



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" ...April 2004

Quarterly Newsletter
" We Ride For Those Who Can't "
April 2004

Inside this issue:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• RUN FOR THE WALL• THE RUN IS UPON US AGAIN!!!• THE ROAD GUARD• ROAD GUARD RULES• PTSD....a Continuation, OUR JOURNEY WITH BROTHERS• GETTING READY FOR "RUN FOR THE WALL"• WE WERE SOLDIERS• BRINGING A BROTHER HOME• KEEPING THE PROMISE• VERIFY YOUR D.C. RESERVATIONS• DISTRIBUTION OF A 'HEALING' BOOK• THE "UNKNOWN SOLDIER" GUARDS | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A LIVING MEMORIAL FOR DR. VICTOR WESTPHALL• GOLD STAR MOTHERS• POW/MIA UPDATE• CALLING ALL PAST ROUTE COORDINATORS• LINDA STIMMELL RIDES WITH RFTW• WALL TO WALL VII• THE VIETNAM WAR IN-MEMORY PLAQUE AT THE WALL• JULY FOURTH• AGENT ORANGE• RFTW MERCHANDISE• MISSION TO BUILD A TRIKE• WOUNDED OF IRAQ |
|--|---|

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER - APRIL 2004
We Ride for Those Who Can't

[top of page](#)

RUN FOR THE WALL

By Richard I. Crane (Old Navy Vet)

Once a year we heed the call,
Once again it's time to ride,
To visit names upon The Wall,
Black stone reflects our country's pride.

To honor all, we all agree,
We ride from coast to coast,

For those who died to keep us free,
For those who live, we cherish most.

Prisoners wait and count the years,
Our missing sleep alone.
Who chares their pain, who shares their fears,
They should be here, they should be home.

Come all of you who fear their fate,
Come join us on this Ride.
Let's set the hour, let's set the date,
Let's ride once more, ride side by side.

[top of page](#)

THE RUN IS UPON US AGAIN!!!

By Mark "Straightarrow" Rittermeyer
Central Route Coordinator

As you read this article you are about 30 days (or less) from our departure in Ontario. Our mission for the 16th year will be in full swing, and we will be telling the story to countless Americans who have never heard it. We will be assisting in a healing that is 30 plus years overdue for some, and we will be rejoicing with family we haven't seen in a year or more. If you are a VETERAN, THANK YOU and WELCOME HOME! If you are an FNG, WELCOME to the Run! To the rest of you Family and Friends, THANK YOU for coming back.

I would like to share some very important information with all of you before you begin the Run. First of all remember that this is a MISSION, not a party. We are riding for those who can't. We want to make sure that every rider gets to the destination safely, and that those that need healing receive it.

There are a few simple rules that will assist all of us in making this happen. First of all, remember there are many FNG's with us and we need to assist them as often as we can. Secondly, we have Road Guards (those wearing the yellow arm bands) who will be putting themselves in harms way to make sure we all get to DC safely. Please obey without question their instructions. They know what they are doing, and have our best interest, and safety at heart. Next, remember that the riding order is bikes (two wheeled), followed by trikes, sidecars, and bikes with trailers, then our last man vehicle will fall in behind them. We will be placing Pace Setters in the pack about every 30 sets of bikes for added safety. Be sure when you register to get a hand book, this will give you all the up dated Run information, as well as the hand signals.

Every morning we will have a riders briefing that will be MANDATORY for ALL riders. We expect to see you there, as important new information will be given out as needed.

Gas stops are another thing you need to understand. Before you leave home, supply your wallet with \$5 bills and \$1 bills. When you pull up to the pump (side by side) have your money(cash) ready, as we will be filling up and going to staging as rapidly and as safely as possible. Do not shut off a pump unless you are the last to fill up. At most pumps there will be someone to assist you. We round UP to the next dollar, pay and move on to staging. Follow the Road Guards, as they will direct you to staging, then you can use the facilities, and or purchase any needed items. There will be a credit island for those who will be paying with plastic. Watch for the Road Guards directing you to the credit pump.

For those of you who are friends of Bill W. ,meetings are coordinated throughout the Run. Be sure to find out who the Bill W. coordinator is within your Route group. There is great strength and help in this area among the RFTW group.

There is an emergency phone number (928-978-1990) for Central Route, that can be used if needed, it will be available from 7 A.M. May 19th until 7A.M. May 29th. The emergency number for Southern Route is 928-978-1986.

We will be sharing much more information with you as you register, and at morning briefings. Please feel free to take any question to the Route Coordinator, or the Run Staff including any Road Guard for assistance, as we are here to serve you.

[top of page](#)

THE ROAD GUARD

By Joe "Firefly" Cappel

ROAD GUARDS: insanity on two wheels or guardian angels in black? Perhaps it is a blend of both. This is an introduction to the functions of a Road Guard in relation to RFTW. It is hazardous duty to say the least, which is why only the very experienced need apply. It is necessary to be riding solo while on duty as well as have two years experience riding with RFTW, although not necessarily all the way. One cannot assimilate the myriad of experiences encountered on RFTW if he is working hard as a Road Guard and the type of formation riding that is necessary may not have been done before as well.

A Road Guard's duties are similar to those performed by a funeral procession escort with many side jobs thrown in. First and foremost, the R/G must try to the best of his ability to get the pack safely from point A to point B. This entails knowing the route before hand, directing traffic and constantly monitoring the pack for safety issues such as rider positioning in the pack, erratic behavior, items in danger of falling off bikes, open saddlebags, mechanical problems that the rider is unaware of, etc. Limited instruction must be given to those who need help in learning to ride formation properly. Road Guards will also give the O.K. to newer riders at the rear of the pack who have become competent to move up to the main body and likewise relegate someone to the rear who needs their skills honed for a time.

Often they might have to run traffic breaks on the freeway or get the pack around a slow moving vehicle in such a way so as not to impede the progress of that vehicle. Since it is imperative to travel as an unbroken pack at all times, the Road Guard must control the traffic at all intersections that might pose a threat to the group's safety. This may require working closely with the local Police escorts. Often the Police will block a busy intersection with his vehicle and a Road Guard will take over for him as he moves up to block the next one. This is called "leap-frogging". Since time is of the essence in these situations, what appears as "maniacal" riding by the Road Guard will ensue. They will also clear a lane of traffic on the freeway so the pack can merge safely up the onramp. They will position themselves to point the way whenever a change in direction occurs to prevent stragglers from getting lost. Anywhere from ten to fifteen miles prior to a destination exit, the Road Guards will break away from the pack en masse and rush to the proper exit to set up traffic control, take command of the gas pumps to be used and set up the staging area. This breakaway time usually only gives them a maximum of five minutes to get set up.

Needless to say, the Road Guard must be constantly briefed as to where the group is going next; route changes, escorts to work with, etc. A "forward observer" might even be sent out occasionally if there may be suspicion of something ahead that might cause a possible rerouting or time delay. Of course, they cannot be afraid to ride faster than the pack, even in horrible weather conditions.

They must be polite and tactful. Many people come on the run to do a difficult thing for themselves. They need to be given respect and consideration. Sometimes an upset cage driver will be encountered when he is being held up for a few minutes while the pack passes. The Road Guard must work to calm him down, explain the mission, maybe even give him a mission statement and a pin. It usually works.

Road Guards must stay in communications with one another, either visually or by radio, including the ride leader and

the chase vehicles. It is not the intent to leave anyone behind or not to obtain help for an injured rider.

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

[top of page](#)

ROAD GUARD RULES

1. Must have ridden with RFTW for at least two years, not necessarily all the way.
2. No two-up riding while on duty.
3. Conduct yourselves in a professional, calm and rational manner at all times. Treat all members of RFTW with respect.
4. Be prompt for all briefings.
5. Carry out the instructions of the Captain.
6. Do not take undue risks.
7. Remain approachable and willing to assist in problem solving, even if off-duty.
8. Be versatile, use initiative and common sense.
9. Keep Captain and/or staff informed of situations that need addressing.
10. Always keep two road guards together when behind chase vehicles.
11. Remain constantly aware of both the pack and the traffic you are directing.
12. Use uniform hand signals.
13. Keep four-way flashers on while moving up through the pack, while working slow-moving vehicles and while directing traffic.
14. Turn off four-ways when in "home" position.
15. When working slow-moving vehicles, position yourself no closer than 100 feet in front of it.
16. While your traffic is stopped and it is safe to do so, use the opportunity to give someone a mission statement.
17. Thank those you have detained or caused to alter their course with a wave or verbally.
18. Meet your escorts and let them know how much we appreciate them and how we are willing to assist them in any way.
19. If someone needs to be watched, inform the other guards so a consensus of opinion can be formed.
20. If you can work with a willing subject to make them a safer or better rider, do so.
21. If someone needs to be "educated", do it tactfully and in private at one of the stops.
22. Give a "thumbs-up" or a verbal "atta-boy" to those who are doing well.
23. Road Guards shall not wear any other "colors" while on duty.
24. Have a good time, laugh often and don't be afraid to cry when the urge strikes.

Pray daily for our safety and for those whom we are serving.

Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming: "Wow....what a ride"!!!

[top of page](#)

PTSD....a Continuation

OUR JOURNEY WITH BROTHERS

By Mel Khal

We are approaching that time to journey east with a number of friends, strangers and brothers, in a large social surrounding. To many it's a struggle of coping; feelings of dissociation bubble within as our expedition makes its passage. For others, it reflects joy and a place to be during a very important mission, relieving and healing. In general most of us experience some sort of anxiety when such an undertaking lies ahead.

You're not alone in your voyage, that's for sure, neither in numbers nor emotions. Depending on how we process it and how well we manage our intruding thoughts, there lays the determining factor in our level of fulfillment. Then what can you expect?

A pleasant journey, if your mind has processed its distress, a clear weather voyage lies ahead to those who desire managed memories. You can expect that unprocessed trauma material will continue to intrude until it makes sense, until you have processed it so it becomes a settled long-term memory. Dissociation prevents healing. In numbing out the painful memories we also lose pleasant ones and feelings of more enjoyable moments. Remember that the next time you're reminiscing the past.

One of our readers wrote me asking about "Views of Others" to those trauma-affected individuals, in general and in the work-place. My response is that once trauma has made its mark, things are viewed in a different light from within, and in doing so portrays a different examination by others.

For example:

Pre-PTSD:

People are good, trustworthy, and comprehensible, worth connecting with.

Post-PTSD:

People can't be trusted anymore, they're all bad, everyone wants to exploit me and wants to hurt me, I feel alienated and isolated, and no one understands what I've gone through.

If we understand ourselves better we can understand others.

Have a safe journey brother,
Mel Kahl (melkahl@columnist.com)

[top of page](#)

GETTING READY FOR "RUN FOR THE WALL"

By Keith "Gator" Midkiff

This will be my sixth year to participate in RFTW. Although I have thoughts on a daily basis for RFTW, it's the last couple of months that really get me excited. Why? One simple word: "FAMILY". Over the past five years I have made so many friends that have become part of my family. I only get to see a lot of these family members once a year and it means so much to greet each other with a big hug.

Last year's RFTW was not a good one for me. I guess the weather and other things had me down and I had decided to skip this year. RIGHT!!! I have told numerous FNG's who care to join us in the chat room that once you participate in RFTW....your life will be changed. So I said to myself, "Keith, practice what you preach." Getting ready is not just about making sure the bike is serviced, packing the bag or making sure of your reservations. It's the excitement of seeing my family members again and making new family members. It's watching the healing process work its magic on so many brothers and sisters. It's the hugs, tears and love from strangers who become a member of my family. Who will join my family this year?? I love you all and welcome you to my family.....See you in Salina!
REMEMBER WHY WE RIDE

WE WERE SOLDIERS

That's the way it is, that's what we were.

We put it simply, without swagger, without brag, in those three plain words.

We speak them softly, just to ourselves, just for ourselves.

Speak those three words anywhere in the world, and many who hear will recognize their meaning.

Listen, and you can hear voices echoing through them: "I solemnly swear to protect and defend."

Other words that sprang white-hot from bloody lips, shouts of "Medic," whispers of "Oh God,"

Forceful words of "Follow Me," and "What's the matter, soldier, you want to live forever?"

Laughing words, and words as cold as January ice, words that when spoken, were meant.

The echoes of "We Were Soldiers."

If you can't hear those echoes, you weren't; if you can, you were.

You can hear the cadences of Gettysburg, or Arlington honoring not a man, but a Soldier, perhaps forgotten by his nation, but not by his Brothers.

You can hear those echoes as you walk your post, go to "The Wall," visit a VA hospital, hear the mournful sounds of Taps, or gaze upon the white crosses, row upon row.

But they aren't just words; they're a way of life, a pattern of living, or a way of dying.

They gave you the right to hope, to dream, to pray; the obligation to serve.

These are some of the meanings of those three words, meanings we don't tally, or even list.

Only in the stillness of a moonless night, or the quiet of a Sunday afternoon, or in the thin dawn of a new day, when our world is close about us, do they rise up in memories and stir in our sentient hearts.

And, we are remembering Anzio, Normandy, The Bulge, Wake Island, Iwo Jima and Inchon, Chosin, Pork Chop and Heartbreak Ridge, and Chu Lai, Tet and the Triangle, and many other places long forgotten by our civilian friends.

They're plain words, simple words.

You could carve them on stone; or you could carve them on the mountain ranges.

You could sing them to the tune of "Yankee Doodle."

But you needn't. You needn't do any of those things, for those words are graven in the hearts of Veterans, they are familiar to 24,000,000 tongues, every sound, every syllable.

If you must write them, put them on my Stone.

But when you speak them, speak them softly, proudly, and we will hear you, for "We were Soldiers."

~author unknown~

BRINGING A BROTHER HOME

By Danny "Big Daddy" Calhoun

On Saturday March 30th, I attended the funeral services for SSG. Larry Gene Kier, a US Soldier killed in action while serving our country. The services were held in his home town of Owingsville, Kentucky.

The scene is one we have seen far too often, one we will never get used to, one which rips at our hearts, automatically brings tears to our eyes, and brings back memories long forgotten, but always a part of us. A scene which brings a terrible sense of loss, as we say goodbye to one of our nation's finest.

A young serviceman has died in a country far from home, serving the country he loved so much, sacrificing his life so that others may live in peace.

This young man is being returned home to be buried with honors reserved for our nation's true heroes. Final honors to say thank you by a grateful nation as this young soldier is laid to rest, to finally find peace, in the soil of the country he fought and died for. He will always remain 20 years old in the hearts, souls and memories of those who knew and loved him and those who respect and honor his service and supreme sacrifice.

But those present soon realized that this service was different. For on this day the quiet streets of Owingsville are suddenly filled with the awesome sound of thunder. A sound which overwhelms all else. The sound is coming from a group of over a hundred motorcycles, "ROLLING THUNDER." Each of these motorcycles is proudly displaying an American Flag and POW/MIA Flag. The license plates on these motorcycles reveal they are from several different states and almost all counties in Kentucky. Each of these motorcycles is ridden by a man or woman with a combined look of respect, reflection, pride, honor and loss on their faces, mixed with the tears flowing from their eyes.

These dedicated men and women of Rolling Thunder, and other groups, many of whom rode hundreds of miles to be there, are there on a shared mission. The most noble of missions; to "bring a brother home." A "brother" who died doing a job he believed in, in a place called Vietnam, almost 32 years ago. The group all shares the same thought, "Never Forget." It makes no difference that none of them had ever met him.

On May 6, 1970, SSG. Larry Gene Kier was killed in action, in Vietnam. His body was not recovered. He was listed as Missing In Action for over 30 years, until a search team finally located his remains. A search team that was there because of groups like Rolling Thunder, and others, who have dedicated themselves to demanding an accounting of all those listed as MIA, in not only Vietnam, but the more than 92,000 of our servicemen and women, still missing since WW I.

These groups share in the mission of seeing that these 92,000 missing be afforded the honor of being returned to their country where their friends, families and loved ones can know they are finally at peace and, if possible, finally find some sense of closure for their loss.

These dedicated people will continue to attend services for their missing "brothers." They will continue to demand an accounting for those still missing. They will continue to educate anyone who will listen. They will continue their mission until they are gone, then others who care will replace them.

As I stood at the final resting place of my "brother" my heart filled with my private thoughts and memories of other brothers lost. I was so proud of being a small part of this very special group of people, so proud to share in their mission. I re-dedicated myself to their cause.

As the service ended and the air filled with the haunting sounds of Taps being played, I prayed that God find a special place of peace for Larry Gene Kier, I prayed that God bless and lead his family, loved ones and friends so that they may also find peace. I prayed that all our missing brothers be brought home. I thanked God for creating such men as Larry Gene Kier, who willingly place pride, service, honor and a devout love of their country, above self, and go into harm's way to prove that love. I prayed that God protect our brothers and sisters who are now in harm's way, carrying on the legacy of Larry Gene Kier, and all those who have gone before them. I also thanked God for placing such special people as the members of Rolling Thunder among us.

Then, just as the sounds of a bagpipe faded into the quietness of a Saturday afternoon and the final tears were still being shed, the sound of thunder echoed once more. It too soon faded away as these dedicated and noble men and women moved on, to continue with their mission. What special people they are. Quietness once again settled up on Owingsville, you could see on the faces of those who lived there, those who witnessed this display of brotherhood and love, that they had been a part of something very special; something that would stay with them for ever.

As I stood there I realized that even though we live in a time when many are quick to find fault with our country and criticize those who live by the mores, standards and values of men such as Larry Gene Kier, and the men and women of Rolling Thunder, there is hope.

Hope, that the hearts of those of our world, who do not understand, and refuse to try, will finally become enlightened to what the "mission" truly represents.

Rest in peace my "brother and comrade" and all the others still missing. Be assured, you will "never be forgotten."

Go in peace and safety my Rolling Thunder brothers and sisters, and all the others who care, as you continue on your mission.

"Fading light---falling night---
trumpet calls as the sun sinks in flight.
Sleep in peace comrades dear---
God is near."

[top of page](#)

Geof Steiner, Donna Elliott, and Dale Lewis, display the POW/MIA flag over a shallow grave at the old French Fort, south of the village of Khe Sanh, South Vietnam. Vietnamese soldiers reburied partial remains discovered while bulldozing in the area approximately a year ago, insisting that it was an American soldier with "US combat boots, long legs, big feet."



KEEPING THE PROMISE

By SGT Donna E. Elliott USA (Retired)

The 77th JPAC [Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command] will deploy from Hawaii on April 18, 2004, to search for MIA's in Vietnam. According to Richard Hites, Special Advisor to the Commanding General, Case 1000, SSGT Jerry W. Elliott, "will be done first on the JFA. ...there are actually two sites (the burial mound Donna saw) and a shaved cliff that had remains and artifacts revealed by a bulldozer in close proximity to the mound, probably where the remains were originally found."

Vietnamese soldiers directed the group of U.S. veterans to the mound of red clay dirt on September 23, 2003. It was located at the incident site where thirty-five years ago, on January 21, 1968, Jerry Elliott jumped off a chopper to assist members of the 282nd AHC in a 'Blackcat 027', which had been hit by a B-40 rocket causing it to crash on the eastern slope of the plateau. It was the last time he was seen alive.

Four former U.S. soldiers, Danny Williams, 'Blackcat' loss incident survivor, Geof Steiner, Dales Lewis, and Steve Jones had joined together with me, Jerry's little sister, in an effort to account for Case 1000. It was an action that was costly in terms of time, money, and emotions, but these Vietnam combat veterans felt it was a simple matter of "honor among warriors."

I will be returning to Khe Sanh for the fourth time in April to be present at the gravesite when it is opened. There is some comfort in knowing that our family may have answers soon. I plan to return in time to meet my Run For The Wall family in Jackson, Mississippi, at the Trail of Honor, and will update everyone on the case at that time.

[top of page](#)

VERIFY YOUR D.C. RESERVATIONS

From Patrick "Dragonrider" McCarthy

The Washington DC area hotels are fully booked due to the dedication of the World War II Memorial taking place the same weekend as Rolling Thunder XVII and RFTW XVI. If you already have reservations.....**VERIFY THEM!** If you don't have reservations.....the only hotels in the area with rooms left are \$300.00/night and up!

[top of page](#)

DISTRIBUTION OF A 'HEALING' BOOK

"Nam Vet-Making Peace with Your Past"

The Vision: To provide support material to help soldiers effectively transition from the psychological effects of wartime conditions to civilian life.

The Tool: "Nam Vet – Making Peace with Your Past", written by Chuck Dean. He relates his return from Vietnam and his own journey from war to peace. A journey whose hardships veterans from all wars have endured, but unfortunately, a journey many veterans have not yet completed. Jerry McNelly, Project Leader, believes "Nam Vet" is the key to the gate to the road home, and a healing only soldiers understand.

Jerry McNelly, with the help of volunteers, will be distributing books on the Run For The Wall on the Southern Route and Dick Darnell will be distributing "Nam Vet" books on the Central Run. The "Nam Vet" book will be circulated to motorcycle riders and Vets all along the routes of The Run For The Wall. When Jerry arrives in Washington, D.C., there will be 10,000 books waiting to be distributed. Point Man Ministries volunteers will man The Wall 24 hours a day during Memorial Day weekend and hand out "Nam Vet" books to veterans. Jerry, a Vietnam Combat Veteran, will start his journey in Phoenix, a journey of reaching out, a journey of healing.

[top of page](#)

THE "UNKNOWN SOLDIER" GUARDS

Bill Hendricks Service Coordinator - USS Construction Sales

1. How many steps does the guard take during his walk across the tomb of the Unknowns and why?
21 steps. It alludes to the twenty-one gun salute, which is the highest honor given any military or foreign dignitary.
2. How long does he hesitate after his about face to begin his return walk and why?
21 seconds for the same reason as answer number 1.
3. Why are his gloves wet?
His gloves are moistened to prevent his losing his grip on the rifle.
4. Does he carry his rifle on the same shoulder all the time, and if not, why not?
He carries the rifle on the shoulder away from the tomb. After his march across the path, he executes an about face, and moves the rifle to the outside shoulder.
5. How often are the guards changed?
Guards are changed every thirty minutes, twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year

6. What are the physical traits of the guard limited to?

For a person to apply for guard duty at the tomb, he must be between 5' 10" and 6' 2" tall and his waist size cannot exceed 30".

Other requirements of the Guard: They must commit two years of life to guard the tomb, live in a barracks under the tomb, and cannot drink any alcohol on or off duty for the rest of their lives. They cannot swear in public for the rest of their lives and cannot disgrace the uniform (fighting) or the tomb in any way. After two years, the guard is given a wreath pin that is worn on their lapel signifying they served as guard of the tomb. There are only 400 presently worn. The guard must obey these rules for the rest of their lives or give up the wreath pin.

Their shoes are specially made with very thick soles to keep the heat and cold from their feet. There are metal heel plates that extend to the top of the shoe in order to make the loud click as they come to a halt. There are no wrinkles, folds or lint on the uniform. Guards dress for duty in front of a full-length mirror. The first six months of duty a guard cannot talk to anyone, nor watch TV. All off duty time is spent studying the 175 notable people laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery. A guard must memorize who they are and where they are interred. Among the notables are: President Taft, Joe E. Lewis {the boxer} and Medal of Honor winner Audie Murphy, (the most decorated soldier of WWII) of Hollywood fame. Every guard spends five hours a day getting his uniforms ready for guard duty.

[top of page](#)

A LIVING MEMORIAL FOR DR. VICTOR WESTPHALL

By Milo "Nayber" Gordon
Chairman of the Board, RFTW

Little Bit asked me to write a few words about Dr. Victor Westphall. I am not sure that a few words will be sufficient for Dr. Westphall, especially where Vietnam Veterans are concerned. I think that my first experience with him exemplifies how he has been an inspiration to us since the loss of his son in Vietnam.

In August of 1993, I was returning home from a conference in Colorado Springs. I was doing my biker thing by going the long way back to Wisconsin. The previous May I had participated in my first RFTW. A couple of years earlier I had also heard from a biking buddy about this memorial in New Mexico. I wasn't very sure where it was. But I decided to let the spirit guide me and ride in that direction.

There was a lot of thought running in my head when I passed through Taos heading south for Santa Fe. I noticed this sign along side the road about this Vietnam Veterans memorial and an arrow pointing left. On such small whims are major life experiences based. I followed the road for 30 some miles; which seemed forever on that cool rainy day. I was amazed when I came out of the valley of Angel Fire and saw the chapel. I still felt somewhat lost and alone. That is a feeling I had had since my return from the Nam.

I pulled into the parking lot. There were only a couple of cars there. I walked into the main administration building and that is where I first met Dr. Westphall. He welcomed me and then gently led me into some discussion. I do not remember what all we talked about. I know that he shared with me about his activities and how he built the memorial. We talked about Wisconsin; that was also his home of origin. He let me wander around the property at my leisure. He was always ready to answer questions. He helped me look up a schoolmate that was listed as MIA. It was one of my first experiences with a PC. He encouraged me in my journey, both physical and spiritual. He thanked me for stopping and hoped that I would return, if possible. What is remarkable about this tale is not that it happened to me, but, that it happened to hundreds of thousands of veterans and their family members and friends over the last 30 plus years.

Dr. Westphall, in the pain of his loss, became a major contributor to the healing and growth of millions of people who

had experienced loss as the result of war. It is for that reason that we of Run For The Wall have decided to place this token of appreciation in gratitude for his existence. Two large Blue Spruce trees are being planted at the grave-site of Dr. Westphall during the month of April. When the RFTW Central Route arrives at Angel Fire on May 21, there will be ceremonies to dedicate this Living Memorial to Dr. Victor Westphall. A plaque from RFTW is currently in the planning stages and will be placed at a later date.

[top of page](#)

GOLD STAR MOTHERS

WILL-TV Examines the History of Motherhood and War in a Documentary about Gold Star Mothers' Pilgrimages. A PBS Plus Offer for May, 2004. Check with your local PBS station for the air date and time in your area.

As a child, William Prince used to creep into his grandmother's hushed, lavender-scented bedroom, and stare at a two-inch gold star, engraved with his Uncle Percy Stevens' name and mounted on a background of red and white silk.

His grandmother treasured the gold star, given to her as an emblem of her sacrifice after her son was killed in World War I. But like other mothers whose sons were buried in Europe, Laura Stevens had not had the comfort of seeing Percy's final resting place. Then in the 1930s, the government organized and paid for pilgrimages to European gravesites for Stevens and 6,000 other mothers and wives.

Prince, of Bend, Ore., relates his grandmother's story in a new WILL-TV documentary about the pilgrimages, Gold Star Mothers: Pilgrimage of Remembrance.

Produced by WILL-TV's Alison Davis Wood, the one-hour program intertwines the history of the pilgrimages and war with the social and political history of motherhood, looking at how the government used propaganda to convince mothers to support the war, how mothers wielded political power to get approval for the trips, and how the segregation of the African American women on the pilgrimages contributed to the abandonment of the Republican Party by many black voters.

The program also features the story of Fred Ziegler and his mother, Louise, of Durand, Ill. Experts on World War I and the pilgrimages help put the mothers' stories in a larger context. The Cincinnati Public Library's John W. Graham, author of a book about the pilgrimages, "As No One but a Mother Could Do," was co-producer of the program.

Wood, who won an Emmy Award for her previous documentary about Illinois architect Walter Burley Griffin, said that mothers were at the height of their influence in American society during World War I and its aftermath. When a young man was killed in battle, people automatically thought of the grief of his mother, she said. "Today, we'd more often think of the spouse, but back then, it was the mother," she said. Gen. John J. Pershing urged his soldiers in the field to write to their mothers on a new holiday, Mother's Day, she said.

The trips were life-changing experiences for the mothers, many of whom had never traveled outside their hometown or state. "If you think about it, you're 50 or 60 years old, and you are asked to go 4-, 5-, 6,000 miles away with a complete group of strangers," said Marvin Fletcher, of Ohio University, one of the featured experts. "You're on a ship with nobody you know. The only thing that you know is that everything is going to be taken care of, but even so, this could have been a terrifying experience." The government worked to make the trips a pleasant experience, he said. Even the African-American mothers, who traveled on smaller, second-class vessels, enjoyed the relative freedom of Europe.

[top of page](#)

POW/MIA UPDATE

Vietnam Veterans of America - March 31, 2004

1,865 Americans are still missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War, though over 450 were at sea/over water losses: Vietnam - 1,421 (VN-494; VS-927); Laos - 381; Cambodia - 55; Peoples Republic of China territorial waters - 8.

A Call for Former Prisoners of War (information provided by www.military.com)

On April 9, 2004, National Former Prisoners of War Recognition Day, VA and the VA Former Prisoner of War Advisory Committee will launch a national effort to reach U.S. veterans who are former prisoners of war with some of the following messages:

VA has benefits and health care programs for former POWs and their dependents VA's benefits for former POWs have expanded in recent years, including new entitlement rules for disability compensation, special eligibility for VA health care and greater access to medication and dental services. Many former POWs may not be aware of the benefits for which they are eligible even if they are currently receiving compensation.

If you are a former POW not receiving VA benefits or health care, now is the time to apply for benefits and enroll in the VA health care system Each VA Regional Benefits Office and VA Medical Center has a former POW coordinator on staff. VA medical centers have former POW clinical treatment teams.

Former POWs not receiving VA benefits should contact VA at 1-800-827-1000.

POW/MIA Legislative Update:

The following POW/MIA bills have been introduced in the 108th Congress. To view these bills go to Thomas.loc.gov or visit Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) Government Relations website at www.vva.org and click on "Legislative Action Center".

H.R. 2224, Prisoner of War Protection Act of 2003 introduced by Congresswoman Shelley Moore Capito, (WV-2). This bill provide for the payment of claims of United States prisoners of war in the First Gulf War, and for other purposes.

S. 1745, Prisoner of War/Missing in Action National Memorial Act introduced by Senator Barbara Boxer, (CA). This bill would designate a Prisoner of War/Missing in Action National Memorial at Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, California.

H.R. 2206, Prisoner of War/Missing in Action National Memorial Act introduced by Congressman Ken Calvert, (CA-44). This bill would designate a Prisoner of War/Missing in Action National Memorial at Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, California.

H.R. 850, Former Prisoners of War Special Compensation Act of 2003 introduced by Congressman Michael Simpson, (ID-2). This bill amends title 38, United States Code, to provide special compensation for former prisoners of war, and for other purposes.

S. 1239, Former Prisoners of War Special Compensation Act of 2003 introduced by Senator Larry E. Craig, (ID). This bill amends title 38, United States Code, to provide special compensation for former prisoners of war, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2106, introduced by Congressman Ciro Rodriguez, (TX-28). This bill would permit Members of the House of

Representatives to use funds provided in Member's Representational Allowances to obtain POW/MIA flags and distribute them to constituents.

H. R. 103, introduced by Congressman Peter King, (NY-3). The resolution would establish a Select Committee on POW and MIA Affairs.

[top of page](#)

CALLING ALL PAST ROUTE COORDINATORS

The current Board of Directors recognizes the hard work that the Route Coordinator puts in prior to the Run, as well as, during the Run. For that reason, the Board would like to recognize each past Route Coordinator with a token of appreciation. You each have done an excellent job of leading your group across the country and getting them safely to our destination of Washington, DC and The Wall! You certainly deserve this recognition! The Board is asking that each Past Coordinator please contact Larry "SkyPilot" Flenniken so that he may get your mailing information. Please contact him by one of the methods below:

Larry "Sky Pilot" Flenniken
1835 FM 697
Sherman, Texas 75090
Phone: (903) 893-5622
Fax: (903) 893-5981
skypilot@rftw.org

[top of page](#)

LINDA STIMMELL RIDES WITH RFTW

Reprinted with permission from Hog Tales-March/April 2004 issue

Linda's story was the Grand Prize Winner in
The 2003 Motorcycling Memories Contest

I started riding a mini bike when I was six or so, graduating to other bikes by the age of 12, which was in 1972. That same year, I purchased a POW bracelet for \$2 from a local radio station in my hometown. The proceeds, as I recall, were going to some type of veterans group. I was very, very proud to wear that bracelet bearing the name of Lieutenant Colonel Ivan D. Appleby 10-7-67.

During the next few years, I graduated up to other bikes and gained more interest in "my POW". And although my love for the sport never decreased, a lack of extra time and money during the subsequent years (marriage and raising children) meant I had to quit riding for a while. After many years of research, including trips to the Library of Congress in Washington, D. C., I learned quite a bit about Ivan. I discovered that he was a pilot who was shot down over North Vietnam, while flying a reconnaissance mission. By this time, the Run for the Wall (a ride from Los Angeles to Washington, D. C.) had begun its mission to account for all POW/MIA's. I had always wanted "to grow up, buy my dream bike (a Harley-Davidson), return my bracelet to Ivan's family, and ride in the Run to honor him". In my research, I discovered that Ivan's remains had been returned in 1995. Thanks to the Internet, someone put me in contact with a USAF department that would forward letters to families. I sent a letter to Ivan's family but didn't hear anything. I found a phone number for his son and after much debate finally decided to call him. He was very receptive to me. His family had received my letter but had not read it until shortly before I called, due to the recent death of their mother.

One of my dreams had come true. I was finally able to mail the bracelet to his son. We stayed in contact after that first

phone call. By this time, I was divorced, my children were raised, and I was even a grandma. It was time for the next dream: to own a Harley-Davidson motorcycle. I bought my Sportster in February 2002! And made plans to ride in that year's Run to the Wall. I met the ride in Hurricane, West Virginia and continued on to D. C. After arriving there and riding in the Rolling Thunder Parade, I was finally (after 30 years) able to place flowers on "my POW's" grave in Arlington National Cemetery. It was overwhelming to say the least. The dreams I had made decades ago had all come true.

But it still was not enough for me. Shortly after returning home from my trip, I traded my Sportster for a Heritage Softail Classic, somehow knowing that this bike would make it all happen. In May 2003, my friend Don and I embarked on a journey to Los Angeles. It was a trip in memory of all our POW/MIAs, and we were making it in honor of Ivan. We departed West Virginia in pouring rain and encountered many more days of heavy rain along the way. We dodged tornados in several states, rode in horrible wind in Oklahoma and Texas, only to meet sandstorms in New Mexico and Arizona. But we didn't care, we were on a mission of our own. We were going to Tucson, Arizona to meet the Appleby family and then continue our journey to L.A. to ride in the Run for the Wall.

We made it to Tucson on fumes and pulled into a gas station to fill up. I was wearing my "In Memory" jacket bearing a patch of the 555th Tactical Fighter Squadron (also known as the "Triple Nickel"). It was the unit that Ivan was tied to at the time of his death. A gentleman behind me inquired, "Excuse me, did you know Ivan Appleby?" Ends up, Ivan was this man's wing commander in Vietnam. Again, I was overwhelmed. We talked for a very long time, and he shared stories and memories of "App" with me. And then it was on to meet the Appleby family. What a dream that was, to finally meet them and be welcomed into their home. They showed me memorabilia and photographs that I had only ever imagined seeing. I cried more on this trip than I think I've ever cried in my life. But they were good tears.

And then Don and I were off to L.A. to ride back across the United States to D.C. with the most sincere and honorable people I've ever met. After 31 years, I was finally able to fully complete my dreams. And it was due to determination and a Harley-Davidson Softail Classic.

Many thanks to the Appleby family for their continued support and to Harley-Davidson for providing the "dream bike" that helped me fulfill mine. Amazing what a mini bike and a \$2 bracelet can start, isn't it?

[*top of page*](#)

WALL TO WALL VII

The run leaves DC after Rolling Thunder and in 2 days we arrive in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. We will visit the VFW in Point Place, OH and have a great meal there. Not to forget the great hospitality from all. The Run spends the night in Monroe, MI. The next morning we visit the Monroe Vietnam Veterans Memorial and get a guided tour. They have UH-1M "Huey" and "Cobra" helicopters. On top of a pole is the 250 pound, wooden, chainsaw carved eagle to represent all our POW/MIAs. They have two memorials there. One memorial for the living (Listing all those that served in Vietnam from Monroe County) and one for their KIAs. The Monroe VVA chapter will greet us there with coffee, donuts and hugs. After visiting with them we head across the border to Canada. We will then visit the Canadian Vietnam Veterans Memorial (The North Wall) and pay our respects to the Canadians KIA/MIAs. The Canadian Vietnam Veterans Memorial Association will have a small ceremony. After the ceremony we are off to the Royal Canadian Legion for a meal provided by the CVVMA and fellowship.

The Point Place VFW, Monroe VVA and CVVMA, look forward to welcoming you and each Run is special. Please consider joining us this year. You do not have to ride a motorcycle to come. And you can join us on route too. Hal's C Phone is 519-357-0289.

NOTE: We will use one lane only when we go through Canadian Customs. Americans coming into Canada will have no "problems" as long as your paper work is in order ...re: license, ownership, insurance, birth certificate. If they ask

for it, you need ID. If you have a child/children with you, please have some ID for them, a birth certificate is the best. "HARDWARE" is not to be taken into Canada and must be left at point of entry. You must have a permit. NO HARDWARE allowed at all in Canada. There will be arrangements for you to leave your HARDWARE on the American side. Ask Us.

May 30 - Day 1 Washington, D.C. TO Somerset, PA: We will leave from the Wall in D.C. around 3:00 p.m. Those who wish to leave on Sunday will meet Maddy and Hal at 2:30 p.m. on the bottoms steps of the Lincoln Memorial. We will ride to Somerset, Pennsylvania. We are staying at the Super 8, 1-814-445-8788 (direct).

DIRECTIONS TO SOMERSET: Take 50 (Constitution Ave) to the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Bridge and keep to the right lane and bear right after bridge and on to the George Washington Memorial Parkway. In right lane take 495 North to Maryland. JCT 270 (4 miles approx.), move to the left lanes and take exit 38 to 270 to Fredrick. Then take 70 West (right lane) to Hagerstown. Exit 42 (Myersville) we will make a stop at McDonald's for drinks, snacks, gas and etc. Return to 70 West to Breezewood. We will stop for gas and etc at the DeliCafe/Sunoco (on the right) just before getting on the Toll. Taking the Penn Turnpike (West 70 to 76), after getting ticket keep to the right lane to Pittsburgh. We stop for the night in Somerset on Exit 10 (60 miles and toll should be \$2.20). Motel is right behind Arby's.

May 31 - Day 2 - Somerset TO Toledo, Ohio TO Monroe, MI: We will leave Somerset about 9:00 a.m. and should arrive at Point Place VFW in Toledo for supper around 3:30 p.m. This VFW supported us each year and they are looking forward to meeting the riders again.

DIRECTIONS TO TOLEDO (POINT PLACE VFW): Take I76 West (Pittsburg) and ride until we get to the Ohio Turnpike (Toll \$4.30). Our first stop will be at the Mahoning Valley Service Plaza (112 miles approx) In Ohio you do not need to wear a helmet and when we leave the Plaza, for those that wish, you may remove your helmets. We will ride for about 96 miles and stop at the Middle Ridge Service Plaza. Returning to the Turnpike we will take exit 64 onto I75 to Toledo (Toll \$6.70). We will take Exit 209 (Ottawa River Rd) and go through the lights and keep the river to your left. Follow the Ottawa River Rd to Summit. At the lights turn left. Down about 2 blocks on the right is Point Place VFW. (89 Miles)

After Supper and visit we will take Summit out to I75 North (helmets on), 20 minutes down the Interstate, take Exit 15 (Dixie Hwy), turn right and take left turn at the Bob Evans Restaurant. Best Western (formerly Cross Country Inn), is located behind. 1-734-289-2330, 1-800-621-1429. Just say you are with the Wall To Wall Run and rate is \$52.99 plus tax. Please make your reservations soon.

June 1 - Day 3 - Monroe, Michigan TO Windsor, Ontario: We will form up at the Best Western Inn and turn right onto Dixie Hwy, crossing overpass and turning into Heck Park to visit the Monroe Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Members of VVA Chapter 142 will meet us. There will be coffee, donuts and a history tour of their beautiful Memorial.

At 11:00 a.m. we will leave Monroe Vietnam Veterans Memorial and travel to the "North Wall" in Windsor, Ontario. We will visit the Memorial and have dinner at the Royal Canadian Legion 143, not far from the Memorial.

For those that wish to stay the night on the Canadian Border, reservations can be made at the Ivy Rose Motel, (519) 966-1700, 1-800-265-7366. Just say you are with the Wall To Wall Run. There is also a family restaurant there. Your hosts will be "The Skally's" and they are looking forward to meeting you. Remember anything paid in Canada you pay our Goods and Service Tax. Keep all your receipts and claim it back at the border.

DIRECTIONS TO THE CANADIAN MEMORIAL: Turn left out of the Monroe Memorial to I75 and making a left turn after the overpass onto I75 North to Detroit. Take Exit 47B to the Bridge to Canada which is about 30 miles. We should have one lane for all of us to go through. They are expecting us.

After crossing over the bridge we make a right turn onto Huron Church Road and continue down to Riverside Drive. At the stop sign, make a right turn. You will see the Flags (American, Canadian and POW Flags on your left where the memorial is and pass the first drive on left and take the next into Assumption Park.

DIRECTIONS TO THE ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION: To get to the Legion Branch 143, you make a left turn out of Assumption Park, then turn right on Campbell (just a few blocks down Riverside) and then make a right onto Wyandotte St. W. The Legion is just down a block on the right on the corner of Bridge.

[top of page](#)

THE VIETNAM WAR IN-MEMORY PLAQUE AT THE WALL

(Washington, D.C.) - Vietnam Veterans of America will host the official dedication on November 10, 2004, of the In Memory Memorial Plaque at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington. The plaque will recognize the sacrifices of those who returned home from the Vietnam War only to die later as a direct result of their service in that conflict. The dedication candlelight ceremony, which will be open to the public, will take place at 7:00 p.m. on the grounds of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the National Mall.

“We are very pleased that an appropriate date has been set,” said Ruth Coder-Fitzgerald, founder of the Vietnam War In Memory Memorial Plaque Project. The announcement followed a meeting of the American Battle Monuments Commission in Arlington, Virginia, that was attended by representatives of the Vietnam War In Memory Memorial, the National Park Service, the Vietnam Women’s Memorial Project, Vietnam Veterans of America, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.

“In 1996, when it was first proposed, Vietnam Veterans of America was one of the first organizations to support the In Memory Plaque,” said Jim Doyle, chair of VVA Public Affairs Committee. “Since then, we have continued to support and encourage the completion of this congressionally approved, privately funded project that honors the men and women who have been called the ‘hidden casualties’ of the Vietnam War. We are proud to have been asked by the In Memory board to host the dedication.”

[top of page](#)

JULY FOURTH

By Marilyn Johnston

He can't let go of the image:
rocket and artillery rounds lighting up the sky
overhead, blasts reflecting off Thu Bon River;
the incessant rattling of earth, and at dawn,
the hunks of shrapnel that shredded his tent walls,
missing his body by inches.

He figured he'd survived this long,
and, Hell, wouldn't it be downright cruel
to take him now, after nineteen months
in 'Nam and just hours before
his discharge, a plane taking him
far away from Da Nang.

He says it didn't take long to become

a fatalist — to believe the only thing separating those who lived and those who died was luck— particularly during days on jungle patrol in 120-degree heat. Sweat rolling down like hate.

But God knows, he still can't shake it.

Each summer for the past thirty-two years, he tells me that story as we sit on the grassy Willamette River bank - then silently wait for the first boom, the first blast, the lights brightening up the night sky.

Marilyn Johnston is the author of RED DUST RISING, published earlier this year by The Habit of Rainy Nights Press. The poems in the collection (which includes "July Fourth") have been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Proceeds from the sale of the book are used to encourage writing projects for veterans and their families dealing with the effects of war. Book order inquiries can be sent to RedDustRising@att.net

[top of page](#)

AGENT ORANGE

INFO BYTES ABOUT AGENT ORANGE

Info-byte #1 - How much must you be disabled by an enemy weapon in order to qualify for the Military Order of the Purple Heart? You don't have to have a scar, a limp, or even a lingering pain to get a purple heart. You just have to be wounded or killed. Veterans identified under the Agent Orange act, however, have to show symptoms of a fatal disease and can be declared 100% disabled, just to be eligible for Agent Orange benefits. Yet not even that 100% disability makes them eligible for the Purple Heart. We think that this is wrong.

Info-Byte #2 - Chemical warfare formally began in World War I, when Germany deployed mustard gas against its enemies. It is a fact that, for these chemical wounds, American troops were awarded Purple Hearts. This set a precedent for the Purple Heart, namely, that exposure to a chemical agent INDEED constitutes a wound and, therefore, is grounds for awarding the Purple Heart.

Info-Byte #3 - In the 1994 Defense Authorization Act, Section 1141, it states that, for purposes of the Purple Heart, personnel who fall victim to friendly fire are to be treated exactly like personnel wounded by the enemy. Since Purple Hearts have been given for chemical wounds in 1917, then American personnel harmed by our own Agent Orange are similarly entitled. The Purple Heart has no discretionary clause, so all combat wounded personnel MUST be given the Purple Heart. Failure to do so puts the entire Military up to the President in direct violation of Public Law.

Info-Byte #4 - The Purple Heart is the President's Medal. JFK, in Executive Order #11016, delegated HIS power to the Secretaries of the four Military services, allowing them to update the standards as needed, but only if they were consistent across the four services. They are not. In fact, Army regulations clearly state that you cannot get a Purple Heart for chemical warfare unless it came from the enemy. This means that not only are the services breaking an Executive Order from the Commander-In-Chief, but also the Army is in violation of the 1994 Defense Authorization Act.

Info-Byte #5 - Both Lieutenant Zumwalt and Chief Davis fall under Naval Regulations, which (although they were

not written for chemical wounds, fully allow for them). By not giving these men their Purple Hearts, the entire administration is in Breach of Naval Regulations.

Info-Byte #6 - Agent Orange IS a weapon of war. Admittedly it is a defoliant, a mere weed killer, in fact. But we sure didn't use it to keep crabgrass out of General Westmooreland's petunia patch. In "Operation Ranch hand", 11 million gallons of Agent Orange were dumped along the entire Mekong Delta region, in order to destroy the dense jungle canopy which hid the movement of enemy troops and sheltered both snipers and armaments. Therefore, Agent Orange WAS used as a weapon of war - and a very good one too. Thousands of Americans lives were saved once we could SEE the enemy. But a chemical weapon knows no demilitarized zone. It respects neither the personnel who deploy it nor the enemy for whom it was intended. Bourne on the wind, flowing through muddy swampland according to its own whimsy, it infected everything and everyone it touched, regardless of ideology, uniforms, sex, or race, indiscriminately poisoning all. This weapon not only was a weapon of war, but it proved to be a double-edged sword.

Info-Byte #7 - Agent Orange exposure meets all of the standards required in the official definition of "wound" as it appears in all military regulation as "an injury to any part of the body from an outside force or agent, sustained while in action as described in the eligibility requirements. A Physical lesion (or cut) is not required, provided the concussion or other form of injury received was the result of the action engaged in. Except in the case of a prisoner of war, "the wound must have required treatment by a medical officer." There can be no doubt that dioxin poisoning REQUIRES immediate treatment. These personnel simply never received it.

Info-Byte #8 - Follow their logic. You must not have merely REQUIRED treatment, you must have RECEIVED treatment, and a record of that treatment must have been made at that timer. By this line of thought, any personnel (In the last 220 years) wounded in battle and who died before RECEIVING the medical care they REQUIRED do not deserve the Purple Heart they were rewarded. No treatment, no medal. Should we dig them up and take them back? As for a record existing, personnel who qualify for Agent Orange benefits can only do so when the Pentagon confirms their exposures. So ... a record exists SOMEWHERE ... and it had to have been made at the time of exposure.

SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE ORDER OF THE SILVER ROSE

The Order of the Silver Rose consists of a numbered certificate, a gorgeous medal, and a copy of our beautiful Silver Rose poster. Both the certificate and the poster are suitable for framing and displaying.

The certificate was designed and created by our National Director Gary J. Chenett. It is lettered and embossed with the Silver Rose crest, which features the scales of justice over our ribbon. It is signed by our National Director of The Order of The Silver Rose.

Our founder, Mary Elizabeth Marchand, carefully designed the Silver Rose medal itself, and each feature symbolizes something special. It is round and Silver, not gold. As in Olympic medals, Gold is for First Place and Silver is for Second Place. Therefore the medal itself is silver, in remembrance of these heroes who are still being treated as second-class citizens by their own government. The front of the medal is an American Beauty rose carved in silver onto a black background, in honor of all Americans exposed to Agent Orange in Viet Nam, and how we deeply mourn for them.

The medal is suspended from an Orange and White cross grain ribbon to represent Agent Orange.

The Order of the Silver Rose shall be awarded on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, Veterans Day.

We also find that sadly now because of the exceptional amount of veterans we are losing, the Silver Rose will also be

awarded on select other days throughout the year. We hope the Purple Heart will soon render The Order of the Silver Rose obsolete. If not, then we'll be here until we accomplish our goals.

<http://www.silverrose.org/html>

At the end of February, the Agent Orange litigation was dealt another major setback. The litigation has been troubled because of the efforts of a federal Judge in the second circuit named Weinstein. He handled the original litigation ... and has made it clear he will block any future claims. There was a "win" last summer that opened the door for new claims. However, many hurdles remain. The decision last week will take two years to appeal. If we are victorious, then the litigation will affectively start at that point in state court.

If you have signed the contract and qualify as a client, you need not do anything else. Understand, however, that there will be no progress made until the appeal is over. Thank you for your patience in this matter.

Very truly yours,
Greg McCormack

Legal Assistant to Michael E. Schmidt, Esq.
The Schmidt Firm, LLP
8401 N. Central Expressway
Suite 880, LB 28
Dallas, TX 75225
214-521-4898

<http://www.schmidtlaw.com>

<http://www.agent-orange-lawsuit.com/article1.html>

[top of page](#)

RFTW MERCHANDISE

by Ron "Spyderman" Strong

Run For the Wall Merchandise is available in advance of the Run. Go to www.rftw.org, print out the order form, fill out the items you want and mail it in with your check (including postage). Your merchandise will be sent to your home by priority or first class mail. This gives you the opportunity to get the sizes and the items you want before there is any chance of selling out. Also, if you order before the Run you have the time to get your patches sewn on your vest before the Run.

There are some items from prior years that are still available, shirts from 2003 and 2001 are available only in size XL and short sleeve. There are also some boonie hats and some scarves from RFTW XIII. We also have some prior year patches, contact Ron "Spyderman" Strong at spyderman47@starband.net and ask for a particular year and I will look to see if we have the one you need. We are all out of 2003 All The Way Bars!

We are cutting off merchandise mailing as of May 1. That gives me time to organize merchandise for the Central and Southern Routes to be delivered to Ontario, Ca. So please get your orders in now.

[top of page](#)

MISSION TO BUILD A TRIKE

By Daemien "Deacon" O'Keeffe

This trike started out as a necessity, but evolved into a MISSION!

The trike was started because, anymore, I have trouble riding a standard motorcycle. When I went on the Run for the Wall last year I had a few problems with the bike I was riding (a 1982 Goldwing GL1200). I have some old injuries from a previous bike accident that have left me with a few metal parts in my left leg and foot. I had to be helped off my bike a few times on the Run. When I got back to St. Louis after riding 3000 miles in the rain, it was obvious that my two wheel days were over.

The idea for the trike initially was my own; my brother-in-law has to be given the credit for really pushing the project through. Tony "Godfather" Monica is the founder and co-owner of Godfatherz Kustomz in St. Ann, Missouri. He donated over 400 hours labor and hundreds of dollars in parts. This project would not have even gotten off the ground if it weren't for the "Godfather".

I wanted to show my respect and commitment to the POW/MIA issue and so I built the trike along that theme. Last year I carried a simple sign that had my cousin's name and the name of Steven Bezold, a Missouri MIA. From there, comes the idea for a trike. I started a not-for-profit organization called the Rolling Guard. The Rolling Guard's main purpose is to educate the public on POW/MIA issues and to encourage the public to become active in making our government accountable for all MIAs. We also have adopted several soldiers in Iraq and send them care packages. I also promised myself that I would have a dedication on my trike for the POWs and MIAs. In the meantime I started working on a website dedicated to the Vietnam War Dogs. We now have one of the largest databases of Vietnam War Dog history on the Internet. I wanted to combine both these efforts in a dedication on the trike. We worked for several months laying out the design of the trike murals and finally had them laid out this past week. Our goal is to finish the trike by May 15th to make our May 21st departure deadline to head to Salina, Kansas. See you there!



[top of page](#)

WOUNDED OF IRAQ

By Joe "Dragon" Lozano

As some of you may know Mee Ok (Silkie) and I are stationed in Stuttgart, Germany. On a number of occasions during appointments at the Landstuhl Military Hospital, we have visited with the troops that are there as a result of being wounded or injured during Operation Iraqi Freedom. On Easter weekend we visited with a number of these young Soldiers and Marines. It is heartbreaking to see these young men and women, their bodies in bandages, casts, sitting in wheelchairs or walking on crutches. Some were lucky enough to be able visit the small TV room with one computer and the coffee pot, yet others are confined to lying in their beds. The hospital staff does everything to provide them with the best care and meeting their every medical need. You must remember these nurses; orderlies and medics are also in the military. It's an overwhelming and constantly challenging ongoing task for them.

These young Soldiers and Marines are so proud of their service, the sacrifices they are making in the commitment to bringing freedom to Iraq is profound. They are fighting and dying at the hands of the very people that would benefit from that freedom. When we talked with these kids their first concerns are for the safety and security of their buddies that they have left behind. Although their bodies may be fractured, their spirits are anything but broken or dented. They are prepared and ready to return to Iraq to fight beside, defend and take care of their brothers and sisters. They don't give a rat's ass about the politics. They come from every walk of life, environment and social background. They joined the services because they're born American or because they share the privilege of living in freedom. They joined the military seeking educational opportunities, economic security, health care for their families, or to escape harsh conditions and living standards. For many, military service is a family tradition, three of the men we talked with, their dads had fought in Vietnam. This war is extracting a major toll. These young Soldiers and Marines are paying an enormous price for this country.

They've been instructed not to talk about what is going on in Iraq; its harshness or difficulties. If you've ever been in

similar circumstances you know the truth and what they're enduring. I'll tell you this, it's far worse than you have read or would ever imagine.

We sit in our comfortable homes, living our day-to-day lives of going to work, hanging with family and friends, a hot shower is taken for granted. We drink clean fresh water; sleep in the warmth and safety of our beds without fear of 'incoming'. We read the news in the paper or watch TV from the security of our homes what is happening with the war in Iraq. Some have never experienced, others can never forget the many horrors of war. The little day-to-day fears we once all shared, the dreams we had and lost. Time and age has changed us, our bravado is of days past, as is our youth. We continue talking the talk but have we forgotten those that now must walk the walk and fight the fight. As we make our plans of reunion, seeing old friends, making our annual pilgrimage across America to visit our "Wall" let us not forget those who continually serve.

I ask you, no, I beg you, please do not let us forget these young men and women that continue giving their lives, limbs and dreams in this distant country at war. Do not let them bear the same scars of guilt, feelings of shame, or abandonment, which so many of us have carried in our hearts for so long. We need to reach out, include and welcome these young men and women to our RFTW family. We must do more for them, than was ever done for us. We have an obligation as veterans and former war fighters to ensure that these wounded, killed in action or missing are never left behind or forgotten. It is our responsibility that their physical, emotional and fellowship needs are met. Their families also must be reassured that their sacrifices are not in vain or will never be trivialized.

I challenge each and every one of us to take the time to go and visit any hospital that these young folks are recovering in. Tell them; let them know you love them, support them and tell them you are proud of their service. Welcome them home. Assure them that you are there for them. It doesn't take much to extend your heart or hand. The rewards are enormously gratifying. This is an ongoing effort for as long this or any war is fought. What do they need? Ask yourself what you needed or would need if you were in their combat boots. Let us not forget the families of those that have lost their sons and daughters, reach out to them and let them know we share in their grief and loss.

Last November I was able to return to the States and attend services at the Vietnam Memorial on Veterans Day. Recon Don saw me and asked if I wanted a mission? My reply, of course I did! A number of wounded soldiers from Operation Iraqi Freedom were coming from Walter Reed Army Hospital to attend the program at "The Wall". During that service, I had the honor of taking care of two of these gallant young warriors that were confined to wheelchairs. Thank you, Recon Don for allowing me that privilege. That experience will remain in my heart for the rest of my life. Some wounds do heal.

[top of page](#)

[About Run For The Wall](#) | [Our Mission Statement](#) | [Contacts](#) | [Newsletter Online](#)
[Run Road Report](#) | [Board of Directors](#) | [Photo Gallery](#)
[Merchandise](#) | [Our Links](#) | [HOME](#)

*Please direct website comments or questions to [webmaster](#)
This website hosted & maintained by:*

