



**RUN FOR THE WALL**  
**Quarterly Newsletter**  
*“We Ride For Those Who Can’t”*  
**January 2014**

*NOTE: Run For The Wall and RFTW are trademarks of Run For The Wall, Inc. The use of Run For The Wall and RFTW is strictly prohibited without the expressed written permission of the Board of Directors of Run For The Wall, Inc.*

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

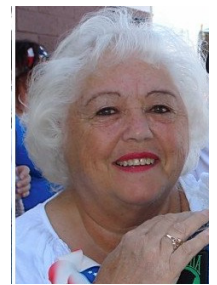
- The Editor’s Notes
- President’s Message
- CR Volunteers Needed
- SR Fuel and Staging Team Members Needed
- Registration
- Riverside National Cemetery Ride
- Evening Parade in D.C.
- Gold Star Families
- VIP Escorts at Rolling Thunder
- Run to Camp Pendleton
- RFTW Combat Hero Bike Build
- A Toast They Will Say
- Thoughts From the Forum
- WWII Veteran Receives POW Medal
- The Last POW to Leave North Vietnam
- The Church Service at Hanoi Hilton
- How to Ride a Motorcycle in a Heavy Crosswind
- New National Cemetery in Colorado
- Funding for Homeless Veteran Families
- Homeless Vets Update
- COLA Fix Materializing?
- DoD Breach of Security
- Possibility: Veterans Cemetery in Angel Fire
- New Army Rifle
- Military’s Bionic Arm
- Free Event Tickets for Veterans
- Boots on the Ground NY
- Bergdahl Update
- MIA Buried on Anniversary of Disappearance
- WWII Aviator Shot Down in Germany
- Missing POW’s Remains Returned 63 Years Later
- Chosin Reservoir Soldiers Brought Home
- Taps
- Closing Thoughts

**THE EDITOR’S NOTES**

Hello RFTW Family:

Every year RFTW is honored to be joined by hundreds of FNGs. Many of us never get the opportunity to meet these new participants. I recently learned of an FNG who plans to ride with us in May. Her family has a pretty impressive history in the military, and I’d like to share it with you here.

SSG Robin Perry (Wildcat) has 15 years in the Louisiana Army National Guard. She is currently serving full-time as a public affairs specialist for the northern part of the state. Robin is also an officer in 6-1, Charlie Det., Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association, and coordinator for Quilts of Valor Foundation. She served in Iraq in 2004-2005 (where she earned the Combat Action Badge) and again in 2010. She and her husband live in Shreveport, La. with their two children, Kieran (11) and Jae (18).



a

Robin's husband is SSG Kelley Perry (Gonzo). He also has 15 years in the Louisiana Army National Guard and served for several years full-time as a Military Funeral Honors team-leader and trainer (until he was promoted out of the job), but still performs honors at funerals when he can. He served in Iraq in 2005-2006 and again in 2010. He is also active in their CVMA detachment and is a ride captain with Patriot Guard Riders.

Kelley's father is a retired CSM, and Robin's father, Richard Conques, served in the Navy in Vietnam in the late '60s. He enlisted when he graduated high school at age 17 and retired last year. Robin's grandfather was a WWII Navy vet. He passed away a few months ago, but he was very active in his VFW and other veterans organizations.

Robin and Kelley have talked about RFTW for several years, and are excited about finally doing it. When Robin told her dad we were going to do it this time, he decided to join them. He has never been to the Wall. He usually rides alone or with one riding buddy.

In 2011, Robin and Kelley took their honeymoon trip on the bikes to D.C. and visited the Wall. They are looking forward to sharing the trip this time with the RFTW family. Her mom, Ramona, will be flying to D.C. to meet up with them. Their first RFTW journey is going to be a real family affair! Robin and Kelley will be blogging about the trip each evening for their National Guard website/facebook.

We have many more FNGs with stories such as this one, and I hope they will share their stories with us. And when you see Robin and Kelley and Robin's dad on the Southern Route, be sure to introduce yourself and thank them for their family's service.

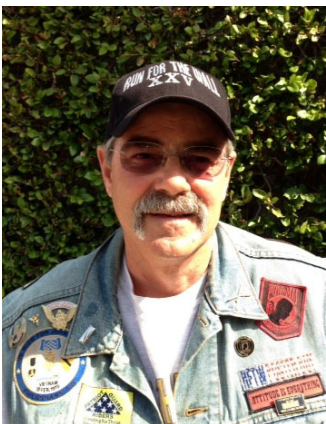
In this issue, be sure to read about an organization in New York called "Boots on the Ground." I have never seen a veterans organization like this one. I don't know how they can do all they do for veterans. They are certainly the template and exalted goal for all groups that want to help veterans.

Also, be aware that this year RFTW has a new host hotel in Rancho Cucamonga. Changes are always inconvenient, but the new hotel is closer to our departure point in Victoria Gardens. Read about it in Attitude's President's Message.

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**



Happy New Year and a hearty Hello from sunny Southern California! Most importantly, it is warm here now while most of you are cold. VERY COLD!! Sorry 'bout that, but it will soon change. It always does, come spring. I am originally from the East Coast and have spent a significant amount of time in Utah, Wyoming, and Nebraska. I do understand what winter can be like, but this one is harder than normal and I realize your frustration. I wish that I could promise you fair weather on May 14<sup>th</sup>, but we all know what went down in 2011 – snow in Williams. Hopefully the moons align for us this year, or whatever you believe that is working for us above.

So --- I know that everyone is concerned about Rancho Cucamonga. That has been my concern as well, but things are moving along in a positive direction. The host

hotel has changed. We were forced to relocate when our former host informed us they could not entertain us this year due to corporate policy. Times are tough all around, and the hotel industry has taken its share of hits. We thank the complex for inviting us to be their guests for several years, but understand that their regular customers now must be given priority consideration for business reasons. Fortunately, the Four Points by Sheridan has stepped up to the plate and volunteered to host us. Unfortunately, they do not offer the large complex and quantity of rooms that we have enjoyed in the past, but they do welcome us. Registration will be held here. It will be tight and we will be asking your indulgence and patience as we adapt our process to the new environment and try to expedite that process to the best of our abilities.

We are still working on a dinner event, although the location is somewhat of a problem, since we will be scattered around the City of Rancho Cucamonga. The California Coordinators are working diligently to secure a site and source. In any event, the Four Points will be our headquarters and I hope that riders choose to gather there for some reunion.

There will be, as most of you know by now, three routes this year. Many participants have ridden the Central and Southern Routes in years past and we are seeing a surge of registration for the new Midway Route. The pressure is on the leadership of that route to accommodate the larger ridership this year and the BOD has been assured that they are in contact with the communities along that route to ensure that they are prepared. Feel free to register for whatever route that you choose. You are encouraged to register online and early. As I mentioned above, space will be tight in Rancho and we will need to be able to process registrants as quickly and smoothly as possible.

There are some itinerary changes this year, so please take note before you make all of your arrangements. Speaking of which, you are also encouraged to make those arrangements as well. As our departure date nears, rooms will get scarce, especially in the smaller communities. Rooms are also a premium in Arlington already, not to mention Rancho.

This message seems to me to be a little light this month, and I apologize for that. The BOD will be meeting face-to-face next week and I will be making a posting on the website following that. In the meantime, make all of the arrangements you can, all the while trying to keep warm. I hate to admit that even with the great weather here in the southwest, I haven't had an opportunity to do much riding for the past couple of months, so I will be getting my scoot squared away soon and try to get some serious miles on it before May—as soon as the roads clear, I would hope that you all are doing the same. Safety is our primary concern and nothing addresses safety more directly than practicing those riding skills. After a winter of ice and snow and bitter cold, we will need to get on it!

Take care,  
And RIDE SAFE!

Harry “Attitude” Steelman

---

## ► RFTW 2014

### CR VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Central Route needs a few good people! A Platoon Coordinator is needed, as well as a Morning Raffle Leader. Also needed are volunteers for the Fuel Team and Staging Team. Anyone interested in learning more about these positions, please contact the following:

George Creacy (Fuel Team) 801-564-1052 or [geocreacy@msn.com](mailto:geocreacy@msn.com).  
Dick McKay (Staging Team) 719-648-8585 or [dikmckay@msn.com](mailto:dikmckay@msn.com)

Ken "Catfish" Ward  
RFTW 2014 CR RC  
513-252-7980  
[kenward.1976@gmail.com](mailto:kenward.1976@gmail.com)

## **SR FUEL AND STAGING TEAM MEMBERS NEEDED**

We still need a few more Fuel Team and Stage Team volunteers on the Southern Route. You must be riding all the way from Rancho to DC this year, and you must have gone all the way at least once before.

If you would like to volunteer for the Fuel team or Staging team, please contact me by email at [joker195@gmail.com](mailto:joker195@gmail.com). Please provide the following information: Name, road name, email address and cell phone number.

Mike "Joker" Sotzen  
SR Advanced Team Leader

## **REGISTRATION**

Pre-Registration opened on January 1. The fee structure has changed slightly. If you elect to pay during the online registration process, the fee is \$30. If while pre-registering, you elect to pay at RFTW (meaning you'll pay when you arrive at your sign-in location) the fee goes to \$35. If you elect to do a "walk-in" registration (i.e. do not pre-register online), then the fee is \$40.

There is no fee for Active Duty, but be sure to indicate this fact on the registration form, and check "**Active Duty/Free (ID Required)**" at the bottom of the form, then hit Continue. You will be required to show Active Duty ID at your sign-in location.

When pre-registering for a couple, be sure to go through the entire process, including paying the \$30 fee for each person. This is necessary to assure that both of you receive a status of PAID.

John "Wicked" McKee  
RFTW BOD  
Director of Risk Management

## **RIVERSIDE NATIONAL CEMETERY RIDE** **"Arlington West"**

A ride to RNC will take place on Tuesday morning, May 13th, from the Victoria Gardens Mall parking lot in Rancho Cucamonga. Rider's meeting at 0911, and KSU at 0936 for the half-hour ride.

The National Prisoner of War / Missing in Action Memorial was dedicated in September 2005. Viet Nam 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. Lee will be with us to present the Memorial and its design.

The balance of the POW/MIA program is coming into focus, but will also include the wife/widow of a pilot missing in action over Laos on 13 October, 1968. He was later listed a POW before the government changed the designation back to MIA.

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

Riverside National Cemetery is also home of the Medal of Honor Memorial and one of four recognized as a National Medal of Honor Memorial Site. Dedicated in 1999, its walls feature the names of all MoH recipients.

Expect to be back to the host hotel by noon, unless you wish to spend more time at RNC, or to visit the MarchFieldAirMuseum nearby. Details to follow in the next newsletter, and in the Forum section of the RFTW website.

Jim "The Mayor" Frost

### **EVENING PARADE IN D.C.**

The U.S. Marines Friday Evening Parade will be Friday night, May 23rd, in Washington, D.C. For the past six years we have reserved seating for RFTW. If you're not familiar with the Parade, you should google it. The Parade consists of the world-famous Marine Silent Drill Team, The Commandant[s Drum and Bugle Corps, and the President's Own Marine Band. The performance is a major event in D.C. and well worth the time to attend it. I do not know at this time who the "Reviewing Officer/Official" will be, but the Marine Officer will be a Flag Officer. Past civilian reviewing officials have been Gary Sinese, all sorts of politicians, some of civilian leadership from DoD, etc. It's a major event.

We have blocks of seats reserved for RFTW. This is the only announcement that will be made. If you wish to attend, you must send me an email with first and last names for each person—like a check list—as I forward to Protocol when requested. If you come up with more names, please send an additional email with **ONLY** their names (don't add to an existing email, as I need an easy head count). This is not limited to RFTW or riders riding only all the way. Nor is it only for first-time riders or first-time attendees. Please send an email, don't just give me a list in person as I then need to type it myself. If you don't have a computer, odds are that a friend does. EMAIL to [Doug@Lyvere.com](mailto:Doug@Lyvere.com). I will send a simple "Good to Go" back to you so you know I've received it. The cut-off date is when the seats are gone (sorry, no way to set a date). Although I have 400 seats, they go fast. PLEASE, if you decide to cancel for whatever reason, let me know.

This following is important. We will stage as a group to go in, BUT it doesn't have to be one group. I will start sending riders in groups of 25 to 50 IF the Barracks is ready in order to get better seating. We will meet at the corner of 8th & I Streets, SE (South East) regardless of how you get to the Marine Barracks. We will not have a RFTW convoy going to and from, or any assigned RGs, leaders, or guides of any type. Mapquest or GPS works fine IF YOU PUT IN THE CORRECT LOCATION. My recommendation is to get a cab unless you're familiar with DC. The actual address is 8th & I St SE (South East - if you do not include south east in your GPS, cab driver, whatever, you will go to the WRONG place). IF you are coming by motorcycle (I think most do), please do not be "yahoo's"—this is a sound restricted area. Don't gun your engines or have blaring music. Normal motorcycle engine noise is fine. The Barracks Marines respect our mission and go out of their way to accommodate us.

Parking for bikes - there is a park at the corner of 8th & I St SE (South East). Literally a park. BUT we are allowed to put our bikes in this park—grass and concrete. DO NOT park in the normal parking lot. Park RFTW tight, please—limited space and you will all leave at the same time. It is possible to go through the parking lot

and then into the park. From past experience I can tell that non-RFTW will park in the same area when they see us park there. It's not restricted to just us.

Staging to go in is NLT 1900 (7:00 PM) at the corner. Please be patient. (I WILL BE THERE by 6:00 PM (1800).

Some strong suggestions: DO NOT bring weapons—you will be going through metal detectors. Leathers, the way we ride, are fine but hopefully clean and void of inappropriate comments (we all agree with what Jane Fonda is—just not the time and place, as there will be women and children). I would leave any metal you don't need (coins, nail clippers, etc.). Bring water. Bring a rain suit as it occasionally rains—rain by itself DOES NOT mean it will be cancelled. Decision is made by the Marines just before the event starts. LIGHTNING storms will PROBABLY be a cancel—think lots of rifles spinning through the air and antennas. Best bet—be there and see what happens. Get there early—there are some food/snack places along the street that welcome the business. Bring your cameras.

## **GOLD STAR FAMILIES**

Gold Star Families, as defined by the Department of Defense is Killed In Action. Please let me know who you are, as KIA families MAY be honored in some additional ways. Please include your hero's name, rank, branch of service, where and when they were KIA. Send to [Doug@Lyvere.com](mailto:Doug@Lyvere.com).

## **VIP ESCORTS AT ROLLING THUNDER**

For specifics and to register as a VIP escort at Rolling Thunder on Sunday, send an email to Joe Baum at [jbaum60@hotmail.com](mailto:jbaum60@hotmail.com). As an escort at Rolling Thunder, your back seat passenger will be a VIP such as a Gold Star Family member, Blue Star Family Member, politician, etc. You will also be in the "lead" element, which is about 150 bikes (I think). If you have not seen Rolling Thunder, it's a huge plus being in the lead element AND a heck of an honor at the same time.

## **RUN TO CAMP PENDLETON**

May 12 (Monday) 0900. This is not a RFTW run, but for those who wish, join me for a ride down to Camp Pendleton to tour the Wounded Warrior Bn. \$80,000,000.00 facility just for our Marine Wounded Warriors. See firsthand how our warriors are taken care of and prepare for their future. This is an "all morning" ride; straggle back (I have meetings to get back for). I need a rough count on numbers going. For those in SoCal - if you prefer, you can meet me at the Main Gate. Email me for details/questions ([Doug@Lyvere.com](mailto:Doug@Lyvere.com)), and if you're planning on going, I need number of bikes and people.

Doug Lyvere  
SgtMaj, Marine, ret  
415-309-2510

---

## **► OUR STORIES**

## **RFTW COMBAT HERO BIKE BUILD**

On January 2 SSgt. Charlie Linville, the Marine who will receive the first RFTW bike, along with his wife, and advisor Triple Amputee Gunny Sgt Meyers, arrived in Medford OR. They were met at the Airport by a Marine detachment in dress blues Color Guard, 30 Young Marines, and 45 Old Guard bikers with a flag line. Ray "Too Tall and his Wife Kay McDowell had flown in to help out. They were all picked up by John "Hardcharger" Barker and his wife Dee Shortstack. When they left the airport they were under escort by the Jackson County Sheriff's Department and 50 veterans on motorcycles.

The next day Hardcharger and Too Tall took them to Thunderstruck Custom bikes where they met with owner Mark Daley Jeremiah Thiring of Thiring Custom Paints. Charlie was examined and they took stock of what he needed to make the bike work for him. At noon he was again escorted by Deputy Sheriffs from Jackson County's Sheriff Department, along with 75 motorcycles, to TouVelle Lodge for a party and meet and greet. Charlie was escorted via vehicle down a quarter mile of flags by the VFW and MIAP organizations. He also had another full color guard by the Marines in Dress Blues. He was overwhelmed at the reception and grateful for RFTW for its assistance in getting him on a motorcycle.



Our first RFTW bike build is coming together; there was a fundraiser here and another one set for April in Boise ID, Charlie's hometown, again by riders of RFTW.

Semper Fi.  
John "Hardcharger" Barker

## **A TOAST THEY WILL SAY**

*"Here's to the foolish"*, were the toasts by our peers,  
As they laughed and they taunted the gullible volunteers,  
*"Here's to the fortune and wit of those safe in our dorm"*,  
As they partied and chanted, - nope, they wouldn't conform.

They undermined war efforts, gave comfort to our enemy;  
Ensured our efforts would be twice as costly and declared their enmity;  
As all wars do, this one wound to its end.  
The boys coming home were returning as men.

The witty then threw new shame and new blame;  
*"To the baby-killers, murderers and thugs coming home"*;  
They spat, called vile names, to the veteran as he roamed.  
Their voices were lifted again and they began a new chant;

*"Nam-vets- dangerous, quiet, eerie and gaunt"*  
They're a threat to society, unhinged, they would taunt.  
Over time facts and evidence showed very clearly,  
The Nam-Vet had served bravely, endured and paid dearly.

Decades later came toasts with different flavor and hue,  
Suddenly being a Nam-vet was claimed by everyone that you knew.

A finite number had stepped forward, took the chiding and blame.  
Decades later claimed 'veterans' are hugely different, in number and name?

Now, how easily the names of campaigns, viles, valleys and bases  
Come off the tongues of those never known to have been in those places.  
The Warriors with real fear, trauma, horror; were once again victim,  
To the witty, the 'fortunate', who now claim to have been with 'em.

*'I always supported you'* is now a common phrase;  
*"Really our chanting and demonstration was just 'a phase'."*  
We Warriors have all had our 'phases' and battles;  
We can see through the smoke and the noise to know what matters;

So let's raise OUR glasses, those who have really been to war.  
Let those witty ones... figure out how to revise it some more!  
*"We Brothers have Mates and family on The Wall. Raise our Glass to them All!  
All Gave Some, Some Gave All.....!"*

"Wish"

©December 2013

In-Country Vietnam: Dec 1968—August 1970

RFTW Board of Directors 2012-2015

ATW-SR- 07, 09,10,11,12,13

Participant- CR-08

## **THOUGHTS FROM THE FORUM**

*In a thread in the RFTW Forum, a member talked about those who weren't in the military feeling out of place on RFTW. Those who responded to him made it plain that our non-military supporters are very important and greatly appreciated.*

Hoofer, Sometimes I have difficulty putting into words what I am feeling, so please bear with me here.

Vietnam was an unpopular war. Still, over 75% of us volunteered for that service. We grew up with God, Country, and Mom's Apple Pie in our hearts, not necessarily in that order. We sang songs like "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," and "Over there, Over there." We dreamed of doing honorable things and making the world right. We played with cap guns or used our hands like guns and never ran out of ammunition; after all, Gene and Roy's guns never did. We were young, brave, and full of hope and wonder. Every parade on 4th of July or Veteran's day or Memorial Day we proudly stood on the sidewalks with our hands over our hearts and applauded those Veterans who marched by carrying our nation's colors. Yes, we wanted to be like the heroes of wars past. Then the clarion call came, we had a draft, but those numbers were small considering the multitudes that volunteered. Off we went down to the sea in ships. It would be a couple of years before troops were flown in country en masse. We found out firsthand the glories of war. Seeing our buddies blown apart, suffering wounds ourselves (not me fortunately), the terrors and horrors that our fathers and grandfathers never spoke of but endured silently. But we knew in our hearts our country would be grateful when we came home. After all, hadn't all the generations before received hearty handshakes, back slaps, ticker tape parades, and picnics in the park? Why would it be any different for us? At first it was like this, but then it changed. I can't say if it was the hippie generation, the college kids with deferments, or just an overall distaste and hatred of the war, but our homecomings abruptly, not subtly, but abruptly changed. We no longer got a "Thank you, welcome home." No, instead we received spittle in our faces, were called names like "Baby Killers." We quit wearing our uniforms with pride when home, in fact shunned them so as not to receive the public's ridicule. Don't misunderstand, not



all of America was like this, but it seemed the vocal minority managed to shame the remainder into silence. Unless you were fortunate enough to be from a small, inland country town, you experienced this type of homecoming.

The Run For The Wall is our homecoming, our ticker tape parade, our slap on the back and "Welcome Home Soldier." Our chance to visit the wall and bid a fond farewell to comrades who gave their all, or just talk to them once again. It didn't matter if we were on ships, in aircraft, or slogging rice paddies, we all met the same homecoming. So here is your chance to say "Welcome Home" and stand with us as a true American. We will welcome you with open arms and heartfelt gratitude for doing so. You are most welcome to walk The Wall with me, as I would consider it an honor from someone who is doing it unselfishly and from the depths of his heart. Welcome to RFTW and welcome to a Brother/Sisterhood that will last you a lifetime.

—*from Topper*

Hooper,

I've felt what you felt. I too, was not able to serve and my way of giving back started with PGR. It was 2 years before I went on RFTW for the first time. I thought I was prepared for the emotions after having been on dozens of PGR missions. I can say I was NOT prepared for the emotions I experienced on the Run. I'd like to share a story that may help put it into perspective for you as well. I was at the Angel Fire Memorial and ready to walk into the Museum and had overwhelming feelings of being out of place. This wasn't there for me, it was there for our Vets as a place of healing, of reverence, of reflection, etc. I didn't belong there and felt very, very uncomfortable being there. Standing in line to enter the museum, a big burly Vet turned around and said "Welcome Home Brother." OMG, now I really feel out of place. I returned the statement and told him thank you, but I never served. This is where it all changed for me. He grabbed my shoulders and looked me in the eye and said "That doesn't matter brother. I am thankful you're here. We are all part of this family and on one mission. Thank you for being here. It means more to us than you'll ever know." WOW. How could me being there mean anything to any Vet? I didn't experience what they did while serving. What I learned in that brief moment changed my feelings and attitude on the Run and other support functions I participate in. I certainly don't want to speak for others, but from comments I've gotten from numerous Vets, because we never served and have taken time to show them we care does mean more to them than we can imagine. I never pass up an opportunity to thank a Vet for his service and welcome him home. With all this said, you are a part of this family and will always be welcomed with open arms, a big ole bro hug, and feelings like you've never experienced. Thank You for your service to our Vets, brother!

—*from Trent "Vapors" Caster*

Hooper:

Like you, I too "Wasn't There, But I Still Care." (BTW, this is patch I now wear proudly on my vest,) I was an FNG on RFTW XXV, last year, and am now proud to have ridden "All The Way" from Rancho to DC, and back again. And, again like you, I had a lot of misgivings about immersing myself, with my lack of service, among such an inspiring group of heroes. Mentally and emotionally, a year ago I was exactly where you are, asking myself, "by what right do I presume" to go on this amazing mission with these men and women who have made (and continue to make) such sacrifices?

Well, I can tell you personally now two amazing discoveries I made on this Run. (1) I have never been so welcomed into a group of amazing people, with open arms, as I was by the men and women veterans (as well as Blue Star and Gold Star Moms and Dads), of RFTW XXV! and (2) I have never felt such an emotional change in myself as when I made my way across this great country with the Central Route participants. I had gotten myself in top physical conditioning for this trek, but had no idea what emotional toll it would take on me ... ME! A non-veteran! In fact, somewhere around Junction City, KS, I started feeling real sorry for myself, after

spending a brutal day through storms, and having broken my thumb that morning in three places, I was sulking in my tent, with lightning striking all around, and water soaked in everywhere, sucking my hurt lilol' thumb, and telling myself, "You're done ... you're going home tomorrow," But the next day as we crawled out of the sack, I had a nice little chat with God, and realized, "this thing ain't about me—it's about all these wonderful people here on this mission, and mostly all those who are not yet back home, and those that might never be. So I sucked it up, and quit my whining, and continued on. I am forever grateful that I did, because once we reached DC, and all the FNGs got to ride a mission through Arlington Cemetery, and then lay the wreaths at The Wall, and said goodbye to the many new friends I had made, I finally felt as much of this wonderful brotherhood as if I had indeed been there in country with them.

So, a hearty "Welcome Home," to you, Brother. I will be on RFTW 2014, without a doubt, and will be very honored to see there!

—*from RC "Iron Butt" Trice*

These men have spoken so well, having filled their hearts with the substance of this mission and poured it out here with eloquence.

If there are a thousand men and women on this mission, there will be a thousand stories worth hearing and not too many alike. But one story you will never hear is one where somebody came on the mission with a patriotic heart and was told they weren't worthy. In contrast, those who come their first year, whether they are grizzled old vets or youngsters whose ears are still wet, are welcomed richly. It is the new people each year who keep the mission vibrant and exciting- the old guys are enthralled watching the new guys and gals get enthralled!

I felt a little funny my first year too. Even as a combat vet, I was drafted reluctantly and would never have chosen to serve in a war. I went because I had no choice, not like so many who gladly signed up to go fight a worthy cause!

But life is what it is, and those details have faded away. Run For The Wall has taken all the stories, good and bad, and replaced it all with a family of Americans who genuinely love each other and ride with complete respect.

Don't worry about The Wall when you get there. It is Memorial Day weekend, and The Wall is jammed with visitors who know nothing of the RFTW mission riders who are there in their own private thoughts. You will not want to be there in that crowd by yourself, much better to be with a friend or new buddy who is sharing your reverence.

Last year when I went to 27E to spend a couple minutes with some lost friends, another biker not from RFTW was there taking a rubbing of a name inches away from my guys. Turns out it was his brother. We exchanged stories for a minute, then a massive hug and we cried our eyes out together!

Nearly 50 years ... but those names are still there, and the memories remain.

This is awesome stuff, and until you get there you don't know what will happen to you. But you will make some real friends, and probably get healing you didn't even know you needed! Plus- THIS IS JUST SO MUCH FUN!

—*from LaiKhe67tc (Sidewalk)*

It's already all been said. Can one other perspective matter? The Run is the most amazing event I've participated in. I love doing it. So many good people to meet and friends to make. What makes this thing partly amazing to me is to see all the vets that have been there and have the same knowledge and appreciation for others as I do.

Like Sidewalk, I also was drafted, but went, did my thing, and got out. We did not come home hating America for the way we were treated. We just boxed it up and put it on a shelf, until someone decided Vietnam Vets needed a memorial, and we did and we're happy to have it. Finally we had something to be proud of and we could unpack our boxes on the shelf and reopen those feelings we kept hidden away for so many years.

What makes the Run and The Wall truly amazing is not just the Vets, although I love them all. It's the others who are not vets who come and want to ride with us and to honor us and show their appreciation for us and to honor and give tribute to those whose names are on The Wall. Names that are people just like them. Those non-vets that come represent the appreciation we Vietnam vets never received. Those who are not vets who come and ride on the Run are those who now appreciate us with appreciation we never received before. How I love each one of them. Personally, I think many like Hooper get the wrong idea—that they are not worthy and maybe not welcome. Nothing could be further from the truth. Anyone who comes is a patriot, every single one. Brothers and sisters that are welcome to stand with us. Brothers and sisters I appreciate more than I can say. Welcome to all who are not vets. Take your place and ride with us in rank and file. Together we will stand side by side at The Wall. You have no idea how much we love and appreciate you all. Bring your friends, Vets or not vets, tags or no tags. All are welcome and all have the right. You are welcome to join us.

If I ever hear of anyone who feels differently, I would be utterly surprised. If I ever hear anyone tell a non-vet they have no right to ride with us on the Run or to stand with us at The Wall, I will personally chew him or her up one side and down the other. Then they will probably kick my ass, but would make another story  
—from Tom "Twotone" Lystrup

---

## ► OTHER STORIES

### **WWII VETERAN RECEIVES POW MEDAL**

By Meg Jones of the Journal Sentinel

Union Grove, WI — Dale Ellington was a prisoner of war during World War II, but for almost seven decades the U.S. military didn't consider him a POW. It was a long time to wait, but judging by the smile as bright as the shiny Prisoner of War Medal pinned to his black fleece jacket on Sunday at the Veterans Home at Union Grove, Ellington was thankful for the belated recognition.

"It's about time," said Ellington, 91.

Ellington was on his fifth mission as a waist gunner on a B-17 crew when the bomber was hit by German anti-aircraft flak on April 13, 1944. With the plane's fuel tanks damaged and control cables severed, the crew couldn't make it back to the home base in England, so the pilot turned toward neutral Switzerland.

Because Switzerland was not an enemy combatant, downed allied airmen such as Ellington were housed in resort towns far from the country's borders. Switzerland was obligated to detain Allied troops, while soldiers and airmen were obligated to escape to return to their units.

Which is exactly what Ellington did.

When he heard American forces were close to the French-Swiss border, Ellington walked away from the remote town in the Alps where he had been detained for five months. Dressed in civilian clothing, he got as far as what he thought was the French border. But an alert Swiss soldier arrested him.

Because he tried to escape, Ellington was now considered a common criminal under Swiss law, which deemed him a foreigner who committed a crime under military jurisdiction — of trying to return to his bomber unit. That meant Ellington was not considered a prisoner of war because the Swiss government during World War II did not afford internees the protections of the 1929 Geneva Convention for humane treatment of POWs, said Maj. Dwight Mears, a history professor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

Ellington was sentenced to serve 75 days at Wauwilermoos prison, whose commandant was a Nazi sympathizer later convicted of war crimes for the horrible treatment of prisoners like Ellington.

"It was terrible. We had one bath in five weeks," recalled Ellington, who graduated from South Division High School in 1940 and worked as a mail clerk at The Milwaukee Journal before joining the Army Air Force.

Prisoners slept on lice-infested straw in poorly heated barracks. Latrines were filthy slit trenches. Skin boils, lice and dysentery affected most of the prisoners because no soap or warm water was provided for hygiene, according to War Crimes Office reports. And many of the prisoners lost weight from the skimpy food portions. Ellington said he lost 30 pounds.

Ironically, Ellington and other American troops probably would have gotten better treatment in German POW camps run by the Luftwaffe, said Mears, whose grandfather was one of 161 downed U.S. airmen imprisoned at Wauwilermoos.

When the number of Americans sentenced to Wauwilermoos began growing, the U.S. government asked the Swiss repeatedly to release them or treat them more humanely, but initially Switzerland refused. But by December 1944, Swiss authorities relented and released Ellington and other American troops to heavily fortified hotels.

Shortly after that, Ellington managed to escape Switzerland and return to his Army Air Force unit. When he came home to Wisconsin, he testified about his treatment for a war crimes tribunal.

And then he got on with his life.

He married his wife, Rose, in July 1945. They were classmates at South Division High School, and she had read in the newspaper that he was missing in action, assuming that meant he was killed. So she was startled to see him walking on a downtown Milwaukee street. Rose called out to him. They chatted. Three months later they got married.

They raised two sons. Dale sold printing presses, bought and ran a motel and later opened an office supply store, D.C. Ellington Co.

Like many World War II veterans, he didn't talk much about his experience and rarely spoke about Wauwilermoos prison.

"When he came back he was sworn to secrecy. I would ask him and he would say, 'The war is over, I'm done with it.' He never applied for POW benefits," said Rose Ellington.

Mears didn't think it was right that American prisoners of Wauwilermoos were not eligible to get POW benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs or to receive the POW Medal. So he worked through military channels and Congress, and after a decade of effort, the government decided this year that Wauwilermoos prisoners deserved the POW Medal. Only 12 of the 161 American prisoners of Wauwilermoos are still alive.

And so on Sunday afternoon at the Veterans Home in Union Grove where Ellington lives, a ceremony was held for an American patriot who wanted to return to the war so much that he tried to escape twice. When he was wheeled into the dining room filled with family, friends and fellow veterans, everyone stood. Ellington returned salutes from the New Berlin VFW honor guard.

A flutist played the national anthem, Dave Chappell, a Vietnam veteran and friend of Ellington's, read a short summary of Ellington's war record, and a chocolate cake adorned with an American flag and "Congratulations Dale!" was sliced.

Wearing a U.S. Army Air Corps hat, Ellington cried as his tearful wife pinned on his POW Medal.

Looking at the well-wishers, Ellington said simply: Thank you.

## **THE LAST POW TO LEAVE NORTH VIETNAM**

By Jason Lesley, Coastal Observer

U.S. Navy pilot Al Agnew of Mullins wouldn't leave his prisoner of war cell in Hanoi until it was his turn in 1973. With one exception, American POWs had agreed not to accept any North Vietnamese offers of early release. "It was first in, first out," Agnew told members of the Lowcountry Warbirds at their annual meeting Saturday at Litchfield Beach Fish House. The Warbirds are former military aviators who meet once a year, on Pearl Harbor Day, Dec. 7, to reminisce.

Because of the POWs' unwritten rule about orderly release, Agnew was the last U.S. prisoner of war to leave North Vietnam.

His RA-5C Vigilante reconnaissance jet was shot down on Dec. 28, 1972, prior to a bombing run of Hanoi ordered by President Richard Nixon. He left Hanoi March 29, 1973.

Agnew said he admires Nixon because he didn't make idle threats like Lyndon Johnson. "Nixon ordered B-52s to North Vietnam and for the first time we really bombed Hanoi," Agnew said. "By December of 1972, Nixon was fed up. He had been trying to get the peace thing going, trying to get the war to an end where we could leave. The POWs were a sticking point. Richard Nixon said our combat troops are not leaving Vietnam until all the POWs are out of the country. The North Vietnamese should have known not to mess with Nixon."

Agnew's last mission in Vietnam was to photograph the landscape prior to a bombing run in support of a large coordinated mission named "Linebacker 2" and get out of the way. His jet had no guns or bombs. "It looks good," he said, "and takes great pictures. Our motto was 'Unarmed and Unafraid' and, well, that was half-right."

Agnew said his threat warning instruments were quiet on the day of his last flight. "They were usually pretty well lit up," he said, "but there was nothing. That was eerie. I pushed the test button because I thought it wasn't working, and I kept pushing it. About that time all these MiG calls started happening. That's why there were no flak or SAMs."

Agnew and his navigator raced for home while his F-4 escort jets provided cover. "I just about had the coast under my nose," he said, "when I lost control of the plane." He said the stick of the Vigilante jet had a history of going "full forward" all by itself. Agnew's jet began to cartwheel. He ejected but couldn't find his navigator and assumed he was dead.

"I came almost straight down into a rice paddy," Agnew said, "and was captured by farmers." He was actually glad to be handed over to some uniformed militia and taken to a village, where he was allowed to wash off the

mud from the rice paddy. After being subjected to a “charade” of execution, Agnew said he was loaded onto a Jeep and taken to Hanoi.

“The old prisoners thought they had been forgotten,” Agnew said. “Lyndon Johnson stopped the bombing. There was no news, nothing. They didn’t know what was going on. Other than torture, that was the worst part. When new guys started showing up in 1971, they knew the bombing had resumed and the war would soon be over.”

Agnew said he went into the prison camp at 172 pounds and came out at 138. He was fed cabbage soup with an occasional can of Russian fish, sweetened canned milk from Poland and something called sticky bread that they pretended to dislike for fear their captors would take it away.

“Our time was a walk in the park compared to what the old guys went through,” he said. “From 1964 to ’69, treatment of POWs was awful. Torture was the name of the game.”

Agnew said he knew the end was near when prisoners were being arranged in ship-out order.

“One demand of the POWs was that we come out in the order we were captured,” Agnew said. “There were no honorable early releases except for one: Navy Seaman Doug Hegdahl, who had memorized 300 names alphabetically by rank and could sing them to the tune of “Old MacDonald Had a Farm.”

The North Vietnamese continued their little games, Agnew said, issuing new trousers, shirts and shoes and then taking them away, claiming there were problems with prisoners from Laos. “We considered it good sign,” he said, “when they gave us a beer.”

As the last POW out of Vietnam, Agnew was asked to make some remarks when he arrived at Clark Air Force Base. First, he said, he wanted a hot shower, clean clothes, two martinis, a steak and lobster and all the Stingers he could drink. He was denied and told he couldn’t leave the hospital.

The POWs were soon allowed anything they wanted to eat, including eggs, ice cream and steak. Nixon invited all 1,200 Vietnam POWs to the White House for a dinner. Tents were set up on the lawn, and the event remains the biggest reception in modern White House history. “It was quite an event,” Agnew said.

The average age of the Vietnam POW is 74 today, he said. There are 661 left.

## **THE CHURCH SERVICE AT HANOI HILTON**

On November 10, 1970, after a failed attempt by U.S. Special Forces to liberate the prisoners, the North Vietnamese captors removed U.S. POWs from their cells and incarcerated them in a single holding area. For several men, it was the first face-to-face encounter with friends they had made through tap-code communication.

The first Sunday after they were removed from their cells, the 43 POWs performed an act of retaliation and attempted to hold a church service but were threatened with severe punishment. Seeing the men’s disappointment, then-Lt. Cmdr. Edwin A. “Ned” Shuman — a naval aviator who would spend five years as a POW and who died December 3, 2013 at age 82 — stepped forward. “I want to know — person by person— if you are really committed to holding church,” he said, asking each of the other 42 men for support until he achieved a unanimous commitment.

The following Sunday, they tried again. This time, Cmdr. Shuman, the highest-ranking officer in the group, began to lead the soldiers in the Lord's Prayer. The guards quickly grabbed him and took him away to be tortured.

The remaining officers continued reciting the prayer in unison, drowning out the shouts of the North Vietnamese guards who were beating them with gun butts.

"Forty-two men in prison pajamas followed Ned's lead," recalled retired Col. Leo Thorsness in his memoir "Surviving Hell: A POW's Journey." "I know I will never see a better example of pure raw leadership."

From then on — until the men were released with other long-serving POWs as part of Operation Homecoming in 1973 — they held a weekly church service.

"It was the first confrontation of the camp's regulation," said Everett Alvarez Jr., a naval aviator who was held as a POW for 8½ years by North Vietnam and at one time served as deputy administrator of the Veterans Administration. "For those of us who were religious or spiritual, it was a very important part of our morale, optimism, and overall, it was a part of our survival."

Edwin Arthur Shuman III was born on Oct. 7, 1931, in Boston. His father, a retired Navy captain, was a sailor and a yacht designer. The son was a 1954 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, and he retired as a Navy captain after 34 years in the military.

Capt. Shuman died at Anne Arundel Medical Center. The cause was complications from a fall he suffered on a boat on his way to a goose hunt, said his wife, Donna Shuman.

Ned Shuman flew 17 combat missions in Vietnam before his bomber was shot down north of Hanoi on St. Patrick's Day 1968. When he ejected, he broke his right arm and shoulder. His injuries, poorly treated at the North Vietnamese prison, left him with a disfigured hand and permanent nerve damage.

Then-Lt. Cmdr. Shuman spent the first 17 months of his incarceration in solitary confinement. He told the Baltimore Sun that he figured he lost about 50 pounds on a prisoner's diet of watery soup. In a written account, he recalled his punishment for attempting to talk with another prisoner:

"I . . . was beaten for four hours, off and on, with a rubber whip . . . followed by sitting on a stool or kneeling on the floor with my arms strapped behind my back for six days and nights."

Elsewhere in his account, he wrote, "I learned to detest Communists in general and North Vietnamese Communists in particular, and everything they stood for."

He was awarded the Silver Star, one of the nation's highest military honors. According to the award's citation, his captors "subjected him to extreme mental and physical cruelties. . . . [But] through his resistance to those brutalities, he contributed significantly toward the eventual abandonment of harsh treatment by the North Vietnamese."

Capt. Shuman's decorations included the Legion of Merit, three awards of the Distinguished Flying Cross, two awards of the Bronze Star, two awards of the Purple Heart and an Air Medal.

Among the POWs close to him at Hoa Lo prison was a future U.S. senator and presidential candidate, John McCain (R-Ariz.). "I am deeply saddened by the death of my dear and beloved friend Ned Shuman," McCain said in a statement. "It was an honor to be in the company of a true hero."

After the war, Capt. Shuman became a squadron commander at Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia Beach and worked at the Naval Safety Center in Norfolk. He ran the Naval Academy's Sailing Center from 1978 until 1982. His final active-duty assignment before his retirement in 1984 was commander of the Naval Annex in Bermuda.

Capt. Shuman, an accomplished sailor, won the 1979 Transatlantic Race from Marblehead, Mass., to Ireland, and he was the skipper of the 54-foot ocean racer Alliance during the disastrous 1979 Fastnet race, in which 15 yachtsmen were killed in a treacherous storm in the Irish Sea. Only 85 of 303 boats — including the Alliance — managed to complete the race.

His memberships included the Golden Eagles, an elite aviation organization, and several local and international yacht clubs, including the Annapolis Yacht Club and the Storm Trysail Club.

Capt. Shuman tried not to reflect on his time spent in captivity. "It's not productive to dwell on bad things that happened in the past," he said in 1991. "Being a prisoner of war is not supposed to be a picnic, and it wasn't. There isn't a society in the world that doesn't mistreat prisoners, including ours."

*(Editor's note: Most of you have ridden enough years that you know this already, but it's good info for newer riders—and even the old pros might get a new tip from this article below.)*

## **HOW TO RIDE A MOTORCYCLE IN A HEAVY CROSSWIND**

By Wes Siler, in Ride Apart

This is something I experienced myself two weeks ago, headed up to Death Valley. Nearly the entire length of 395 from Mojave to Big Pine, cold air was pouring off the Sierras to replace the warm air lifting up off Owens Valley. Since 395 follows the valley North-South, paralleling the mountains, that means the winds run perpendicular to the road. Anyone who's ridden or drive up there knows there's nowhere to hide from that wind — very few trees and no geographic features to speak of. To add to all that, we were riding dual sports on knobbies, so they were already pretty unstable.

How did we keep them upright? With science and skill.

### **Step One: Batten Down the Hatches**

Start with the 70 mph or whatever speed resistance you encounter from the air as your cruise along a road. You know how serious that is and you know how tightly you have to strap things down to your bike and to your body to keep them secure. Sidewinds exacerbate that problem to a huge degree. So, if you have a tank bag or panniers or a tailpack or a backpack or whatever, try and get it as immobile on the bike as you can possibly make it. Throw a bungee net over the luggage, pull the straps as tight as they'll go, anything you can do to make it work.

Your gear will also be vulnerable to attacks from the wind coming from an unexpected direction. Now's the time to fully-close zippers, zip together two-pieces, seal visors and make sure the peaks on dual-sport helmets are on securely.

If you know you'll be riding in challenging conditions, it's also a good idea to make sure your bike and its components are all in decent condition. Pay particular attention to air pressures, as those can contribute to instability should they fall too low.

### **Step Two: Speed Up**

Know how you can take your hands off the handlebars at highway speeds and the bike will continue to track a straight line? Well, that's due to the gyroscopic force of the wheels, which make a bike "want" to stand straight up. In a crosswind, this is your greatest ally. While getting blown all over the road may make you want to slow



down, but you should actually maintain a decent speed in order to bring the full gyroscopic effect into the equation. Just don't go crazy, 55 mph should work just fine.

### **Step Three: Minimize Your Footprint**

Depending on what bike you're riding, your own body could be the largest piece of resistance the wind is encountering. Crouching down can reduce this area; if your bike has a screen, try to put as much of your body behind it as possible. At the very least, this will mean that the force of the wind will be acting on something closer to the bike's center of gravity rather than as far away from it as possible.

At the same time, release your death grip on the bars. If the wind is moving your upper body around, a tight grip or stiff arms could be translating that movement into steering inputs.

### **Step Four: Weight the Pegs**

When you're upright, weighting the peg on the side of the bike facing the wind will cause it to turn somewhat in that direction. This counters the force of the wind which is trying to turn it the opposite direction.

### **Step Five: Hang Off**

If the wind is blowing so hard that you need to steer into it to maintain a straight line, then hanging off will have the same effect it does while you're rounding a corner — making for less steering input and less lean. This method is particularly effective while crouching down in some approximation of sportbike body position (a little challenging on a dual-sport), reducing your aerodynamic footprint and countering the force of the wind with your body weight.

Using these techniques, my friends and I were able to manage hours of riding in significant crosswinds in some approximation of safety and control. Don't take things too far though, in any inclement weather condition you'll need to use your judgment to determine if the risk is outweighing the progress. Pull over if conditions get too dangerous.

---

## **► VA NEWS**

### **NEW NATIONAL CEMETERY IN COLORADO**

The VA has purchased 374 acres of land in Colorado for a new national cemetery in the southeast portion of Colorado Springs. VA plans to construct the cemetery in the southeast portion of Colorado Springs. The facility will serve approximately 95,000 Veterans and family members who are not within 75 miles of an open national, state, or tribal Veterans cemetery. The closest national cemetery is Fort Logan National Cemetery in Denver, about 85 miles away. The property, known as the Rolling Hills Ranch, is located east of Marksheffel Road between Bradley and Drennan Roads.

When VA receives construction funding, it will proceed with the initial phase of construction, which includes development of cemetery roads, an entrance, administration and public information center, committal shelters and a maintenance facility. This infrastructure will support approximately 10 years of initial burial capacity for casket gravesites, cremation sites and columbarium niches.

This will be the third VA national cemetery in Colorado. The other two are Fort Logan National Cemetery in Denver and Fort Lyon National Cemetery in Las Animas.

In addition to the two VA national cemeteries in Colorado, there are two state-run cemeteries: the Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado in Grand Junction which was funded by a VA construction grant, and the Colorado State Veterans Center at Homelake in Monte Vista.

Veterans with a qualifying discharge, their spouses and eligible dependent children may be buried in a VA national cemetery. Also eligible are military personnel who die on active duty, their spouses and eligible dependents.

Other burial benefits available for all eligible Veterans, regardless of whether they are buried in a national cemetery or a private cemetery, include a burial flag, a Presidential Memorial Certificate and a government headstone or marker.

VA operates 131 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico and 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites. More than 3.8 million Americans, including Veterans of every war and conflict, are buried in VA's national cemeteries.

Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, at [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov), or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 800-827-1000. To make burial arrangements at any VA national cemetery at the time of need, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117.

## **FUNDING FOR HOMELESS VETERAN FAMILIES**

The VA recently announced the availability of up to approximately \$600 million in grants for non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives that serve very low-income Veteran families occupying permanent housing through the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program.

“Those who have served our Nation should never find themselves on the streets, living without hope,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “These grants play a critical role in addressing Veteran homelessness by assisting our vital partners at the local level in their efforts. We are making good progress towards our goal to end Veterans’ homelessness, but we still have work to do.”

The SSVF program is designed to assist very low-income Veteran families who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless. The program employs a housing first model, an approach which centers on providing homeless Veterans with permanent housing quickly and then providing VA health care, benefits and services as needed.

Required services include outreach, case management, assistance in obtaining VA benefits, and providing or coordinating efforts to obtain needed entitlements and other community services. Grantees secure a broad range of other services for participants, including legal assistance; credit counseling; housing counseling; assisting participants in understanding leases, securing utilities, and coordinating moving arrangements; providing representative payee services concerning rent and utilities when needed; and serving as an advocate for the Veteran when mediating with property owners on issues related to locating or retaining housing. Grantees also offer temporary financial assistance that provides short-term assistance with rent, moving expenses, security and utility deposits, child care, transportation, utility costs, and emergency expenses.

VA is offering \$300 million in FY 2014 funds and \$300 million in FY 2015 funds, subject to available appropriations. VA will make award decisions based on a national competition.

In FY 2013, VA awarded approximately \$300 million in SSVF grants for operations beginning in FY 2014. VA is focusing up to \$300 million in surge funding on 76 high priority continuums of care in an unprecedented

effort to end Veterans' homelessness in these communities. In FY 2013, funding from the SSVF program served over 39,000 Veterans and over 62,000 participants,

In November, VA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced the results of the 2013 Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness, which was prepared by HUD. The report estimated there were 57,849 homeless Veterans on a single night in January in the United States, an eight percent decline since 2012 and a 24 percent decline since 2010.

More information about the program can be found at [www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp](http://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp).

## **HOMELESS VETS UPDATE**

As more young veterans of recent wars leave the military, the number of them falling on hard times and homelessness continues to rise sharply. Nearly 50,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans were either homeless or in a federal program aimed at keeping them off the streets during 2013, almost triple the number in 2011, according to numbers released 16 JAN by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The number among this generation falling on hard times is rising sharply even as homelessness among veterans of all ages and conflicts has been on the decline, according to the VA. Advocates for the homeless say many of the estimated 2.5 million Americans who served in the two wars went into combat zones on multiple deployments, something many veterans of previous conflicts never had to endure.

"They're coming home to a bad economy. The country is different. Their families are different. They are different. Plus they are dealing with PTSD and other issues around mental health," says Gregory Scott, president of New Directions For Veterans, a non-profit assistance group in Los Angeles. 26 27. "We don't know what the long-term impacts will be on the Iraq and Afghanistan veterans," says John Driscoll, president and chief executive officer of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans.

VA spokeswoman Victoria Dillon said the number of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans struggling with homeless issues has grown because the department has expanded efforts to identify and assist them. The department has programs throughout all 50 states, working with community groups to target homeless veterans, and as a consequence, a more accurate picture of the number of these veterans is emerging. A lack of affordable housing has contributed to veteran homelessness, the VA says.

In the past month, two major American cities—Salt Lake City and Phoenix—have both announced that they have ended "chronic homelessness" among military veterans in their town. How? Both pulled off this legitimately impressive (if temporary) feat by focusing, before anything else, on housing. The New York Times sums up the rationale behind Phoenix's approach: According to local and national surveys, it is more expensive to cover the costs of emergency room visits or nights in jail for homeless people than it is to give them homes. A 2009 analysis commissioned by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, which handles the largest population of homeless veterans in the country, found that the monthly cost of housing and supportive services for one person was \$605, while the public costs of a person living on the streets were roughly \$2,900 a month. Across the country, the strategy is centered on an approach called Housing First, through which a home is not treated as a reward for good behavior. The logic is simple and economically compelling. By paying something up front to give people a place to live, a city can save a lot of money on social services. The political difficulty arises when moralizers object that homeless people should not be "rewarded" with subsidies. In fact, society always pays one way or another. Enacting a comprehensive housing program for homeless veterans, who have already made a donation to the public, so to speak, is more palatable. But if no-questions-asked housing works for homeless veterans, it should work for all homeless people.

More information about VA's homeless programs is available at [www.va.gov/homeless](http://www.va.gov/homeless). Details about the GPD Program are online at [www.va.gov/homeless/GPD.asp](http://www.va.gov/homeless/GPD.asp).

To help a homeless Veteran or Veteran at risk of homelessness, refer them to the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans, 1-877-4AID-VET, or direct them to [www.va.gov/homeless](http://www.va.gov/homeless). The hotline connects homeless Veterans, Veterans at risk of becoming homeless and their families with the VA services and benefits they have earned.

---

## ► OTHER NEWS

### **COLA FIX MATERIALIZING?**

Congress took a small step in January toward repealing recently passed COLA cuts for military retirees. Both the House and Senate passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act (H. R. 3547) – an omnibus package to fund the federal government for the remainder of the fiscal year – exempts medical (Chapter 61) retirees and survivors from the COLA cuts. A comprehensive fix could be on the way.

### **DOD BREACH OF SECURITY**

On Friday, 17 January 2014, there was a breach of the eBenefits website that is run by the Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The VA is conducting an independent investigation. If you are a veteran registered with this website, you can call the VA directly at 800-827-1000 to learn whether your eBenefits information may have been compromised. If you are a WWP registered alumni, you can also reach out to your Benefits Service team at WWP: [wwpservice@woundedwarriorproject.org](mailto:wwpservice@woundedwarriorproject.org).

### **POSSIBILITY: VETERANS CEMETERY AT ANGEL FIRE**

Many veterans in New Mexico and the Southwest are underserved in terms of access to a veterans' cemetery. New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez created a state veterans cemetery initiative to address this need. The plan is to construct three to four new veterans' cemeteries in the initial phase. These cemeteries will be built to National Cemetery Administration standards and the majority of the funding will come from federal grants. Village of Angel Fire officials have requested that Angel Fire be chosen as one of the initial sites for a veterans' cemetery. The proposed site is adjacent to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial State Park near Angel Fire.

### **NEW ARMY RIFLE**

The MXT135 Counter Defilade Target Engagement System has a range of roughly 7,800 feet—and is to be deployed in Afghanistan soon. Some call it the "Punisher."

The rifle's gun sight uses a laser range finder to determine the exact distance to the obstruction, after which the soldier can add or subtract up to 10 meters from that distance to enable the bullets to clear the barrier and explode above or beside the target. Soldiers will be able to use them to target snipers hidden in trenches rather than calling in air strikes. The 35-millimeter round contains a chip that receives a radio signal from the gun sight as to the precise distance to the target.



Lt. Col. Christopher Lehner, project manager for the system, described the weapon as a 'game-changer' that other nations will try and copy. The Army plans to buy 42,500 of the MXT135 rifles this year, enough for every member of the infantry and special forces, at a cost of \$11,900.00 each.

Lehner said, "With this weapon system, we take away cover from [enemy targets] forever. Tactics are going to have to be rewritten. The only thing we can see [enemies] being able to

do is run away."

Experts say the rifle means that enemy troops will no longer be safe if they take cover. The MXT135 appears to be the perfect weapon for street-to-street fighting that troops in Afghanistan have to engage in, with enemy fighters hiding behind walls and only breaking cover to fire occasionally.

The weapon's laser finder would work out how far away the enemy was and then the U.S. Soldier would add one meter using a button near the trigger. When fired, the explosive round would carry exactly one meter past the wall and explode with the force of a hand grenade above the Taliban fighter.

The army's project manager for new weapons, Douglas Tamilio, said: "This is the first leap-ahead technology for troops that we've been able to develop and deploy."

A patent granted to the bullet's maker, Alliant Tech systems, reveals that the chip can determine how far it has traveled. Mr. Tamilio said: "You could shoot a Javelin missile, and it would cost about \$69,000. These rounds will end up costing \$45.00 apiece."

They're relatively cheap. Lehner added: "This is a game-changer. The enemy has learned to get cover, for hundreds if not thousands of years. Well, they can't do that anymore. We're taking that cover from them and there's only two outcomes: We're going to get you behind that cover or force you to flee." The rifle will initially use high-explosive rounds, but its makers say that it might later use versions with smaller explosive charges that aim to stun rather than kill.

## **MILITARY'S BIONIC ARM**

It's metal, sleek and precise. It pivots and flexes like a real hand, or at least one from a science-fiction movie. But with no Hollywood special effects involved, brain research experts at last week's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency Congressional Tech Showcase demonstrated an artificial arm and hand that can do everything from picking up cups to playing the piano, powered by the user's brain.

Mike McLoughlin, chief engineer for research and exploratory development at Johns Hopkins University's applied physics laboratory, said the defense agency's Revolutionizing Prosthetics Program developed the device over about five years to improve the quality of life for service members who have suffered the loss of an upper extremity. "Five, six years ago [an amputee's] option was essentially a hook," McLoughlin said. "We want to give them a much greater level of functionality, because what they really want to do is go back and contribute to society."

A military-funded advanced mechanical arm is controlled by a volunteer with paralysis via his brain signals recorded by electrocorticography in September 2011. It was the first time ever a prosthetic arm was controlled this way by a paralyzed person. The demo also featured an excerpt from a 60 Minutes episode that aired in 2013 showing Jan, a patient suffering from a neurological condition, with two electrode chips, each about the size of

a fingernail, in her brain. Even simple tasks such as picking up a cup of coffee are the result of a complex series of commands and information “behind the scenes” in the brain,

McLoughlin explained. “We’re able to take those complex things and reduce them down to simple thoughts.” With the help of the arm and hand, Jan moved, interacted and grasped objects in a more natural way, McLoughlin said, adding that the arm also can function with information gleaned from a computer script. He described the arm’s future and range of potential applications as “exciting” for service members and civilians alike. “Think about the elderly,” he said. “If somebody has trouble getting around, and we can provide assistance through exoskeleton devices that has huge impact, not only to the individual in terms of quality of life and being independent, but it also has huge financial implications, possibly saving them hospice care expenses.”

## **FREE EVENT TICKETS FOR VETERANS**

There’s an organization called “Vettix” that accepts donations of tickets to all kinds of events, which they in turn give free to veterans.

From their website (<http://www.vettix.org>): “The 7% of our population that are veterans and less than 1% actively serving shoulder unique burdens of stress, sacrifice and time away from their families. The majority of our veterans have served during wartime. Yet these veterans receive limited access to charitable giving to honor their service. Military discounts are small or infrequent. The majority of veterans do not receive military discounts because they do not have an ID card. More than that, the cost for the average football game or concert is over \$500 for a family of four. This makes many events simply un-affordable for average Military and Veteran families. These All-American moments are the times we should use to welcome and acknowledge our veterans. They provide essential community re-integration, family bonding experiences and give a real gift of gratitude for their time of service. Through The Veteran Tickets Foundation, now those who care about our Military and Veterans have a way to give back. Our veterans served and fought to protect our life and liberty, Veteran Tickets Foundation wants to say thank you by assisting in their pursuit of happiness.”

What a wonderful way to tell our veterans they are appreciated! Please consider donating event tickets to this organization.

## **BOOTS ON THE GROUND NY**

Boots on the Ground NY was founded November 11, 2010 by Frank “Frankie B” Bania, a Service Connected Disabled Veteran. The organization, a 501(c)19, is a team of veterans and supporters who care about the Veterans of America. They collect and deliver food and furniture for veterans and their families, usually those who everyone else overlooked or has forgotten. Their motto is “Leaving no veteran behind.”

These supporters believe that no veteran should be hungry or sleeping on the floor. They ship care packages to military units that don’t have access to supplies. They provide what they can to those who need it most.

The group leases a facility on Pond Road in Ronkonkoma which houses their Veterans Activity Center, food and furniture pantries, offices, meeting/counseling rooms, and storage and shipping area for their care package program. Renovation of the facility was all done with volunteer help. Some active duty soldiers showed up to help frame and paint the VAC.

They open their doors and hearts to any veteran who needs help. They house veteran talk groups at the VAC. Veterans are not just a last name and case number to them—they build and maintain friendships. They are also there for the families of the deployed, and for the families of those who fall in the service of their country. They do not take their commitments lightly.

A priority of BOTG-NY is not letting veterans who live in hospitals be forgotten. They schedule trips to Northport VA Hospital regularly, delivering supplies as well as friendship. Taking the veterans a lunch meal gives them the chance to sit with the veterans and get to know them. They also visit wounded soldiers at Bethesda Military Hospital in Maryland. Once a year on the Father's Day weekend they host a BBQ along with live entertainment to veterans who reside at the Nursing Home at Northport VA.

As part of their Project Veteran Support Program, they receive wish lists from various veteran support organizations of needs that local military/veteran families require in order to get back on their feet. They assist with housing, general funds, furniture, clothing, and food. They maintain a food and furniture pantry for veterans who were recently homeless and now live in government approved housing.

At their Veterans Activity Center, they house veteran talk groups. After learning of a study showing that playing video games helps those with PTSD, they added video games to the lounge in their VAC for troops or veterans to use. The Center also houses their care package program and food and furniture pantries. They are open five days a week for vets to pick up food or other needed items. If vets are unable to go to the Center, BOTG will deliver to them.

In their furniture pantry they have used furniture they collect, clean up, and refurbish, and they also have donated overstock furniture from retail establishments. They work closely with organizations and case workers who put them in contact with veterans and their families who have recently been housed in homeless shelters or in some cases domestic abuse shelters.

Every year BOTG-NY hosts a benefit to create awareness of PTSD. They also coordinate Welcome Home Escorts for active duty military arriving at local airports. They meet with families of active duty military prior to the service member's return and discuss issues that the service member may have to deal with upon their return home.

Every person in BOTG-NY is a volunteer. No member receives a salary or compensation of any kind. The board members and directors are all veterans who have served or are serving their country honorably.

Their rent, utilities, and other expenses for the VAC run about \$2,000 a month, so they have a donation program where supporters can pledge \$10 or \$20 a month to meet their expenses.

Looking through BOTG-NY's Facebook page, I noticed that whenever a call for help is posted—whether it's to give a vet a ride, deliver something, buy a Christmas tree for a family that has none, or anything else—someone always replies immediately. They get tremendous support from the community. When they publish a need – be it for boxes, or food, or anything at all – a local business answers the call immediately.

This program is a model of what our veterans need, and BOTG-NY deserves great praise for the outstanding services they are providing for our servicemen and women and veterans.

[www.bootsongthegroundny.com](http://www.bootsongthegroundny.com)

---

## ► BRINGING THEM HOME

**BERGDAHL UPDATE**

A new video surfaced in January showing Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, the only known American service member being held against his will. It is the sixth known video to show him in captivity after being captured in eastern Afghanistan by the Taliban on June 30, 2009. They initially demanded \$1 million and the release of 21 Afghan prisoners being held at Guantanamo Bay. The Taliban later reduced their demand to five prisoners in exchange for Bergdahl. This is an extremely difficult situation for the U.S. Government. Bergdahl is being held in an unknown location by an enemy combatant who represents an ideology, not a country. Plus, the Taliban's offer for a prisoner swap goes against U.S. policy to not negotiate with terrorists. Pinning down his location and launching a successful rescue operation remains a top U.S. priority.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0snkYYCcb4> to view the video.

## **MIA BURIED ON ANNIVERSARY OF DISAPPEARANCE**

The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command and Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory have identified the remains of an airman who went missing during the Vietnam War.

Air Force Col. Francis McGouldrick Jr., of New Haven, Conn., was buried December 13 with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery on the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his loss.

McGouldrick was listed as missing in action on Dec. 13, 1968, after his B-57E Canberra aircraft collided with another aircraft over Laos' Savannakhet Province during a night strike mission, the statement said. In 1978, a military review board changed his status from missing in action to presumed killed in action.

Between 1993 and 2004, joint teams from the U.S. and Laos unsuccessfully tried to locate the crash site, the statement said. On April 8, 2007, a team found a promising site near the village of Keng Keuk.

From October 2011 to May 2012, joint teams excavated the site three times and recovered human remains and aircraft wreckage consistent with a B-57E, the statement said. JPAC used circumstantial evidence and mitochondrial DNA, which matched McGouldrick's great-nephew and niece, to identify the remains.

McGouldrick once taught at The Ohio State University. His daughters told The Columbus Dispatch they were informed of the identification on Sept. 3. They asked for burial on the 45th anniversary of the crash.

"This is all still a kind of pinch-me experience," daughter Megan Genheim told the Dispatch. "But when we're in Washington and at that grave, then we'll know: He's home."

*There are 1,644 Americans who remain unaccounted for from the Vietnam War.*

## **WWII AVIATOR SHOT DOWN IN GERMANY**

Published December 12, 2013/FoxNews.com

The body of a U.S. aviator who disappeared over Germany during World War II was buried at Fort Logan National Cemetery in Denver on Friday.

Army Capt. Franklin B. Tostevin was shot down on March 20, 1945, but his remains were not accounted for until Oct. 30 of this year by matching DNA samples.

Tostevin was born in New Jersey. Veterans Affairs officials say they believe his closest living relative lives in Colorado.



The Defense Department says he was flying in an F-6P on a reconnaissance mission over Eigen when the plane rolled to the right and crashed. No anti-aircraft fire was reported. It was his 159th mission as a reconnaissance pilot. He was shot down two days shy of his 23rd birthday.

In 2006, a German citizen led a team from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command to a crash site near the town of Eigen. The command is the Pentagon unit charged with finding and identifying missing U.S. military personnel from conflicts overseas.

A JPAC recovery team excavated the site in 2008, recovering remains and personnel effects. The remains were identified as Tostevin's in DNA testing at JPAC's laboratory in Hawaii, and his family was notified Oct. 30, Daniel Tostevin said.

"The fact that he has been brought home and will be laid to rest among his comrades at Fort Logan is a wonderful thing," Daniel Tostevin said. "Uncle Franklin was truly a courageous man. He did his duty."

### **MISSING POW'S REMAINS RETURNED 63 YEARS LATER**

By Samantha Schaefer, December 20, 2013, 11:20 a.m.

Army Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Gantt told his wife to remarry if he didn't come back from the war. She told him no.

For 63 years, the World War II and Korean War veteran was missing in action and presumed dead, but Clara Gantt, 94, held out hope and never remarried.

On a cold, dark Friday morning on the Los Angeles International Airport tarmac, the widow stood from her wheelchair and cried as her husband's flag-draped casket arrived home.

"I am very, very proud of him. He was a wonderful husband, an understanding man," she told TV reporters at the airport. "I always did love my husband, we was two of one kind, we loved each other. And that made our marriage complete."

Joseph Gantt joined the Army in 1942 and served in the South Pacific during WWII. He met his wife on a train from Texas to Los Angeles in 1946 and they married two years later. They had no children.

In the Korean War, he was assigned as a field medic, Battery C, 503rd Field Artillery Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division, when he was taken prisoner by North Korean forces in December 1950. He died in March 1951, it was learned later, but his remains were only recently returned to the U.S. and identified, said Bob Kurkjian, executive director of USO Greater Los Angeles Area.

Clara Gantt, of Inglewood, bought a home and got a gardener so that when her husband returned, he wouldn't have to work in the yard — he could just go fishing and do whatever he wanted, she said.

"I bought a home for him. And I am in that home now," she said.

In her bedroom, the widow keeps a shrine with her husband's awards, including the Bronze Star with Valor, awarded posthumously for his combat leadership actions while defending his unit's position, and a Purple Heart, Kurkjian said.

### **CHOSIN RESERVOIR SOLDIER BROUGHT HOME**

PFC Jerry Pat Craig was 17 years and 11 months old when he was killed in action on the Eastern Shore of the Chosin Reservoir, "Heartbreak Ridge." North Korea on December 2, 1950. His Regimental Combat Team was attacked and overwhelmed by superior numbers of Chinese soldiers and the RCT was forced into a fighting withdrawal to more defensible positions south of the reservoir. Private Jerry Craig was one of the many men later reported as Missing In Action on December 2, 1950 as a result of the battle. His remains were exchanged by the Chinese and North Koreans in 1953, declared dead, and unidentified. At that time, soldiers' bodies were filled with formaldehyde, killing any traceable DNA. He was buried at the Punch Bowl National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii and marked as unknown until his identification in September 2013.

Thanks to forensic scientists and anthropologists at JPAC, the Joint Prisoner of War and Missing in Action Accounting Command in Hawaii, Craig's remains were identified and accepted by his niece, Dr. Anita Fields Gold of Lake Charles. Craig was interred in December at the Central Louisiana Military Cemetery in Leesville.

Craig was a member of the Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Division of the United States Army. His name is engraved on the Courts of the Missing at the American Battle Monument in the Honolulu Memorial.

---

## ► TAPS

### **Arthur J. Hubbard, Sr., Code Talker**

Arizona tribes were saddened this weekend as news came that Arthur J. Hubbard Sr., walked on February 7 at 102 years old. Hubbard was a Navajo Code Talker and the first American Indian elected to the Arizona State Senate.



“The Navajo Nation mourns the loss of a living treasure, an American hero and a role model for young kids across the Nation,” read a Navajo Nation statement following the news.

Arthur was born in Topawa, on the Nation, in January 1912. He was raised a Christian with Navajo and O’odham traditions, making him uniquely suited to bridge the Native and Non-Native communities according to a Tohono O’odham release.

The decorated military veteran voluntarily served in the United States Marine Corps during World War II from 1939 to 1945. While serving in WWII, Hubbard trained over 200 men in the famed unit that played a critical role in the Allied victory according to the O’odham release. In 2000, Hubbard received the Navajo Code Talker Congressional Silver Medal.

“The Navajo Code Talkers are living treasures of the Navajo Nation. With the passing of Arthur Hubbard, Sr., we have lost a true American hero. The Nation offers our heartfelt condolences to the family during this time,” Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly said.

Hubbard returned to Arizona following his military duty where he was appointed as Director of Indian Development District of Arizona by then Gov. Jack Williams according to O’odham release. Then in 1972, he made history by becoming the first American Indian elected to the Arizona State Senate, where he served 12 years.

### **Olga Brammer**

Jack “Chief” Brammer’s mother passed away January 12, surrounded by family. Olga Brammer 88, was interred with Chief’s dad at Riverside National Cemetery. She had been a lifetime member of the DAV Auxiliary since the early 70's, and held many leadership positions in the local chapter, and was chapter delegate to the state and national conventions. She was the local Adjutant/Treasurer for many years and only gave up the position reluctantly by not accepting nomination for the 2013-14 year. She trained both replacements and still kept active with them until she had a stroke last September. Olga was also a lifetime VFW Auxiliary member, volunteering every Tuesday since 1995 at the Loma Linda VAMC where she had more than 3,750 volunteer hours and was the VA Volunteer Service representative for the DAV Aux. Olga went on RFTW CR twice, was an avid supporter of the RFTW mission, and made donations to the CR Waterpoint trailer. She had a special love for the Angel Fire Memorial, especially when Dr. Westphal was. Last May Olga was at the host hotel in Rancho as usual, to support the RFTW mission. We send our condolences to Chief, and express our gratitude and admiration for the support his mother gave to veterans and to RFTW.

---

## ► CLOSING THOUGHTS

### Veteran’s Creed

I am a Veteran. I have seen and done things that many will not understand.  
I am a warrior and member of a team spanning the world.  
I have served my country proudly and now stand by to serve my brothers and sisters in arms.  
I will never accept defeat.  
I will never quit.  
I will never leave a fallen brother or sister. If they are hurt, I will carry them.  
If I can’t carry them, I will drag them.  
I will help them face their enemies, to include the demons from within.  
They are my brothers and they are my sisters.  
I am a veteran!!

- Anonymous

“I Fought for You” – a beautiful tribute to all those who have fought for our freedom.

[http://www.youtube.com/v/AgYLR\\_LfhLo?version=3&](http://www.youtube.com/v/AgYLR_LfhLo?version=3&)

## *You Are Not Forgotten*



