



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

Official Newsletter of... "Run For The Wall"... July 2007

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

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THE EDITOR'S NOTES



RFTW XIX was an awesome journey! We had, I believe, more FNGs than we've ever had before—which is great, because we want to reach as many veterans as we possibly can. We hope we were able to make you feel welcome on your voyage with us.

The weather was good on both routes (in spite of one funnel warning in Hugo, Colorado, which sent everyone scrambling for their bikes to hightail it back to Limon), and both routes seemed to experience larger crowds welcoming us into their cities. Run For The Wall is indeed becoming more noticeable in the public eye each year.

In this issue you'll find some good memories of this year's Run; I know you'll enjoy reading the stories. Don't miss "My Hero," a poignant poem by the niece of David Westphall. I apologize for editing down some of the stories, but we had so many good stories submitted for this issue that there just wasn't enough space to accommodate them all. A few of the stories will appear in our next issue.

I think one of the most exciting parts of RFTW is starting out as one group, splitting into the Southern and Central Routes, and ending up in Washington, D.C. again as one group. As I've come to know more and more folks on both routes in my five years of participation, I feel blessed to count so many wonderful human beings among my friends. The people in RFTW are exceptional examples of selflessness, honor, and genuine caring for their fellow man. They have proven they would do anything for their friends, but even more, they would do anything to help a stranger in need. Truly ... *We Are Family*.

Never Forget,
Judy

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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**By John "Slammer" Gebhards
President, Run For The Wall**



My personal thanks to all the Run Leadership, Staff, State Coordinators, volunteers, participants and organizations that hosted us and anyone who just came out to see what was going on with all the motorcycles. Being President of RFTW has truly been a humbling and rewarding experience.

Special thanks to Judy Lacey, the Editor of our newsletter, for all her hard work and dedication to the principles that make RFTW so great. The newsletter plays an extremely important part in our communication and Judy did a fantastic job of getting the information out there. Thank you.

Our supportive websites (www.rftwcr-2007.us and www.rftwst-2007.us) that are route-specific have been an evolution of Anne Perry's vision and perseverance. Her artistic talents, literary skills, and computer knowledge have enabled our RFTW flyer and DVD to capture the pulse of our organization. This addressed the needs of our organization to get the word out and news media to understand why we participate in RFTW. Thank you.

Our bookkeeper Tambria Huston has helped us with a clear path for money accountability and procedures. Thanks to both routes' Finance Teams for handling the money for fuel and donations for several projects. Keeping this all straight is a daunting task and was accomplished magnificently. Thank you.

The Merchandise Team is the lifeblood of RFTW. Their hard work, long hours, and dedication to the RFTW Mission make it all possible. Thank you.

The Chaplain Corps has evolved into an important and now necessary part of the Run. Their work as helpers in accidents and breakdowns is indispensable. Thank you.

The Hydration Team and Water Point Team is such an outstanding and now necessary support tool. The idea of making "Cool Wraps" (Val McClymonds) and giving them to the riders was truly a "God Send" on the hot days. Thank you.

To all volunteers: your hard work, long hours of preparation, endless meetings, and commitment to RFTW made the

2007 Run truly outstanding.

I have enjoyed working with a Board made up of such dedicated and selfless volunteers. It has been an honor to represent RFTW as President. Thank you for supporting "Run For The Wall." I'm looking forward to our 20th Anniversary, RFTW XX, May 14 to May 25, 2008.

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INCOMING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Mark "Straightarrow" Rittermeyer



Thank you in advance for all you do to make RFTW a success.

To those of you who don't know me, let me introduce myself. My name is Mark "Straightarrow" Rittermeyer and I have been on the Run since 1999. I have served as Road Guard '01, Road Guard Captain '02, Assistant Route Coordinator '02, Route Coordinator '04, Chaplain '05, Missing Man Coordinator '06, and Director of Risk Management on the Board of Directors. My wife MaryAnn and I live in Lakeland Florida and have two children and one Granddaughter. Most of you will know our son Phillip "Gator," as he has been on the Run with us since 2000. Phillip is now stationed at Fort Carson Colorado, and is an Army Chaplain.

I am humbled and honored to have been elected to serve the Run as President of the Board of Directors. These are big shoes to fill, and there is a lot of work to be done, but with the entire Board working together as a team I feel confident that we will move forward with the Run as we prepare for the 20th anniversary. Please know that I am available to any and all of the Run Family, and my contact information is on our website. Please feel free to contact me at any time, as I am here to serve you.

I want to invite as many of you as can to attend the reunions either in Eagles Nest (Angel Fire), New Mexico September 7-9, or Kerrville, Texas September 28-30, or to attend both if possible. It is always a great time to catch up with the Run Family.

I am looking forward to RFTW XX with the anticipation more FNG's riding with us, and more healing for our Vets who so richly deserve it.

I want to close with this thought: I have been seeing a lot of patches that say "We went over as Strangers, We came home as Brothers." I would like for all of us to remember that phrase as we meet new riders at different locations, and remember that the next time we meet them we are not just One Run, Two Routes, but also Brothers for the Mission of RFTW.

Never Forget!!!

Mark "Straightarrow" Rittermeyer

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY, AMERICA!

INDEPENDENCE DAY

By Del "Abe" Jones

In the year of 1776
That paper was decreed -
They were tired of oppression
And wanted to be freed.

They wrote a Declaration
So the whole world would see
This was, "the home of the brave
And the land of the free."

They signed that piece of parchment
The leaders of this land
Knowing, divided they would fall
But, together they could stand.

A new world lay before them
Untamed from shore to shore -
They swore they would protect it
If it meant going to war.

Battles have been fought
And many lives have been lost -
So sad something so basic
Has such a high, high cost.

Seems freedom is a luxury
There's some would bind us all -
Like then, together, we can stand
But divided, we will fall.

More than two hundred years
Have past by since that day
That each of us celebrate
In our own different way.

We should be proud and thankful
Pay a share of the cost -
Not take freedom for granted
For it easily could be lost.

► STORIES FROM RFTW 2007

RFTW XIX IS HISTORY

By Frank “Tadpole” Perry

Southern Route Coordinator 2007

Another successful Run For The Wall is now in the history books. I would like to personally thank all the 130+ volunteer workers on the Southern Route who stepped up to the plate and helped make this a most successful mission. Early in April a certain photographer friend said to me, “Well, so you’re going to be the star this year.” I considered that for a moment and replied, “No, we’ve got more than 200 stars with us; I’m just going to lead them from Ontario to D.C.” No job this immense could be accomplished by a single individual. It took teamwork and a lot of enthusiasm and dedication by all of the volunteers to make this work.

We were indeed blessed with good weather and mostly good roads and traffic conditions. There was a time east of Texas when we really expected bad weather. All we got were two quick showers that managed to wash the road grime off my bike. And where did all the bad road surfaces disappear to? We were prepared for two separate situations in Texas where construction threatened to really cause us some problems. But when we got to those specific locations, the surface was really very good. We did have a very few crashes, but thankfully all of those riders who were involved were released from the hospitals before we actually reached D.C.

And the generosity of the riders continues to overwhelm me! As we started out from Ontario, I told our leadership team that we wanted to pledge at least \$1,500 to each of the three schools that we support on our way across the U.S. And I wanted to add another worthy cause to our list, the Wounded Warrior Project (WWP). We pledged to purchase 15 of the backpacks filled with personal articles for those soldiers who are wounded and flown out of Iraq to the trauma hospitals in Germany. After all was said and done, we gave an even \$3,000 to each of the schools and, as of last week, the total donations for the WWP had exceeded \$8,000! What a marvelous bunch of patriots and, well, just nice folks we had riding with us.

I salute each of you for all that you did to make this a successful RFTW XIX and I sincerely thank you for giving me the opportunity to be a part of this effort.

AN FNG’S THOUGHTS ON RFTW 2007

By Rick Meussner

I participated in Run for the Wall 2007. I did not know what to expect. I thought it was a motorcycle event with a purpose, and a social affair... Well, it is that and MUCH, MUCH more. It is a mission, a family; it provides services to the various communities, it helps and honors veterans, it helps heal, and it is a charitable event with very positive results.

RFTW is a welcome home, a renewal of friendships with both survivors and those on the Wall, a bonding. It is physically and emotionally exhausting, but in a very good way.

The unit I was with in Viet Nam was the US Navy’s HAL-3 Seawolves. HAL-3 was a very small attack helicopter unit operating in-country in support of the River Forces in the Mekong Delta region of Viet Nam. The unit was created by Adm. Elmo Zumwalt primarily to support the US Navy’s Seal Teams, but the mission grew rapidly. We were a very small unit that only existed from 1967 to 1972. There were 400 to 500 personnel assigned to the Seawolves in any given

year—small. We operated hand-me-down, very-well used and abused Bell UH-1B aircraft that were modified by the Navy for all-weather operation. We also supported every other operating force in the delta region, Army, Marines, Coast Guard, PF's ARVN, Aussies ROCs, etc. There are 44 Seawolves on the Wall.

On this run, I met two other Seawolves that I had not known before: John Gana, Carl Reeves and John's better half, Sharon, an honorary Seawolf and great Seawolf supporter. I rode in with another Wolf who was with me in RVN (Barry Waluda). I met Seals, PBR sailors, Army, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen who had very positive Seawolf experiences. I met folks who knew people I knew, both living and on the Wall. We were all wearing Seawolf Patches.

RFTW-SR supports several schools and notably, the Wounded Warrior Project. The Wounded Warrior Project provides a backpack of essential items to Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Airmen that are wounded in Iraq or Afghanistan and evacuated to hospitals in Germany (for example). Most of these wounded evacuees are rushed out without their basic personal effects, shaving gear, clothing, etc. These backpacks provide all of that. The cost is \$100 per backpack.

We four Seawolves bought one backpack in the name of the Seawolves and our 44. The following morning, John, Barry and I learned that someone had bought a backpack in the name of Seawolf LCDR Robert Johnson (turned out it was Carl). This Project may be something that we can work with our Association to contribute towards.

I connected with RFTW in Weatherford, TX. The next morning, during registration, a former Army Helo Pilot noticed the Seawolf Patch on my back, and introduced us to John Gana. We also met Carl Reeves that same morning as he saw our patches. Over the course of the run, I think we (John, Carl, Sharon, Barry and I) became close. We also met and became friends with many others.

In Monroe, LA, I overheard someone mention PBRs. I asked him if he was a PBR sailor; he was. When I told him we were Seawolves, the man cried, hugged us, and said that if it wasn't for Seawolves he wouldn't be alive today!! In Meridian, MS, I heard a former Seal mention the name of a Seal I knew who was killed and whose team I medevaced. Emotional times.

Along our way to Washington, D.C. we were feted, paraded, honored, and treated with utmost respect. There were governors, mayors, Medal of Honor recipients, former POWs, and more. In Wytheville, school children surrounded us for pictures and autographs; they were full of questions, and made some real good observations. In Montville, the children fed us, sang to us (this brought tears to my eyes), and celebrated us.

We visited VA medical facilities and nursing homes where the residents were happy to receive visitors and have someone to talk to. All along the route, we were fed by the VA, churches, dealerships, American Legion, DAV, Shriners, VFW, and so on. In many places, fuel was donated. This may be another area for which we can approach our Seawolves Association to contribute.

In parts of Louisiana, all of Mississippi, and parts of Alabama, the highways were shut down so we could pass; no one entered the highway. We passed no one and no one passed us. In many places we had police escorts; in some, the police rode with us as participants.

Upon arrival in the DC area, we visited the Wall.....

I told my wife that I was going to do it again next year. I have started recruiting for 2008. I have a commitment from a Seawolf from Monticello NY and have posted information on our Seawolf Association website, which has resulted in several people expressing an interest in the Run. John, Carl, Barry and I think it would be really great to have a large Seawolf turnout in next year's and future RFTWs. If you do it once, you will want to do it again, and again....

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THANKS, BROTHERS AND SISTERS

By Tom "Tracker" Lockett

Well I've had a couple of weeks to sit back and ponder this year's run. I had to miss last year due to health issues. That won't happen again. I knew I missed not going in 06, but had no idea how much until I arrived in Ontario this year.

The moment I started seeing old friends in Ontario I was thanking God for allowing me to make this ride. I was home with my run family and it felt so good. Thanks to Central Route Road Guard Captain Kent Markley for letting me Road Guard again after a year away. The blessings started immediately. In Arizona my good friend and fellow Marine Les Egge gave me the best news I could receive. Les, spread that good news. Thank you my friend. Monte Apodaca and his wife Linda are also great friends and such a blessing to me. Monte and Linda had to return home because of family health issues. I pray all is well. I also pray for "Medicine Man," a Road Guard who had to leave because of his wife's illness. I prayed for his situation when he left and I am still praying God's Blessings on you guys.

The stop at Angel Fire was just a great time for all, especially me as I had quality time with some good folks. Met some great FNGs, had a great evening, and the food was great. Thanks Monte and Linda, also Rhett and Linda (Buffalo and Angel.) Angel is having her knees replaced this month (June); keep her in your prayers for a speedy and complete recovery. Santa, You are also in my thoughts. Pray you are doing well. Slim Jim, I love your attitude and thank you for your kind words to me.

In Gallup the welcome home from the Navajo Nation was such great fun and I was blessed to receive a shawl from the fine folks there as we danced in the Gourd dance. What a great honor to be received as a Warrior.

To say the least, this Run For The Wall was, as always, a life altering experience. I was very thankful for our successful transition through Kansas City. That is one town I am very glad to get through. Kenny Miller and I shared some moments on the freeway there waiting to direct the pack at a rather dangerous intersection. We kind of felt like the main goal on a pinball machine. Thanks Kenny for being a very good friend, God Loves Ya!! Mike and Delores McDole, you guys are the best. Thanks for your concern and all your help and prayers. Paula, what can I say. You are a great lady and I respect you for your support of your Mom and Dad and The Run. Pato Pato, it is always great to hear your words of wisdom; you are a good guy.

In this letter I am trying to speak of some very special friends who have helped me in so many special ways over my five years with The Run. That is in fact what the Run is all about—brothers and sisters helping to make your life a little better. Russ and his wife ran the merchandise trailer this year, but I remember the year he was our chaplain and we tried to pray at The Wall on the grass and were asked to move. Thanks for your faith and your boldness. Mark Rittermeyer, you and your wife also helped me so much. Thanks for your kind words this year. Eddie (Black Hat) Radcliffe and I are sharing something that neither of us want, but the faith is strong. They can kill us but they can't beat us. Love you Eddie, my best to Mary-Bryan. JR Franklin: you humble me sir and I want to be just like you when I grow up. I have prayed for you every year at the end of our mission. I didn't get to do that in person this time, but you are in my prayers. So far so good with the VA.

Washington D.C. was the best time I have had. Thanks to a lot of support, I was able to have my daughter Tawnie fly into D.C. to spend this special time with me. Tawnie was born while I was in Vietnam and we had a lot to talk about and catch up on. To all who shared with her, I thank you. Marla, Kate, Karen—I love you guys. Thank you. Then there are my very dear friends, Tony and Judy D'Aquanni. Tony (Moses) and Judy (Duchess) met me in D.C. on my first Run and have been there every year since. Judy and I went to school together in the late 50s and early 60s. Julie and our family have been so blessed to be friends with them, what a great family. Kendra, Thank you for sharing your family with me. One thing we do every year is to get together so I can Bless Tony's bike. Last year when I couldn't be there Tony called me so I could bless it over the phone. That is friendship. Thanks Guys. Tony rode from Hurricane with us this year and we are hoping to have him go all the way next year. Ron "Hammer" Young, you are a great friend and a great patriot. I was very honored when you asked me to be a part of the wreath laying at Arlington. I will never forget that privilege. Thanks Krispy. To Sparky, Walrus, Butcherman, Jim, Screamer, Many Bikes, Kenny, Kent, and all the other road guards and Don and the fuel crew: it was and is an honor to serve with you, and God willing we will do it again next May as we honor those we ride for who can't speak for themselves.

I am not responsible for any errors, any people I may have missed, or the content of this letter. That's my story and I'm sticking to it. See you down the road.

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THE RFTW "ODYSSEY"
By Dwight "Dutch" Stevens
Richardson, Texas

In 2005 I stated that the word "Odyssey" is defined in dictionaries as "a spiritual or intellectual quest." In no small part that definition still fits the Run For The Wall for 2007 as it has in years past. Every year I come away spiritually and intellectually renewed, having gained more than in the previous year. Each run builds upon the other, new friends are made and in my heart I see what America is all about. The run to DC was only the beginning of a greater mission and purpose.

I have to thank all participants of the run for allowing me to experience a renewed outlook for this wonderful country. Most Americans have multiplied their possessions, but reduced their patriotism. They talk too much, love too seldom, and never salute our flag. A lot of Americans have done larger things, but not better things. The 2007 RFTW Odyssey is one of those events in life that sends a message of renewal. It lets me know what and who we are as a nation.

I will continue this odyssey for as long as I can because life is not measured by the number of breaths we take. It is measured by the events in our life that take our breath away. Once again, the RFTW took my breath away.

GOD BLESS YOU ALL AND THANK YOU !!!!!!!

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RAINELLE REPORT
By Krispy Ferris, WV State Coordinator

The Run collected \$22,094.50 (checks and money orders I handed to John Lewis on Day 9) for Rainelle Elementary School in West Virginia this year. This amount includes the anonymous donation of \$10,000—to be matched, which it was. There was \$681.00 in the collection at the school Thursday afternoon, and I sent a check for \$35 for all the coins I had floating around in the Jeep, for a total of \$22,810.50.

Well done, RFTW!

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DID YOU HEAR THEM?
By Carl Reeves

It's Friday, and I have almost finished the first week back at work since RFTW 2007. My seventh time riding with RFTW, twice to DC, is over. However, the time since returning home has provided opportunities for reflection and learning, conversation with old and new friends, and soul searching.

While the activities are over, the experience continues. Stories have been shared on a daily basis. Family and friends want to know "how it went." Brothers and sisters from RFTW are calling and emailing. Pictures are coming and going.

Aren't digital cameras the greatest things? News is on the web page every day. Some bring a smile while other news brings tears. We have lost a brother to a traffic accident. On a personal note, a couple of things stand out and are worth sharing.

First, the power of The Wall continues to provide amazement. The patch, "I touched the Wall and it touched my heart," says it all. An email about that very subject was sent to John Gana, a RFTW Road Guard. It touched one heart. The email was forwarded to others and ... you know how that goes in this day of instant communication. The email is as follows:

"The RFTW has such a profound effect on first-timers ...

The first time I went was in 2002 when the run went straight to The Wall. Quite honestly, I did not have the emotional experience I thought I would because of all of the people that were there. Later that night I went back. That visit was the one I had been wanting. I cried, talked out loud to people I had known, and in general acted as if I were crazy.

"When I got back to the hotel, I ran into John King. When I told him where I had been, he said, 'Did you hear them?' Without thinking, I said, 'Yes.' He and I understood. I am sure others feel the same way. That is why I like to go when there are not many people there. Sometimes I even stand at some distance away for a period of time.

Last March when we there for the Gathering of Eagles, John and I took the list of the 44 Seawolves, in date order, and walked the entire Wall. We spoke their names, touched their names, and said a prayer. So many people I did not have the honor to serve with."



Don't we all have a similar story concerning a visit to The Wall? If you feel so moved, please share that story with someone. There are fewer vets each day. That monument is the legacy of all Vietnam veterans, living or dead.

Legacy is the second item worth mentioning. A friend calls and quotes from a book written many years ago. The book is titled "These Good Men" and was written by Michael Norman. The complete quote is:

"I now know why men who have been to war yearn to reunite. Not to tell stories or look at old pictures. Not to laugh or weep. Comrades gather because they long to be with the men who once acted their best, men who suffered and sacrificed, who were stripped raw, right down to their humanity.

I did not pick these men. They were delivered by fate. But I know them in a way I know no other men. I have never given anyone such trust. They were willing to guard something more precious than my life. They would have carried my reputation, the memory of me. It was part of the bargain we all made, the reason we were so willing to die for one another.

I cannot say where we are headed. Ours are not perfect friendships; those are the province of legend and myth. A few of my comrades drift far from me now, sending back only occasional word. I know that one day even these could fall to silence. Some of the men will stay close, a couple, perhaps, always at hand.

As long as I have memory, I will think of them all, every day. I am sure that when I leave this world, my last thought will be of my family and my comrades ... such good men."

"They would have carried my reputation, the memory of me"... a legacy consecrated with the lives enshrined on our memorial—The Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Have we all asked the question, "Have I been a responsible steward of their reputation and memory?" If the answer is no, please put this thought on your heart: who will carry my reputation and the memory of me? **Long may we ride for those who cannot.**

THE CAB DRIVER

By Anne Perry



Frank “Tadpole” Perry had a really poignant few minutes on Memorial Day. We needed to go to The Wall early, and he chose to go via cab. The cab driver was obviously Asian, and there were a few long moments of silence after we got into the car. Then the driver held up a cardboard sign on which he had written "Thank You ALL vets...our heroes." After another long moment, he added, "especially Viet Nam vets."

It was very emotional for all of us ... I was crying, and so was he, as he told the story of being a SVN Marine working in VN, Laos, and Cambodia. After the war, he spent five years in jail and then, after one failed attempt, managed to get 19 members of his family out of the country via boat. He was a very proud man, and it was a wonderful experience, especially for the two veteran Marines.

Since this happened, and we have shared the story with others, some of our friends have said that they rode with the same cab driver. We wonder if he wasn't working our hotel in particular in order to share his own memories and thankfulness and love with our veterans. If you were so blessed, we hope you think this was a gift from God, as we do.

MY NEW FAMILY

By Mike Kerr

(Ed. Note: Mike is the founder of the “Snowball Express,” an all-volunteer, non-profit organization that provides good memories and a few days of fun to the children of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Mike sent the following email to Chapter 785 in thanks for the experience of helping with their Water Point in this year’s Run for The Wall.)

Reading the (Chapter 785) Dispatch brought tears to my eyes this morning, for two very distinct reasons. First, for the loss of Alan (Bandoli) and for the pain his family must be going through at this very moment. Second was in appreciation and gratitude for being invited by Chapter 785 to be one small part of an incredible journey. I met so many wonderful people—the guys from the chapter that I did not really know before the trip and who are now brothers. I would do anything for them.

Then of course there was the healing I experienced on a very deep and personal level. As I have mentioned before, I am ashamed and it is one of my deepest regrets that I never served this country in uniform. I am even more ashamed of the generation in which I grew up who turned their backs on our warriors. Ever since coming of age I have searched for a way to make up for this in some fashion and to bring closure to that unfortunate portion of my life. I really had no idea that being of service to all the riders on the run would finally allow me to come to peace with those feelings, nor did I understand the family I was about to join.

The night before we left I could not sleep but for a couple of hours, mostly out of excitement but also out of fear—fear of how I would measure up to people like you and all the other Vietnam Vets along the way. What could I possibly have to offer men and women of such courage and strength? It is not just the courage to go into battle but the strength to come home and go on with the memories of the war and the ungrateful attitude of a nation. I prayed for just a bit of the strength all of you have and asked for help in just being of service. My prayers were answered and answered, as usual, with much more than I had asked for. I found a group of people who I finally felt at home with—a group of people who

don't judge or look down upon anyone who serves this country. The mere fact that I would take the time out of my life to work a water truck and hand out a few items meant so much to them and they in turn lovingly brought me into their extended family—the family of veterans I am dedicated to serving. Not one cared where I was from or what I did or have done. They accepted me just as I am and it has changed me forever.

So I really want to thank all the members of Chapter 785 for reaching out to me. I am a much better man, husband, father and worker as a result of my Run for the Wall and I will never forget you for what you have done. Thank you my brothers and sisters for truly changing my life and the lives of so many.

Semper Fi,
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THE HEALING MISSION

By Judy Lacey

RFTW XIX's mission is completed, and each of us has different memories of the journey. For the FNG, the memories may be unclear, with hundreds of images and feelings jumbled and spinning around in your head. You just finished the ride of your life and may not be too sure exactly what all the feelings mean. What you do know, though, is that this ride was something very important for your well-being, and that maybe, just maybe, your healing has begun after all these years.

For those who were FNGs last year, this year's Run was very different, wasn't it? Last year it was about you—you experienced your self, your personal quest for healing. This year you wanted to be there for the new FNGs, to help show them the way to healing, and to show them they are surrounded by friends who understand what they have been going through. On RFTW, they say "The first year is for you, and the next year is for someone else."

And so it goes, year after year—the healed ones helping those who have yet to find healing. That's one of the missions of Run For The Wall, and that's why we keep coming back.

That leaves the rest of us who travel with you—the non-veterans. We come back every year to do what we can to support you, to hopefully make your journey of healing a little easier by showing you there are so many of us who weren't there, but still care. And we do care, believe me. When we see dozens of people and flags on overpasses we have tears in our eyes like you do; when we hear a Huey we get a lump in our throat, knowing what they mean to you. When we watch the kids in Rainelle treat you like heroes, we know it's because you really are heroes. And when we stand at the Wall and see all those names we, like you, find it impossible to stop the tears.

Run For The Wall has done for you what no government agency was able to do: provide a way to heal your wounds of war—the ones not visible, and I want to say thank you to Gunny and Bill Evans for making that first journey to The Wall so that thousands of other vets could also find healing.

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DC CAMPGROUND FEEDBACK REQUEST

By Pat McCarthy

I am looking for information (good/bad/whatever) from people who stayed at Burke Lake and Lake Fairfax campgrounds in 2007. Were the facilities adequate for tent camping and/or RV camping? Showers clean with enough hot water? What were the costs? Was the camp store stocked/open and are there alternate stores available nearby? Please reply via e-mail to rftw.dc@gmail.com

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LETTER FROM LOUISVILLE VAMC (CR)

(I received the following letter from a Health Technician at the VA Medical Center in Louisville, KY. Letters like this one make us realize just how much our visits mean to VA patients.)

Judy,

I just had to let you know how much we at the VA Medical Center in Louisville, KY appreciate the riders taking the time to stop and visit with our patients. I am a Health Technician and love when all the bikes roll up our hill, but never have I witnessed such compassion as I did this morning. One of my patients that missed the bikes last year due to having his left leg removed from the knee down has been very depressed over the last few months. The guys and girls that took the time to talk to him, hug him, and pat him on the back really touched my heart, because Gary was again smiling and cutting jokes.

He hasn't done this for some time. One of the guys even let Gary get on a motorcycle and have his picture taken (at right). Let me tell ya, Scott was an angel. Gary was like a kid on Christmas morning sitting on his first bicycle. I know ya'll do all kinds of good things along the way all through the year, but had to share this with you.



I hope you will pass this on so the riders will know it's worth what they go through to bring some happiness to our VETS, and in this case made a very sad VET smile and have a great day. Thanks to all of you for NEVER FORGETTING our vets...God Bless each and every one of you and may every ride be a safe one.

Phyllis Barnett
VA Medical Center
Louisville,Ky.

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THE STORY OF "BILLY POPCORN"

By Bill "Monsoon" Mimiaga

Excerpts reprinted from the *Monsoon Dispatch*

(Ed. Note: Monsoon is the esteemed editor of the (award-winning) "Monsoon Dispatch," the newsletter for Chapter 785 of the Vietnam Veterans of America, Orange County, CA). Chapter 785 members volunteer every year to provide the "Water Point" for RFTW Central Route. They work all year to collect donations to stock bottled water, fruit, and snacks for all of our participants; but this is just one of the many good works the Chapter does. Monsoon is sending out special editions of the Dispatch, covering the Central Route's journey this year, with lots of photos, and he includes very special stories like this one. He is a talented journalist, and very good at ferreting out the "stories behind the stories.")



Pictured is Billy "Popcorn" Pfeister with Chapter 785 member Harry "Attitude" Steelman. Billy is more than just an ordinary volunteer at the VA Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri. Billy is a Vietnam Veteran who has

volunteered at the VA Hospital for over 40 years, often caught serving "popcorn" to patients and visitors alike, but Billy does so much more. He can be found daily, visiting and ministering to so many patients who have come to depend on Billy for his wise discernment, humor and friendship. Billy is a very caring individual who came to this chosen place as a result of his own wartime experience in Vietnam.

Billy often says "Half of me died in Vietnam." He and his twin brother, Bobby, were inseparable. Just two months after they graduated from high school in their hometown of Lyndon, Kentucky, they both enlisted in the Army. They served in the same unit, and were sent to Vietnam together. In Kontum, in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam, their unit was attacked and Bobby was killed. Billy received serious injuries, but he barely noticed them, so great was his grief over losing his brother. Even today he says the hurt never goes away—it's always painful.

Billy's life revolves around his volunteer work at the VA Hospital in Louisville, and at the VFW, the American Legion, and the Vietnam Veterans of America. At the VA Hospital he passes out popcorn and is known as "Popcorn Billy." In 2001, he received the Liberty Award for his service to veterans. He visits his brother's grave twice a week, and he has arranged to be buried with his brother. His name will be etched on the opposite side of Bobby's headstone.

And now we come to the rest of the story. By chance, I came across Harry "Attitude" Steelman on our visit at the VA. Harry appeared emotionally moved and close to tears. Harry was standing in line to meet Billy at the bequest of his two good friends that he met and who befriended him on the "run" as a new FNG, "Tanker" and "Girlfriend" McDole. "Girlfriend" had become very close to Billy over the years and on each visit would ask Billy to accompany them to "the Wall" to visit his brother, Billy has always declined with a "maybe" someday.

Harry finally drew up to Billy as the line shortened and Billy, without a word, reached down and behind him and came up with some "popcorn" sealed in a bag. What was also in the bag was a piece of paper with a panel and line number. Billy looked at "Attitude" and spoke softly, would he take this bag of popcorn to his brother Bobby, "at the Wall." Harry could do very little to stop the flow of tears as he told Billy that he would be honored. In telling this story to others all were moved to tears and hugs.

A few days later I was honored along with many other "brothers" to be with Harry "Attitude" Steelman at the "Wall" where he placed Billy's bag of popcorn at the panel and line number for his brother Bobby. This was a very moving and emotional moment for all and just another of the many stories of our wonderful "journey" and "mission" to "the Wall" riding for those who can't, our POWs and MIAs.



Above: Harry making a rubbing of Billy's brother's name to send to Billy

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D.C. GROUP PHOTO

Copies of this year's group photo in D.C. can be ordered now. 12x18 size is \$15 each plus \$5 S&H (up to 3 photos per tube). 20x30 size is \$25 each plus \$5 S&H (up to 3 photos per tube).

Make a copy of the order form below to order copies of the



group photo. If you have any questions, contact Ric at Pikzr@aol.com.

You can also order copies of RFTW photos from 1993 to 2007. These include not just the group photos in DC, but also Road Guard and other photos. All available photos will soon be posted in Photo Gallery on the RFTW main website.

Note: Ric will soon be changing the name of his company to KZWerks.

[CLICK HERE FOR PRINTABLE ORDER FORM](#)

**ORDER FORM FOR 2007 RFTW GROUP PHOTO
BY PERCEPTUAL IMAGES (KZ RIC WHITE)**

I would like to order the following of the 2007 RFTW Group Photo at the Lincoln Memorial:

12" x 18" (\$15) _____ Quantity _____
20" x 30" (\$25) _____ Quantity _____

I am enclosing \$_____ plus \$5 shipping and handling (for up to 3 photos).

Please mail to:

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____

Mail this form and your payment to

Perceptual Images
11206 Visalia Drive
Dallas, TX 75228.

Allow 3 to 6 weeks for delivery.
Make check payable to Perceptual Images.

[CLICK HERE FOR PRINTABLE ORDER FORM](#)

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LETTER FROM WYTHEVILLE (SR)

(The following letter was received from the Word of Life Ministries. We are grateful for their contribution to Run For The Wall)

Greetings from Word Of Life Ministries in Wytheville, VA on the 63rd Observance of D-Day.

Pastor Gary C. Cope and the entire Congregation of Word Of Life Ministries want to convey how HONORED we were to have had the opportunity to participate in Welcoming RUN FOR THE WALL 2007 to our community on 5/ 23 - 24 /07.along Interstate 81, at Withers Park and, thanks to Dan Biertzer's hospitality, also at Wytheville Moose Lodge #

394.

With Membership including approximately 20 Veterans & Families, WOLM knows the importance of the Mission RFTW has undertaken, in Remembrance of POW / MIA / KIAs of the Vietnam War and all Wars.

We were HUMBLED, to have been given the opportunity to greet and thank each participant of RFTW, for what each has already given to this Nation and for all that is to follow.

Word Of Life Ministries looks forward to again joining with RUN FOR THE WALL in Wytheville, VA in 2008.

GOD SPEED on your Journey!

Pastor Gary C. Cope

PastorGary2010@aol.com

GaryC1150@aol.com

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RFTW TOUCHES TWO GENERATIONS

By Shadow

When I was in Rainelle a little girl came up to me and asked if I would sign her book. As I was signing, she asked "Are you Shadow?" I was surprised because she was so little and couldn't have remembered me. As I looked up she said "My mommy said you signed her book when she went to school here." Turns out that in '97 I had signed her book and now she is all grown and has a kid of her own and she brought her and remembered me. It really got to me.

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THANK YOU FROM RFTW FOUNDER

I wish to sincerely thank Cowboy, Milo, the Mayor of Wytheville, and all the folks of Run For The Wall for the presentation of the Founder plaque, patches, and challenge coin.

Thank you and Semper Fi,
James "Gunny" Gregory



L-R: Slammer, Gunny, Cowboy, and Wytheville Mayor Trenton Crewe, Jr.

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► OUR STORIES

I RIDE FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T

By Cowboy

Folks,

We at some time or other will be asked, do we really believe there are any POW/MIA's out there? Well here's the latest answer for anyone who wonders why we ride. Five more families will now have some closure. Sure the moms and dads have probably passed on as well as their spouses, but what about that son or daughter who never knew their father?

Thanks to the DNA lab in Hawaii and research in DNA, we are identifying remains on a weekly basis. A little over a month ago they ID'd the remains of a WW I soldier buried all these years in France. So when and if someone says ours is a futile mission, remind them of these brothers that have now been identified and brought home.

I will be the first to admit that time is running out to find some of our POWs. But time will never run out for identifying and returning the remains of our brothers and sisters. Time will never run out to return them to the soil that they so bravely died for. Time will never run out for the families that deserve to know their loved ones are home.

I ride for those who can't, I ride for those who have lost loved ones and deserve answers.

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ALAN BANDOLI'S MEMORIAL

By Jack "Chief" Brammer (Chase 2)

Alan Bandoli's memorial service was really great; you could see the love the RFTW family had for the family and friends of Alan. Monsoon spoke kindly of him, saluting a fellow Marine, Ron told the standing room only church of the trip, of the stops, and of the love that Mid-America showed its veterans. Also of the city of Rainelle, how the school means so much to RFTW as does the city. Then Bill "No Chute" blew us all away: he told us of the trip, the times shared with Alan along the route home, in a manner we all laughed and applauded, not mourning the loss of Alan but celebrating his life and especially the time he shared with us. Doc spoke of a new found friend in the FNG, and of the times along the way home, as did Big Grumpy, who even tried to limit his special choice of words, and only said damn a couple of times ... the crowd enjoyed his down home common sense way with words. Then Pegleg gave Pamela and Sara the picture of mile marker OK 168, where they had placed boots, Marine BDU cap, and an American flag in memory of Alan, also a RFTW 2007 t-shirt was given to Sara ... Hugs, tears, and warmth were shared by all.



Following the memorial Pamela and Sara, Alan's wife and daughter, endured the long procession, giving a hug, warmth and kind words to each visitor, friend, and family member. Pamela stood tall and proud as she greeted and thanked each person waiting in line. The community and church members had prepared a very nice outpouring of love for the family, setting up four tables of food and drinks. Alan's older brother also spoke of Alan's desire to go All The Way with us, getting the welcome home parade we all never received, of visiting his brothers and sisters at the wall and at Arlington. He was happy Alan was able to do the RFTW and all family members were so proud to be included in the RFTW family. Needless to say, Monsoon said it all when he asked the RFTW members to say how far they and Alan had went, and a robust "ALL THE WAY!" shook the church windows and those family and friends shed tears of joy knowing Alan rode with family on the trek to DC and was with family when he passed.

To all members of RFTW, please know we honored his presence with many friends and over 60 bikes, several cars and trucks of the RFTW family members, American Legion Riders, and of Alan's fellow members of the Patriot Guard Riders. He was shown the honor we feel for all of those who are family.

Those who were not able to attend were thought of, and knowing their thoughts were there for Alan's family and friends in Ojai. Hopefully these new friends and new members of the RFTW family will be able to join us, if not All The Way, at least at the host hotel or morning meeting at the start of RFTW 2008. All were invited to join us, and Pamela looks forward to seeing Rainelle, a very special place that was so dear to Alan. All RFTW members are encouraged to donate to the Rainelle school in memory of Alan N. Bandoli.

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► VA NEWS

VA TO IMPROVE SERVICES FOR RETURNING COMBAT VETERANS

WASHINGTON (May 8, 2007)—Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson today announced the formation of a formal, 17-person committee that will advise him on ways to improve VA programs serving veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and their families.

The new OIF/OEF advisory committee will hold a three-day inaugural meeting, beginning May 14 in Alexandria, VA. The committee is scheduled to discuss its general work program, future meeting dates, and plans for site visits to VA facilities around the country. The schedule includes briefings by senior officials of VA's key programs, comments by members of the public who register in advance with the committee, discussions about "seamless transition" goals and procedures affecting combat veterans moving from the military to civilian life.

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VA TO ESTABLISH NURSING ACADEMY

WASHINGTON, June 4, 2007—To address a shortage of nurses across the nation and ensure that veterans continue to receive personalized, world-class care in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities, VA has announced creation of a new multi-campus Nursing Academy.

A five-year, \$40 million pilot program will establish partnerships with 12 nursing schools across the country during the next three years, beginning with four for the 2007-2008 academic year. The VA nursing academy is a virtual organization with central administration in Washington and teaching at competitively selected nursing schools across the country that partner with VA.

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VA OPENING 38 NEW CLINICS

WASHINGTON, May 29, 2007—To bring the world-class health care of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) closer to where veterans live, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson today announced plans to open 38 new community-based clinics in 22 states.

The new facilities, called community-based outpatient clinics, or CBOCs, will become operational by October 2008. Local VA officials will keep communities and their veterans informed of milestones in the creation of the new CBOCs.

VA's Proposed Sites for New Outpatient Clinics:



Alabama—Childersburg
Arkansas—Pine Bluff
Florida—Jackson and Putnam
Georgia—Camden and Stockbridge
Idaho—North Idaho
Indiana—Elkhart County and Knox
Iowa—Carroll, Cedar Rapids, Marshalltown, and Shenandoah
Kansas—Hutchison
Kentucky—Berea, Daviess, and Grayson County
Maryland—Andrews Air Force Base and Ft. Detrick
Michigan—Alpena County and Clare County

Missouri—Branson and Jefferson City
Montana—Cut Bank and Lewistown
Nebraska—Bellevue
South Carolina—Aiken and Spartanburg
South Dakota—Wagner and Watertown
Ohio—Hamilton and Parma
Tennessee—Hawkins and Madison
Utah—Western Salt Lake Valley
Virginia—Charlottesville
Washington—Northwest
West Virginia—Monongalia

For VA News Releases, visit: <http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/index.cfm>

For Veterans Benefits Resource Guide, see July 2006 Newsletter

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► OTHER NEWS

THREE NAMES ADDED TO VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

The names of three American servicemen were inscribed on the black granite walls of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in May, announced Jan C. Scruggs, founder and president of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.

*Navy Fireman Apprentice Joseph Gerald Krywicki
Holton, Mich.*

March 8, 1947 – Sept. 13, 1966

Date of Casualty: Sept. 13, 1966

Wall Location: 15E, Line 26

*Army Sgt. Richard Monroe Pruett
San Diego, Calif.*

July 22, 1945 – Feb. 28, 2005

Date of Casualty: May 27, 1969

Wall Location: 21W, Line 38

*Army SP4 Wesley Alvin Stiverson
Monticello, Ill.*

July 16, 1950 – March 30, 2005

Date of Casualty: April 6, 1971

Wall Location: 7W, Line 73

“We will add the names as close as possible to their dates of casualty, so these servicemen can remain in the company of those they served with,” said Scruggs.

The highly technical procedure requires meticulous work to match the stroke and depth of the surrounding names to within one-thousandth of an inch. James Lee has performed the name additions for many years through his former company, Great Panes Glassworks. Now with Engrave Write, he will continue making the inscriptions for The Wall.

Beside each name on the Memorial is a symbol designating status. The diamond symbol denotes confirmed death. The

cross represents missing in action. When a service member's remains are returned or accounted for, the diamond is superimposed over the cross. In addition to the three names being added this year, 14 designation changes will be made as well.

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► BRINGING THEM HOME

KOREAN WAR VETERAN BROUGHT HOME 56 YEARS LATER

SAN FRANCISCO, April 30, 2007 – Military authorities have identified the remains of a Korean War veteran from San Francisco who was missing for more than 56 years, the Department of Defense said Monday. **Cpl. Pastor Balanon, Jr.**, was assigned to L Company, 3rd Battalion, 8th Calvary Regiment, when he was declared missing in action on Nov. 2, 1950, after fighting in a battle south of Unsan, North Korea.

A joint U.S.-North Korean team led by the Joint POW-MIA Accounting Command found Balanon's remains after excavating a burial site near the battleground in 2001. Scientists used forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, as well as mitochondrial DNA and dental comparisons, to confirm his identity. Balanon was buried May 3 in Arlington National Cemetery.

CPL. JIM MOSHIER

After 40 years, Marine Cpl. Jim Moshier's remains are coming home from Vietnam to be buried between his father and the son he never saw. Moshier's helicopter crashed in Vietnam on June 11, 1967. Moshier was in one of the most dangerous details, reconnaissance, in the most heated battlegrounds, and those close to him say he would not have had it any other way. Services are planned for 10 a.m. at Hillcrest Cemetery July 18. Moshier will be laid to rest beside his son, Eric, who was born just months before Moshier's death. Moshier never had the opportunity to see his only child who was killed by a drunk driver during his senior year in high school.

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FIVE MISSING WWII AIRMEN IDENTIFIED

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) recently announced that the remains of five U.S. servicemen, missing from World War II, have been identified and are being returned to their families for burial with full military honors. They are 1st Lt. Cecil W. Biggs, of Teague, Texas; 1st Lt. William L. Pearce, of San Antonio, Texas; 2nd Lt. Thomas R. Yenner, of Kingston, Pa.; Tech. Sgt. Russell W. Abendschoen of York, Pa.; and Staff Sgt. George G. Herbst of Brooklyn, N.Y.; all U.S. Army Air Forces. Pearce was buried April 27 in Louisville, Ky.; Herbst was buried June 8 at Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C.; Biggs was buried June 9 in Teague, Texas. Abendschoen's funeral was June 13 at Arlington; and Yenner will be buried July 30 at Arlington.

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AUSTRALIANS REPATRIATED

The remains of two Australian soldiers killed in the Vietnam War were recently repatriated, more than 40 years after their deaths. It was the first repatriation for Australia since the war ended in 1975.

Lance Cpl. Richard Parker, 24, from Canberra, and Pvt. Peter Gillson, 20, from Melbourne, were killed in November 1965 in a battle in Dong Nai province, northeast of former Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City.

► EVENTS

RFTW REUNIONS

Angel Fire Reunion—September 7-9

Eagles Nest, New Mexico

Motels:

Laguna Vista Lodge (505) 377-6522 Eagles Nest, NM (Headquarters Hotel)

Econo Lodge (505) 377-6813 Eagles Nest, NM

Elk Horn Lodge (505) 377-2811 Angel Fire, NM

Angel Fire Resort Hotel (505) 377-6401 Angel Fire, NM

PLANNED EVENTS:

1. Friday for those of you who arrive early, I (Monte Apodaca) will be at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at 0900 preparing for Saturday's work schedule. I will need some volunteers.
2. Friday evening Dinner at Angel Fire Community Center (I need a head count). Father Mitchell will join us for dinner. I also have Kimberly Westphall scheduled if she can get away from school.
3. Saturday 0900 work schedule at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial State Park. Engraved brick-laying and other small jobs. I will need volunteers. This year will not be as physically demanding as last year. (Roy Hopwood is waiting to see everyone). Lunch will be at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.
4. Saturday (for those wishing to ride) Enchanted Circle Ride. There will be someone to escort you on this beautiful ride. I will need a volunteer (medically trained) to assist on this tour.
5. Saturday evening dinner at Eagles Nest (ask for directions at the Laguna Vista Lodge) (need a head count)
6. Sunday Depart and make ready for the TEXAS HILL COUNTRY REUNION. Folks, this is a great Texas style Reunion. It was great last year and I expect it to be even greater this year.

NOTE : New Mexico is high altitude and cool weather, with lots of wildlife.

Angel Fire Memorial Walkway Bricks:

Bricks for engraving for the Memorial Walkway are now on sale, all U.S. Veterans—living or deceased. The price is \$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; 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.”

RIDE SAFE

Monte (Bullrider) Apodaca

New Mexico State Coordinator

Run For The Wall

Kerrville Reunion—September 28-30

YO Ranch Resort Hotel
2033 Sidney Baker
Kerrville TX 877-967-3767

Located off Interstate 10; take exit 508. Hotel is south of I-10, approximately ½ mile on the left.

Ask for RFTW group rate:

Single/dbl rate: \$89

Family suite \$149

1 bdrm suite \$175

2 bdrm suite \$250

To check out hotel accommodations, visit www.yoresort.com. For those needing RV accommodations, contact Kerrville-Schreiner Park 830-257-5392; or Buckhorn, off I-10 800-568-5392.

Arrangements are being made for a buffet dinner on Saturday evening. For more info, contact Janice Wentworth at 214-906-5357 or stitchnbitch1@earthlink.net

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► SICK CALL

Ed “Fingers” Gohn was injured the second day of this year’s RFTW. He went down near Flagstaff, AZ and was taken to the Flagstaff Medical Center with serious injuries, including 6 broken ribs and a dislocated right ankle as well as 20 broken bones in the right foot. After eight days in the hospital, he is at home recovering and appreciates all the calls and emails he received from RFTW brothers and sisters. He recently wrote *“Please thank everyone for their prayers ... I believe in the power of prayer.”*

Bill “Monsoon” Mimiaga, VVA Chapter 785 editor, was recently diagnosed with Stage 2 breast cancer and underwent surgery to remove his right breast on June 27, followed by chemotherapy. The Monsoon, as always, was very optimistic and maintained his great sense of humor. When one of his doctors asked about reconstruction surgery, he told her “unless I can acquire Arnold's pec's, forget about it.” His sense of duty won't allow him to slow down; he has every intention of being at the Huntington Beach July 4th parade that Chapter 785 has participated in for five years. Please keep Monsoon and his beautiful wife and daughter in your prayers. You can email your encouragement to him at gunnymims@aol.com.

Andy Grow (Navy), a RFTW brother and Patriot Guard rider, had a massive heart attack in May. One of his arteries was fully blocked, and he had surgery at the Desert Regional Medical Center in Palm Springs Ca. After the word was sent out, Andy received so many phone calls from concerned friends that the nurses asked they be slowed down, as they couldn't get any work done. Let's keep Andy in our prayers and thoughts for his return to good health.

Malcolm “Honeymooner” Kirby and **Ed “Yosemite Sam” Finch** both suffered minor injuries in a mishap leaving North Carolina on the RFTW return trip this year. They are on the road to recovery, but we pray for their continued good health.

Paul Blomgren Jr. went into emergency after suffering a stroke on May 4. The doctors found a 99 percent blocked carotid artery, and he had surgery a few days later. He has no known nerve damage and is recuperating at home. We wish Paul a speedy and full recovery. Send him a get well wish at pblomjr@yahoo.com

► TAPS

Alan Bandoli

Alan Bandoli of Ojai, CA was killed on Wed May 31, 2007 during his return trip home along I-40 near Oklahoma City, OK. According to reports, an SUV in the opposite path of travel blew a tire and crossed a grass median, hitting Alan's motorcycle head-on.

Alan was an FNG and Marine (Vietnam) who went All the Way from Ontario to D.C. He called his wife Pamela every day and told her how much he enjoyed the riders, communities and sense of family he felt on the road. He was especially moved by Rainelle School children and Yamaha Powersports' (Hurricane, WV) refusal to accept money for shop labor, but rather suggested donations to a charity. The Run became more than a ride to Alan; it became a journey of America and Her people. His family is so proud of his accomplishment.

(Alan's memorial was held on Saturday, June 9 at the Ojai Presbyterian Church. There were about 100 bikers in attendance (RFTW—50-52; PGR—30; ALR—20). Ron Young later said, "I am not sure the Ojai Presbyterian Church will ever be the same, and the minister will be more careful the next time 100 bikers want to "take over" his church."



Above: Wife Pamela, daughter Sara, and Alan Bandoli

► WORTH READING/VIEWING:

The following was posted on YouTube; it was created by a 15-year-old girl:

http://www.youtube.com/p.swf?video_id=ervaMPt4Ha0&eurl=&iurl=http%3A//img.youtube.com/vi/ervaMPt4Ha0/2.jpg&t=OEgsToPDskJ5zP8TZ5MA_9kxDQFvCQ8s&autoplay=1

OR:

<http://www.youtube.com/v/ervaMPt4Ha0&autoplay=1>

2007 CR RFTW, from Chapter 785: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3O8QHRHVHak&NR=1>

2007 CR RFTW, TV station video of arrival in Wentzville: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0_tPHJV6v8

2007 SR RFTW; escorting the Traveling Vietnam Wall to Jackson, MS: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yQ7u79SszY&mode=related&search=>

2007 SR RFTW, passing through Phoenix, AZ:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAdqGBUvB1g&NR=1>

2006 Run For The Wall on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KfTIDucGszU>.
This video was made by “Mike” in memory of a friend who died in 2005.

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► CLOSING THOUGHTS

MY HERO

By Kimberly Westphall

(Kimberly Westphall is the daughter of Doug Walter Westphall. This poem is about two brothers, both of whom served in Vietnam—her father Walter and her Uncle David. David was killed in Vietnam, and was the son of Dr. Victor Westphall, who built the Angel Fire Vietnam Memorial in his memory. Kimberly read her poem at the recent Memorial Day Services at the Angel Fire Memorial.)

You are my hero, my best friend and lend me courage to go on,
Though you are not with me because your life ended in Vietnam.

Your life may have ended, but your courage could never blow out,
I cling to your hope as my mind clutters with doubt.

I just don't understand why such a young life had to end,
Or why such a terrible war even had to begin.

I wonder why God didn't take me instead,
Why he chose you first and to lead on ahead?

Now I'm standing here at a crossroad, I was the brother that got to live,
I'm trying to conjure up the strength, but it takes more than I have to give.

I still wonder why God didn't take me instead, why I'm left here to stay.
I tell myself that He wanted the best and that's why He took you away.

That still doesn't spare my heart from breaking or make the anger subside,
I just wish I could accept it and force my heart to abide.

40 years have past and the pain is still as strong as it was back then,
I look at my family and my life and wonder what could have been.

So I celebrate you on this day and your courage that gleams so bright,
All I have our vivid memories and flag folded up nice and tight.

I am proud of you my big brother, more proud than you could ever know,
And what hurts the most is never telling you face to face that you are my hero.

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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