



**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 2007**

**Quarterly Newsletter  
" We Ride For Those Who Can't "  
April 2007**

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**THE EDITOR'S NOTES**



March 17, 2007 is a date many of us will long remember. On that day thousands of Vietnam veterans ended their 40-year silence. No longer would they remain quiet as the world around them dishonored them with ridicule of their service in an unpopular war. There was no support for them back then, no welcome home, job well done, and thank you for your service. Those veterans went into hiding for 35 years, even denying they

fought in that faraway country—to avoid the wrath of their fellow Americans.

What brought them out of their silence? Some may think it was Jane Fonda, reappearing like a ghost all these years later; or Cindy Sheehan, a mother many think dishonors the memory of her son. Or the signs—those awful signs—that brought back the horrible memories of a long-ago protest.

No—it was none of these. The powerful force that made thousands of aging soldiers ride or fly all the way across our country was a silent sentinel, a simple black wall with 58,249 names engraved on its reflecting face. No ordinary wall, this. This wall has the power to bring men to their knees in sorrow, in memory of lost comrades-in-arms and lost youth; it has the power to elicit the deepest grief for sons, fathers, brothers, and friends. This wall also has the power to heal, and it is a sacred place to Vietnam veterans. It is the place where they feel they finally come home, and finally find peace.

It was the thought of their Wall being desecrated by anti-war marchers that finally pulled these veterans out of their silence. The protestors had damaged memorials before, and these men would not allow that to happen again not to their Wall or any other war memorial. So they came together at the Wall, to form a line to protect it, and to tell the world that never again would they be silent.

The most amazing thing about our veterans going to the Wall to protect it was the fact that ANSWER had a year to plan their protest and hoped for at least 100,000. The actual count varies wildly, depending on who presents it, but most counts put it at about 5,000 or less. The Gathering of Eagles had only about six weeks to prepare—and were able to muster at least that number, although some reports put it at 30,000. Whichever is more correct, the fact remains that our veterans came together as never before for a common purpose.

Many of our RFTW and Patriot Guard members heeded the call to the Wall—the Gathering of Eagles: Slammer, JR, Dutch, Blackhat, Buffalo, Wayne “Redcather” Nicholls, Mike “Tanker” McDole, the Monsoon, “Top” Desherow and wife Diane, Cruiser, and many more. Be sure to read, in this issue, some stories of their determination to protect the Wall. You will be as proud of them as I am.

And now it’s time to turn our thoughts to the next gathering of eagles—the Run For The Wall. I believe this year our veterans will be riding taller than ever before in the saddle. See you in Ontario. Kickstands up on May 16!

Never Forget,  
Judy

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## **THE PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE**

**By John “Slammer” Gebhards**  
**President, Run For The Wall**



Greetings! Welcome to 2007 RFTW XIX.

For the most **significant information/changes** when both routes are combined (one day in Ontario, CA and three days in Toms Brook/DC), we have placed one of the Route Coordinators and Road Guard Captain in charge of each day and the other coordinator and staff in support. All Road Guards and the supporting Road Guard Captain will report to the tasked road guard captain.

**Wednesday, May 16, 2007. Ontario, CA:**

**Ron Young**, Route Coordinator  
**Kent Markley**, Road Guard Captain

**Friday, May 25, 2007. Toms Brook to DC:**

**Frank Perry**, Route Coordinator

**Rich Ford**, Road Guard Captain

**Saturday, May 26, 2007. DC:**

**Ron Young**, Route Coordinator

**Kent Markley**, Road Guard Captain.

**Sunday, May 27, 2007. DC:**

**Frank Perry**, Route Coordinator

**Rich Ford**, Road Guard Captain

**The Route Coordinator will have the latest information on events and changes and will communicate that information through his Road Guard Captain who will then pass it on to all participants from both routes.**

Washington, DC, Saturday May 26th. We will stage in several location's (assembly area) depending on what event you choose to participate. We are doing this we reduce the confusion within the assembly of motorcycles. **Ron Young** and **Kent Markley** will have the latest information on staging locations and departure times.

These will be the **only** people who will have the latest information.

A registration fee of \$10.00 will be charged for each RFTW registrant. This fee will primarily fund the required AMA insurance coverage and also will provide additional funds for RFTW projects. RFTW will be actively seeking input on Veteran Projects to support during the year. Please bring the projects to the Board attention. The registration fee will be exact change in cash (no checks or plastic). Anything over the fee will be considered a donation to RFTW if we don't have change.

If a registrant is requested to leave the Run for safety, behavior or other issues, the registration fee may be returned to that registrant by the Route Coordinator.

Mark Rittermeyer, Director of Risk Management, is responsible for the implementation of the AMA rules and regulations. He will create a team of (ICOs) Insurance Communications Officers (AMA-trained) for each route. The ICO's responsibility include: monitoring his specific route for compliance with AMA guidelines, ensuring that riders' meetings are conducted each morning and assisting with accident support and reports.

Due to the necessity of obtaining liability insurance for the organization, our registration process has become more involved and will require additional information. It will save you time if you print the online registration form from the website and bring it to registration fully **completed**. In order to participate in RFTW, proof of a valid driver license with a motorcycle endorsement and proof of current liability insurance for the vehicle that you will be riding will be required of all riders operating motorcycles. This excludes passengers. Documentation will need to be validated at registration before RFTW wristbands will be issued. If your state does not require a motorcycle endorsement on your driver license then this requirement will be waived. The 2007 Registration Form **sample** is [posted on the RFTW website](#). Thank you in advance for your patience and understanding regarding these necessary changes.

We have discussed a "Northern Route" for several years. There is a group, "The National Veterans Awareness Ride" made up of some of our past participants. We have approached the NVAR with an offer to them of becoming our "Northern Route." They have their own website, coordinators, and leadership group. They have decided not to join RFTW. We have a highlighted link on our website to theirs and wish them all success. This matter is now closed and we will not pursue a "Northern Route."

You will notice an addition of "End of Days Activities" on our daily itineraries. This is to make clear when the RFTW responsibility ends for that day. We will be watchful again this year and enforce the ban on drinking and use of recreational drugs during the Run. This includes RFTW supporters dispensing alcohol at official Run dinners or at any

time prior to the end of the RFTW daily scheduled activities. We are adding an additional requirement of **no visible display of a firearm**. Even if you have a concealed carry permit, pack the firearm in your bags. Most institutions that we visit prohibit the display of firearms on their property.

All riders need to be responsible for their own actions. They should have sufficient resources to provide for their gas, lodging, food and motorcycle maintenance on the Run and for the trip back home. In the event of an accident you are also responsible for getting your bike back home.

Both Routes' Senior Route Chaplain and the Chaplain's Corp have been asked to obtain first aid training and provide proof of certification.

Registration will be conducted in the mornings and evenings for riders joining the Run. The morning riders' meetings are mandatory for all participants. The Southern Route will have two exceptions to this requirement for 2007 and will be in compliance for 2008. For those two exceptions in 2007, we will send an advance Registration Team/ICOs and they will conduct rider's meetings at both locations.

AMA has a stringent requirement regarding participation by minors. When a parent accompanies a child, they will have to sign a waiver as part of registration. There may be an issue with registering a child who accompanies someone other than a parent (i.e., a grandparent) who does not have the authority to sign a waiver on behalf of the child. It is noted that different states observe different ages of majority, ranging from 17 to 21 years of age.

There has been some discussion on the reimbursement policy of RFTW. First, let's be very clear we do not reimburse any expense without a valid receipt. These are turned in to our Bookkeeper. They are maintained as a historical record by John King, our Treasurer.

1. Board members are reimbursed for gas and motel to participate in our required annual "face to face" meeting, which is usually held during one of the annual reunions. The board member can elect to delay payment or donate the expense to RFTW. We pay only on receipts turned into RFTW. This is the only compensation the Board members receive. No expenses are paid to board members during the RFTW event.

2. RFTW reimburses the Route Coordinators for their motel rooms from Ontario to DC. The route coordinators normally get comp rooms from the motels. Receipts must be submitted by the coordinators for reimbursement. No one else on the Run gets reimbursed for motel rooms. No board member is authorized or has been reimbursed for motels or fuel on the Run.

3. RFTW pays fuel for chase trucks and designated support vehicles. The chase vehicles are paid from Ontario to DC based upon fuel receipts. The fuel expense for merchandise trailer vehicles are paid from the pick-up point in Phoenix, AZ and back to storage. The merchandise trailer carries a lot of other essential items for the Run. Fuel receipts must be submitted for payment.

Thanks for your support of RFTW.

John "Slammer" Gebhards  
President RFTW

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## **PROFILES OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBERS**

*(Ed. note: Judy Cockrum was recently appointed to the Board of Directors, replacing Sally "Sizzmo" Down, who resigned from the Board of Directors. Judy will serve the remainder of Sally's term, which expires June 30, 2008. Following is Judy's profile and a description of her duties with RFTW.)*

## **Judy Cockrum, Board of Directors Secretary**

As secretary, my duties will be to: (a) record the minutes of the meetings of the members and of the board of directors; (b) see that all notices are duly given in accordance with the provisions of our bylaws or as required by law; (c) be a custodian of the corporate records and of the seal of the corporation; (d) keep a register of the post office address of each member; and (e) perform all duties incident to the office of secretary and such other duties as from time to time may be designated to me by the president or by the board of directors.



I bought my first motorcycle in June 1999, after taking the ABATE rider training course. I've ridden my '99 Heritage Softail All the Way, Central Route 2003, 2004, and 2005. My husband (Russ Cockrum) and I were merchandise coordinators on the Central Route 2006. Russ served as Chaplain Central Route 2004, and Chaplain's Corp 2005. Russ joined the US ARMY ASA in 1968, a year after we married. He served a 13-month tour in Korea, leaving one day before our first son, Jim, was born. He served 4 years. My Dad served in WW II, US ARMY in Europe, and Russ's dad in the Pacific. Our second son, Ken, served 4 years in the US Navy in the 90's.

Inspired by the integrity and purpose of Run for the Wall, and my personal love/hate relationship with the color "Olive Drab," I had my motorcycle painted Olive, with Rosie the Riveter airbrushed on the front fender; as a constant reminder to "Never Forget."

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## **RFTW 2007**

### **NEW REGISTRATION PROCEDURES**

The 2007 RFTW Registration and Emergency Information Form is now revised and available online at the RFTW homepage. Please download this document and completely fill it out prior to registering. This will help to reduce the time required for you to register.

Remember that you will be asked to present your current drivers' license with appropriate endorsement, as well as a proof of valid liability insurance for the vehicle that you will be riding on the Run. Without this documentation, you will not be permitted to register and ride with the RFTW. Additionally, there is a \$10 fee required for all registrants for the Run. This is needed to help pay for AMA liability insurance, which we are now carrying, and for additional RFTW projects. Exact change is required at the time of registration; .no checks and no credit cards accepted.

Due to these new requirements, there is no online or preregistration for the Run. Registrations must be accomplished prior to the Run in Ontario, CA or in the mornings or evenings at those designated overnight stops for each route.

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### **NEW: MINOR RELEASE FORMS REQUIRED**

**From Mark Rittermeyer, RFTW Director of Risk Management**

All persons under the age of eighteen (18) must complete a Minor Release and Waiver of Liability and Indemnity Agreement form, and have it signed by a parent or guardian (***Guardian must have a Notarized approval from Parent—no exceptions***). Also, the Minor must complete the **Minor's Assumption of Risk Acknowledgement** form to be eligible to participate with Run for the Wall. Both of these forms will be available at the registration.

## **RUN KICK-OFF EVENTS**

**From Mil "Big Dog" McThornton, California State Coordinator**

### **Pre Events**

May 15, 2007, Tuesday: (The day before the start of RFTW 2007)

#### **8:30 a.m.**

There will be a run to Riverside National Cemetery to visit the Medal of Honor Memorial and to pay respects to Medal of Honor Recipients that will be there. From there we will ride to the POW/MIA monument and meet the architect and sculptor of this magnificent monument, Lee Millett, son of Col Millett. We will raise and lower a POW/MIA flag at the monument to be taken across to Washington DC to be raised at a location yet to be determined. We will have a brief prayer and release everyone to get back to the hotel area in Ontario.

The ride will stage at the RFTW host hotel, the Hilton Garden Inn, 11481 Mission Vista Drive, Rancho Cucamonga, CA. Staging will start at 8:30 a.m. There will be detailed directions available at the sign-up table for RFTW 2007 at the Host Hotel.

A riders meeting will take place at 9:15 a.m. at the staging area and kickstands up at 9:30. We will arrive at the RNC and the Medal of Honor Memorial at approximately 10:30 a.m. We will be there for approximately 45 minutes and then we will move to the POW/MIA Monument to raise and lower a POW/MIA flag and then fold it and carry it across the U.S. to Washington DC during RFTW. There the flag will be raised at a location yet to be determined.

Everyone will be on their own to get lunch and to get back to the hotel area in Rancho Cucamonga after the ceremony at the POW/MIA monument. There will be detailed directions on how to get back. This was the schedule of events last year for the ride and it was a very special experience for many. If you have not been to the Riverside National Cemetery to see the various memorials that are there, it is well worth the ride. Ask anyone that was on the run last year and they will tell you it was well worth it.

I hope we see you there.

#### **5:30-7:30 p.m.**

The RFTW 2007 kickoff dinner has been organized this year for all RFTW participants to get together and meet each other and to welcome the FNGs and share your experiences and let them know how important they are to RFTW. We will be eating at the hotel area. The dinner is a catered event by Backwoods Barbeque of Corona. You will not want to miss this dinner. The food is some of the best you will find anywhere. The dinner is free for all who have registered and received their armbands. If you are not registered the dinner will be \$10/person. The dinner has been funded by donations made from various individuals and businesses that have been friends to RFTW for a long time. They will be recognized at this dinner and will be the guests of RFTW for the dinner.

Donations are still being solicited and if anyone is interested in making a donation, you may contact Mil "Bigdog" Thornton, California Coordinator at [mcthorntons@yahoo.com](mailto:mcthorntons@yahoo.com)

## **RIDERS READY ... MOUNT UP!**

**By Frank "Tadpole" Perry**

**Southern Route Coordinator 2007**

It's almost time to take off for the Run—but it's definitely time to complete those unfinished maintenance items on your motorcycle: get the oil changed, clean the air filter, check the tires carefully for excessive wear and cuts or foreign objects protruding from the tread, ensure there are no loose nuts or bolts and that everything is snugged in place. Hopefully we all have had the opportunity to get in some saddle time over the past couple of months so that our backsides are somewhat prepared for the long hours and extensive miles on the bike facing us in May.

We have just about finished all the preparations for the Southern Route of the Run For The Wall XIX for 2007. Over a hundred and twenty-five volunteers have already spent countless hours coordinating activities within their specialty areas. Numerous gatherings are planned over the next few weeks to finalize plans, fill registration packets, and fold and staple individual Daily Itinerary booklets for each registrant.

The RFTW has a new headquarters hotel in Ontario this year. We will be using the Hilton Garden Inn as the facility for our pre-Run meetings and social gatherings. On Wednesday, May 16, we will depart from the TA Truckstop at 0745 and head east toward D.C. The Southern Route will depart only 15 minutes in front of the Central Route, so timing becomes a critical factor for us from the very start.

Hopefully the weather will cooperate again this year. That is such an uncertainty for us as we prepare to hit the road. The emails are already flying about the prognostications from the Farmers' Almanac, but as we all know, what will be will be. Just pack accordingly and be prepared for any eventuality.

I am really getting excited this year ... there is so much to look forward to. We've got new stops planned in Blythe, CA, and the locals there are anxious to have us parade through the town so that they can honor us (as we honor them for their support). Phoenix promises to be bigger and better ... get ready for the Arizona Experience, according to our AZ state coordinator, Rayman. Colorado City, TX Middle School is already preparing for our arrival. They have made giant leaps and strides in completing their new Veterans Memorial, and RFTW has been a significant contributor to that project.

Always a monumental stop, Jackson, MS, seems to grow exponentially year after year. Ms. Anne and I have the opportunity to travel to Jackson later this month to attend their final planning session. One of the highlights of this trip will be a stop in Hattiesburg, MS, to share a cup of coffee with Jack and Ruby Lucas. Jack is a MOH recipient from WWII. They are such a wonderful couple to just sit down and visit with ... so down to earth and sincere.

Every day is a new adventure on the Run For The Wall. There are so many new experiences, and each of us is impacted and affected in different ways. The visit to Wytheville, VA, and that experience with those Spiller Elementary School children is so reminiscent of our stop in Colorado City, TX. Their dedication and sincerity is so touching. Then on to Montvale Elementary in Montvale, VA, for our final school visit. Those kids work for months putting their program together. It is always touching for our riders to be honored in this manner.

Day 10 is kind of bittersweet. It's wonderful to ride into D.C. knowing what we have accomplished on our mission crossing the U.S. in ten days; but it's a bit sad, too, in that our Run is over for another year. The several activities scheduled during our weekend in D.C. help to buffer that sadness. The wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns by RFTW personnel is such an emotional experience for us all. Then on Sunday, we stage in the Pentagon parking lots to take part in the Rolling Thunder XX demonstration. To see and hear over a quarter million motorcycles in one place is another experience to behold.

There is so much to see and experience ... words just can't do it justice. We hope that you are able to join us and see for yourself. I can promise that you'll never be the same person that you were before.

Welcome Home!

## **MISSING MAN POSITION**

**From Ron "Hammer" Young, CR Coordinator**

We have six positions remaining for Missing Man. Bill Kable is our Missing Man Coordinator for the CR in 2007. His contact information is tenrpipe@msn.com. If you wish to ride a leg of the Run in the Missing Man formation you should contact Bill.

The Missing Man position is a place of dignity and honor, and is not to be taken lightly. Many people report the experience is especially moving and is often cited as part of their personal healing process. This is not to be viewed as a way to "ride in the front" or an "easy ride." I take this position very seriously, and feel you will as well.

The Missing Man formation is constructed of three rows of motorcycles:

<u>Left Column</u>	<u>Right Column</u>
Row 1: Route Coordinator	State Coordinator
Row 2: Missing Man Rider	Vacant
Row 3: Missing Man Coord-----	Senior Chaplain

This is a tight formation that leads RFTW. When ridden correctly, the formation is easily recognized as we travel across country. The significance is deeply moving to those who witness it.

The criteria for riding the Missing Man formation is as follows:

1. First preference goes to FNGs. FNGs are dear to the Run, and that is why we have continued the Run for 19 years. The Missing Man assignment is a terrific experience for them.
2. Next is someone who has not ridden in the Missing Man.
3. Only when 1 and 2 are satisfied would we allow a "repeat."
4. In case of "no shows" we can have someone from the front of the 1st platoon ride that leg to maintain formation.
5. In no case will anyone use the Missing Man position to "get a ride in the front."
6. For safety reasons, the Missing Man assignment must be conducted on a motorcycle without a sidecar or trailer.
7. Upon completing their assignment, the honoree will receive a Missing Man pin.

We have about SIX slots currently open for consideration. Feel free to contact Bill for more information and to select a position.

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## **SOUTHERN ROUTE: VIRGINIA VETERANS CARE CENTER**

**From Laurie "Airborne" Clay**

RFTW Southern Route has had the pleasure of visiting veterans at the Virginia Veterans Care Center for a number of years. Each year, the veterans look forward to our arrival and are always outside to greet us when we arrive. Every year the staff of the Care Center amazes us by putting on a wonderful, hot meal for all the RFTW riders and supporters. A number of the veterans at the Care Center have minimal income, so this year I would like to do something special for those who welcome us into their home. Most of these items will fit in a saddlebag of your bike or can be given to a designated chase vehicle. These veterans support RFTW each year; now it's time to show our support. Please consider donating one or more of the following items:

- Large magnifying glasses (hand held type)
- DVD or VHS movies
- Trivia type games
- Sweat pants and sweat shirts (all sizes)



Shirts with quilted lining (all sizes)  
Word search books  
Lounge pants (all sizes)  
Underwear (all sizes)  
T-Shirts (all sizes)  
Gripper socks  
Socks

See everyone in May.

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## **RFTW MERCHANDISE UPDATE**

First of all I want to remind you that the merchandise portion of the website has been redesigned. We have added pictures of everything RFTW sells and there are now three ways to order: email, fax or snail mail.

The orders are rolling in at a rate of 4-5 a day and I want to personally thank all of you for supporting RFTW with your orders. The 2007 All The Way and Participant patches arrived last week so all orders are going out complete. Back orders for those patches have also been filled so if you feel you have something on order and haven't received it, please contact me.

Website orders will be accepted until May 1, which is the cut-off date. We will not accept any more orders until the "Run" is complete and the trailers are returned to Phoenix. This will allow us time to stock the two trailers for the run over to Ontario. I anticipate being able to begin shipping again by June 15. If we run out of anything on the "Run" it will be restocked by July 1.

We will have some new items for 2008, so you will want to keep an eye out for those. Looking forward to seeing many of you in Ontario and along the route.

Don "9-Ball" Morris  
Director of Merchandise  
RFTW Board Member  
(623) 486-9433 After 4:00 pm pacific time  
(602) 326-7502 Cell anytime  
[donmorris@earthlink.net](mailto:donmorris@earthlink.net)

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## **WHERE TO GO FOR ROUTE NEWS**

**By Anne Perry, RFTW Public Information Contact**

Riders and those interested in Run For The Wall may now check either route-specific website for 2007: [www.rftwcr-2007.us](http://www.rftwcr-2007.us) or [www.rftwsr-2007.us](http://www.rftwsr-2007.us) for the Mission flier (downloadable in Adobe Acrobat Reader [pdf] format) and the 2007 Mission video (downloadable as a Windows Media file).

If you are a returning rider and are recruiting other riders and/or supporters, please check first with your RFTW State Coordinator (listed under Contacts on the main [www.rftw.org](http://www.rftw.org) webpage). This will help avoid duplication of effort.

Keep up-to-date by reading the Latest News posted by the Route Coordinator for the route you have chosen, as well as

the President's Latest News on the main website. There are many necessary changes being made this year to both routes.

If you need other information for media releases, riders, or supporters, please contact Anne Perry by e-mail at [aperry@flash.net](mailto:aperry@flash.net) or by telephone at (979) 828-4374.

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*(Ed. note: The following guidelines for riding with RFTW have been approved by the Board of Directors. Every rider should read this, not just once, but over and over until following the guidelines becomes automatic. If all riders read this, the journey to Washington, D.C. will be safer and more enjoyable for everyone.)*

## HOW WE RIDE

By Colin Campbell

Asst Platoon Leader, SR

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

The rules are outlined as follows:

### Signals

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

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



**Right turn**

**Left turn**

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

**Speed up:** Pump left fist up and down



**STOP or  
Slow down**



**Speed UP**

**Hazard:** Point at the area on the road with your hand and index finger (left or right side).

**Close Ranks:** Left hand overhead, open and close fist



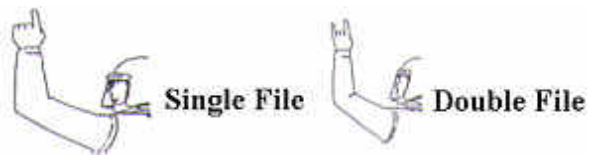
**Hazard in the  
Road**



**Close the Ranks  
open and close fist**

**Staggered Formation:** Left arm raised overhead, index finger extended.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Passing signals back. The Route Coordinator passes signals through Platoon Leaders. Please (all riders) pass the signals all the way back down to the end of the column.**

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

**Fueling:** During fuel stops on the Southern Route, fueling personnel wear an **orange** arm band and cap which indicates lines for premium grade fuel or a **green** arm band and cap which indicates the regular grade fuel line. On the Central

Route, all fueling personnel will be wearing green vests and caps. File in side-by-side, two riders to a pump. Pay to the nearest dollar rounded up. Any excess monies collected will go toward fuel for chase vehicles.

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## **RUN Q&A**

**By Ron “Hammer” Young, Central Route Coordinator**

I have received several calls and emails with the following questions. This is an update of the FAQs I posted last fall.

Q. How fast does the pack ride?

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

Q. How does the pack enter the highway?

A. We work with local and state authorities to aid our entrance onto the highways. The lead element will slowly enter the highway and maintain a slow speed as the pack follows. There is no reason to ride fast to "catch up" with the pack. The lead element continues a slow speed until the last man vehicle reports he/she is on the highway. At that point the Route Coordinator will slowly increase speed in five mile per hour increments at the rate of about 2-3 mph increase per minute. This increase is given to the Assistant Route Coordinator who is leading the 1st Platoon, who will then slowly bring the pack to the assigned speed. The Platoon Leaders will follow suit, and are responsible for maintaining the proper distance. As you can see, there is no reason to ride faster than the speed limit - follow these guidelines and the platoons will bring you up to speed properly and reduce "rubber banding."

Q. When will itineraries be available?

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

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

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

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

A. Cost of lodging, meals and gas to ride All the Way is largely a matter of personal preference. If you camp, some sites are free or reduced prices. Hotels will be indicated on our Route Schedule (see 1 above) and we often get a modest group discount from the standard rack rate. Gas is sometimes provided by supporters, but given the current state of gas prices, the level of future support cannot be certain. Most meals are provided free by local volunteers. Also, allow enough funds for emergency repairs and maintenance of your vehicle.

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

A. Our number one goal is safety of the Run participants and the public. Personal vehicles can travel a few miles ahead or behind the pack, but cannot intermingle with the pack at any time. Due to limited space at most of our gas stops we ask you proceed to another station or skip a gas stop. Our gas stops range are spaced from 70 to 114 miles apart so "cages" will not need gas as often as the pack.

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

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

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

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

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## WHAT TO PACK FOR THE RUN

Lots of FNGs have asked for suggestions on what to bring on Run for the Wall. When we thought about it, we decided that a lot of RFTW "old timers" might also find this information helpful. We went through our email and RFTW Bulletin Board posts from the past several years and brainstormed to compile this list. Tailor your checklist to your own personal needs—you may want to bring additional items, you may want to leave some things at home.

Thanks to Mark "Straight Arrow" Rittermeyer, Pup, Ghost, Iron Mike, Doorgunner, Sizzmo, Duct Tape, Deekin, Nuguyabe, Spook, Shadow, Suzanne S., Little Mac, Dragonrider, and others who contributed to this list.

### Motorcycles

- American & POW-MIA Flags for bike
- T-bag and/or saddle bags
- Water bottle ("sport" bottle or "Camelback")
- Bungee Cords (lots of 'em)
- Duct Tape
- Tool kit
- Regular & allen wrenches
- Screwdrivers
- Spark plugs & wrench
- Wire ties, zip ties
- Shop rags
- WD 40
- Clamps
- Rope
- Jumper cables
- Funnel
- Can of Fix-a-flat
- Tire repair kit
- Replacement light bulbs
- Fuses
- Super glue
- 6' of 1/4" plastic hose or turkey baster (to siphon gas)
- Motorcycle oil (however much your bike needs!)
- Helmet (DOT legal)
- Bandanna or "do-rag"
- Jammies (or shorts or sweat pants)
- Hankies
- Shower shoes
- Bath towel
- Wash cloth (in zip-lock bag!)
- Toilet Kit
- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Soap
- Deodorant
- Shampoo
- Comb and/or brush
- Roll of TP in Ziploc bag (be prepared!)
- Sun block (Don't leave home without it!)
- Chapstick
- Personal first aid kit
- Medications in marked containers
- Prescription glasses
- Sun glasses or goggles (2 pair)
- Ear plugs
- Laundry detergent (in heavy zip-lock bag)
- Small sewing kit
- Money
- Credit Cards/Traveler's Checks
- Driver's License
- Insurance information
- Dog tags for emergency identification
- Emergency info: Next of kin, home and work phone numbers, doctors' phone numbers, list of prescription

- Warm knit cap for under helmet and/or sleeping
- Heavy jacket
- Light weight jacket
- Chaps
- Warm gloves
- Summer gloves
- Rain Gear (Jacket, pants and galoshes)
- Padlock
- Trash Bags for covering T-Bag in rain, laundry, etc.
- Zip-lock bags (all sizes) organizes & keeps stuff dry
- Extra pair of boots
- Jeans (2-3 pair)
- T-shirts (at least 6)
- Long-sleeved T-shirt (for the Mojave desert)
- Warm sweat shirt
- Underwear & Socks (at least 6 pair)
- Thermal underwear
- medications, glasses prescription, bank information
- Cell phone and/or pager
- Road Maps and Run Schedule
- Business cards (to exchange with new friends)
- Note pad & pencil
- Camera and film
- Items you want to leave at The Wall
- List of names you want to locate on The Wall

### Campers

- Tent with pegs
- Waterproof Ground Cloth/Tarp
- Sleeping Bag
- Sleeping Mat or Cot
- Folding chair or camp stool
- Flashlight with extra batteries

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## GET YOUR BIKE READY TO GO

By John "Shooter" McCabe,

RFTW Road Guard

[John@CrucifiedRider.com](mailto:John@CrucifiedRider.com)

1. If your tires need changing, change them now. If tires are good, check inflation just before we leave; have a tire pressure gage on hand.
2. Change the oil just before leaving.
3. Check all lights and have extra bulbs on hand.
4. Check suspension air lines (for air shocks).
5. Check operation of all switches; make sure things that should work do.
6. If you have spoke wheels, get them checked at the dealer for spoke tension!
7. Change air and fuel filters.
8. Check brake and hydraulic clutch fluid levels.
9. Check clutch and brake cables.
10. Check every bolt, nut, screw you can get to, make sure things are tight.
11. Check your luggage, make sure straps are not rotted or torn. (I have dodged sleeping bags, small luggage bags and other things falling off bikes...not fun for Road Guards at 90+mph)
12. Make sure your bike is ready. If nothing else, take it to a dealer and have them go over it for you. The money you spend there will not compare to the funds it will cost you if things go wrong and you are 3500 miles from home.
13. Make SURE you are ready, get the bike out and practice speed control at 65 mph by easy throttle movements NOT brakes. Practice slow maneuvering; we all know how to ride at highway speeds but it's those slow maneuvers we will be needing that may need to be honed a bit. Remember, we will be maneuvering in close proximity to other bikes (6-8 inches between bikes at times)—be ready for it.
14. If you plan on riding two-up, take a few rides two-up and practice rider and driver communications. If you are a rider, your eyes are just as important as the driver's in a close formation ride. You are NOT a sight-seer—you are part of the overall bike safety team.

This will be my 4th year as a Road Guard. Our job starts the morning you all get to the parking lot at the truck stop. When you come into the lot there at Ontario please go SLOW, and tell the Road Guards which route you will be taking

so we can get you to the proper lines. Have your gas tank FULL. Re-check your luggage one last time—make sure it's tight and secured on your bike. There will be a bunch of riders, bikes, media, and normal traffic in that parking lot so be careful and keep your head up.

See you all in Ontario...

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## **MISC. REMINDERS**

- Cash: Take extra \$1 and \$5 bills for gas. When we fill up, total is rounded up; the extra helps gas up the support vehicles.
- Throttle rockers will add some comfort to your ride (available at H-D dealers).
- Morning meetings are mandatory.
- Take showers at night so you won't be late for the morning meetings.
- If you get sleepy while riding, give a heads-up to the riders around you and pull off where safe. You can catch up at the next stop. RIDE SAFE!!!

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## **POMONA VALLEY HD OPEN FOR RFTW**

WELCOME HOME! Hope to meet most of you on the morning of May 16th, or during the first four days on the Central Route. If Pomona Valley Harley-Davidson can be of assistance to you, I may see you before the 16th.

Pomona Valley Harley-Davidson is nine miles west of the T&A Truck Stop. We're normally closed on Mondays, and don't service bikes on Sundays. For the third year now, our dealership has agreed to staff the Service Department on Sunday, May 13th, and open the store (including Service), on Monday, May 14th to help RFTW riders. If you need a predictable service or oil change, give us a call to make a reservation ... it'll help us to staff the Service Department for you. Tuesday the 15th is a normal work day for us, but we'll take reservations for that day also. Unanticipated repairs will be handled as quickly as possible on a first come, first served basis. I'm very passionate about the Run, and will make sure your bikes will be given a top priority.

If you or one of your contacts needs to arrange service or has other questions, please give us a call at (909) 981-9500.

Jim Frost, Accounting Manager  
Pomona Valley Harley-Davidson  
USAF SSgt, Bien Hoa Air Base, RVN, 8/67 – 10/69

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## **NOTICE OF CHASE VEHICLE POLICY**

*Approved by RFTW Board of Directors*

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

1) Chase trailers are provided only as outlined below. They are not to be used to transport personal property including functional motorcycles, motorcycle trailers or luggage.

- 2) RFTW will make reasonable attempts to assist riders with incapacitated bikes, but there are no guarantees this service will always be available. (There may be times when the trailers are full and the riders will either have to wait or make their own arrangements.)
- 3) Chase vehicles will provide free service for motorcycles broken down or incapacitated in case of an accident.
- 4) Oversized trikes or other vehicles exceeding the capacity of our trailers WILL NOT be transported. Capacity decisions rest with the chase truck driver.
- 5) Where a motorcycle is incapacitated due to an accident, the bike will be loaded on the trailer with approval from authorities and owner/rider release as appropriate.
- 6) If the motorcycle needs to be transported and has a trailer attached, the trailer can be loaded onto the trailer with the bike.
- 7) Assuming the rider is not injured, he/she is responsible for assuring the bike is tied down safely and appropriately. The chase crews will assist, but ultimately the responsibility for securing bikes rests with the rider. The chase crews will not be responsible for bike damage.
- 8) In addition to item (7) above, the rider shall secure luggage so that it will not become separated from the bike. Should it be prudent to remove the luggage, it shall be secured to the trailer floor or placed in the truck bed prior to chase truck departure.
- 9) The chase crews will transport the motorcycle “forward” along the daily route to the next available dealership where it will be unloaded. The chase vehicle will then depart to catch the Run.
- 10) The Route Coordinator is the final authority on any questions concerning this matter.

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## **RFTW GROUP PHOTOS IN D.C.**

Ric White has been taking RFTW’s panorama group photos each year in front of the Lincoln Memorial. We gather there immediately upon our arrival in D.C. on Friday, May 25. PLEASE NOTE: This year, the photo of the All-the-Way group only will be taken right after the big group photo. If you are in the All-the-Way group, don’t leave the area after the first photo. All-the-Way photo will also include road guards and fuel crew.

From Ric:

“I will be waiting in front of the reflecting pool at the Lincoln Memorial for RFTW arrival in order to seat everyone for the massive group portrait. This year I will be in a wheelchair, but still capable to take photos.

“My photo and poetry exhibit will be in the main showroom of H-D of Washington from Thursday, May 24 until Tuesday May 29 featuring photos of RFTW. I will personally be with the exhibit ‘We Will Never Forget’ all day Saturday May 26 and on Sunday May 25 in the North Pentagon parking lot with the Panorama and large group portrait display near the H-D of Wash T-shirt trailer. This display will be set up only between the hours of 7 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. (but could stay up longer if I can find the extra help by then). A heads up: I am still looking for a 50ft POW-MIA flag to be unfolded and held by volunteers at the base of the parking lot below the spot where my brother Patrick J. Hughes takes the annual Rolling Thunder Panoramic photograph about 10:45a.m. Reach me by the internet [pikzr@aol.com](mailto:pikzr@aol.com).”

Ric also sends some helpful info: “When leaving Wash. D.C. and taking Constitution Ave across Roosevelt bridge (Rt66) there is an OPEN JOINT in the hammer lane as Smoke Murphy from CA found out the hard way and spent two



week recovering in George Washington Hospital. Southwest Freeway (95south) as you approach South Capital Street also has an open joint in the hammer lane to look out for.”

“Together Forever” KZRic White

You can order RFTW group photos from past years from Ric by contacting him at [pikzr@aol.com](mailto:pikzr@aol.com). He also has a lot of individual photos of RFTW riders that can be purchased.

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## OUR STORIES

### MARCH ON THE PENTAGON USING THE VIETNAM WALL

By cagerbob

What an honor it was for me to stand with thousands of other “Eagles”. I saw many Eagles who just happen to be PGR (from their pins and patches). I ran into some Rolling Thunder members who attend missions here in Ohio (two of them are Gold Star parents).

One thing I found most striking was who the two sides represented.

The Eagles flew Red, White, and Blue and carried signs themed with what is best for America (us). They showed that their concern was for the strength and safety of the nation (the greater good).

Their side was a joining of forces of special interest groups, including socialists, communists, Free the Palestinians, Immigrants Rights, and many others. Many of them were college age (students?) laughing and chanting and having a good old time. I got the impression they were there because it was something fun and different to do, not because they understood the issue or that their heart was in it.

I did note that the very few American flags they flew either had Peace signs in the blue field, or were flown upside down. I also noticed that this crowd flew more flags of foreign countries than American flags. As an American citizen, had I chose to side with this group I would have been very insulted and embarrassed to have these foreign flags there. These people are the "me" crowd. This was an opportunity for them to try to advance their own personal interests/agendas.



I observed that the lines at the Lincoln Memorial were drawn with each side on one side of Constitution Ave. Although the LEOs were numerous, they did not appear to interact with the protestors unless necessary. There were, however, a good many of them along the Eagles side of the street. They appeared happy to be stationed there, and freely talked and joked with the Eagles as they kept their eyes open for trouble. The trouble came in the form of people (typically "kids") trying to walk into the Eagles group to incite trouble. They were usually followed by people with cameras to "document" Eagle abuse for their propoganda. The first kid I saw come across received a few "attention-getters" by someone and then was forcibly pushed back into the street with advice to "walk it off." The surprised look on this kid's face told me that he had no idea of the passion of the Eagles for this issue. I took that as meaning he didn't carry the same passion for the opposing side of the issue. After that the Eagles got wise to this tactic and responded (I believe) brilliantly. Whenever one of these would-be infiltrators would approach the Eagles side (appearing nonchalant, but hiding a poster or something and again usually having some cameras in tow), the Eagles would get very vocal to the LEOs and point at the offender. The LEOs would promptly surround these spies and force them back across the street.

I was very relieved when I arrived to find the Park Police screening all visitors to the Wall. As a consequence, the line of waiting visitors was very long. The police discontinued the screening process at about 1430, but did not leave. They were still standing vigilant watch when I left.

On a personal note, it was very fulfilling for me to finally get back (I went once on a Jr. high school field trip) to Washington D.C. I finally got to see and touch the Wall (and it touched me). I got rubbings of my second cousin (I placed a "Mission Accomplished" pin in front of his panel), and of an MIA master sergeant who was finally brought home and buried with honor last year (I should have brought two pins).

I believe the Silent Majority is silent no more.

*Editor's note:*

*Cager Bob was a Lance Corporal, U.S. Marine Corps, and was awarded the Navy Cross during the Vietnam War. He is paralyzed on one side and has massive head and body injuries, but will stand for hours to honor a fallen brother or sister. To Pegleg and many others who know Bob, he is a great American and a great hero. Said Pegleg: "With all his medical problems he stands with us at funerals of fallen from the war on terror and considers it an honor to stand with us as a PGR Rider, a veteran, and an American."*

From the Navy Department Board of Decorations and Medals:

Date of Action: February 25, 1969

Citation:

The Navy Cross is presented to Robert B. Gregory, Jr., Lance Corporal, U.S. Marine Corps, for extraordinary heroism while serving as a Rifleman with Combined Action Platoon 2-1-2, Third Combined Action Group, III Marine Amphibious Force, in the Republic of Vietnam on 23 and 25 February 1969. Lance Corporal Gregory's platoon was participating in a search and destroy operation near the village of Hoa Huong in Quang Nam Province when the Marines sustained several casualties as they came under a heavy volume of hostile automatic weapons fire from a numerically superior force occupying well-fortified emplacements. Realizing the necessity for immediate action, Lance Corporal Gregory rushed across the fire-swept terrain to a machine gun which had been dropped by a wounded Marine and, with complete disregard for his own safety, provided covering fire which enabled his companions to remove the injured men to positions of relative safety. Having exhausted his ammunition and heedless of the enemy rounds impacting about him, he again ran forward and assisted a casualty to safety, after which he repeatedly crossed the dangerous terrain to retrieve weapons and equipment left behind by wounded men. When a medical evacuation helicopter arrived, he fearlessly exposed himself to the intense hostile fire raking the landing zone as he assisted the casualties to embark. On 25 February, during the same operation, Lance Corporal Gregory's platoon was directed to assist another unit which was heavily engaged with the enemy. Arriving at the designated location, he observed a wounded Marine fall in a position dangerously exposed to the hostile fire. After crawling to the man's side, he was treating the casualty when he detected an enemy soldier preparing to fire at his injured companion. Although realizing the explosion would reveal his presence to the hostile force, Lance Corporal Gregory immediately threw a hand grenade and killed the enemy soldier. Ignoring the hostile rounds that were being concentrated on his now revealed position, he began carrying the casualty from the area. Although struck by enemy fire three times, he refused to abandon his wounded comrade and successfully reached a position of relative safety. He refused medical evacuation to ensure that his comrade and other wounded were cared for. Although weak from his wounds and loss of blood, he continued to aid his fellow Marines until he received a fourth wound and was forced to abandon his selfless tasks. By his courage, bold initiative and unfaltering devotion to duty, Lance Corporal Gregory upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.

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## **DUTY, HONOR, COUNTRY**

**March 17, 2007 – Washington, DC**

**Some Observations by Dwight "Dutch" Stevens—Advance Team Captain**

There are moments in life that define who we are, and what we stand for, both as individuals, and as a nation. On Saturday, March 17, 2007 in Washington, DC, I witnessed first-hand what this nation is all about, and saw the American soldier defeat yet another enemy. It was a defining moment in American history. The men and women who defined that

moment on March 17 heard 58,249 voices speak to them. Those voices thundered across 40 years of history and shouted: "Duty, Honor, Country."

On that historic morning the bravest men and women I have ever known answered the call to arms. As we boarded the buses to face the enemy, I saw my brothers brave the bitter cold. No one complained and their faces were deadly serious. The mission was clear, and the outcome was never, never in doubt!

As the day unfolded the lines of battle were drawn. The Gathering of Eagles, along with Run For The Wall, and others, were posted on a very windy knoll at the East End of the Wall surrounded by hundreds of American flags. John "Slammer" Gebhards and J.R. Franklin deployed us in groups to protect the perimeters of the Wall and at that point I remembered the words of General George S. Patton: "I pity the bastards we're going up against."



My group was deployed along Constitution Avenue NW and Henry Bacon Drive NW. It was cold and windy, and the occasional hot cup of coffee felt good as the battle drew near. One of my areas, at the intersection of 21st Street and Constitution Avenue (I labeled it LZ-21C), went from "LZ" to a "Hot LZ" very fast. I was getting concerned and began to wonder what I had done to piss-off Slammer and J.R. Franklin.

As a Sector Leader, I remember thinking that the bright orange "Marshal" shirt I wore was only a target. It was my job to keep the peace, and make sure my team remained "on station." Keep the peace? Protestors shouted obscenities in your face, carried signs attached to wooden stakes that could have been used as a weapon, and Slammer wants me to "keep the peace." The concept of "Situational Awareness" was out the window. It was survive as best you can. As 21C heated up, a GOE official said to contact Slammer and get more orange shirts to 21C fast. NO PROBLEM! I then ask Larry "Stepper" Rodgers to stick around. I figured if anyone attacks me from the back, he could at least help. Good strategy huh?

Some of the words used by the Vietnam Vets cannot be written here, but I can assure you that everything including the protestor's ancestry was questioned in detail. Everything was fair game. One sign carrying protestor broke the line of Vietnam Vets, but was immediately relieved of her sign and handed over to the Washington Police. Whatever her intentions were, they didn't work here. I have to be honest and say that, for the better part of the day, I was concerned about our safety. I think you could even say I was just plain frightened of what could have happen.

Late that afternoon the tension began to subside. A feeling of pride was in the air, and the bitter cold, the pain, the lack of food and coffee didn't matter anymore. As we searched for transportation back to the Holiday Inn Ballston, I felt renewed. Our enemy was confused, disoriented, and lacked any sort of organized deployment. They met their enemy, and it was more than they could handle. Hanoi Jane Fonda ran, and Cindy Sheehan was left out in the cold and abandoned.

As the article "Miracle in Washington" stated: "Soon we realized that the hundreds of thousands the anti-war movement promised did not descend on the nation's capital to mark the 40th anniversary of the Vietnam protest of 1967. They numbered only in the thousands, and part of those thousands included the less protest savvy "other side!"

March 17, 2007 ushered in a new chapter in history. The call to arms was answered and the phrase: "Not On My Watch" was the cry of the day. The idiotic, self-serving, moon-bat anti-war protesters were in Washington wearing peace emblems and shouting slogans like "Impeach Bush." It was a disgusting display of anti-America at its hypocritical best. But their "best" was only a maximum of their stupidity. It could not compare to The Gathering of Eagles, and their supporters.

Unfortunately, like the Vietnam War, this war was reported by a self-serving Media who penned stories filled with inaccuracies, deliberate omissions, biased presentations, and blatant distorted interpretations. The support of the troops took a back seat to the press and its own importance. As the Late Col. David Hackworth called them, "the perfumed

paper princes of Washington."

Without a doubt our brothers and sisters whose names are etched on the Vietnam Wall will hold us all accountable for our actions of March 17, 2007. I hope I passed their inspection. I also hope that the organizations that refused to answer that call to arms can sleep at night. I hope their leadership realizes that without their support they (to some degree) weakened a nation. Run For The Wall has no such worries or concerns. Our eagle soared and our members were led, not thrown into a potentially dangerous abyss.

In closing I would only say that the Vietnam Veterans still stand strong, and are still willing to fight to ensure that this war is won on the battlefield and not by the likes of Cindy Sheehan and Jane Fonda. Make no mistake, there is nothing up for debate here. The GOE campaign in Washington, DC was greater than the sum of its parts, and its success can never be rationally disputed. The anti-war, anti-Vietnam idiots have had their day, and that day is OVER.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED ...  
AND GOD BLESS THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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## **ENDING 40 YEARS OF SILENCE**

### **From Monsoon's Dispatch**

The Gathering of Eagles was a very historic, moving and emotional event on Saturday as Veterans stood in solidarity at "the Wall" with our "Band of Brothers and Sisters" proudly ending 40 years of silence.

"The Wall" was secured around the perimeter. Nobody was down at the Wall; they were around it and the entire Park. Not one protester ever entered! We were lined up on Constitution Ave so they could not enter the trails leading to the Wall.

As thousands of anti-war protesters passed our ranks, they validated the service and sacrifice of each of us, as we fought to preserve those freedoms they were now exercising. We stood for the silent majority, showing the anti-war protesters that there were indeed others who supported a different viewpoint on the war on terrorism and that by our actions we truly supported our troops in harm's way.

These aged veterans of wars past were brought together for a patriotic "mission"—to guard our sacred grounds from vandals who would so desecrate them. In addition, to show those that are weak in spirit and moral fiber, that lack the courage and strength to resist defeatism, that the dictatorships and bloodletting in the Iraq's, Rwanda's and Dafur's must stop and who but America has the power to make this happen. The anti-war protesters need to understand that there are those in America who still believe in the ideals of our forefathers, "that all men are created equal and have the right to the pursuit of happiness," and that we will defend that right, whenever and wherever tyranny raises its ugly head. If not America, then who, "to strike down these despotic leaders" depriving their own people of their right to the freedoms that we all enjoy, bought and paid for by the sacrifice of our veterans.



The Run For the Wall Headquarters was at the Holiday Inn in Arlington where old friends and comrades had come to gather: Tanker, Slammer, JR, Redcatcher, Blackhat, Cruiser, Dutch, Top, Buffalo and Monsoon to name but a few. We met to organize Saturday's mission, protecting "our Wall" and the sacred grounds where our monuments to heroic sacrifice stood.

Reveille was held at o'dark hours as we formed and were bussed down to the Vietnam Memorial Wall. Stages were

being erected and Veterans organizations forming for their sectors protecting “our grounds.”

Organizations along with RFTW arrived early to help set up and establish their perimeter security. Once we all received our standing orders, we ventured out and toured the sacred grounds.

The anti-war protesters seemed confused and bewildered when they came upon thousands of Veterans surrounding the perimeter of our sacred monuments. Many backed away and collected in groups under trees and many returned in the direction that they came from. The Park Police turned around a few of the “hotheads” and were joined by Washington's finest (the Police) who assisted with removing them. There was not a single incident involving a Veteran in our sector and not an ungentlemanly act from a RFTW participant with a protester other than an exchange of words. In fact, many acts of kindness were observed by RFTW members as exhibited by Wayne "Redcatcher" Nicholls escorting a WW2 Veteran to a cab as the gentleman became ill. The Veterans chanting USA, USA resounded in the park, and it was motivating, to say the least.



Members of Run For The Wall gathered later that afternoon and evening for a little fellowship and camaraderie for a “Job Well Done!” The mission was accomplished as our Nation's sacred monuments were protected by our Nation's most treasured asset, its Veterans. RFTW participants can be proud as they came together, once again, as a “Band of Brothers and Sisters” continuing to serve our Nation and our Veterans and their families in need.

The anti-war demonstrators could have numbered in the thousands, but the number of Vietnam Veterans that stood in solidarity were well over 58,000. I truly felt the spirit of our fallen brothers and sisters on our Wall, as they once again stood shoulder to shoulder with their Band of Brothers and Sisters supporting us all on this mission to protect the ideals of the freedoms that we fought for. That emotional and endearing moment will forever remain on my conscience and in my heart. I stood proud Saturday and was never prouder of those aging and tireless warriors that stood with me.

Semper Fi,  
Monsoon

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## **YOU WERE WITH US IN SPIRIT**

**By Wayne “Redcatcher” Nicholls**

WOW! It was an incredible feeling to be re-united with such great company. I hadn't seen such a large gathering of Vietnam Vets in one place since leaving Vietnam. Words cannot express the rewards I felt knowing they had my back and I had theirs, just like so many years ago.

Run For The Wall, Patriot Guard Riders, Rolling Thunder, Vietnam Vets MC, and other groups worked together in protecting our Memorials. RFTW was represented by (my count) 65+ guys and gals. Led by Slammer and JR, we broke out into two platoons. Each platoon had several two-man patrols. We were responsible for patrolling Constitution Avenue, from Henry Bacon Street on up past the pond adjacent to the WW2 Memorial. We were a reactionary force; reporting back “Moonbat activity.” We were cautioned that some would possibly be carrying “oven cleaner.” When sprayed into the eyes, it causes blindness. There were also threats of the "New SDS" (remember the "Students for a Democratic Society?") coming back in “full body armor” to deface the Wall by throwing acid on it. There were other groups including A.N.S.W.E.R. and “Code Pink.” Mostly made up of young kids, most didn't have a clue what they were doing. A smile at them usually got one in return. Although none appeared threatening to me personally, the threat of defacing our Wall was real and never far from my thoughts.

Some of the "Anti-War Protesters" walking down Constitution to their rally had



to walk through a gauntlet of veterans and patriots lined up on both sides of the path. Voices were raised on both sides with the "Gathering of Eagles" drowning out their chants as the "Moonbats" marched past the "Jane Fonda (outhouse) Field Office."

I witnessed first-hand the biased media reporting on this event. Not once did I hear the "Gathering of Eagles" mentioned by reporters. We were labeled "Counter Protesters" or the "Pro-War Group." One "Moonbat" said in his interview that we were "a bunch of hooligans in leather jackets." Most media claimed we were just a "few," whereas my estimate puts us around 10,000+. Far more than just the "handful" the protesters and organizers expected.

Our Memorials were protected. You were with us in Spirit. Mission Accomplished.

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## **SCOOTER SERVICES IN ONTARIO AREA**

All of you are putting some miles on your scooters before starting the run, and perhaps looking for oil changes or other service before heading east. Here's what's lined up to take care of you and the machines: Yamahas: Check with Yamaha of Cucamonga, [www.yocracing.com](http://www.yocracing.com), toll free at (800) 523-2414. John runs the service department. Service will be closed on Sunday. They say they'll close on Monday the 14th, but if you call for an appointment, the owner might be talked into opening the service department. Appointments on Tuesday "are highly recommended." The owner, Jay Conaway, is very anxious to provide priority service to members of the run, so let him know why you're looking for his help. Several of Jay's customers will be joining the run this year, so Jay's up to speed on what we're all about. Yamaha of Cucamonga will also handle routine service for other metrics; oil changes, tires, and such. They're the closest metric dealer to the T&A starting point of the run.

Hondas, Kawasakis, and Yamahas: John Burr Cycles (909) 823-1338, in Fontana, California. General Manager Kurt knows you're coming to town, and has told his service staff of the importance of giving you priority service if you need their help. Closed on Sunday the 14th and Monday the 15th, they'll take reservations for service on Tuesday, and will also try to give priority to RFTW riders. Harley-Davidson: Pomona Valley Harley-Davidson is again going "above and beyond" for the run this year. They're nine miles west of the T&A truck stop in Montclair, California. They're normally closed on Mondays, and don't service bikes on Sundays, but you're the exception. For the third year, the dealership has agreed to staff the Service Department on Sunday, May 13th, and will open the store (including service), on Monday, May 14th to help RFTW riders. If you need a predictable service or oil change, give them a call to make a reservation (it'll help them to properly staff the department). Tuesday the 15th is a normal workday for them, but they'll take reservations for that day also. Unanticipated repairs will be handled as quickly as possible on a first come, first served basis. If you or any of your contacts needs to arrange service or has other questions, give them a call at (909) 981-9500. As a side note, if you have reservations but will be rolling in late, give them a call to let them know your ETA.

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## **LETTER FROM AN HONOR GUARD MEMBER**

*(Editor's note: "Boomer" recently received a letter from an Honor Guard member thanking the Patriot Guard for their show of support and respect. For reasons of privacy, Boomer omitted names in the letter. Also, read Boomer's remarks following the letter. We CAN and do make a difference.)*

Hello Sir,

I was wondering if you could forward the following for your fellow Patriot Guard members to read:

My name is (edited out by Boomer) and I was one of the Honor Guard these past two days for Sgt. \*\*\*\*\*. I have been

-serving in the United States Army Infantry for almost 3 years now, I just got back from a year in Iraq 3 months ago.

When I was placed on this Honor Guard at the beginning of this month I was not very excited or happy and I must say that this has not been a very happy month. Sgt. \*\*\*\*\* was the 10th service our team has been a part of; however, his was the first that I truly felt "Honored" to be part of the Honor Guard. Over the many past months I have lost my sense of pride in what I have done and why I chose to join and serve. I had forgotten that there were so many people in this country who still did support us and what we do, that there were still people in this country who I was proud to serve for. Seeing the support of your Patriot Guard and the local community for Sgt. \*\*\*\*\* shocked me and brought back my pride which I had lost long ago. I have never been so proud to be in the service and to be a Vet than I am now as a result of your actions and support. I would like to thank all of you for putting that back into me. Thank you for showing your support for Sgt. \*\*\*\*\* and for those of us who still serve. Thank you for making a soldier proud again of his country and fellow Americans. I am proud to serve each and every one of you and will to the best of my ability as long as I am able. Should my life be required of me in my service I now know that it will not be a waste regardless of how or why, but will be a token of my appreciation to my fellow Americans, and especially those such as yourselves. I would be honored to have even one of you present when the time comes for my own funeral. Sgt. \*\*\*\*\* will not be forgotten by his loved ones, by me and I will not forget you and your service to those who serve. **THANK YOU PATRIOT GUARD FOR YOUR SERVICE TO OUR NATION!**

A Soldier Proud To Serve,  
SPC\*\*\*\*\*

I, like all of us, am proud to have even had a small part in helping this young Trooper understand that he and those he serves with are Honored, Appreciated and Respected by all of us in the PGR and the RFTW.

It's easy to see their pride and not have an inkling of the negative impact so many things going on in this country and in the mainstream media may be having on these brave young men and women. I was surprised by this young Trooper's comments, as they always look so tall and proud. Sending this message was important enough to him that he did the research to find out who I was and to track down my e-mail address.

This just goes to show how important even the casual comment of support to our Troops, either individually or by a group, can be to any Trooper, be it a Pvt. or a career officer. Let's not be caught in the trap of complacency and assume that all is fine just because they are standing tall and brave for all of us.

BOOMER

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## **WELCOMING HOME OUR SOLDIERS**

RFTW and Patriot Guard Riders are very busy these days, welcoming home or seeing off soldiers at airport. Pegleg (Roland Marchand) sent the following photos, taken January 28, 2007 at a Welcome Home Escort to take 800 Marines returning from Iraq back home to 29 Palms.



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## WHO ARE THE BLUE STAR MOTHERS OF AMERICA, INC.?

By Sandra “Socks” O’Rear

President, Rio Grande Valley Chapter Blue Star Mothers of America,  
Albuquerque, New Mexico



You’ve seen the banner. Perhaps hanging in the window of a home, maybe a pin on someone’s jacket, vest, or shirt, a car magnet, or maybe even a patch. Ever wondered what it meant? It means a child stands watch while a family, a mom, waits and prays for their safe return. It is a symbol of pride and hope.

In 1917, the “Blue Star Service Banner” was designed and patented by World War I Army Captain Robert L. Queissner of the 5th Ohio Infantry, who had two sons serving on the front lines. The banner quickly became the unofficial symbol of a child in the service. The Blue Star Service Banner was officially adopted by the Department of Defense in 1966.

During WWI, the covering of the blue star with a gold star began. This indicated that the service member had been killed or died during their service to the country. The gold star symbolizes the ultimate sacrifice of a family.

During WWII, the practice of displaying the banner became much more prevalent. In January 1942, Captain George Maines ran an ad in a Flint, Michigan newspaper inviting mothers to join together in support of their service members. On February 1, 1942, 300 mothers met at the Durant Hotel in Flint, Michigan. With over 1,000 responses to the ad, it was decided to form a permanent organization. On February 6, 1942, Blue Star Mothers of America was reported on Congressional record, and in 1960 the organization was chartered by Congress as a Veteran Service and Support Organization.

Blue Star Mothers of America experienced rapid growth during the years surrounding WWII. Membership dropped in the years following, including the times during the Korean War, Vietnam War, and the first Persian Gulf War. But in the years that have followed September 11, 2001, membership has again grown rapidly.

Mothers across the U.S. come together to tape boxes, sort donations, sew neck coolers, and pack care packages filled with essentials and reminders of home. They visit the wounded warriors, sew lap quilts for the wounded, write letters



and cards to show their support, and offer encouragement for those wounded and their families. Through a new program called “Wounded Warriors” they provide items of comfort and necessity to hospitals, including field hospitals: sweats, towels, hygiene items, socks, and underwear are being sent to those wounded in action. Blue Star Mothers are there to Welcome Home service members at airports around the U.S., a cheer, a hug, a thank you, and a bag of goodies are offered to each returning service member. They are educating themselves on veterans’ benefits to ensure that their children are taken care of. They offer whatever support they can to all those who are currently serving and all those who have served. Families that have lost a loved one are supported in the transition from Blue Star to Gold Star family. Blue Star Mothers attend funerals and provide the families with a Gold Star Service Banner, helpful information, and a collection of condolence messages. They are there for each other with a hug, a word of comfort, and a helping hand.

In Albuquerque, we mailed over 1,000 boxes at a cost of more than \$13,000 last year. Over 3,000 neck coolers have been sewn and included in the care packages. Letters, cards, and emails that we receive from our troops let us know that what we are doing is important and makes a difference to them. It reminds them that someone cares.



What can you do to help? Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. We exist on donations. Money and items for the care packages and other projects are donated, although we sell magnets and other items as a way to earn funds, also. Please visit our National website at <http://www.bluestarmothers.org> to learn more about our organization, to locate a chapter near you, and to offer your assistance.

Along the route from LA to DC, there are sure to be Blue Star Mothers. Now that you know who they are and what they do, I hope that you offer your support to each of them. Give them a hug, ask about their son or daughter. You never know whether their Soldier, Sailor, Airman or Marine is on the other side of the state, the other side of the country, the other side of the world, or serving his or her tour(s) in Iraq or Afghanistan. A hug and a prayer may be just what they need to get through one more day.

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## **MORE STORIES . . .**

### **WHERE MEMORY ENDURES: AFTER 25 YEARS, THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL CASTS A LONG SHADOW.**

**By Cathleen McGuigan, Newsweek  
Feb. 12, 2007 issue**

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is so iconic, you tend to forget the political tempest that surrounded it more than 25 years ago. After the design—by a then-unknown Yale undergrad named Maya Lin—beat out 1,420 contenders in a blind competition, big shots such as Ross Perot, as well as 27 Republican congressmen, tried to block the starkly elegant plan. Critics claimed the gentle V where its two long walls met was a coded peace sign; what Lin called “a rift in the earth” one brigadier general termed “a scar of shame.” Some vets hated it, too, so a conventional bronze statue of three soldiers and an American flag were installed nearby. But even from the start, the public seemed to embrace the memorial. Today it's the most-visited monument in Washington.

The stunning design is a testament to the principle that less is more: those two long walls of polished black granite, cut into the earth and engraved with the names of 58,249 servicemen and -women who died in the Vietnam War, are charged with emotion. The ground is always scattered with notes and flowers; visitors run their fingers over the names, staring at their own reflected faces.

This week the American Institute of Architects is honoring the Vietnam memorial with its Twenty-five Year Award, for a work that's stood the test of time for a quarter century. It's especially impressive when you consider that past winners include the Guggenheim Museum and Rockefeller Center—while the memorial, as an early critic put it, is “neither a

building nor sculpture.” Yet few public projects have had such a profound hold on our national consciousness, and it’s cast a long shadow over the design of major memorials ever since. Lin created not just an object to revere but an evocative sense of place. You can see its influence in the Oklahoma City National Memorial, which opened in 2000. The architects, Hans and Torrey Butzer, created a space for contemplation, three quiet acres with a reflecting pool, an orchard and 168 bronze-and-glass chairs, one for each victim. The winning design for New York’s 9/11 memorial, by architect Michael Arad, similarly rejected the idea of a majestic monument in favor of a many-layered experience: cascading water in the footprints of the Twin Towers, terraces and a grove of trees—which a jury that included Maya Lin insisted be added to his plans. (Landscape architect Peter Walker joined Arad in revising the scheme.)

Another legacy of the Vietnam memorial is its design process—it was the largest competition of its kind—and its rough-and-tumble public aftermath. Similar public controversy has dogged the competition for the 9/11 project, and objections to Arad’s design have led to a number of changes. Some victims’ families are still squabbling over how the names of the dead should be inscribed—and are threatening to hold up fund-raising for the memorial unless they get their way. Maybe disputes are inevitable because loss is so personal, but the Vietnam memorial shows that such a monument can speak to next of kin as well as to the next generation. It’s a place where people can go to think without being told what to feel.

Still, neither Oklahoma City nor the 9/11 plans have the startling power, freshness and eloquence of Lin’s Vietnam design. We have high hopes that such landmarks will help us “heal” and “move on.” But the Vietnam Memorial’s deeper message—of not forgetting—is inescapable in those 58,249 names etched in stone. When you think about those names, the saddest truth may be that someday we’ll be building another war memorial, to those who are dying right now.

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## **THE HISTORY BEHIND CHALLENGE COINS**

*(Editor’s note: This year, for the first time, RFTW is issuing challenge coins. What are they? Why do they exist in the military, and also in sports clubs and almost every organization? There are many variations of the birth of challenge coins. The following two articles give us some info.)*

During World War I, American volunteers from all parts of the country filled the newly formed flying squadrons. Some were wealthy scions attending colleges such as Yale and Harvard who quit in mid-term to join the war. In one squadron a wealthy lieutenant ordered medallions struck in solid bronze carrying the squadron emblem for every member of his squadron. He himself carried his medallion in small leather pouch around his neck.

Shortly after acquiring the medallions, the pilot’s aircraft was severely damaged by ground fire. He was forced to land behind enemy lines and was immediately captured by a German patrol. In order to discourage his escape, the Germans took all of his personal identification except for the small leather pouch around his neck. In the meantime, he was taken to a small French town near the front. Taking advantage of a bombardment that night, he escaped. However, he was without personal identification.

He succeeded in avoiding German patrols and reached the front lines. With great difficulty, he crossed no-man’s land. Eventually, he stumbled onto a French outpost. Unfortunately, the French in this sector had been plagued by saboteurs. They sometimes masqueraded as civilians and wore civilian clothes. Not recognizing the young pilot’s American accent, the French thought him a saboteur and made ready to execute him. Just in time, he remembered his leather pouch containing the medallion. He showed the medallion to his would-be executioners. His French captors recognized the squadron insignia on the medallion and delayed long enough for him to confirm his identity. Instead of shooting him, they gave him a bottle of wine.

Back at his squadron, it became a tradition to ensure that all members carried their medallion or coin at all times. This was accomplished through a challenge in the following manner: a challenger would ask to see the coin. If the challenged could not produce his coin, he was required to buy a drink of choice for the member who challenged him. If the challenged member produced his coin, the challenging member was required to pay for the drink. This tradition

continued throughout the war and for many years after while surviving members of the squadron were still alive.

The fighting men and women of the 48th Intelligence Squadron proudly continue this tradition.

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## “COINING”

**From *Soldiers Magazine* Aug 94 Vol 49, No 8**

***Story by Maj. Jeanne Fraser Brooks***

Within days of his liberation from a prisoner of war camp, Sgt. Troy Dunlap received two Iraqi coins from an employee of the hotel where he and the other U.S. POWs were being housed by the Red Cross following their release. “One for you and one for me,” he told Maj. Rhonda Cornum who also had been taken prisoner when their UH-60 helicopter was shot down by members of Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard during Operation Desert Storm. “We joked that we could use them like military coins. ... We planned how we would use the Iraqi money to ‘coin’ our friends when we got back to Fort Rucker,” Cornum wrote in her book, “She Went to War.”

“Coining” is a relatively new U.S. military tradition, but has roots in the Roman Empire, where coins were presented to reward achievements. In the U.S. military, the tradition goes back to the early 1960s. A member of the 11th Special Forces Group took old coins, had them over-stamped with a different emblem, then presented them to unit members, according to Roxanne Merritt, curator of the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Museum at Fort Bragg, N.C.

A former commander of the 10th SFG picked up on the idea, becoming the first to mint a unit coin for a U.S. military unit. The 10th Group remained the only Army unit with its own coin until the mid-1980s, Merritt said, when “an explosion took place and everybody started minting coins.” Originally, the coins, which bear the unit crest on the front and whatever design the unit wants on the back, were given out by commanders and sergeants major to recognize outstanding acts performed by soldiers in the course of duty.

“They're a real morale booster,” said Duvall, “and tell the soldier, ‘you're a member of our unit’ which builds unit cohesion. The soldiers carry their credit card, driver's license and unit coin—their wallets are permanently deformed.” Don Phillips, a former commander of the 20th SFG, designed a coin for his unit and presented it to his soldiers when he retired. “Another unit asked me to make a coin for them, and then another, so I went into business making them,” said Phillips. To date, Phillips has made coins for between 600 and 700 units. The tradition has spread to the other services and is even being adopted by paramilitary units like the U.S. Marshall's SWAT team, according to Phillips.

The proliferation of coins and their availability to the general public in post gift shops has caused Dr. Joseph Fisher, Special Operations Command historian, to view them as “not as special as they used to be; there are so many of them out there now.” But that doesn't stop Fisher from carrying his with him at all times.

Making the coins available for purchase has added yet another dimension to the tradition—collecting. SMA Richard A. Kidd has approximately 300 of the coins on display in his office “museum.” He has even issued an open invitation to soldiers visiting the Washington, D.C., area to stop by his office “even when I'm not here” to see his collection of unit memorabilia.

According to Phillips, World War II soldiers were given a coin when they mustered out of the service. But it wasn't until the Vietnam era that a “challenge-response” was added to the tradition of giving unit members a coin. The initial challenge was to prove membership in a particular unit by producing the unit coin.

That was followed by the addition of the requirement to “buy a round” if a soldier didn't have the coin. “Buying a round isn't the only challenge these days,” said Phillips. “Drinking is frowned on, so the challenge can be anything. If you don't have your coin, you get the detail.” Kidd still uses the original premise in distributing coins and carries some with him whenever he travels. “It's a way to immediately recognize above-and-beyond-the-call-of-duty actions on the part of a

soldier when you're in the field," said Kidd.

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## FIRST-EVER POW DRAGSTER

By Bill "Monsoon" Mimiaga

VVA Chapter 785 Editor

Chapter 785 President Emeritus Greg Young, Treasurer Pete Sandro and Chapter 47 President Steve Mackey and Secretary Tom Hohmann were representing all the Vietnam Veterans of America at the unveiling of America's "first ever" POW/MIA top-fuel dragster at the Riverside National Raceway On February 8 at the Pomona Drag Strip.

Vietnam Veterans of America is proud to be included in the effort by drag-racing philanthropist Evan Knoll to salute Vietnam Veterans by dedicating a Top Fuel dragster in memory of the 58,000 Americans who perished during the Vietnam War, along with those still listed as missing in action, and the 2.8 million American Veterans of the War. We Vietnam Veterans salute you, Evan, and your support team for recognizing and acknowledging the service of our fallen warriors of the Vietnam War, those still held in captivity and those that are still missing in action. Your unselfish contribution to our Vietnam Veterans fund will long be remembered and your legacy helping our Veterans and their families in need will bless you forever with God's graces. You and your Support Team Family will forever have a home with Chapter 785 and Chapter 47 of Orange County and Riverside. You are all "Honorary Members of our Chapters."



*Melanie Troxel and Evan Knoll at left center;  
Chapter 785 President Greg Young at far right,  
with presidents of other Vietnam Veterans  
Chapters who attended the unveiling.*

Presentations were made by Steve, Greg, Pete, and Tom to the owner and operators and pit crew members as our way of saying thank you for their honoring and recognizing our own. Steve Mackey presented a beautiful bronze statue of the kneeling POW to Evan Knoll, the President of Torco Race Fuels in Decatur, Michigan, who is honoring our Vietnam Veterans and VVA with an 8,000-horsepower Top Fuel dragster that will be driven by the beautiful Melanie Troxel and will compete in all 23 NHRA POWERade Series races in 2007.

We thank Evan and all the great folks connected with Torco Racing Fuels for remembering and honoring America's greatest treasure and asset . . . its veterans, who unselfishly served and sacrificed for the freedoms we have today.

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*(Editor's note: Following is an article describing Melanie Troxel's runner-up finish in the recent NHRA CSK Nationals. Melanie placed second in a field of over 300 men—and she missed winning by just .046 of a second.)*

## MELANIE TROXEL DRIVES THE VIETNAM VETERANS/POW-MIA DRAGSTER TO RUNNER UP FINISH

PHOENIX, AZ., February 25, 2007—Melanie Troxel drove the Vietnam Veterans/POW-MIA dragster to a runner-up finish at the NHRA CSK Nationals in Phoenix, AZ. The award winning driver from Avon, IN, drove an inspired race that started from the #5 qualifying position and enabled her to take out the #1 qualifier along the way to meeting Rod Fuller in the final round.

Troxel's successful weekend catapulted her from the 11th position in the championship standings to fifth.

“The one thing that completes the day is that we made a huge leap in the points,” Troxel said. “It’s disappointing to get to the final round and lose. But, there were so many positives this weekend for the Vietnam Veterans/POW-MIA dragster. The crew did a great job and we didn’t hurt a lot of parts. I think with Morgan Lucas Racing that we are moving in the right direction.”

Troxel opened the day by stopping Lucas Oil-sponsored teammate Morgan Lucas and performed a masterful driving job in taking out Brandon Bernstein’s Budweiser entry. Her finest hour transpired in the semi-finals when she defeated top qualifier Tony Schumacher’s U.S. Army team.



In the final round, Fuller’s Valvoline dragster beat Troxel to the finish line by a mere .046 of a second.

Over a dozen Vietnam Veterans and members of the POW-MIA families group attended this weekend’s event in a show of support for the car. Half of the group were attending their first drag race since the 1960s.

“It’s so incredible to get to meet the Vietnam Veterans as well as all war veterans and those families with POW-MIA loved ones. They come by and thank us for our tribute and I tell them thanks because it is their sacrifice that has made what we do out here possible. I know this is just a little token but

this is about Evan Knoll and the commitment he made to honor these wonderful people. It’s important that our Vietnam Veterans know that we are welcoming them home. It’s important also that we convey that we haven’t forgotten our POWs and MIAs.”

One of the veterans posed the question to Troxel, “You do know that you’re going to have a lot of fifty-something's cheering for you this year, don’t you?” Troxel just smiled at the notion.

“I think it’s great. It has been so great to talk to so many people and learn of their experiences. In this day and age, everyone is behind the troops whether they agree with the war or not. You get to talk to these people and it helps to understand what they have had to go through. I can’t think of a better group of people I’d rather have out there cheering me on.”

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## VA NEWS

### FEDERAL TASK FORCE LAUNCHES WEB SITE

WASHINGTON (March 15, 2007)—Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson, head of the new inter-agency task force examining the processes for combat veterans seeking services and benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other federal agencies, announced the creation of a dedicated Web page to solicit input on the ease of accessing federal services. People can email their comments to the task force at [TFHeroes@va.gov](mailto:TFHeroes@va.gov) or fax comments to

202-273-9599. Task Force information and mailing address can be obtained on the VA home page, [www.va.gov/taskforce](http://www.va.gov/taskforce). The Web page allows active duty service members, veterans, family members, and others to comment directly to the task force on the accessibility, timeliness, and delivery of services. Comments will be studied by the task force, used in the panel's evaluation of gaps in service and form the basis of recommended solutions. Called the "Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes," the panel consists of the secretaries of Defense, Labor, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Education, plus the administrator of the Small Business Administration and the director of the Office of Management and Budget. Under the terms of the executive order creating the task force, the group has 45 days to identify and examine existing federal services for returning Global War on Terror service members; identify gaps in such services; seek recommendations from federal agencies on ways to fill those gaps, and ensure that appropriate federal agencies are communicating and cooperating effectively.

To view and download VA news release, visit the following: <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel>.

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## **VA AND DOD TO PURSUE JOINT ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD**

WASHINGTON (January 24, 2007)—The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD) today agreed to make joint inpatient electronic health records a reality—a move that will transform the way both departments deliver health care and that can be a model for the health care industry nationwide.

"This groundbreaking agreement will help us provide better care to veterans and to members of the armed forces, all of whom have earned the right to world-class health care," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson.

Both VA and DoD believe that a joint system will make inpatient medical records instantly accessible to clinicians in both departments. VA clinicians will have immediate access to their patients' military health records, allowing doctors and others to make faster and better treatment decisions.

"DoD and VA manage two of the largest health care systems in the world," said Dr. William Winkenwerder, Jr., Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs. "By working together, we can share medical data sooner and more seamlessly than we could on our separate paths."

In recent years, the two departments have developed a string of pioneering initiatives to improve the way they care for men and women transitioning from military to civilian life. VA's current electronic health records system, known as VistA, received the prestigious "Innovations in American Government Award" from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government in 2006.

In testimony yesterday before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, VA Deputy Secretary Gordon H. Mansfield said, "Our two departments understand that we are responsible for the same people, only at different times in their lives. Our greatest challenge, and our greatest opportunity, is to build systems that meet the needs of veterans and DoD beneficiaries for today and tomorrow. We will continue to persevere toward that goal."

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## **OTHER NEWS**

**VIETNAM'S ABILITY TO ACCOUNT FOR AMERICANS MISSING FROM THE VIETNAM WAR**  
**National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia**  
**February 1, 2007**

Family members, veteran organizations, and other POW/MIA supporters throughout the country have consistently opposed steps to improve economic and political relations with Vietnam until their leadership made the decision to cooperate fully to resolve the POW/MIA issue. The League supported a policy of reciprocity—steps by the U.S. to respond to efforts by Vietnam to locate and return remains and provide case-specific archival documents. In the League's view, important leverage was lost without commensurate results during the Clinton Administration.

One way of viewing what the U.S. knows and what Vietnam can do is by looking at what Vietnam has not, but could have done. At the end of the war, U.S. intelligence and other data confirm that roughly 200 missing Americans were last known alive or reported alive in close proximity to capture. Vietnam knows that these are highest priority cases, directly related to the live prisoner issue, but has accounted for far less than half of these Americans by returning identifiable remains. In all but about 30 of these cases, joint field investigations have reportedly been sufficient to confirm death. If true, remains of these Americans logically should be the most readily available for return (other than those who died in captivity in South Vietnam) since they were in captivity or on the ground near Vietnamese forces.

U.S. wartime and post-war reporting on specific cases, captured Vietnamese documents concerning the handling of U.S. prisoners and casualties, and debriefs of communist Vietnamese captives, reinforced by U.S. monitored directives and other reporting, form a clear picture of a comprehensive Vietnamese system for collection of information and remains, dating back to the French-Indochina War. Specific sources, such as the mortician in 1979, substantiated by others in the 1980s, highlighted remains collection and storage as a key aspect of Vietnam's policy for eventual dealings with the U.S.

Assessments by community-wide intelligence served as the basis for long-standing U.S. expectations that hundreds of Americans could readily be accounted for by unilateral Vietnamese actions to locate and return remains. In 1986-87, the entire intelligence community maintained much higher estimates, but the numbers were subsequently further screened to establish the most realistic targets for the Vietnamese government to meet.

During the war and since, the Vietnamese communists placed great value on the recovery and /or recording of burial locations of U.S. remains. In wartime, if jeopardized by imminent discovery or recovery by U.S. forces, burial was immediate to hide remains, which were disinterred and photographed when possible, then reburied or transferred to Hanoi when feasible. Evidence of this process is confirmed by U.S. intelligence.

Forensic evidence serves as another basis for establishing expectations. Scientific evidence of above or below ground storage, or both, exists on 179 of the 557 identified remains returned from Vietnam since the end of the war. This number, confirmed by CIL forensic scientists, is far below U.S. expectations, based on reliable intelligence indicating that hundreds more were stored by the Vietnamese government and, if Vietnam's leaders issue authorization, could be repatriated.

The total number of identified remains returned from Vietnam with scientific evidence of storage (177) is far short of the 400+ reported stored by valid sources and does not come close to the U.S. Government's long-standing assessments of remains available for unilateral repatriation by the Government of Vietnam. Evidence of storage also exists on three remains returned in 1992 and subsequently identified, and an important signal was sent by the Vietnamese in a 1989 stored-remains repatriation. Both instances revealed province-level storage/curation.

After two years of no results from the Vietnamese in 1979-80, during a September 1982 ABC "Nightline" program, the late Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach flatly denied that Vietnam was holding any U.S. remains, as did other senior Vietnamese officials throughout the Carter Administration. Yet, in 1983, Vietnam returned eight remains with clear evidence of storage. Negotiations for a two-year plan in 1985 brought the largest number of remains obtained to that point; nearly all showed evidence of storage. In 1987, negotiations resulted in the largest number returned during one year—over 60 in 1988—about half of them returned at one time. Nearly all were virtually complete skeletons that showed clear evidence of storage; there are more recent examples.

Vietnamese officials have admitted storage of remains. In 1985, following up an initiative through a regional government, a U.S. National Security Council (NSC) official met privately with a Vietnamese Politburo member during

an NSC-led U.S. delegation to Hanoi. The carefully drawn plan was for negotiations on live prisoners and remains, but the minister indicated live prisoners were not on the table for discussion. Rather, as discussed through the third party, the subject was hundreds of remains.

In order to test the scope of Vietnam's knowledge, two specific cases were officially presented to officials in Hanoi in 1985/86 with a request for their unilateral assistance; both losses were judged by the U.S. Government to have occurred inside Laos, in areas under Vietnamese control during the war. One was returned unilaterally in 1988, 98% complete and stored above ground since his 1972 incident along the Lao/Vietnamese border. Vietnam has unilaterally repatriated stored remains from Cambodia and very remote locations spanning the entire war, not just highly populated areas.

There is continuity. In 1991 and 1993, the Vietnamese provided graves registration lists with names of unaccounted for Americans. Inclusion of these names was likely purposeful, as was filtering through private channels photographs of dead, unaccounted for Americans whose remains have not yet been returned. The Government of Vietnam directed combat photography; though their soldiers did not own personal cameras, much less carry them. Regardless of mixed or conflicting signals, these and other actions by Vietnamese officials were apparently intended to signal the U.S. Government of remains availability.

Information obtained from field operations after the war, including Joint Task Force-Full Accounting (JTF-FA) activities, reveals that central Vietnamese authorities systematically recovered U.S. remains. Eyewitnesses reported central-level supervision of remains recoveries of Americans who still have not been accounted for. Vietnam's leaders have repeatedly pledged to renew and increase their own efforts to locate and return remains and provide relevant documents, but they invariably move incrementally, or obfuscate in other ways.

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## **SOCIAL SECURITY CREDITS MILITARY SERVICE**

Eligible military members may be able to receive credit on extra earnings from the Social Security Administration (SSA). To find out if you qualify, review the [SSA fact sheet](#). The fact sheet spells out the SSA policy regarding military wage credits in various years since 1940. Carefully note the qualifications for your year group on the fact sheet. These special credits for the military do not apply for service after 2001.

To receive credit, retirees or widows in receipt of Social Security benefits should take a copy of the servicemember's DD-214 or other separation or retirement order that documents the periods of active service to the Social Security office. Be prepared to refer Social Security personnel to these references, as they probably won't know as much about the benefit as you will.

The special credit usually will not mean a significant increase in Social Security benefits for most retirees. A few dollars each month is all anyone should reasonably expect from these extra credits. However, a few dollars more each month is better than nothing.

Servicemembers who served in years 1957-2001 were granted deemed wage credits as follows:

1. For years 1957 through 1977, you are granted \$300 for each calendar quarter that you receive any basic pay.
2. For years 1978 through 2001, you are granted credits in increments of \$100 up to a maximum of \$1,200 per calendar year. The \$100 increments are granted for each full \$300 of basic pay. *No credit is granted if your annual wages are less than \$300 and no further credit may be granted when the annual wages exceed \$3,600.*
3. Effective 01/01/02, deemed wage credits are eliminated for all years after calendar year 2001. Deemed wage credits will continue to be given for military wages for periods prior to calendar year 2002.

For more details, see

[http://www.moaa.org/serv/serv\\_benefits\\_pay/serv\\_benefits\\_pay\\_compensation/serv\\_benefits\\_pay\\_compensation\\_ss\\_credit\\_clarification.htm](http://www.moaa.org/serv/serv_benefits_pay/serv_benefits_pay_compensation/serv_benefits_pay_compensation_ss_credit_clarification.htm) for



more info, and <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10017.pdf> for a Social Security fact sheet.

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## **NEW POW/MIA SELECT COMMITTEE PROPOSED**

Congressman Pete King (NY-3) introduced H. Res. 111 on January 30, 2007 for a new POW/MIA committee to investigate new POW evidence and to pick up where the previous Senate Select Committee left off.

You can help make sure this committee is created by contacting your congressman and asking him to co-sponsor this bill. Please do this as soon as possible. There have been live sightings and satellite imagery of POWs since the last POW/MIA committee. Most congressmen will not co-sponsor a new committee unless the constituents ask them to. We have limited time to get the committee approved; your effort to get the committee formed may be the extra effort that puts it over the top. If you ever were serious about the return of surviving POW/MIAs don't give up on them now. The matter of remains will be looked into also. If we don't do, it no one else will.

Find out who your Congressman is, then call the U.S. Capital operator toll free at 866/272-6622. The regular number is 202/224-3121. You can find your Congressman—and even email him—at <http://www.house.gov/writerep/>.

A letter from Pete King to all 435 Congressmen on Capital Hill:

“Dear Colleague:

Over 88,000 American military personnel are still unaccounted for from military conflicts during the 20th century, including: 1,788 in Vietnam, over 8,100 in the Korean Conflict, 124 from Cold War missions, over 78,000 from World War II, and 3 airmen from the Gulf War. Now as we begin the 21st century with Operation Iraqi Freedom, 2 American soldiers—Sgt. Keith “Matt” Maupin and Spec. Ahmed Altaie—have become POWs. It is imperative that the accounting of each and every one of our POWs and MIAs be given the highest priority by our government and this Congress. “Finding new information on American POWs and MIAs can help thousands of families who only want to find the truth about their loved ones. I am writing to ask you to cosponsor H.Res. 111 establishing a House Select Committee on POW and MIA Affairs. The courage and sacrifice of these brave men and women must never be forgotten, and our efforts to acquire a full account of all missing armed forces personnel must never stop. This is the very least we owe these patriotic and courageous Americans.”

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## **“WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY”**

A bill was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on February 16, 2007 to establish a “Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day. Sponsored by Rep. Linda Sanchez (D-CA), H. Res 189 was referred on the same day to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. This bill is in the first stage of the legislative process where the bill is considered in committee and may undergo significant changes in markup sessions.

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## **TO OUR TROOPS WE MUST REMAIN ALWAYS FAITHFUL**

**By Rep. Sam Johnson, Texas, 3rd District**

*A 29-year Air Force veteran, Johnson served in both the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Johnson spent nearly seven years as a Prisoner of War, more than half of that time in solitary confinement. Coincidentally, this week in 1973 as one of the*

*longest held captives, Johnson finally left Hanoi on February 12, 1973 and returned home to Texas on February 17, 1973. Johnson was awarded two Silver Stars, two Legions of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, one Bronze Star with Valor, two Purple Hearts, four Air Medals, and three Outstanding Unit Awards.*

*The following text of remarks delivered by Rep. Johnson on the floor of the House of Representatives on February 16, 2007 in his plea to not cut funding for our troops in Iraq.*

“You know, I flew 62 combat missions in the Korean War and 25 missions in the Vietnam War before being shot down. I had the privilege of serving in the United States Air Force for 29 years, attending the prestigious National War College, and commanding two air bases, among other things. I mention these stories because I view the debate on the floor not just as a U.S. Congressman elected to serve the good people of the Third District in Texas, but also through the lens of a life-long fighter pilot, student of war, a combat warrior, a leader of men, and a Prisoner of War. Ironically, this week marks the anniversary that I started a new life—and my freedom from prison in Hanoi. I spent nearly seven years as a Prisoner of War in Vietnam, more than half of that time in solitary confinement. I flew out of Hanoi on February 12, 1973 with other long-held Prisoners of War—weighing just 140 pounds. And tomorrow—34 years ago, I had my homecoming to Texas—a truly unspeakable blessing of freedom. While in solitary confinement, my captors kept me in leg stocks, like the pilgrims ... for 72 days. As you can imagine, they had to carry me out of the stocks because I couldn't walk. The following day, they put me in leg irons ... for 2 1/2 years. That's when you have a tight metal cuff around each ankle—with a foot-long bar connecting the legs. I still have little feeling in my right arm and my right hand—and my body has never been the same since my nearly 2,500 days of captivity. But I will never let my physical wounds hold me back. Instead, I try to see the silver lining. I say that because in some way I'm living a dream—a hope I had for the future. From April 16, 1966 to February 12, 1973 I prayed that I would return home to the loving embrace of my wife, Shirley, and my three kids, Bob, Gini, and Beverly. And my fellow POWs and I clung to the hope of when—not if—we returned home.

“We would spend hours tapping on the adjoining cement walls about what we would do when we got home to America. We pledged to quit griping about the way the government was running the war in Vietnam and do something about it. We decided that we would run for office and try to make America a better place for all. So ... little did I know back in my rat-infested 3 x 8 dark and filthy cell that 34 years after my departure from Hell on Earth I would spend the anniversary of my release pleading for a House panel to back my measure to support and fully fund the troops in harm's way ... and that just days later I would be on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives surrounded by distinguished veterans urging Congress to support our troops to the hilt. We POWs were still in Vietnam when Washington cut the funding for Vietnam. I know what it does to morale and mission success. Words cannot fully describe the horrendous damage of the anti-American efforts against the war back home to the guys on the ground.

“Our captors would blare nasty recordings over the loud speaker of Americans protesting back home ... tales of Americans spitting on Vietnam veterans when they came home ... and worse. We must never, ever let that happen again. The pain inflicted by your country's indifference is tenfold that inflicted by your ruthless captors. Our troops—and their families—want, need and deserve the full support of the country—and the Congress.

“Moms and dads watching the news need to know that the Congress will not leave their sons and daughters in harm's way without support. Since the President announced his new plan for Iraq last month, there has been steady progress. He changed the rules of engagement and removed political protections. There are reports we wounded the number two of Al Qaeda and killed his deputy. Yes, Al Qaeda operates in Iraq. It's alleged that top radical jihadist Al-Sadr has fled Iraq—maybe to Iran. And Iraq's closed its borders with Iran and Syria.

“The President changed course and offered a new plan ... we are making progress. We must seize the opportunity to move forward, not stifle future success. Debating non-binding resolutions aimed at earning political points only destroys morale, stymies success, and emboldens the enemy. The grim reality is that this House measure is the first step to cutting funding of the troops. Just ask John Murtha about his “slow-bleed” plan that hamstring our troops in harm's way.

“Now it's time to stand up for my friends who did not make it home—and those who fought and died in Iraq—so I can keep my promise that when we got home we would quit griping about the war and do something positive about it ... and

we must not allow this Congress to leave these troops like the Congress left us.

“Today, let my body serve as a brutal reminder that we must not repeat the mistakes of the past ... instead learn from them. We must not cut funding for our troops. We must stick by them. We must support them all the way. To our troops we must remain always faithful. God bless you and I salute you all. Thank you.”

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## **BRINGING THEM HOME**

### **SOLDIER MISSING IN ACTION FROM THE KOREAN WAR IS IDENTIFIED**

February 16, 2007—The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced today that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from the Korean War, have been identified and returned to his family for burial with full military honors. He is Cpl. Jimmie L. Dorser, U.S. Army, of Springfield, Mo. He will be buried tomorrow in Lake Forest, CA. Representatives from the Army met with Dorser’s next-of-kin to explain the recovery and identification process, and to coordinate interment with military honors on behalf of the Secretary of the Army. Dorser was a member of I Company, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division (organized into the 31st Regimental Combat Team). The RCT was engaged against the Chinese People’s Volunteer Forces along the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea from Nov. 27-Dec. 1, 1950. The unit was forced to retreat to the south and many men were reported missing in action under the intense enemy fire. In 2002, a joint U.S.-Democratic People’s Republic of North Korea (D.P.R.K.) team, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), excavated a mass grave on the eastern side of the Chosin Reservoir. The remains of five individuals were recovered. Among other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory also used mitochondrial DNA and dental comparisons in Dorser’s identification. The additional remains cannot be attributed to specific individuals at this time and will undergo further analysis.

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### **VVA HONORS THE MEMORY OF TWO FORMER MIA’S**

(Washington, D.C)—Vietnam Veterans of America paid tribute to two fallen American servicemen from the Vietnam War: 1st Lieutenant Fred Ramsbottom, and Pfc. William E. “Skip” Skivington, Jr., whose remains recently were repatriated to the United States. Ramsbottom was interred in Edmond, Oklahoma, on January 13 and Skivington was interred at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors on January 23. Both men perished on May 12, 1968, during a fierce battle at the Special Forces Camp of Kham Duc.

“Because of the ferocity of the battle, it was impossible to recover their bodies,” VVA President John Rowan said. “Vietnam Veterans of America is proud—and humbled—by the fact that our organization played the leading role in finding out what happened to the 32 men who were unaccounted for in that battle and at nearby Ngok Tavak two days earlier. Our Veterans Initiative Task Force made three trips to Vietnam—in 1994, 1995, and 1998—to help account for these men and worked closely and encouraged the Pentagon’s MIA office to undertake efforts to find and repatriate the remains.

“We are pleased that after more than three decades the families will be able to benefit from the recoveries of their loved ones,” Rowan said.

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## **NAVY AVIATOR MIA FROM THE VIETNAM WAR IS IDENTIFIED**

January 25, 2007—Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced today that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from the Vietnam War, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. He is Cmdr. Peter Mongilardi, Jr., U.S. Navy, of Haledon, N.J. He will be buried on April 11 at Arlington National Cemetery near Washington D.C. On June 25, 1965, Mongilardi departed the USS Coral Sea in his A-4C Skyhawk on an armed reconnaissance mission over North Vietnam. His flight encountered bad weather and enemy fire over Thanh Hoa Province, causing the wingman to lose visual and radio contact with Mongilardi. Contact was never re-established and the aircraft failed to return to the carrier. In 1993, a joint U.S.-Socialist Republic of Vietnam (S.R.V.) archival team, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), obtained information concerning the crash while researching documents, artifacts and photographs at the Central Army Museum in Hanoi. Later that year, another joint U.S./S.R.V. team conducted an investigation in Thanh Hoa Province. The team interviewed two local Vietnamese citizens who recalled the crash and said the pilot died in the impact. The men then led the team to the crash site. In 1994, another joint team excavated the crash site and recovered human remains and pilot-related items, including a belt tip, boot heel, pieces of flight boot and other items worn by the pilot. Among other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory also used nuclear DNA in the identification of the remains.

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## **ARMY SERGEANT MIA FROM VIETNAM WAR IS IDENTIFIED**

January 4, 2007— The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced today that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from the Vietnam War, have been identified and returned to his family for burial with full military honors. He is Master Sgt. Norman Payne, U.S. Army, of Cleveland, Ohio. He was buried on Dec. 30 in Cleveland. Representatives from the Army met with Payne's next-of-kin to explain the recovery and identification process, and to coordinate interment with military honors on behalf of the Secretary of the Army. On Dec. 18, 1968, Payne was a member of a long-range reconnaissance patrol operating in Salavan Province in southern Laos. The unit set up a defensive position for the night when it was attacked by enemy forces. Payne was last seen attempting to move from one element of the patrol to the other. A rescue team searched for Payne the next day, but was forced to withdraw due to enemy activity. Between 1993 and 2003, joint U.S./Lao/Vietnamese teams, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), conducted five investigations in the area of the incident. In 2001, Vietnamese officials turned over documents that U.S. specialists believed to be related to Payne's death. According to the documents, Vietnamese troops killed an American soldier and buried him near a stream by a Vietnamese Army field hospital in Quang Tri Province, which adjoins Salavan Province. During the investigation conducted in 2003, witnesses led the team to the location of a former field hospital where they claimed to have buried an American soldier. In 2004 a joint U.S./Lao team excavated the reported burial site in Salavan Province but found no remains or evidence of a burial. In 2004 and 2005, a Laotian source gave U.S. officials remains he found in Savannakhet Province, Laos, which borders Salavan Province. Among other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory also used mitochondrial DNA and dental comparisons in the identification of the remains.

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## **EVENTS**

### **RFTW FUNDRAISER AT NEW SITE**

**El Segundo, CA**

**April 7, 2007**

As you probably know, the annual RFTW BBQ fundraiser in Highland, CA has been cancelled this year. Danny Lopresto and David “Pegger” McDonald work for Raytheon and discussed having the RFTW fundraiser at their facility in El Segundo. The facility is very large and has a big recreation park, complete with basketball, tennis, softball fields, restrooms, and showers, plus swings and slides for the little ones—not to mention a big parking lot that can hold lots of motorcycles.

Not only does Raytheon support the idea, but Raytheon is going to cater the event with some good grub as well. An admission price will be charged as in Highland, which will include food, entertainment, speakers, and use of the recreation park. **ALL** the money from the admission price will go toward RFTW 2007. Raytheon has already donated \$1,000 for RFTW and management is very excited about putting on this fundraiser.

Danny said he’s never done anything like this but with the help of some fellow RFTW brothers he believes that we can make this a really great event and fundraiser.

We’ll need some type of head count for the food and beverages. **Let Danny know ASAP if you and/or your family will attend** ([dlopresto@raytheon.com](mailto:dlopresto@raytheon.com)). This is a family event (just like in Highland). The price will be around \$5 or \$10 dollars for adults, children free. If any of you are venders and want to sell your wares, we will charge a fee (not much). More on that issue and other details later. So, pass the word, let’s make this a good time and great fundraiser. Date of event is tentatively set for **April 7, 2007**. All money received from the fundraiser will be split equally between the Central and Southern routes.

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### **PURPLE HEART RIDE** **Sykesville, MD** **April 15, 2007**

The Blue Knights MD IX, a law enforcement motorcycle club, is having its third annual Purple Heart Ride on Sunday, April 15, 2007 to honor the wounded servicemen and women who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The police escorted ride travels from Freedom Park, Raincliffe Rd., Sykesville, Maryland, to the Bethesda Naval Hospital. Registration begins at 7 a.m., and the ride begins at 10 a.m. A donation of at least \$25 is requested, which will be presented to the Armed Forces Foundation to benefit these Purple Heart recipients.

For details, visit their website at [www.bkmdix.org](http://www.bkmdix.org) or contact Steven Martin at (410) 804-5721 or [roadkingmd@yahoo.com](mailto:roadkingmd@yahoo.com).

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### **RIVERSIDE SALUTE TO VETERANS PARADE** **Riverside, CA** **April 21, 2007**

Run For The Wall is entered in Riverside's Salute to Veterans Parade. If you would like to participate, please contact RFTW California Coordinator Mil Thornton at 714-335-4557 or [mcthorntons@yahoo.com](mailto:mcthorntons@yahoo.com). Go to [www.salutetoveterans.com](http://www.salutetoveterans.com) for details on the parade and other events. There are already more than 50 units signed up for the parade, including many military units, veterans groups, and Pearl Harbor Survivors. This will be a great way to bring awareness to RFTW and what it stands for. By participating in this parade, RFTW can also show its commitment to our troops. Let's be a BIG presence in this parade!

## **VIETNAM REMEMBRANCE DAY**

**Phoenix, Arizona**

**April 29, 2007**

During the Vietnam War, our soldiers were joined by a brave group of Vietnamese who fought side by side in an attempt to dismantle the threat of communism in their country. The fight for freedom still continues in that small Asian country. "Without Freedom you can exist but you cannot truly live."

In-Country Vietnam Veterans, in conjunction with the Vietnamese Community in Arizona and many veterans organizations, request the honor of your presence on April 29, 2007, for the 13th Annual Vietnam Remembrance Day Ceremony. On Vietnam Remembrance Day, we share the grief and sadness of the American and Allies 'veterans' families whose fathers, husbands, and children were wounded, passed away during the war, or still remain MIA. In this ceremony, we will 'welcome home' those that received no welcome, no adoration from our Nation or thank you for sacrifices and for serving in Vietnam. On this day, they will receive congratulations, admiration, and gratitude, something that eluded the generation that served in Vietnam. This ceremony will especially pay proper homage to the fallen and to the cause to which lives were given.

The commemoration starts at 09:00 with ceremonies at 10:00 and will be held at Wesley Bolin Plaza, Phoenix, AZ. (17th Ave - Adams Street westbound/Jefferson Street eastbound - one way streets).

For more info, contact Josie Delsi at [kakar\\_delsi@cgmailbox.com](mailto:kakar_delsi@cgmailbox.com).

## **BFE RIDE & RALLY**

**MAY 12, 2007**

**FALLBROOK, CA**

The 3rd Annual BFE Ride & Rally will be held on Saturday, May 12. This event is to raise money for the children of our fallen heroes. Their children need our help now more than ever. And you can help by attending.

Visit [www.BFERIDE.com/register.html](http://www.BFERIDE.com/register.html) to register for the BFE Ride & Rally and your FREE T-shirt, ride pin, and chance to win \$1,000 cash!

Last year's Rally raised more than \$30,000 for the "Freedom Alliance Scholarship Fund" and other educational charities. This year, with your help, we hope to raise \$50,000 for youth education and the children of our fallen American heroes.

For your registration fee (tax-deductible donation), you get all this and more:

- Hot breakfast and blessing of bikes at St. Peters School (Fallbrook CA)
- \$1,000 Poker Run of 80+ miles (scenic & challenging route)
- FREE T-shirt and ride pin (sign up by May 5th)
- Afternoon rally at the world-famous *Bates Nut Farm* (Valley Center, CA)
- BBQ lunch and beer/wine garden
- Live classic rock music by "*Ruthless*"
- Best bike contest and awards (winners get trophies and photos/story in QuickThrottle Magazine!)
- 50/50 cash raffle, plus lots of other raffles and FREE door prizes

- Vendors of all kinds (from leather and chrome to jewelry and eyewear)
- Several local casinos (Harrah's, Pala, Pauma, Pechanga, Valley View)
- Plenty of camping and lodging nearby (stay the night or weekend!)

So please register today and “*Ride With Me to BFE*” on Saturday, May 12 to support youth education and the children of our fallen American heroes. If you can't attend, please make a donation and help spread the word to your fellow bikers and friends.

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## **RFTW REUNIONS**

### **Angel Fire Reunion—September 7-9**

Angel Fire Resort Motel 505-377-6401

Angel Fire Memorial Walkway Bricks:  
From Monte Apodaca, CR NM Coordinator

Bricks for engraving for the Memorial Walkway are now on sale, all U.S. Veterans—living or deceased. Early Bird Special until May 1, 2007: price is \$60.00 per brick; after May 1, 2007 price will be \$75.00 per brick.

Each red brick is 4" x 8" and can be engraved with three lines. To order by phone on your Visa/ Mastercard, call (505) 377-6900. For more info, email: [memorial@taosnet.com](mailto:memorial@taosnet.com) Fax: 505-377-3223; P.O. Box 608 Angel Fire, New Mexico 87710

All Bricks purchased during the Year will be stored until the RFTW Reunion work Day. This will be the annual project for RFTW.

“I am trying to get involved with as much as the State will let me,” Monte said. “I was impressed with last year’s response to the work day and the State people were also impressed. They had no idea how committed the RFTW Family was until that day.”

“For this year’s work day, I plan on limiting the projects because I expect that we will be laying a sizeable amount of bricks.”

### **Kerrville Reunion—September 28-30**

YO Ranch 877-967-3767.

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## **SICK CALL**

### **Dave “Scooby” Schubert**

One of our RFTW Vietnam vets (Navy) is in hospice and needs our help. Dave “Scooby” Schubert of Ames, Iowa, is in the final stages of cancer and his wife, Robbie, said one of his last wishes is to hear from other RFTW people.

Dave, a retired fireman, rode partway in 2001, all the way in 2002, but in 2004 was too ill to ride his bike and went by cage. He loved RFTW so much that in 2005, in spite of his grave condition, he was determined to ride again and was strapped to his buddy, Tom Walker, on his bike. Robbie said Dave told her RFTW gave him such a feeling of belonging

and being cared about that after he dies he wants his ashes to be scattered on the Run.

Dave cared deeply about our POWs and MIAs, and he petitioned the city of Ames to start flying the POW flag. The city declined because their policy is to fly only the U.S. flag, but as a Christmas gift to Dave, POW flags were flown for a day at the three fire stations in town. The firemen gave him photos and videos so he could see the flags flying. Robbie said it was the best Christmas gift Dave could possibly have been given.

Please send a note to Dave at the Israel Family Hospice, 400 South Dakota Ave., Ames, Iowa 50014. Or you can mail a note or card to him at his home: 3815 Toronto Street, Ames, Iowa 50014, and his wife will take them to him. Dave is unable to hold a phone, but you can call the hospice (515-956-6000) and a nurse might be available to hold the phone to his ear so he can listen. If you prefer, you can send an email to [stefunky42@hotmail.com](mailto:stefunky42@hotmail.com). His wife or daughter, Stephanie, will print the emails out and take them to her dad to read.

RFTW family, please keep Dave in your prayers, and let him know you care about him.

## **Robley Rex**

If you have been to the Louisville, KY VA Medical Center you have likely met Robley Rex. Robley is 105 years of age and is the last remaining World War I veteran in the state of Kentucky. Although the numbers vary by reporting agencies from four to dozens, as of February 9, 2007 the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs knew of only seven (now six) American WWI veterans still alive, according to spokesperson Laurie Tranter. Charlotte Winters of Maryland recently passed away at the age of 109; she was the last known female WWI veteran.

CR Coordinator Ron "Hammer" Young recently talked with the VA Center in Louisville, and they advised that Robley is now in an assisted living facility. Imagine: Living on your own until you are 105 years young, and working three days a week! Robley has been a volunteer at the Louisville VAMC for many years, and each May he has put on his RFTW vest and helped welcome RFTW. From what Ron understands, Robley will most likely not be able to greet us for this year's Run.

Robley would surely love to hear from some of his RFTW friends and fans; he is able to read cards and letters. You can send cards to: Robley Rex, c/o Christopher East Health Care, 4200 Browns Lane, Louisville, KY 40220.

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## **TAPS**

### **Jeff Neal**

During the 2006 RFTW, the widow and sons of Steven H. Neal accompanied us in tribute of Steven's life. Each of his three sons took turns riding Steven's motorcycle on the Run. Sadly, one of Steven's sons, Jeff, a deputy sheriff, was killed in a traffic accident on March 5, 2007. RFTW extends its profound sympathies to Jeff's wife, Nicole, his mother, Cathy Neal, and his two brothers, Steve K. Neal and Scott Neal. We are so very sorry for your tragic loss.

### **War Hero Billy Walkabout Passes Away**

From [www.nativetimes.com](http://www.nativetimes.com)

Billy Walkabout died March 7, 2007. He was the most decorated Native American soldier of the Vietnam War. Billy, a full blood Cherokee, was living in Connecticut and lost his last fight with Agent Orange complications. He was 57 years old. Billy, an Airborne Ranger of the 101st, received a Distinguished Service Cross, the second highest U.S. decoration for gallantry in combat, for his actions during one such incident in November 1968. " [After] a long range



reconnaissance patrol southwest of Hue... [Sergeant Walkabout's team] radioed for immediate helicopter extraction. When the extraction helicopters arrived and the lead man began moving toward the pick-up zone, he was seriously wounded by hostile automatic weapons fire. Sergeant Walkabout quickly rose to his feet and delivered steady suppressive fire on the attackers while other team members pulled the wounded man back to their ranks. Sergeant Walkabout then administered first aid to the soldier in preparation for medical evacuation. As the man was being loaded onto the evacuation helicopter, enemy elements again attacked the team. Maneuvering under heavy fire, walkabout positioned himself where the enemy were concentrating their assault and placed continuous rifle fire on the adversary. A command detonated mine ripped through friendly team, instantly killing three men and wounding all the others." Although stunned and wounded by the blast, Sergeant Walkabout rushed from man to man administering first aid, bandaging one soldier's severe chest wound reviving another soldier by heart massage. He then coordinated gunship and tactical air strikes on the enemy's positions. When evacuation helicopters arrived again, he worked single-handedly under fire to board his disabled comrades. Only when the casualties had been evacuated and friendly reinforcements had arrived, did he allow himself to be extracted."

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### **WORTH READING/VIEWING:**

Read a great article on RFTW on page 164 of the March *Thunderpress*.

See a haunting pictorial of the Vietnam War online at: <http://patriotfiles.org/VietnamWar.htm>

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### **CLOSING THOUGHTS**

#### **LOOKING BACK**

**By The Shadow**

As I stood at the Wall with my friends and brothers;  
I looked around and saw the many others.  
They had come to pay their respects,  
To those who gave their lives to serve and protect.

I gazed back at the long black Wall,  
In the distance the Washington Monument standing so tall.  
My eyes grew cloudy—my heart beat fast,  
Realizing I was finally here at long last.

Here were the names I knew from school,  
When we had run together and thought we were so cool.  
I never had the chance to say good bye,  
When they took that long flight into the sky.

I had always thought one day they would return,  
So both ends of that candle we could again burn.  
No, I never thought I'd be standing here like this,  
Looking into the past through the years of mist.

My friends' names and all the others,  
That we have come to call our brothers.

Yes, here they are honored on this Wall,  
We remember them when they were young, proud and standing tall.

I wish I could snap my fingers and change the past,  
So we all could be riding in the wind so fast.  
But instead I stand her in quiet reflection,  
Praying they all know my heart's intention.

To let them know I am here out of deep respect,  
And that they will always be apart of me and I'll NEVER, EVER FORGET!!

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### **UNCLE SAM'S FINEST** **From the heart, by Mom Kramer**

It's time troops to gear up for another cross-country run  
A wave of black leather, hogs shining in the sun.

Rumble of wheels and the breeze in our faces  
Looking for time to hit the wide open spaces.

We won't forget our comrades whose names appear on the granite wall  
They gave their lives and answered their nation's call.

It's a friendship forged out of was that has lasted through the years  
Shared by our blood, sweat, and tears.

During the war I called you my troops  
Young faces standing at attention all in a group.

We're not getting older, but better you see  
There's a special bond between my Nam Vets and me.

I'll greet you at the West Virginia Capitol as I always do from the heart  
Someday in God's house we will never part.

I pray angels roll by your side, check the rough places along the roadway  
Until Run For The Wall rolls into Washington DC on Memorial Day.

**You Are Not Forgotten**



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## **RUN FOR THE WALL**



### **WE RIDE FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T**

**To promote healing among Vietnam veterans and their families and friends  
To call for an accounting of all Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action (POW/MIA)  
To honor the memory of those Killed in Action (KIA)**

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