



RUN FOR THE WALL

Quarterly Newsletter

“We Ride For Those Who Can’t”

October 2010

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THE EDITOR’S NOTES



I had an experience last month that taught me the importance of sensitivity when dealing with veterans, especially Vietnam Veterans.

A huge 10-day event was held in my town, the centerpiece of which was one of the touring replicas of The Wall. The same Wall had visited our town last year and was so successful that they decided to come back, partnering with a local organization of hotels and restaurants. The idea was to fill the event with entertainment, concerts, motorcycle rides, car shows, an air show—as many things as they could sign up to bring people and revenue to town during the slowest month of the year.

Many were worried about having the event in September, still a very hot time of year in Lake Havasu. While the temperatures would not be as high as the 120-125 degrees of summer, we knew most visitors, unaccustomed to the 110 degree heat, would likely suffer. But the organizers dismissed the thought and the event pushed forward. Everyone was excited about this big event; all the veterans groups lined up to help.

The day the Wall arrived, our Patriot Guard Riders and those from two cities 60 miles away met it with great fanfare. We had a parade through town and the next morning veterans showed up to set up the Wall. Workers erected a large concert stage two hundred feet or so away from and facing the Wall. I was worried: surely the

loud music from rock bands would reach and disturb the veterans who visit the Wall, seeking solitude and quiet as they look for their buddies on the black granite.

And it did. Every evening, as veterans came, they were shocked that loud rock bands were so close to the Wall. It bothered them. They were unable to find the quiet so needed to honor the names on the Wall. Many veterans turned back without even getting close to the Wall. More than one said it was a circus, and disrespectful to the men on the Wall and veterans alike. Others verbalized that it was obvious the event wasn't about veterans—it was about making money. Most couldn't believe the owner of the Wall himself was the one who created the circus. Some commented that the fact there were no plants or trees or benches by the Wall showed that the organizers had more interest in making money than honoring the Wall.

How could this happen in a city with a huge population of veterans? It happened because the organizers never asked veterans or veterans' advocates for advice to ensure veterans would be shown the proper respect when the Wall came to town. The Wall owner should have known better, but obviously was caught up in the excitement of such a huge event. He made the unforgivable mistake of not thinking of veterans first.

I always try to be sensitive of veterans' feelings when working on an event involving them, but this experience has shown me the great need to be ever vigilant.

Judy “Velcro” Lacey

*Freedom is never free. It is paid for with the blood of the brave.
It is paid for with the tears of their loved ones. It is up to us to
preserve and defend that which they have paid so dearly for.*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Ron “Hammer” Young



Preparations for RFTW XXIII are progressing well. Our route coordinators are busy planning for another great Run and have already made great progress. I am proud to work with Harry and Richard and look forward to them leading us in May.

A few updates for you:

Hotel lists will be finalized and on the website in early December. I will update as we get closer to the posting date.

Access to Arlington National Cemetery has been a concern with respect to changes in ANC's leadership. I am pleased to share with you RFTW received approval to continue our 22-year tradition of riding into ANC. As in the last several years, 250 bikes will be allowed to ride into Arlington as a group and lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Congratulations to John Gosser, DC coordinator, for his work in this area.

Several Run folks have expressed interest in having an “official” RFTW reunion at a location not served by either route. If realized, the proposed reunion would be sponsored by RFTW. The recent reunions held at Kerrville and Angel Fire are not “official” reunions, but are held by interested individuals and sponsors; the Board does not sponsor these reunions. but is supportive of them. If RFTW does sponsor an official reunion, the current reunions will continue if supporters want to organize them.

In response to some questions, I want to remind riders the purpose our AMA insurance. Our affiliation with AMA is a result of our need to obtain insurance for RFTW, Inc (a registered non-profit) after the costly lawsuit resulting from an accident near Colorado Springs, CO. The accident occurred several years ago and involved an

unregistered day rider following the Run by several miles. Although the rider and passenger had no affiliation with RFTW, the Run was sued regardless. Future Runs were in doubt unless we obtained insurance. The resulting AMA liability insurance covers RFTW, Inc. from negligent acts. It does not provide medical or liability insurance for individual riders.

The Board of Directors has passed an increase in registration fees to \$20, the first increase since registration fees were initiated. In that period nearly all budgeted costs have increased. Our reserves/contingency funds are not adequate when compared to guidelines suggested for non-profit organizations. We feel a \$20 registration fee is very reasonable for a 10 day journey across America.

Run for Them All is a committee of the Board which encourages veterans from the Global War on Terror join RFTW. Run for Them All is not a replacement or a splinter group of RFTW, but rather recognizes the real need for healing RFTW can provide our current and recent veterans. Run for Them All raises money by selling a patch for \$10. Funds will be used to assist qualifying GWOT FNGs in their journey across the country. Additional information will be posted. Please support this next generation of riders!

As our planning progresses, updates will be more frequent via Latest News from the Route Coordinators and the President.

The Board of Directors are excited about the coming year and look forward to seeing you in May.

Ron "Hammer" Young
"Until they are home ..." – JPAC

► NEW ROUTE COORDINATORS FOR 2011

Central Route Coordinator: Harry "Attitude" Steelman

As with many of the riders on the "Run," my world was changed 40 years ago. Exactly that, it turns out, as I served in the Army in Vietnam from March '70 until March '71. My tour was, to me, rather quiet and uneventful as the senior field advisor of a Mobile Advisory Team in IV Corps. I came home and went back to work as expected, never looking back – for 20 years. And then I did. It was about 1990 or so that I made my first visit to the Wall and it about took me to my knees. In 1996 I was working in Pittsburgh, PA and heard about Rolling Thunder. What a rush that would have been, I thought, but I had no motorcycle. That situation was corrected in 2004, but by then I was in California working for Amtrak and the problem became getting to D.C. Upon contacting VVA Chapter 785, I was informed that they had a contingent that went with the "Run For The Wall" every year. So I signed up.



I made my first "Run" in '07 and was immediately hooked. My wife joined me in '08 and we were right away "drafted" into "Registration Duty." I also served that year as an Assistant Platoon Leader. '09 found Martha back in charge of Registration and me riding in the 6 pack, "just to get a feel for how this thing operates." This of course prepared me completely to be Assistant Route Coordinator this past year with Miss Martha back at the Registration Desk. And now I am absolutely ready to be your Central Route Coordinator – RIGHT! And you'll know where you can find my beautiful wife again as well.

I am very much honored to have been asked to lead the Central Route across our great nation. For my wife and me, the riders themselves, and those for whom they ride are some of the most important people in our lives and we have the utmost respect for them and their sacrifices. It is my personal commitment to see they (you) all

arrive in D.C. safely as should be your rightful expectation. If we all stay aligned with the Mission and focused on Safety, then this should not be a problem

I tell my employees at Amtrak that the most important focus in Railroading is Safety and I strongly believe that the same holds true for the Run For The Wall. If you hear me talk of nothing else, you will hear me talk about Safety. My posts to the website over the next several months will also address Safety issues and how to prepare for the ride across the country. I also believe strongly in acknowledging the efforts of those that contribute to the administrative and operational success of the Run, both within the pack as well as along the route, and I have a few ideas in mind designed to show my appreciation for them and all who participate – at any level.

If you've never made the "Run" before, then let me welcome you home and into our Family. If you have done it before, welcome back. Those of us who have done it multiple times can attest that it's never the same Run twice. The State Coordinators are hard at it getting the route confirmed and the hotels lined up, and the Fuel Crew and Staging Crew are working to ensure that we have things set up at our various stops. It promises to be a great trip! Check the website often and we'll see you in May.

Harry "Attitude" Steelman
Central Route Coordinator 2011

Southern Route: Richard "Preacher" Moore



It is an honor to have been chosen Southern Route Coordinator for 2011. Many of you know me as "Preacher," but I was named Richard Moore at birth. I volunteered and served in the US Army from 1962-1965 in Bremerhaven, Germany in the 59th MP Company.

Five years ago I was on a PGR Mission in Waco, TX and met "Double D," "Dutch," "Stepper, and "Master Chief" and asked them about the RFTW patch on their vests. I went home from that encounter and told my wife, Jerry, that I was going to go to California and ride to DC with a group called Run For The Wall.

The first year I served as a Chaplain, and the next 3 years as the Senior Chaplain. Last year (2010) I served as the Assistant Route Coordinator to "Too Tall." What an honor.

As we say on The Run, "we are a family" and truly I have many new brothers and sisters. With all of your help, I know that 2011 will be a mission of healing and remembrance of those who have gone on before us.

Richard (Preacher) Moore
Southern Route Coordinator 2011

RFTW 2010 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Submitted by John "Hardcharger" Barker, RFTW Treasurer

Run for the Wall Statement of Income & Expenses-Income Tax Basis For the Three Months and Nine Months Ended May 31, 2010

	Three Months Ended May 31, 2010		Nine Months Ended May 31, 2010	
		%		%
Revenue		%		%
Merchandise Sales	\$ 74,015.15	86.69	\$ 86,724.45	85.71
Donations	500.00	0.59	500.00	0.49
Registration Fees	<u>10,860.00</u>	<u>12.72</u>	<u>13,960.00</u>	<u>13.80</u>
Total Revenue	<u>85,375.15</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>101,184.45</u>	<u>100.00</u>
Cost of Goods Sold				
Purchases	15,107.32	17.70	62,353.04	61.62
Purchase Freight	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>1,243.64</u>	<u>1.23</u>
Total Cost of Goods Sold	<u>15,107.32</u>	<u>17.70</u>	<u>63,596.68</u>	<u>62.85</u>
Gross Profit	<u>70,267.83</u>	<u>82.30</u>	<u>37,587.77</u>	<u>37.15</u>
Operating Expenses				
Bank Charges	251.63	0.29	952.39	0.94
Business Promotions	(2,000.00)	(2.34)	10,782.75	10.66
Depreciation	962.50	1.13	2,887.50	2.85
Dues & Subscriptions	6,950.00	8.14	6,950.00	6.87
Insurance-General	3,125.00	3.66	3,125.00	3.09
Office Supplies	935.98	1.10	1,036.54	1.02
Supplies	12,860.29	15.06	12,935.02	12.78
Permits & Licenses	0.00	0.00	36.25	0.04
Postage	1,858.71	2.18	2,113.48	2.09
Printing & Reproduction	12.81	0.02	92.77	0.09
Professional Fees	0.00	0.00	450.00	0.44
Telephone	518.50	0.61	1,272.27	1.26
Travel	5,000.00	5.86	10,572.19	10.45
Truck & Auto Expense	250.19	0.29	1,132.03	1.12
Web Services	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>334.53</u>	<u>0.33</u>
Total Operating Expenses	<u>30,725.61</u>	<u>35.99</u>	<u>54,672.72</u>	<u>54.03</u>
Net Profit (Loss)	<u>\$ 39,542.22</u>	<u>46.32</u>	<u>\$ (17,084.95)</u>	<u>(16.88)</u>

See Accountants' Compilation Report

**Run for the Wall
Statement of Assets & Liabilities-Income Tax Basis
As of May 31, 2010**

LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES

FUND BALANCE	
Fund Balance	102,264.43
Current Revenue	<u>(17,084.95)</u>
Total Fund Balance	<u>85,179.48</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES	\$ <u>85,179.48</u>

**Run for the Wall
Statement of Assets & Liabilities-Income Tax Basis
As of May 31, 2010**

ASSETS

CURRENT ASSETS	
Cash-Bank of America Checking	40,661.25
Cash-Wesbanco Checking	28,584.18
Inventory	<u>14,338.22</u>
Total Current Assets	<u>83,583.65</u>
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT	
Trailers	21,500.00
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	<u>(19,904.17)</u>
Net Property and Equipment	<u>1,595.83</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ <u>85,179.48</u>

GROUP PHOTO IN D.C.

The RFTW group photo is now available from KZ Ric. Ric said this year's photo is an improvement, in that the process he used causes no distortion at the edges. The result is gorgeous! The new size is a little larger than the past few years 12" x 25"

Please use the below form to order a copy.



2010 Group Photos by "KZ" Ric White

(One size only: 12"x 25")

\$15 each plus \$5 for S&H = \$20

(Up to 3 photos per shipping tube; for more than 3,
add an extra \$5 for shipping.)

Name or Initials of group: RUN FOR THE WALL Date: _____

How many 12x18's: _____ Total cost: \$ _____

Please mail to:

Name _____

Address _____

City, State & Zip _____

Email or phone (In case of problems) _____

Method of payment: CASH (in person), Personal check, or U.S. Postal Money Order

Payable to: Ric White and mail to: P.O. Box 180789, Dallas, TX 75218

703-445-8538 or pikzr@aol.com



PLEASE ALLOW 4 TO 6 WEEKS FOR
DELIVERY

God Bless America



► OUR STORIES

NO LONGER ENEMIES

Steve Edmunds is president of the Ivy Dragoons Chapter 4IDA; C/3/8 4th ID RVN 5/67-5/68 and a “proud member” of VVA Chapter 785. He sent the following email to the person who gave him a Soldier’s Angel pin.

Colleen,

I think you gave me one of your Soldier's Angel pins at one of the VA LB barbeques a couple of years ago. While I was in Vietnam last year I met a former member of the 209th NVA Regiment who fought my battalion 3/8th, 4th ID in a battle that took place 26 March 68 at Firebase 14 in the central highlands. He located me 4-5 months prior through my battalion's website and asked for help locating the graves of his comrades that were killed in that battle. Anyway, after meeting in Hanoi, we agreed that 42 years ago, given the opportunity, we would have not hesitated to kill one another...but on this day, we would have lunch together. I pinned the Soldier's Angel on his lapel before we parted...from one soldier to another. We still correspond periodically through email. I need a new pin:)

Best Regards,
Steve Edmunds

PLEA TO RESTORE ANGEL FIRE

Many veterans were dismayed by the changes made to Angel Fire Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The following email to Angel Fire was written by 2010 Central Route Coordinator Arnie Swift:

Chuck,

First I would like to thank you once again for allowing us to place more bricks at the Memorial this past Labor Day weekend. It is always a special time and a time to give back in thanks for all the Dr. Westphall gave to us.

Secondly, I want to make a few comments on the newly redone visitors' center. As a Vietnam vet and a member of Run for the Wall and having visited and talked with Dr. Westphall I am saddened and hurt at what has been done to the inside. It is as though a piece of our soul has been taken. Please let me explain why I feel this way, and I am not alone in these feelings.

I guess one has to figure out just what the mission of the visitor's center was and is. From our standpoint, it was a place of healing. It was almost sacred ground. One felt that they could go in and see the murals on the wall and be drawn back to a time in their lives that maybe wasn't so pleasant and feel some safety in the center. They also felt that with the banners hanging and the lights low that they could also find refuge and be able to cry without the whole world looking on.

With the new design you have taken that away. When I walked in Saturday I felt like I was in a shopping mall with a mobile display like you see at so many places these days. The other room that you have I feel changed is the movie room. Again this was a safe place to watch a movie that is extremely emotional and you could again shed a tear and not feel that everyone was watching.

I believe that the main room could be returned to its original status as well as the movie room with very little work involved—that is, assuming that you still have all of the pictures that were on the wall. You could utilize the new rooms to rotate and add new items.

I understand that this may be indeed be a state park now, but it also is a Memorial. I would hate to think that something like what has been done there could in fact be done to the Wall or the Korean or WWII Memorial.

Thank you for listening.

Arnie Swift

VIET NAM VETS

By Rich Martin, Sgt. USMC
1965-1969; Viet Nam Vet

We are going home. We made it! Just a wakeup and then we board the big freedom bird and head back to the "World". Does it get any better than this!

Then we remembered that you left some of our brothers behind. You didn't care! You didn't get them back. And you broke our hearts.

Then we got home and what did you do? You called us "Baby Killers" and you broke our hearts. You spit on us and you broke our hearts. You threw things at us and you broke our hearts. You turned your backs to us and you broke our hearts some more.

Many of us turned to drugs and alcohol to ease our pain. And all you did was shake your head and say, "What else could you expect from us." And you broke our hearts.

Many of us committed crimes because of how we were mistreated. And all you did was shake your head and say, "What else could you expect from us." And you broke our hearts again.

Many of us killed ourselves because we couldn't take the pain anymore and what did you do? Nothing! You just shook your heads and said, "What else could you expect from us." And our hearts broke again.

Over the years we tried to hide the pain we felt and retreated from life. You made us feel ashamed to admit we ever served. And you broke our hearts.

We are getting older now and we are starting to come back and stand proud because we served with honor and are not ashamed anymore. You broke our hearts over and over again but we had each other and are becoming stronger.

We did what you asked us to do and then you threw us away. The pain of what you did to us will never go away. When you turned your back on us you broke our hearts again. The shame is yours.

Now we have a place to go and visit our brothers and sisters that gave all. We built it ourselves. It is sacred ground to us. Our pain is something we learn to live with but we have our Wall. We shed our tears and try to heal ourselves. You can't take that from us.

We served with honor but you didn't care. Well we are proud now of our service and won't let what happened to us ever happen to our brothers and sisters who are serving today. Our hearts have been broken many times over the years but now we know that the shame is yours, not ours. We are Viet Nam Vets and we are now proud of our service and we know the shame is yours, not ours.

Some day we may be able to heal. But remember this; the shame has always been yours, **NOT OURS!**

A VIETNAM SURVIVOR'S GUILT

By Jack Estes, in Sign On San Diego

August 22, 2010

Bob Gregory has supplied water and snacks for PGR Missions in the Orange County, CA area.

I've always felt guilty for not getting shot in Vietnam. I used to think if I lost an arm or a leg it would justify my trouble inside. As I caught my recent flight out of Portland to San Diego for a reunion with Bob and Doc, I wondered what they were feeling. Were they seeing the same dead and wounded lying on the battlefield? I've seen Bob since he was awarded the Navy Cross. But neither of us had seen our corpsman, Peter Hayman, since we loaded him on a chopper 41 years ago.

In February 1969, Bob and Doc and I were living in a village near Da Nang. We were part of a Combined Action Platoon of nine Marines, a Navy Corpsman and some ragtag villagers called Popular Force soldiers. The PFs lived in the village and sometimes fought but scattered when things got really hot. During the day, we ran patrols and held medical outreach so villagers could see Doc. At night, we set ambushes for the enemy.

February 23: We were set in at a grass hut and the sun was high and hot in a blue sky. Flies lapped at our C-rations and buzzed at our eyes. Jack Walker, the dog handler, was watering King, his German shepherd, while Jimmy Tyus, Charlie Young and Corporal Redden were cleaning weapons. Two black Marines named Hodges and Bingham were playing cards with Bob and I on a poncho spread out in the dirt and Doc was reading. Suddenly, our squad leader, Cpl. Colton, announced headquarters had radioed that other platoons in the area were getting hit hard.

We picked up our weapons and left in single file, spread out with Jack and his dog on point, and I followed. Bob was behind me and Doc behind him, then Jimmy and the rest. In the distance I could hear the crack of AK-47s and M-16s and fighter jets as they roared above us. The villagers had run, the PF's were gone and the fields were empty.

Bob Gregory was a star running back at Notre Dame High School in Southern California. In the war, he could fly and tumble and come up firing, just like John Wayne. A few days ago, he met me at San Diego's Lindbergh Field with a big grin, limping hard, his leg in a brace and his left arm dead, swinging in the wind. He wore Marine Corps suspenders and a matching necklace, and when someone calls his cell, the ring tone is the Marine Corps hymn. When I saw him shuffling toward me, I wanted to cry.

Later, we met Doc in my hotel lobby. He wore a suit and tie and seemed a bit shy. I felt detached but Bob looked so pleased. Doc – real name Peter – was in San Diego attending the American Psychological Association's annual meeting. He lives in Florida, has a Ph.D. and helps oversee vet centers for the Department of Veterans Affairs. He has spent his life assisting veterans. He's soft-spoken and moved gingerly across the lobby. When we sat down, he helped Bob with his chair.

Our squad moved along a wide expanse of rice paddies. Suddenly, the dog darted into the field pulling Jack. When they crossed over a rice dike the tree line erupted, Jack pivoted, and crumbled. Bullets struck my rifle and I dove to the ground. When Doc ran by me, I yelled for him to get down, but he was determined to save Jack. A moment later he was hit and fell. Jimmy ran to the side firing but soon he, too, was wounded. Rounds pounded the dike and whizzed overhead while Bob and I fired at the tree line. Bob crawled toward to me at the same time Redden was hit, spun around and fell at my feet.

Between rounds of firing at the tree line we tended to the wounded. Doc was fading, so Bob took off his belt and tied it above the spurting artery. I used the radio and called in gunships and a medevac while Bob

hammered back with the machine gun. No one else came out in the field and no one else fired and when the gunship finished, it was quiet.

Bob and I loaded Doc, Jimmy, Cpl. Redden and Jack on the floor of the medevac. As I turned to leave, the tree line opened up again and rounds tore through the chopper, killing Jimmy and the door gunner. Doc said he watched Jack's blue eyes flicker. Two days later, Bob was shot four times while we were moving another wounded corpsman and Cpl. Colton was medevaced for fatigue. A month later, Charlie took one in the throat and Hodges too was hit and gone.

"I had a severed artery and cracked femur in my left leg and I was shot in the groin through my right leg," Doc said as we sat at the table in San Diego. "The bullet came out my back side and went through my wallet and a picture of my girlfriend. In 1985, I found Jack's mother. When she opened the front door, it was like looking in Jack's blue eyes. All these years later I still feel like I had failed, by not saving her son."

We spent hours talking, sometimes with tears in our eyes, trying to suture our old memories together. We had dinner and then we were done. There was sorrow when we left each other. We were happy to gather, but we couldn't recapture what we felt so many years ago.

On the plane home, I wondered about the guilt some soldiers feel. Guilt for surviving. Guilt for not saving someone. Guilt for being saved. I sat next to a fresh-faced Marine named Jordan Vicars from rural Colton, Ore., in Clackamas County. He showed me a picture of his sweetheart and told me how his father cried when he graduated from boot camp. Someday soon Jordan will be in Afghanistan carrying a machine gun. He'll be brave, I'm sure, but who knows what kind of guilt he may bring home.

Estes is a writer and president of Fallen Warriors Foundation. He lives in West Linn, Ore., with wife Colleen O'Callaghan, who contributed to this article. He can be reached at jackestes@comcast.net

I AM PROUD

By The Shadow

I heard you were coming, coming to Hurricane, West Virginia on your way to the Wall. I came out and I wandered around the park, watching as the preparations were being made. I heard a familiar noise and looked up to see an old Huey coming in for a landing in the parking lot. I moved closer, looking and remembering. I listened to the small talk and heard someone say,-they are at the state line and coming fast.

The Huey sprang to life and I watched as it lifted into the air. I wondered where it was going, and I heard them say, they are going out to meet the pack and lead them in. I was surprised at this and I began to get excited along with everyone else there. Soon we heard the chop-chop-chop of the blades and she once again landed in the parking lot. Someone was calling out the miles, and when the group turned off at the exit and headed into the park I made my way to a place where I could see them pass by.

I stood there and saluted you, each and every one of you as you passed by. I looked into your faces and saw the miles and hours in the saddle. You looked great. And I smiled to myself and thought, I am proud, so proud!! that all of you would do this--ride to remember those who have served and paid the ultimate price.

I was there in the dining hall as you gathered to break bread and satisfy a well-deserved hunger. I stopped at your table and listened to the small talk—the chuckles and the tears. I walked with you as you ate ice cream cones, with it melting and dripping on your chins and beards. And I walked with you as you headed for your tents and campers to lay the day's exhaustion down.

As it got dark I listened to the night sounds creeping in, and stood watch over you as you slept through the night. And as morning drew near I listened as you stirred, waking, stretching, softly cursing the stiffness you tried to overcome.

Someone calls out—is there coffee yet? And there is the scent of hot coffee drifting through the morning air. I remember the taste of hot coffee in the mornings. Ahhhh—it'd be wonderful to share a cup with you. but I shall be content to stand close by as you pack and repack your gear, for today the much-anticipated ride to Rainelle and the children is about to start.

I hear the bikes begin to rumble as platoons and lines form. Last-minute instructions go out and I see everyone's anticipation building. I move to a spot where I can watch you leave and when the signal is given, the sea of bikes begins moving as one. I come to attention and salute you, each and every one of you, as you pass by.

As a tear rolls off my cheek, I say thank you—thank you for remembering me!

I watch you in the distance, riding out of sight, and I feel my chest swell and again I am proud ... so proud of you all.

GOLD STAR MOTHERS DAY

By Roland "Pegleg" Marchand

President, VVA Chapter 785, Orange County, CA

Vice-President American Legion Riders Inland Empire

Today, September 26, 2010. Monsoon, Danny Lopresto, Derek and his wife and daughter, Jumper. Malcolm Kirby, Richard, Carol, Wayne Nichols, and I celebrated Gold Star Mothers Day with 34 Gold Star Mothers and their Families at the Gold Star Manor in Long Beach.

What a wonderful day, spent fellowshiping, crying, and laughing with amazing women. No words can express the hurt they endure and yet they have the love and understanding of what it is to be a mother and a human being.

Gold Star Mothers Day is something you need to experience. I wish I could have taken every one of them home with me. One mother who lost her son in Vietnam 42 year ago still is crying out to him. What a moving and emotional time to see a woman cry so hard for her son after 42 yrs. I'm still crying today, Monday, and the experience will be embedded in me forever. If you run into a Gold Star Mom or even a Blue Star Mom, hug her and tell her you love her and her child, and reassure her of how thankful you are to have our freedoms in America because of these mothers and their children.

We must tell them we as a nation will never forget the sacrifice that they and their children have made to this country so we as Americans can live in peace and our families can enjoy what being an American means today.

SEMPER-FI

MISSOURI BREAK

by Evo Red



I was crawling on all fours, smoke so dark I couldn't see my hand in front of my face; a life was on the line. Nah, that was then, my firefighter days; this was now, same-old, same-old where TV or books bring the only action. I was wallowing in a daily humdrum, needing a shot of something to cue my life back to full throttle. When this dog-day mood hits me, my usual drug of choice is to get in-the-wind on my Wide Glide. In this case making another coast-to-coast run would do the trick. I could visit my daughter and family at their new place in Concord, MA. Scheduling the trip for August could tie into Sturgis Bike Week and my club's National Rally in Hill City, SD.

For a cooler desert crossing and an earlier Vegas check-in we left Santa Barbara at 6 a.m. I was riding with "Duc" (*tagged "Toe Duc" on a Sturgis putt due to his relentless new boot mending via duct tape*). Duc had set us up at Aliante Station in North Las Vegas. What sticks in my mind about the place, besides a cheerful eye-catching bartender—a double for Miley Cyrus—was my next morning's breakfast at A-Station's Original Pancake House.

I walked down to breakfast while Duc slept in. As I waited to be seated, a young woman of maybe 5' 1" approached. Her petite height deterred little from her squared-away troop persona: blonde hair tied up tight, fatigues pressed and spotless, a "full alert" attitude. She trudged along nonchalantly, trailing her large travel bag after her. I heard her say, "There will be four." I sat down in my booth; she took the booth adjacent. Next up, a brunette arrived, taller, outfitted the same and just as squared. Two more women of the same caliber completed an Air Force crew of four.

The young ladies sat straight in my line of sight. It didn't take long for me to reflect about war, my Vietnam days, sacrifices our troops make, how young they always seem to be and to be reminded of the shit-welcome we Vietnam Vets received coming home. When the waitress came over I said, "Put this (\$50) towards their breakfast."

She said, "It's already been taken care of. The gentleman over there said he'd pick up their check."

That gentleman was another old guy like me...perhaps another vet. "Ooh rah!"

That simple encounter might be easily overlooked as nothing by most people; but to me it was an overwhelmingly emotional comparison of then to now.

The best scenery on our route east was passing through Capital Reef National Park in Utah. This side trip loop off I-70 is definitely worth the extra time. The weather to the Black Hills held for the most part, dusting us with only a 20-mile patch of rain. Sturgis Bike Week was as it always is, exactly what's out there in print time and time again. We stopped to check out the 2011 Harleys on Lazelle Street and then walked over to the Sturgis Motorcycle Museum to see if my original colors vest and the Wind & Fire MC story were still downstairs on display. Yup, still there! Sturgis has it all; but, to me Bike Week is about seeing old friends and riding through The Hills. How many times have I been to Sturgis? Enough times that I quit counting...couldn't give an exact number if asked.

Duc and I split up after Tuesday's rally. He headed to Gillette, WY to meet his son. I headed east on a 550-mile day ride towards St. Paul, MN, where I grew up.

Laying down the miles on Dakota's Hwy 34, I was anticipating a stop at Papa J's Grill for coffee and a fresh baked caramel roll. What I tend to forget is how time changes things between rides. J's, as with many of my past haunts, had since vanished. While reflecting on that cosmic switch, "a rock hit the fan." I passed by one measly, tiny, almost obscure detour sign. So what if two cars and a van turned off? I kept going. How bad could it get? The two-lane blacktop turned to miles of off-and-on gravel, then to all gravel, then to washboard with gravel and finished with a full roadblock barricade. Times changes things between rides. J's, as with many of my past haunts, had since vanished. I was *not* backtracking through that obstacle course again! Surprisingly

there was an out. A small paved road led left away from the barricade, ominously numbered Highway 13. From the next town, Flandreau, I figured by heading north and east I'd hit some other eastbound route. No, I don't have one of those GPS gismos. Where's the adventure in that? Eventually I reached eastbound Highway 14. The silver lining to this whole dusty fiasco was a badger. As it crossed the road in front of me, the hurried waddle of its chubby low slung body, reminded me of a furry turtle.

A few days later I was at my daughter's home in Concord, MA. After a 5-day visit I headed out early. That first morning, after having run a couple of hours, as usual, I was thinking of food. The sign for the next exit off I-84 in West Hartford, CT said "Children's Museum". Somehow I equated "children's" with the possibility of a ma & pa breakfast place. No logic; just a thought, but it worked! I pulled up to The Quaker Diner on Park Road, a "cash only" place fashioned in 1931 as an antique railroad dining-car and in operation ever since.

A waiting line inside was a good sign. I hung my jacket and helmet on a clothes tree between a couple of booths and took the first free stool at the counter. One of the regulars plopped down next to me and asked, "Do you mind?"

"Nope, feel free."

Amid some banter with the waitress and ordering his usual, we struck up a conversation. My biker garb and Run For The Wall t-shirt steered the conversation to Harleys and the Vietnam war. Reflecting on my veteran status he said, "You guys didn't deserve the flack for being 'Baby Killers.' The public didn't understand the war."

I hadn't heard the Baby Killer tag for over 30 years and wondered what was coming next from this guy? He seemed a mellow sort, but maybe his idle chatter might erupt into a glassy eyed tirade. What he did do was tell a story about a Vietnam vet buddy of his. It seems the young G.I. developed a friendship with a little Vietnamese boy. From the vet's gifts of candy, the shared jokes, and the playfulness between the two, a warm relationship of daily smiles evolved. One morning the little boy showed up but remained at a distance, standing and staring intensely at his American friend. With a teary face he fearlessly said, "You have to kill me." The shock of his plea cleared when the boy explained that he had been wired with explosives and sent to kill the soldiers. The Viet Cong had his family and would kill them if he did not do as told.

The soldier shot the boy.

I have my stories from 15½ months In-Country; they're intense, but mild in comparison.

As I finished my breakfast of coffee and blueberry-raspberry pancakes, my bar mate said, "If you don't mind I'd like to pay your bill."

I sensed where he was coming from and accepted his offer with a, "You don't have to do that, but thanks."

Later it dawned on me that a couple of weeks ago I'd made a similarly motivated offer in North Las Vegas.

Hours and miles farther down the road in Towanda, PA I was in need of a break and about ready for lunch. As if on cue The Red Rose Diner appeared on Main Street. This dining car looked somewhat like a colorfully painted gypsy caravan trailer. I assumed the diner had been on this spot for *ever* and was *the* local small town landmark. In actuality, the car was built in New Rochelle, NY in 1927, found in Stroudsburg, PA in 1998, restored and moved to Towanda in 2003 by its new owner, Gordon Tindall.

As I munched on my Rueben sandwich and sipped my coffee, I got to talking with Gordon, relaying my earlier breakfast in another dining car. As I looked up from my micro table's swivel seat, I saw him excitedly reach under the counter and pull out a book while asking me the name and location of the car. Better yet I showed him

a photo from my digital camera. In short order, he found a page with a photo of the Quaker's interior. "Is that what it looked like inside?"

"Yup, that's it."

"I've got them beat! We're older, 1927 to their 1931."

"You ever heard of Mickey's Diner in St. Paul? I was there about ten days ago."

"That's the place that's been in the movies; it's yellow and orange or something."

I showed him another camera shot, this one of the yellow and red 1937 Mickey's. The car sits downtown like an outpost buffeted on all sides by high-rise buildings. I mentioned its cramped basement restroom, reached by carefully dropping down a narrow stair as if entering a dungeon.

That first day westward was clear for 520 miles but finished with 30 miles of rain, wet enough for me to mark my turf in front of the motel check-in counter with a sizable pool of water.

I'd planned my return route to include Lake of The Ozarks, Missouri, the site of my club's 20th Anniversary bash in 2011. Six miles from Ozark Lake, my Wide Glide erupted into a hellacious banging, as if one of the mufflers had fallen off, accompanied by a power loss. It being Monday, chances were slim that a motorcycle dealer would be open. Nevertheless, I limped down the road stopping here and there asking directions to the local Harley shop. I found the dealership, a big place, but closed. So, I back-tracked a mile and a half to the Osage Beach Comfort Inn to wait for Tuesday. A couple of days being delayed for repairs would be okay; if longer I'd have to come up with another plan. On the up side, I wasn't stranded in the middle of nowhere.

Things looked bleak the next day when the service writer opened with, "What kind of oil do you use?"

After draining the oil, the tech had found metal shavings and a measly one pint rather than the bike's operational three quarts. 1,500 miles ago I'd had a 10K service done! Good news / bad news, once the mechanic opened up the motor he found the rest of the oil...in another part of the motor, along with worn bearings, a worn crankshaft, a damaged crankcase and a dry piston. The likely culprit was oil pump failure. My motor was toast. Harley-Davidson Inc. doesn't stock built-up motors but rather offers two-week turnaround rebuilds. My only option was to have Lake of the Ozarks Harley-Davidson button up my trashed motor and ship it to HDI. This ordeal was going to take at least three weeks!

The day wasn't totally bad. The shop gave me as loaners first a 2011 Ultra with the 103 motor and ABS brakes and later, my choice, a used Road King with ape hangers. Both these rides were exact bikes that I had wanted to try. Each was fun in its own way.

The next day I flew home. I had broken down Monday afternoon; Tuesday the problem was diagnosed; Wednesday night I was back in Santa Barbara. I had definitely escaped my daily rut of "Groundhog Days"!

A toasted motor after a meticulous maintenance regime understandably would make anyone irate. Not me! Maybe I'm naively looking at the glass half full? My bike had 120,000 miles on it. Harley-Davidson didn't design the motor to crap out. Sometimes you just get the short straw. I'm sold on the Motor Company. HDI is an American business that has been around since 1903. The "Harley-Davidson" image is arguably a universal icon for freedom. In a way my fire service years and having founded W&F MC imbedded my bias. It happened in 2002 on a W&F MC run from Ground Zero to the Firefighters' Memorial Ceremony in Colorado Springs where the names of the murdered 343 FDNY firefighters were added to the wall. We – bikers – were the first group at Ground Zero for the one-year anniversary of the Twin Towers Attack, 350 motorcycles on site at 0001, September 11, 2002. A few days later in Colorado our memorial ride trailed down the interstate with 100 fire

apparatuses and 700 bikes ridden by bikers from all walks of life. Harley-Davidson Inc. supported this memorial effort throughout, even assisting when on September 12th Ray Feasel, one of our road guards, was killed in New Jersey. The Motor Company never asked for anything, including any publicity.

On the side of my riding vest I have a small embroidered patch that reads, "Not crazy – just a little impaired" (*Matchbox 20 lyric*). My stint in limbo, waiting for my bike, morphed into a mental water-boarding of not knowing how or when I'd get my Harley back. I realize, compared to the grand scheme of things, this mere inconvenience was insignificant; just the same I couldn't shake my anxiety. I've accomplished a lot over the years and I've come up short a few times. Riding my Harley fits into my life as either an outlet to get away from whatever irritant is floating through my brain or it's simply my go-to fun thing to do. The 100th Anniversary Wide Glide that I ride carries a 500,000-mile lineage from my '86 Harley Softail, "Evo Red". I purchased Red from overtime money working the job, firefighting. Evo Red's path took me through 344,000 miles and 18 countries. For years I had planned to buy as its successor a 100th Anniversary Softail. That successor lasted two weeks, totaled at 55 mph when a pickup pulled out in front of me. The witnesses said I looked like Superman as I was catapulted off my bike through the air and onto the asphalt. Without asking, for pain and suffering from road rash on all limbs and my several months of hand rehab – I should have been killed but only broke my little finger – I was offered \$10,000. That 10K went into an upgraded Successor #2, my present 100th Anniversary two-tone Wide Glide accessorized to my taste. Not having that bike around was like missing a body part, a feeling of life out of sync ...

"Not crazy - just a little impaired.

► OTHER STORIES

HEROES OF THE VIETNAM GENERATION

By James Webb

The rapidly disappearing cohort of Americans that endured the Great Depression and then fought World War II is receiving quite a send-off from the leading lights of the so-called 60s generation. Tom Brokaw has published two oral histories of "The Greatest Generation" that feature ordinary people doing their duty and suggest that such conduct was historically unique. Chris Matthews of "Hardball" is fond of writing columns praising the Navy service of his father while castigating his own baby boomer generation for its alleged softness and lack of struggle. William Bennett gave a startling condescending speech at the Naval Academy a few years ago comparing the heroism of the "D-Day Generation" to the drugs-and-sex nihilism of the "Woodstock Generation." And Steven Spielberg, in promoting his film "Saving Private Ryan," was careful to justify his portrayals of soldiers in action based on the supposedly unique nature of World War II.

An irony is at work here. Lest we forget, the World War II generation now being lionized also brought us the Vietnam War, a conflict which today's most conspicuous voices by and large opposed, and in which few of them served. The "best and brightest" of the Vietnam age group once made headlines by castigating their parents for bringing about the war in which they would not fight, which has become the war they refuse to remember.

Pundits back then invented a term for this animus: the "generation gap." Long, plaintive articles and even books were written examining its manifestations. Campus leaders, who claimed precocious wisdom through the magical process of reading a few controversial books, urged fellow baby boomers not to trust anyone over 30. Their elders who had survived the Depression and fought the largest war in history were looked down upon as shallow, materialistic, and out of touch. Those of us who grew up on the other side of the picket line from that era's counter-culture can't help but feel a little leery of this sudden gush of appreciation for our elders from the leading lights of the old counter-culture. Then and now, the national conversation has proceeded from the

dubious assumption that those who came of age during Vietnam are a unified generation in the same sense as their parents were, and thus are capable of being spoken for through these fickle elites.

In truth, the "Vietnam generation" is a misnomer. Those who came of age during that war are permanently divided by different reactions to a whole range of counter-cultural agendas, and nothing divides them more deeply than the personal ramifications of the war itself. The sizable portion of the Vietnam age group who declined to support the counter-cultural agenda, and especially the men and women who opted to serve in the military during the Vietnam War, are quite different from their peers who for decades have claimed to speak for them. In fact, they are much like the World War II generation itself. For them, Woodstock was a side show, college protesters were spoiled brats who would have benefited from having to work a few jobs in order to pay their tuition, and Vietnam represented not an intellectual exercise in draft avoidance, or protest marches but a battlefield that was just as brutal as those their fathers faced in World War II and Korea. Few who served during Vietnam ever complained of a generation gap. The men who fought World War II were their heroes and role models. They honored their father's service by emulating it, and largely agreed with their father's wisdom in attempting to stop Communism's reach in Southeast Asia.

The most accurate poll of their attitudes (Harris, 1980) showed that 91 percent were glad they'd served their country, 74 percent enjoyed their time in the service, and 89 percent agreed with the statement that "our troops were asked to fight in a war which our political leaders in Washington would not let them win." And most importantly, the castigation they received upon returning home was not from the World War II generation, but from the very elites in their age group who supposedly spoke for them. Nine million men served in the military during Vietnam War, three million of whom went to the Vietnam Theater. Contrary to popular mythology, two-thirds of these were volunteers, and 73 percent of those who died were volunteers.

While some attention has been paid recently to the plight of our prisoners of war, most of whom were pilots; there has been little recognition of how brutal the war was for those who fought it on the ground. Dropped onto the enemy's terrain 12,000 miles away from home, America's citizen-soldiers performed with a tenacity and quality that may never be truly understood. Those who believe the war was fought incompletely on a tactical level should consider Hanoi's recent admission that 1.4 million of its soldiers died on the battlefield, compared to 58,000 total U.S. dead. Those who believe that it was a "dirty little war" where the bombs did all the work might contemplate that it was the most costly war the U.S. Marine Corps has ever fought—five times as many dead as World War I, three times as many dead as in Korea, and more total killed and wounded than in all of World War II. Significantly, these sacrifices were being made at a time the United States was deeply divided over our effort in Vietnam. The baby-boom generation had cracked apart along class lines as America's young men were making difficult, life-or-death choices about serving. The better academic institutions became focal points for vitriolic protest against the war, with few of their graduates going into the military. Harvard College, which had lost 691 alumni in World War II, lost a total of 12 men in Vietnam from the classes of 1962 through 1972 combined. Those classes at Princeton lost six, at MIT two.

The media turned ever more hostile. And frequently the reward for a young man's having gone through the trauma of combat was to be greeted by his peers with studied indifference or outright hostility. What is a hero? My heroes are the young men who faced the issues of war and possible death, and then weighed those concerns against obligations to their country. Citizen-soldiers who interrupted their personal and professional lives at their most formative stage, in the timeless phrase of the Confederate Memorial in Arlington National Cemetery, "not for fame or reward, not for place or rank, but in simple obedience to duty, as they understood it." Who suffered loneliness, disease, and wounds with an often-contagious elan. And who deserve a far better place in history than that now offered them by the so-called spokesman of our so-called generation.

Mr. Brokaw, Mr. Matthews, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Spielberg, meet my Marines. 1969 was an odd year to be in Vietnam. Second only to 1968 in terms of American casualties, it was the year made famous by Hamburger Hill, as well as the gut-wrenching Life cover story showing pictures of 242 Americans who had been killed in one average week of fighting. Back home, it was the year of Woodstock, and of numerous anti-war rallies that

culminated in the Moratorium march on Washington. The My Lai massacre hit the papers and was seized upon the anti-war movement as the emblematic moment of the war. Lyndon Johnson left Washington in utter humiliation. Richard Nixon entered the scene, destined for an even worse fate. In the An Hoa Basin southwest of Danang, the Fifth Marine Regiment was in its third year of continuous combat operations.

Combat is an unpredictable and inexact environment, but we were well led. As a rifle platoon and company commander, I served under a succession of three regimental commanders who had cut their teeth in World War II, and four different battalion commanders, three of whom had seen combat in Korea. The company commanders were typically captains on their second combat tour in Vietnam, or young first lieutenants like myself who were given companies after many months of "bush time" as platoon commanders in the Basin's tough and unforgiving environs. The Basin was one of the most heavily contested areas in Vietnam, its torn, cratered earth offering every sort of wartime possibility. In the mountains just to the west, not far from the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the North Vietnamese Army operated an infantry division from an area called Base Area 112. In the valleys of the Basin, main-force Viet Cong battalions whose ranks were 80 percent North Vietnamese Army regulars moved against the Americans every day. Local Viet Cong units sniped and harassed. Ridge-lines and paddy dikes were laced with sophisticated booby traps of every size, from a hand grenade to a 250-pound bomb. The villages sat in the rice paddies and tree lines like individual fortresses, crisscrossed with the trenches and spider holes, their homes sporting bunkers capable of surviving direct hits from large-caliber artillery shells. The Viet Cong infrastructure was intricate and permeating. Except for the old and the very young, villagers who did not side with the Communists had either been killed or driven out to the government controlled enclaves near Danang.

In the rifle companies, we spent the endless months patrolling ridge-lines and villages and mountains, far away from any notion of tents, barbed wire, hot food, or electricity. Luxuries were limited to what would fit inside one's pack, which after a few "humps" usually boiled down to letter-writing material, towel, soap, toothbrush, poncho liner, and a small transistor radio. We moved through the boiling heat with 60 pounds of weapons and gear, causing a typical Marine to drop 20 percent of his body weight while in the bush. When we stopped we dug chest-deep fighting holes and slit trenches for toilets. We slept on the ground under makeshift poncho hootches, and when it rained we usually took our hootches down because wet ponchos shined under illumination flares, making great targets. Sleep itself was fitful, never more than an hour or two at a stretch for months at a time as we mixed daytime patrolling with night-time ambushes, listening posts, foxhole duty, and radio watches. Ringworm, hookworm, malaria, and dysentery were common, as was trench foot when the monsoons came. Respite was rotating back to the mud-filled regimental combat base at An Hoa for four or five days, where rocket and mortar attacks were frequent and our troops manned defensive bunkers at night. Which makes it kind of hard to get excited about tales of Woodstock, or camping at the Vineyard during summer break.

We had been told while training that Marine officers in the rifle companies had an 85 percent probability of being killed or wounded, and the experience of "Dying Delta," as our company was known, bore that out. Of the officers in the bush when I arrived, our company commander was wounded, the weapons platoon commander wounded, the first platoon commander was killed, the second platoon commander was wounded twice, and I, commanding the third platoons fared no better. Two of my original three-squad leaders were killed, and the third shot in the stomach. My platoon sergeant was severely wounded, as was my right guide. By the time I left, my platoon I had gone through six radio operators, five of them casualties. These figures were hardly unique; in fact, they were typical. Many other units; for instance, those who fought the hill battles around Khe Sanh, or were with the famed Walking Dead of the Ninth Marine Regiment, or were in the battle of Hue City or at Dai Do, had it far worse. When I remember those days and the very young men who spent them with me, I am continually amazed, for these were mostly recent civilians barely out of high school, called up from the cities and the farms to do their year in hell and then return. Visions haunt me every day, not of the nightmares of war but of the steady consistency with which my Marines faced their responsibilities, and of how uncomplaining most of them were in the face of constant danger. The salty, battle-hardened 20-year-olds teaching green 19-year-olds the intricate lessons of the hostile battlefield. The unerring skill of the young squad leaders as we

moved through unfamiliar villages and weed-choked trails in the black of night. The quick certainty when a fellow Marine was wounded and needed help. Their willingness to risk their lives to save other Marines in peril. To this day it stuns me that their own countrymen have so completely missed the story of their service, lost in the bitter confusion of the war itself.

Like every military unit throughout history we had occasional laggards, cowards, and complainers. But in the aggregate, these Marines were the finest people I have ever been around. It has been my privilege to keep up with many of them over the years since we all came home. One finds in them very little bitterness about the war in which they fought. The most common regret, almost to a man, is that they were not able to do more for each other and for the people they came to help. It would be redundant to say that I would trust my life to these, men. Because I already have, in more ways than I can ever recount. I am alive today because of their quiet, unaffected heroism.

Such valor epitomizes the conduct of Americans at war from the first days of our existence. That the boomer elites can canonize this sort of conduct in our fathers' generation while ignoring it in our own is more than simple oversight. It is a conscious, continuing travesty.

Former Secretary of the Navy James Webb was awarded the Navy Cross, Silver Star, and Bronze Star medals for heroism as a Marine in Vietnam. His novels include The Emperor's General and Fields of Fire.

MEDAL OF HONOR FOR FIRST LIVING SOLDIER SINCE VIETNAM

The White House announced on September 10 that President Obama will award the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military decoration, to an Army sergeant who will be the first living soldier to receive the honor since the Vietnam War.

The president personally called Staff Sgt. Salvatore Giunta, an Army specialist in Afghanistan at the time the events took place, to let him know of the decision. He was awarded the medal for placing his life in danger when he and fellow paratroopers were ambushed by the Taliban in 2007.

"When an insurgent force ambush split Specialist Giunta's squad into two groups, he exposed himself to enemy fire to pull a comrade back to cover," the White House statement reads. "Later, while engaging the enemy and attempting to link up with the rest of his squad, Specialist Giunta noticed two insurgents carrying away a fellow soldier. He immediately engaged the enemy, killing one and wounding the other, and provided medical aid to his wounded comrade while the rest of his squad caught up and provided security."

Awarding the Medal of Honor to Giunta, 25, carries symbolic weight beyond the individual decision to award it to a living service member. Only a handful of the medals have been awarded, even posthumously, to service members who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A more detailed description of Giunta's heroic actions has been pieced together through interviews with him and other soldiers present that day in 2007, when they were ambushed by Taliban fighters in Afghanistan's Korengal Valley.

Giunta "was knocked flat by the gunfire; luckily, a well-aimed round failed to penetrate his armored chest plate," The Washington Post reported. "As the paratroopers tried to gather their senses and scramble for a shred of cover, Giunta reacted instinctively, running straight into the teeth of the ambush to aid three wounded soldiers, one by one, who had been separated from the others."

A New York Times Magazine article, which provided a blow-by-blow description of the ambush and ensuing battle, described as a "quiet Iowan lofted into a heroism he didn't want."

Fewer than 3,500 Medals of Honor have been awarded [since 1863](#).

MEDAL OF HONOR AWARDED TO VIETNAM VET

The U.S. Department of Defense announced on September 20 that President Obama will posthumously award the Medal of Honor to Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Richard "Dick" Etchberger for "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty."

In 1967, Etchberger volunteered for a mission at Lima Site 85, a clandestine radar post in Laos. There he maintained equipment that helped the U.S. bombing campaign in North Vietnam. But when North Vietnamese rangers overran the secret outpost in March 1968, 16 Americans lost their lives. In his book "One Day Too Long," author and Vietnam veteran Timothy Castle described the incident as "the largest single ground combat loss of U.S. Air Force personnel in the history of the Vietnam War."

Etchberger, 35, displayed "immeasurable courage and uncommon valor" by single-handedly holding off the enemy with an M-16 rifle while directing air strikes and air rescue with his radio, the U.S. Air Force reported. Under heavy fire, he placed his wounded comrades into evacuation slings that hung from a rescue helicopter. Only after the others were on the hovering helicopter did Etchberger climb into a sling. He was being raised into the aircraft when enemy fire fatally wounded him.

"I definitely wouldn't be here if it were not for Chief Master Sgt. Etchberger," John Daniel, a technical sergeant, told [The Ocala Star-Banner](#). "If (Richard) hadn't gotten us out of there we would have ended up dead or POWs."

Although Etchberger was posthumously [awarded](#) the Purple Heart and Air Force Cross in 1968, the sensitive nature of the mission, which occurred in then-neutral Laos, may have hindered efforts to have him nominated for the Medal of Honor.

Today, a granite memorial in Hamburg, Pa., memorializes Etchberger's heroism. He was also inducted into the Hall of Heroes at the Pentagon in September.

RECKLESS

By J. Drake (from the Internet)

When wars are fought, heroes are made, but it's unusual for a hero to come in the form of a horse! In a time when the war horse had almost been forgotten, this little mare brought history back to life.

It all began in Korea when a race horse named Flame of the Morning was born sometime in the late 1940s. Flame's owner, Kim Huk Moon (a young jockey), loved her very much but times were hard and his sister needed an artificial leg when she lost her leg in a land-mine accident. Faced with the hard decision of selling the beloved race mare, Kim sold Flame to a United States Marine gun crew who purchased her for \$250 of their own money to be used as an ammunition carrier at the front lines of the Korean War.

When Flame was brought back to camp by the young lieutenant who found her, she was given a new name. The name "Reckless" was bestowed upon her, named after the weapon she would serve. Reckless's temperament was level-headed and willing. It was as if she just knew what she was supposed to do. In fact, she got along so well in her new surroundings and job that she was given free-run of the place and would find herself sticking her head into tents to doze with the men by the stove at night. She was fitting right in with the Marines and her normal diet consisted of barley, sorghum, hay, and rice, although sometimes a chocolate bar and candy found its

way to her as well. Apparently, the chestnut mare had also developed a weakness for her rations and often-times the men would return to a wrecked tent which she had torn apart looking for any goodies that might be found.

When her preliminary training for the battle field was over, Reckless was taken out for the first time into combat in February of 1953. When the first loud cracks of the recoilless rifles sounded off, the little mare became only slightly unnerved but regained her composure in quick order. It wasn't long until Reckless went along as if the guns weren't even there. She was then packing six rounds of ammunition per trip and working her way carefully through the rough terrain to reach her destination from firing position to firing position as the Marines moved to take the hill called Detroit. Reckless had made twenty-four trips total that day, which was about twenty miles total. She had carried a total of about 3,500 pounds of ammunition, which was way more than the men would have been able to carry had they been without her help.

Then, in March, Reckless proved how invaluable she was to her men at Vegas Hill. Early in the morning before the sun had even come up, she was loaded up with eight rounds of ammunition. After a few trips led by her handler up the steep 45 degree inclines and rough path, she soon learned her way on her own. The men went up with her by her side, carrying three rounds of ammunition as well. On and on the little mare went until after she had made a total of twenty-one trips of carrying the heavy load. She was then given a meal, water, and a good rub-down. Just a little while later though, she went back into duty willingly.

At times Reckless went up the hard path alone and made her way to the men's firing position on her own. She was able to make two trips for every one the men could make. During these trips, Reckless took a hit above her eye and flanks where shrapnel had hit her. As the day got later, her load was lightened to just six rounds vs. the eight she had been carrying and by the time it was dark, she had logged up to fifty-one trips that day which was a total of thirty-five miles over the rough and steep terrain. She had carried a total of 9,000 pounds that day. She continued to haul ammunition for two more days until the men had won the battle for Vegas Hill.

After her heroic efforts at Vegas Hill, Reckless had won the hearts and the respect of the entire 1st Marine Division. By the end of the Korean War, she was as much a part of the men as any of them were. The question was brought up though as to what would happen to the little chestnut mare when they left? Would they have to leave her behind? Surely not! The Marine's motto is "leave no man behind" isn't it? Yet, it seemed impossible to bring her home with them as there was no military funding to transport a horse to the United States. After a story was published in the *Saturday Evening Post*, a cargo line offered to help ship Reckless home at no charge.

On November 10, 1954, Reckless set foot on American soil for the first time in her life in San Francisco. She was greeted enthusiastically by large crowds of people who gave her a hero's welcome. In fact, she was greeted by more people at her arrival than the Vice President, Richard M. Nixon, had just a week earlier. Reporters swarmed around her to get pictures as she posed for the camera and she was just as poised then as she was in battle. Her arrival also marked the 179th birthday of the Marine Corps. She was an honored guest at the birthday celebration where she rode an elevator to the tenth floor of a hotel to enjoy cake with the rest of her men.

Reckless then went on to Camp Pendleton in California, which was to become her new home. While there, she performed a few publicity duties and gave birth to four foals, two of which were colts who were named Dauntless and Fearless. She was given a gold and crimson sheet for special occasions on which she hung her purple hearts and Service Medals. She was officially retired in 1960 at the rank of staff sergeant with full military honors and many awards. She was granted full quarters at the base's stable for life. She was never to have anything other than a blanket on her back ever again. In order to give her exercise, her caretaker was to run alongside her as she trotted until she was tired.

In 1968, Reckless said her final farewell to the men she served with after suffering from a serious injury and had to be euthanized at the age of 19 pr 20. A plaque now hangs on the wall of the stable she lived in to commemorate the courage of the little mare who fought so bravely with the Marines in the Korean War.

Reckless Facts:

Color: Chestnut

Markings: Blaze and three white socks

Awards:

2 Purple Hearts

Gold Conduct Medal

Presidential Unit Citation with star

National Defense Medal

Korean Service Medal

United Nations Service Medal

Korean Presidential Unit Citation

► VA NEWS**NEW LAW FOR BURIAL IN NATIONAL CEMETERIES**

A recently passed bill, called the Corey Shea Act, will allow parents to be buried with their deceased veteran sons and daughters in cemeteries run by the Veteran Affairs Department's National Cemetery Administration.

In the past, only spouses or children could be buried with the deceased veteran. But Denise Anderson, mother of Corey Shea, 21, recently won her nearly two-year battle for the right of parents like herself to be buried alongside their children in national veterans cemeteries. Shea was not married and had no children, and the VA turned down her request to be buried in the same plot with her son. The law said only veterans, their spouses, and minor children were eligible.

Anderson was sad that her son, who was killed in Iraq in 2008, would be buried alone, and she worked with Massachusetts lawmakers to push the bill, and wrote hundreds of letters to House and Senate members.

Effective immediately, biological or adoptive parents of service members who are buried in any of the 131 national cemeteries can be buried with their son or daughter if the service member had no spouse or minor children, and if there is available space at the gravesite. The bill does not apply to burials at Arlington National Cemetery, which is maintained by the Army. The service member must have been killed in battle or in preparation for battle.

► OTHER NEWS**COURT RULES STOLEN VALOR ACT UNCONSTITUTIONAL**

PASADENA, Calif., August 17, 2010—A three-year-old federal law that makes it a crime to falsely claim to have received a medal from the U.S. military is unconstitutional, an appeals court panel in California ruled on August 17, 2010.

The decision involves the case of Xavier Alvarez of Pomona, Calif., a water district board member who said at a public meeting in 2007 that he was a retired Marine who received the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military decoration.

Alvarez was indicted in 2007. He pleaded guilty on condition that he be allowed to appeal on First Amendment grounds. He was sentenced under the Stolen Valor Act to more than 400 hours of community service at a veterans hospital and fined \$5,000.

JUDGE RULES STOLEN VALOR ACT ILLEGAL

DENVER, July 16, 2010—A law that makes it illegal to lie about being a war hero is unconstitutional because it violates free speech, a federal judge ruled Friday as he dismissed a case against a Colorado man who claimed he received two military medals.

Rick Glen Strandlof claimed he was an ex-Marine who was wounded in Iraq and received the Purple Heart and Silver Star, but the military had no record he ever served. He was charged with violating the Stolen Valor Act, which makes it a crime punishable by up to a year in jail to falsely claim to have won a military medal.

U.S. District Judge Robert Blackburn dismissed the case and said the law is unconstitutional, ruling the government did not show it has a compelling reason to restrict that type of statement.

A spokesman for the U.S. attorney in Denver said prosecutors are reviewing the decision and haven't decided whether to appeal. The spokesman said that decision would be made by the U.S. Justice Department in Washington and prosecutors in Denver.

Strandlof's lawyer, Bob Pepin, said he hadn't spoken to Strandlof since the ruling was issued. Pepin said he would advise Strandlof not to comment publicly because the case might be appealed.

"Obviously, we think this is the right decision, or we wouldn't have been making the objections to the statute to begin with," he said. Pepin said Strandlof has been living in a halfway house in Denver while his case is in the courts.

Denver attorney Christopher P. Beall, who filed a friend-of-the-court brief for the American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado, said the Stolen Valor Act is fatally flawed because it doesn't require prosecutors to show anyone was harmed or defamed by the lie.

"The government position was that any speech that's false is not protected by the First Amendment. That proposition is very dangerous," Beall said.

"It puts the government in a much more powerful position to prosecute people for speaking out on things they believe to be true but turn out not to be true," he said.

Beall said the ACLU was not defending the actions Strandlof is accused of, but took issue with the principle behind the law.

Rep. John Salazar, D-Colo., who sponsored the Stolen Valor Act in the House, predicted the decision will be overturned on appeal.

"This is an issue of fraud plain and simple," Salazar said in a written release. "The individuals who violate this law are those who knowingly portray themselves as pillars of the community for personal and monetary gain."

Pam Sterner, who as a college student wrote a policy analysis that became the basis of Salazar's bill, said the issue isn't free speech but misrepresentation. Sterner, a former Coloradan who now lives in Virginia, said authentic medal winners' credibility suffers when impostors are exposed because the public becomes suspicious of even true stories of heroism.

THE STOLEN VALOR ISSUE

By Tom Richards, from the Monsoon Dispatch (VVA Chapter 785)

Dear Stolen Valor Task Force Members,

Here is an update on the case of Raymond R. Sawyer, who pleaded guilty to the murder of his first wife in January 2008, and on 13 March 2008 was convicted and sentenced to 13 years in prison. He was originally charged with 1st Degree Murder but was allowed to bargain his confession in exchange for a reduction of the charge to 2nd Degree Murder.

I originally became aware of Sawyer in 2007 while attending the national reunion of the 1st Marine Division Association in Denver. While there, I met some really great members who mentored me and help recruit members to the MCRD Museum Historical Society, of which I was then the executive director. I established great rapport with them and trusted them. Thus, when they asked me to help recruit Sawyer into the Legion of Valor, I trusted their judgment and did so. Doug Sterner noticed Sawyer's name in the Legion of Valor's newsletter and notified us that Sawyer was a Stolen Valor perpetrator. That was verified by the awards branch of HQMC and we dropped him from the rolls. I've attached Sawyer's forged/alleged Navy Cross citation for your information. Those of you familiar with Navy Department citations will immediately recognized it as being irregular, including the misspellings. I have also received information from Chuck and Mary Schantag (<http://www.pownetwork.org>) that Sawyer's DD-214 does NOT list the Navy Cross as one of his awards.

We had also alerted the FBI about Sawyer's Stolen Valor and it was poised to arrest him when the Maricopa County (AZ) beat them to it and arrested him in the cold case murder of his first wife, whom he had apparently strangled. News reports at the time noted that Sawyer broke down during interrogation and revealed aspects of the crime that had not been made public and that only the killer would know.

On or about 10 July, Sawyer was medically evacuated from the prison in Arizona where he was incarcerated to a local hospital where he died on 12 July 2010. His family is now planning to inter him in the Ft Logan National Cemetery in Colorado.

I have spoken twice with Orin Hatton, Director of Field Operations of the National Cemetery Administration (<http://www.cem.va.gov/>) and have learned that, according to the law, the only exclusions to burial in a national cemetery for an honorably discharged veteran for criminal activity is if the deceased veteran had been convicted of a capital crime and was sentenced either to life without parole or execution. That means that violent felons, including attempted murders, rapists, multiple murders, and/or any murderer who takes a plea deal to reduce the charge(s) could be buried in a national cemetery—please note that this law applies to ALL national cemeteries, including the one(s) nearest you. I believe it is a travesty, morally reprehensible.

Sawyer was in his mid-eighties when he was sentenced and not in good health. I received information through sources, though I have not confirmed this, that when he was sentenced, the prosecutors considered his thirteen year sentence to be effectively a death sentence since he would almost assuredly die in prison, which, of course, he did. Ergo, allowing him the plea bargain, was effectively the same as life in prison. I have a call in to the Maricopa County Attorney, whom I'm told is a disabled Vietnam Veteran, to try to verify that. When I suggested that Mr. Hatton talk with the authorities in Arizona to investigate this, he responded "Why would I do that. This decision has already been made. We spoke with people and Arizona and they did not tell us that." Well, frequently, one only gets answers to the questions one asks – If you don't ask the right question, or if you phrase it such that you get the answer you want, then, well . . . ?

I must preface this by stating emphatically that I am not a VA basher. While I know the VA has faults and challenges, I really believe that it does pretty well with the money it is allocated and the regulations under

which it must operate. Room for improvement, no doubt, but I think most VA employees are well-intentioned and concerned about veterans.

During my conversation with Mr. Hatton, though, it appeared to me that he was defending the decision that had been made, apparently with concurrence at the national level, to bury Sawyer in the National Cemetery. In short, he seemed to me more interested in defending the decision than in doing the right thing for veterans and the veterans community. I understand the law, but I also believe that sound judgment and morality should prevail in the end. I do not believe that has occurred in this case.

There is a rumor circulating that Sawyer's grave plot has been selected and that he will be interred next to GWOT Navy SEAL and Posthumous NX Recipient Danny Dietz. Mr. Hatton stated emphatically that the grave plot has not been selected, that plots are assigned on a "first come, first served" basis and that with burials occurring both this weekend and on Monday, the site has not been selected. Having said that, he did not say that the National Cemetery Administration would attempt to avoid a gravesite next to or near a service cross or Medal of Honor recipient or other significant veteran.

On a positive note, I have confirmed that Joe Ryan, Commandant of the Denver 1st Marine Division Assn. Chapter, was successful in getting the Marine Honor Guard for Sawyer's ceremony canceled. I was working on that but he beat me to the punch. Congrats to Joe Ryan.

May I suggest two courses of action:

1. That we, collectively, communicate this immediate issue to all possible veteran contacts and have them object to this travesty, which is morally reprehensible. Perhaps overwhelming public outrage will cause this situation to change.
2. That we contact our legislators and change the law regarding burials to exclude anyone convicted of having committed a violent criminal felony, regardless of the sentence.

Please know that these are that facts as they have been revealed to me, and/or that I know personally to be true and the opinions expressed herein are mine, alone, and not those of any of the organizations to which I belong, though I feel confident that most veterans will agree with me on this issue.

Request that you forward this liberally and invite your contacts to do the same.

Tom Richards

VVMF MOVES FORWARD ON EDUCATION CENTER

Washington, D.C., Sept. 30, 2010 – The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) has chosen Tishman Construction Corporation of Washington, D.C. as the construction manager for the Education Center at The Wall, announced Jan C. Scruggs, VVMF founder and president.

The Education Center at The Wall is a learning facility being built on the National Mall, near the Vietnam Veterans and Lincoln Memorials, that will put faces to the names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and celebrate the values embodied by all of America's service members.

"In looking for a construction manager, VVMF wanted to find a firm that understands the delicate challenges of working on a building in a historically significant area," said Scruggs. "Tishman is the construction manager for the new One World Trade Center building in New York City, so we feel the firm is uniquely suited to building on the National Mall."

Tishman also has a long history of working on projects in Washington, D.C., including the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the American Pharmacists Headquarters and the Ronald Reagan Building.

As construction manager, Tishman will oversee all aspects of the design and construction of the Education Center, which includes coordinating with all of the federal commissions and local agencies that are required to approve new additions to the National Mall. The Education Center is already well into the design approval process with the federal commissions, and Tishman will continue that cooperative work as design development moves forward.

“At a time when we’re reminded daily of the sacrifice that Americans in uniform are called on to make each day, being selected for a job of this significance is an honor and a source of pride for everyone at Tishman,” said Daniel R. Tishman, chairman and CEO of Tishman and vice chairman of AECOM. “We look forward to working on a project that will provide visitors with a sense of history and serve as an appropriate place to display so many mementos of remembrance that have been left by millions of visitors to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.”

The Education Center at The Wall has been designed to minimize visual impact on the site and preserve the historic vistas of the National Mall. It will adhere to the strict design standards set by the owner and operator, the National Park Service. The Center features a courtyard that is open to the sky, maximizing the use of natural light in the Center. Reflecting the importance of using “green” technology, the project team will incorporate sustainable design features and construction techniques in order to pursue LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) silver certification.

The centerpiece of the exhibits will be a wall of larger-than-life photographs of those whose names are on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, shown on their birthdays. Other displays will showcase some of the more than 100,000 items that have been left in tribute at The Wall, a timeline of key military events of the Vietnam War and a history of the Memorial. The Center will celebrate the values embodied by all of America’s service members—loyalty, duty, respect, service, honor, integrity and courage—and one of the exhibits will show images of those who served in all of America’s conflicts, from the Revolutionary War to Iraq.

Ennead Architects, LLP, formerly known as Polshek Partnership Architects, is designing the Education Center at The Wall. Some of the New York City-based firm’s other notable projects include the William J. Clinton Presidential Center, the Newseum and the Utah Museum of Natural History.

Ralph Applebaum Associates, currently the largest interpretive museum design firm in the world, has been chosen to create the exhibits for the Education Center at The Wall. RAA’s past projects include the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Newseum and the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center.

Gen. Colin L. Powell, USA (Ret.) is the honorary chairman of the \$85 million fundraising campaign to build the Education Center. VVMF has raised an estimated \$26 million for the project, including the \$10 million lead gift from Time Warner and a recent \$1 million matching grant from San Antonio Spurs owner Peter Holt to match all donations from his home state of Texas up to \$1 million.

The following letter was received by RFTW:



New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

Bill Richardson
Governor

Jim Noel
Cabinet Secretary

David J. Simon
Division Director
State Parks



September 7, 2010

Run For The Wall; Central Route
c/o Judy 'Velcro' Lacey

RE: Thank you for Work Day 2010

Not only were there good times, renewed acquaintances, work done, but also on display to the public, an image of what a veteran is. No group can exemplify that image better than the RFTW crew.

The work on our Memorial Walkway is growing into a beautiful adjunct to the park. Many visitors line the walk to read names on their way to the Chapel and museum. We get asked who-what-when, and when explained about the Run's efforts here people are surprised of such dedication.

When I first got here as manager, I sensed the trepidation of some veterans as to what will the facility being a state park mean to the veteran community. I think that it was viewed as a nice undertaking by the state but less hands-on by the veterans. We truly feel that sweat equity is the passport to the real stakeholders and RFTW has proven to be a large part of the stakeholdership.

RFTW central can certainly hold their heads high as to their image here. The honor and dignity displayed for the bricks that symbolize veterans present and past strikes awe in the civilian viewers we got this past weekend. Some even are planning for next year's vacation to coincide with RFTW reunion.

It does not sound quite enough to just say thank you, but, THANK YOU for your energy, efforts and dedication to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial State Park.

Tom Turnbull, Manager, representing the staff and volunteers at
Vietnam Veterans Memorial State Park



► BRINGING THEM HOME

JPAC SEARCHES FOR MIA'S FROM WWII AND KOREAN WAR

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii (Sept. 10, 2010) – Two investigation teams from the U.S. Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) deployed to Canada and the Republic of Korea to search for MIA's missing from World War II and the Korean War.

An investigation team departed Hawaii recently for a mission in Canada searching for evidence of Americans lost during World War II. The team will search a site where two missing aircrew members may have perished.

An investigation team will authenticate leads from eye witnesses and conduct field research throughout multiple provinces throughout the Republic of Korea. The team will investigate 11 cases located in Kangwon and Kyonggi provinces, investigating leads by means of witness interviews, case visits, and light test digging.

Additionally, an anthropologist is conducting a federal training class on recovery techniques for the Department of Justice in Columbia. JPAC regularly conducts humanitarian and training missions to assist other countries in recovery techniques, which may hopefully lead to the recovery and identification of other missing persons.

Falling directly under the U.S. Pacific Command, the jointly-manned organization of more than 400 military and civilian specialists has investigated and recovered missing Americans since the 1970s. To date there are approximately 74,190 unaccounted-for Americans from World War II and 8,008 the Korean War.

The names listed here are U.S. military servicemembers who were once missing and have been accounted-for so far this year.

Maj. Woodrow W. Vaden, U.S. Air Force, 1131st Special Activities Squadron, was lost on Dec. 10, 1964, aboard a C-123 Provider aircraft that crashed into a mountain near Da Nang Air Base, South Vietnam. His remains were identified on Aug. 11, 2010.

Sgt. John P. Bonnassiolle, U.S. Army Air Forces, 392nd Bombardment Group, was lost April 29, 1944, near Hannover, Germany. His remains were identified June 14, 2010.

Cpl. Frank H. Smith, U.S. Army, 5th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division, was lost on July 25, 1951, in South Korea while under enemy attack. His remains were identified on May 25, 2010.

Capt. Clyde W. Campbell, U.S. Air Force, 602nd Special Ops Sq., was lost on March 1, 1969 while flying his A-1J Skyraider over targets in Houaphan Province, Laos. His remains were identified on May 18, 2010.

1st Lt. Paul G. Magers and **Chief Warrant Officer Two Donald L. Wann**, U.S. Army, Company D, 158th Aviation Battalion, 101st Airborne Division, were lost June 1, 1971, while flying in an AH-1G Cobra helicopter over South Vietnam. Their remains were identified on March 22, 2010.

1st Sgt. George H. Humphrey, U.S. Marine Corps, 6th Marine Regiment, lost Sept. 15, 1918, during the first U.S.-led offensive of World War I, under the command of Gen. John J. Pershing, near St. Mihiel, France. His remains were identified on March 2, 2010.

Fireman 3rd Class Gerald G. Lehman, U.S. Navy, aboard the battleship USS Oklahoma was lost Dec. 7, 1941, when the Japanese capsized the vessel during their attack on Pearl Harbor. His remains were identified Jan. 11, 2010.

JPAC RETURNS FROM SEARCH

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii (Aug. 17, 2010) – Several archeological teams from the U.S. Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) returned to Hawaii recently after searching for fallen Americans in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, the Republic of Vanuatu, and Europe.

Investigation and recovery teams successfully uncovered evidence and information associated with Americans missing from the Vietnam War and World War II.

Recovery teams searched for human remains, life support, and other material evidence (personal and military issued items). All possible human remains found were “repatriated” with military honors and have since been transported to JPAC’s Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii for analysis.

Investigation teams authenticated leads from eye witnesses, conducted field research, and gathered information to determine whether or not there will be a return visit for excavation at a later date.

Three Vietnam War recovery teams searched in the Khammouan and Xekong provinces for four missing aircrew members. This was the 115th Joint Field Activity in Laos.

Four recovery teams searched for WWII remains: two in the South Pacific—Espiritu Santo, Republic of Vanuatu—and two in Germany and France, searching for a total of 14 MIAs. The investigation team conducted interviews, research, and fieldwork in Germany, Austria, Ukraine, France, and Bulgaria searching for 25 Americans who never made it home.

JPAC TEAMS SEARCH FOR WWII AIRCRAFT CRASH SITES

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii (Aug. 5, 2010) – Two archeological recovery teams and one investigation team from the U.S. Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) departed Hawaii recently for missions in the Independent State of Papua New Guinea.

The more than 35-person joint field activity will be in-country for approximately 45 days to investigate and excavate several aircraft crash sites. Two recovery teams will search in the Madang and Morobe provinces at sites that are associated with the losses of more than 21 Americans missing from World War II. The investigation team will validate the authenticity of leads by conducting interviews, research, and field work in the Central and Northern provinces for 16 aircraft losses and more than 50 Americans still listed as missing in action.

AIRMAN MIA FROM WWII IDENTIFIED

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced ON August 6 that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from World War II, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors.

He is Sgt. John P. Bonnassiolle, U.S. Army, of Oakland, Calif. He was buried August 2 in San Francisco.

On April 29, 1944, he was aboard a B-24J Liberator with nine other crewmen. They failed to return following a bombing mission over Berlin. German documents captured after the war established the aircraft had crashed near the town of East Meitze, Germany, north of Hannover. German forces removed the remains of three crewmen from the site and buried them in a cemetery in Hannover.

In 1946, The U.S. Army's Graves Registration Command located the remains of the men buried in Hannover and reburied them at the U.S. Military Cemetery at Neuville-en-Condroz, Belgium, after confirming the identities of two of the three.

In 2003, a German citizen began excavating the East Meitze crash site and turned over human remains to U.S. officials. A JPAC team traveled to excavate the crash site in 2005 and 2007, recovering additional remains and crew-related equipment—including identification tags for Bonnassiolle and three other crew members.

Among other forensic identification tools and circumstantial evidence, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory used mitochondrial DNA—which matched that of Bonnassiolle's sister—in the identification of his remains.

More than 400,000 of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II died. At the end of the war, the U.S. government was unable to recover, identify and bury approximately 79,000 as known persons. Today, more than 72,000 Americans remain unaccounted-for from the conflict.

JPAC SEARCHES FOR MARINES LOST IN BATTLE OF TARAWA

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii (July 27, 2010) – An archeological JPAC team traveled to the Republic of Kiribati in early August to search for Americans still missing from World War II; notably, missing Marines who fought during The Battle of Tarawa.

Up to six sites designated as areas likely to contain possible human remains and material evidence will be excavated during the month and a half-long operation.

In the event human remains and/or material evidence are recovered, the findings will be analyzed by scientific experts in the hopes of making a positive identification. A positive identification can often bring closure to families whose loved ones are still missing.

Falling directly under the U.S. Department of Defense, JPAC specializes in humanitarian missions. The jointly-manned organization of more than 400 military and civilian specialists has investigated and recovered missing Americans in the Pacific region since the 1970s.

Investigation and recovery teams travel annually to both Papua New Guinea and the Republic of Vanuatu in the hopes of returning fallen comrades.

An investigative team and analysts from JPAC visited the island of Betio, The Republic of Kiribati, in September 2009; JPAC's policy officials have worked closely with the Kiribati government since the initial visit last year.

“We truly value the support we get from our friends and officials based out of Kiribati, they really understand the importance of what we do and are always willing to help,” said James Darby, a senior policy officer for JPAC.

UPDATE: THE MISSING IN AMERICA PROJECT

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI—The Missing in America Project (MIAP) in partnership with the Missouri Veterans Commission, interred the remains of Private John W. Kling, a Veteran of the Civil War, and his spouse Elizabeth Kling, whose remains have been unclaimed since her death in 1923 on Friday, September 17,

2010 in a 1:00 pm ceremony at the Jacksonville State Veterans Cemetery, 1479 County Road 1675, Jacksonville, Missouri.

Kling was interred with full military honors. Civil War Re-enactors and members of Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War escorted the remains.

John Kling was born in 1837 and on November 4, 1861 at the age of 23, joined the Union Army. He served in E Company of the 2nd (old) Regiment Artillery Volunteers of Missouri. He was honorably mustered out of the Union Army on 24 August 1863 holding the rank of Private. After the war, Kling met and married his lifelong companion Elizabeth in 1870. John died in 1918, followed a few years later by Elizabeth in 1923. John and Elizabeth's remains were located and identified through the efforts of MIAP and Newcomers Funeral Homes of Kansas City, MO.

The Unclaimed Remains law provides immunity to funeral homes from any suit for negligence related to the handling or interment of unclaimed veterans remains if they follow prescribed statutory steps. Funeral homes that do not have the manpower to research the names of their unclaimed remains for veteran status can request the assistance of MIAP, a national organization that locates and identifies the unclaimed cremated remains of veterans.

For more information on the Missing in America Project go to www.miap.us, or contact Linda Smith, National Operations Coordinator at sailormom@miap.us or (573) 528-6930.

JPAC ARRIVAL CEREMONY FOR AMERICA'S HEROES

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii (Aug. 27, 2010) – The U.S. Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command hosted an Arrival Ceremony Friday, Sept. 10 at 9 a.m. in Hangar 35, to honor fallen U.S. personnel whose identities remain unknown.

The remains receiving full military honors represented losses associated with the Vietnam War and World War II. An honor detail made up of JPAC military members carried five flag-draped transfer cases from a C-17 to a bus that transported the cases to JPAC's laboratory for analyses. The first two transfer cases represented the Vietnam War and were recovered from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The remaining transfer cases were recovered from the Republic of Vanuatu, Germany, and France, and represented World War II losses.

After the transfer cases arrived at JPAC's Central Identification Laboratory (CIL), the forensic identification began. If and when identifications are established, the names will be announced following next-of-kin notification.

Falling directly under the U.S. Pacific Command, the jointly-manned organization of more than 400 military and civilian specialists investigates, recovers, and identifies missing Americans from past U.S military conflicts.

► SICK CALL

Vance Scott

Shirley "Top Sarge" reported on October 1 that although Vance's treatments have helped with the pain, his cancer hasn't responded to any of the treatments and continues to grow. His doctor is willing to try one more time with chemo. Shirley and Vance thank the many people who have sent their prayers and support. Please continue to send your caring and support to Vance (angelluvers@att.net or angelluvers.1@juno.com).

Kris and Bill Hanlon (waiting for info)

Please keep Kris and Bill both in your prayers. Send them your support to No_chute@mac.com.

► TAPS

Robert "Tom" Lockett

Robert "Tom" Lockett, age 64, died peacefully in his sleep on July 21, 2010, at his home near Harrison, AR. He had been fighting cancer for several years. Services were held July 2 at Crossroads Community Church, Harrison AR.

Tom was born on August 5, 1945, in Reno, NV the son of Eldred and Lorraine (Todd) Lockett. He was in the Marine Corp from 1963 to 1972. He was a member of Crossroads Community Church. He loved his family and grandkids, motorcycle riding, and meeting with his friends at the diner. Tom was involved in Run for the Wall for eight years, Patriot Guard Riders, Christian Motorcycle Association, Promise Keepers, Abate, and Pointman Ministry.

Tom is survived by his wife, Julie Lockett, of the home; daughters Wendy and husband Tim Robinson of Harrison, Tawnie and husband Larry Cunningham of Reno, NV, and Cindy and husband James Stephenson of Reno, NV; and his sons, Tom Lockett of Reno, NV and Kevin and wife Amy Lee of Spring Creek, NV.

John Marcikese

John Died October 16 after a six-month battle with colon cancer. He had never been to The Wall and was making plans to visit it with RFTW next year. He attended the reunion in Angel Fire in 2008 and vowed to go all the way very soon—but it was difficult to get the time off work. Lake Havasu City recently honored John for his service and recognized his awards: a Silver Star, Bronze Star, and two Purple Hearts. The city started a fund to help him get to The Wall. John's wife Pat is making plans to go on RFTW in May and take his ashes to Arlington.

WIFE OF WWII HERO PASSES AWAY

From the Los Angeles Times, April 15, 2010

Pamela Murphy, widow of WWII hero and actor, Audie Murphy, died peacefully at her home on April 8, 2010. She is survived by sons, Terry and James. Pam established her own distinctive 30 year career working as a patient liaison at the Sepulveda VA Hospital, where she was much beloved. Services will be held at Forest Lawn (Hollywood Hills) on April 16 at 2:30 p.m.

Pam Murphy, the widow of Audie Murphy, was involved in the Sepulveda VA hospital and care center over the course of 35 years, treating every veteran who visited the facility as if they were a VIP.

After Audie died, they all became her boys. Every last one of them.

Any soldier or Marine who walked into the Sepulveda VA hospital and care center in the last 35 years got the VIP treatment from Pam Murphy. The widow of Audie Murphy—the most decorated soldier in World War II—would walk the hallways with her clipboard in hand making sure her boys got to see a specialist or doctor - STAT. If they didn't, watch out. Her boys weren't Medal of Honor recipients or movie stars like Audie, but that didn't matter to Pam. They had served their country. That was good enough for her. She never called a veteran by his first name. It was always "Mister." Respect came with the job. "Nobody could cut through VA red tape faster than Mrs. Murphy," said veteran Stephen Sherman, speaking for thousands of veterans she befriended over the years. "Many times I watched her march a veteran who had been waiting more than an hour right into

the doctor's office. She was even reprimanded a few times, but it didn't matter to Mrs. Murphy. "Only her boys mattered. She was our angel."

Last week, Sepulveda VA's angel for the last 35 years died peacefully in her sleep at age 90.

"She was in bed watching the Laker game, took one last breath, and that was it," said Diane Ruiz, who also worked at the VA and cared for Pam in the last years of her life in her Canoga Park apartment. It was the same apartment Pam moved into soon after Audie died in a plane crash on Memorial Day weekend in 1971. Audie Murphy died broke, squandering million of dollars on gambling, bad investments, and yes, other women. "Even with the adultery and desertion at the end, he always remained my hero," Pam told me.

She went from a comfortable ranch-style home in Van Nuys where she raised two sons to a small apartment - taking a clerk's job at the nearby VA to support herself and start paying off her faded movie star husband's debts. At first, no one knew who she was. Soon, though, word spread through the VA that the nice woman with the clipboard was Audie Murphy's widow. It was like saying Patton had just walked in the front door. Men with tears in their eyes walked up to her and gave her a hug. "Thank you," they said, over and over.

The first couple of years, I think the hugs were more for Audie's memory as a war hero. The last 30 years, they were for Pam.

She hated the spotlight. One year I asked her to be the focus of a Veteran's Day column for all the work she had done. Pam just shook her head no. "Honor them, not me," she said, pointing to a group of veterans down the hallway. "They're the ones who deserve it."

The vets disagreed. Mrs. Murphy deserved the accolades, they said. Incredibly, in 2002, Pam's job was going to be eliminated in budget cuts. She was considered "excess staff." "I don't think helping cut down on veterans' complaints and showing them the respect they deserve, should be considered excess staff," she told me. Neither did the veterans. They went ballistic, holding a rally for her outside the VA gates. Pretty soon, word came down from the top of the VA. Pam Murphy was no longer considered "excess staff." She remained working full time at the VA until 2007 when she was 87. "The last time she was here was a couple of years ago for the conference we had for homeless veterans," said Becky James, coordinator of the VA's Veterans History Project.

Pam wanted to see if there was anything she could do to help some more of her boys.

► CLOSING THOUGHTS

Some excellent videos of interest to veterans:

Pentagon video about things left on the Wall: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZP7CaO1VkY>

I Fought For You: http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?v=KTb6qdPu8JE

A documentary about the Michigan Vietnam Veterans: http://www.v-prod.com/trailer_vietnam.html

Trailer for movie "Our Vietnam Generation": http://www.v-prod.com/trailer_vietnam.html

For more info: <http://www.ourvietnamgeneration.com/>

Gene Simmons honoring the troops:

http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?v=5MtdIO23MKM

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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)
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Kris Hanlon

No Chute's wife Kris is improving after cancer treatment. Bill reports that the numbers on her blood and stem cells is very good and continuing on the rise. But after spending nine months in bed and the loss of her hair and other adverse affects of the chemotherapy, Kris has been battling depression.

Please continue to send your caring and support to Kris and Bill at No_chute@mac.com.

The Doctor called Whitney (I was at the Dr myself), and gave her this good news. Unfortunately there is some some not so good news. As i suspected, Kris is very depressed. Heck who would not be after. Physically she is doing well, but mentally she is struggling. Her doctor told us that her mental state in currently the only thing holding her back and that she wont get better or be able to leave the city of hope until her depression improves. Which is why he called us to notify all of her friends and family that she needs you more than ever to get well. He asked that we all call her or go and visit her. Her body is doing well but her spirit needs some of our love and laughter.

If you have time night or day, please call her or visit her.

Regards,

Bill Hanlon