



RUN FOR THE WALL

Quarterly Newsletter

“We Ride For Those Who Can’t”

January 2013

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THE EDITOR’S NOTES



America is a very giving nation. Many of its people donate their time and money to a lot of different and very worthy organizations. But without volunteers, few of these organizations would survive.

The volunteer is the lifeblood of America. Every one of us volunteers in many ways. We may not even realize we’re one of those valuable volunteers when we help out at church or school, or by taking a housebound elderly neighbor shopping or to run errands.

I’m involved as a volunteer for many groups. But the volunteering that means the most to me is when I help the military or veterans in some way. As a Blue Star Mother I donate many hours at events that help us raise donations so we can ship care packages to our local service men and women who are serving overseas. We also give assistance to local veterans who are in need.

This month I'm learning that one of the most important things any person can do to help veterans is to help in a Stand Down. In February, my local VVA chapter, of which I'm a lifetime associate member, is helping put on our area's first Veterans Stand Down. I'm helping with paperwork and advertising, and also with gathering donations, and in the process I'm finding out that there are so many more homeless and at-risk veterans in America than most of us realize. Almost every city has veterans who are living on the streets. And although many veterans aren't on the streets, they may be struggling with health or money problems. Both my VVA chapter and Blue Star Mothers chapter step up when we hear of a local veteran who is having a rough time and is in need of a little help with rent or utilities.

The Mohave County Stand Down will bring much-needed help to at-risk veterans: food, clothing, and shelter. We have dentists who are volunteering to do dental work, and doctors who will make evaluations and referrals for needed health care. Barbers will give free haircuts, and we'll even have veterinarians giving needed care to veterans' pets.

This is what volunteering is all about—and I'm proud to be a part of it. If you hear of a Stand Down in your area, please step up and volunteer to help. You'll be glad you did.

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

The BOD is having a face-to-face meeting this weekend in Phoenix to work on getting final preparation ready for the Run. If you haven't noticed, there has been a lot of work done on the merchandise page. Dave "Trunks" Gladwill has been working on it and is still making updates to it everyday.

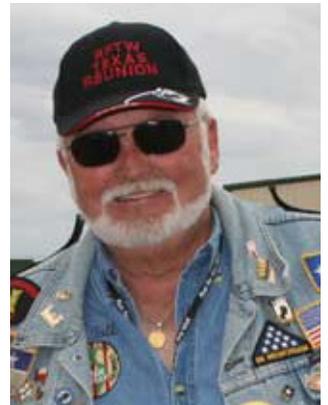
We are excited about the 25th year of the Run and have several new things that we will be doing this year. There are a few things that you as riders need to think about starting now in order to be ready when May gets here. One thing is to start getting into shape. This is a long 10-day trip and most of us aren't getting any younger, so start doing some workouts to get yourself ready to go.

Now would be a good time to start on your bike as well, checking the tires to see if you may need to get some new ones before the Run, brakes, and other wear items on the bike.

We only have about three and a half months to go before we start our trip to The Wall. If you know you are going, now would be a good time to pre-register. You will save 10 bucks and will be ahead of the game.

Hope everyone is doing well and hope to see all of my old brothers and sisters soon and looking forward to meeting new ones as well. Thanks and God Bless.

Ray "Too Tall" McDowell
President BOD Run For The Wall 2013



► 2013 RFTW NEWS

The BOD reports that plans for RFTW's 25th year are moving forward. There are several things that are new and more than a few surprises.

25TH ANNIVERSARY PATCH AND COINS

25-year commemorative patches and challenge coins are available for this year's Run. Visit the RFTW Store at www.rftw.org, email rftwstore@hotmail.com, or call Trunks at 209-329-9367 or 209-366-0879.



RFTW'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY

By James "Gunny" Gregory

To all the wonderful folks who make Run For The Wall happen – THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU.

When I lead the RFTW pack across the heart land of America in 1989 I thought this would be a once in a life time experience. Then America went to war again—and again we saw American heroes paraded by our enemies as Prisoners of War. I met with the wife of Marine Warrant Office Guy Hunter and knew that RFTW had to continue one more time. We rode again a second year and then a third year and still the need was there. I never thought that anyone would want to continue such an endeavor. Boy was I wrong! Leaders stepped up and volunteers took over RFTW. Then a miracle happened. A few dozen folks rode across country every May, then a couple of hundred and now a couple of thousand. Many folks told me a 3,000-mile run across country with a bunch of crazy veterans on motorcycles was impossible. YOU, Run For The Wall, have proven them wrong in so many ways.

As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the longest, most important motorcycle event in history, I salute you, thank you, and wish all of you continued success. I look forward to riding with all of you this May 15th, the 38th anniversary of the last battle of the Vietnam War, the SS Mayaguez crew rescue. I dedicate this 25th Run For the Wall to the 41 Americans who died in the rescue attempt but especially to LCpl Joseph Hargrove, PFC Gary Hall, and PFC Danny Marshall, machine gun team, 2nd Bn, 9th Marines - KIA on Koh Tang Island.

Semper Fidelis

1989 RFTW

James “Gunny” Gregory, one of the founders of RFTW, has created a website devoted to the 1989 inaugural RunFor The Wall. He has posted documentation and hundreds of photos from the 1989 Run, and members can upload photo albums, videos, and journals from all years. Visit <http://runforthewall1989.shutterfly.com> and take a walk down memory lane.

The first RFTW left from San Diego and made the following stops:

Day 1 – San Diego to Las Vegas, Nevada
Day 2 – Las Vegas to Green River, Utah
Day 3 – Green River to Denver, Colorado
Day 4 – Denver to Salina, Kansas
Day 5 – Salina to Wentzville, Missouri
Day 6 – Wentzville to Owensboro, Kentucky
Day 7 – Owensboro to Mt. Sterling, Kentucky
Day 8 – Mt. Sterling to Natural Bridge, Virginia
Day 9 – Natural Bridge to Washington D.C.
Day 10 – 2nd Rolling Thunder

33 all the way riders
15,000 in the 2nd Rolling Thunder

EVENING PARADE IN D.C.

Doug Lyvere once again has a supply of free tickets for the Friday Evening Parade in D.C. This is the famous “Silent Drill Team” performance at the 8th and I Marine Barracks. As last year, everyone is on their own to get there.

Contact Doug to request tickets.

Doug Lyvere
SgtMaj, Marine, ret
Doug@Lyvere.com, 415-309-2510

MOH RECIPIENT MAY GREET RFTW IN GALLUP

Hershey Miyamura Medal of Honor recipient of Gallup, NM, is expected to be in Gallup when the Central Route stops there on May 16. It’s hoped he will be able to be at the ceremony when RFTW arrives.

Miyamura and his lifelong friend Joe Annello (Silver Star) are the subject of a new book, “*Forged in Fire: The Saga of Hershey & Joe.*” The book presents a fresh perspective on the Korean War as experienced by two prisoners of war. Ranger Hale of Famer Vincent H. Okamoto’s detailed account transports readers to a Korea that few have experienced and even fewer have survived. Witness the friendship develop between two very different individuals faced with relentless wartime conditions. Based on a true story, Okamoto—himself a decorated Vietnam veteran—vividly details the horrors of war through the experience of surviving a death camp and the challenges of coming home to readjust to civilian life.

The Gallup area is also home to a number of Code Talkers, who meet with RFTW every year.

The publishing company had expected to sell maybe 100 books at the July 7 book signing. The publishers are usually happy with sales of around 60 to 70. But in 4 hours over 300 books were sold, breaking any previous records of book sales for the publishing company.

The photo below was taken at the July 8, 2012 book signing for *Forged in Fire*, held in Gallup at the Comfort Suites.



Back Row L-R: Comfort Suites GM Ken Riege; Medal of Honor Recipient, Korean War Veteran and POW Hershey Miyamura; Korean War Veteran, POW and Hershey's best friend, Joe Annello; and Vietnam Veteran Ken Hayeshi.

Front Row L-R: Retha Riege; Korean War Veteran and POW Dan McKinney; Vietnam Veteran, author of *Forged In Fire* and his book *Wolfhound Samurai* and Distinguished Service Cross Recipient Vincent Okamoto.

IMPORTANT RUN INFO

1. Minors making the Run For The Wall. There are release forms that must be signed by BOTH parents or legal guardian, which are available from the American Motorcycle Association (AMA 1-800-262-5646). Or provide a notarized letter giving whomever they are riding with permission to take a minor on RFTW and the dates the minor will be participating. Have the original of the letter attached with AMA minor release to registration form when you register. If you are registering on line please bring the necessary documentation with you when you register wherever that may be.
2. Persons interested in having their motorcycle's shipped from the DC area back to their home may contact the following for further information such as cost, estimated shipping time and where they will pick up in the DC area. Motorcycle mover 1-800-410-7499. This is by no means the only shipper; however, it is the one that has been used by several RFTW riders before.
3. Persons interested in providing VIP Escort (Gold Star Family Members) for Rolling Thunder may contact Joseph Baum at 973-670-3671 or email at jbaum60@hotmail.com. There are a number of requirements that are musts in order to be an escort. Must have a helmet for the rider and passenger, passenger back rest, foot pegs for the passenger, motorcycle endorsement on driver's license, registered bike, and proof of insurance. The most important thing is the desire to give a VIP passenger (whether they be a Gold Star Mom, or Wife, or any other passenger that Rolling Thunder designates as a VIP) a safe ride. Additionally "NO TRAILERS" are allowed with the escorts.

4. Anyone wishing to attend the Marine Evening Parade at 8th and I in DC on the evening of May 24, 2013 may contact MSgt. Doug Lyvere(Ret.) at 415-309-2510 or email at doug@lyvere.com. Doug will be the lead on setting up the reservations for attendance.

5. Additional hotel rooms are being listed as well as contract rates being confirmed. If you identify a location that is all booked, please let the respective Route Coordinator and/or State Coordinator for that location know so they can try and obtain additional rooms and/or hotels. Please be patient with the persons on the other end of the phone when they tell you that they are booked. Ask them if they can recommend another facility within the area. Most of these folks do not have the authority to make policy for the facility. The state coordinators have done the best with each and every facility to make rooms available for RFTW participants. Everyone is working hard to get everything in place; thank your state coordinators this year when you see them for all their hard work. The MISSION is only successful as a result of all the folks that have stepped up and took on a volunteer position within their respective routes.

Stan "Ironfish" Handley
RC/CR RFTW 2013

ARE YOUR TIRES READY?

By Ironfish, CR Coordinator

Doing the RFTW this year? That's great. Does your motorcycle know about your plan yet? Is it ready? Unless this is a new (to you) machine, you probably have a pretty good idea about whether your bike is generally reliable or not but take a stroll around it with this one event in mind.

When you look at the tires for instance, realize that what they look like five months before the RUN isn't entirely decisive. Think about it this way: in May you plan to put on a lot of miles. Depending on where you plan to join or leave the RUN you can easily put up to 6,000 miles on your tires. Planning to visit a few folks while you are on the way out or back? Now there will be even more miles accumulated. You should already know about how many miles you normally get out of a set of tires on your bike. The answer is different for each combination of rider, motorcycle, and tire brand—but let's just say that typically you can safely get 9,000 miles out of your rear tire (that's normally the worst for wear). For safe planning purposes, let's say you want to arrive home still having 1,000 miles of wear remaining to give you a fudge factor. Okay, that means you need to start the RUN with no more than 2,000 miles already on that example tire/bike combo.

Figuring this out in advance gives you some other opportunities as well. If you want to shop around for price or maybe want to try a different brand of tire, you have the time to do a little research. The dealer you use doesn't always have the ability to install tires on the day you pick so why not order, pay for, or otherwise have him hold the set you want so you are assured of it being in stock and ready when you are? As the actual installation time approaches, be thinking about brake pads as well. These will typically have to be removed anyway for the tire installation, so be prepared to invest in a new set of pads if the dealer inspection (or your records) says it's time to replace those.

Speaking of records, I find it helpful to keep a written record on each motorcycle I operate, and some of the important things I list are the date and mileage the last set of tires was installed, along with the tread depth of the tire when it was new and the pressure it is operated at.

Take a look for obvious things like nails or strange wear patterns, but also for less obvious things like weather cracking (especially important on a bike that may have been sitting for quite awhile). If your remaining tread depth is down to 3/32" you have already given away some of your tire's ability to handle wet conditions and if you reach 2/32" you are at the "unsafe; I need to go shopping!" stage of tire wear. You are going to have a contact patch smaller than the size of the back of your hand where the rubber meets the road at each end of your

motorcycle. Make sure it has as firm a grip as possible and also that you have planned ahead far enough that you aren't stopping some place a thousand miles away frantically looking for a set of tires just to get you home. Believe me; if your planning has gotten this far off, it will now also be after hours, on a day they close, or both.

Items to bring: Along with keeping oil in your engine, taking care of your tire condition is very important on an extended trip. Consider bringing a way to check your pressure (gauge or TPMS). Have a way to inflate? (pump or CO2) An emergency way to repair? (tire plug kit or slime).

Last backup, of course, is a flexible schedule and a credit card. This works also, but we'd much rather have you safely with us on the RUN.

RIVERSIDE NATIONAL CEMETERY

By Jim "The Mayor" Frost

A ride to RNC will take place on Tuesday morning, May 14, from the host hotel area in Rancho Cucamonga. Rider's meeting at 0911, and KSU at 0936 for the half-hour ride. Any changes will be posted on the website Forum.

Riverside National cemetery is home of the Medal of Honor Memorial and one of four sites recognized as a National Medal of Honor Memorial Site. Its walls feature the names of all MoH recipients. It was dedicated in 1999.

The Fallen Soldier/Veterans' Memorial, erected in 2000, is dedicated to all service members who gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

The Prisoner of War/Missing in Action National Memorial was dedicated in September 2005. Vietnam veteran Lewis Lee Millett, Jr., son of MoH Recipient Lew Millett, sculpted the bronze statue which depicts an American serviceman on his knees with hands bound by his captors. The statue is surrounded by black marble pillars that evoke imprisonment. In past years, Lee Millett has also been available to describe his sculpture to our riders.

For those interested, the March Field Museum, just across the street from RNC, will also be available to our riders. Details to follow, but you will find it well worth the visit.

► OUR STORIES

THIS RFTW THING

Gary C "Legion Rider" Florrisant, MO

When I joined the Army in '68, several of my high school buddies also joined. One of them was Gregory Vogler. When he joined he wanted to be a Helicopter Mechanic and tried to talk me into doing the same. I took another path and went to Track School. Greg left for Nam about four weeks before I did (I was on leave). He was there about three weeks when he was KIA. Man, what was I heading for. So time passes quickly, I get back and out of the service. Life happens and before long it's your 60th birthday and you never made it to the Wall. So I started communicating with some of the folks on the RFTW website. Before long I find out I am going to be an FNG. I was one of those when I got to Nam and I made it back, so it should not be too bad. I talk to more people and get hooked up for the MMF (thanks, Tom Pogue), riding in memory of Greg. Here is where some of the tears start—damn. Then some guy named Sidewalk says he can make me some Purple Heart patches with

Greg's name and date. He failed to tell me just how awesome they would look. So they arrive and I know they will be left at the Wall.

More reading on the Web and I soon discover some folks who are going to ride from Louisville KY to Junction City KS to meet up with the Central Route folks coming from RC. A few emails later and they agree to stop in St. Louis and pick me up on the way to Junction City. Turns out to be one of the best decisions I ever made. These people are the real deal. In Junction City we watch the pack arrive. I get the feeling this RFTW thing is going to be a true life-changing experience. We get signed up. Hugs all around. Now, I have never been the hugger type, but I quickly see this is going to have to change. It does. Luck is on my side and I get in the same platoon with what I now call the Kentucky Crew. So we are all set for the RFTW. Meet many more great people who all are truly sincere. The stops at the VA hospitals are just totally moving experiences. I have to tell you it is really, really hard to give one of the Flag Stars to a Vet there and read the little passage and not get emotional.

So we get to Mt. Vernon and it's time to ride in the Missing Man Formation. I find Tom "Bones" Pogue and get ready. Well, I thought I was ready. Riding this position is a little more than I bargained for. But Tom and his group helped me make it. What an honor. Tom asked me if I had any contact with Greg's family. I told him that I had not in the last 40 years. His advice was that when I get back home I try to contact them. Well, life is strange. I am the Athletic Director for my Legion Post and last week I was entering the Roster for our Legion Baseball teams. One of the names on the freshman team was Drew Vogler. Since the last name was the same as my buddy Greg, I thought they might be related. I went to a game two days ago and talked to Drew. It turns out his dad was Greg's brother. His dad was only one year old when Greg died in Viet Nam. I asked Drew if his Dad was okay with it to give me a call and that I would like to tell him about the RFTW and the ride in Greg's Honor. Hope I get a call.

Then we get to Rainelle WV. I think I left a part of my heart there. Now I have done a lot in my life but I have never had a kid ask me to sign his shirt. Yep, I WILL be going back there.

Now I am really starting to wonder what it's going to be like when we get to DC. As emotionally moving as it has been so far, will I be able handle it? Then I remember that I am with a group of people who get it, have done it before, and will not let me fail. On to DC.

We get to DC and luck is still on my side. I am going to get to ride into Arlington. If you have done it, you know the feeling. If you have not, I hope someday you get the chance. On my walk up to the Tomb of the Unknowns I happened to be walking behind a Vet who was a double amputee, a true hero. The most moving thing was that nobody, and I mean nobody, tried to walk around him. I was truly honored to walk behind him all the way to the top.

Then a quick ride over to the Lincoln Memorial. Seeing the steps full with the RFTW group was special. Seeing people from every part of the country and even some from outside the USA was really special. Then the walk to the Wall. I am still trying to put those thoughts together. Don't think I can even describe the feelings. I will just say that I completed my mission and left some things at the Wall. Guess I will have to go back next year and see if they are still there. *[Editor's note: All items left at The Wall are collected every night, to be inventoried and placed in storage to eventually be displayed in the soon-to-be-completed Wall Education Center.]*

A special thanks to "Girlfriend" for flipping my FNG pin over when we got to the Wall.

A BIG thanks to the people who organized this Run. The Road Guards, Fuel Crews, Staging Crews, Registration Team, and Support Teams do an unbelievable job in getting us there safe. Thanks to all of you.

A special thanks to the folks in the First Platoon. Mike "Tanker" McDole, our Platoon leader—awesome job. His wife Delores "Girlfriend"—thanks again. And the Kentucky Crew: Lyle, Lee, Nic, Craig, Dana, Jim, Shannon, Jeff, and of course Melba. Thanks for treating someone you never met before like family. The Run

For The Wall people are truly like family. I rode most of the way home with these guys. We stopped at Dano's in West Virginia and had a really great dinner and breakfast. You should meet his grandkids, Grace and Daniel, real special. Then it was on to a BBQ in Louisville with the "Bush Pilots."

From Louisville to home in St. Louis it was a solo ride. Lots of time to reflect on everything that had just happened. I pulled into the driveway at home and was ready to go do it all again. See everyone next year.

THOUGHTS OF THE WALL

Richard S. "Taildragger"
Susanville, CA

Well, I guess I'm not sure how to start this what with all the thoughts, memories, and emotions still fresh in my mind from one of the greatest rides of my life! It all started with following the General Discussion Forums and all the Welcome Homes and Welcome to the RFTW family that came with each log on. You all kept telling me how great the trip will be and how many new friends I will meet. It was hard to believe all this until the first day at sign in at RC. My hand was sore, my back pounded raw and I have never had so many tears in my eyes for so long a time in my entire life! Then everyone said just wait - it gets better. What?? How can it get better than this? Damn if y'all weren't right again. It did get better every day. I don't know how everyone did it. I know we owe a lot to the citizens of each community we stopped at along the breadth of this great country, but I truly believe that a great deal is owed to the organizers and staff of RFTW. Preacher—I wanted to thank you for everything you did. What an accomplishment logistically getting all of this together.

From my Platoon 4 Leader JC and the Assist P.L. "Tin Man" to our great Tailgunner "Casper," thank you all. You were there every time checking on us FNGs, giving advice and praise and was there with a shoulder and understanding when the emotions became too much to bear. I am in awe of the Road Guards in the mission they undertook and completed with professionalism. After retiring with nearly 30 years as a Highway Patrolman in CA, I understand the intricacies of riding in such conditions. It brought back some fond memories with y'all whipping past us (I'm sure and will swear to it that you all were within 5 mph of some posted speed limit somewhere in the world). You guys were up way before most of us thought about getting up and didn't get to bed until way after we all did. You made sure we FNGs found our way to the staging area and breakfasts each day. To each of you - Thank you.

As for the fuelers, what can I say but - Damn you're good! NASCAR has nothing on you!!!! My first fueling came with more than a touch of trepidation. Actually my first thought was what a cluster ****. Was I proved wrong. You all have my utmost respect and admiration. No matter what time of day or weather conditions, you all meet us with a smile and asking how the ride was so far. Thank you for all you did.

The Chaplain Corp was always nearby, ready to lend a shoulder or a private moment with us as the emotional roller coaster during the ride continued. Being selected to ride the "Missing Man Formation" was a special opportunity that I was proud to be involved in. What an emotional moment. Almost 100 miles of riding and looking to my right and realizing what this mission meant. Y'all were right, I could hear the voices from the missing and there was pride in their voices at what we, the RFTW we accomplishing—Riding For Those Who Can't.

Last and not least were ALL the new friends made during the ride. Every one of you during the trip has made a lasting impression on me that will last my lifetime. Listening to Gary Wolf rendering Reveille every morning to Taps each night on his bugle was a special treat those of us on the Southern Route got to enjoy.

I must also take this opportunity to thank a very special individual from the Central Route—Chaplain Russ Cockrum. Without you, my friend, I know I would not have been able to make that long walk down to the Wall. Even now, I am sitting here with tears in my eyes and crying like a baby with thoughts of the Wall running

through my mind. Your kindness and compassion you showed to me on that day will be forever in my mind and heart. Thank you brother

It was a privilege to ride with my friend 83PGR Rider from here in Susanville—Southern Route's very own WWII Veteran who braved the trip and completed ALL THE WAY on his Yamaha. What an inspiration to us all. I can only hope I am in half as good a shape as Ray is now, when I get to his age. Happy trails my friend. Hopefully you can shock and awe more people next year by going all the way in 2012!!

Well I finally made it home after six weeks and some 9,460 miles of traveling across this wonderful Nation. I saw some beautiful sights and have memories that I never believed I would have. Thank you all and hope to see all of you again next year as we again make our way "ALL THE WAY."

A PLACE OF HONOR

Ken "Papa" Brown
Arlington, TX

I didn't really know what to expect or how it would affect me. I was briefed by the Missing Man Formation coordinator that the Southern Route Coordinator liked to have the 6-spot formation run very tight and close together. One needs to remember that we are traveling at about 65 miles an hour. Anyway, I agreed that I understood.

The Missing Man Formation is in a place of honor in the very front of all of the other motorcycles and is designed to be ridden with two bikes in front and two bikes in back and then two bike slots in the middle. I was in the center row of two slots closest to the lane centerline and the slot to the right of me was vacant, representing the Missing Man. In our Run this is representative of all those killed in action or still missing in action.

Leading up to this segment I knew that it would be a place of honor to ride next to the missing man and I wanted to ride in such a way to pay the utmost respect. You might say that there was no one actually there in that spot. You can say that, but you would be wrong. I know of over 58,000 who were there. I have heard that riders sometimes hear the missing men talking to them. I so much wanted to hear them talking to me and I wanted them to tell me that it was OK that I came home and they didn't.

I didn't hear any audible voices and probably was distracted wanting to. I kept glancing to my right at that vacant spot knowing I would not see anything. But you see I did see something. I saw the memory of all those men and women who were killed or missing. Every time I glanced over I became a little more emotional. I found myself telling them that I was doing this for them and that I was sorry they did not come home alive. The farther I rode the more difficult it became. I had to concentrate on maintaining proper separation from the other four bikes and yet deal with what I was going through. I actually sobbed several times when I looked over at the empty spot.

When we arrived in Monroe to conclude my segment, the Route Coordinator told me I did a good job and after seeing the look on my face asked if I was OK. I guess he could tell that I wasn't. Several other people came over to check on me and I remember saying that it just isn't fair that they didn't get to come home. Then, I totally lost it and leaned over the seat of my bike and just broke down in tears.

That is what this ride is all about, though, and there were people there to comfort me. No one told me it was OK, because it wasn't. No one told me this wasn't a significant event, because it was. They were just there to help me work through my emotions at my own pace.

It was just a few moments of grief, but then everything was okay.

I am left with the realization that I did honor those men and women in the Missing Man Formation. I also know that by riding in the Missing Man Formation I got as close to them as I will ever be allowed until we meet someday in heaven. I really believe that then I will hear them say “we were there with you on that day you rode the Missing Man Formation.”

THE EMPTY SPOT

Dadbo
Lompoc, CA

You don't see them but they are there in that empty spot in the MMF formation. You don't hear them but they speak loud and clear. Every Missing Man escort rides beside a seemingly empty spot in the formation, but nothing is further from the truth. We are privileged to have in our midst so many that won't ride with us physically, but I assure you they are with us in spirit enjoying the run with all of us. I've ridden the MMF a few times and I can with all honesty state that it was one of the most humbling experiences of my life. I take pride in having the MMF with us cross-country and express honor and respect as it passes my position. When you see the MMF approaching, know that there IS someone in that spot, being escorted across America by patriots who will never forget. You may not know the escort or for whom they ride beside, but know it is a position of great honor deserving of our deep respect and admiration. Make it known that you care as the MMF passes you.

REMEMBERING ROBLEY REX

Robley Rex was a WWI vet the Central Route met when he was volunteering at the Louisville VAMC. Rex passed away in May 2011, 4 days before his 108th birthday.

Judy, I have attached a picture I ran into from 2002 +/- when I was Road Guarding. This was the first time we met Robley Rex.

Rex was fascinated with my do rag, so I put it on his head. He made a comment about my jacket and vest, so I put them on him. He said he had never been on a Harley, so we hoisted him up on the Springer. He asked if he could fire it up, he did!! What a smile...I can still see him smiling and wrapping up the motor. The more throttle he gave her, the bigger his smile got. Then all the cameras began flashing and this photo was taken. What a wonderful memory of a "Gentle Hero". God Bless You Robley Rex!



Cruzerr

► OTHER STORIES

148-YEAR-OLD LETTER FROM POW

AP, AUGUSTA, Ga. — A faded envelope discovered after 148 years sheds new light on Augusta's little-known role as a place where Union prisoners of war were held during the Civil War.

Its author, Sgt. William S. Marshall, was a young Indiana soldier captured near Rowe Gap, Tenn., on May 3, 1863, and shuffled from place to place for the remainder of the conflict.

An envelope he addressed to his family in Green Castle, Ind., on Nov. 26, 1864, however, places him in Augusta, where a county jail at Fourth and Watkins streets was anecdotally known to have housed Union prisoners.

The rare cover, signed “W.S. Marshall, Adjt 51st Ind. Vols, Prisoner of War Augusta Ga,” was part of a collection sold earlier this month by Siegel Auction Galleries in New York, where it fetched \$1,900 as a possibly one-of-a-kind postal artifact.

Although the stamped and canceled document carried the appropriate notations from Confederate censors, the correspondence it once contained is long gone.

Georgia was home to Andersonville, one of the largest and most notorious camps for Union prisoners. More recently, the short-lived Camp Lawton in Jenkins County was re-examined as an archaeological project. Camp Lawton was established in late 1864 to relieve overcrowding and deplorable health conditions at Andersonville, where more than 13,000 Union POWs died.

Augusta was never widely known as a venue for war prisoners, but it was not unusual for cities to use existing facilities to house captured soldiers, said Erick Montgomery, executive director of Historic Augusta Inc.

“I don't know a thing about a full-fledged prison camp in Augusta, but there were prisoners of war here from time to time during the Civil War,” he said. “Certainly wounded prisoners were brought here after the Battle of Chickamauga late in 1863.”

The date on the envelope would have placed Marshall in Augusta during the confusing period when Gen. Sherman's army was approaching the area.

“In November 1864 General Sherman was on his way through Georgia, and Augusta was full of refugees,” Montgomery said. “If Adjutant Marshall were being held somewhere in the path of Sherman, it seems logical they may have brought him to Augusta to hunker-down until the bummers passed.”

The number of Union prisoners who lived in Augusta during the war remains unknown, but records for Augusta's Magnolia Cemetery show that some of them died here.

According to the cemetery's database, about 90 of the nearly-300 Civil War soldiers interred there were federal prisoners, from places as far away as Maine, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, who succumbed to ailments ranging from “consumption” and “diarrhea” to bullet wounds.

The square brick building that served as the Richmond County Jail during the Civil War is long gone, Montgomery said, and the site is now occupied by the present-day law enforcement complex.

LIFE IS LIKE A CASE OF “C” RATIONS

This is a 12 September 2009 speech by Major General Robert Scales USA (Ret) at the Truman Library

Mr. Skelton, Mr. Cleaver, distinguished guests and, most importantly, fellow veterans. What a great thrill it is see my comrades in arms assembled here so many years after we shared our experiences in war.

Let me give you the bottom line up front: I'm proud I served in Vietnam. Like you I didn't kill innocents, I killed the enemy; I didn't fight for big oil or for some lame conspiracy. I fought for a country I believed in and for the buddies who kept me alive. Like you I was troubled that, unlike my father, I didn't come back to a grateful nation. It took a generation and another war, Desert Storm, for the nation to come back to me.

Also like you I remember the war being 99 percent boredom and one percent pure abject terror. But not all my memories of Vietnam are terrible. There were times when I enjoyed my service in combat. Such sentiment must seem strange to a society today that has, thanks to our superb volunteer military, been completely insulated from war. If they thought about Vietnam at all our fellow citizens would imagine that fifty years would have been sufficient to erase this unpleasant war from our conscientiousness. Looking over this assembly it's obvious that the memory lingers, and those of us who fought in that war remember.

The question is why? If this war was so terrible why are we here? It's my privilege today to try to answer that question not only for you, brother veterans, but maybe for a wider audience for whom, fifty years on; Vietnam is as strangely distant as World War One was to our generation.

Vietnam is seared in our memory for the same reason that wars have lingered in the minds of soldiers for as long as wars have been fought. From Marathon to Mosul young men and now women have marched off to war to learn that the cold fear of violent death and the prospects of killing another human being heighten the senses and sear these experiences deeply and irrevocably into our souls and linger in the back recesses of our minds.

After Vietnam we may have gone on to thrilling lives or dull; we might have found love or loneliness, success or failure. But our experiences have stayed with us in brilliant Technicolor and with a clarity undiminished by time. For whatever primal reason, war heightens the senses. When in combat we see sharper, hear more clearly and develop a sixth sense about everything around us.

Remember the sights? I recall sitting in the jungle one bright moonlit night marveling on the beauty of Vietnam. How lush and green it was; how attractive and gentle the people, how stoic and unmoved they were amid the chaos that surrounded them..

Do you remember the sounds? Where else could you stand outside a bunker and listen to the cacophonous mix of Jimmy Hendrix, Merle Haggard and Jefferson Airplane? Or how about the sounds of incoming? Remember it wasn't a boom like in the movies but a horrifying noise like a passing train followed by a crack and the whistle of flying fragments.

Remember the smells? The sharpness of cordite, the choking stench of rotting jungle and the tragic sweet smell of enemy dead.

I remember the touch, the wet, sticky sensation when I touched one of my wounded soldiers one last time before the MEDEVAC rushed him forever from our presence but not from my memory, and the guilt I felt realizing that his pain was caused by my inattention and my lack of experience. Even taste is a sense that brings back memories. Remember the end of the day after the log bird flew away leaving mail, C rations and warm beer? Only the first sergeant had sufficient gravitas to be allowed to turn the C ration cases over so that all of us could reach in and pull out a box on the unlabeled side hoping that it wasn't going to be ham and lima beans again.

Look, forty years on I can forgive the guy who put powder in our ammunition so foul that it caused our M-16s to jam. I'm OK with helicopters that arrived late. I'm over artillery landing too close and the occasional canceled air strike. But I will never forgive the Pentagon bureaucrat who in an incredibly lame moment thought that a soldier would open a can of that green, greasy, gelatinous goo called ham and lima beans and actually eat it.

But to paraphrase that iconic war hero of our generation, Forrest Gump, life is like a case of C Rations, you never know what you're going to get because for every box of ham and lima beans there was that rapturous moment when you would turn over the box and discover the bacchanalian joy of peaches and pound cake. It's all a metaphor for the surreal nature of that war and its small pleasures...Those who have never known war cannot believe that anyone can find joy in hot beer and cold pound cake. But we can.

Another reason why Vietnam remains in our consciousness is that the experience has made us better. Don't get me wrong. I'm not arguing for war as a self-improvement course. And I realize that war's trauma has damaged many of our fellow veterans physically, psychologically and morally. But recent research on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder by behavioral scientists has unearthed a phenomenon familiar to most veterans: that the trauma of war strengthens rather than weakens us (they call it Post Traumatic Growth). We know that a near death experience makes us better leaders by increasing our self-reliance, resilience, self-image, confidence, and ability to deal with adversity. Combat veterans tend to approach the future wiser, more spiritual and content with an amplified appreciation for life. We know this is true. It's nice to see that the human scientists now agree. I'm proud that our service left a legacy that has made today's military better. Sadly Americans too often prefer to fight wars with technology.

Our experience in Vietnam taught the nation the lesson that war is inherently a human not a technological endeavor. Our experience is a distant whisper in the ear of today's technology wizards that firepower is not sufficient to win, that the enemy has a vote, that the object of war should not be to kill the enemy but to win the trust and allegiance of the people and that the ultimate weapon in this kind of war is a superbly trained, motivated, and equipped soldier who is tightly bonded to his buddies and who trusts his leaders. I've visited our young men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan several times. On each visit I've seen firsthand the strong connection between our war and theirs. These are worthy warriors who operate in a manner remarkably reminiscent of the way we fought so many years ago. The similarities are surreal.

Close your eyes for a moment and it all comes rushing back. In Afghanistan I watched soldiers from my old unit, the 101st Airborne Division, as they conducted daily patrols from firebases constructed and manned in a manner virtually the same as those we occupied and fought from so many years ago. Every day these sky soldiers trudge outside the wire and climb across impossible terrain with the purpose as one sergeant put it - to kill the bad guys, protect the good guys and bring home as many of my soldiers as I can. Your legacy is alive and well. You should be proud.

The timeless connection between our generation and theirs can be seen in the unity and fighting spirit of our soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Again and again, I get asked the same old question from folks who watch soldiers in action on television: why is their morale so high? Don't they know the American people are getting fed up with these wars? Don't they know Afghanistan is going badly? Often they come to me incredulous about what they perceive as a misspent sense of patriotism and loyalty.

I tell them time and again what every one of you sitting here today, those of you who have seen the face of war, understand: it's not really about loyalty. It's not about a belief in some abstract notion concerning war aims or national strategy. It's not even about winning or losing. On those lonely firebases as we dug through C ration boxes and drank hot beer we didn't argue the righteousness of our cause or ponder the latest pronouncements from McNamara or Nixon or Ho Chi Minh for that matter. Some of us might have trusted our leaders or maybe not. We might have been well informed and passionate about the protests at home or maybe not. We might have groused about the rich and privileged, who found a way to avoid service but we probably didn't. We might have volunteered for the war to stop the spread of global communism or maybe we just had a failing semester and got swept up in the draft.

In war, young soldiers think about their buddies. They talk about families, wives and girlfriends and relate to each other through very personal confessions. For the most part the military we served with in Vietnam did not come from the social elite. We didn't have Harvard degrees or the pedigree of political bluebloods. We were in large measure volunteers and draftees from middle and lower class America. Just as in Iraq today, we came from every corner of our country to meet in a beautiful yet harsh and forbidding place, a place that we've seen and experienced but can never explain adequately to those who were never there.

Soldiers suffer, fight and occasionally die for each other. It's as simple as that. What brought us to fight in the jungle was no different than the motive force that compels young soldiers today to kick open a door in Ramadi

with the expectation that what lies on the other side is either an innocent huddling with a child in her arms or a fanatic insurgent yearning to buy his ticket to eternity by killing the infidel. No difference. Patriotism and a paycheck may get a soldier into the military but fear of letting his buddies down gets a soldier to do something that might just as well get him killed.

What makes a person successful in America today is a far cry from what would have made him a success in the minds of those assembled here today. Big bucks gained in law or real estate, or big deals closed on the stock market made some of our countrymen rich. But as they have grown older they now realize that they have no buddies. There is no one who they are willing to die for or who is willing to die for them. William Manchester served as a Marine in the Pacific during World War II and put the sentiment precisely right when he wrote: "Any man in combat who lacks comrades who will die for him, or for whom he is willing to die is not a man at all. He is truly damned."

The Anglo Saxon heritage of buddy loyalty is long and frightfully won. Almost six hundred years ago the English king, Henry V, waited on a cold and muddy battlefield to face a French army many times his size. Shakespeare captured the ethos of that moment in his play Henry V. To be sure Shakespeare wasn't there but he was there in spirit because he understood the emotions that gripped and the bonds that brought together both king and soldier. Henry didn't talk about national strategy. He didn't try to justify faulty intelligence or ill formed command decisions that put his soldiers at such a terrible disadvantage. Instead, he talked about what made English soldiers fight and what in all probably would allow them to prevail the next day against terrible odds. Remember this is a monarch talking to his men:

*This story shall the good man teach his son;
And CrispinCrispian shall ne'er go by,
From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remembered-
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he today that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition;
And gentlemen in England now-a-bed
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap
whiles any speaks that fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.*

You all here assembled inherit the spirit of St Crispin's day. You know and understand the strength of comfort that those whom you protect, those in America now abed, will never know. You have lived a life of self-awareness and personal satisfaction that those who watched you from afar in this country who hold their manhood cheap can only envy.

I don't care whether America honors or even remembers the good service we performed in Vietnam. It doesn't bother me that war is an image that America would rather ignore. It's enough for me to have the privilege to be among you. It's sufficient to talk to each of you about things we have seen and kinships we have shared in the tough and heartless crucible of war.

Some day we will all join those who are serving so gallantly now and have preceded us on battlefields from Gettysburg to Wanat. We will gather inside a firebase to open a case of C rations with every box peaches and pound cake. We will join with a band of brothers to recount the experience of serving something greater than ourselves. I believe in my very soul that the almighty reserves a corner of heaven, probably around a perpetual campfire where some day we can meet and embrace all of the band of brothers throughout the ages to tell our stories while envious standers-by watch and wonder how horrific and incendiary the crucible of violence must have been to bring such a disparate assemblage so close to the hand of God.

THE FLAGMAN

Larry Eckhardt "The Flag Man" from Little York, IL, travels from town to town helping with veterans funerals by lining the procession route with the 2,200 2'x3' American flags he keeps in a trailer. Flags line routes for about 8 miles, although one time he lined 78 miles with flags.

Last year, Eckhardt went into debt doing this, but he refuses to stop or even scale back on the flags-- partly, he says, because of spectacular sight it creates, but even more because of the stage it sets.

"This gives the town a rallying point, you might say," Eckhardt said. "A way of coming out and saying 'thanks.'"

Turns out, when you line a country road like a hero's coming, he gets treated like one. People drop whatever they're doing. Flags beget flags. And for eight miles, one family's loss is shouldered by an entire community.

Since 2006 Larry has been traveling to the funerals of soldiers who have been killed in Afghanistan and Iraq. He takes his flags to funerals throughout Illinois and neighboring states, often driving hundreds of miles. He had attended 90 funerals by June 2012. He arrives the day before the funeral with a trailer in tow that contains over 2,000 6-foot flags. With the help of local volunteers, he lines the funeral procession route with flags and sets the stage for a true hero's welcome. After all, when someone has given everything for your defense, the least you can do is say a proper thank you.



One of the volunteers: While a hero's welcome home put on by hundreds of residents can't bring a loved one back, it is meaningful gesture and a wonderful way for the families to have their grief momentarily shouldered by the community.

"Invariably, somebody will ask me why I do it," Eckhardt said. And in a world where motivations are often self-interested, the Flag Man's is puzzling: He is not a veteran, and there are no soldiers in his family.

"I just honestly don't believe there's any such thing as too many flags for a soldier," he said.



Some people are grateful for Eckhardt's work. Others are suspicious at first. Once, Eckhardt was sitting in a TasteeFreez when a tough-looking man walked up to him, asked if he brought all the flags and called him an obscene name.

Eckhardt asked the man why he had a problem with the flags. The man explained that he had fought in the Korean War, taking part in a battle that lasted all night and left only 10 survivors.

"He swore to himself that night that nothing would ever touch him again, but when he turned the corner and saw five miles of flags, all he could do was cry," Eckhardt said. "It touches a lot of people a lot of different ways."

If you'd like to donate to Eckhardt's efforts, please mail him: 323 South Broadway Street, Apt. 1S, Little York, IL 61453

MONOPOLY BOARDS FREED POW'S

Monopoly boards were used by fake charities during the second world war to send maps and messages to prison camps in Nazi-occupied Europe. Beneath the familiar board, the equivalents of James Bond's 'Q' concealed Leeds-made escape maps.

A wartime plan hatched between the government and John Waddington's, who then manufactured the boards and players' tokens in Wakefield Road, Stourton, saw secret escape maps produced by the company for Allied prisoners of war.

In an especially cunning plan, Monopoly boards were used by fake charities to send the maps and related messages to prison camps in Nazi-occupied Europe. Equipped with the information, a number of shot-down pilots and other captured servicemen managed to break out, and some made their way to neutral countries and back home.

The system was set in place by MI9, a secret government department responsible for helping POWs and liaising with resistance movements in continental Europe. Section Nine of the British Directorate of Military Intelligence in the War Office carried out trials of maps printed by Waddingtons on silk, rayon, and tissue paper as early as 1940.

Hiding places included cigarette packets and the hollow heels of flying boots, where the flimsy maps did not rustle suspiciously and, in the case of those printed on cloth or mulberry leaf paper, could survive wear and tear and even immersion in water if an aircraft ditched in the sea.

Debbie Hall, formerly of the British Library and now at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, has studied the secret history of the silk maps, and the involvement of the famous Yorkshire firm. She says: In December 1939, MI9, the branch of the secret service responsible for escape and evasion, was set up. It was made clear that it was the duty of all those captured to escape if possible. One man who was behind many of MI9's most ingenious plans, including the Waddington project, was Christopher Clayton Hutton.

Waddingtons already had the technology to print on cloth and made a variety of board games, packs of cards and the like that could be sent to the camps. They began by printing silk maps for supply to air crews, British and later American, and went on to conceal maps inside Monopoly boards, chess sets and packs of cards which could be sent into the prison camps.

POWs were allowed to receive parcels from their families and from relief organizations such as the Red Cross. So as not to compromise the Red Cross, a range of fictitious charitable organizations, often based at fake addresses or bombed buildings, were set up to send games, warm clothing, and other small comforts to the prisoners.

One of the major problems of captivity was boredom, and games and entertainments were permitted as the guards recognized that if the prisoners were allowed some diversions they would be less troublesome. Once several Monopoly boards got safely through, MI9 and Waddingtons developed a code to show which map was hidden in the set.

A special code was even used to indicate to the ministry which map was concealed inside a particular game so that it would be sent to a POW camp in the appropriate area. Hall says: A full stop after Marylebone Station, for instance, meant Italy; a stop after Mayfair meant Norway, Sweden and Germany; and one after Free Parking meant Northern France, Germany and its frontiers. "Straight" boards were marked "Patent applied for" with a full stop.

Present-day North Yorkshire county councillor John Watson, from Wetherby, whose father Norman Watson was instrumental in turning Waddingtons into a household name, says: My father was fond of telling tales about Waddingtons part in the war effort. The silk maps were a major feature of such recollections. As I remember it, some of them were used as part of airmen's uniforms. I also know that the silk had to be specially treated so that it wouldn't distort through environmental pressures or through time. The Monopoly ones were laminated within the boards.

He also said that several Monopoly sets were sent out containing tokens made of pure gold to be used by prisoners to pay for assistance with their escapes. One other tale was that, once it was discovered the German guards were not searching the Monopoly sets themselves, real German currency was included in some of the packs of Monopoly banknotes.

SUNSET FLAG CEREMONY

It's a tradition. Every night at sunset, from Memorial Day to Labor Day, there's a very special ceremony in Sunset Beach, near Cape May, New Jersey. It goes like this: first, Marvin Hume, 92 in February and owner of several shops at Sunset Beach, including three gift shops and a snack bar, asks for children to volunteer to help lower the flag. Many families reserve a night for their children to lower the flag a year in advance. The children are told that there is a proper way to fold the flag, and that they will be shown how to do it. The flags at Sunset Beach are special. They are all U.S. servicemen's casket flags. When you visit, ask Mr. Hume about some of the stories behind these flags, and how he came by them. As the sun sets, the pounding of the surf is joined by Kate Smith singing "God Bless America." A crowd gathers, and the National Anthem is played. Some people salute. Then Taps is played, and the children lower the flag, being careful to catch it so that it doesn't touch the ground. The children then fold the flag under the instruction of Mr. Hume.

For nearly 40 years, they've come — 200 or 300, sometimes 400 a night — for Hume's solemn flag-lowering ceremony that each night honors one deceased veteran.

When his audience is in place, Hume comes over the loudspeaker, and in a voice now raspy with age, asks everyone to stand, remove their hats and face the flag. He asks people in cars to shut off their engines. When the crowd is quiet enough, a tape of Kate Smith's rousing "God Bless America" is played, then the U.S. Army band's version of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Before the music, Hume encourages all veterans to salute the flag, reminding those not in uniform that a law passed in 2007 by Congress allows them to do so. He wants them to stand out in the crowd. This is all said with such gentle sincerity, no one dares not comply. It is not just the appeal of old-school patriotism; it's the source of the flags themselves.

Every flag raised and lowered at the beach—more than 6,000 as of July 29, 2012—has been donated by families of deceased veterans. The ceremony is so popular that 2013 is already full. Reservations must be made by May 2013 for a ceremony in 2014. Call 800-757-6468.

"We fly nothing but casket flags," said Hume, a veteran World War II Navy engineer. "During the sunset ceremony, we say a little bit about the veteran. It's our way of honoring each of them again."



After the national anthem is played, the lone bugle notes of taps float over the beach, as Hume and members of the veteran's family lower the flag. Then, as the flag is folded, there is respectful silence, punctuated only by bay waves rolling over the beach.

The tradition began immediately after Hume bought the Sunset Beach souvenir shop in 1973.

"The old owner flew a flag over the beach and asked me if I would mind continuing to do so. I said, 'Would I mind? I would be honored.' "

The lowering of the American flag is a 42-year tradition and Marvin Hume has been at the mast for 40 of those years. Hume also sponsored a special 9-11 ceremony every year, but it became so big that his daughter asked the city council in 2011 to take it over.

How long will he continue to do this?

"Til I drop, sure," Marvin said. "That's what keeps me alive."

And that's what keeps alive the memory of those who served.

Watch this 2010 CBS video on Hume's sunset ceremony: <http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=6642221n>

► VA NEWS

TRICARE PRIME ENDS OCTOBER 1

The military's managed-care option -- TRICARE Prime -- will be ended Oct. 1 for retirees, their family members and for military survivors who reside more than 40 miles from a military treatment facility or from a base closure site, TRICARE Management Activity announced Wednesday.

Most of these 171,400 beneficiaries will need to shift health coverage from Prime to TRICARE Standard, the military's fee-for-service health insurance option. For beneficiaries who use more than preventive health care during the year, the shift will mean higher out-of-pocket costs.

Defense officials expect the move to save the health care system up to \$55 million a year.

The rollback in number of Prime service areas will not impact active duty members or their families living far a military base for tours as recruiters or in other remote assignments. Their health insurance through the separate TRICARE Prime Remote program will not change.

But grown children of members or of retirees who elected coverage under TRICARE Young Adult insurance will, like retirees, lose access to managed care providers under Prime if they reside more than 40 miles from a base.

TRICARE had considered ending Prime in remote service areas of the West Region on April 1, to coincide with changeover for that region's TRICARE support contractor. On that date, the TriWest Healthcare Alliance will give way to UnitedHealthCare Services of Minnetonka, Minn.

"The primary concern was the beneficiaries. We didn't feel like we had enough time to notify them and help them through the transition," explained S. Dian Lawhon, director of beneficiary education and support at TRICARE Management Activity headquarters in Falls Church, Va.

Congressional committee staffs also had complained about a staggered start across regions to a major benefit change. So the Prime service area rollback will occur in the North, South and West regions simultaneously next fall. This will cause another set of challenges in remote areas of the West Region that an April 1 start there would have avoided.

TriWest needed years to build its current network of providers far from military bases across the region. UnitedHealth will now be paid additional monies under a contract change order to build its own remote networks of providers. Those networks will only operate until October.

How successful UnitedHealth can be in luring providers, or even beneficiaries, to new networks that will be dissolved quickly is anyone's guess but the scheme has skeptics.

"They are just kicking the can for six months at significant expense to the government," said one TRICARE contracting official with knowledge of the move. "When they have a [defense budget] sequester looming, proceeding down that path really doesn't make a lot of sense."

TRICARE's far more critical challenge, however, is to educate impacted beneficiaries that their Prime coverage will end and most of them will need to shift to TRICARE Standard. An aggressive information campaign is planned with the first of three letters of explanation and warning to be sent to affected beneficiaries and families within 30 days, Lawhon said.

Under Prime, beneficiaries get their care from a designated network of providers for a fixed annual enrollment fee, which for fiscal 2013 is set at \$269.28 for individual coverage or \$538.56 for family. Retirees and family members also are charged a co-pay of \$12 per doctor visit.

Under TRICARE Standard, beneficiaries choose their own physicians and pay no annual enrollment fee. When in need of care, retirees must pay 25 percent of allowable charges themselves. They also pay an annual deductible of \$150 for individual or \$300 per family. Total out-of-pocket costs, however, cannot exceed a \$3000 per family catastrophic cap.

Some beneficiaries who see local Prime coverage end will be able to enroll in a remaining Prime network near base. To do so they would have to reside less than 100 miles from that exiting network and would have to waive the driving-distance standard that TRICARE imposes for patient safety. That standard when enforced required that an assigned network provider be within a 30-minute drive of the beneficiary's home.

If displaced Prime beneficiaries meet the two requirements, then an existing network will make room for them regardless of number of beneficiaries enrolled, Lawhon said. But joining a new network also will mean new doctors. So most displaced Prime beneficiaries are expected to choose to use TRICARE Standard instead to get care locally and, in many cases from the same physicians who treated them under TRICARE Prime.

"People who use Standard are very, very pleased with it," Lawhon said. As a group they report higher scores on customer satisfaction surveys than do Prime users, she said.

The push to end Prime in areas away from bases began in 2007 with design a third generation of TRICARE support contracts. It took years to settle on winning contractors for the three regions, however, due to various bid protests and award reversals. Health Net Federal Services has run North Region under the new contract since April 2011. Humana Military Healthcare Services has had the South Region under the new contract since April 2012. Along with TriWest, these contractors have continued to run remote Prime networks under

temporary order while waiting final word from TRICARE on imposing Prime area restrictions written into original contracts.

The driver behind new restrictions on Prime is cost. Managed care is more cost efficient for the private sector but more expensive for the military to offer than traditional fee-for-service insurance. This is true in part because Congress won't allow Prime fees to keep pace with health inflation. So more beneficiaries using Standard means less cost to TRICARE.

Of beneficiaries impacted by the Prime area rollback, more than half, almost 98,000, reside in South Region. Roughly 36,000 are West Region beneficiaries and more than 37,000 are in the North Region.

Let your elected officials know how you feel about this change in TRICARE benefits.

“THE ENTIRE SYSTEM IS A MESS”

The time needed to process veterans' disability claims shot up by nearly 40 percent last year despite years of effort by federal officials to streamline and shorten the process, records show.

The times necessary to process education benefits and burial benefits, as well as the time needed to wind through the Department of Veterans Affairs appeals process, also increased in fiscal 2012.

The disability-processing time is closely watched by Congress and veterans' advocates as a measure of VA efficiency. In fiscal 2012, the average days to complete a VA disability compensation or pension claim rose to 262 days, up from 188 days in fiscal 2011, according to a recently completed VA performance report. The 262-day average is the highest that measure has been in at least the past 20 years for which numbers were available.

The VA's long-term goal is to get the processing time to an average of 90 days.

"The entire system is a mess," said Paul Rieckhoff, founder and chief executive of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, a support and advocacy group. "They've been saying now for 10 years that it'll get better, and it still doesn't get better, and we've seen tremendous frustration from our members in the last few months. It's reached a breaking point."

The VA said it is working to speed its decision-making process and is in the midst of an overhaul of its claims system. It eventually will end its reliance on paper-based processing and reconfigure the way claims move through 56 regional offices that handle them.

"We recognize that from the standpoint of the veterans, they are waiting too long, and that's unacceptable," said Diana Rubens, who helps oversee the VA's regional offices. "We've got to transform how we do things. We know that fixing decades-old problems is not going to be easy."

America's veterans are eligible for a range of benefits, from access to the VA's well-regarded medical system to lifetime payments for disabilities suffered during military service to access to education, life insurance and home loan programs.

The disability benefits are awarded to veterans who suffer physical or mental injuries during their military service. Benefits vary based on the severity of a disability and beginning Saturday range from \$129 a month to \$2,816 a month for a single veteran.

The VA has struggled for years to reduce the waiting times, and each year it stresses to Congress that fixing the process is a top priority.

In 2010, for example, VA Secretary Eric Shinseki told the House Veterans' Affairs Committee that claim time had improved the previous year, dropping from 179 days to 161 days.

"The progress made in 2009 is a step in the right direction, but it is not nearly enough," he said.

In 2011, he told the same committee that "one of VA's highest priority goals" is to eliminate a backlog of disability cases by 2015 and to ensure all veterans receive a decision in "no more than 125 days."

In 2012, he told the committee that improvements were being made and that the department was aiming for significant improvements in 2013.

"While too many veterans will still be waiting too long for the benefits they have earned, it does represent a significant improvement in performance over the 2012 estimate of 60 percent of claims more than 125 days old, demonstrating that we are on the right path," Shinseki said.

In fact, the recent performance report shows that 66 percent of claims in fiscal 2012 were more than 125 days old. That's up from 36 percent in 2010 and 60 percent in 2011.

And since Shinseki told Congress about the improvement he saw in 2009, average processing time has gone up - from 161 days, to 166 days, to 188 days, to the most recent 262 days.

Even so, Rubens of the VA said the department is on track to meet Shinseki's goals by 2015, given the restructuring in place.

The department has seen a massive increase in claims from veterans in recent years, both younger ones from Iraq and Afghanistan and older ones who have recently been able to file claims on new conditions. Claims the past four years have topped 1 million a year.

While some decisions might be straightforward -- a soldier loses a limb in battle -- others are more complicated, requiring extensive medical reviews and research to tie a disability to the veteran's time in the military.

Sen. Patty Murray, a Democrat from Washington who chairs the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, said the VA's tardiness and mistake-prone process is "totally unacceptable."

"We know that this is a complex problem and more troops returning home make this job even more difficult," she said in a statement to McClatchy Newspapers. "But Congress has provided VA with the funding and resources it has requested to tackle this problem."

The new performance report shows that the VA has lost ground on many of its other benefits-related goals:

- The average time to complete an education claim jumped to 31 days from 24 days; the long-term goal is 10 days.
- The average time to complete a burial claim jumped to 178 days from 113 days; the long-term goal is 21 days.
- The average time in the appeals system for veterans who dispute their disability compensation decision jumped to 866 days from 747 days; the long-term goal is 400 days.

The annual performance report includes dozens of goals to spur improvement among the VA's health care system, benefits division and cemetery administration.

Of those, the VA highlighted 23 as "key performance measures." The VA met its short-term goals for only 12 of those measures.

REPORT ACTIONS OF PHONY SERVICE GROUP

The following warning was issued by Michael G. Daugherty, Staff Attorney, Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of General Counsel:

“An organization called Veterans Affairs Services (VAS) is providing benefit and general information on VA and gathering personal information on veterans. This organization is not affiliated with VA in any way.

“VAS may be gaining access to military personnel through their close resemblance to the VA name and seal. Our Legal Counsel has requested that we coordinate with DoD to inform military installations, particularly mobilization sites, of this group and their lack of affiliation or endorsement by VA to provide any services. In addition, GC requests that if you have any examples of VAS acts that violate chapter 59 of Title 38 United States Code, such as VAS employees assisting veterans in the preparation and presentation of claims for benefits, please pass any additional information to Mr. Daugherty at the address below. Michael G. Daugherty, Staff Attorney, Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of General Counsel, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW Washington DC 20420.”

When looking for veterans services information, be sure you access the official VA website. The phony organization’s website is <http://www.vaservices.org/>.

The official VA website is <http://www.va.gov/>

NEW POLICY ELIMINATES PAPERWORK

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced in December that it is cutting red tape for Veterans by eliminating the need for them to complete an annual Eligibility Verification Report (EVR). VA will implement a new process for confirming eligibility for benefits, and staff that had been responsible for processing the old form will instead focus on eliminating the compensation claims backlog.

Historically, beneficiaries have been required to complete an EVR each year to ensure their pension benefits continued. Under the new initiative, VA will work with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) to verify continued eligibility for pension benefits.

“By working together, we have cut red tape for Veterans and will help ensure these brave men and women get the benefits they have earned and deserve,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

VA estimates it would have sent nearly 150,000 EVRs to beneficiaries in January 2013. Eliminating these annual reports reduces the burden on Veterans, their families, and survivors because they will not have to return these routine reports to VA each year in order to avoid suspension of benefits. It also allows VA to redirect more than 100 employees that usually process EVRs to work on eliminating the claims backlog.

"Having already instituted an expedited process that enables wounded warriors to quickly access Social Security disability benefits, we are proud to work with our federal partners on an automated process that will make it much easier for qualified Veterans to maintain their VA benefits from year to year," said Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security.

"The IRS is taking new steps to provide critical data to help speed the benefits process for the nation's Veterans and Veterans Affairs," said Beth Tucker, IRS Deputy Commissioner for Operations Support. "The IRS is pleased to be part of a partnership with VA and SSA that will provide needed data quickly and effectively to move this effort forward."

All beneficiaries currently receiving VA pension benefits will receive a letter from VA explaining these changes and providing instructions on how to continue to submit their unreimbursed medical expenses.

More information about VA pension benefits is available at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/pension> and other VA benefit programs on the joint Department of Defense—VA web portal eBenefits at www.ebenefits.va.gov.

▶ OTHER NEWS

ARMY SSGT TO RECEIVE MOH



The Medal of Honor will be awarded to an Army staff sergeant who fought off a Taliban attempt to overrun his combat outpost in eastern Afghanistan.

Former Staff Sgt. Clinton Romesha, 31, of Minot, N.D., is scheduled to receive the medal in a ceremony on February 11. Romesha will become the fourth living recipient of the MOH from the post-9/11 wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A total of 10 Medals of Honor have been awarded for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The three other living recipients, all of whom served in Afghanistan, are Army Staff Sgt. Salvatore Giunta, Marine Sgt. Dakota Meyer, and Army Sgt. 1st Class Leroy Petry.

Obama announced the tribute to Romesha's "heroic service in Afghanistan" during a White House news conference with Afghan President Hamid Karzai. The president stressed that Afghan troops will have to shoulder the responsibility for their own security as the U.S. winds down the war.

Romesha earned the Medal of Honor for his bravery after Afghan troops fled a firefight at Combat Outpost Keating in eastern Nuristan province while he was serving as a section leader with Bravo Troop, 3d Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division. Eight U.S. troops were killed and more than 20 others wounded in the assault by the enemy with mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machineguns that breached the gates of the post.

The attack, one of the deadliest single-day engagements for U.S. forces in the Afghan war, was the focus of the recent book "The Outpost" by former ABC-TV White House correspondent Jake Tapper. Nine other troops who fought alongside Romesha had already received the Silver Star for their own heroism.

About 50 American, 20 Afghan, and two Latvian soldiers, along with about 12 Afghan security guards, found themselves at COP Keating when the pre-dawn attack began. It continued for more than three hours. Romesha "took out an enemy machine gun team and, while engaging a second, the generator he was using for cover was struck by a rocket-propelled grenade, inflicting him with shrapnel wounds," according to the MOH citation. Romesha kept fighting. "With complete disregard for his own safety, Romesha continually exposed himself to

heavy enemy fire as he moved confidently about the battlefield, engaging and destroying multiple enemy targets, including three Taliban fighters who had breached the combat outpost's perimeter," the citation said.

Romesha lives in Minot with his wife and three children. He left the Army in April 2011 after serving for 12 years.

BOWE BERGDAHLUPDATE

Experts are trying to determine the meaning of the Afghan authorities' latest statement. They said that Kabul does not oppose the U.S. holding direct talks with the Taliban on the exchange of POW Bergdahl for five prisoners at Guantanamo prison (they originally demanded 11 of their POWs). But, at the same time Americans have no right to hold talks on a peaceful settlement with the Taliban because it is a prerogative of the Afghan government.

The 26-year-old Sgt Bowe Bergdahl went missing while patrolling in the southeastern province of Paktika in June 2009. According to the CNN, the serviceman disappeared after getting drunk and going outside the base. It became clear that he was abducted after three weeks when captors showed a video showing the frightened soldier and his dog tags. Since then, they released four videos. On April 7, 2010, the Taliban released a video of Bergdahl, now with a beard and wearing a Pushtu dress, pleading for the release of Afghan prisoners held at Guantanamo. A year ago, he escaped from captivity and tried to reach the closest village knowing that the code of honor obligates Pushtus to defend any person who asks for help. But villagers had fled the volatile region long ago. The soldier met nobody and hid in a forest. However, militants discovered him after three days and tightened security.

In March, American officials and extremists discussed his exchange at their covert meetings in Qatar. These meetings have not resumed yet. Most likely, there have been attempts to establish contacts and this angered Kabul that tried to hold peace talks with the Taliban.

STOLEN VALOR LAW PASSES

A law designed to punish those who boast battlefield medals for heroics they never performed passed the Senate on December 3, 2012, marking the second bid by Congress to outlaw lying about war records.

The first so-called Stolen Valor Law was declared unconstitutional in June by the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled that lying about military service was protected speech.

This time around lawmakers have anchored the law on lying about awards and decorations for "tangible benefit or personal gain," not strictly lying for the sake of lying. The bill was filed by Sen. Jim Webb, D-Va., a Vietnam combat veteran, shortly after the high court knocked down the original 2006 law.

"For someone who has not served to come in and get material benefit from something they did not do is just not right," Webb said in an interview with Norfolk TV station WTKR in July, when he filed the legislation that is now set to become part of the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act.

The House of Representatives already passed its own version of the law, so final language has to be worked out before it can be signed. Under the Senate version anyone found guilty of violating the Stolen Valor law would be fined and possibly jailed for not more than 6 months, or both. The House version would put violators in jail for up to a year.

The new law states that benefits include any provided by the local, state or federal government for military service, earn a job, run for elective office, or attain an appointment to a board or position on a non-profit.

Webb's bill was cosponsored by Sen. Scott Brown, R-Mass., and Joe Lieberman, I-Conn.

The 2006 version of the Stolen Valor Act made it a crime to make any false statements claiming military awards and decorations.

A California man, Xavier Alvarez, was convicted of violating the law for claiming to have earned the Medal of Honor. He was ordered to pay a \$5,000 fine but appealed the case up to the Supreme Court, which struck it down.

Webb and others argued the law is necessary to protect the integrity of military decorations, since those who earn them are held in high regard by the public. False claims of receiving such medals or serving in the military, the bill language states, "are especially likely to be harmful and material to employers, voters in deciding to whom paid elective positions should be entrusted, and in the award of contracts."

"Military service and military awards are held in such great respect that public and private decisions are correctly influenced by claims of heroism," the bill states, arguing that making false claims about military service and heroism are "an especially noxious means of obtaining something of value."

GROUNDBROKEN FOR EDUCATION CENTER

On November 28, 2012, Gold Star family members and veterans were joined by Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, Members of Congress, and senior military leaders for the ceremonial groundbreaking of The Education Center at The Wall. The Center will be a future national landmark dedicated to bringing to life the stories of more than 58,000 American service members lost in the Vietnam War. It will also feature photos and stories of the fallen in Iraq and Afghanistan, serving as a temporary memorial until today's veterans receive their own national place of honor.

Dr. Michael McClung, Vietnam veteran and Gold Star Father to Major Megan McClung, the first female Marine KIA in Iraq, delivered remarks during the ceremony and said, "We have a legacy of service, and we only ask that you remember us."

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund is the driving force behind The Education Center at The Wall. The organization needs to raise an additional \$38 million before construction can commence. The goal is to have The Center open as the final troops return home from Afghanistan in 2014. To learn more, visit www.buildthecenter.org.

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICTS WALL

In the rural Illinois town of Marseilles, home to Illinois Valley Cellular, there is a memorial to those who have sacrificed all for freedom.

On June 19th, 2004 a granite Memorial Wall was dedicated commemorating the servicemen and women who have lost their lives in worldwide conflicts since 1979. The project was conceived by Jerry Kuczera and Tony Cutrano and built with donated material and labor and is the first of its kind in the UA to give honor to our fallen by name while a conflict is ongoing. It took 20 years to Honor our Vietnam Veterans. Almost 60 years to Honor our World War II Veterans. The names on the wall represent our fallen heroes from such diverse locations as Panama, Lebanon, the Balkans, Grenada, Somalia, Haiti, USS Cole, USS Stark, Terrorist attacks in Italy, Greece, Scotland, and the current conflicts in the Middle East.

On the third Saturday in June every year, tens of thousands of motorcycles make their way to Marseilles for the annual "Freedom Run" that honors those who have sacrificed all for our freedom.

From an article on March 23, 2011 by Achy Obejas: Co-founder Tony Cutrano (who was killed in a motorcycle accident on Memorial Day weekend 2012) says the idea came to him while watching a Chicago anti-war demonstration on TV back in 2003. "Someone burned a flag, and I'm a Navy veteran," he says, "so I said, let's take a ride up there and show some support for our troops."

By ride he meant on a motorcycle. Thousands of bikers followed him up to Chicago.



"We weren't there to support the war – no one supports war," says Cutrano, who works as part of a project management team for Bescoto in Chicago. "We were there for the veterans, the families. We got stuff thrown at us, got verbally abused. But at the end of it, I said, you know what? We're gonna do this again. And we're going to call it the Freedom Run."

And they have, drawing as many as 40,000 bikers for their annual get together. The axis of all the activity is what came later, the wall, which is unique in two ways: One, unlike the memorial to the Vietnam War veterans, which was erected 20 years after the conflict, or the tribute to those who fought in World War II, which went up 60 years after the fact, this memorial was built while the conflicts were ongoing. And, two, it's a totally private, supported by the "Illinois Motorcycle Community," without a penny of government money.

"The first casualty of the first Iraq war was from Illinois," says Cutrano, "a young man named Ryan Anthony Beaupre from a little town called St. Anne's, and we" – meaning him and his motorcycle buddies – "went up and told his parents, this is what we'd like to do, set up a memorial."

On June 23, 2003, they accomplished their goal. About 7,000 people showed up to support them, about three times the size of the town. And that got Cutrano thinking about doing it again, on a larger scale.

"Marseilles offered us a spot," he says.

But why is it called the Middle East Conflicts Wall when its scope is actually global?

“Well, I had to call it something,” says Cutrano, who served during the Iran hostage crisis but didn’t see action. “The majority is from Middle East conflicts and terrorist acts. But there are also guys from the conflicts in Grenada, Lebanon.”

The list isn’t alphabetical, chronological or even by conflict.

“Look, when I asked the Pentagon for help, they said there were 130,000 service men and women killed since Vietnam,” says Cutrano, who pretty much runs the thing by himself. “But if you died in a theater of war or in a terrorist act, your name is up there.”

His goal right now is to raise funds for a visitor’s center and to add the 761 casualties that have occurred since the last time he updated the wall. And to host the next Freedom Run, which will take place June 18 in Marseilles again.

“I don’t know who put me in charge,” he says, “but that’s the way it is. Because this has to be done.”

The Middle East Conflicts Wall was built in the parking lot of Illinois Valley Cellular corporate office, which is a proud supporter of the Memorial. Their building contains a large room that houses the Wall’s Museum. Many visitors leave items at the Wall, as is done at the Vietnam Veteran’s Wall in Washington, D.C. But sometimes the items are vandalized or even thrown into the river, so IVC collects the items left at the wall every day. Those items are also displayed in the museum in their building. Every June when a ceremony is held to unveil the names of the fallen soldiers of the past year, IVC puts all phones on message and every employee stands outside to greet the bikers and others who come to show respect to the fallen warriors.

In January 2013 the city of Marseilles was close to agreeing to become a joint owner of the Middle East Conflicts Wall Memorial as well as approving a management committee to oversee its use and operation. The City Council said the agreement will allow for better planning for the memorial’s care and expansion. The memorial has been overseen by the Illinois Motorcycle Freedom Run, which proposed the structure, the City Council, the city’s Middle East Tribute Committee, and MTCO, which owns the site.

The agreement proposes creation of an umbrella super committee of all four groups to oversee the memorial. The city and the IMFR would be joint-owners, with sole ownership passing to the other party in case one of the entities would dissolve.

The Memorial is located at 200 RiverFrontDr, in Marseilles, Illinois (815-795-2133).

To see a video on the Memorial, visit <http://stg.do/bjSc>. More info at www.ilfreedomrun.org.

NATIONAL VIETNAM VETERANS ART MUSEUM



When visitors first enter this museum, they will hear a sound like wind chimes coming from above them and their attention will be drawn upward 24 feet to the ceiling of the two-story high atrium.

Dog tags of 58,226 service men and women who died in the Vietnam War hang from the ceiling of the National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum in Chicago. The 10-by-40-foot sculpture, entitled “Above & Beyond,” was designed by Ned Broderick and Richard Steinbock. All OF these metal dogtags are suspended 24 feet in the air, 1 inch apart,

from fine lines that allow them to move and chime with shifting air currents. Museum employees using a kiosk and laser pointer help visitors locate the exact dog tag with the imprinted name of their lost friend or relative. The dog tags are displayed in chronological order as they are on The Wall, and each one has the name, branch of service, and date of casualty.

WALMART COMMITS TO HIRING VETS

The nation's largest retailer, Wal-Mart, announced on January 21 a plan to hire every veteran who wants a job, provided that the veterans have left the military in the previous year and did not receive a dishonorable discharge. The program will officially begin on Memorial Day and will eventually lead to the hiring of more than 100,000 people in the next five years. The new program represents one of the largest hiring commitments for veterans in history.

FREE TAX HELP FOR VETERANS

The IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and the Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) Programs offer free tax help for taxpayers who qualify.

The VITA Program generally offers free tax help to people who make \$51,000 or less and need assistance in preparing their own tax returns. IRS-certified volunteers provide free basic income tax return preparation with electronic filing to qualified individuals in local communities.

The TCE Program offers free tax help for all with priority assistance to people who are 60 years of age and older, specializing in questions about pensions and retirement issues unique to seniors.

To find a VITA or TCE site near you: <http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/Find-a-Location-for-Free-Tax-Prep> 1-or call 800-906-9887.

A majority of the TCE sites are operated by the AARP Foundation's Tax Aide Program. To locate the nearest AARP Tax-Aide site between January and April, visit <http://www.aarp.org/applications/VMISLocator/searchTaxAideLocations.action> or call 888-227-7669.

► BRINGING THEM HOME

SOLDIER MISSING FROM VIETNAM WAR IDENTIFIED

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced on December 3 that the remains of a serviceman, missing in action from the Vietnam War, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors.

Army Sgt. John R. Jones, of Louisville, Ky., was buried Dec. 6, in Arlington National Cemetery. On June 4, 1971, Jones was part of a U.S. team working with indigenous commandos to defend a radio-relay base, known as Hickory Hill, in Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam. When enemy forces attacked the site, Jones and

another serviceman took up a defensive position in a nearby bunker. The following morning, Jones was reportedly killed by enemy fire and the other soldier was captured and held as a POW until 1973.

From 1993 to 2010, joint U.S.-Socialist Republic of Vietnam (S.R.V.) teams, led by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), conducted several investigations, surveyed the site and interviewed multiple witnesses, including those involved in the battle. During that time, analysts from JPAC and DPMO evaluated wartime records and eyewitness accounts to determine possible excavation sites. In 2011, another joint U.S.-S.R.V team located human remains in a bunker suspected to be the last known location of Jones.

For the identification of the remains, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools, such as dental records and mitochondrial DNA that matched Jones' mother and brother.

Since 1973 more than 900 servicemen have been accounted for from the Vietnam War, and returned to their families for burial with military honors. The U.S. government continues to work closely with the governments of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to recover all Americans lost in the conflict.

REMAINS OF TWO SOLDIERS FROM KOREA WAR RETURNED

The Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office announced this month that the identification of remains belonging to two soldiers who had been unaccounted-for since the Korean War. Identified are:

Army Pfc. Ernest V. Fuqua Jr., 21, of Detroit. In late November 1950, units of the 35th Infantry Regiment and allied forces were deployed in a defensive line advancing across the Ch'ongch'on River in North Korea when Chinese forces attacked. Fuqua was listed as killed in action on Nov. 28, 1950. His body was not recoverable at the time.

Army Pfc. Glenn S. Schoenmann, 20, of Tracy City, Tenn. In late November 1950, elements of the 31st Regimental Combat Team were deployed along the eastern banks of the Chosin Reservoir in North Korea when they were encircled and attacked by Chinese forces. Schoenmann was reported as missing in action on Dec. 12, 1950. It would be later learned he died in captivity from malnutrition and lack of medical care for his wounds.

JPAC SEARCHES FOR 90 MISSING FROM WWII

It was announced on January 18 that a specially trained investigation team from the U.S. Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command is conducting an extended investigation operation in the Philippines for about six weeks, searching for evidence of service members who remain unaccounted-for from World War II.

A nine-member investigation team will conduct back-to-back missions at numerous locations throughout the Philippines, searching for information about 20 sites and approximately 90 individuals who are unaccounted-for from World War II.

Investigation teams authenticate leads from eyewitnesses, conduct field research and gather information throughout various locations to determine whether or not there will be an excavation at a later date.

Falling directly under the U.S. Pacific Command and employing more than 500 joint military and civilian personnel, JPAC continues its search for the fullest possible accounting of the more than 83,000 Americans still missing from past conflicts. The ultimate goal of the JPAC, and of the agencies involved in returning America's heroes home, is to conduct global search, recovery, and laboratory operations in order to support the Department of Defense's personnel accounting efforts.

► MEET & GREETINGS

SAVE THE DATES

February 24 – RFTW Meet and greet for So Cal or anyone who wants to join us. Simi Valley Moose Lodge, 4860 East Alamo Street, Simi Valley, California time 1:00 pm (1300 till)?? The lodge is letting us use the back room and has agreed to cook for us. Pasta lunch, salad, bread, desert & beverage \$15.00 per person. Please RSVP so I can tell them how much food to prepare. Looking forward to seeing you all soon. Shirley Scott, Vanceshirley@juno.com 805-443-4373.

July 26-28 – The official 2013 RFTW Reunion will be in Colorado Springs, on the last weekend in July, the 26th, 27th, and 28th.

September 27-29 – Unofficial Kerrville, TX reunion

Pending: Meet & Greet in Sacramento, CA area. Check Forum for details.

You may be able to find more meet and greets at www.rftw.org on the Forum.

► SICK CALL

Don Smith (RFTW 2005 2006 2007), Korean War Marine Vet. Dave “Bounce” Talley’s dad, known as “The Old Marine,” has been very ill and underwent dialysis treatment in December. He was released from the hospital and expected to make a full recovery.

Smoke – RFTW old-timers will remember Smoke, a WWII B-17 crewmember. Wonderful guy, never a bad word from or about him. He has been undergoing chemo for lung cancer. Please keep him in your prayers. He’s weak but would love to hear from RFTW brothers. Call him at 909-240-4524

► TAPS

Allen James

Allen “AJ” James was killed on his motorcycle in Charleston, South Carolina on January 15 while trying to avoid an accident with a car that pulled out in front of him and the group he was riding with. He laid his bike down and was run over by a vehicle behind him in traffic.

Laura Byrd wrote the following:

Allen and his wife Melanie are one of those dynamic, animated couples who love to ride, and love each other with an obvious passion and devotion we all admired. Allen was a Vietnam Veteran who smiled and laughed as often as some people breath, his sense of humor and love of life was infectious. To Scott, he was more of a brother than just a friend, and they rode several thousand miles together in 2009 and 2010 for Run For the Wall. When Scott called me from the road during the 10-day ride in 2009, the first thing he said was "I have a new brother." Allen and Melanie were our RFTW road buddies, and over the many miles, through every fuel stop,

over many days, we always tried to ride alongside them in the First Platoon, because we loved watching them ride together, and Scott trusted Allen's riding ability implicitly in the one platoon formation that required riders be in a side-by-side formation. Today, we pray for Melanie and send her a heart full of love over the many miles that separate us. We thank Allen not only for his service in Vietnam, but for his continued service and efforts over the years to document his experience and champion veterans. We hope Allen is looking down at all of us from heaven on a black Road Glide, his cowboy boots up on the freeway pegs, laughing and smiling as he blows by. We love you, Allen.

Alfie Fripp, the last British WWII POW. The man thought to be Britain's oldest surviving prisoner of war died January 3 at the age of 98. Squadron Leader Alfie Fripp spent most of World War Two in captivity after his Blenheim bomber was shot down over Belgium in 1939. He was held at 12 POW camps until 1945, including Stalag Luft III in Poland — immortalised in *The Great Escape*.

Alfie acted as a spy for the 76 men who broke out. Tragically, 50 were caught and executed.

Alfie, the last of the "39ers" — troops who spent most of the war in captivity — died in a Bournemouth hospital. He was uncle to King Crimson guitarist Robert Fripp. Alfie's pal Pat Jackson said: "Just eight weeks ago he was marching past the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday. He was an inspiration."

► CLOSING THOUGHT

TAKING A STAND

By John Bailey

I ask you to stand with me
For both the injured and the lost
I ask you to keep count with me
Of all the wars and what they cost
I ask you to be silent with me
Quietly grateful for our lot
As I expect you're as thankful as me
For the health and life we've got
I ask that you wish them well with me
All those still risking their all
And I ask that you remember with me
The names of those that fall

I expect that you are proud like me
Of this great nation of ours too
So enjoying all its freedoms like me
Support those upholding them for you
I hope that you are hopeful like me
That we'll soon bring an end to wars
So you'll have to stand no more with me
And mourning families no different from yours
'Til then be thankful you can stand with me
Thinking of those who now cannot
For standing here today with me
At least we show they're not forgot



You Are Not Forgotten



TO SUBSCRIBE TO A MAILED COPY OF THE NEWSLETTER:

APPLICATION FOR NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION

The RFTW newsletter is published in January, April, July, and October. If you would like to have printed copies of the newsletter mailed to you, a one-year subscription is \$10, which covers the cost of printing and mailing. If you subscribe or renew by October 31 you will receive all four issues for that year. If you renew between October 31 and January 1, your subscription will begin with the January issue of the next year.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____ 2013

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____ FOR 1 YEAR _____ 2 YEARS _____

Please mail this form with your check or money order (made payable to Run For The Wall) to Judy Lacey, 4249 Comstock Drive, Lake Havasu City, AZ 86406.