run](#)
- [Lessons Learned](#)
- [Movie Review](#)
- [Runs to the Run](#)
- [RFTW Packing Checklist](#)
- [Run For The Wall Planning Calendar and Cost Estimate](#)
- [Run for the Wall 2000 Daily Schedule](#)
- [RFTW Contacts 2000](#)
- [RFTW Eve Info](#)
- [Run For The Wall Merchandise Order Form](#)

**A Message To State Coordinators  
From The RFTW Board Chairman**

First, I would like to thank you as Run For The Wall State Coordinators for all the great work you have done to make every year's ride so successful. Without your untiring efforts, dedication and love for the mission, Run For The Wall would never be possible. Thank you so very much.

I would like to address some issues. I speak as a member of the Board of Directors for RFTW and as a State Coordinator (Colorado.) As a Board member we have fallen short in keeping open the avenues of communications with you as State Coordinators. We are working to correct this situation and will work closer with you in the future. We are a new Board and still working out some rough spots and I would hope that we are getting better. We are open to new ideas in an effort to make the Run better, and to better spread the word of the mission of Run For The Wall. I and we (Board) fully realize that it is only through your efforts as State Coordinators that the success of the Run works.

Each state is unique in its support, programs and benefits, these are due to your hard work. California, as the starting point for the Run. Arizona, for its flexibility to change and vast wonderment. New Mexico, its welcome at the Navajo Nation and Angel Fire. Angel Fire, where the first real test of what the Run means. Where we come face to face with some of our past and look forward to our future. Colorado, that little truck stop with the big heart. Hugo, and the wonderful dinner at the VFW. Kansas, riding sideways in the wind. The welcome at Thomas Park in Salina. Ruth and the Sandpipers, the three teddy bears that will be carried to the Wall. Missouri, another warm welcome to Wentzville. Their program, dinner, music, service, breakfast and loving sendoff. The visit to the Veterans Hospital at Jefferson Barracks. A moment to realize how much we have and to help and visit someone less fortunate. Illinois, our welcome to Mount Vernon, a great lunch, nice folks with sandwiches and fresh fruits. Indiana, the fish fry some have only heard of and others can't wait to taste again. Long John Silver's, eat your heart out. Kentucky, and the country's most thought provoking Vietnam Memorial. West-By-God-Virginia, where a photo is done at one of the most lovely places. Huntington, where you can camp by the hotel, get great motorcycle service and your bike washed. And of course, Rainelle, which words fail to adequately describe. Virginia, and the stop at the Iwo Jima, to pay our honors and that special group picture. Our escort by the Washington, D.C. Park Police to the Wall. The Wall, where for some it will be their first visit with friends lost. On Saturday, the privilege of riding our motorcycles through Arlington National Cemetery, the garden of stone. To lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers.

Yes, there is more to each state, the person standing at the overpass, waving his hand or the American flag. That person who will stand and render a hand salute as the Run rides past. Or at a stop in your state when someone walks over and tells you, Welcome Home. It is in your state where someone's mother and dad will tell you, thank you for not forgetting that their son has not come home. It is more than the meals, fuel, camping and speeches. It is the hearts of your state that come out and give. It is in your state that a veteran will get his very first, "WELCOME HOME."

And to the State Coordinators the Run For The Wall does not ride through your state. Your position is no less important or any easier, in fact it is even more difficult. Asking for support or donations for a ride that will not even come into your state is tough. But, you have done it and we hope that you will continue to spread the word of our mission, organize the runs to the Run or offering a place and time for healing. We all work together.

Run For The Wall will continue to grow, changes will be made at times. But the one thing that will not change is the need for your support,

hard work, dedication and commitment.

Again, I want to thank you for everything that you have done to make Run For The Wall work. Please feel free to contact me at anytime. Our effort is year round. God Bless and take care. I look forward to seeing you in May, somewhere on the Run.

Keep your head down and your powder dry, and your body armor near. Remembering our POW/MIA's.

Joe "Dragon" Lozano

Chairman, RFTW Board of Directors

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### **A Word From The Editor**

Great Caesar's Ghost, it's getting to be that time of year again! Pack up your T-bag and get ready for what promises to be the biggest, best Run For The Wall ever.

This pre-Run issue of the Newsletter is full of information about the Run, ideas for packing, and the much-awaited RFTW 2000 Merchandise Order Form. Of course we haven't forgotten to include articles about the POW-MIA cause, an all-new Legislative Update (*write those Congressmen!*) and stories by and about our Brothers and Sisters in the RFTW Family.

My sincere thanks to everyone who contributed.

*Enjoy!*

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### **The Hunt For Those Missing Gets Harder Teams still seek "closure" from Vietnam War**

By Mick Elmore. US News & World Report 02/21/00

SAVANNAKEHT, LAOS - The crash site is teasing the Americans digging deep into a hillside in this remote corner of Laos along the old Ho Chi Minh Trail. They have recovered bits from an American A-6 Intruder attack jet in "the pit." What they are seeking now are traces of the two Marine Corps aviators who perished during the Vietnam War when their jet plowed into the jungle hillside.

After three one-month missions here, the pit is more than 20 feet deep. With no shade and no breeze, the heat is nearly unbearable at the bottom, where 12 American soldiers take turns digging and rotate out to supervise the Laotian workers sifting the dirt for any foreign objects. They suspect this is where the A-6A went down Sept. 29, 1969, but they can't be sure since other warplanes went down in the area during the Vietnam War. (*U.S. News* is withholding the names of the two aviators to protect the privacy of their families.)

Air Force Master Sgt. Keith Williams, a "wrecker" who can recognize the smallest bits of aircraft parts, identified pieces of two life support systems, and that's how they know two men perished with the plane. "I like to find remains to put to rest some of the questions that still need to be answered," said Williams, who has participated in more than 25 such missions. But he added that the pit guards its secrets well.

DNA traces. And they're not asking for much. Human remains weighing as little as 5 grams is all the Army's Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii requires to make a reliable identification using new DNA technology. The American servicemen and -women searching the remote corners of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia for the remains of soldiers lost during the Vietnam War consider it closure when they are able to find and identify the remains of someone previously unaccounted for. So far, the Pentagon has been able to complete that task in the cases of 552 personnel listed as missing at the end of the war in 1975, while another 622 are considered "not recoverable," for instance, those lost when their planes crashed into the South China Sea. The remains of 236 others are in the identification process or await approval from the families, who must sign off before a case is closed. That leaves 1,173 cases.

After years of searching, the easy ones are done. The Pentagon's Joint Task Force - Full Accounting has

\$20 million this year to conduct 11 missions - five in Vietnam, five in Laos, and one in Cambodia. The hunt extends into some of the region's most remote terrain, making excavations difficult, expensive, and often fruitless. The fact is, most of the remaining missing will never be found - though neither Congress nor the Pentagon wants to call off the search. "The sites have been harder to find. And when we do find the sites, they have been picked over more," says archaeologist Pete Miller, a civilian who has worked for the identification lab since 1986. "Another reason is the witnesses are getting older, if there are any left. Fifteen years ago we had witnesses that could pinpoint, and that made it easier to dig. Now it's second [-generation] witnesses."

The crash site, in mountainous terrain thick with bamboo, shows just how difficult the task is. It's no picnic digging and sifting Laotian dirt eight hours a day in a stifling heat in a high malarial area. Choppers fly the team to the site each morning and out at night to the base camp, which has such creature comforts as fans in the tents, hot showers, a restaurant with cold drinks, and a recreation room with satellite television. It's not Club Med, but after the nearly 40 soldiers and three archaeologists return from digging in three remote crash sites, the camp offers rest and relaxation.

Despite hardships, the soldiers are enthusiastic about their work. Williams, for instance, signed on for an additional two-year stint with the Air Force with the understanding that he would continue to work on these search missions. Staff Sgt. Mike Henshaw shows off the tattoo on his right shoulder: "POW-MIA, You are not forgotten," with seven stars below it. He adds a star after each mission, just as a pilot paints on his aircraft the number of planes he has shot down. Now, he can add one more; the dig concluded last Thursday. But it may be many months yet before the Hawaii lab will determine whether the pit gave up its secrets.

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**RFTW Editor's Note:** As you can see from this article, the official U.S. Government position denies the possibility for ever obtaining a FULL accounting of ALL POW-MIA's. If you read between the lines, you'll probably agree with the National Alliance of Families of POW-MIA's and Operation Just Cause that these official statements are part of a government effort to prepare us for the discontinuation of JTF Full Accounting in 2004. Most of us believe that the government isn't doing enough to account for our POW-MIAs, but if JTF-FA is discontinued, they'll be doing NOTHING!

*If this matters to you, fax, email, write or call your Congressional Representative immediately and let them know what you think! And if you have time, money or energy to help the National Alliance of Families for the Return of America's Missing Servicemen, e-mail NAF's Lynn O'Shea at: [lynnpowmia@prodigy.net](mailto:lynnpowmia@prodigy.net) with the subject line: I WANT TO HELP. Write to: National Alliance of Families P. O. Box 40327 Bellevue, WA 98015, or call them at (718) 846-4350.*

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## **Ron "Beanie" Valandra Takes Leave of Absence From RFTW Board**

On February 15, 2000, the RFTW Board of Directors accepted Ron "Beanie" Valandra's request for a leave of absence from his duties as both a member and Chairman of the RFTW Board, for personal and business reasons.

As Chairman of the Run For The Wall Board for the past year, Beanie led the necessary efforts toward formal organization of Run For The Wall. This was a huge job which, in addition to assisting the National Coordinator in overseeing arrangements for Run support across the nation, also included directing the Run's incorporation and dealing with State and Federal Government entities.

During Ron's absence, Joe "Dragon" Lozano will be acting as Chairman of the RFTW Board.

Ron says that, among the hundreds of people he's worked with during the past 30 years, RFTW is the

greatest group of all. Ron will be missed, and we hope he'll return soon.

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### **From the Front National Coordinator's Message**

By the time you read this edition of the RFTW Newsletter, your bike should already be cleaned up and ready to go, oil changed, tires checked and your route to Ontario, CA (or wherever you plan to join the Run) mapped.

The planning for this year's Run is right on schedule. State and local coordinators and their assistants have checked and rechecked our route, and our supporters across the country are anxious to start the bean pots cooking. Here's some info to help you plan and prepare for the Run.

Our Road Guards will again be wearing lemon-yellow armbands to make them more visible on the road and more accessible to you. Road Guards will know the up to the minute schedule on the Run. They will know the exact departure times from our gas and lunch stops. They will also be acting as your first-line point of contact with the Run. If you have questions, comments, complaints or suggestions, and you can't find me, just see a Road Guard and ask him to pass the info along.

We have continued with our upgraded communications system this year. In addition to the radio units that the Road Guards and chase trucks have, we will have several digital telephones that work off of the AT&T nationwide system. That way we can keep track of our chase trucks when they are hauling someone to a dealer. We will also be able to phone ahead from the road to give our supporters an idea of how many mouths they will have to feed.

The Run has an emergency telephone number: (812) 522-0608. Messages left at this number will be delivered to you as soon as possible. Leave this number with your family, to contact you in an emergency. Please use this number for *emergencies only*, not for routine messages.

For any routine messages, you can receive e-mail while you're on the Run. Our Run e-mail address is: [mailcall@rftw.org](mailto:mailcall@rftw.org). Have the sender place your name in the subject line. We will print your email and pass it along to you at morning mail call.

We will have our group photo for the Rolling Thunder Poster taken on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial this year. We will go from the Iwo Jima over to our reserved parking area between the Lincoln Memorial and the Wall and go to Lincoln Memorial for the photo before going to the Wall.

Due to the high number of four-wheeled vehicles that join us, the Run's order of march will separate types of vehicles on the road. Motorcycles (2-wheeled bikes) will be in the first part of the pack, followed by trikes, sidecars and bikes with trailers. The pack will be followed by designated chase vehicles (two breakdown trucks, a support truck and our last man jeep.) The rest of the four-wheelers will follow approximately one-half mile back.

All groups will leave in the morning from the point of departure together; however, when the motorcycles reach the midmorning gas stop, the four-wheelers will continue on to the lunch stop without stopping. The four wheelers do not require gas as often as the bikes, and sending them ahead to lunch will allow the midmorning gas stop to go quicker. It will also allow the 4-wheelers to get gas, park, and be on hand to welcome the bikes into the lunch stop.

After lunch, we will all leave together, again with the four wheelers one-half mile back, and repeat the

procedure for the mid-afternoon gas stop. The four wheelers will go directly to the overnight stop to make camp, check into the hotels, etc., and set up to welcome us in. The only exception to this procedure will be when the run stops at a location for a visit, such as Angel Fire, the VA medical centers and the Kentucky Vietnam Veterans Memorial. All vehicles will make these stops. It is hoped that this change will make gas stops smoother and quicker and will also ensure a safer passage across the country.

Those who have been on the Run a few times realize that we have grown significantly over the years; for you FNG's, in a couple of years, you'll look back at RFTW 2000 and say "Wow, we had such a small group back then." That kind of growth is good for the Run. We reach more citizens with our message and provide much needed healing for more and more people. The down-side to this growth is that from time to time, people may view the Run as a party rather than the mission and pilgrimage that it is. *Run For The Wall is NOT a party.* The Run asks that you refrain from the use of all intoxicating substances while we are underway. No one cares what you do in the evening, as long as you are quiet and do not disturb other riders. But to drink during the day creates problems for the entire Run, both actual and perceived. The perception of the civilians who see us at gas stop is crucial to our mission. If we are viewed as a dedicated group of veterans honoring our missing and dead brothers, we can usually count on those people to speak highly of us, and to become supporters of our cause. But if we are perceived as just another biker gang, drinking and riding our way across the country, no matter how many American and POW-MIA flags we fly, we will leave behind a negative image. Additionally, there aren't many of you out there that want to be riding next to someone at 65 miles per hour, whose judgment is the least bit impaired. The bottom line is if someone is seen drinking or taking any drugs, or is believed to be impaired, they will be asked to put their bike on the trailer until we get into the campground. 'Nuff said on that!

We will again be camping on the football field and using the school showers and restrooms in Rainelle. This is a public school, funded with public tax dollars. It is against the law in West Virginia for anyone to use any tobacco products on school property at any time. If you camp in Rainelle, please honor their request that you leave the school property to smoke.

For those of you who have been asking, "YES," T- shirts and all the other RFTW merchandise we have can be ordered before the run. Check the merchandise order form on the inside cover of this newsletter for selection, prices and how to order.

For those of you who are friends of Bill W., there will be a meeting nightly during the Run. See me for a contact person, and times and locations of the meetings.

Finally, the Board of Directors is accepting applications for Road Guard Captain for RFTW 2001. The progression to National Coordinator is a three-year commitment, beginning with Road Guard Captain, then Assistant Nat'l Coordinator, and finally National Coordinator. If you have any interest in this job, please let your interest be known. Your responsibilities for the immediate future would be minimal. You should be ready to engage in discussions about the Run, and to assist in some of the planning and execution. If you think this is something you would be interested in, contact Joe Lozano, acting Chairman of the Board of Directors or leave a message on the Run phone at (812) 522-0608.

See you in May!

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### **Road Guards for RFTW 2000**

We still need a few good men and women for Road Guard duty. I've got a couple of riders that have made the run 1 time. I would like to give them the opportunity to enjoy it for a 2nd time before we put them to work. There are still some past Road Guards who have not contacted me. Hey guys, please let me know if you

can still perform.

One item that was left off the criteria list: All Road Guards ride solo. Under no circumstances will Road Guards be allowed to carry passengers while acting as Road Guards. This rule is set up for the safety of both Road Guards and RFTW riders. Two-up bikes just do not handle as quickly as solo bikes.

Weather here has been just great for riding. One weekend I was riding sno-scoot and the next weekend I was riding Goldwing with no snow on the ground, except snow banks. Look forward to seeing you all in May at Ontario.

Milo Gordon "Nayber"  
F2457 Blueberry Road Colby, WI 54421  
Phone: (715) 223-3462  
Email: [nayber@pcpros.net](mailto:nayber@pcpros.net)

### **ROAD GUARD CRITERIA:**

1. Must have been on the Run for two (2) years, but need not have gone "all the way" either time.
2. Must have a current motorcycle endorsement on license for the state of licensure.
3. Must be a well-experienced motorcycle operator. Successful completion of the Motorcycle Safety Foundation Experienced Riders Course is desirable, but not required.
4. As servants to the Run and to the public, Road Guards must treat everyone with honor and respect. Their function is to provide safe travel to both the Run and the Public.
5. Must be riding alone. No passengers may ride with an on-duty Road Guard.

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### **THINK OF ME**

You know you can not bring me back  
You know that I am gone  
I walk the streets of heaven now  
It's my eternal home  
But think of me now and then  
Just as you do today  
Remember that I died for you  
So America could stay  
A land where men are equal  
A land where men are free  
A land I lived and died for  
When you think of freedom  
Think of Me

*- Loyde P. "Snake" Arender*

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### **RFTW Support Groups A Special Part of Our RFTW Family**

When most of us think of Run For The Wall, we picture the pack of motorcycle riders, side by side in a tight formation that stretches for several miles down the highway, wind in their faces, American and POW flags

flying proudly from atop the bungee-corded packs on their bikes. But this is just one aspect of Run For The Wall. Another, vitally important picture of the Run is that of the Run's wonderful family of supporters, welcoming the Run into their home towns, all the way across America.

These are the generous men, women and children of all ages and backgrounds, who spend countless hours preparing delicious meals and arranging places for riders to sleep; greeting the Run, serving tasty chow with a smile and a hug, then nourishing riders' souls with songs, poetry, and heartfelt ceremonies. They are always on hand to wave and salute the Run as we leave their town, wishing that they could ride along, and sending their love and prayers along with us. After the last rider has disappeared down the road and the roar of motorcycle engines has faded, they devote themselves to the chore of cleaning up after us, and begin planning to do it all again next year.

Our Run family also includes the veterans who stand for hours on highway overpasses in all kinds of weather, just to wave an American flag as we ride past, and the young families who bring their children out to meet the wind-blown riders, say "thanks for serving," and learn a little bit about the cost of freedom. They all spend considerable time, money and energy to let us know that they, too, remember our POW, MIA and KIA Brothers who did not return, and that they remember us; and they all are just as much a part of Run For The Wall as the riders who go "*all the way.*"

When our Vietnam Veterans returned from war, they did not receive a "Welcome Home" parade. For many years they were left to wonder if anyone but their fellow veterans appreciated their service to our country, or understood how very much they gave. The popular media claimed that America didn't care. But the media lied - America *did* care, and still does. Each year during Run For The Wall, all across this great nation of ours, groups and individuals prove that they care deeply for our veterans, and remember our lost Brothers, as they turn out to greet our Run with a hearty "Welcome Home!"

This Welcome Home Parade, so long overdue, is profoundly appreciated by everyone who rides in this pilgrimage called Run For The Wall. It is an outpouring of love that heals broken hearts and mends shattered spirits.

To all of our generous Brothers and Sisters, Moms and Dads who participate in Run For The Wall as supporters: without your contribution, we would not be able to ride as we do. All of the support you provide is fantastic. But the biggest blessing of all is your love and encouragement. From everyone who rides, THANK YOU.

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### **Run For The Wall's Organization**

We've gotten lots of questions about the organization of Run For The Wall, and many offers to help with the mission. Here's a brief description of RFTW's history and structure, to help folks understand where they, as participants and "RFTW Family" fit in, and where they can be of the most help to the continuing success of the Run.

Run For The Wall is a memberless corporation formed for the purpose of sponsoring an annual event - the Run - to honor veterans, particularly KIAs, and seek a full accounting for POW-MIAs from all wars.

Begun in 1988 when two veterans rode their motorcycles from San Diego to Washington, D.C. to attend the Rolling Thunder Parade and spread the message of support for the POW-MIA cause, in the ensuing decade RFTW grew from a small informal gathering to a large, complex, high-profile national event.

In December 1998, the RFTW State Coordinators appointed a Board of Directors, and shortly thereafter the

organization was incorporated under the Illinois Not-For Profit Corporation Act of 1986. In 1999 the Federal Government recognized RFTW as exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in Section 501 (c)(3).

The RFTW Board of Directors handles the business end of the Run. They deal with the IRS, State and Federal Governments, and appoint volunteer officers such as National Coordinator, Assistant National Coordinator, Road Guard Captain, Southern Route Coordinator, and State Coordinators. The Board handles the Run's finances, and oversees the design, production and sale of official Run merchandise, operation of the RFTW Internet Web Site, and publishing of the RFTW Quarterly Newsletter.

The National Coordinator works with the State Coordinators, the Assistant National Coordinator, and the Road Guard Captain to determine the route of the Run, and provide support (such as Road Guards, chase vehicles and communications equipment) for the Run. He orchestrates the State Coordinators' efforts and, once the State Coordinators have submitted their proposed routes and stops, compiles them into a final overall Run schedule.

State Coordinators are the key people in organizing the Run. They scout and recon routes for the Run, arrange for logistical support such as hotels, camping, meals and police escorts, and determine appropriate gasoline stops. State Coordinators orchestrate publicity and advertising, oversee distribution of Run fliers to motorcycle shops, veterans' organizations and POW-MIA support organizations, and issue press releases. State Coordinators also work with local volunteers to arrange "Runs to the Run" in their areas in order to help folks travel together to meet the Run in Ontario or at other locations along the way.

As you can probably imagine, the job of each State Coordinator is huge. They start months in advance of the Run to make arrangements for meals. At least 31 meals are served during the Run, each in a different location, each provided by a different local support group, each of which must be contacted, cajoled into feeding a battalion-sized group, and kept involved and enthusiastic. State Coordinators also arrange for hotels, and are often able to obtain discount room rates for RFTW participants, or for free camping. They work with VA hospitals and other sites such as Angel Fire and the Navajo Nation to ensure that our visit at each location will go smoothly. State Coordinators can usually use help with these tasks, particularly in larger states with more than just a few stops.

Once the Run Schedule Flier is published, distribution of fliers is an ongoing job. Locations where fliers are distributed must be visited and revisited frequently, so that the flier supply can be replenished when they run out. State Coordinators can always use help with this job.

Everyone involved in the leadership and organization of Run For The Wall is a volunteer. From the Board of Directors to the State Coordinators, no one receives pay for their work. Arrangements for the Run are begun well in advance - sometimes more than a year before each Run, and fine-tuning and last-minute tasks continue until the moment the Run ends, after the Rolling Thunder Parade.

In 2001, RFTW will be running two routes - the current Central Route, and a new Southern Route. The logistical needs of the Run will be doubled, and lots of assistance will be needed to arrange to feed and support riders along the way, and to get the word out about our mission.

Anyone interested in getting involved in the Run is welcome. If you have a special skill, a great idea for improving the Run, or if you know of a group who is willing to do a little or a lot to support the Run along the way, PLEASE speak up and let your State Coordinator know what you can do. Better yet, just ask what needs to be done. They may have you make a last minute recon of a gas stop near you, to be sure it's fully operational before the Run descends upon it, and that there are no surprises such as major construction when we arrive. They may ask you to make copies of the RFTW Schedule flier, and deliver them to bike shops and Vet Centers in your area. These are not useless chores - they are vital tasks, and necessary for

getting the word out so that we can share the healing and fellowship of Run For The Wall with more Brothers and Sisters, and for spreading the word about our POW-MIAs to everyone who will listen.

Your help will surely be appreciated.

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### **Chase Vehicles Wanted**

Run For The Wall helps pay the cost of gas for official Chase Vehicles when they have a bike on board.

You must have a large truck or van, and a trailer which can tow at least 4 bikes at once, and must be willing to help any riders who break down on the Run. Taking riders and their ailing scoots to the nearest repair facility may require significant detours from the Run route, as well as personal time, but you'll make lots of friends along the way.

If you are interested in serving as a Chase Vehicle, please call Iron Mike ASAP at (812) 522-0608.

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### **Attention State Coordinators**

RFTW State Coordinators, please check your phone number and email address as it is listed on the last news letter. If it needs to be corrected, or if you now have an email address which you did not have before, please send updated information or corrections to:

Joe "Dragon" Lozano, RFTW Board Chairman at:  
(719) 576-7642, or  
email: [lozadragon@aol.com](mailto:lozadragon@aol.com)

\*AND to\*

Sally Marie "SizzMo" Down, RFTW Newsletter Editor at:  
(619) 258-6388, or email: [sfd@sdpdms.sannet.gov](mailto:sfd@sdpdms.sannet.gov)

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### **FNG'S Don't Worry! By Cookie Monster "I Wasn't There, But I Care"**

Run For The Wall is remarkably well organized, and the logistical support is superb. State Coordinators work hard all year to make arrangements for meals, camping and hotels on the Run. They coordinate with local groups who feed us along the way, locate convenient gas stops that can accommodate large numbers of bikes, and they run repeated recons of the RFTW route to ensure our safety on the road. The National Coordinator, Assistant National Coordinator and Road Guard Captain organize on-the-road support, and communications. Thousands of hours of behind-the-scenes work is done throughout the year (all by unpaid volunteers,) to ensure that when you ride with RFTW, no one gets lost or left behind.

There is a rider briefing each morning on the Run. *Every* rider should attend the briefing *every* morning, as schedule changes and important announcements may be made. E-mail messages from family and friends are also distributed at the daily Mail Call. (Have friends and family send e-mail to: [mailcall@rftw.org](mailto:mailcall@rftw.org) with

your name in the subject line.) Don't sleep in and miss the meeting - most of us ain't pretty enough that a few minutes of beauty rest one way or another will make much difference!

Whenever we're on the road, Road Guards patrol the route, stopping at intersections where needed. They also keep an eye on the formation, and will probably tell you at some time or another to close up the ranks a little (tighten up the distance between you and the bike in front of you) if the pack is getting stretched out and too dangerous. RFTW rides tight and relatively fast (usually right at the speed limit.) If you have a fear of riding close or sharing a lane with another bike, we ask you to ride towards the back of the pack for safety. When the Run leaves a stop, pick a spot to ride in, and stay in it. No passing or cutting in - it's rude and it's dangerous. Don't try to ride side by side with a buddy. You will be separated as the pack moves, and if you try to stay together, you will create gaps and hold up other riders. If you feel you must ride near someone, ride in line with (in front or behind) them. Better yet, just get out there and ride, and visit with your friends at rest stops. Road Guards are easy to identify because of their bright yellow arm bands. Please listen to them, respect them, and obey their instructions while on the road - they are experts, and they take a risk to help get everyone to The Wall safely.

Whenever the Run is in motion we have a guy called "Tail-End Charlie" (not to be confused with Victor Charlie,) bringing up the rear. He is your friend. He makes sure you stay with us. If you break down, pull over to the shoulder and give the RFTW distress signal (hold out your arm with thumb pointed down to passing riders and other Run vehicles,) and a Chase Truck will come to you. They will get you to the next available fix-it place. If you choose to ride apart from the pack, you're on your own. Chase Trucks, Tail End Charlie and Road Guards have radios to communicate with each other. Key Run officials also have cell phones to call for emergency medical or police services if they're needed. Their mission is to take care of you, should you need help.

You will receive a Run Information Sheet containing each day's route when you sign in at Ontario, or wherever you join the Run. The current Run Info Sheet is included in this Newsletter, but exact routes and times are subject to change. Any changes will be announced at the morning rider briefing.

You should be prepared to pay for your meals. Most meals along the route are provided to riders free of charge, and food is delicious and plentiful. However, there are a few stops where meals are not provided, and you must provide for yourself. Also, if you don't happen to like the food being served at any particular stop, you are on your own.

Be prepared to pay for your gasoline all the way, and for any repairs, should your bike need them. There are a few stops where your gasoline (for motorcycles only) is free - paid for by generous individuals or groups in the area. (Yeh, it's amazing, but it's true - there are a lot of patriotic Americans who appreciate Veterans, and support our Mission THAT much!) Nevertheless, free gas is the exception, NOT the rule.

Campgrounds are reserved in advance for the Run, and you need not make reservations or worry about having a camping space. Some campgrounds are free, others charge a fee (usually around \$5.00.) You should be prepared to pay for camping at all stops, and consider it a nice gift when it's free. Status of camping fees is announced at every morning rider briefing (another reason to attend those briefings!) Campers who are light sleepers should take care to set up their tent a good distance away from both Pup and Doorgunner. These gentlemen are both handsome, charming, and each bathes regularly, but both are talented, experienced, reliable snorers. (There's a whispered rumor that Doorgunner's wife shares his gift of snoring, but does not snore as constantly or as loudly as her husband.) If you camp near these folks, *don't say you weren't warned!*

If you stay in hotels along the way, you must pay for them yourself. Sorry, no freebies here.

Please remember to say "Thank You!" to our supporters who provide meals and free camping along the way

- for many, their contribution is a significant financial commitment, as well as one of time and effort. They are important members of the RFTW Family, and we all need to let them know that we appreciate them.

Well, let's get ready to ride. I hope this information helps relieve some of the anxiety that you all feel. We all go through it no matter how many times we make the RFTW. Oh! And don't forget to bring hugs - we trade *lots* of those on the Run!

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### **Nikki's POW-MIA Vigil** ***An Activist Who's Making A Difference***

Nikki Mendicino describes herself as "A friend to all Vets, and PROUD of it!" Nikki is 11 years old and attends 6<sup>th</sup> grade in Springdale, PA, a small town outside Pittsburgh. In 1997, Nikki became friends with a WWII Veteran who came to her school for Veterans Day. She began visiting him regularly at the Southwestern Veterans Center, where she has since made many friends and learned a lot about Veterans and patriotism.



Last year, Nikki became interested in the Vietnam War. Through research, she learned that there are 58,219 men and women on The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall as KIA, or still listed as POW-MIA, Nikki's heart told her that, "I didn't like what I did understand." So Nikki started working to honor all Veterans and to obtain a full accounting for our POW-MIAs.

Nikki flies the POW-MIA and American flags every day at her house, and she says that the big yellow ribbon will stay around the tree in her front yard until all our POW-MIAs are home in the USA, where they belong. Nikki has created an Internet web page called "Nikki's POW-MIA Vigil," which contains comprehensive information on 8 POW-MIAs who Nikki has "adopted." The site is very professional, and has won several awards for excellence.

When the Moving Wall visited Tarentum, PA in July 1999, Nikki and her teddy bear, "Powmia," worked as volunteers every day for a week, helping visitors find names and take rubbings, and giving vets a big "Welcome Home." Nikki also helped with the opening ceremonies, representing the family of one of her adopted POW-MIA's, at his mother's request.

On September 17, National POW-MIA Recognition Day, Nikki noticed that her local Post Office was not flying the POW-MIA flag. Nikki wrote to the Postmaster asking, "If you can't fly the POW-MIA Flag every day, then please fly it when you are supposed to, so people don't forget our POW-MIA's."

Nikki sent the Postmaster a copy of Federal Law 105-85 which lists the days the POW-MIA Flag is to be flown at the Post Office, and offered to donate a POW-MIA flag, if they could not get one. She told them that on Veterans Day, "I hope that I see that flag flying as it should be."

The Post Office wrote back to Nikki, thanking her for the information and apologizing for their oversight. In order to make up for not flying the POW-MIA flag, the Springfield Post Office got special permission to fly the flag every day from September 24 until Veterans Day. But this was not enough for Nikki. She's decided to find out "Who says they can't fly the POW-MIA flag EVERY DAY?" and she won't give up until the flag flies daily, or our POW-MIAs are all accounted for. Nikki modestly says, "My mom always tells me that you can't

do everything, but you must do something. I guess that's what I am doing."

On September 17, Nikki was at Three Rivers Stadium before the Pirates baseball game, to help Tarentum, PA VFW Post #5758 in a ceremony honoring returned WWII POWs, and paying tribute to POWs and MIAs from all wars who are still missing. She then served as a flag bearer alongside Veterans and Gold Star Mothers during a candlelight vigil later that night.

Nikki marched with VFW Post 5758 in the Veterans Day Parade on November 11, and also helped organize a ceremony at her school, so all the kids could learn about, and honor our Veterans.

In December, Nikki was honored by the Borough of Springdale for her outstanding volunteer efforts, service to Veterans and to her community.

Nikki is now spearheading an effort to raise funds and restore a local park called "Veteran's Field."

Through her activities and internet website, Nikki has met and now corresponds with Vietnam Veterans or their family members from 29 states.

Nikki says that the Vietnam Veterans she's met are the greatest people in the world, and we owe our gratitude and remembrance to those who never came home from the Vietnam War, the Korean War and WWII because they "gave all" for our freedom.

Nikki is an inspiration, and her work in support of veterans and the POW-MIA cause is an example for all of us. She is living proof of how much each individual can do to ensure that our POW-MIAs are not forgotten. Nikki's compassion and tenacity are a model for success. Nikki hopes to become President of the United States someday, and you can bet that when she runs she will have my vote!

Nikki and her family will be in Washington, D.C. in May as honored guests of Rolling Thunder and ICVMC in the Rolling Thunder Parade, and I'm looking forward to meeting her and thanking her for her support.

You can email Nikki at: [mendicin@stargate.duq.edu](mailto:mendicin@stargate.duq.edu)

and visit her POW-MIA web page at: <http://www.geocities.com/nlmendicino>

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### **POW-MIA Flag Law**

Many of you have asked for information on Public Law 105-82, which requires certain Federal Facilities to fly the POW-MIA flag on certain days. This law was signed into law on November 18, 1997.

Let's all be vigilant - Stop by your local Federal facilities such as the U.S. Post Office a few days before designated POW-MIA flag days, and remind them to fly the flag. And if you see a that a Federal building is not flying the POW-MIA flag in plain view on specified days, give them a copy of this law, and insist that they comply.

### **PUBLIC LAW 105-85**

(Section 1082) Requires the POW-MIA flag to be displayed each year on POW-MIA flag days at specified Federal buildings, memorials, national cemeteries, Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers, and post offices.

(a) REQUIRED DISPLAY- The POW-MIA flag shall be displayed at the locations specified in subsection (c) on POW-MIA flag

display days. Such display shall serve (1) as the symbol of the Nation's concern and commitment to achieving the fullest possible accounting of Americans who, having been prisoners of war or missing in action, still remain unaccounted for, and (2) as the symbol of the Nation's commitment to achieving the fullest possible accounting for Americans who in the future may become prisoners of war, missing in action, or otherwise unaccounted for as a result of hostile action.

(b) DAYS FOR FLAG DISPLAY-

(1) For purposes of this section, POW-MIA flag display days are the following:

- (A) Armed Forces Day, the third Saturday in May.
- (B) Memorial Day, the last Monday in May.
- (C) Flag Day, June 14.
- (D) Independence Day, July 4.
- (E) National POW-MIA Recognition Day.
- (F) Veterans Day, November 11.

(2) In addition to the days specified in paragraph (1), POW-MIA flag display days include--

- (A) in the case of display at medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs (required by subsection (c)(7)), any day on which the flag of the United States is displayed; and
- (B) in the case of display at United States Postal Service post offices (required by subsection (c)(8)), the last business day before a day specified in paragraph (1) that in any year is not itself a business day.

(c) LOCATIONS FOR FLAG DISPLAY- The locations for the display of the POW-MIA flag under subsection (a) are the following:

- (1) The Capitol.
- (2) The White House.
- (3) The Korean War Veterans Memorial and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.
- (4) Each national cemetery.
- (5) The buildings containing the official office of--
  - (A) the Secretary of State;
  - (B) the Secretary of Defense;
  - (C) the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; and
  - (D) the Director of the Selective Service System.
- (6) Each major military installation, as designated by the Secretary of Defense.
- (7) Each medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- (8) Each United States Postal Service post office.

(d) COORDINATION WITH OTHER DISPLAY REQUIREMENT- Display of the POW-MIA flag at the Capitol pursuant to paragraph (1) of subsection (c) is in addition to the display of that flag in the Rotunda of the Capitol pursuant to Senate Concurrent Resolution 5 of the 101st Congress, agreed to on February 22, 1989 (103 Stat. 2533).

(e) DISPLAY TO BE IN A MANNER VISIBLE TO THE PUBLIC- Display of the POW-MIA flag pursuant to this section shall be in a manner designed to ensure visibility to the public.

(f) LIMITATION- This section may not be construed or applied so as to require any employee to report to work solely for the purpose of providing for the display of the POW-MIA flag.

(g) POW-MIA FLAG DEFINED- As used in this section, the term 'POW-MIA flag' means the National League of Families POW-MIA flag recognized officially and designated by section 2 of Public Law 101-355 (36 U.S.C. 189).

(h) REGULATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION- Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the head of each department, agency, or other establishment responsible for a location specified in subsection (c) (other than the Capitol) shall prescribe such regulations as necessary to carry out this section.

(i) PROCUREMENT AND DISTRIBUTION OF FLAGS- Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the

Administrator of General Services shall procure POW-MIA flags and distribute them as necessary to carry out this section.

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### Americans Still Unaccounted For From Vietnam War

Vietnam	1,520
Laos	429
Cambodia	74
Territorial Waters, People's Republic of China	8
Total as of 12/27/99	2,031

### POW-MIAs from all US Wars

WAR	POW	MIA
Revolutionary War	18,152	1,426
War of 1812	20,000	695
Mexican War	46	238
Indian Wars	POW-MIA - Many, few survived	
Civil War - Union	POW-MIA - 194,743	
Civil War - Confederacy	POW-MIA - 214,865	
Spanish-American War	8	72
World War I	POW-MIA - 7,470	
World War II	124,079	30,314
Cold War Era	Unknown	343
Korean War	7,140	8,177
Vietnam War	POW-MIA - 2,583	
U.S.S. Pueblo	82	0
Grenada	0	4
U.S.S. Stark	0	1
Persian Gulf War	29	20
Somalia	6	2
Kosovo	3	0

Source: Bob Necci, Co-Chair, VVA Nat'l POW-MIA Committee

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### Legislative Update

Legislative Update lists nonpartisan summaries of current national legislation affecting POW-MIA, Veteran and military issues. Run For The Wall does not take political positions. We won't tell you whether to support or oppose any issue. However, we do ask you to educate yourself and get involved. Whether you support or oppose these bills and resolutions, please write or call your elected representatives to get more information and to convey your beliefs on these matters.

The 106th Congressional term is now more than half over. Legislation introduced in 1999 and 2000 will expire forever if it has not come to a vote before December, 2000. Here's how the process works: When a

bill is introduced by a member of the House or Senate, it is first sent to the appropriate Senate or House Committee(s) for study and a recommendation. A bill must receive Committee recommendation before it can be brought to the floor for a vote. If the Congressional term ends before a bill has been voted on, the bill expires. If a bill that you think is important is "stuck in Committee," call or write your Congressional or Senate Representative to urge political pressure to bring the bill to a vote. We, The People must tell OUR elected representatives what we think, or we have no right to complain!

Bills are designated by letters indicating their type of legislation.

H.R.= House Legislation    S. = Senate Legislation;    H.. Res/S. Res = House or Senate Resolution

**Vietnam War Recognition (H.Res. 224)** Calls on the President to issue a proclamation recognizing the 25th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam era and commemorating the service and sacrifice of the men and women who, during that era, served the nation in Southeast Asia or otherwise served in support of U.S. operations in Vietnam or in support of U.S. security interests throughout the world.

Introduced by Representative Mike Thompson on 11/09/99, this Resolution currently has only four cosponsors, and was referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

**Duty to Assist Veterans Act of 1999 (H.R.3193)** To amend title 38, United States Code, to reestablish the duty of the Department of Veterans Affairs to assist claimants for benefits in developing claims and to clarify the burden of proof for such claims.

Requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, with respect to any veterans' benefits claim filed on or after July 14, 1999, to assist such claimant in developing information pertinent to a decision on the claim, including by informing the claimant of any medical or lay evidence needed and by providing a medical examination to determine the current disability of the veteran concerned.

Sponsored by Representative Lane Evans and 71 cosponsors, this bill was introduced on 11/2/1999, and has been referred to House Committee on Veterans' Affairs' Subcommittee on Benefits for study.

**Stand Down Authorization Act: (H.R.566)** To authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct Stand Down events and to establish a pilot program that will provide for an annual Stand Down event in each State.

Stand Down Authorization Act - Authorizes the Secretary of Veterans Affairs: (1) to carry out Stand Down events (events to provide veterans who are without a home, unemployed, experiencing health or social adjustment challenges, or otherwise in need with one to three days of safety and security and access to food, shelter, clothing, benefits certification, health care, or any other appropriate form of assistance); and (2) in connection with such events, to provide outreach services, use Department of Veterans Affairs personal property, and provide any other appropriate benefit or service.

Directs the Secretary to establish and implement a pilot program under which the Secretary shall carry out a single Stand Down event in each State in each calendar year, beginning in 2000. Requires an annual report to the Congress on pilot program implementation and recommendations for legislation.

Sponsored by Representative Bruce F. Vento and 100 cosponsors, this bill was referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs' Subcommittees on Benefits and on Health in March 1999, and is still being studied.

**Keep Our Promise to America's Military Retirees Act (H.R.3573)** To restore health care coverage to retired members of the uniformed services.

Includes as an employee, for purposes of Federal provisions authorizing enrollment under the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program: (1) a member of the armed forces who began service before June 7, 1956, and retired after a minimum of 20 years of such service or by reason of a service-connected disability; and (2) the surviving widow or widower of such member.

Directs the Secretary of Defense to enter into an agreement with the Office of Personnel Management to provide FEHB coverage to the following eligible beneficiaries: (1) a member or former member entitled to military retired or retainer pay; (2) an unmarried former spouse who was married to a member for at least 20 years, during which such member performed at least 20 years of retirement- creditable military service; (3) a dependent of a deceased qualifying member or former member; (4) a dependent of a living member or former member; and (5) a family member of such member.

Repeals a provision prohibiting coverage under the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services for persons entitled to hospital insurance benefits under part A of title XVIII (Medicare) of the Social Act.

Introduced on February 2, 2000 by Representative Ronnie Shows, this bill has 176 cosponsors. It has been referred to the Committee on Government Reform, and to the Committee on Armed Services, for consideration.

*Next issue: A follow-up on pending POW-MIA, military and veteran-related legislation, and advice on how to be most effective when you write to your elected representatives.*

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## Your Opinions Count!

Senators and Congressional Representatives are interested in constituent viewpoints. You may express your views by writing: The Honorable [name], U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510, or The Honorable [name], U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515. You may call the Senate at (202) 224-3121; the House at (202) 225-3121.

If you don't know who your elected officials are, contact your local Registrar of Voters for this information.

[Go To RFTW Newsletter Page 2](#)

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[What's New](#) | [About Run For The Wall](#) | [Behind The Scenes](#) | [Run Road Report](#)  
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