



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"...November 2003

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

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QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 2003

We Ride for Those Who Can't

INTRODUCING THE 2004 SOUTHERN ROUTE COORDINATOR

LTC John E. Gebhards, USA-Ret. After graduating from college in 1967, I enlisted in the Army. I completed BCT/AIT in 11B at Ft. Dix, NJ and was assigned to the Infantry School and Center. I attended Airborne School and was assigned to their cadre. I am a graduate of Infantry OCS, Signal Advance Course, Engineer Construction Course, PsyOp/SF Operation Course, Command and General Staff College and other courses. My top three awards are the Bronze Star (Achievement), Purple Heart and Meritorious Service Award (2). I am a Senior Parachutist and Fallschirmspringer (30268)-Fallschirmjager. My last assignment was as Assistant G-5 (PsyOp), 1st SOCOM. I served in Vietnam and Persian Gulf War and retired (medical disability-GSW to neck) with 25 years service in 1993. I retired again in 2002 from



3M.

I received a rather strange call late one night in the spring of '99 from an old team-mate telling me about a ride he wanted to make to DC called "Rolling Thunder". I took the bait. It was good seeing Don Canaday, and once again I was back among brothers. We traveled the Central Route and had a great experience. My '85 BMW ran well and I was hooked. I ride a black Ultra now, but for 2003, I had to use a Ford F-150, because my old bike sold fast and my new '03 Ultra (black) got pushed back. I helped Jim David in 2000 as road guide in Missouri. In 2001, I switched to the Southern Route and helped with communication and stuff for Center Punch. In 2002 and 2003 I was Assistant Coordinator for Kent Wilson on the Southern Run.

I am involved with the VFW National Motorcycle Run and American Legion Riders of Missouri. I am somewhat of a loner and don't like crowds, so I try to go the Wall on Friday night or Saturday after Arlington, less people. I have made several good friends on the Run and have put ghosts to rest. John "Slammer" Gebhards

John "Slammer" Gebhards

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INTRODUCING THE 2004 SOUTHERN RUN ASST. COORDINATOR

Don "9-Ball" Morris. I graduated from High School in 1963 in a small Iowa farming community. After a couple of years working I attended the American Institute of Business in Des Moines and graduated with an Associate Degree in Business Administration. Shortly thereafter I was drafted into the Army. Basic was at Fort Campbell and AIT was in Fort Polk (Tiger Land). I then attended NCO Academy in Fort Benning graduating with honors. I received my E-6 stripes, sent back to Fort Polk for OJT and then in July of 1968 I left for Vietnam. I was assigned to Delta Company, 1/7 Cavalry (Recon). I spent the first five months in I Corp out of Camp Evans then they moved the entire 1st Cavalry Division closer to the action in III Corp. After a few months of real training I became Platoon Sergeant of the Second Platoon. I left Vietnam in July 1969 returning to Iowa. I have lived in Phoenix, AZ for 22 years and that is where I met "Li'l 9-Ball" 10 years ago. We own a small business and hope to retire in a few short years.

I learned about RFTW in Sturgis 2000 from Don Weaver. Those of you that knew him were very fortunate. He was responsible for Della and I being on the 2001 run. In the three years we have made the run we have made "life long" friends. In 2003 I shadowed Kent Wilson learning as much as I could about the administrative duties. I also worked as a Road Guard in 2003 observing that very important aspect of the run. When "Slammer" asked me to be his assistant for 2004 I didn't hesitate. RFTW has provided a lot of healing for me and I have seen the results through other participant's experiences. It is now time for me to give back. In 2001 many of you were there for me, now it is time for me to be there for those that are going to the "Wall" for the first time. I look forward to renewing old friendships and making new ones in 2004 along with keeping the POW/MIA issue in the forefront.

Don "9-Ball" Morris



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INTRODUCING THE 2004 CENTRAL ROUTE COORDINATOR

Mark "Straightarrow" Rittermeyer. After graduating from high school in K.C.MO in 1970, I went to work for General Motors. Then married (MaryAnn) in 1971. In January of 1974 I entered the fire service with the Kansas City, MO Fire Department. I was promoted to Driver in August of 1977. After serving 12 years, and with two knee surgeries behind me I was placed on a duty disability. I then finished Berean College and obtained a Diploma in Ministerial Studies. In 1999 I was invited to ride with RFTW, and was able to ride for two days.



Since then, I rode all the way in 2000, was a Road Guard all the way in 2001, Road Guard Captain in 2002, and was Assistant National Coordinator in 2003. I look forward to serving the Run, and each and every rider as Coordinator in 2004.

We must keep the POW/MIA issue before the public and our Government.

Mark "StraightArrow" Rittermeyer

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INTRODUCING THE 2004 CENTRAL ROUTE ASST. COORDINATOR

J. R. "Cleaner" Franklin. As a youth growing up in Illinois, between the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers, I learned the skills while hunting and tracking that would later serve me well in Vietnam. I moved to the middle of Kansas my junior year and finished high school in 1965. In less than a year I was drafted. I became part of the 9th Infantry Division and trained for eight months with my unit at Ft Riley Kansas. I shipped over in January of '67 as part of the advance party for my unit. At that time I was a Buck Sergeant Squad Leader and was sent to the 1st Infantry Division at Di-an, South Vietnam. I was immediately assigned to a Unit in the field. My first two weeks in-country I saw ambushes blown on them as well as their ambushes blown on us. I was in the thick of it. I was then sent back to Bear Cat, 9th Infantry Division Headquarters to rejoin my regular command which was just getting to Vietnam. Shortly thereafter in early 1967, the 2nd Brigade moved south and became part of the Mobile Riverine Force made up of joint Army/Navy units. Having fired batallion high on the rifle range at Ft Riley, I was made a sniper and my M-16 was taken away and I was given an M-14. I continued to serve as a Squad Leader and as a sniper for the next few months becoming an E-6 at 15 and one half months service time. At one point I served as platoon Sergeant. After being wounded twice, I became a supply sergeant for the 9th Division Officer's Club System. In January Of '68, I returned to The states and was made a Platoon Sergeant again. I received a hardship discharge after 22 months service.

In December of 1999, I put the money down on a motorcycle and told the people I had heard of a Ride from LA to DC promoting awareness of the POW/MIA issue. I found out more about it through the web-site and made my first all the Way Run in 2000. In 2001 I again made the Run as part of the Road Guard Team and continued to work as a Road Guard in 2002 and 2003, making many friends and knowing that I wanted to continue, I had found a family that loved me and a Nation that did, also.



I am looking forward to serving on the Team as your Asst. Coordinator this time. We will Work together to make 2004 - RFTW XVI - safe, rewarding and healing once again, as we carry the Message to Washington that our

POW/MIA's are not forgotten. We want an accounting!

J. R. "Cleaner" Franklin

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RUN FOR THE WALL XVI – 2004

It seems we just completed Run For The Wall 2003 . And immediately we start on the plans for Run For The Wall XVI – 2004, Year Number 16! The phones are ringing, e-mails are flying back and forth, positions are being appointed, decisions are being made, fine-tuning has begun for the next Run. 2004 is going to be the best Run, ever!

Bear in mind that the dates are set, we will depart Ontario, California on Wednesday, May 19, 2004, heading east to arrive in Washington, D.C. on Friday, May 28, 2004.

If you are interested in helping within your state, please check the list of State Coordinators and contact them to see what you can do. This endeavor takes many hands to make it a success. Especially, keep the Message alive year-round. Take any opportunity to voice your concerns for the POW/MIA issue and also, keep our troops in your thoughts and prayers.

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HISTORY OF VETERANS DAY

Official recognition of the end of the first modern global conflict -- World War I - - was made in a concurrent resolution (44 Stat. 1982) enacted by Congress on June 4, 1926, with these words:

WHEREAS the 11th of November 1918, marked the cessation of the most destructive, sanguinary, and far reaching war in human annals and there resumption by the people of the United States of peaceful relations with other nations, which we hope may never again be severed, and

WHEREAS it is fitting that the recurring anniversary of this date should be commemorated with thanksgiving and prayer and exercises designed to perpetuate peace through good will and mutual understanding between nations; and

WHEREAS the legislatures of twenty-seven of our States have already declared November 11 to be a legal holiday: Therefore be it Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That the President of the United States is requested to issue a proclamation calling upon the officials to display the flag of the United States on all Government buildings on November 11 and inviting the people of the United States to observe the day in schools and churches, or other suitable places, with appropriate ceremonies of friendly relations with all other peoples.

An Act (52 Stat. 351; 5 U. S. Code, Sec. 87a) approved May 13, 1938, and the 11th of November in each year a legal holiday - - a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be hereafter celebrated and known as "Armistice Day."

Armistice Day was primarily a day set aside to honor veterans of World War I, but in 1954, after World War II had required the greatest mobilization of soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen in the Nation's history; after American forces had fought aggression in Korea, the 83rd Congress, at the urging of the veterans service organizations, amended the Act of 1938 by striking out the word "Armistice" and inserting in lieu thereof the word "Veterans. "

With the approval of this legislation (Public Law 380) on June 1, 1954, November 11th became a day to honor American veterans of all wars.

Later that same year, on October 8th, President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued the first "Veterans Day Proclamation " which stated:

"In order to insure proper and widespread observance of this anniversary, all veterans, all veterans' organizations, and the entire citizenry will wish to join hands in the common purpose. Toward this end, I am designating the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs as Chairman of a Veterans Day National Committee, which shall include such other persons as the Chairman may select, and which will coordinate at the national level necessary planning for the observance. I am also requesting the heads of all departments and agencies of the Executive branch of the Government to assist the National Committee in every way possible."

A letter from the President to the Honorable Harvey V. Higley, Administrator of Veterans' Affairs, was sent on the same date designating him to serve as Chairman. In 1958, the White House advised the VA's General Counsel that there was no need for another letter of appointment for each new Administrator, as the original proclamation in 1954 established the Committee with the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs as Chairman.

The Uniforms Holiday Bill (Public Law 90-363 (82 Stat. 250)) was signed on June 28, 1968, and was intended to insure three-day weekends for Federal employees by celebrating four national holidays on Mondays- -Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and Columbus Day. It was thought that these extended weekends would encourage travel, recreational and cultural activities and stimulate greater industrial and commercial production. Many states did not agree with this decision and continued to celebrate the holidays on their original dates. The first Veterans Day under the new law was observed with much confusion on October 25, 1971.

It was quite apparent that the commemoration of this day was a matter of historic and patriotic significance to a great number of our citizens, and so on September 20th, 1975, President Gerald R. Ford signed Public Law 94-97 (89 Stat. 479), which returned the annual observance of Veterans Day to its original date of November 11, beginning in 1978. This action supported the express will of the overwhelming majority of the State legislatures, all major service organizations and the American people.

The restoration of the observance of Veterans Day to November 11 not only preserves the historical significance of the date, but helps focus attention on the important purpose of Veterans Day: a celebration to honor America's veterans for their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good.

In connection with the signing of the proclamation on Veterans Day, the President today sent the following letter to the Honorable Harvey V. Higley, Administrator of Veterans' Affairs:

Dear Mr. Higley:

I have today signed a proclamation calling upon all of our citizens to observe Thursday, November 11, 1954 as Veterans Day. It is my earnest hope that all veterans, their organizations, and the entire citizenry will join hands to insure proper and widespread observance of this day.

With the thought that it will be most helpful to coordinate the planning, I am suggesting the formation of a Veterans Day National Committee. In view of your great personal interest as well as your official responsibilities, I have designated you to serve as Chairman. You may include in the Committee membership such other persons as you desire to select and I am requesting the heads of all departments and agencies of the Executive branch to assist the Committee in its work in every way possible.

I have every confidence that our Nation will respond wholeheartedly in the appropriate observance of Veterans Day, 1954.

Sincerely,

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER
Veterans Day, 1954

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
A PROCLAMATION
3071

Whereas it has long been our customs to commemorate November 11, the anniversary of the ending of World War I, by paying tribute to the heroes of that tragic struggle and by rededicating ourselves to the cause of peace; and
Whereas in the intervening years the United States has been involved in two other great military conflicts, which have added millions of veterans living and dead to the honor rolls of this Nation; and

Whereas the Congress passed a concurrent resolution on June 4, 1926 (44 Stat. 1982), calling for the observance of November 11 with appropriate ceremonies, and later provided in an act approved May 13, 1938 (52 Stat. 351) , that the eleventh of November should be a legal holiday and should be known as Armistice Day; and

Whereas, in order to expand the significance of that commemoration and in order that a grateful Nation might pay appropriate homage to the veterans of all its wars who have contributed so much to the preservation of this Nation, the Congress, by an act approved June 1, 1954 (68 Stat. 168), changed the name of the holiday to Veterans Day:

Now, Therefore, I, Dwight D. Eisenhower, President of the United States of America, do hereby call upon all of our citizens to observe Thursday, November 11, 1954, as Veterans Day. On that day let us solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought so valiantly, on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom, and let us reconsecrate ourselves to the task of promoting an enduring peace so that their efforts shall not have been in vain.

I also direct the appropriate officials of the Government to arrange for the display of the flag of the United States on all public buildings on Veterans Day.

In order to insure proper and widespread observance of this anniversary, all veterans, all veterans' organizations, and the entire citizenry will wish to join hands in the common purpose.

Toward this end, I am designating the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs as Chairman of a Veterans Day National Committee, which shall include such other persons as the Chairman may select, and which will coordinate at the national level necessary planning for the observance. I am also requesting the heads of all departments and agencies of the Executive branch of the Government to assist the National Committee in every way possible.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and cause the seal of the United States of America to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington this eighth day of October in the Year of our Lord nineteen hundred and fifty-four, and of the Independence of the (SEAL) United States of America the one hundred and seventy-ninth.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

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JAMIE RACHEL-LEIGH JULIAN HAS ARRIVED

There is baby news coming from Aguilar, Colorado. Jessica “Spots” Julian is happy to announce that "Speedbump"

finally arrived on August 14, 2003 at 5:51 pm. Her given name is Jamie Rachel-Leigh Julian, and she weighed in at 7 lbs., 11 oz., and she was 20 inches long. She got her middle name from her Auntie Rachel (aka "Ratchet"), who was a part of the RFTW family for almost her entire life. "Speedbump" will be following in "Ratchet's" footsteps in May of 2004, God willing. She is a healthy baby, and she will be a very special part of the Run Family. (I guess everyone can now start calling Lil' Boss and Fidel - "Grandma" and "Grandpa.")

Congratulations to Jessica!!!!!!

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SOUTHERN ROUTE 2003

by Kent Wilson

Hello to all Southern Route Riders for 2003. Many of you called me about there being no information in the last newsletter. Well, I Blew It! I missed the deadline all by myself and it was my fault!! Please excuse!

Yes, we had a great Run with many memories. The Run was dedicated to Don Weaver, World War II POW, whom many of you met and rode with in past years. Don had a real heart for veterans, especially Vietnam Veterans and really supported RFTW. We had a remembrance time with his wife Sandy at the VA Center in Phoenix on our first night's stop. Don Morris did a superb job in recalling Don Weaver's impact along with RFTW on his life. Don Morris will be the SR Assistant Coordinator for 2004.

Another high point was meeting with Pvt. Joseph Hudson from the 507th Maintenance Division, U.S. Army at our Anthony gas stop outside of El Paso. Members of the SR presented to Joe the POW bracelets for each soldier that was captured in Iraq. This was so neat, as it was not a media event. Although TV cameras were there, it was a meeting between two generations of soldiers and it had a certain privacy about it, even though we were public. Vietnam Veterans (and others) welcoming home a POW from another generation. We now know RFTW has made a difference, as Joe Hudson acknowledged that active military personnel today know of our efforts to keep this issue alive. He then rode in Missing Man formation thru El Paso and became a member of the RFTW family. Upon our leaving, both he and his Sarge asked us to place their berets at the Wall in memory of those who gave all and those who never came home. Truly a moment we will never forget.

The Southern Run visited three schools and did a 'ride by' at another school this year. Each group of students touched many RFTW members hearts.

This year we visited and laid wreaths at nearly a dozen memorials as we crossed the southern United States. It is a special time for RFTW veterans who lay those wreaths. Four VA Medical Centers were visited and a 'ride by' done in Jackson, MS to observe the new POW/MIA Flag flying in front of the hospital. Jackson, MS Harley Dealership had an outstanding reception with the Governor of Mississippi there to greet us. Jack Lucas, the youngest Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient in U.S. history and Sonny Montgomery were quest speakers. The Trail of Honor prepared to represent all wars fought by U.S. soldiers was a very special surprise. Many hours of work went into preparing this outstanding layout. Pappa Bear, Mississippi Coordinator deserves special thanks for this work.

Each State Coordinator needs special thanks once again for their excellent organizational skills to make 2003 the best Southern Run ever. The time each of you gave to the SR was a sacrifice that is greatly appreciated.

While this brief summary of highlights is terribly incomplete, we do not mean to overlook anyone, any stop, any meal or any expression of support given to the SR.

I personally want to thank each State Coordinator, each Road Guard, Chase Truck Driver, Merchandise Seller,

Support Vehicle and especially you , the riders, for your support.

Now, let's support "Slammer" Gebhards as he prepares for 2004.

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POEMS BY DEL "ABE" JONES

of White Bluff, Tennessee

USAF '58 - '61. K-9 Corps @ Fairchild AFB, Spokane, WA

POW/MIA

So many fates are left unknown
And so many rumors that abound
So many families ask the question
"When will, the answers be found?"

So many years have come and gone
Sometimes, hope is hard to keep
There's some who feel there's none
And in some, it's buried deep.

The pain, is in not knowing
How, to put loved ones' to rest
When there is no way to prove
They have passed, the final test.

But, no matter what the answers
We can't let this cause alone
Until, each and every one of them
Is found, and brought back home.

POW/MIA STORIES

It's hard to find the stories
That they won't talk about
It's hard to realize the things
That they had to go without.

How can they let the feelings
(Even they don't understand)
Show to any other people
In this, Freedom's Land.

We can't know the hardships
Unless we were there
Especially when they came back home
To those who didn't seem to care.

Unless you had lived through it



Watching, Comrades that had died
Why should they talk about it to us
Of the tears inside they've cried?

Even if they chose to tell us
What difference would it make
Would it be worth the chance
That they would have to take.

Why should they bare their soul
That's already been stripped clean
Because even with a picture of it
We couldn't see what they have seen.

Sometimes, all we have to do
Is to look into their eyes
And think that we might see or hear
Their mournful, pain-filled cries.

The POW who came home
Who lived through that Hell
Can't tell the stories of the MIA
Who never had a chance to tell!

So, we may never, ever, know
Of the horrors they have known
And, if we think about it
It's probably best, that they aren't shown!

But, there is always an end
To every never-ending story
Although sometimes they're never told
In all their Truth and Glory.

So if you ask about it
And if you ever wonder why
They won't talk of that nightmare
Maybe now, you might know, Why?

Please visit Abe's 9/11 Memorial page:

<http://mywebpage.netscape.com/delabejones/page1.html> (9/11 Memoriam)

<http://mywebpage.netscape.com/delabejones/instant/memorial.html> (more poetry)

Abe also has his first e-book: "THE WORLD, WAR, FREEDOM, AND MORE", (re: Vietnam, Gulf War, and all Vets, Native American, Trail of Tears and Chief Joseph) available for FREE in .zip or .exe format. Just ask for it.

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THE SOUTHERN ROUTE RUN FOR THE WALL 2003...AN FNG'S EXPERIENCE
by Frank Perry, Sgt. USMC, Vietnam '65 – '66

They told us up front that it wasn't a "fun run"...that we were on a mission. Specifically, the mission was "To promote healing among veterans and their families and friends, to call for an accounting of all prisoners of war and those missing in action (POW-MIA), and to honor the memory of those killed in action (KIA). There was no mistaking that this was a serious ride.

We hooked up with approximately 75 riders on the Southern Route of the Run For the Wall in Weatherford, TX. They had started in Ontario, CA several days prior and were stopping for the night. We met them at the local Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) hall and got registered for the run. This consisted of signing the various liability waivers, strapping on the black & white RFTW ID band on our wrists, receiving the complementary sun screen lotion and chap stick, and most moving, a hug and "Welcome Home" from Shirley Scott, the person handling our registration. I think that was the defining moment when I really started to understand what this run was about.

The run was a mastery of logistics. The route was pre-determined with gas and food and overnight stops strategically placed along the way. I think that in the 1700+ miles I rode with them, I only paid for gas for my bike twice; the rest of the time, the fuel was donated by either a local supporter, the gas station operator, or from funds collected by the RFTW. And meals...no one went hungry! Most evenings, we were feted to a banquet or buffet by a VFW Chapter, an American Legion Post, and even a Moose Lodge in Wytheville, VA. We were usually able to scrounge coffee at the motels before we departed in the mornings, but in one case, the motel operators prepared a full breakfast for all the riders.

It started to rain during our third day on the road. I really had no recent experience riding in the rain.... Mom and Dad taught me to come in out of the rain! No real options here; either ride or whimp out and put the bike on our trailer (my lovely bride of 30+ years was riding "chase" with our pickup pulling the 2-bike trailer). We had been riding about 65 mph with less than one second separation between bikes...side-by-side...no staggered formation. Now I was going to have to maintain this same spacing, but with zero-to-limited visibility in the rain! Am I a sane person? All my years of instructing the National Safety Council's Defensive Driving Course were starting to haunt me!

Well, I was able to hang in there and really did learn from the more experienced riders about managing my bike in the rain....and over grooved pavement...and over metal-surfaced draw bridges. Some people weren't so fortunate. There were at least 3 crashes involving the bikes...some with injuries. I had to navigate through 2 of those, as they occurred immediately in front of me.

The crowning moment for me was when our Southern Route combined with the Central Route, and we were some 400 bikes strong, riding across the Memorial Bridge into Washington, DC to The Wall...The Vietnam Memorial. We had made it!!! I don't think that I was the only one trying to navigate across that bridge with teary eyes. It was just too momentous an event.

I had been to the Wall on two previous occasions, always going to the same name. I think it's our private connection with those who didn't come home with us. But this time was different....I was there with new buddies...guys and gals who had ridden all the way across the U.S. for this very moment. There were tears and there were hugs...but most of all there was a reverent silence prevailing all along the Wall. Actions spoke louder than words that day. I had met a new friend on the way across from Texas. He wasn't riding a bike, but was driving a pickup and helping any way that he could. He had never been to the Wall before. I told him that he shouldn't go alone the first time...and that I would go with him whenever he was ready. Naturally, we got separated in the masses, and he didn't go that day. A later email from him revealed that he went alone that night...and spend most of the entire night at the Wall. I think he came to grips with his own fears and uncertainty that night. (He writes that he's ready to go again in 2004.)

On Saturday, the Memorial Day weekend included a ride into Arlington National Cemetery and laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. As many times as I have been to this particular memorial, I never cease to be impressed with the solemn atmosphere surrounding such a beautiful site. Representatives from both RFTW routes assisted in laying the wreath.

Sunday morning was marked by another significant event....Rolling Thunder XVI. We staged the bikes at the Pentagon's north parking lot early in the morning, then sat or stood and waited...and waited. After a few hours time, all the bikes had arrived and were staged with their respective organizations. It was time for demonstration...this was not a parade. A quarter-million riders on motorcycles began the run through Washington, DC; a very visible and loud demand for an accounting of all POW/MIA's. The streets were lined with thousands of well-wishers waving flags and giving the riders salutes and "thumbs-up". It was a heartwarming "Welcome Home" for all of us who were shunned for our service back in the 60's and 70's....the Run For The Wall was truly worth the effort! We'll be back again in 2004!

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I AM PTSD

I've come to visit once again. I am PTSD.

I just love to see you suffer mentally, physically, socially and spiritually. I want to make you restless so you can never relax. Yes, I want you jumpy and nervous and anxious. I want to make you agitated and irritable so everything and everybody makes you uncomfortable. I want you to be confused and depressed so that you can't think clearly & positively.

I want to make you hate everything & everybody, especially yourself. I want you to feel guilty and remorseful for the things you have done in the past, those things that you will never be able to let go of. I want to make you angry & hateful toward the world for the way it is & the way you are. I want you to feel sorry for yourself & blame everything but me for the way things are. I want you to be deceitful & untrustworthy and to manipulate and con as many people as possible. I want to make you fearful and paranoid and guilty for no reason at all.

I want you to wake up during all hours of the night screaming for me. You know you can't sleep without me or with me. I'm in your dreams and I live within you.

I remember the countless good jobs you have sacrificed for me. All the fine friends that you deeply cared for and you gave up for me. What's' more, the ones you turned against yourself because of your inexcusable actions? I'm even more grateful, because your loved ones, your family (the most important people in the world to you) you even threw them away for me or hurt them really bad because of me.

I'm glad you passed me on to your wife & kids, so I can live within them too. I cannot express in words the gratitude I have for the loyalty you have for me. You sacrificed all these beautiful things in life just to devote yourself completely to me. Do not despair, my friend, for on me you can always depend. For after you have lost all these things, you can still depend on me to take even more. You can depend on me to keep you in a living hell within yourself, and to keep your mind, your body & your soul, for I will not be satisfied until you are dead, my friend.

Forever yours,
PTSD

(FROM THE KHE SANH VETERANS ASSN. MESSAGE BOARD)

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PTSD!

By Mel Kahl

Today, class we are going to address an issue that not too many people are totally aware of, it is called PTSD! PTSD!

Yeah, right. Like no one has heard of this. Well, maybe a lot of you think you know all about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, but I assure you there are a few things most people don't know. And I use "MOST" as the operative word here.

I'd bet if you were to go up to a co-worker or your neighbor and ask them to explain what PTSD was, you would end up with only a few common responses; "doesn't that have to do with Vietnam Vets?" And the second thing would be something along the lines of "they're nuts". Well, wouldn't you? In general that is what most people think of when it comes to PTSD. Right or wrong, it is out there, and I hope to perhaps change at least one person's mind in coming newsletters about their view of the darn thing.

As a group we ride for those who can't, which means POW/MIA's. If you have been a POW, then you would have to have had an encounter with our friend PTSD. He ain't gonna be passing you up, that's for sure. Like most, I really didn't associate PTSD so much with POW's; I leaned more toward combat vets having it and sort of forgot about the POW part of our mission. So, one day it hits me: Hey, what about our real purpose in riding "all the way", and since I have that darn friend that won't leave me alone, let's open it up and see how it can be managed a little bit better for those of us that want to make small improvements in everyone's life.

Everyone who has had a traumatic event suffers from PTSD in one way or another, some a lot, others not as much as the other guy. You've heard this before, I'm sure. Never the less, PTSD has made an impact upon everyone, including POW/MIA's, survivors, friends, family members, ex-family members, and even people we can't stand. A few of us have (A) gone for help, (B) decided to handle it on our own (it could be! Yeah, right) and then we have those who will (C) deny everything. Which are you?

For 30+ years I fell into that "B" group and functioned very well, thank you. Well.....almost. So, I can relate to just about all the above. From now on let's give our friend (PTSD) a real good talking to and get on with it. He is not going to be leaving anytime soon.

What does it really mean to the rest of the world?
What you mean to the rest of the world?
What does it mean to you?
Fix it and forget it?
What do you want it to mean to you?
Want them to pay you for it and then you can be happy?
Are you one sick puppy?
What can you do to prevent it from happening?
What happens to me now?
Why can't they leave me alone?
What does it do to my surroundings?
At the end of your life....just how long is that?

To be explored in future issues.

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by “PatoPato” Fred Pepper

We are all improved over the Egyptians and the ostriches, so the river denial should not be a factor, and once you have admitted to learning about the PTSD monster, the bottom line is, if you have survived this long, just think how great it will be when you take the bull by the horns and accept the fact that you are gonna have good days and bad days. But drugs, pills, alcohol, and the VA pain “retarders” do nothing but run you into the ground and leave you in the river. Step out and smell the roses....the best healing for someone with PTSD is the Run For the Wall and all the bitchin' things that you receive from your brothers and sisters and people who really do care if you are alright. DC, The Rolling Thunder Parade and all the other vets and bikes and history will constantly remind you that it is great to be alive and be in control of your destiny. Never forget and fight 'til the end - you have earned that right. All of that is what the “newbe” must know and remember to gain control and live a life with PTSD.

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FINDING THERAPY AND THE RUN

by **J. R. Franklin**

I was 19 years old when I went to Vietnam as a Buck Sergeant Squad Leader. They made me a sniper, later a platoon sergeant, then a supply sergeant after being wounded several times, sent me back to the states and made me a platoon sergeant again. They discharged me after 22 months service and I was still only 20 years old and couldn't even vote. While in Vietnam, all I could think about was to return to normalcy, but when I got back home, home wasn't normal either. Newark was burning to the ground, my folks didn't want me to speak about Vietnam, they just wanted me to be the same kid that had left home. But I wasn't! I knew I viewed the world differently than those who had not had my experiences. I had more in common with a guy I had only known for 20 minutes, who had also just returned from Vietnam, than I did the kids I grew up with.

In 1969, I had some health problems and went to the VA. It was a bad experience and I didn't go back. I knew I had a temper, I knew I didn't like me when I showed it, and I didn't know how to control that temper. In 1989, my wife told me to get a handle on my temper or find a different place to spend Christmas. That was when I found a Vet Center in Amarillo, TX. I was directed to a drug and alcohol counselor and he told me that I needed to quit drinking, so I did. He never recognized the lurking PTSD and never treated it. Since I had stopped drinking, he felt that I had things under control. Without self-medication, five years later my whole world blew up in my face. In '94, I found a Vet Center that started treating me for PTSD. I don't want to make it sound like that was the beginning of a better life, but, well, it was, it just took me a while with treatment to realize it.

In the winter of 1999, I had spoke to my wife about wanting to go on Run For the Wall. At the time, she told me that I wasn't getting any younger and that it was a long ride and that we had the money and if I wanted to do it, now was the time to do it.

I was making the Run for four guys that were on the Wall. One of them broke me out, taught me how to ride motorcycles, when I was 14. And I thought if Jay was alive today, he would make this Run. So I loaded up my 19 year-old daughter, who had only two sentences about Vietnam in her history book, and brought her with me to California to start the Run. When we got to the mid-west, there were people standing on overpasses waving flags and holding banners that said “We Love our Vets”, “Welcome Home” and “Thank You” This was the part of the country that I came from. And this struck me dead in the heart...I finally felt there was someone who cares about the sacrifices we made on their behalf. At that point, the Run changed...my reason changed...it was not only for the four guys on the Wall, but it was for me, also. It was the Nation welcoming me home after all those years. The Run was extremely healing for me. The Run let me get a handle on the fact that there was a Nation that cared about me.

Life is much better today. The Run is part of my continuing therapy allowing me a much better quality of life.

“WHAT IS A VIETNAM VETERAN?”

A college student posted a request on an internet newsgroup asking for personal narratives from the likes of us addressing the question: "What is a Vietnam Veteran?" This was the reply from Vietnam Veteran Dan Mouer.

Adam,
Vietnam Veterans are men and women. We are dead or alive, whole or maimed, sane or haunted. We grew from our experiences or we were destroyed by them or we struggle to find some place in between. We lived through hell or we had a pleasant, if scary, adventure.

We were Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Red Cross, and civilians of all sorts. Some of us enlisted to fight for God and Country, and some were drafted. Some were gung-ho, and some went kicking and screaming.

Like veterans of all wars, we lived a tad bit--or a great bit--closer to death than most people like to think about. If Vietnam Vets differ from others, perhaps it is primarily in the fact that many of us never saw the enemy or recognized him or her. We heard gunfire and mortar fire but rarely looked into enemy eyes. Those who did, like folks who encounter close combat anywhere and anytime, are often haunted for life by those eyes, those sounds, those electric fears that ran between ourselves, our enemies, and the likelihood of death for one of us. Or we get hard, calloused, tough. All in a day's work. Life's a bitch then you die. But most of us remember and get twitchy, worried, sad.

We are crazies dressed in cammies, wide-eyed, wary, homeless, and drunk. We are Brooks Brothers suit wearers, doing deals downtown. We are housewives, grandmothers, and church deacons. We are college professors engaged in the rational pursuit of the truth about the history or politics or culture of the Vietnam experience. And we are sleepless. Often sleepless.

We pushed paper; we pushed shovels. We drove jeeps, operated bulldozers, built bridges; we toted machine guns through dense brush, deep paddy, and thorn scrub. We lived on buffalo milk, fish heads and rice. Or C-rations. Or steaks and Budweiser. We did our time in high mountains drenched by endless monsoon rains or on the dry plains or on muddy rivers or at the most beautiful beaches in the world.

We wore berets, bandanas, flop hats, and steel pots. Flak jackets, canvas, rash and rot. We ate cloroquine and got malaria anyway. We got shots constantly but have diseases nobody can diagnose. We spent our nights on cots or shivering in foxholes filled with waist-high water or lying still on cold wet ground, our eyes imagining Charlie behind every bamboo blade. Or we slept in hotel beds in Saigon or barracks in Thailand or in cramped ships' berths at sea.

We feared we would die or we feared we would kill. We simply feared, and often we still do. We hate the war or believe it was the best thing that ever happened to us. We blame Uncle Sam or Uncle Ho and their minions and secretaries and apologists for every wart or cough or tic of an eye. We wonder if Agent Orange got us.

Mostly--and this I believe with all my heart--mostly, we wish we had not been so alone. Some of us went with units; but many, probably most of us, were civilians one day, jerked up out of "the world," shaved, barked at, insulted, humiliated, de-egoized and taught to kill, to fix radios, apply bandages, to drive trucks. We went, put in our time, and were equally ungraciously plucked out of the morass and placed back in the real world. But now we smoked dope, shot skag, or drank heavily. Our wives or husbands seemed distant and strange. Our friends wanted to know if we shot anybody.

And life went on, had been going on, as if we hadn't been there, as if Vietnam was a topic of political conversation or college protest or news copy, not a matter of life and death for tens of thousands.

Vietnam Vets are people just like you. We served our country, proudly or reluctantly or ambivalently. What makes us different--what makes us Vietnam Vets--is something we understand, but we are afraid nobody else will. But we appreciate your asking.

Vietnam Veterans are white, black, beige and shades of gray; but in comparison with our numbers in the "real world," we were more likely black. Our ancestors came from Africa, from Europe, and China. Or they crossed the Bering Sea Land Bridge in the last Ice Age and formed the nations of American Indians, built pyramids in Mexico, or farmed acres of corn on the banks of Chesapeake Bay. We had names like Rodriguez and Stein and Smith and Kowalski. We were Americans, Australians, Canadians, and Koreans; most Vietnam veterans are Vietnamese.

We were farmers, students, mechanics, steelworkers, nurses, and priests when the call came that changed us all forever. We had dreams and plans, and they all had to change...or wait. We were daughters and sons, lovers and poets, beatniks and philosophers, convicts and lawyers. We were rich and poor but mostly poor. We were educated or not, mostly not. We grew up in slums, in shacks, in duplexes, and bungalows and houseboats and hooches and ranchers. We were cowards and heroes. Sometimes we were cowards one moment and heroes the next.

Many of us have never seen Vietnam. We waited at home for those we loved. And for some of us, our worst fears were realized. For others, our loved ones came back but never would be the same.

We came home and marched in protest marches, sucked in tear gas, and shrieked our anger and horror for all to hear. Or we sat alone in small rooms, in VA hospital wards, in places where only the crazy ever go. We are Republicans, Democrats, Socialists, and Confucians and Buddhists and Atheists--though as usually is the case, even the atheists among us sometimes prayed to get out of there alive.

We are hungry, and we are sated, full of life or clinging to death. We are injured, and we are curers, despairing and hopeful, loved or lost. We got too old too quickly, but some of us have never grown up. We want, desperately, to go back, to heal wounds, revisit the sites of our horror. Or we want never to see that place again, to bury it, its memories, its meaning. We want to forget, and we wish we could remember.

Despite our differences, we have so much in common. There are few of us who don't know how to cry, though we often do it alone when nobody will ask "what's wrong?" We're afraid we might have to answer.

Adam, if you want to know what a Vietnam veteran is, get in your car next weekend or cage a friend with a car to drive you. Go to Washington. Go to the Wall. It's going to be Veterans Day weekend. There will be hundreds there...no, thousands. Watch them. Listen to them. I'll be there. Come touch the Wall with us. Rejoice a bit. Cry a bit. No, cry a lot. I will. I'm a Vietnam Veteran; and, after 35 years, I think I am beginning to understand what that means.

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I AM A SUPPORTER

By Shirley Scott – “Top Sarge”

When I was asked to write about my experience with Run for the Wall, I was surprised, I'm not a veteran, I've only driven a support vehicle for three years. How do you put such an emotional roller coaster on paper? How do you put into words how it feels when you register someone and give them a welcome home hug for the first time since their return and they start to cry because it is the beginning of a healing process that is long overdue; or when a "big bad biker" cries like a baby on your shoulder at the Wall because of all the emotions that have surfaced that he has kept locked away in that safe area for so long. Then there was the warm feeling at the end of the Run when a veteran thanks you for making the RFTW special for him, because he wasn't "in-country" he wasn't sure he would be welcomed on the Run?

How do you describe the lump in your throat, when you visit the hospitals, and the patients thank you for coming to visit and you know that they wouldn't be there if they hadn't been defending our freedoms, and it is you that owes them a Thank You?

How do you tell someone the feeling you get when you see someone standing in the rain to salute the RFTW, or the school kids interacting with the Veterans and treating them like the Heroes they are; the adoration on the children's faces or the tear in the Veteran's eye?

What words do you use to describe the pride you felt when you helped a young lady find her father's name on the Wall? She learns that he had died a hero; she was eight when she last saw him, and her mother had divorced him while he was in Nam. Or how your heart soared when you saw the young mother in Virginia who was obviously dirt poor, but whose five children, even though they were toddlers, knew how to show respect to the flag. You just have to be there to understand the range of emotions that mere words cannot express.

Vance first saw an article about RFTW in a Veteran's Service Magazine, and decided it was something he wanted to do and started planning for it. I heard about his plans to go from a friend who called to see if I was also going. This was a total surprise to me since he hadn't ridden in over 30 years, didn't own a bike, and was very ill and weak from chemo therapy. A year before, the Doctors had given him less than two years to live. It was the best therapy that could have happened to him. A friend arranged for Honda to loan him a bike, and he started riding every day. Our friends and family thought I was crazy to let him go, but it meant the world to him. I arranged to meet him in DC that year. I was waiting on the hill by the Iwo Jima monument when everyone came riding up with the flags flying, the engines thundering and the police sirens screaming. What a memory! It was only after I arrived in DC that I found out that Vance had laid the bike down the first morning and another biker had run over his knees. He had refused treatment, and his knees were badly infected, and being an insulin diabetic on chemo, they were very painful. He wasn't sure he could manage the bike with both of us on it in the parade, so I told him to go without me. I stood with helmet in hand in the hotel parking lot as every one left, except a guy named George from Texas. He was running late, but stopped. After hearing my story, he gave me a ride down to the Pentagon parking lot. He apologized that he couldn't give me a ride in the parade, he had promised someone else. Vance did manage to ride us double in the parade, and I was hooked. I hadn't seen such an outpouring of love shown to our Veteran's since I had left home. Here all Veterans were treated as HEROS. It was also my first time in DC and at the Wall to see the names, to read the items left behind and feel the pain and love. Every name on the Wall is someone's son, daughter, father, mother, or brother, and to know that so many families paid the ultimate price for my freedom is overwhelming.

For the families of those who are still POW-MIA's, I can only imagine the anguish you must live with every day not knowing the status of your loved one.

When we got back to California, Vance started talking about going again the next year saying, he had missed out on several ceremonies because he didn't know where or when to be somewhere. I knew then that I had to be more involved, go all the way. I called Centerpunch and offered to help in any way that was needed. I started asking him if various things were taken care of. He told me to slow down, they would be completed in Ontario.

When I arrived in Ontario and reported for duty, I was introduced to everyone by CP as "Top Sarge". I think it had something to do with my shy, quiet nature. I was never in the service; they wouldn't accept me when I was younger because I was too short. After they lowered the height requirements they wouldn't accept me because I was widowed. (Boy, have times changed). So I did the next best thing I could do, I worked as a volunteer at the VA Hospital and at our local VSO.

I have just completed my third year of driving a support vehicle and doing registration for the Southern Route. I have scheduled my vacation for next year to coincide with the RFTW. My boss asked what I would do if she said 'no'. My answer is simple: "Here is my notice of resignation." Our vans proudly display the RFTW logo on the windows all year, and I have cards ready to hand out to anyone who asks for more information. The Run for the Wall feels like family. Sure we have our differences but when the chips are down, we all pull together.

I can never repay the Veteran's for all that they have endured to protect our freedoms, but I can lead a campaign to say Thank You to each and every one of them. I also try to live my life so that I am worthy of all of their sacrifices. It is my hope that I have given back, in some small measure, a fraction of what I have gotten from the Run; that I have touched a life and made it better for having been there.

To all veterans I wish to take this opportunity to again say, Thank You and Welcome Home!
Come find me on the 2004 RFTW, and I'll give you your Welcome Home Hug.

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FAMILY BRIEFINGS

Family Briefings are presentations by DPMO, sometimes Stony Beach DIA, or other military personnel organizations responsible for POW/MIA affairs. The PNOK's (primary next of kin) are given the opportunity to review case files sometimes, and at a minimum are updated. There is a Q & A session and that's when the "chit hits the fan"...very direct questions. Sometimes there's press, but they mostly interview the speakers, so thoughts are rather slanted. The participants in these meetings are getting smaller and smaller as we die off...which is the way DPMO would like to handle the POWMIA cases.

The 2003 and 2004 Schedule is as follows:

DATE	LOCATION	---	DATE	LOCATION
Jan 18	San Francisco, CA	---	Jan 24	Nashville, TN
Feb 22	Birmingham, AL	---	Feb 21	Los Angeles, CA
Mar 22	Houston, TX	---	Feb 24	Honolulu, HI
Apr 26	Detroit, MI	---	Apr 2-3	Washington, DC*
Jun 18-21	Washington, DC *	---	May 15	Milwaukee, WI
Jul 25-26	Washington, DC *	---	Jun TBD	Washington, DC**
Aug 23	Seattle, WA	---	Jul 31	Oklahoma City, OK
Sep 20	St. Louis, MO	---	Aug 28	Denver, CO
Oct 18	Jacksonville, FL	---	Sep 25	Hartford, CT
Nov 22	Phoenix, AZ	---	Oct 23	Portland, OR
		---	Nov 20	Orlando, FL

* - Family updates held in conjunction with the annual government briefings

* - The Korean and Cold War Annual Government Briefings
** - The Southeast Asia Annual Government Briefing held in conjunction with the National League of Families' Annual Meeting

Missing Personnel Office (POW-MIA) web-site: <http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/index.html>

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FINAL INSPECTION

The soldier stood and faced God
Which must always come to pass

He hoped his shoes were shining
Just as brightly as his brass.

"Step forward now, you soldier,
How shall I deal with you?
Have you always turned the other cheek?
To My Church have you been true?"

The soldier squared his shoulders and said,
"No, Lord, I guess I ain't
Because those of us who carry guns
Can't always be a saint.

I've had to work most Sundays
And at times my talk was tough,
And sometimes I've been violent,
Because the world is awfully rough.

But, I never took a penny
That wasn't mine to keep...
Though I worked a lot of overtime
When the bills got just too steep,

And I never passed a cry for help,
Though at times I shook with fear,
And sometimes, God forgive me,
I've wept unmanly tears.

I know I don't deserve a place
Among the people here,
They never wanted me around
Except to calm their fears.

If you've a place for me here, Lord,
It needn't be so grand,
I never expected or had too much,
But if you don't, I'll understand."

There was a silence all around the throne
Where the saints had often trod
As the soldier waited quietly,
For the judgment of his God,

Step forward now, you soldier,
You've borne your burdens well,
Walk peacefully on Heaven's streets,
You've done your time in Hell.

~~Unknown~~

THE JOURNEY DOESN'T STOP IN D.C.

By Fred Pepper – "PatoPato"

Most of you know me as 'Pato'. I was asked to write something about one of my experiences from the Runs I have been on. The one I have picked is from the year 2000.

It starts like this: I showed up in Los Angeles a few days before the Run so I could get the Barbarian Bitch ready for the journey I was to undertake. I had planned for a seven-month tour of the country. I was introduced to one of the regulars who told me where to meet before we left for Ontario; the vet was Fingers. For some reason, we have connected and become good friends as a result. Anyway, at 4:00am that morning, we were to meet at a gas station. Fingers, being the shy guy he is, came blasting down the road to be followed by the local authorities. By rights, we should have gone to jail, but cooler heads prevailed and my buddy Fingers has never let me forget how much he loves getting into mischief. The Run was great and I taught everyone how to ride from LA to DC in shorts the Island Way. It was one of those great years, where the weather didn't bother us and it was hotter than hot.

I then took off after DC and headed south to places I never even knew existed. After two months of cruising around the southern states, I headed towards the central states and a brief visit with relatives in Fort Collins, Co. I left Fort Collins for Sturgis, SD. I was on my way to hook up with the Northern Reunion of RFTW. After loosing my maps, I ended up at the library in Rapid City. I ended up going on line to the RFTW web site to find Papa Smurf and Squirell's phone number. They could not believe how I finally found them. That started the adventure that I am going to relate to you all. After going to their home outside of town, I was introduced to a few vets who have been coming into town early for the reunion and of course, The Sturgis 60th Anniversary. I was taken under-wing by everyone.

Two days later we took off out of Rapid City for the Bad Lands and Rose Bud Indian Reservation. The trip was great, as I actually felt like one of the outlaws hightailing it into the badlands to hide out. Yup! An over active imagination. Well, Beanie the Native American Indian Rep, took us to the Reservation for a purification Pow Wow. It is where all the tribes under the guidance of Chief Crow Dog, have the ceremonies to help those purify their bodies and souls from the evils of what life has to offer. We were taken in as honored guests for the day's events. It was truly a spiritual and learning process for me; the healing I achieved from there is unbelievable. People were dancing around dragging all sorts of items that were tied to a leather strap that was attached to their skin via a skin cutting ritual. The people then moved around for many hours this way, as if they were in some sort of a trance. Just totally unbelievable! We were then invited into the inner circle to view and participate if we chose to, full of piercings and tattoos, I still declined. I suppose I am still a woose at heart. Children, women, old people, everyone from all walks of life, were doing this. It was truly an emotional thing for me to be a part of this. Towards the end of the day, Chief Crow Dog held a special ceremony for all the Veterans present from all Wars. They then told of a story of finding ashes from a plane crash in Laos, which were given to us to take to The Wall. This was done this past year. That ceremony just brought the whole day at Rose Bud into perspective. After the ceremony for the Veteran, we were taken to Chief Crow Dog's special camp area and were given food and blankets, medicine bags and sweet grass, for our continued journey's safe passage. We then were treated to a night a Beanie's home and doing the local casino for dinner and some fun. I cannot believe how big the sky and all the stars were way out in the middle of South Dakota.

Upon returning to Rapid City, more vets were arriving at Casa Whiting. We were treated to runs all over the area, and having Papa Smurf and Squirrel to show us around the entire time was just mind boggling. I met the old timers from the first couple of Runs, and of course the Wanderer Andy D from Australia was touring the US for two years, he did manage to keep us all in tears. Squirrel's meals were adventures in themselves. Some friendly advice; don't ask what's under her apron.

Another one of the vets there was Toy Man....a guy from Michigan, who had his bike all fixed up with computer and internet and cell phones and faxes. Every day we all watched as Toy Man did his thing. Just amazing! Then there was the ole man Rod, from Colorado Springs area, who had an on- going love/hate relationship with the local turkey. Poor guy always got bested by that buzzard. Unfortunately, I understand the Turkey has gone to its final resting place.

At the end of the 10 days I spent there, it was very hard to leave and say my good byes. Twice in a few months is a tough thing to do. But the up side of all of this, is that every year I go, the Run gets better and better. I will do the Northern Reunion again, I promise. From there I headed back out west and finished up my journey in early November. I still have not gone to the Southern Reunion but that, too, will happen.

This is just one of my experiences from the Run. I am certain I could probably write a whole book on the past five years, like the rest of you who have done the Runs, you have had your experiences. I will end here with the hopes that you all will be in Ontario in May 2004 for the start of the next Run For The Wall. By-the-by, 2004 is supposed to be a special one, as I understand that they will be dedicating the World War II Memorial, along with all of us vocal people, who keep the memories alive by NEVER FORGETTING!

ALOHA FROM HERE TO THERE....NEVER FORGET....cya....patopato

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A SON RETURNS FROM IRAQ

by Rev. Jerry Peters

Greetings to all RFTW supporters. Once again we had a great run and were able to show our love and concern for those men and women that have served our great nation.

As a disabled veteran I have always been especially proud of those who serve. However, this year was much different for me. You see, as I traveled on the run this year, my 19 year old son was serving with Army SOC in Iraq. This not only made me very proud, but created great concern for me and my family.

During the run I shared this concern with many of the other riders. They would grab me in a show of support and share their heart felt concern. Each time this happened I would share about the faith and trust that I have in God to protect my son in any situation. (Although I must admit, I would feel better standing next to him with a rifle and a knife. I know I could protect him, too. Hoorah!)

I remembered earlier this year sending him off to war with a scripture from Psalms 91. The Bible states in this passage: "though a thousand fall at my side and ten thousand at my right hand, no harm will befall me. Because I have made the Lord God, my God". It goes on to say in that passage: "That God will command His angels to protect me so that I will not even dash my foot against a stone".

What an awesome God, who loves us so much that He has promised to care for us in any situation. Our family believes in God's promise. However, in July we had to live by that faith.

You see, on July 14th 2003 our son's six man team was ambushed by the enemy. As they were on a recon patrol they came upon a small truck with three men in the back. As they approached the vehicle the men jumped out and ran. At the same moment they command detonated a large bomb that lifted Joshua's humvee completely off the ground. The small pick-up exploded and the two halves of the vehicle flew nearly 100 feet in different directions. Consequently, the three men had not anticipated the effect of the explosion and they went to pieces all over the road (say hello to allah guys).

During the incident Joshua was severely wounded from shrapnel in his left foot and right leg. One piece severed an artery in his left foot and caused severe bleeding. His buddy bandaged the wound as Joshua took up a defensive position in case of further attack. Upon seeing the severity of the injury the First Sergeant ordered the driver to evacuate the area. (Thank God the humvee was still operational).

One other soldier was injured in the finger but Joshua's injury required immediate evacuation. Just one problem...the team was 45 minutes in either direction from assistance and their radio's were out of effective range (imagine that). The driver took off as ordered Joshua reached a medivac chopper 45 minutes later. Now, we all know that arterial bleeds can take your life in as little as four or five minutes. Yet, 45 minutes later Joshua was still alive (that is God's protection).

So what is the "Paul Harvey" on this story? Well, Joshua is in Ft. Bragg looking at a year of rehab to learn how to walk again. He has permanent nerve damage to his foot, but his right leg has healed. He has endured three surgeries to date and may need a few more in the future. But thanks to God he is alive and his spirits are very high. Joshua's team Captain called me from Iraq and said that he could not believe this kid was only 19 years old. He stated that the many times their team came under fire Joshua never hesitated to react properly to protect the team and that he never showed anxiety or fear. He said Josh always kept everybody in stitches with his jokes and fun attitude. Even when the team loaded Josh on the chopper and the Capt. was hurting over Josh's injuries, Josh just looked at him, smiled and said "hey captain...this is my first real helicopter ride".

I don't have to tell any of you that I am so proud of my boy. So thankful that God spared his life and so grateful to the men that were there to help him during this ordeal. I give all praise, honor and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ who comforts us in all of our afflictions, if we just go to Him and trust Him with our lives.

Thank you to all that have served this great Country. Thank you to those who support the efforts of our veterans. And finally, thank you to everyone who has held us up in your prayers during these difficult times.

May God continue to bless each of you and your families. Remember, God always desires to draw us closer to Him as He awaits our commitment with open arms.

I hope to see you again next year! Hopefully, Josh can ride with us by then.

Jerry is a traveling minister and is director of Integrity Ministries, a non-profit interdenominational organization that provides encouragement to others through their evangelistic and ministry efforts. Jerry is a disabled United States Marshal and was first invited on the RFTW by Mark and MaryAnn Rittermeyer. You can contact Jerry for prayer or speaking engagements in the following manner.

Toll free: 1-888-653-8397

E-mail: Jay@Integrityministry.org

or visit his website at: www.Integrityministry.org

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VA SEEKS FORMER POWS FOR POSSIBLE BENEFITS

WASHINGTON (Sept. 19, 2003) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is asking former prisoners of war not currently using VA benefits to contact VA to find out if they may be eligible for disability compensation and other services.

More than 23,000 former prisoners of war (POWs) already receive compensation from VA. This year, the department mailed information about benefits to another 4,700 known ex-POWs not on its rolls. However, VA estimates there could be as many as 11,000 more POWs for whom it does not have an address.

Today, on National POW-MIA Recognition Day, VA is asking former POWs not receiving benefits who did not receive a VA letter recently to call the department at 1-800-827-1000.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi said VA has expanded policies to cover increasing numbers of former POWs as new illnesses have been found related to captivity. The administration currently is pressing to get even more compensation and medical care benefits for former POWs.

"These veterans sacrificed for their country in time of war, and it's the nation's turn to serve them, to help them determine if they are entitled to compensation, health care or other services," Principi said. Nine out of ten former POWs are veterans of World War II, and their service predates the use of Social Security numbers as a military "service number." That, coupled with the decades that have elapsed since their service, makes it difficult for VA to track down those who have not opened a file with VA in recent years.

"On this POW-MIA Recognition Day, VA is asking veterans and all Americans who know of a former POW to help spread the word that benefits and services may be just a phone call away," Principi said.

The most recent expansion of VA benefits for former POWs was a July regulation that added cirrhosis of the liver to the list of diseases to which entitlement to disability compensation is presumed in former POWs.

Similar policies making it easier for former POWs to obtain compensation have been enacted for POWs detained for 30 days or more who develop specific illnesses.

Former POWs have a special eligibility for enrollment in VA medical care and are exempt from making co-payments for inpatient and outpatient medical care. They have the same copy rules as other veterans for medications and for extended care. Free dental treatment for any dental condition is available to former POWs held for more than 90 days.

More information about VA services for former POWs is available at: <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Benefits/POW/>.

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POW/MIA UNIT ACTIVATION AND REPATRIATION CEREMONY

Oct. 1, 2003

CAMP H.M. SMITH & HICKAM AFB, HAWAII - The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) will activate on Wednesday, Oct. 1, in a ceremony at 9 a.m. on Camp Smith. JPAC will also conduct its first remains repatriation ceremony at 1 p.m. on Hickam Air Force Base.

Army Brig. Gen. W. Montague "Que" Winfield will assume command of the new Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command in a ceremony at the new Nimitz/MacArthur Pacific Command Center on Camp Smith. After the activation ceremony, POW/MIA mission experts will be on hand with displays to discuss their areas of expertise with guests.

The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command consists of 425 joint military and Department of the Navy civilian personnel and is headquartered on Oahu. The new command both absorbs and replaces the U.S. Army's Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CILHI), established in May 1976, and Joint Task Force-Full Accounting, established in January 1992. The decision to merge resulted from extensive studies to determine feasibility and the benefit of operational improvements. JPAC will serve as the operational nucleus to coordinate all U.S. POW/MIA investigation and recovery efforts.

The repatriation ceremony will take place in Hangar 35. Remains believed to be those of American servicemen unaccounted for from the Vietnam War will arrive home to American soil. A joint service honor guard will commemorate their arrival. Following the arrival ceremony, the remains will be transported to the JPAC's Central Identification Laboratory where the forensic identification process will begin.

Today, there is one American still missing from the Gulf War, more than 1,800 from the Vietnam War, 120 from the Cold War, more than 8,100 from the Korean War, and more than 78,000 from World War II.

The U.S. Government, the Department of Defense and the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command remain committed to scientific excellence and the fullest possible accounting of all Americans still missing or unaccounted for in defense of this great country. JPAC will continue to fulfill our nation's promise to the POW/MIA families and those Americans still waiting to come home. "Until there are none."

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THE OLD UNIT

Contributed by Skywalker

Ah yes, the dudes in the old unit. I remember some but not all. Some with faces but no names and some with names but no faces. Then again there are those whose faces and names are forever etched upon your mind, heart and soul.

Like as not, they were your closest of friends. Having shared with you the special brotherhood of being part of such an elite unit. You worked, ate and played together. You shared your innermost feelings with each other and relished in your triumphs together. Together there were no obstacles too obtrusive; there were no dragons that could not be slain.

Then the dragon came. And it had no face. And it had no name. It was altogether more terrifying than anything you had ever encountered. And it left your close friends and brothers horribly maimed, mutilated and dead all about you. Then with blood still dripping from its wretched claws it reached in and ripped a gigantic hole in your heart and soul.

And after our roles played out in this tragedy of tragedies we each went our various ways to try to heal. To heal not only the wounds of our bodies but also the gaping wounds in our hearts and souls. All these thirty years or more hence we tried to mend ourselves but guilt and shame and anger and contempt and an entire plethora of other emotional stumbling blocks were there to hinder our convalescing.

And although we each gave our solemn oath to forever keep in touch it was a promise we knew would not be fulfilled. Isolation and alienation and quite often drugs of any and all kinds were used to lessen the pain and anxiety of remembering

So we stayed apart these many years and each on his own did the best they could. And yes, some names have faded and some faces have faded but never, NOT EVER the brotherhood we all share.

Whether clear in my mind or faded over time I love all those faces and names of the dudes in the old unit and I have an everlasting respect and brotherhood for any and all who have come face to face with the dragon beast called "COMBAT".

written by:

Michael Bradshaw, Sgt. E-5

E Co.- Recon, 1st/501st Inf., 101st Airborne Div.

I Corps, RVN 1967-1968

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THE ROLLING GUARD

The Rolling Guard is a non-profit organization that's purpose is to raise awareness of the still unaccounted for MIAs from each state.

We are currently recruiting members nationwide for the Run for the Wall 2004. Each member should have a bike/trike or vehicle of any type that can participate in the Run for the Wall and have the MIAs names from either their Town/County/State listed in some way on the vehicle.

Temporary signs or vinyl stickers are fine. Our ultimate goal is to have all MIAs from Vietnam represented in the Run.

Contact Information:

Rolling Guard
c/o Daemien "Deacon" O'Keeffe
10801 St. Xavier Ln.
St. Ann, MO. 63074
e-mail: rollingguard@aol.com

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WALK ACROSS THE USA

Hi! My name is Ginger Mohlie and I am presently involved in planning a 3000 mile walk to raise money for the families of the troops who made the ultimate sacrifice in the post 9/11 wars on terrorism. In finding the best military charity willing to meet our criteria of 100% allocation of funds (or the closest to 100%) to the families who lost their soldier, neediest first, I believe we have found the perfect beneficiary in the "Patriot's Fund".

I have a tentative route in place which is still preliminary and will likely be revised as I get more information regarding places to stop, weather and terrain conditions, etc. The planned route will go through the following states: Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia (NW area near Atlanta), Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, and California. Since the trek begins in September, this route will be more conducive to climate comfortable walking. I hope to be in or a little passed Little Rock, by Christmas.

Most of the walkers will most likely be ordinary people like myself, just housewives who have recently become empty nesters, or retirees, but our common link is that we want to DO something to give back to the people who gave their lives for us. And if walking across the USA can help them then we will gladly do it.

The planning for this event is still in the early stages, but the momentum has been wonderful. I predict it will be a smashing success.

I am an artist btw, in Richmond, VA (www.artplaces.com/ginger) if you would like to know me a little bit better. And I will be painting murals on the RV so that everywhere we go people will know what's going on and how to contribute.

I would love to get any kind of feedback from you that you think might be helpful.

Thank you for your time and for your dedication to the needs of our brave troops.

Please contact me if you are interested in participating or helping in any way.

Ginger Mohlie
804 379-6608
email: USAWalkingTrek@aol.com

Walk Across the USA
September 2004-September 2005
Richmond, VA to San Francisco, CA

"Those who say it cannot be done should not interrupt those who are doing it" (Confucius)

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THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL COLLECTION

<http://www.nps.gov/mrc/indexvvm.htm>

Who would have thought of the general public as curators of a major museum collection -- curators whose job is to choose objects which will be placed in a collection that will be preserved and interpreted for perpetuity. This is exactly what has happened at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial where objects have been left by the public. Most museum objects are collected because they relate to a special event, person, or natural wonder. The museum curator selects these specific objects to tell a story. However, in this case, it is the public who collects and leaves the objects left at the Wall. These objects reflect the experiences of over 25 million visitors who each have an individual reason or story that goes with the objects that are represented in this collection. While these objects may have a central theme of the Vietnam War or Generation, the power of the Memorial and the individual stories behind these objects is really the focus of this collection.

The National Park Service certainly never thought of starting a collection when it entered into an agreement with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, who were going to build a memorial to those who had served in Vietnam and those who made the ultimate sacrifice. At that time, we were concerned only with receiving a memorial that was to heal the wounds, suffered during the Vietnam era, of the Nation and its individuals whether they were pro-war or anti-war.

But as we know, this is exactly what happened. The public began leaving "things" at the Memorial which later became known as memorabilia. These "things" that are left by the public do not fit the standard definition of an artifact or historical objects which are terms used to describe something over 50 years old. But whether they fit the definition or not, this was the start of one of the most unique and interesting museum collections that the National Park Service would deal with in the 1980's and 1990' s.

The phenomena of leaving "things" was reported to have started when someone dropped a purple heart in the concrete as the wall on which the panels would be mounted was being poured. It continued throughout the first two years of construction and by the time the Memorial was turned over to the National Park Service on November 11, 1984, leaving objects at the Memorial had gained momentum. Many of these objects were picked up by the public, but others were collected by the maintenance and ranger staff. Media attention to this phenomena focused our thoughts on how to deal with these "things". We decided to develop them as a museum collection.

The first group of memorabilia numbered 554 objects and included objects left during the first two years. The most recent count is over 50,000 objects. Since 1984, we have continued to set museum precedent for modern documentary collections while deciding what to do with these "things" that the public was leaving. Our first step was to decide under what category of accountability these objects would be placed, the regular property system or the museum property system. We chose to take them into the museum property system.

After several years of studying different ways to handle this collection, we arrived at a solution. Objects are collected and inventoried each night by Park Rangers who work for National Capital Parks-Central. This is the park that oversees the National Mall as well as the monuments and memorials in the Washington, D.C. area.

The objects picked up are then treated as part of a historic collection, and are cataloged and placed in storage, as if they were extremely old and valuable. One of the first news shows that dealt with this collection in detail was Ted Koppel and Nightline. On Memorial Day, 1986, Mr. Koppel filmed a documentary about these common everyday objects being treated as part of a museum collection. Indeed, he was seen on television picking up cans of C-rations and army issue toilet paper while wearing curator's white gloves. He was able to convey the message about why "people leave things at the Wall" and the effect the Memorial has on the American Public. Even after all these years, it continues to be the Memorial which is the focus of the story, for if it had never been built, there would be no place to leave the objects that make up this collection.

In order to better understand this collection, we ask ourselves many questions such as why is the Wall so powerful and what makes people bring things and leave them? The public brings not only the customary things that are left at other War Memorials such as flowers and flags, but objects that are traditionally handed down from generation to generation such as medals, uniforms, dog tags and other military-related material of war.

They also leave letters, photographs, plaques and other similar items that have been purposely prepared with the intent to leave them at the Wall.

The Wall has a power that is felt differently by each visitor who comes to the Memorial. The same questions continue to be asked. Why does it compel people to come and leave things? Why are some left spontaneously and others prepared at home, brought to Washington, or in many cases sent to Washington with someone who happens to be going to the Memorial? Why do some people bring things to leave and then find themselves unable to do so? Why do people come to visit in the middle of the night and why are there people who to this day, 14 years later, still cannot bring themselves to visit the Memorial?

In the beginning, people did not know that the National Park Service would save this material, but they left it anyway. Mothers and fathers left teddy bears and favorite pictures of their children. They left birthday cards, Christmas trees, letters, and poems to their loved ones who were lost in this war. Wives, husbands, children, comrades, friends, fiancées and total strangers leave "things" at the Wall to either commemorate or denounce the effect this war had on the nation. Objects have been left by individuals from foreign countries as well as from our own citizens who now use the Memorial to register their protest against many current social and political issues. While these objects are not usually Vietnam related, they are kept in the collection as part of the offerings left at the Memorial. A wall to which people feel drawn and a wall which is used to express their thoughts.

In October 1992, an exhibit opened at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, that put these objects on view to the public for the first time. The exhibit is extremely popular and has been extended indefinitely. There are over 1,500 objects on display with many of them service related such as military patches, dog tags, and service bars. Other objects are things of a more personal nature such as photographs, letters and teddy bears. We have tried to include objects that are representative of the different types of objects that are now part of the collection. It is our hope that this exhibit will also be able to share with the public the depth of this collection and the effect that the Memorial has had on the world. As with the objects left at the Memorial, every visitor to this exhibit will bring their own experiences with them. These unique experiences will recreate a similar effect that the Memorial has had on its visitors.

Pamela Beth West
Director
Museum Resource Center

If you know anything about an object left at the Memorial and you wish to share that information with us, you can send us the information at www.nps.gov/mrc/vvmv/vvmcform.htm . By sending us this information, you will help

improve the documentation of the collection for future generations.

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