



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"...July 2003

Quarterly Newsletter  
" We Ride For Those Who Can't "  
July 2003

Inside this issue:

- [2003 CENTRAL ROUTE COORDINATOR'S MESSAGE](#)
- [THANK YOU FROM CENTRAL ROUTE ASSISTANT COORDINATOR](#)
- [BIG THANKS FROM CENTRAL ROUTE ROAD GUARD "MUDBUG"](#)
- [THE LITTLE GREEN JEEP](#)
- [FNG THOUGHTS ON RFTW - #1](#)
- [FNG THOUGHTS ON RFTW - #2](#)
- [FNG THOUGHTS ON RFTW - # 3](#)
- [FNG THOUGHTS ON RFTW - #4](#)
- [A STORY OF EMOTION AND THANKS](#)
- [A MESSAGE FROM IRON MIKE](#)
- [NEW BOARD MEMBER AND 2004 ROUTE COORDINATORS CHOSEN](#)
- [TAPS FOR JAMES " GABBY" DUPRAZ](#)
- [A NOTE FROM INDIANA](#)
- [MERCHANDISE](#)
- [SENDING PHOTOS TO THE WEB-SITE](#)
- [GROUP PICTURE TAKEN ON LINCOLN MEMORIAL STEPS IN D.C.](#)
- [INDIAN MOTORCYCLE OFFERS SUPPORT TO POW/MIA ISSUES](#)
- [FOUNDER OF ANGEL FIRE MEMORIAL DIES](#)
- [DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES FOR MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS](#)
- [GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATING IDEAS TO IMPROVE RUN FOR THE WALL](#)
- [CRIPPLE CREEK, COLORADO 2003](#)
- [SEEKING COMBAT WAR VETERANS FOR HISTORY CHANNEL TV SPECIAL: "OPERATION REUNION"](#)
- [NEW GULF WAR RESEARCH PRESENTED TO ADVISORY COMMITTEE](#)
- [OVERVIEW OF CILHI OPERATIONS AND THE CONNECTION TO RFTW](#)
- [VIETNAM VETS HOME PAGE on the Web](#)
- [ANOTHER USEFUL WEBSITE](#)
- [VETS HEALTH NEEDS - GUARANTEED FUNDS](#)
- [IN SUPPORT OF OUR TROOPS IN IRAQ](#)

- [RFTW FALL REUNION](#)
- [FACE TO FACE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING SCHEDULED FOLLOWING REUNION](#)
- [RUN FOR THE WALL T-SHIRT DESIGN FOR 2004](#)

## **QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER - JULY 2003**

*We Ride for Those Who Can't*

### **2003 CENTRAL ROUTE COORDINATOR'S MESSAGE**

The greatest honor I've ever had was the opportunity to coordinate and lead the Central Route of Run For The Wall XV (2003). To everyone who rode with us, and to all who supported the Run, I SALUTE YOU!

The Central Route pack was bigger than ever this year, and while this presented many challenges, the Run touched more hearts than ever, and more people than ever before learned about our Mission as we traveled across America.

The Run received outstanding media coverage, and the articles and broadcasts that I saw were great. Everyone I saw interviewed articulated the RFTW Mission well, stressing the Run's commitment to a full accounting for all POW-MIAs, remembrance and honor of all KIAs, and a big "Welcome Home" and healing for all Vietnam Veterans, their friends and family members, and the media got it right.

Recently, our military has begun making it a priority to ensure that no one is left behind, and as our troops arrive home from war, they are being welcomed and honored. There are still many Americans unaccounted for from prior wars, and we will continue to ride until every last one is home. Nevertheless, it is gratifying to know that our message is being heard. We are making a difference.

Moving a battalion-sized group across the nation in 10 days is a logistical challenge, and my heartfelt thanks goes out to the hundreds of generous supporters who worked so hard to provide the Run with meals and snacks, gasoline, camping, traffic control, and most important of all, a warm welcome to communities all the way across these United States. I am grateful to each of you who selflessly served and supported this Run. Your devotion to the RFTW Mission is equally as important as the commitment of all who ride with us.

To all the wonderful Americans who stood on freeway overpasses to salute the Run, or lined the streets to welcome us to your towns, I cannot begin to tell you how important and deeply treasured you are. I trust that, having seen the tears of appreciation in the eyes of so many riders, you know that you have blessed us.

I could not have asked for a better staff, both before and during the Run. The support I received from the RFTW Board of Directors and all who served on the Run made my task a real joy. I know I can't mention everyone (there's simply not enough space in the RFTW Newsletter,) but a few especially stand out, and I'd like to thank them publicly.

My sincerest thanks goes to our Assistant Coordinator, Mark "Straight Arrow" Rittermeyer (my right hand man); to all of our fantastic State Coordinators (I can't say enough good stuff about ALL of you); to our Road Guard Captain, Jerry "Peaches" Simpson, and to every one of those outstanding shepherds, otherwise known as Road Guards (we'd be more than lost without you); to our Merchandise and Sign-in folks and our Chase Truck drivers (all of you went above and beyond the call of duty every day); and finally, to my wife, Sally Marie, aka SizzMo' ("behind every great man\*")

I'm quite certain that the Run would have occurred even without these folks, but it wouldn't have been the great

experience it was without the tireless efforts of every one of these people, who worked countless hours all year in order to ensure that the Run would be well organized and fully supported.

And then there are all you Participants. The word "Participant" simply doesn't do justice to the many contributions made by each person who comes on the Run. I never cease to be amazed and impressed at the commitment to the RFTW Mission made by each rider on this Run, whether on a motorcycle or on four wheels, and at the support that everyone gives each other. Through rain and shine, 2003 was no exception.

RFTW is NOT an easy Run. It is a grueling ride, full of both physical and emotional challenges. In addition to the considerable time and expense involved in making the trip, the substantial physical and mental stresses of the ride alone make it a journey that is not for the faint of heart. Added to these hardships are the memories and emotions that each rider confronts during the Run.

It takes a great deal of courage to address one's deepest and most closely guarded personal feelings, and sharing them with others takes a special type of bravery. For me, the struggle it took to open my heart to others on the Run, and having others share their hurts, hopes and fears with me was difficult at first, but has been richly rewarded. As we cried together, laughed together and supported each other, those "Participants" on RFTW changed from strangers into my dearest Brothers and Sisters. It's rare and wonderful to have an opportunity to spend time with men and women of such great character. You are all, indeed, my Family.

I will forever consider it my greatest privilege to have led this Run, and especially to have accompanied my Brothers and Sisters to The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall to pay our respects, remember, shed tears, and eventually, begin to smile again.

Thank you all.  
Terry "Doorgunner" Clevenger  
Central Route Coordinator  
Run For The Wall XV (2003)

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[top of page](#)

## **THANK YOU FROM CENTRAL ROUTE ASSISTANT COORDINATOR**

As Assistant Coordinator for the Central Route I would like to take this opportunity to say THANK YOU to all of the support team. There are too many to mention, and of course I would forget someone, so let me just say THANK YOU again. Without all of the efforts from all of you, I could not do my job. I appreciate all the efforts done by each of you. Our mission was a success because you made it happen. I would like to say a special THANK YOU to "Doorgunner", and "Peaches". This was a great team to work with, and I believe our success was based largely upon their leadership.

I would also like to thank "Iron Mike, and "Nayber" for their assistance with the motor home.

Now that I have said all that I would like to thank all of YOU that rode any part of, or all the way. You are what keeps RFTW going. Most of all, I want to say THANK YOU to all of the Vietnam (and any other war) Vet's that participated. You are my HEROS. It is an honor serving with and for you!

Ride Safe!!!  
Never Forget!!!  
Mark "Straightarrow" Rittermeyer

## **BIG THANKS FROM CENTRAL ROUTE ROAD GUARD "MUDBUG"**

Craig "MudBug" Matthews wishes to offer his sincere thanks to all of the Central Route for chipping into the "hat" to help him get home after his up-close encounter with the pavement. He was able to pay for his plane-fare back home and for the transport of his bike back to Kansas City. But speaking of the bike....it is sadly history. Craig and his wife were very touched by the gesture and truly appreciated the support, prayers, phone calls and e-mails. Craig is recuperating nicely from his injuries.

MudBug says it is a simple reason why he joined the Run and then became a Road Guard; he wanted to give back just a little to the men and women that have given so much for him and our Country. He says he cannot even begin to pay back the debt owed. And now he feels he has another debt to the RFTW Family for their love and support.

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## **THE LITTLE GREEN JEEP**

By "Skeater" Richard Skeate

My name's Skeater. I am "THE LAST MAN" in the little green Jeep on the Central Route.

I have been involved with RFTW since 1997. "Two-Lane" (Steve Paszek) had talked to me about it for several years, but I didn't really take it to heart until our company (Southern California Edison) gave me early retirement. "Two-Lane" and I had known each other for almost 20 years there. Anyway, when he broached the subject in late 1996, I said "YES!, I want to go."

I showed up in that little green Jeep, not really knowing what IT was all about. Deekin was the leader that year and as we headed across the country, I sort of migrated behind the last bike to keep other 'cages' away from the pack. My first selfish thoughts that year were to go The Wall with other Nam vets. I thought that was one of the goals. I found out in Wentzville that the Run was the goal. I didn't know I needed it, but I came home in Wentzville. The VFW Post Commander, Larry, stayed with me for about 20 minutes after I 'lost it'. I found out about healing. In the years since, I have been there to witness, and thankfully, to help others heal,too.

Each year has special moments, but the "year of the helicopter blade", was one of my most memorable. Donna Elliott's brother, Jerry, was MIA after his chopper went down and he was last seen fighting on the ground. A search later found no sign. Years later, one of the search teams found a piece of helicopter blade being used by a farmer. It turned out to be from Jerry's chopper. That year, Donna and several others escorted the blade in a beautiful box, filled with items related to Jerry's life. We got to know who he was. One of the guys who was asked to escort the blade had turned out to be wearing a POW bracelet with Jerry's name on it for years. Very moving! Then, while in D.C., Donna picked up a T-shirt depicting a scene with the Wall in the background; BUT one of the names visible on the shirt was Jerry Elliott. More inspiration! I was honored to be part of the ceremony carrying the box to Jerry's panel. I was carrying Old Glory. As we were at the panel and the ceremony was going on, I leaned over to ask Cat (Donna's sister) where his name was located on the panel. She said she wasn't sure but that it was near the upper area. I glanced over my shoulder and I swear, the whole panel was a blur, EXCEPT JERRY'S NAME. I think the Spirit was very strong wherever and whenever we were involved with Jerry Elliott. I pray he will be found and brought home, as all of them should be brought home. That is our goal. Bring them home or send us back.

Take care. I've got your back door.

[top of page](#)

## **FNG THOUGHTS ON RFTW - #1**

By Bruce - FNG 2003

I was an FNG on Run For the Wall 2003. I can't begin to tell you the range of emotions I experienced during the three week ride, before, during and after the RFTW. I met and made many new friends, which I hope will be long and lasting. It was a 3,000 mile welcome home parade, thirty-five years later, but maybe that made it that much more special.

There are memories from this ride that still bring tears to my eyes and will for the rest of my life. Part of the healing process, I guess. I'm just now beginning to feel OK about saying I'm proud to be a Vietnam

veteran. I always have been, but never could speak about it to anyone other than another vet. There's something about people thanking you for your service that eased decades of guilt and shame. It validated what you always knew inside, that having served was honorable and something to be proud of.

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[top of page](#)

## **FNG THOUGHTS ON RFTW - #2**

By Valerie Vetter - FNG 2003

I have to tell you that this event was one of the most incredible and life-changing events for me, my driving partner, Judy, and so many other of "our new brothers and sisters" that we had come to meet, love, and respect during the trip. We developed very close friendships throughout the trip, not only with people on the Run, but also with people in various states through which we traveled. We shared the highs and lows. We cried and we laughed. Once Judy and I cried and laughed at the same time, which was truly a sight to see!!!!

Oh, I have to tell you about Wendy!!! He was an 80 year old W.W.II vet, who drove his trike, which pulled a small teardrop trailer, and who almost made it the entire route. Unfortunately, he had to turn back in Missouri because his buddy's trike broke down. He was so interesting and so much fun. I regret not exchanging telephone numbers with him, so if anyone reading this knows Wendy and can provide me with a way to contact him, I will be very grateful!!!!

So many other things to write about, but the most important and most moving event for me was being at the Vietnam War Memorial---the Wall. I cannot begin to express the many thoughts and feelings I had as I examined the names on the Wall and saw the tributes that so many people left there for their loved ones. I found the name of my friend from High School on the Wall, Pete Mills, and my tears really started to flow. It was one thing for me to have known that he gave his life for this country, but when I saw his name on the Wall, that reality actually set in for me. It was quite an interesting phenomena for me when I found myself actually having a "conversation" with him when I reached out and touched his name. People around us were crying, praying, standing silently, and honoring the fallen Vets, each in their own way. At that time, I found myself feeling proud to be an American, and proud to be standing in the company of my heroes---those Vets who gave the ultimate.

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### **FNG THOUGHTS ON RFTW - # 3**

By Judy Lacey - FNG 2003

Memorial Day has changed forever for me - because of a group of bikers.

When a longtime friend, Valerie, invited me to join her on a motorcycle ride called "Run For The Wall," I said why in the world would a 65-year-old woman want to travel with a bunch of motorcyclists across the country? Valerie told me these were not just "a bunch of motorcyclists"; they were Vietnam vets and vets of other wars and their supporters who do this because they don't want our country to forget about the POWs and MIAs who have never returned home. They also do it for the many Vietnam Vets who *did* return, but to an America hostile to those who fought over there. Anti-war sentiment was strong, and many returning veterans were not welcomed home as heroes, as veterans of previous wars were. Many vets refused to talk about their time in Vietnam; some even denied they were over there in order to avoid the questions and accusations.

By the second day, riding with hundreds of vets on motorcycles had lost its strangeness. When I had committed to the ride, I wanted to feel a part of the group, so before we left I pulled out a denim vest, sewed a large "Run For The Wall" patch on the back, and added various pins given to me by my new friends (with rather strange names, like Fingers, Rock, Jungle Jim, Trouble, Little Big Mike.) Some of us were also sporting bright pink buttons with the letters "FNG," to identify us as a first-year participant in the Run. I learned that in Vietnam, no one wanted to be stuck with the "f----- new guy" because he was green and bad luck and could get you killed. On the Run, there is no such stigma in being the FNG; in fact, the new guys (and gals) are welcomed heartily and given support on their first trip to The Wall. It's become a custom to take a pin off and give it to an FNG for his vest. Maybe they're trying to make up for having treated the FNGs so shabbily 30 years ago.

It was an exciting trip, but also a somber one. This wasn't a vacation - it was a mission. Many of the vets were going to the Wall for the first time, and it was deeply emotional for them. For those who had been suppressing memories for over 30 years, releasing them was painful. The Run helps them deal with those memories, and allows them to experience the welcome home they never got. No one is alone on this ride; they all support each other. It's commonplace to see both men and women crying as they face their demons on the Run, not only at The Wall, but all along the way. So many things bring back memories: seeing a replica of the bamboo cages POWs were kept in, or hearing the roar of a Huey hovering overhead to greet us at one of the stops.

America is definitely trying to make amends to Vietnam vets; cities, organizations, businesses, and individuals donated to provide every meal and some of the gas for the group all the way across the country. We had breakfasts, lunches, and dinners in campgrounds, parking lots, VFW Halls, and city parks. We visited with veterans in VA hospitals, visited war memorials, and laid a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. We were escorted from city to city or state to state by various state and city police and highway patrols. We were greeted by police cars, fire trucks, and a Huey helicopter. We were honored by the Navajo Nation in Arizona, where we met an original Navajo Code Talker, subject of the movie, "Wind Talker." And we were welcomed by Victor Westphal, who almost single-handedly built "Angel Fire," a beautiful, soaring, white angel wing memorial, in memory of his son David, who was killed in Vietnam. This is a true sanctuary, revered by veterans, and one of the most special stops on the Run.

I was truly amazed at the reception the vets received all across America. Whole towns came out to wave flags as we passed through. People - sometimes two, sometimes dozens - stood on freeway overpasses, waving both American flags and POW/MIA flags, and held signs saying "Welcome Home!" and "Thank you for our freedom." I had never before taken much notice of the POW flag, but now I'm painfully aware of what the stark black and white flag stands for. Sometimes other vets stood along roads or on overpasses and saluted while the hundreds of bikes passed. The vets returned the salutes with an upraised arm and clenched fist.

I've been changed by this experience; I'll never again take the men and women who fight for our freedoms for



granted. I'll do whatever I can to remind our government that our POWs and MIAs must be accounted for. And maybe I'll do this every year now; like many others before me, I don't think I can stay away.

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[top of page](#)

## **FNG THOUGHTS ON RFTW - #4**

By Brian "Mac" McKinsey

**Brothers.** There was Buffalo, Tanker, Spiderman and Rock, RC, Wild Man, Door Gunner and Bear, Arty-Up, Mud Flap, and Fingers, and me, Mac. Of course there were many more, but these are some of the riders I remember. Like Nam, we all had handles or nicknames, so most of the time we never even knew our buddies' real names. But it made no difference, we were all "brothers", and now part of a brotherhood that only we can understand, only we can share.

Rather than ever bemoan my service in Vietnam as a Marine Corps radio operator, I revel in the privilege. How fortunate I was, not only to have had the opportunity to serve my country, but also in the process, to become a member of this brotherhood. To me it's sacred. I feel as though we're a cut above our peers. This feeling can't be helped, not when the "brothers" took care of each other the way we did in Nam. There was nothing we wouldn't do for each other, even give our lives if it came down to it. We flat out took care of each other.

Many of our friends will never be able to share what we "brothers" share. To do so, they would've had to have been there. Being a member in this brotherhood makes me feel special, exalted! Some say, "Yea, you guys are lucky." No, we're not lucky. We earned the right and privilege, and personal sacrifice is what makes it so special.

As an FNG on this year's Run For The Wall, I saw brothers taking care of brothers at every turn and every fork in the road. I witnessed solidarity and comradeship, selfless care and concern. After all these years, we still bond and we still take care of each other. We honor and remember our "brothers" who did not make it home. And in this way, we watch over them, and they watch over us.

When the run culminated at The Wall in Washington, it reminded me of when my short-timer calendar in Nam expired. It was time to rotate, time to go home. And like Nam, it was awfully hard leaving my "brothers." So until next year, take good care of yourselves.

See you then, Mac

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[top of page](#)

## **A STORY OF EMOTION AND THANKS**

By Troubillie - FNG 2003

Ok, where do I start this? The ending or the beginning? Let's see.....

I'm the daughter of a Vietnam Vet, a very screwed up Vietnam vet. I had an extremely traumatizing childhood, the worst of which I've just come to grips with in the past year.

My husband is a Desert Storm vet and our marriage hasn't been the easiest since he came back from the Desert. We've been together off and on for 15 years now. We were separated for 1-½ years and of that divorced for 1 year of it. We're now happily married to each other again. We have 2 daughters and for the most part, they're pretty happy girls.

My husband has been going with the RFTW guys for the past 4 years, and I decided that this year I wanted to go with him. I'll have to admit I really was clueless as to how emotional it was going to be for me.

We "trucked" his VTX so we could take the girls to his mom in MO, and then we got on the bike and backtracked to meet the RFTW guys in Salina, KS. After seeing the way he was greeted by so many people, it really struck me as odd. You see, since he came back from the desert, he's not been able to get along with people, he's been diagnosed as having PTSD and Anti-Social Disorder, and seeing him smile and hug these (to me) strangers it just put me in awe. Everyone greeted me as if they'd known me for years, and it was cool and scary for me.

Of course, as we all know it started raining that night in KS & pretty much rained the entire rest of the way. But even through all the gloom and doom, I had this feeling that things were changing for me.

You see, just in the past year I'd started "remembering" and dreaming about the abuse that I'd kept hidden deep down for almost 30 years, and I just felt so damn angry and hurt all the time. I was always quick to get pissed and it took forever for me to calm down. Little things were the absolute worst, but in the rain and misery of this road trip, and the pain in my back, and legs going numb, I didn't feel as angry or miserable as I had in the past year.

It was amazing to me that so many people could come together, that were Vietnam vets, and not get stupid, and not get ugly, they could actually care about one another and not where their next drink or hit came from.

I am so much in debt to all you guys from the RFTW group. You showed me that you guys all do have a heart, an especially huge heart for kids. All you guys could think of was how could you help these little kids even more and not how to use them or abuse them. The reception we got in Rainelle was the most uplifting experience I've ever had. I can't even put into words how it made me feel to be part of your group. At first I felt out of place, but the kids were so much in awe of each one of us and it didn't matter that I didn't fight in any war, what mattered was that I was there with you guys. I must have grown up during this trip. I felt like a little infant not knowing what was coming next, to being an adolescent not sure of what I was supposed to feel or how to react to it. Then once we got to the Wall, I felt all of this over-whelming emotion and I've never cried as much as I did the 3 days my husband and I were there. And all you guys kept coming up to me and hugging me and I feel like I finally met my real "dad". Each and everyone of you guys that were there with us, Mike, Gene, Bill, (God there's so many to mention) and guys I never did get names to go with your faces, you're all my dad in one way or another. You each did more for me in the few days I knew you and you did more to help me, than my "dad" ever did for me. I feel like I finally know what it's like to live. I can enjoy a beautiful day now and really enjoy it for what it's worth. I don't have ugly nightmares anymore, I sleep the whole night through now, and I can enjoy my daughter's laughter and now I know what it's like to be loved. I just wanted to thank each and every one of you from the bottom of my heart for helping to heal me. I know I've still got work to do, but now I don't hate and fear men like I did before and now I know how to live life to it's fullest each day.

I know you do this ride to bring attention to the plight of the POW's, MIA's, and KIA's, but you need to realize that these aren't the only people you're out there helping. When I decided that I wanted to go it was because of the change I'd seen in my husband & wanted to see what exactly went on during these rides. Even after being part of one I can't exactly explain what you guys do for each other.

You're all so selfless, if you see someone in pain, you take it upon yourselves to go over there and help that person, whether you've known this person for years or you just met them. It's simply the best therapy a person could ever get, and trust me I should know. I've spent a lot of time in therapy and never got this kind of help or felt this good after therapy.

I want our daughters to grow up knowing what you did for our country and what our country didn't do for you so it never happens again. Our oldest daughter was born when her daddy was in Desert Storm, he didn't see her until she was 2 months old, and he's told her some of the stuff he did over there, but they just don't teach this in school. When we told her the first time what he was going to be doing with the RFTW ride, we had to explain where Vietnam was,



“why” the war happened and the awful stuff that the country did to you when you came back. She went to school the next day and was talking to some of her classmates and they’d never heard of Vietnam either and when she asked her teacher about it she was told not to worry about it. Well she is very worried about it and so is her little sister. I’ve told them as much as I can about it, their father has done the same about his war, and with the war that was just fought a still being cleaned up, we had to fight the bullshit the teachers were spreading around in school. For this reason, I will home-school them myself and teach them the IMPORTANT things in life, and know that they’re being taught the stuff that matters and not being filled with bullshit. Our daughters are so excited that they’re going to be going with us next year. They want us all to go on motorcycles, but I just got my license not even a month ago, and I’ve been riding for about that long too, and I don’t want to endanger anyone on the run. So I’ve decided that we’ll take the truck, the girls and I, because it’s that important that they see what it’s like to be there. I know you will all welcome them with open arms. They did see on C-SPAN, Nikki talking and it made a really big impression on them. I’m going to start taking them to the vet hospitals around here and introducing them to everyone that is willing to meet and talk to them. I don’t want them to think of the Vietnam Vet like I did, someone to be feared and someone to run from and ignore. I want them to know the truth about you!

I made sure to buy all my patches and I will proudly wear them on my vest and explain to anyone who will listen what you are and what you stand for and invite them to come along. It’s one hell of a ride.

Thank you and God Bless You All!!!

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[top of page](#)

## **A MESSAGE FROM IRON MIKE**

I have completed my term of office on the Board of Directors of RFTW and have chosen not to sit for re-election. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the family members I have had the honor of serving the past three years. I firmly believe that, as with any organization, it can only grow and become better with fresh ideas and new energy. It is these beliefs that lead me not to seek another term on the board.

Let me repeat, it has been an honor to represent each and everyone of the RFTW family. We may not always agree on the best way of doing one thing or another, but as with any family, we can disagree and still remember that we are there for each other and the mission of the Run.

I feel confident that the new board member, as well as all the current members, will lead us in the right direction and, yes, I will be there to support them in their mission. I, as all members should, will also point out to them areas I think they should look further at; as well as, giving them a well deserved pat on the back for a job well done.

I will be continuing as President of RFTW until my term expires later this year and then the board will elect a new President. Again, thanks for all your support and guidance these past three years and may God Bless each and every one of us as we continue to demand a full accounting of our POW/MIA’s.

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[top of page](#)

## **NEW BOARD MEMBER AND 2004 ROUTE COORDINATORS CHOSEN**

At a recent Board of Directors meeting Terry (DoorGunner) Clevenger was elected to a 3 year term on the Board. Congratulations to Terry. We know he will do a great job on the Board.

Also, new Route Coordinators for 2004 were chosen:

Mark (Straight Arrow) Rittermeyer - Central Route Coordinator for 2004  
Email: [RFTWstraightarrow@juno.com](mailto:RFTWstraightarrow@juno.com).

John (Slammer) Gebhards Southern Route - Coordinator 2004  
Email: [jeg1576@onemain.com](mailto:jeg1576@onemain.com)

Congratulations to Mark and John on their appointments. Please give them all the help and respect they deserve.

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[top of page](#)

### **TAPS FOR JAMES “ GABBY” DUPRAZ**

Rick Wiselus

Please be informed that an old Marine and good friend of ours, James Dupraz, known as Gabby, has passed away from a two year fight with Cancer, he passed on May 13th 2003, one day before you left Ontario for RFTW XV. He was a rider to the Wall the past three years, and he truly loved the ride, and looked forward to it each year. He was a good, kind and sharing man, an asset to his uniform, and a friend to all who ever met him. He will be missed by all of us who were blessed to have known him.

If anyone wants to contact the family, here is Gabby's daughter's email address:

[pasajaha@mailstation.com](mailto:pasajaha@mailstation.com)

Thank you, and God Bless all, and always ride safe.

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[top of page](#)

### **A NOTE FROM INDIANA**

By Billie Bubala

For several years now John (J.R.) and I have been the coordinators for the Indiana and Kentucky area and it is always a pleasure to have "that" day to actually get here. Fortunately, over the years, we have received excellent help from several organizations in the local area and the help continues to grow. That is what makes it all possible, the volunteers. For the last two years Garth Vinson, from Kentucky has done the Kentucky part for me and that has been a God send. We truly could not do all this without his help.

John and I were not able to go all the way to D.C. with the group this year and had to leave at Rainelle. John is the American Legion State Chairman for the Indiana Soldiers and Sailors Home for Children at Knightstown, IN and we felt that he should be at graduation. Believe me, though, our thoughts were with the group and we will be in D.C. next year.

I noticed the chili went over well and if I had known it was going to be such an awful day, I would have made much more. We are always open to suggestions as to what would make our stop more enjoyable or comfortable for the group, so please don't hesitate to e-mail us.

We will see you next year. Love to All, Billie

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[top of page](#)

## **MERCHANDISE**

By Ron "Spyderman" Strong

Well, the Run is over but not the merchandising. I am holding "All the Way 2003" patches for the following people - Bill Hartley, Raymond Santana, James Kirchmar, Stephen Williams, Liana Johnson, Cameron Carley, Roy Carson, Alfonso Manzanares, Ron Brozene, Mil Thornton, Don Sheive, and Pablo Gallegos, you folks need to order through Lynda "Bandit" Papaioanu (normal merchandise order procedures), making sure you let her know your name is on this newsletter list. The price is the same, \$3.00 plus shipping. Don't bother ordering extras, as we don't have them. We are working on a solution for the 'All the Way' patch shortage that seems to have plagued us the last few years. We will have it corrected for next years Run.

Two items were left in the Central Route merchandise trailer that I do not know who the owners are:

- A T-shirt from Wal-Mart that a couple of folks had started to sign.
- Some kind of headset cord.

If either of these items are yours, please contact Spyderman at [spyderman47@starband.net](mailto:spyderman47@starband.net)

Merchandise sales this year were great! I would like to thank Karan "Candylady" Johnstone for driving the motorhome and trailer all the way across the country, Sandra "LittleBit" McKinney for jumping in and selling her heart out for us, and Mary Ann Rittermeyer for being there all the way. "Wild Bill", thanks for being there from open time to close time every time! "Wild Bill" Semper Fi for a job well done.

"Iron Mike" and "Nayber", thanks for guiding and escorting the motorhome, you guys were fantastic at making sure "Candylady" got to where she needed to be when she needed to be there.

We will need people to help in registration and merchandising again next year, both on the Central Route and the Southern Route. Keep this in mind, and contact your Route Coordinator if you are interested in helping. Thanks everyone for all the help this past year and for the patience you showed with the sales crew.

We have the following items still available:

### **MERCHANDISE ITEM**

**CR Bar Patch**

**SR Bar Patch**

**3"x 5" Patch**

**Participant Patch**

**RFTW Back Patch**

**Half Moon Patch**

**Pins**

**RFTW Ball Caps, black**

**RFTW Ball Caps, white**

**Bucket Hats**

**Short Sleeve T's**

**Small 3**

**XL 125**

**XXL 4**

**Long sleeve T's**

**Med 2**

**XXL 5**

**Past Years Stuff**

Scarves, black	2002 T's
Scarves, white	XL 4
Half Moon Patches	L 3
Flag Sets	
American Flags	2001 T's
RFTW 2002 Video Tape	XXL 1
Decals	--- XL 68
Klingon Decals	S 1
POW/MIA Decals	Long Sleeve
I Wasn't There Decals	L 2
Support Troops Decals	Boonie Hats 53
Pin/Decal sets	Scarves, blk 32
Kooldanas	Scarves, white 9

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[top of page](#)

## RFTW FALL REUNION

The Fall Reunion for Run For The Wall is in the planning stages. It will be held again in the beautiful pines of Prescott, Arizona the weekend of October 3, 4 & 5, 2003. A pay-your-own dinner and drinks is planned for Friday evening at Hailey's Grill which is next to Grand Canyon Harley Davidson in Mayer, Arizona. A ride is planned on Saturday morning for those who want to see some gorgeous Arizona scenery. The group will ride to Grand Canyon Harley Davidson and eat lunch at the Route 66 Road House Cafe, then ride through Oak Creek Canyon and Mingus Mt. The dinner will be held early Saturday evening at the Watson Lake Parks and Recreation Campground with live Blue Grass Music, good food, a 50/50 raffle and time to visit and tell "stories".

If you have any questions or suggestions, you are welcome to e-mail Ed Johnson at [peloha@myexcel.com](mailto:peloha@myexcel.com). or phone: 928-775-5731.

Listed are some motel recommendations:

Prescottonian Best Western  
 928-445-3096  
 Ref #100505 - RFTW / Ed Johnson  
 \$65.00 @ night

Motel 6  
 1-800-466-8356  
 Ref: RFTW  
 Friday - Saturday: 2 people \$55.99 1 person \$49.99  
 Sunday-Thursday: 2 people \$45.99 1 person \$39.99

Super 8  
 928-776-1282  
 Ref: RFTW  
 2 beds - \$62.99 1 bed - \$58.49

Spring Hill Suites  
 1-800-466-8440

Ref: RFTW

2 people - \$109.00 - includes breakfast

Please RSVP for the Reunion before September 15 to RC Busha, Phone: 928-632-5893 or e-mail [harleyrcb@msn.com](mailto:harleyrcb@msn.com)

Watch the "Related Events" section on [www.rftw.org](http://www.rftw.org) for additional information on the Reunion.

As the time gets closer, we will be posting more details there.

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[top of page](#)

### **FACE TO FACE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING SCHEDULED FOLLOWING REUNION**

The Board of Directors will hold the Annual Face to Face meeting on October 5 & 6, 2003. The meeting will be held in Payson, Arizona at the home of Lynda "Bandit" Papaioanu. If the directors are planning on flying to the event, you will be flying into Phoenix, AZ to Sky Harbor International Airport. The drive then to Prescott is about 90 miles and from Prescott to Payson, another 100 miles. We look forward to seeing all the Board members at the Reunion, with an opportunity to share our thoughts and ideas on RFTW XVI - 2004.

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[top of page](#)

### **RUN FOR THE WALL T-SHIRT DESIGN FOR 2004**

Are you an artist? Do you know an artist? We are looking for the lucky person that will create the design for the 2004 Run For The Wall T-shirt. All designs must be submitted to IronMike East by September 1, 2003.

Mike "Iron Mike" East  
635 N. Chestnut Street  
Seymour, IN 47272  
(812) 522-5575  
[ironmike@rftw.org](mailto:ironmike@rftw.org)

The designs are reviewed by the Board of Directors and the choice is made by them. What an honor it would be if your design were chosen to be worn by hundreds as we ride across the country in 2004. So, get your thinking cap on and get your artist's pen in gear. We look forward to something new and creative for 2004!

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[top of page](#)

### **SENDING PHOTOS TO THE WEB-SITE**

To send in photos for posting on the RFTW Photo Gallery:

You can send them to us scanned in a 'jpg' or 'gif' format via e-mail to [pics@rftw.org](mailto:pics@rftw.org)

**Please reduce your images prior to sending.** Our mailbox continuously overfills due to images that are way too large in byte and screen size. This prohibits others from sending in their photos when the mailbox is full. Preferably send images in zip format as well.

If you do not have access to a scanner you can send them to us at:

WebKat  
2311 W. Chilton Street  
Chandler, Arizona 85224

We will scan them in and return them to you. Please send a return envelope with postage.  
Note that photos scanned by us will take longer to be put into the website as it is a longer process.

#### EXTRAS:

- Please put a caption for each image whether they are sent via email or by regular mail.
- If you are sending more than one image, please put them in a zip file.
- If you are e-mailing photos, [please reduce your images prior to sending](#).

If you have any questions, you are welcome to contact us via email at [webmaster@rftw.org](mailto:webmaster@rftw.org)

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[top of page](#)

#### GROUP PICTURE TAKEN ON LINCOLN MEMORIAL STEPS IN D.C.

There is still time to order the Group Photograph that was taken by Kra-z Ric on the Lincoln Memorial steps upon arrival in D.C.

12 x 18 - \$15 plus \$5 s&h - total \$20.00

20 x 30 - \$30 plus \$5 s&h - total \$35.00

for any group 150 people and up Ric recommends the 20 x 30 and our group was 300+ people so he obviously recommends the 20 x 30.

Ric is also looking at making a 30 x 40 print but is waiting for the results to see if the grain works for our group. It would cost \$60.....\$50 on orders of 25 or more.

His address is:

Ric White  
3216 Antrim Circle  
Cumfries, VA 22026-3329

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[top of page](#)





## **INDIAN MOTORCYCLE OFFERS SUPPORT TO POW/MIA ISSUES**

Mickey Dominique rode a very special motorcycle across the United States on the Southern Route Run For The Wall XV. This awesome Indian Motorcycle was painted by American Art (formerly Eagle Art) out of the Los Angeles, California area. The theme on the rear fender was "Last Seen Alive!!! Listing names of those still MIA in Vietnam, featuring a picture of SS Jerry W. Elliott, MIA-Vietnam (brother of RFTW Board Member Donna "iz" Elliott). The POW/MIA emblem is painted on the gas tanks with the American Flag flying through it. All proceeds from the sale of this POW/MIA motorcycle will go to Mary and Chuck Scantag, who have [www.pownetwork.org](http://www.pownetwork.org). They do a tremendous amount of work trying to get information and help for POW/MIA families.



Mickey is so happy to be working with such a great company, Indian Motorcycles, and their involvement in the POW/MIA issue. Many thanks to Lou Terhar, President of Indian Motorcycle and to Mr. Robert Myers, who was the backbone for getting this project completed.

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[top of page](#)

## **FOUNDER OF ANGEL FIRE MEMORIAL DIES**

By Frank Zoretich

July 22, 2003 - Albuquerque Tribune

Victor Westphall, who founded the nation's oldest memorial to Vietnam veterans 32 years ago in Angel Fire, died today at age 89. The cause and location of his death were not immediately available.

Westphall began building the New Mexico memorial within a week after his son, Marine Corps infantry officer David Westphall, was killed in Vietnam in May 1968. The memorial was dedicated in 1971.

Victor Westphall "was sort of like a father to a whole lot of Vietnam veterans," said Lonny Tanning, an Albuquerque Vietnam veteran and fund-raiser for the memorial.

"It was the first national memorial for Vietnam vets. He beat the government to the punch by 10 years," Tanning said today.

Vietnam vets "loved him for the acknowledgement he gave to all of us," Tanning said. "He created a real special place for veterans and has certainly been appreciated by thousands and thousands and thousands of veterans."

"Some people say I am the memorial," Westphall said in an interview shortly before Veterans Day last November. "But this memorial is much bigger than me."

A former University of New Mexico professor, Westphall had used the life insurance his son left behind to begin building the memorial for members of the U.S. military killed in the Vietnam War.

The memorial, a white, gently sloping triangular structure on a hilltop overlooking the Moreno Valley, is open 24 hours a day.

Westphall's office there is filled with memorabilia from veterans and other visitors who have expressed gratitude for his long years of work and financial sacrifice to build it and maintain it.

Westphall, who was confined to a wheelchair in the last years of his life, continued to supervise day-to-day operations and lived in an apartment on the site.

"I'd love to see this memorial funded into perpetuity," he said in the November interview. "It's a very special place to me and so many others. I just continue to have faith that it will carry on long after I am gone."

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[top of page](#)

## **DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES FOR MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS RUN FOR THE WALL**

The affairs of Run For The Wall are managed by or under the direction of its Board of Directors. The Directors elect the corporate officers, oversee expenditures, and appoint the route coordinators. It is the responsibility of the Board to set policy that clearly and accurately reflects Run For The Wall's mission statement.

The term of a Board member is three years. Two terms may be served consecutively if that member is re-elected. After the second term however, that member must stand down for one year before running for re-election.

Nominations for the position of director may be made by any individual. Members are elected by the Board of Directors. The current number of directors is six. The bylaws provide that this number may be revised from time to time by amendment to Article IV, Section 2 to any number, but never to less than three. No member shall serve as a state coordinator during his term on the Board.

Members of the Board are not compensated in any way for their services to the Run.

Members must have access to a computer.

Meetings of the Board are generally held on the internet or by teleconference. Members are however, required to attend, in person, one meeting each year. The date, time and place of this annual meeting is determined by the Board. Air fare, travel expenses, hotels and meals are the responsibility of the individual.

Board members do not necessarily have to be veterans. At all times, however, a simple majority of the Board must be honorably discharged veterans of the armed services of the United States and its Allies.

Members are assigned tasks and projects having to do with the organization, preparation, supervision and function of Run For The Wall. Examples are shipping and handling of merchandise, newsletter editing and website interfacing.

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[top of page](#)

## **GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATING IDEAS TO IMPROVE RUN FOR THE WALL**

Whenever communicating to the contacts for the Run, please put "RFTW" in the subject line of your e-mail. We all get so much spam, and have been sent so many corrupt (virus) e-mails, that it is possible your e-mail could get deleted because we're not sure who is sending it. Only send your e-mail to one person. If you do not receive a reply, then try someone else.

The board of directors is responsible for appointing the Southern and Central Route Coordinators, the State Coordinators, and approving the design of the merchandise and what merchandise the Run will handle, as well as, handle policy decisions.

The President is responsible for ordering merchandise and all the administrative matters (day to day operations) of the Run. All the real work is done by the State Coordinators and their staff of volunteers.

The State Coordinators (with the approval of the Route Coordinators) determine where the Run stops, and what activities will occur.

If you have suggestions, or wish to take your level of participation to a higher level, please contact your State Coordinator. By working together we can make the Run even better.

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[top of page](#)

## **CRIPPLE CREEK, COLORADO 2003**

### Salute to American Veterans Rally and Festival

A salute to veterans who have fought for, suffered for or have been killed while fighting for our country and freedoms. A four-day event with military marching bands, aircraft fly-overs, tattoo competition, beer garden with live bands and food and a huge vendor show all set in an old west gambling town in beautiful Cripple Creek, Colorado.

This annual event will be held August 14-17, 2003. There will be many of the RFTW Family attending this rally. It is a great opportunity to see old friends and to make new ones.

Check out the web-site for more information on this great Veterans gathering.

[http://www.pro-promotions.com/cripple\\_creek\\_rally.php](http://www.pro-promotions.com/cripple_creek_rally.php)

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[top of page](#)

## **SEEKING COMBAT WAR VETERANS FOR HISTORY CHANNEL TV SPECIAL: "OPERATION REUNION"**

"Operation Reunion" reunites combat war veterans who shared a traumatic experience on the battlefield, or who had a life changing impact on each other during combat.

The TV Special will be produced in 2003. We have on-staff private investigators to find the chosen veterans, and all production fees are paid for by Indigo Films.

Stories we feature must meet the following criteria:

- Veterans must be from Vietnam, or a more recent battle, i.e. Desert Storm.
- Veterans must have had no contact with each other since their combat experience or limited contact post-war that ended with the two of you losing touch with one another.
- Veterans must have a very strong, emotionally driven reason for wanting to reunite.

For more information, and to share your story, please e-mail OPERATION REUNION as soon as possible at:

[OPERATIONREUNION@INDIGOFILMS.COM](mailto:OPERATIONREUNION@INDIGOFILMS.COM)

or call Joe Agro at (973) 571-0400.

Regardless of whether your profile airs, we will do our best to find your person if you are chosen. We hope we can make your reunion possible! Please let us know if we may assist you or someone you know in finding someone.

Regards,  
Joe Agro - pi.org investigator  
Indigo Films Operation Reunion  
History Channel Project

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[top of page](#)

## **NEW GULF WAR RESEARCH PRESENTED TO ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

WASHINGTON (June 18, 2003) -- Research studies that challenge the conventional wisdom regarding potential links between military service during the Gulf War and the numerous, yet often undiagnosed, illnesses reported by many veterans were presented recently to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Research Advisory Committee for Gulf War Veterans Illnesses.

“I am very pleased with the progress of the committee and ongoing research into the illnesses that continue to afflict the brave men and women who served so well during the Gulf conflict,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi. “They haven’t given up on their search for answers and neither will we.”

Presentations June 16 by the principal investigators of four completed studies looked at the nervous system, cognitive function, use of pyridostigmine bromide (a drug protecting people from nerve agents) and exposure to pesticides and nerve gas.

Antonio Sastre, Ph.D., of Midwest Research Institute in Kansas City, Mo., presented, for the first time, results of his Defense Department-sponsored study of autonomic nervous system function in Gulf War-era veterans. The autonomic nervous system controls many of the body’s functions (like breathing) automatically, without any conscious effort. Using a battery of tests to capture the complexities of the autonomic nervous system, Sastre’s findings indicate that ill veterans demonstrate autonomic system dysfunction on a broad range of tests. Results of a just-published VA-funded study by Roberta F. White, Ph.D., of Boston University School of Medicine and the Boston VA Healthcare System Medical Center indicated that Gulf War-deployed veterans performed “significantly worse,” on tests of attention, visuospatial skills, visual memory and mood. Additionally, Gulf War- deployed veterans who used pyridostigmine bromide performed worse than their deployed comrades who did not use the drug.

John Vogel, Ph.D., of Lawrence Livermore Laboratory in California, discussed the use of accelerator mass spectrometry to detect very low levels of pesticides and their effect on the brain’s increased absorption of a second toxic exposure. The research, conducted with animals, was sponsored by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. Likewise, undetected low-level exposure to sarin nerve gas can cause delayed development of brain alterations that may be associated with memory loss and cognitive dysfunction in animals. This study, by Rogene

Henderson, Ph.D., of Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute in Albuquerque, advances scientific understanding of the long-term effects of exposure to chemical weapons.

“This new research has important implications, not only for ill veterans, but for the development of medical defenses to protect future American troops and civilians from chemical attack,” said committee chairman James Binns.

The advisory committee was established by Secretary Principi to review research and give advice on those areas showing the greatest promise for finding the cause, or causes, of Gulf War illnesses and treating Gulf War veterans.

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[top of page](#)

## **OVERVIEW OF CILHI OPERATIONS AND THE CONNECTION TO RFTW**

*This past weekend we had the pleasure of meeting SFC Team Sgt. Robert Bryson who works with the CILHI program. The information below does not begin to generate the excitement I felt at hearing this young man speak passionately about his work. On a daily basis he works, along with other members of his team, to recover the remains of those MISSING IN ACTION. He told us stories of recoveries of soldiers from WWII, from Vietnam, from Korea. It IS HAPPENING each and every day...there IS work going on to BRING THEM HOME! This is one answer to the cry from those who ride with Run For the Wall. Please check out the website at [www.cilhi.army.mil](http://www.cilhi.army.mil). Sandra*

The CILHI Operations section, also known as S3, is led by a senior quartermaster major and is responsible for planning and implementing the recovery and field operations portion of the CILHI mission. The Operations section is comprised of four areas: Southeast Asia, Korea, WWII/Cold War and administration. Together, these areas provide the operational planning and coordination necessary to facilitate recoveries worldwide.

The CILHI maintains 18 search and recovery teams. A typical 10- to 14-person search and recovery team consists of members with specialized duties and skills including anthropology, photography, explosive ordnance disposal, medicine (medics), mortuary affairs, linguistics (interpreters), and radio communications.

The shared leadership of these highly specialized and experienced teams falls upon the shoulders of a military team leader, a senior team sergeant, and a recovery team leader. The team leader is typically a captain. The team sergeant is usually a U.S. Army sergeant first class. The recovery team leader is a civilian anthropologist. These teams travel the world conducting investigations and excavations of crash and burial sites associated with the U.S. service members and civilians lost as a result of past conflicts. Since 1992, the CILHI has conducted recovery operations in Southeast Asia under the operational control of the Joint Task Force - Full Accounting (JTF-FA).

The JTF-FA is mandated by Congress to achieve the fullest possible accounting of U.S. service members whose remains were not recovered following the conflict in Vietnam. Southeast Asia missions to Vietnam and Laos typically take place five times a year and involve six teams deploying to Vietnam, three or four teams deploying to Laos, and two teams to Cambodia each year. The selection process used to determine which sites the recovery teams will excavate during any given deployment is different for Southeast Asia, Korea, and worldwide missions.

The Southeast Asia cases are selected by the JTF-FA in consultation with the CILHI, in a structured decision-making process. Sites are selected to be excavated based on investigative work, analysis by the CILHI and the JTF-FA, safety, accessibility, and available weather windows.

Recovery missions to North Korea are planned and coordinated with the Korean Peoples' Army during annual talks. Operations in North Korea began in 1996 with one team deploying only once that year. Operations increased to two deployments in 1997, five deployments in 1998, six in 1999, five in 2000, and five in 2001. Also, in 2000 each deployment to North Korea consisted of two recovery teams.

World War II cases are selected by the CILHI Operations section (S3) based upon analysis of the case by the Casualty Data section, political stability of the country, available weather windows, safety, accessibility, and logistics support availability. These worldwide recovery missions round out the balance of our yearly schedule. Typically, the CILHI worldwide deployment schedule consists of three teams deploying numerous times a year to such places as Europe, Papua New Guinea, China, the Pacific Islands and many other locations where lives were lost during World War II.

Teams usually remain in the field for 30 to 45 days per mission. The CILHI search and recovery team members commonly deploy five to six months a year in some of the most austere areas of the world. The time spent away from home and family is enormous even by military standards. As the CILHI continues to grow, additional search and recovery teams will be allocated to the expected increase in Korea and World War II missions.

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[top of page](#)

### **VIETNAM VETS HOME PAGE on the Web**

The Vietnam Vets Home Page (VVHP), the brainchild of Ret. Col. Bill McBride in San Antonio, is 10+ years old. It's enjoys the distinction of being the first internet website dedicated to Vietnam veterans.

Roger Herrick, a member of the RFTW family, and whose brother is MIA-Vietnam, joined them in 1994 as a volunteer to man the Remembrance section while the editor ("Ed" as she's fondly called), Deanna Shlee, took a few months off. Roger gladly gave that full-time job back to Deanna when she returned that summer, as they were inundated with submissions from vets who wanted to tell their stories.

Roger stayed on to lead the new Memorials page, which was established to provide pictures and info or links to veterans' memorials around the world. Roger stepped away from the post (can a volunteer ever retire?) a few years ago when he became involved with RFTW. Memorial Day, 2003, there is a planned reunion at Angel Fire, New Mexico, where Roger first met most of the VVHP gang about 8 years ago.

There is a TON of info on VVHP, from stories and poems, to trip guides to Vietnam, a PX, a Locator Service to find Vets you served with, and everything in between. Pretty much anything concerning a Vietnam vet can be found on this website. Any vet who starts poking around this website will be amazed and helped by what he/she finds. The main page url is: <http://www.vietvet.org>

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[top of page](#)

### **ANOTHER USEFUL WEBSITE**

<http://govbenefits.gov> - The official government benefits website. It is a free and confidential tool that helps find government benefits that you may be eligible to receive. This site is not just for Veterans, but Law Enforcement Officers, Students, a Low Income Person, Senior Citizens, Victims of Abuse, just to name a few. Check out this useful site!

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[top of page](#)

### **VETS HEALTH NEEDS - GUARANTEED FUNDS**

Cox News Service - June 12, 2003



WASHINGTON - The quality of veterans' health care could be threatened unless the federal government guarantees it will fully fund it, a congressional panel was told Tuesday, June 10, 2003.

The panel also was told that if the Department of Veterans Affairs cannot provide timely health care, veterans should be allowed to seek private care at government expense.

"The present situation is not acceptable," said Gail Wilensky, co-chair of a 15-member presidential task force.

The task force, whose two-year charter expired last week, was appointed to recommend ways the departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense could better coordinate health care delivery.

But the task force concluded that "the mismatch in VA between demand for access and available funding is too large to be solved by collaboration alone."

The panel's report noted that long waiting times for appointments continues to plague veterans.

"As of January 2003, at least 236,000 veterans were on a waiting list of six months or more for a first appointment or an initial follow-up - a clear indication of a lack of sufficient capacity, or...a lack of adequate resources to provide the required care," the report said.

Allowing veterans to obtain private health care funded by the VA could temporarily relieve some access problems, said Wilensky, a former Medicare and Medicaid administrator under President George H. W. Bush. But she warned that the government must be careful how it provides such care so that it keeps control of costs.

President Bush has recommended spending \$28.4 billion for veterans' health and medical research in the fiscal year beginning October 1, a \$2 billion increase from current spending levels.

That will be enough to adequately cover all eligible veterans next year, Wilensky said, but she warned that future funding levels should be guaranteed, not subject to administration and congressional discretion.

The panel suggested there are several ways of ensuring adequate VA funding, including mandating that veterans be entitled to a specific level of care or creating a board of actuaries to estimate funding levels independent of the Office of Management and Budget, which drafts the president's budget.

One issue that split the panel members was whether the government should guarantee access to full health care for veterans categorized as "Priority 8" - those with non-service-related ailments whose incomes exceed various criteria.

In 1996, Congress expanded the health care eligibility to include Priority 8 veterans, a move that increased the population of enrolled veterans from about 3 million to nearly 7 million.

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[top of page](#)

## **IN SUPPORT OF OUR TROOPS IN IRAQ**

by Jackie "BestMan" McKinney as delivered at a "Support The Troops Rally" - April 2003

We in America must be in support of our Armed Forces Men and Women who are currently placing themselves in harms way to protect the individual freedoms that all of God's children deserve.

We must carry the message that our brothers and sisters, our sons and daughters SHOULD be honored for their

personal sacrifices, in protecting the quality of life we are blessed with.

Unfortunately, there are dictatorships and terrorists consumed with greed and hate, that unjustly persecute their fellow man by performing atrocities that many of us here cannot even fathom.

For the critics of this current war, I ask that they recognize the tragic events that have led up to our government's reaction to protect the innocent:

1979 - Iranian students attacked and seized the American Embassy in Iran. Setting the stage for the events to follow the next 23 years. American citizens could no longer be protected while traveling, living or working abroad. Americans began to be kidnapped and killed throughout the Middle East.

1983 - A large vehicle packed with explosives was driven into the US Embassy in Beirut. 63 KILLED.

6 months later: A truck with 2500 lbs. of TNT smashed through the main gate of US Marine Corp.

Headquarters in Beirut. 241 US SERVICEMEN KILLED.

During 1984 - Two different explosions at the US Embassy in Kuwait.

1985 - A Volkswagen loaded with explosives drives thru the main gate at the US Air Force Base in Rhein Main. 22 KILLED

59 Days later - The Achille Lauro Cruise Ship is hijacked and we all watched as an American in a wheelchair is singled out of the passenger list and executed.

1986 - A bomb on TWA Flight 840 - KILLS 4

1988 - A bomb on PanAm Flight 103 over Lockerbee, Scotland. KILLS 259.

1993 - Terrorists decide to bring the fight to America while entering CIA Headquarters in Langley, Virginia, 2 AGENTS SHOT AND KILLED.

1 month later - Terrorists bomb the World Trade Center. 6 KILLED, 1000 INJURED.

1995 - A car bomb explodes at US Military Complex in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, KILLING 7 Service Men and Women.

1996 - A Truck bomb explodes at a US Military compound in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, KILLING 19, INJURING 500.

1996 again - Terrorists attack US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania - KILLING 224.

October 2000 - The USS Cole docked in the Port of Yemen is bombed - KILLING 17 US NAVY SAILORS.

And then there was September 11, 2001. The terrorists were out of control! Thank you President Bush for beginning the process of accountability.

Families in our country have paid the Ultimate Sacrifice! As of July 16, 2003, 223 American soldiers have died in Iraq. They gave their lives while serving their country - our country! <http://www.ron.keller.name/Blessed/RollCall>. Their families have suffered, our communities have mourned them, and the grieving process will continue. WE CANNOT FORGET THEM, WE MUST NEVER

FORGET THEM. WE MUST HONOR THEIR MEMORY! I believe we owe it to their sacrifices, to support our troops, and when they come home, WE HONOR THEM, WE RESPECT THEM, WE WELCOME THEM, AND WE THANK THEM!

We must be steadfast in our policies to the Missing in Action, The Prisoners of War, and commit, that we will never, ever, leave an American Soldier behind.

The issues are clear; our Nation's mission is just. We must stay the course. By our presence here, in support of our troops today, we have each made an installment on a debt we can never fully pay to our veterans and active-duty personnel.

You can be Proud to be an American. WE ARE ALL BLESSED TO LIVE IN AMERICA!!!!



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[top of page](#)

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