



## RUN FOR THE WALL

### Quarterly Newsletter

*“We Ride For Those Who Can’t”*

July 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
- Incoming President’s Message
- Outgoing President’s Message
- RFTW 2014-2015 Board of Directors
- Meet the Newest Member of the Board
- 2014 DC Group Photo
- Midway Route Recap
- RFTW Group to Escort Remains to Canada
- RFTW Combat Hero Bike Build
- Beyond Description
- May the Ride Continue
- Help Preserve the History of RFTW
- A Note to SR Platoon 5
- The Offering
- Medal of Honor Trike Fundraiser
- An FNG’s Journal
- Why We Ride
- My Two Families
- For Them All
- A Kind Gesture
- Two Stories From the Run
- The Soldiers Cross
- New Medal of Honor Recipient
- The Day the Heroes Came to Town
- A Silent Soldier’s Ride
- The Richard Faulkner Story
- Veteran’s Widow Carries on Patriotic Legacy
- Burn Pit Registry Now Open
- VA Gulf War Claims
- Rare Cancer of Vietnam Vets
- VAMC Phoenix AZ Update
- Servicemembers’ Civil Relief Act
- Pending Legislation of Interest to Veterans
- Chosin Reservoir KIA Comes Home
- Seventeen Recovered From 1952
- Korean War Sgt’s Remains Returned
- Remains of Three WWII KIAs Returned
- Korean War Sgt. Returned
- Korean War POW Returned
- Tarawa Marine Returns Home
- Korean War POW Comes Home
- JPAC Accused of Refusing to ID Some Remains
- Names Added to The Wall
- Reunions
- Sick Call Taps
- Closing Thoughts

---

#### THE EDITOR’S NOTES

The new Midway Route had its maiden voyage, so to speak, this year, and it was a big success. With experienced leaders in control, everything went like clockwork. We’ve heard nothing but praise from the Midway riders, so congratulations are in order to the Midway leadership—job well done!



In my hometown of Lake Havasu City, Arizona, the Midway Route presented a unique challenge for us, as we've always gone out to welcome the Central as they went past. But this year we had both routes go by-- Midway first, making a fuel stop, followed by Central three hours later. Since 2006 when I moved to Lake Havasu, I've been reminding our residents, Patriot Guard Riders, and American Legion Riders to go out on the I-40/Highway 95 overpass every May to honor our veterans on RFTW Central Route. From the center of town, it's a 40-mile round trip out to I-40. This year, with Central coming through three hours after Midway, asking everyone to wait around that long in usually 110 degree heat would be a grueling hardship on most. Asking them to go home and return three hours later is equally arduous. But that's exactly what many of our residents did. Neither welcoming crowd was quite as large as in previous years because some had to choose to welcome one or the other route, but still we had good-sized groups to honor both routes, and I'm very proud of the people of my town stepping up to the challenge. But I'm just going to have to talk more people into going out on that overpass so both RFTW routes will be greeted by a big crowd!

Be sure to read a wonderful story in this issue, about the remains of a WWII U.S. soldier from Canada finally being brought home after 69 years in a German cemetery. A RFTW contingent from all over the U.S. will be traveling to Canada in August to escort PFC Gordon's remains.

Lots of good info in this issue; I hope you find much of it of interest, of use, and heartwarming.

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.*

## **INCOMING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Ken "Wish" Hargrove



I am honored to be selected as President for this next year, I am committed to our Mission and the success of this year's Run, just as I have been committed to the success of every Run since my first year in 2007. What do I bring to the table? A lot of two-wheeled Run miles; ATW SR- 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, ATW MR- 2014 and Participant CR-2008.

You might ask what happened to All The Way in 2008? Well, as my wife always says, every great story starts with "No \$#!+, there I was...". Well "No \$#!+, there we were..." putting break-in miles on our new rides the week before RFTW 2008. Next thing we knew her bike flips at 65mph on I-10 and she is in a body cast for the next nine months. It was all I could do to register and ride to the first gas stop that year.

Since then I've volunteered as Tailgunner for two years, Platoon Leader one year, Road Guard for three years and on the Board of Directors as Secretary/Treasurer for the past two years. Why do I ride? Why do we all? I have buddies and family and friends on the Wall. I spent two tours in Nam from late 1968 through most of 1970. I have trouble even approaching The Wall. Going with RFTW support eases the approach. I see, hear, and feel them as I get closer. Thank you, Brothers and Sisters.

I am committed to the POW/MIA Awareness campaign that we all wage. I honor our currently serving military at every chance and I am involved in Veteran's events where I am able. Along with my RFTW Mission commitments, I serve as 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Commander of my local American Legion, Post 78 in Claremont, CA. I'm a Member of the local Marine Corps League, Detachment 965. I'm a Life Member of DAV, and I'm also Chair of the Claremont High School Veterans Alumni Committee, where I diligently uncover and archive 113 years of Alumni veterans.

I have four kids and 13 grandkids. The two oldest of my grandkids have been on the Run, one of them All The Way. The younger ones are already planning their 'turns' to accompany Grandpa. We make it an honor for them to be able to go. They need to 'qualify' to ride with this crusty crew. They had to run military donation drives, send packages to the troops, write essays on American Flag protocol and write reports on the Medal of Honor. One of them wrote a detailed summary of my wife's favorite MOH recipient's life. The essays were all 'graded' by my wife, who has now rehabbed enough so that she was able to ride All The Way finally this past year.

What do I think we need to focus on for 2015? Maximize our profile as we cross this country. We have started some great relationships with a couple of National Corporations, KIA and Pepsi. Each route has some highly visible events and some deeply personal interactions with their supporters along the way. I still come across people who have never heard of us; we need to harness these lost opportunities. It is a particular shame when I come across the many veterans who do not know that we are even out there. That veteran very likely has a need that we can meet, a cross we can help him/her bear, a 'Welcome Home' that can make a world of difference and if they don't have a need, at least they can pass along awareness of our Mission and be given a chance to participate.

I am looking forward to working with a highly capable and motivated Board for 2014/2015. There are many challenges in front of us to ensure RFTW 2015 is as good or even better than every Run for the past 26 years, not the least of which is to better organize our Rancho kick-off venue. The Route Coordinators, Assistant Route Coordinators, and Road Guard Captains are the core leadership of each Route for which the Route Coordinator is the General. It is our responsibility to make sure that we give these Generals the resources they need to make it happen.

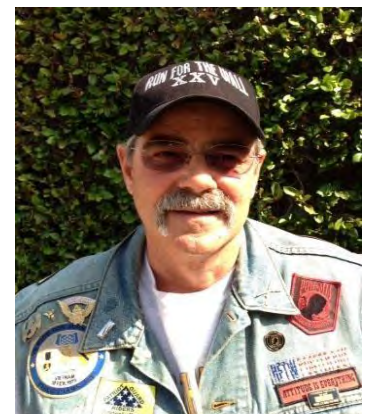
Support The Mission, support your Route Coordinator, Take the time to engage others and talk about The Run. and if you can, volunteer to be a resource for your Route as well as a rider for the Mission. I look forward to working with you in this coming year.

All Gave Some, Some Gave All  
Ken "Wish" Hargrove

## **OUTGOING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Harry "Attitude" Steelman

Well, so ends another RFTW year, or does a new one begin? It has been my distinct honor to have been given the opportunity to serve RFTW and its riders at such a level as this. I never could have perceived this when I put my kickstand up in Ontario on my FNG run. I have truly enjoyed the experience. Has it been all fun and games? Well, no, but the effort that it has taken to make things work out well has been more than worth it. And things did work out well this year, didn't they? OK, OK, so the situation in Rancho may have left



something to be desired, but the bottom line is that RFTW, mostly due to the efforts of the Route Leadership and Road Guards, managed to see everyone into Arlington without significant injury. I take no credit for that, but the BOD did their job very well this year in establishing policies and enforcing existing policies that allowed the Route Leadership to do their job well.

That was my goal when I accepted this position: to avoid making changes that lessened the authority of the Route Coordinators and their Leadership Teams. With their authority intact, they can make the decisions necessary to move their packs safely and efficiently. And they did. Do I agree with all of their decisions? No. Does the BOD agree with all of their decisions? No. But it is hard to argue with success and it is not by coincidence that the same level of success was achieved by all three routes. GOOD JOB! And that comment is directed to the Leadership teams as well as all of the riders because getting a motorcycle down the road is primarily an individual accomplishment. You all did that well and safely—congratulations.

I have been known to ramble on in my letters and posts, but not this time. I am stepping down from the presidency, but I volunteered to remain on the Board for the next three years. Miss Martha is not happy about it, but she supports my decision wholeheartedly. I have accepted the position of Secretary/Treasurer and will do my best to carry on the work that Ken Hargrove has carried forward. He has done a fantastic job of pulling things together from a financial and administrative standpoint. I know that he will do just as well, if not better, in his new role as president. He, as well as the rest of the Board, continues to stand by the mantra that Too Tall left when he passed the torch to me last year—that mantra being something on the order of “the BOD must always remember that whatever decisions are made should continue to improve the Run based on the best interest of the riders.” As always, FNGs need to continue to be our focus. And I would add that we need to allow the RCs to lead their packs as the situation dictates on a day-to-day basis.

I have been honored and humbled by this past year and thank everyone for their support. Now please join me in supporting our new president, Ken “Wish” Hargrove.

BE SAFE

Harry “Attitude” Steelman

---

## ► RFTW 2014-2015 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President:	Ken “Wish” Hargrove
Chairman/Vice President:	Daryl “Top” Neil
Secretary/Treasurer:	Harry “Attitude” Steelman
Director of Operations & Training:	Greg “Pied Piper” Smith
Director of Merchandise:	Ray “ZZ” Brammer
Director of Public Relations/Communications:	Harlan “Whitebirch” Olson
Director of Risk Management/Purchasing:	John “Wicked” McKee

## MEET THE NEWEST MEMBER OF THE BOD

Ray “ZZ” Brammer

I have been an active supporter of Run For The Wall since 2010, my FNG year. I was able to go all the way (RC to DC) in 2011 working on the Staging Team. I was a participant in 2012, and went all the way in 2013 working on the Staging Team. In 2014 I was asked by Dave "Trunks" Gladwill to haul and sell merchandise on the new Midway Route.

I was raised in Longmont, Colorado, where I still reside with my lovely wife Denise. I have four children and three grandchildren.

After receiving an Honorable Discharge from the U. S. Navy in 1966, I worked in construction, trucking, and as a mechanic, then as an owner of a construction/trucking company. I went back to school and got my degree and became a Senior Scientist/Construction Manager for an environmental engineering consulting company. I recently retired.



I am an active American Legion member, past president of the American Legion Riders District 4 Colorado, Sergeant of Arms American Legion Riders Post 32, Longmont Colorado and was recently appointed as an Area Director for the American Legion Riders of Colorado by the State Commander.

I am looking forward to serving on the Board of Directors to the best of my ability.

---

## ► RFTW 2014



### 2014 DC GROUP PHOTO

The order form for this year's group photo in Washington, D.C. can be ordered from the Store on the RFTW website. Or you may contact the photographer directly:

Michael Ventura  
4011 Adams Drive  
Silver Spring, MD 20902 240-838-6773

The photo is 12" x 18" and the cost is \$25.

## MIDWAY ROUTE RECAP

By John "Hardcharger" Barker  
Midway Route Coordinator

This year was the first-ever Midway Run for RFTW. It was everything that we could have hoped for: a new route along I-40, the Purple Heart Highway. We can say with confidence that it is on par with the two established routes. We ran a smaller leadership group and smaller platoons.

The whole reason for the Midway was to reduce the numbers on the other two routes, as they were getting too big and the potential for a huge accident was just a matter of time. The reports from the other two routes tend to support the position that the plan worked. This year the routes were accident-free. We raised over \$22,000 and, after paying the bills, we donated \$4,500 to two different homeless veteran organizations and \$500 each to two different schools for coming out and supporting the Midway. The communities that supported us along the way went over the top. We were fed dinners from Steaks to southern fried chicken to an original Mexican dinner. The town of Cookeville, TN turned out in force to greet us—four miles of nothing but waving support, all the way to a great dinner that included adult beverages for free, a first.

We made a stop at the ASOM museum in Fayetteville, NC and a stop at the Marine Corps Museum in VA, with a huge welcome at both. The Mayor of Fayetteville rode a leg with us as did the Drummer for the Lynard Skinner group, a former Marine. This was after he entertained the troops at the Harley dealer in Ashville, NC.

The leadership was made up of folks from Southern and Central and they came together in building new ways to create the Midway Route. If a job needed to be done it didn't matter if it was in their job description or not, they jumped in and did it—in the true manner of what RFTW stands for. I cannot thank them enough, I'm very proud of what they accomplished.

I was honored to be the route coordinator for this new route and to see what it accomplished. Hats off to Central and Southern for all of their support. Semper Fi.

---

## ► RFTW 2014—OUR STORIES

### RFTW GROUP TO ESCORT KIA REMAINS TO CANADA

PFC Lawrence R. Gordon grew up in Saskatchewan and later on went to work in Wyoming.

Shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack, he enlisted in the U.S. Army, deciding that the Canadian Scottish Regiment wasn't as good. He sent his last letter home at age 28, just before he died, while he was fighting at Saint Lo, north of Normandy. On Aug. 13, 1944, Gordon was in command of an armored vehicle during an operation to stop the Germans from escaping through the Falaise Gap. It is believed that Gordon and James Andrew Bowman, a gunner who was standing next to him in the turret, were shot at by a German Motorcyclist. The driver of the vehicle died two weeks later.

His remains were first interred in an American cemetery as “unknown,” despite the fact that his bloody wallet was sent home to his family and the man killed next to him was identified.

The remains were later exhumed and reburied in a German cemetery. He was mistaken for a German soldier because he was wearing some clothing of a German soldier. Apparently American soldiers often did that because German undershirts and trousers were much cooler than their own uniforms.

The only survivor was Pvt. Kurtz, who wrote a report on that day. Kurtz died in January 2011.

Filmmaker Jed Henry became interested in Gordon's story while shooting a documentary about his grandfather,

Staff Sgt. David L. Henry of Viroqua, in November 2011. His grandfather, just like Gordon, was part of the 199-man Reconnaissance Company, and died at home when Henry was only 3 years old. He worked together with a team of researchers at UW-Madison Biotechnology Center's DNA Sequencing Facility to find out whether or not the person they buried as a German soldier more than 68 years ago, was U.S. Army Pfc.

Lawrence S. Gordon. Gordon's body was in first instance labeled as Unknown X-3 and found buried next to another soldier tagged Unknown X-2, on Aug. 13, 1944, the Journal Sentinel reports.

There was a teeth scan done on X-3, but no fingerprints taken. While The X-2 was later identified by the FBI as U.S. Army Pvt. James Andrew Bowman, the man who was shot at together with Gordon, the X-3 was found "completely clothed in German Equipment" The explanation following the discovery states that it might have been possible that Gordon exchanged his American undershirt and trousers with the German ones because they were cooler than the U.S. Army uniform. That, however, doesn't mean the outer layer of clothing was part of the German uniform as well, as that would have got him in quite some trouble if captured.

Gordon's mother was first told of her son's death almost eight months later, with no information as to where his grave was located. She desperately tried to find out where her son was put to rest and she died without ever knowing. Nobody in the family knew for sure that Gordon's body was missing until his nephew—Lawrence R. Gordon, a lawyer in Medicine Hat, Alberta, went searching for his grave in France in 2000. He promised his father that he would find his uncle's final resting place, but instead he found his name written on the Wall, a month other missing in action servicemen, at Brittany American Cemetery near St. James, Normandy. Once the teeth charts were compared, the forensic investigator decided that according to the reports in which is stated that the wisdom teeth and the third tooth on the right side were missing, the two charts matched. The DNA tests, done on the saliva collected from his eight nephews, proved conclusive.

The remains were later exhumed and reburied in a German cemetery, where they remained for 69 years. The remains were marked unknown German soldier, X-3. In early 2013, officials at JPAC refused to exhume and test the remains, citing Defense Department policy. For years, they also refused to aid in the research effort. The French and German governments, however, determined there was enough evidence to proceed with testing of their own. Thanks to their efforts, Gordon's remains will not be buried next to his father and brothers in Saskatchewan, Canada, on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death.

Because the Defense Department stonewalled the identification process, it is unlikely that Gordon will receive American military honors. To receive the honors and be removed from the list of the unaccounted for, the results must be verified by the Defense Department.

Gordon's nephew received the following letter from a German Defense Attaché involved with this case:

*Dear Mr. Gordon,*

*Eventually, justice has won. My congratulations for showing such honorable commitment, patriotism, faith and courage to walk that long path for your uncle.*

*He will come home and that is what counts.*

*He fell in a battle against my countrymen, but he did this under a just cause: To liberate Europe from fascism and to restore peace, freedom and humanity.*

*His sacrifice was not in vain ... Today Germany is surrounded by friends and we are no longer deemed as enemies. The shadows of the past are vanishing.*

*What remains is the decency of those who fought for it and the lesson that we have to preserve it in order to teach the next generation.*

*That is why I will stay committed to your future intentions and, please, remain assured of my highest appreciation for your next plans and my unconditional support for the things to come.*

*Jed can always approach me on any details.*

*Yours sincerely  
Dirk H. Backen  
Brigadier General  
German Defense Attaché*

This video is of the recent transfer of Gordon's body from the French and Germans to the Americans. At about 7 minutes, you will see the casket being turned over to American soldiers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWNuWC6IKP8&feature=youtu.be>

## **RFTW Riders' Mission**

Les "Easy" Williams, RFTW platoon leader and USMC Colonel (Ret), was in contact with Lawrence R. Gordon, nephew of PFC Gordon, and on Saturday, May 23 he joined RFTW members on their walk to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The group then escorted him to the WWII Memorial to honor his uncle's service.

On August 13, the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of PFC Gordon's death, RFTW riders will attend the re-interment of PFC Gordon in Eastend, Sask. More than 75 riders have already signed on for the trip into Canada.

If you are interested in joining the escort into Canada, contact Les at [boodawglkw@gmail.com](mailto:boodawglkw@gmail.com) or 970-7449724. The group will meet on August 12 in Havre, Montana to regroup to enter Canada. You can make reservations at the Best Western Great Northern in Havre, Mt. The number is 406-265-4200 and mention that you are with RFTW. Les is working with Canadian and US Border Patrols for the group to cross the border, so Les will need confirmation of your participation. If you don't have a passport, Border Patrol will accept Driver's License and birth certificate. Meet and greet and briefing will be August 12 at 1930 in Havre, MT.

## **RFTW COMBAT HERO BIKE BUILD**

Run For The Wall's first Hero Bike Build was presented to SSgt. Charlie Linville, USMC, during the pre-Run meet and greet. Linville took the bike outside the restaurant, followed by many riders, to get the feel of his new bike.





## **MAY THE RIDE CONTINUE**

By Josue Griego

On May 17, 2014, I left Amarillo, Texas and became a participant in RFTW XXVI (Southern Route), joining at Grand Prairie, Texas. Upon arrival there, I immediately realized that this was going to be an experience of a lifetime for me. Flaggers were present, members and others were present, -all welcoming and directing arriving riders to proper parking. After dismounting, I was approached and hugged, handshakes extended and words offered for my coming there. Having pre-registered, I was directed to where I could complete registration and receive my packet for the ride. This was done in a very easy manner and I was then asked to stay and have dinner. Fantastic food, drinks and desserts.

Next day began what I was to learn would be a totally different type of riding than I was accustomed to. Intense and disciplined riding coordinated by what I found to be loving and experienced leaders followed for the next 6 days to DC.

The patriotism, concern, purpose, and dedication I observed and sensed from riders and citizens greeting us all along the way was exceptionally emotional and will certainly be part of me the rest of my days and I can further share with all that will listen.

All gas and food stops brought new friendships, discussion, sharing and meeting those that prepared and served us food, drinks and snacks. Places like Monroe, Wytheville, Lynchburg and Bedford stand out for me, but in no way diminish any other place. Harley dealerships were so gracious, Veterans Hospital was so cordial, children and faculty at schools were so loving, ceremonies in different towns were so respectful. Suffice it to say that everything everywhere had special meaning(s).

In closing, I wish to say that if able, I want more of what I just went through and hope to become a bigger part of this fantastic Run in the future. My sincerest gratitude and appreciation I want to convey to all planners, coordinators, guards of all types, advance teams and all who orchestrated together to make this Run work.

I thank God for watching over all riders to the Run and back home. Thank you RFTW. Thank you Veterans and those now serving. Freedom and rights are precious.

**MAY THE RIDE CONTINUE FOR MANY MORE YEARS AND MAY CLOSURE COME TO MANY MORE GRIEVING FAMILIES THROUGHOUT THE U.S. DUE TO THIS WORK.**

*“Pricklypare” kept a journal of her ride with RFTW this year, her first. This is her description of how she felt when she rode in the Missing Man Formation on Day 3.*

## **BEYOND DESCRIPTION**

By Pricklypare

My day started full of tears. Topper and I were in the Missing Man Formation at the head of the pack with only two riders in front of us that I could see. No one told me what to expect beyond what was expected of me while in the Missing Man position. We shoved off at 8:50 a.m. and rode 120 miles, almost 2 hours, before stopping and we stepped out of the formation.

All I can say is that the wave of emotion hit me so very hard with the source my grief over all the Veterans we take Home who have no one who cares. In trying to come to grips with this I realized that this is my mission – to take “my” Veterans to Washington letting them see through my eyes our country from one ocean to the other, what they fought for and sacrificed so much for. So I called to their souls, offering my body as a haven so I could take them with me. I began talking to them, telling them my plan. Within a few seconds, a wave of peace descended upon me and I could feel them come into my body starting at the top of my head all the way to my toes. The grief I carried vanished and peace settled in. I knew they would be able to return Home and finally be at peace with the completion of my mission.

When we got to our fuel stop that ended our leg of this journey, I told Topper of my experience. He told me he knew because he felt them coming as well. The same thing happened to him last year when he was Missing Man. In telling others of my experience they knowingly nodded their heads. It is beyond description. To a person they all said you have to experience it to understand.

### **HELP PRESERVE THE HISTORY OF RFTW!**

By Jennifer (Flame) Connors  
SR 2014 Missing Man Coordinator

We will be collecting documents (preferably originals) relating to the Run. A university archive is willing to take on these items and permanently preserve them. Items such as the by-laws, board minutes, correspondence, fliers, brochures, photos, ride books (daily schedules), proclamations, news clippings, press releases, and situation reports, etc. are what we are looking for. If you have kept journals, scrapbooks, and or photo albums and you'd like to donate them, we'd love to include them as well.

Texas Tech University has the largest archive relating to the Vietnam War outside of the US National Archive in DC. They will organize, preserve, and in some cases digitize our historic records. They will then be available to the public for study, both at the University and on-line. Visit their web site at <http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/>.

At this time, we are ONLY collecting information. We need to know how much stuff you have and its condition. For example: I have one box (banker's box /carton) of papers in good condition; I have three cartons of paper that have been stored in the garage and may have an old mouse nest in it. I have one journal and one photo album. Note: If you offer original material (something you wrote), you will need to sign over copyright to the University if you want it to be shared on-line; otherwise it will be only available for study in hard copy at the University.

Please e-mail Flame at: [RFTW.Flame@gmail.com](mailto:RFTW.Flame@gmail.com) with the information about quantity and quality. We will be back in touch with details on how and when to ship the material to the University AFTER we have a sense of how much they should expect.

### **A NOTE TO SR PLATOON 5**

By Mojo

As part of the leadership, one of the concerns platoon leaders have is getting their riders across safely to D.C. When we ride into the Marymount University parking lot, we know that it is like a huge burden that is suddenly lifted off everyone's shoulders—leadership AND riders. All everyone can think of is—we made it, and safely.

**We made it.** There is hugging, crying, laughing, and shouting with each other. And...a sigh of relief. It is incredible. Yet, I know that many did not get to experience this wonderful release and sharing of our triumph. Within only a few minutes of our arriving and getting off our bikes, we had to move out of the parking lot for the CR riders. You had no time to even take a breather, even if you weren't staying at the host hotel. I felt so badly for you, even while I was shouting for you to get back on your bikes. And I had absolutely no chance to congratulate you and give you hugs.

For whatever reasons, the logistics of the arrivals didn't work out this year, and I want to say that I'm sorry you didn't get those few triumphant moments with each other. Once we all leave that parking lot, we all spread out and don't see each other, except maybe during the Lincoln Memorial picture time or crossing each other at The Wall. But that doesn't seem to be the case many times. I truly hope that this snafu did not mar your experience with the Run. It would be great if we could say it won't happen again, but no one can. As you saw all along the run—"stuff happens." We just try to roll with it and go on.

But, as your platoon leader, I give you a heartfelt congratulations and "job well done" to not only Platoon 5 riders, but also to all of you who stuck it out to the end. You Platoon 5 guys and ladies were great, and it was a pleasure to have ridden with you and to have led you. I hope to see you next year.

## **THE OFFERING**

By Tom "Twotone" Lystrup

Run For The Wall - Midway Route

2014 - Platoon 3 Tail Gunner

I signed up to make the first run on the Midway Route and threw my name in the hat for a leadership role. Curly quickly assigned me to Platoon 3 as a Tail Gunner. I was excited for the opportunity to pay it forward to the riders on the Run after being an FNG the previous year. I went on the Central Route as an FNG and fell in love with the people and children of Rainelle, so I knew I would miss that reunion experience and was having reservations about doing the Midway Route. That didn't last very long as I got into my role as TG and proceeded east across the US. Our platoon road side by side, in close formation and at our Platoon Leader's request we saluted people on overpasses. From the back, I thought our platoon looked sharp. It was a pleasure to ride in this fashion and the time seemed to pass quickly.

Since the Midway Route was new, all the towns we stopped in were new to the experience of the Run, but we were welcomed with hand and flag waves and salutes wherever we went. It was great to see the love and appreciation extended to us riders from people that had no idea who we were. In many towns, the mayor or a representative showed up and read a proclamation declaring the day we were there as Run For The Wall Day in that town. One mayor asked us, practically begged us to return next year or to move to his town. The people yelled with enthusiastic agreement. This was an amazing experience for me to witness. There were many volunteers along the Midway Route that welcomed us, hugged us, served us and thanked us at every place we stopped.

Let me share one particular instance that really showed me the love these people along the Run had for us riders. In Santa Rosa, NM, at the Blue Hole, I was in the food line and this darling little girl (she might have been five) was reaching as far as she could to try to put an orange on my plate flimsy paper plate. She was standing on a chair with a box of apples and oranges next to her while reaching across the table in front of her to offer apples and oranges to us as we passed her. I told her I didn't think I had room for an orange and she said, "Yes you do, right there on your plate". I could not resist this little angel's orange. So I did this balancing act with my plate and gratefully took the orange. When I found my seat, I ate this orange like it was my last meal and I watched

this little girl in her determination to offer riders apples and oranges. This orange tasted like heaven to me. My gratitude was maxed out.

Later as I was policing tables, I saw this little girl with her mom picking up after us. I went over to her, removed my Vietnam bracelet and offered it to her, which she grabbed from me in excitement. Her mom told me thanks as the little girl stared at her bracelet in amazement. It was the least I could do and my offering to her felt insignificant to me compared to the offering she made to me earlier. I will never forget this little volunteer in Santa Rosa, or any of the many volunteers who gave so freely and willingly of their time and their resources to each of us riders on the Run.

To me the Run is about the mission, surely, but what's not mentioned in the mission and what I think is even more important at least to me is the people. The riders for sure (I met many new friends) but also the volunteers in communities across America that care, who serve, that love and appreciate us, who make us feel welcome in their town and make us feel like we belong there. That's what the run is about to me. We are, after all, one nation under God, indivisible.

I had an amazing time on the Midway Route and plan to return next year. How could I not?

### **MEDAL OF HONOR TRIKE FUNDRAISER**

By Barbara "Happy Feet" Montoya  
Angel Fire Reunion Coordinator

Labor Day weekend 2012 while attending the Run for the Wall Reunion and Brick Laying Ceremony in Angel Fire, New Mexico, we had the honor of meeting a Medal of Honor Recipient. When asked if he would attend our dinner and be a guest speaker, he graciously and willingly spoke to us about the Medal of Honor he wears, and the pride bestowed upon him in sharing this medal with all veterans. I found this young soldier to be humble, gentle, kind, compassionate, and was completely surprised by his sense of humor.

After dinner, several of us were able to speak with him at length, and he revealed to us that he used to ride a motorcycle and wished he could again ride. And so began our quest.

As a Combat Veteran, he sustained wounds in Afghanistan that limit his ability to ride a motorcycle. With modifications to a trike, we could help him ride again. We have identified and secured a beautiful 2013 TriGlide Harley Davidson through The Military Order of the Purple Heart, Chapter 3620, out of Dayton, Ohio.

With the help and support from folks like you, we will be presenting this trike to him in August. The date and location are to be announced once we have all the modifications complete.

It is my hope that all New Mexicans, friends, supporters, veterans, and patriots will step up and support this cause, as he is one of our hometown heroes, having been raised in Santa Fe.

We are still seeking donations to complete our endeavor. If you would be so kind as to enclose your check made payable to "The Military Order of the Purple Heart, Chapter 3620" (MOPH) and on the memo line please note "MOH Trike Donation." We need to raise \$35,000 to complete all modifications, and to finish paying for the trike. Any additional funds will be used to help him acquire the riding gear he will need.

Should you require further information or have questions, please contact me at 505-250-6495 or [leobjm@aol.com](mailto:leobjm@aol.com), and in the subject line type MOH Trike 2014.

PLEASE MAIL YOUR DONATION TO: Barbara "Happy Feet" Montoya, 11025 Briarwood Terrace NE, Albuquerque, NM 87111.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart, Chapter 3620 is a 501(c)(19) qualifying as a charitable organization. Their EIN Number is 59-0829647.

## **AN FNG'S JOURNAL**

By Jim "Hooper" McCrain

### **May 8, 2014**

Tonight was the start of my RFTW ride. I headed west toward the coast, stopping for the night in Sweetwater, Texas. And all of a sudden, good things started happening.

As I was registering at the hotel, the young Lady at the counter (Kourtney) looked at my Patriot Guard vest, smiled, and then told me about her recently deceased Grandfather. He had served in WWII. When I started to sign, I noticed that she had reduced my room rate by \$50. She told me she supports and appreciates the PGR!

I then went to get a burger. A woman walked up to me and told me about her brother that died last month. He had served in Vietnam. I promised to remember his name in a prayer when we reach the Wall in DC. Hugs were given and accepted!

I got the bag of food and went back to my room. I had ordered a small burger. In the bag was a LARGE burger, some fries, and a desert. There was also a hand-written note that simply said "Thank You."

This is going to be an epic trip!

### **May 15, 2014**

What a day! SO many things to tell, but I will keep it short. To all of the people of Wilcox, AZ, THANK YOU!!! Wow, what a reception! I think the whole town turned out to see us parade through their streets!

And then we got to Las Cruces, and I saw the biggest US Flag I have ever seen! Along the way, all day, there were people standing LITERALLY in the middle of nowhere, waving American flags as we went zipping by. My faith in American Patriotism is being restored!

But the BEST thing that happened this evening was meeting a WWII Veteran that served with my Grandpa Hill on Okinawa!! They were in the same locations at the same time! Although he didn't know Grandpa by name, I still consider him to be my hero for helping to keep Grandpa Hill alive! THANK YOU!!!

### **May 16, 2014**

Okay, get ready Folks. This is a tough one!

Today, I was given the extreme honor and privilege to attend a memorial ceremony for CW2 Johnny V Matta. About a dozen of us were personally selected to visit the home and Family of Johnny. "Chief" was killed on March 23, 2003.

We left the main pack of riders and rode as fast as we (legally) could, about 100 miles to reach the Mata Families home. When we arrived at the town of Pecos, we were met by the Sheriff and several deputies. Many

of them were related to Johnny, and ALL of them knew him. They then proceeded to escort us through town with sirens blaring and lights flashing. All too soon, we arrived at the Mata home. I say "all too soon" because we were all getting the feeling that this was not going to be easy.

As we rounded the corner, we could see a wonderful and PERMANENT memorial that his family had erected in their front yard. We were all in tears as we dismounted our bikes and walked silently up to the wall. We were greeted by the entire Family, with hugs and kisses flowing. Johnny's Mother apparently doesn't speak much English, but she sure does smile and hug in a language that we all understood!

Our group made a few presentations to the Sheriff's Department, and then began the memorial service.

One of the members of our little band of brothers was actually with Chief when the incident occurred, and held him in his arms until it was too late for help. He was then knocked unconscious and taken prisoner. (I am not giving his name, because this was a very trying day for him and I want to respect and honor his courage.)

He told us of how intense the fire-fight was, that they were hopelessly out-numbered, and how that they were all sure they were going to die. He told us how he said his final goodbyes to his friends, comrades, brothers in arms, and said a prayer for his family; all while holding onto his dying friend. He broke down, sobbing, as he told of the bravery of his Chief and the other soldiers, and how that he doesn't understand WHY he survived. We ALL broke down. Finally, the Chaplain offered a prayer of healing, and we hugged each other over and over.

And THIS is why we are riding across our Nation. So that people like our one soldier can come to terms with their survival. So that the Family of our fallen can know that their loved-ones are not truly gone, because some of us WILL remember them! So that those Families that STILL do not know what happened to their brother, uncle, father, friend, can gain some closure to their pain.

I have seen such pain and sorrow already on this trip. Whether the wounds were opened 50 years ago or last week, the pain doesn't go away. We, as American Citizens, owe it to our Veterans and their families to help ease that pain.

THIS IS WHY WE RIDE! We ride for those who can't!

### **May 17, 2014.**

Again, I was given the honor of participating in a "break-a-way" outreach mission. Platoons 1 and 2 left Colorado City, Texas earlier than the main pack and headed to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Mineral Wells, Texas. RFTW had not visited this site in the past, and they had been asking for us for several years. This stop was going to be special for me, as my Father was going to meet me there!

We rode! Hard! There were gators in the road that bit three bikes! But we continued. "Mission Before Self!"

When we arrived, there were 20-30 people waiting for us, including my Father and his Wife. Marie's first husband was treated horrifically when he returned from Vietnam. He died a few years ago, never having found the healing that he so desperately needed. Marie has not been able to deal with her emotions about Vietnam, either. It took every ounce of courage for her to attend this wreath laying ceremony. I urged her to mingle with the Riders. Take the hugs as they were offered. Talk to the Guys who were "in country" with her husband. Heal. She was smiling when we left!

But the story of the day I really want to tell is about a young Lady named Tina. During the Wreath laying ceremony, I noticed that this Lady was standing well away from the crowd, literally hiding behind a tree, and

was visibly upset. I walked up to her, introduced myself, and asked why she was there. Her story was simple. Her boyfriend had been in Vietnam but had never really come to terms with WHY he was there. It had taken almost 40 years for him to start "feeling normal" again, and as soon as that happened, he was killed in a motorcycle accident. Our appearance on so many bikes, with so many Vietnam Vets was just too much for her to bear.

As we talked, I asked questions about her boyfriend, their life together, and her proposed future. She was astonished to find that so many people DO care about our Vets, and she had contemplated volunteering at the Memorial site. She hadn't been on a motorcycle in 5 years, ever since that fateful accident. I urged her to talk to someone who was there, to get involved with Veteran Organizations, and to get back on a bike. That would be the best way to honor her boyfriend.

Our time was at an end. We had to leave. But before I went away, I gave her an RFTW pin and one of my business cards. I let her know that there is always someone that she could talk too if she needed too. If I couldn't be there, I would find someone. As we left, I saw her mingling with the crowd, and she, too, was smiling! It was an amazing day!

*Postscript: I have talked with Tina since this meeting. She HAS become a volunteer at the Mineral Wells Memorial Park, and she has bought another motorcycle! She is going to be okay!*

### **May 18, 2014**

This morning, I will be riding the Missing Man Formation. I hope to honor the memory of Gary C Johnston and the Family of my old high school friend, Nubbin Johnston. Nubbin is a "Double Gold Star" Family. Not only did he lose his brother Gary in Vietnam, but he lost his son, also named Gary C Johnston, in Iraq.

THIS IS WHY WE RIDE!

*Postscript: It wasn't until a day or two later that Pops (Reid Choate) gave me an answer to a question I had never thought to ask. I have been having a lot of trouble understanding WHY I feel the way I do towards our Vietnam Vets. Pops described me as a "survivor's syndrome" victim. I was not quite old enough to be in 'Nam, and then became ineligible for duty for medical reasons. But I saw what was going on and understood the injustice of it all. I felt guilty for not being there; for not "doing my part." I had survived without ever being put into jeopardy, and I felt guilty. I had never thought of this, but he was absolutely right. I understand myself a little better now.*

### **May 19, 2014**

Here is today's lesson in sincerity, honesty, and innocence.

At lunch today, I had the honor of shaking hands with two Navajo Code Talkers, a survivor of the Bataan Death March, and one of the original Tuskegee Airmen. But I also met another Hero that deserves to be listed amongst these four.

As I was walking towards our lunch break, I was approached by a young Lady of about 10 years of age. She offered me a cold bottle of water which I gratefully accepted. I then presented her with one of the RFTW pins that I carry. As she smiled, her mother asked if the little girl would like me to pin it to her shirt collar, to which she smiled again and said "YES!"

As I knelt there in the grass so I could be eye-to-eye with her, she saw the Patriot Guard Riders patch on my vest, and told me "I know about the Patriot Guard!" When I asked her HOW she knew about us, she looked straight at me and simply said "My Uncle stepped on a land mine."

I was stunned into silence, and then immediately started crying. This little girl then did the most amazing thing I have experienced yet. While the tears were rolling down my face, she ran into my arms, gave me a big hug, and said "It's okay!"

### **May 20, 2014**

Today's story is both happy and sad.

When we stopped in Asheville, Alabama for fuel and snacks, there was a large roped-off area for the bikers to park, with lots of people lined up to see all the bikes. I noticed one Man standing alone, and that he was obviously (and visibly) upset.

I walked over to the Gentleman, said "Howdy!" and then Thank You for coming out on such a hot afternoon. He took my hand and repeated over and over "Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!" He then started to shake and sob. I immediately gave him a hug and asked him when he was in-country. He replied and started shaking even more. I then said "And you haven't talked about since you got home, have you?" He started shaking even more, and started telling me stories about his time in Vietnam.

And so there were two grown men, standing in a parking lot underneath the hot Alabama sun, crying. I didn't let him go until the crying and shaking stopped. The crowd around us had grown silent with respect for this Man. They knew, as did I, that he needed to talk, but hadn't been able to for over 45 years.

I asked if he had ever been to the Wall, and he said "No, but would you look up some friends for me?" I immediately agreed and asked if he would like me to get a rubbing of the names for him. He said "No. Just touch them and let them know I haven't forgotten them."

This is why we ride!

### **May 22, 2014**

Today I was part of a break-a-way group that went to visit a VA Care Center. I chose this mission instead of attending a children's program at a local school, because some of these Veterans simply don't get visitors very often. And after all, honoring Veterans is what this ride is all about!

I had lunch with a Korean War Veteran that had several stories to tell about MacArthur. He was complimentary about "Mac" except for being angry that his unit wasn't allowed to get off the line when Marilyn Monroe made a USO stop!

I met another gentleman that was very humble about his own time in Korea. "No, I didn't do anything important. I just worked in transportation." he said. Well, after talking a little bit more, the REAL story came out. He drove a mine-sweeper vehicle! That means he was in the very front of the convoy every day, purposely looking for hidden explosives. I was sorry that we had to leave, because he had a lot more stories to tell! As I left him, he saluted me and thanked ME for what I was doing. I turned around and went back. I shook his hand one more time and promised him that I would remember this visit for a LONG time, and I thanked HIM for allowing me the privilege of visiting with him.



Leaving the VA Center was tough. I don't think ANY of us could see the road clearly. There were just too many tearful eyes!

### **May 24, 2013**

I had the opportunity to address a group of high school students at The Wall today. I tried to help them understand that it isn't just a list of names, but is instead a list of PEOPLE whose loss is felt by entire Family groups.

Fathers, Mothers, Sons, Daughters, Brothers, Sisters, Aunts, Uncles, Cousins. For each name, there is a circle of grief. And for many of these circles, there hasn't been closure yet. Too many Families simply do not know what happened to that "name on the Wall."

I asked the students to never forget the sacrifices made by these "circles", not just from Vietnam, but from ALL wars. And by the tears I saw in their eyes, I am confident that the "lesson" was well learned.

### **May 29, 2014.**

I have spent a few days "decompressing" from my 2014 FNG RFTW ride. I have seen and experienced things that have given me a renewed sense of pride, patriotism, and hope for the future of our country. I have met the TRUE face of America, and saw it smiling back at me. From the smallest of small-towns to the seat of our Nations Government, I have been given a heart-felt "Welcome Home!" Even though I wasn't there (Vietnam) and don't deserve such an accolade, I accept it for all of my Brothers and Sisters who WERE there, STILL have loved ones missing, and those whose lives were shattered by the ultimate sacrifice. It is THEY who deserve that "Welcome Home!" I will do my best to make sure they receive it.

My participation in the 2014 RFTW has had a profound impact on my life, one that I was not prepared for. Yes, I knew that I would see and experience things that would make me proud. But I was NOT prepared to get answers to questions I hadn't thought of. Thanks to the advice, camaraderie, love, support, and new friendships created on this ride, I understand myself better. I know why I have the emotional reactions that have "plagued" me for my entire life. I understand the connection I have had with people who were "in-country", whether it be Vietnam, or Iraq, Afghanistan, or Korea. I understand why the heart-break felt by thousands of Americans directly affected by war have hurt me, too. I understand now.

So today I will ride home. Alone, just the way the ride started for me. But although I will be on the road by myself, there will be a chorus of others riding with me in Spirit. I have a new Family now!

### **WHY WE RIDE**

By Lori Ann "Leggs" Schaeffler. Marana AZ

Patriotic Americans coast to coast came out to show their support and appreciation as we rolled through their town, some just on an overpass waiting for hours just to wave a flag and say thank you for what we do. Believe it or not, but this is what keeps us going. Stopping in a small town for literally 45 minutes and hundreds there to say thank you and proud of what you're doing.

Encouraged by emails phone calls and Facebook posts by family and friends was awesome. But in the Run for the Wall family that is the biggest encouragement of all. Standing at a Memorial or at a cooler full of water and seeing tears in the eyes of our FNGs as they tell their reason for being on the Run. Some you can see the pain of many years of agony just falling off their shoulders as they realize that it's okay to let it go or finally be able to tell of their experience through their war.

Standing at the Wall that Saturday, I look to my right and a man is standing there who was not on the Run. He looked at me and pointed to a name on the wall with tears in his eyes. He explained it had taken him decades to get the courage to come here. He explained that he wasn't sure if his buddies' names were on the Wall or not. He explained he did and didn't want to know. I stood there with him for 15 minutes as he cried hugged laughed about his buddies. We ended with a huge hug and me thanking him for his service and sacrifice and he stated NO it is you that has helped me just willing to listen and give a grungy ole man a few minutes.

AND THIS IS WHY WE RIDE YEAR AFTER YEAR TO HELP THOSE HEAL

## MY TWO FAMILIES

By Daniel "Papa Hawg" Underhill

I started with RFTW in 2007 doing a few days here and there, but never was able to go ALL THE WAY. On the Midway Route I was the Tail Gunner for 1st Platoon. Meeting old friends was great, but meeting new people was even better. There are so many events on this run that were remarkable, but this is the one that is most special to me. I guess it's because RFTW is family, but I was going to be with family that I have not seen in 14 years.

Leaving Asheville, NC on May 21, I was riding in the Missing Man Formation. Thoughts of my father who served in WW II, Korea, and Vietnam filled my mind as I rode down the road. My mind drifted to my brother who served in the Army in the early '60s. It flashed on fallen Army buddies I had served with. I dedicated my ride this year to SFC Kenneth Westbrook of Colorado who gave his life in 2009. Kenneth was serving in Afghanistan in the Ganjal Valley during a six-hour battle when he was wounded. SGT Dakota Meyer (USMC) and CPT William Swenson (USA) would receive the Medal of Honor for their actions in this deadly firefight. We lost five great heroes that day. My mind focused on Kenneth for the last half of the ride that morning. Kenneth received wounds to his neck, broken ribs, broken collar bone, and was removed from the battle by Dustoff. He passed away due to those wound received on September 8, 2009. It is important to remember, as our mission creed is "Never Forget."



Kenneth Westbrook was the second son lost in combat. His brother gave his life in 2005 in Iraq, Their father is a Retired Army Sergeant First Class. My thoughts took over, my feelings became weak and my tears made it very hard to see. I was riding with so many emotions that at times I felt I was part of something I cannot explain. I don't think there are any words that can describe the roller coaster emotions I felt. The rest of the day my mind was racing with memories, the stories I heard from veterans and the knowledge of what our American Heroes have given to us.

That evening we rode into Fayetteville, NC and the ASOM Museum. I met my nephew at the Iron Mike statue; he had just returned from Afghanistan two weeks before. He was in uniform and made me feel so proud. I asked Short Stack (The Missing Man Coordinator) if he could ride the Missing Man Formation from ASOM Museum to Destiny Now. It was a five-mile ride, but I wanted him to ride in that position of Honor for his fallen comrades. Danny (my nephew) was shocked that he was given that honor, but it was something we both shared on that day.

Next year we plan to ride together from Fayetteville, NC to Washington DC and share more memories as family and brothers in arms.

## **FOR THEM ALL**

By Kelley Perry

2014 was my first year to participate in RFTW. Several people have asked me what it was like. I never could describe it. This kinda came to me today. May just be rambling, but here it is . . . .

For the Veteran of Vietnam,  
Who never got his “Welcome Home,”  
For the Soldier in Korea,  
His whereabouts – still unknown.  
For the heroes in stone gardens,  
Known only but to God.  
For these and countless others,  
This is why we ride!

For the young Army Veteran,  
Who sees death in her sleep.  
For the Marine in Afghan Mountains,  
Praying nightly to find peace.  
For the brave teen-aged sailor,  
Bringing freedom to our seas.  
For these and countless others,  
This is why we ride!

For the ever watchful Airman,  
Securing our skies as we sleep.  
For the hundreds of school children,  
Who sing our Nation’s hymn.  
For all the grieving families,  
Who wear the stars of gold.  
For these and countless others,  
This is why we ride!

Loud rumble gives way to silence,  
And our journey sees its end.  
We soon begin to say goodbye,  
Once new acquaintances – now old friends.  
Though this year’s mission is complete,  
One thing shall remain.  
For these and countless others, This –  
This is why we ride!

## **A KIND GESTURE**

By Big Pete

About 5:30 one morning I was pulling into a gas station in Wytheville, VA, to gas up for the day. As I pulled up next to the pump, an elderly lady in her late 70's whom I had seen sitting nearby in her car pulled in next to me. She rolled down her window and asked me if she could please pay for my gas, as it was the only way she and her husband could think of to help and thank us for what we were doing. I was both shocked and moved, and thanked her profusely for her kind gesture. She couldn't wait to get home to tell her husband who was unable to leave the house due to his health issues. We shook hands and said goodbye with tears in our eyes. I still tear up thinking about an 80 year old lady, who waited in the dark for a 65 year old biker in full leather to come by so she could say "Thank You."

## **TWO STORIES FROM THE RUN**

By Diann "Mojo" McKee

Because the Run For The Wall ride is so dynamic from the myriad of people, places, communities, and stops, stories become abundant. The days go by so quickly, believe it or not, that everything starts to run together, and you can't remember where you were when a specific incident happened. Well, I had two separate incidents happen that showed there are still many good people in this country. One was with a fellow rider, an FNG, and the second with a young lady (college-age student) who didn't even know who I was or where I lived.

The first story is with Russ. Russ, an FNG from Montana, accidentally knocked my bike over in Monroe, LA, while we all were eating the always-awaited-for, delicious dinner of Cajun food. The parking lot was packed tighter than a can of sardines, and he was trying to slowly get out when something on his bike knocked mine over. It broke one of my mirrors, and luckily my bike didn't push the Harley beside mine over. Russ was heartsick and beside himself, but he stayed right there till Wicked and I finally came out to leave to tell us what happened. Long story short, we got it ordered through the Honda shop in Chattanooga, TN, and had the shop replace it in a few days. Russ willingly paid for it all. We even joked about it afterwards. This incident could've left a bad taste in anyone's mouth if it had been someone who knocked the bike and then just left. But despite his experiencing deep emotions during the run as FNGs always do, Russ stayed and did the honorable thing.

The second story truly shows the goodness of strangers. Wicked and I were on our way home, on I-20, riding through rainy Shreveport, LA. I have a soft helmet bag that I use to store my doo-rags, spare chaps, neckerchiefs, etc. and that I carry on my trunk rack, secured by my purple cargo net. Done that many, many times. Well, we stopped at the TX Welcome Center right at the LA/TX state line for a break, and, as we get off the bikes, I see that my bag is gone—yet the cargo net is still hooked and secured! How in the world did that bag slip out of that net?! My disbelief quickly turns into despair, because when Wicked asked what was in it, I remembered that I had put my RFTW vest in it. Talk about heartsick. I could buy everything else in it, but the vest—no way could I replace the special patches and pins. As we get back on the road, I'm already thinking of how to replace the vest and getting in touch with StitchNBitch (Janice) to re-make the patches for me. Janice Wentworth makes ALL the RFTW patches that are distributed to leadership and the workers. Imagine our utter amazement when, as we stopped in Arlington for the night, Wicked had a phone message from "Pops," the SR Coordinator, that a young lady had my bag! She was driving behind us (don't know how far back) when she saw it fly off the bike in the rain. It took her two times to circle back onto I-20 to pull off on the shoulder and pick it up. Since there was no identification at all in the bag, all she had to go on was reading the RFTW patches and my Road-Name patch "Mojo." She apparently Googled "Run For The Wall" and its website thoroughly enough

to start making phone calls and finally got Pops' number to explain what she found. I was ecstatic, and we called her immediately to thank her and hear her story. Her phone's area code registered from Ohio, but she lives in Shreveport.

What a wonderful ending to that story, huh? We got the bag back within the week. It's really humbling to see the goodness of someone who went way out of their way to do something nice for a complete stranger—and not knowing the outcome as they're doing it. How many of us would turn around on an interstate—not once but twice—to see if we could return something flying out of a vehicle or off a bike? It surely makes me think twice now about really wanting to “pay it forward.”

What lesson was learned? Keep some type of I.D. in or on your bags! We all know this when we fly, but it never occurred to me that it would be important while on a bike trip. Even more important, though, is the lesson of giving back to others. Paying it forward...that's what it's all about.

*The poem below was written by "Ice Cube," a 12-year-old who rode with All The Way on RFTW this year, with her Grandfather.*

### **The Soldiers Cross**

Amazing beyond her comprehension stands a statue.  
Beautiful rays across the field touch the metal.  
A man stands within the crowd staring at this piece.  
Distraught, distant, defeated, deceased goes through my mind.  
Gratitude concerning the brave men and women who proudly wear our nation's uniform.  
American patriots have sadly died wearing our nation's uniform.  
Endless upon her imagination flow the emotions through her mind.  
Boots, rifle, helmet are the pieces that make you stop and stare.  
Heads lowered, shoulders slumped, and men saluting are part of the pieces of my canvas.  
Looking past the crowd I feel a sense of strength.  
Strength within our soldiers dedicated to the land of the free.  
I lifted my head, looked beyond the light, and saw the Soldiers Cross.

(Composed by Serena "Ice Cube" Balderas, 2014)



---

## ► OTHER STORIES

### NEW MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT

Retired Marine Cpl. Kyle Carpenter, 24, received the Medal of Honor for heroism in Afghanistan in 2010. He is only the second living Marine to receive the award for actions during the Global War on Terrorism. He is also the youngest living MOH Recipient.

On Nov. 21, 2010, Carpenter covered a grenade with his own body to save a fellow Marine. At the time, the two with Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines, were manning a rooftop post at the newly established Patrol Base Dakota in the Marjah district of Helmand province.

The new base was several kilometers south of PB Beatley, much closer to insurgent strongholds, and Fox Company had taken regular harassing fire, including grenade attacks that had wounded two Marines the day before.



Carpenter says it is difficult to remember exactly what happened in the moments leading up to the detonation, but those who served with him say they are confident he covered the grenade to save Lance Cpl. Nicholas Eufrazio. Eufrazio did not die, but sustained grave brain injuries from shrapnel, despite Carpenter's sacrifice.

When Marine Corps Times first reported in March that Carpenter had been tapped for the MOH, fellow Marines said they never doubted he deserved the medal.

Blake Schreiber who was present during the attack recounted what he saw.

“I could only see half their bodies; you could see Kyle falling down toward [the grenade],” Schreiber said. “I had to look away for a quick second. And that’s when the boom went off. There was screaming, everybody moving fast. The reaction time was insane.”



Because the fortified position blocked a direct line of sight, no Marine actually saw Carpenter on the grenade. But a corpsman’s assessment and a post-blast analysis by explosive ordnance technicians left no doubt among those who were there that day that Carpenter had sacrificed himself.

When Marines turned Carpenter over, they saw that he had lost most of his jaw, fractured his right arm in more than 30 places, lost an eye and sustained a host of other grave injuries. They also found the grenade’s spoon squarely under his torso.

“When EOD did a post-blast analysis, they said there’s no way that he didn’t jump on it,” said Michael Tinari, then in Carpenter’s platoon, who had been at Camp Dwyer, in the Garmsir district, when the Marines were wounded. When Tinari heard that Carpenter had sacrificed himself in an attempt to shield his friend, he said he didn’t doubt it for a moment.

“I will tell you Kyle is probably the most genuine person you’ll ever meet,” he said. “He’s the most polite person, he’s genuine. You’ll never meet anyone like Kyle Carpenter, I assure you of that.”

Since Carpenter’s heroism in Afghanistan, followed by a remarkable recovery that included more than 30 surgeries, he has emerged as an inspirational figure who loves snowboarding, sky diving and endurance sports. He has appeared on several national TV shows, eventually completed a Marine Corps Marathon and began an undergraduate degree at the University of South Carolina this year. He was medically retired July 30 during a small ceremony at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland.

The fact that there were no direct witnesses may have contributed to the long lag between the time of the incident and the official announcement of the award. By law, a formal recommendation for the Medal of Honor must come within three years of the combat action for which it is awarded.

Carpenter was found lying face-down directly over the blast area, his helmet riddled with holes and his gear melted. He was “literally wounded from the top of his head to his feet,” according to one of the doctors who treated him.

Carpenter, the youngest living recipient of the Medal of Honor, spent five weeks in a coma and more than two and a half years in the hospital undergoing nearly 40 surgeries — including brain surgery. Doctors had to remove shrapnel from his head and repair a collapsed lung, fractured fingers, and a right arm that was broken in more than 30 places. He received a new prosthetic eye, a new jaw, new teeth, and multiple skin grafts.

*The below story was written by Lowell Tonips of Raton, NM (a fuel stop on CR). He first heard of RFTW in May 2013 when he ran into FNGs Terry and Bill Braid in Raton at breakfast while they were waiting for the pack to*

*get there. Lowell was very intrigued by RFTW and this year made some wood-burned plaques to honor the RFTW's return to Raton. RFTW took the plaque to the wall, and now he wants to make another to let the riders know what they mean to him and the residents of Raton. Lowell told Terry Sharp, who passed on this letter to us, that he told one of the residents afterward that he was finally home. This is why we ride.*

## **THE DAY THE HEROES CAME TO TOWN**

By Lowell Tonips

Raton, NM

It started out as any day in small town America, not much happening ... yet, but this was to be a special day. I had not planned to be a part of anything, just go and see what was happening.

Then they came down the Interstate and exited and came into the service station to be refueled—so many, more bikes than I had ever seen. I had some art work on display, concerning Vietnam veterans and veterans in general. After fueling up, the riders were milling around, some going over and reading the plaques. They were very interested in them—they even asked who did them, and some ladies nearby pointed me out as the one who did the plaques. The guys would come over and thank me for doing the plaques and thank me for my service.

I had NEVER had so many thank you's, but being a Vietnam vet, it was a welcome greeting. Most Vietnam vets cherish this greeting, I am, certainly, not a special person but these guys, the real heroes, made me feel so special by thanking me for the sentiments on the plaques. What a feeling.

Another of the guys, a Marine, came over to where I was. He was actually crying and told me that I had stated on the plaques exactly what he was feeling but didn't know how to say it. Remember when you were young and crying and someone came and put an arm around your shoulders? I put my arm around his shoulders and I know that it made him feel better, it made ME feel better. Again, just a special feeling.

I had ventured down the street and was returning when I heard a lady yell, Sir! Sir! Knowing she was not yelling to me, I continued, and she yelled again, Sir! Sir! Then I heard her footsteps on the asphalt as she was running. She approached me from behind, tapped me on the shoulder, and handed me a small card, about the size of a business card. I thanked her, and without looking any closer at it, stuck it in my pocket and we both went on our way. Afterward as I returned home I was emptying my pockets and found the card. This time I saw the other side, and it said: "Dear American Hero, for your service and dedication to our country and my individual freedom, I am forever grateful. Please accept this small token of my appreciation." Another very special moment. With the number of Vietnam veterans all around, I knew that she could not have given one to each of the veterans, but she came, caught up to me, and gave it to ME. In mentioning this to another person, this person pointed up and said: "You were supposed to get this." Special moment? You bet!

A gentleman and his wife came up and were reading one of the plaques. He mentioned that it was nice but wondered what something on it meant, and as I happened to be right there, I explained it to him, asked if he was in Vietnam and he replied, no, he wasn't—but he and his wife had lost a son in Afghanistan, I had a feeling that he thought that this whole day was about Vietnam and Vietnam veterans, I told him not to feel that way, that his son's name was as important as any on the "Wall" and that he should be proud to have raised such a brave son, I thanked him and his family for the sacrifice that their family made in sacrificing a family member to the service of this country, I hope he left there feeling a little better. A special moment? Yes!



I had met two gentlemen the year prior to this and asked them to tell me a bit about what they do on the Run. They explained it to me and I was amazed, appreciative, and just happy to learn of all that they do. And again, being a Vietnam vet myself, I just felt like I had to make a plaque thanking the riders.

When the Run came through town this year, I had the plaque finished, and as the riders were being honored with a small program, the emcee had the plaque up on stage and read it to the people of the town. It got a great ovation, and what a special feeling! But then they saw that I was nearby and hauled me on stage and introduced me to the crowd, telling them this is the gentleman who made the plaque. Another great ovation, a special feeling. This plaque was then taken on to Washington to be displayed at The Wall. What an honor that was, but the plaque was to thank the riders.

I have to thank the two gentlemen who told me about the Run—they were the inspiration for the plaque. Thanks, gentlemen. One of these gentlemen knew of a DVD that was made into a documentary of RFTW and he told me that he would like for me to receive one, so he saw to it that I got one. This is my most prized possession; everyone should see this. Well, when I decided to purchase a couple more DVDs, I was ordering them and spoke with a very special gentleman. He was tolerant and patient with me in listening to my experiences of the most special day that I had. I thanked him, also.

In closing our conversation, he said to me: Thanks for your service and Welcome Home. I told him that I had not returned home until "The Day the Heroes Came to Town." I chose that title because this was the most special day of my life, and I've lived a few, as I'm 74 years old.

I mentioned to another person that this day was not about me but it turned out to be MY day. I have never been in awe of so many people, but these people were my people; these people were who I am.

I had also mentioned to someone that the past January was 47 years since I returned from Vietnam, and in that time four people thanked me for my service. Four.4 people—but "The Day the Heroes Came to Town" changed all of that. It takes a special person, or another Vietnam vet, to understand all of this. I know that in most cases, they are the same.

During this very special day, I must have met 70 or 80 people, all very sincere in their compliments. They are the ones most responsible for this being my most special day, and I cannot thank them enough.

I would like to ask anyone out there: Have you ever had a real honest-to-God hero come up and make you feel so special? And this all happened "The Day the Heroes Came to Town."

*Katrina Henson-Bennett is a third-grade teacher at Valley Elementary School in Smithers, West Virginia, where RFTW CR Ambassadors stop to talk to the children and attend an assembly. Katrina wrote the below poem when she returned from her first trip to the Wall in 2013. This year she had the privilege of riding with the Ambassadors to the school, and she read the poem for the first time publicly then.*

### **A SILENT SOLDIER'S RIDE**

By Katrina "Hurricane" Henson-Bennett

He graduated from high school in 1969,  
He didn't know which road to choose,  
Was it college or a job?

They had lost so many things,  
And oh so many friends.  
Some even came back home,

There were so many things,  
That he could now pursue.

But then one day, His choice was made,  
To fight for the Red, White, and Blue.  
The letter came in the mail,  
And he nervously opened it.  
It said "This is your number,  
On the Selective Service List."

He called up his buddy,  
And he had gotten one.  
So they made a pact,  
To seal their act,  
And then went down to join.

They were young and strong and proud,  
As they signed upon the line.  
They were going to be soldiers,  
And everything was fine.

So off they went to boot camp,  
And they all survived the test.  
They trained and trained as soldiers,  
So they could do their best.

Then one day the CO came,  
And said "Boys the time has come,  
To go and serve your country,  
You're going to Vietnam."  
"Grab your gear and have no fear,  
We're going off to fight.  
To help people we don't know,  
Get back some of their rights."

So off they went, such brave young souls,  
With dignity and pride.  
To do what they were told to do,  
They followed orders in stride.  
They fought and fell,  
And lived through hell,  
For the Old Red, White, and Blue.  
They lost many friends,  
And some lost limbs,  
Doing what they had to do.

Finally the war was over,  
They were going home.  
They couldn't wait  
To get back to the States,  
And the country they'd loved and known.

But when they got to America,  
Things were not the same.

Without some of their limbs.

And many didn't come back,  
What would be done about them?  
Those faithful ones, left all alone,  
Those ones we left behind.  
Do we forget our POWs?  
And the ones we could not find?  
Do we leave them there to despair  
And turn an eye that's blind?

But our government did forget,  
And said, "Let's leave well enough  
alone.  
We have peace with the Vietnamese,  
And we brought you guys back home."

So as time moved on,  
And the war grew old,  
People forgot to care.  
And all the thoughts of MIAs,  
Vanished into thin air.

Until one day a man,  
Riding on his bike.  
Said, "I must do something,  
To make this injustice right."  
So he decided on a mission,  
As he rode along.  
He needed to bring recognition,  
And bring those soldiers home.  
He rode his bike with passion,  
Others to defend.  
From California to Washington DC,  
His colleagues depended on him.

And soon others joined him,  
And with passion rode along.  
Then soon a tradition started,  
To bring those soldiers home.

And so the Run For The Wall  
Became a national treasure,  
And all of those who ride with them,  
Are proud beyond measure.

They ride through mountains, deserts,  
and plains,  
And many a city and town.  
People recognize them,  
And present them with their crowns.  
Of cheers, hoots, and hollers,  
Flags waving and many thanks.  
And many salutes to the troops

They walked into a different world,  
Of bitterness and blame.  
They were not greeted with respect,  
No Ticker Tape Parades.  
They were called names for what they'd  
done,  
Spat upon and degraded.

Why couldn't people understand?  
That was not their choice!  
In the military ranks,  
The CO has the only voice.

"We did what we were told to do,  
A humble soldier said,"  
"And we did it with respect and pride,  
And many were left dead."

ignored,  
And left on Vietnam's banks.

My father served in WWII,  
My friends in Vietnam.  
And although I didn't get to serve,  
So proud of them I Am!

So ride with heart and passion,  
Such a difference you have made.  
Because of you all those due,  
Have finally gotten their parade.

You have made such a difference,  
In so many people's lives.  
Keep riding brave, dear soldiers,  
Ride for those who didn't survive!

**God Bless You And Welcome Home!**

## **THE RICHARD FAULKNER STORY**

Richard Faulkner volunteered for the Army Air Forces on October 10, 1942, two days after he turned 18. Less than a year had passed since the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, and signing up, he believed, was his duty. That December, he said goodbye to his family outside the Finger Lakes town of Skaneateles, N.Y., and headed for Syracuse, where he swore his oath of enlistment. He trained for nearly a year: First basic, then airplane and engine and gunnery school. One month before his 19th birthday, Faulkner — Dick to those who knew him — began ball turret gunner training on the B-17 in Texas. The job would change his life. Faulkner arrived in England in January 1944 and was later assigned to the 350th Squadron, 100th Bomb Group at Thorpe Abbots. The group had already sustained such catastrophic losses it was nicknamed "The Bloody Hundredth."

Staff Sgt. Faulkner and the nine other crew members on the bomber called the Berlin Playboy completed five training flights in the run-up to their first bombing mission over Augsburg, Germany, on the foggy morning of March 18. The flight would be their last. Somewhere over Northern France, the B-17s came under heavy antiaircraft fire and fell out of formation. As the planes came back together, the Berlin Playboy was struck by another bomber and split in half. Few turret gunners, squeezed into a sphere below the belly of the B-17, had room for parachutes. But Faulkner had half-fastened one to himself for the mission. As the broken plane sank toward Earth, he forced open the door, fastened the other side of the chute and fell face-first into the sky. As the landscape came into focus, he tried to deploy his parachute. Nothing. Faulkner, still in a free fall, unsnapped the cover and yanked on the pilot chute. The canopy opened, its harness striking him so hard in the jaw he passed out.



**Staff Sgt. Richard Faulkner, standing far left, was the only surviving crew member of their B-17 bomber**

Faulkner came to beneath the tangled silken canopy on a hill somewhere near the Nazi-occupied town of Dieppe, France. He alone had survived the crash. He scrambled into a thicket, buried himself with underbrush and waited silently for hours. After dark, the staff sergeant decided, when he was sure the Germans were gone, he'd make his way to a nearby farm. The farmer had already spotted the American, though. They met as dusk fell, the Frenchman stopping short when he noticed the pistol under Faulkner's arm. "I'm an American," he told the farmer, who refused to come closer until Faulkner had relinquished the gun. The Frenchman buried the gun in a hole in the ground and led the airman to a barn, where Faulkner would spend his first cold night hiding from the enemy. The farmer roused him before daylight and brought him into the house. Inside a bedroom, the farmer pointed at him and began speaking in French. Faulkner understood only after a woman in the home brought him a mirror. He was covered in dried blood, his knees and ankles swollen painfully. The man and woman helped him clean up, gave him hot water in which to soak his knees. On the third day, his rescuers secreted him to another home where he stayed only until nightfall.

The Germans were looking for the missing American. Faulkner left after dark through a window and spent much of the night walking slowly on his swollen legs. He'd avoided the Germans but the family did not. They were executed for their role in the American's disappearance into the French underground, Faulkner was later told. Faulkner's next stop — at the home of a couple and their middle-aged daughter early the next morning — would be his longest. Here he stayed for eight days, keeping to a bedroom when the family was home and venturing into the rest of the house only after they left for the day. They brought him meals and a chamber pot and water to bathe with. On the seventh day, a German soldier showed up at the door and demanded to search the house. Faulkner hid behind a door as the soldier went room to room. A man on a motorcycle whisked Faulkner away early the next morning. Wearing a beret and scarf, the baby-faced Faulkner would now hide in plain sight, presumably passing as a young French boy. The riders came harrowingly close to German troops when they stopped to change a flat tire and again when they stopped at a cafe for lunch. So many people were out, the man on the motorcycle explained, because it was Easter Sunday.

At a train station the next day in Amiens, Faulkner's escort bought him a ticket and a French magazine. They kept their distance on the train car, the staff sergeant with the magazine to his face, too terrified to move much. They traveled to Neufchâteau, according to the sign at the station where they disembarked, some 300 miles east of where his plane had gone down. The family that took Faulkner in tried to teach him French over the few days that followed, finally giving up because, they told him, he had the wrong accent. "Keep your mouth shut," they told him in broken English, and pretend like you don't understand if someone speaks to you. That was easy enough, Faulkner thought, since he couldn't. Soon, he was on his way to Paris, this time in a truck with two other American gunners taken in by the French Resistance after their planes had been shot down. Only Faulkner would make it successfully out of the city.

The three Americans were to follow the resistance fighter one by one from an apartment in Paris: left out of the building, to the end of the block. From there, train tickets in hand, they would head to the subway, jumping on just as it pulled away and scattering inconspicuously across the train car. Faulkner went first. When the two other gunners never showed up, their escort motioned for him to follow anyway. Faulkner had just missed the Gestapo, who arrested the two other Americans as they left the apartment. They would spend the rest of war in a German-controlled prison camp. The Germans, it seemed, were everywhere. On the crowded subway, he found himself next to a German officer and a guard with a machine gun. As the train pulled out with a lurch, the guard bumped into Faulkner, who in turn shot the soldier a dirty look. He was sure the journey would end then, sure they would see the terror in his face and know his true identity. But the Germans only exchanged a few words, said “merci beaucoup” to the boy in the beret and turned their attention elsewhere. The train carried them westward, toward the town of Morlaix on the Brittany Peninsula, at the mouth of the English Channel.

Faulkner rode to an empty farmhouse in the back of a truck, hidden between barrels and hay bales. Here he joined up with an American fighter pilot, a British intelligence officer and a trio who’d broken out of a prisoner-of-war camp. French resistance workers came with guns and food. At midnight, four Frenchmen went out to watch a nearby German machine gun post with orders to kill if the soldiers spotted them. If they weren’t spotted, they were to do nothing, so they could use the route again. Two hours later, the group made their way single-file across a mine field, guided by dots of phosphorus placed by French resistance fighters. The Frenchmen stopped at the top of an embankment near the machine gun post. The rest continued on, sliding one by one down a muddy gully to the beach. Hours passed. The British officer flashed a signal out over the water, and just before dawn, two rubber rafts rowed to shore. The rafts carried them to a pair of torpedo boats, where they split into two groups, Faulkner and the fighter pilot in one, the rest in the other.

The two Americans were ushered down into the crew quarters, the hatch closed over them, leaving them in darkness. The boat had just begun to move when they came under German fire, shells smashing into the plywood vessel. The hatch opened. Was either man a gunner, the skipper called down. His had just been killed. Faulkner rushed on deck, where the dead gunner’s bloody body still lay. Just as he fired a test shot, two British fighter planes came to their rescue. The German U-boats scattered. But it was daylight now, and they were in enemy waters. Faulkner maintained his post at the machine gun until they safely reached harbor, just in case. In an English port, Faulkner changed into a British uniform. He left behind his beret and scarf and the French magazine he’d clung to like a lifeline. It was April 16, 1944, 29 days since the crash.

By the time he made it back to the 100th Bomb Group, he knew hardly any of the men. Most had arrived after he went missing. Faulkner packed up some of his personal possessions — his wallet and photos and letters — and sent them home to his mother. He shyly answered questions for half an hour before a crowd of some 250 on how to evade the enemy. A couple of days later, he and two officers who had also recently escaped the Germans met with then-Col. Curtis LeMay, who would become chief of the Air Force nearly two decades later. They spoke for an hour about their experiences and how the military might better prepare men who fall behind enemy lines. Faulkner would not see combat again. He returned to New York on May 4, 1944, and spent the rest of the war stateside training B-29 crews. When the Army Air Forces offered the staff sergeant a Purple Heart, he declined. He did not feel right accepting a decoration when his nine crew mates were not alive to do the same.

Faulkner was discharged Oct. 25, 1945, three years after he’d volunteered. He went home, got a job as a lineman for the New York State Electric and Gas Corp., married and had two sons and a daughter. He tried to forget the war. Faulkner never said much about his time in Europe, his daughter-in-law, Mary Ellen Faulkner, said in an interview with Air Force Times. He had done his duty, he told his family, and that was all. Three grandchildren came along and four great-grandchildren. He quietly settled into a retirement community in Auburn, N.Y. A few years ago, as Faulkner neared the end of his eighth decade, he told his family about the

Purple Heart, how he'd turned it down. Maybe he should have accepted it after all, for his grandchildren who were having children of their own.

A relative, aware of the significance of his service, sat down with Faulkner, "picked his brain and wrote it all down," Mary Ellen said. "That's how we got it all out of him." The six-page story provided a startlingly detailed account through the French countryside, through Nazi-occupied Paris and across the English Channel. Faulkner even agreed to share his story with a few school groups. Maybe, Mary Ellen thought, it wasn't too late for that Purple Heart.



**Rep. Dan Maffei, D-N.Y., pins the Purple Heart on Richard Faulkner on March 8**

When she mentioned the idea to Faulkner, now 89, he told her he was sure it was. A letter, she responded, wouldn't hurt anything. Mary Ellen contacted Faulkner's Congressman, Rep. Dan Maffei (D-NY), whose office sent paperwork allowing the lawmaker's staff to look into Faulkner's military record. He'd earned it all right, Maffei's office told the Faulknors, and he was still eligible to receive it. When Mary Ellen told her father-in-law the news, she recalled, "He said, 'OK, they can just send it to me in the mail.'" But Mary Ellen insisted on a presentation. "How many adult children get to watch that honor?" she said. "So we thought we'd arranged just a little ceremony." Maffei pinned the Purple Heart onto the veteran's striped dress shirt at a March 8 ceremony at Faulkner's retirement home. He accepted it quietly, Mary Ellen said, declining to speak afterward. Some 150 people were there for the ceremony: Family and friends and reporters and even folks from the New York State Electric and Gas Corp. who hung a giant American flag for the occasion. In the days that followed, the story of the man who never wanted any fanfare went around the world, appearing on the nightly news, in newspapers and online as far away as England, where 70 years ago it all began.

*The following article was written in July 2013, but it is such a beautiful story that when I came across it, I knew our riders would want to read it, late or not. Jim Huggins was a former president of VVA Chapter 785 of Orange County, CA, and he participated in RFTW for many years, helping with 785's Waterpoint and also as a chase vehicle. His wife, Joyce, always accompanied Jim and brought along her sewing machine so she could sew patches on vests as RFTW traveled across the country.*

**VETERAN'S WIDOW CARRIES ON PATRIOTIC LEGACY**

By David Whiting, Orange County Register  
July 2013

Earlier this year, in a hotel lobby just miles from the Washington, D.C., museum housing the enormous flag that inspired "The Star-Spangled Banner," Joyce Huggins huddled over a sewing machine, stitching the stars and stripes on black leather bikers' vests.

She always sews the patches in the same place: top front, just above the heart. These vests are worn by men who fought for our country.

As we approach the Fourth of July, Joyce is fond of reminding people what Independence Day is really about: hard-won freedom. But this year, for the first time since she got married more than four decades ago, she won't share the celebration with her husband, Jim Huggins, a Navy clerk during the Vietnam War.

Just days after Joyce sewed those red, white and blue patches, Jim died from a heart attack while returning from a trip to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall.

At a recent memorial service in Costa Mesa, veterans gathered to support Joyce. One by one, they hugged the widow, sharing the loss of their brother-in-arms. The affair was modest. The cinder-block building was the former National Guard Armory; the food was potluck, with fried chicken and apple pie. Accompanying herself on an autoharp, Joyce sang the theme song for each branch of the military. She concluded with "God Bless America."

Yet this celebration of Jim's life was, in its own way, as spectacular as any fireworks show.

The first thing you need to know about Joyce is the first thing you see when meeting her: She wears bonnets. Not any old bonnets, mind you. Joyce wears "Little House on the Prairie"-style bonnets. And, yes, she sews each one herself, thank you very much.

I first came across Joyce before she'd lost Jim, during Run for the Wall, a motorcycle ride across America by Vietnam veterans to honor fallen comrades and find some healing.

Fittingly, I spot Joyce's bonnet at dawn in Oakley, Kan. There are hundreds of Harley-Davidson motorcycles around us, but none are for Joyce and Jim. Unable to ride a motorcycle because of health issues, Jim is nearby, moving about on a red electric scooter.

Joyce looks at me from behind thick glasses and explains that they're traveling by van; two veterans drive while they ride in the back. It wasn't long ago, she explains, that they ferried drinking water to pit stops along the route. But this year, Jim is in especially poor health, and it's all she can do to help her husband.

She says Jim suffers from a variety of Agent Orange-related diseases and tells me that if it weren't for a ruling a few years ago acknowledging the ripple effects of Agent Orange – a powerful chemical defoliant used during the Vietnam War – the couple would be destitute. Along with much health care, the Department of Veterans Affairs paid for the scooter and the little elevator on the van that gives Jim a window to the world.

But Joyce's story isn't a tale of woe. It's a story of patriotism and triumph.

Jim and Joyce both went to Santa Ana Valley High School, and watching them navigate for 3,000 miles, you'd think they were high school sweethearts. But as teenagers, they didn't know each other.

Still, Jim knew Joyce before Joyce knew Jim.

Jim joined the Navy and spotted Joyce in a friend's snapshot of a local beach party. Then and there, he decided he was going to marry the girl in the picture. He even taped it next to his bunk aboard the ship.

Without knowing it, Joyce in her own way followed Jim's example of public service. Small and nearsighted, Joyce knew she'd have a tough time joining the military. So she joined AmeriCorps VISTA, a service program that fights poverty in the U.S.

She served in North Carolina, and it was there where she not only gave, but also received. Already versed in the ways of the autoharp from a church camp in Orange County, she sang to the mountain people. In return, they taught her how to sew bonnets.

A fan of hats and scarves, Joyce said the bonnets felt cozy, protective. Throughout the years, she explains, she's probably made hundreds of bonnets. After wearing one for a bit, she usually gives it away.

Some might call Joyce eccentric. They would be wrong. In truth, Joyce is fiercely independent. When "Little House on the Prairie" was popular, kids would sometimes hum the theme song when they saw her. But Joyce didn't mind. In fact, she considered it an honor.

In 1969, Jim was on leave in Santa Ana after serving in the Gulf of Tonkin. He tracked down the girl in the photo to Joyce's living room. Yes, it was love at first sight. They ran off to Las Vegas and got married.

After the war, the couple scraped together enough money to buy a house. Jim worked as a carpenter. The couple had a son. Joyce worked as a seamstress to make ends meet.

But Jim suffered from cancer, diabetes, detached retinas and high blood pressure. Medical bills mounted. After 20 years, the couple lost their home. For the next 12 years, they lived in a van or in Jim's shop in Santa Ana. Good times were when they housesat for UC Irvine professors on leave.

Yet every time Joyce drove Jim to the VA hospital in Long Beach, she left things she sewed: storage bags to hang on wheelchairs, lap cozies, quilts.

After a retroactive payout from the VA, the couple bought a modest home in Hesperia. But Jim, former president of the Vietnam Veterans of America chapter in Costa Mesa, wasn't content to stay in Hesperia during this year's 25th anniversary of Run for the Wall.

With yellow sunflowers practically bursting from her bonnet, Joyce told me Jim figured the ride was his last hurrah. And it was.

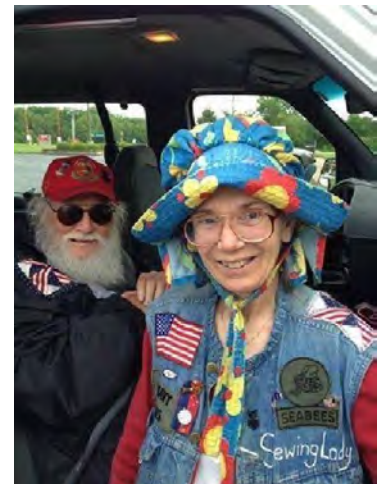
After honoring his brothers-in-arms one last time at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Jim died quietly coming home while crossing the desert in Arizona. As Joyce told me about it, she smiled.

"He wanted to be with his buddies, the people he loved. The desert was absolutely gorgeous. And he got to see America still vibrant, flags flying, people doing things right."

Then, Joyce shared a little secret. Her favorite song is "America the Beautiful," and her favorite lines are some of the least known:

*"O beautiful for heroes proved in liberating strife, / who more than self their country loved / and mercy more than life!"*

Mercy, the way of true warriors.





*RFTW Editor's note: Joyce passed away on November 2, just five months after her beloved husband Jim.*

*Jim and Joyce Huggins*

---

## ► VA NEWS

### **BURN PIT REGISTRY NOW OPEN**

All Desert Shield/Storm veterans, and post-9/11 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan and deployments into Djibouti are encouraged to log onto the VA's new burn pit registry to report exposures to airborne hazards such as smoke from burn pits, oil-well fires, and other pollutants or exposures encountered during deployment, as well as other health concerns.

A registry is required to properly document whether such exposures harmed or caused other illnesses or diseases. VA officials acknowledge that troops may suffer from illnesses related to environmental exposures, and has established a surveillance program for service members exposed to the known carcinogen hexavalent chromium from a water treatment facility near Basra in 2003, but VA also said there is not yet enough scientific evidence to prove that exposure to burn pits causes long-term health problems.

Log onto the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry at <https://veteran.mobilehealth.va.gov/AHBurnPitRegistry/index.html#page/home>.

### **VA GULF WAR CLAIMS Four of Every Five Denied**

While the Veterans Affairs Department encourages former troops with Gulf War illness symptoms to file claims for health care and benefits, only one in five applications are approved, according to data obtained by Military Times. In 2011 — the last time VA published data on claims for undiagnosed illnesses related to service in the 1991 Gulf War — a total of 42,811 vets requested service connection for their symptoms, with 21,072, or 49 percent, approved. Yet new figures provided to Rep. Kerry Bentivolio (R-MI) by VA in April show 54,193 claims have been filed for Gulf War-related illnesses with 11,216 granted service connection — a denial rate of nearly 80 percent.

The figures come with caveats: They do not include compensation claims to Gulf War-era veterans who became sick while on active duty, and of those denied service connection for Gulf War illness, 52 percent are receiving compensation for another service-connected condition. Nonetheless, the low approval rate — and the discrepancies between the 2011 data and the more recent figures — has angered veteran advocates who have worked Gulf War illness issues for years. “VA prefers to deny the reality of the illness to keep benefits and wait lists down rather than address it honestly and aggressively pursue treatments while veterans suffer,” said Jim Binns, who heads the Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans’ Illnesses.

Bentivolio requested the updated information because VA had not published it since 2011. VA did not provide that data when it was requested by Military Times in May. On 3 JUN, Binns wrote a letter to acting VA

Secretary Sloan Gibson, White House Deputy Chief of Staff Rob Nabors and others asking for an investigation into the VA's handling of Gulf War-era claims as well as research. Binns said VA has sought to manipulate research, data and independent observations in an effort to deny benefits. "Like the Gulf War battlefield, VA is a toxic environment," Binns wrote.

## **RARE CANCER OF VIETNAM VETS**

Vietnam veterans were not warned about parasites in the water they drank and the fish they ate in Southeast Asia. Nobody ever mentioned the parasites could cause cancer.

Cholangiocarcinoma is a rare cancer of the bile ducts, sometimes called Fluke Cancer, which drain bile from the liver to the gallbladder and into the small intestine. Cholangiocarcinoma is most prevalent in people ages 50 to 70. About 200 cases of bile duct cancer are diagnosed in the United States each year. Often, it is diagnosed in advanced stages.

Symptoms are jaundice, clay-colored stools, itching, loss of appetite, weight loss, fever, chills, and abdominal and back pain. Symptoms seldom develop during the early stages. These symptoms don't usually develop in the early stages, so the cancer often is well advanced by the time it's discovered.

Treatments are surgery, liver transplant, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, photodynamic therapy, and biliary drainage.

The VA ruled in 2007 that cholangiocarcinoma was service-related. Vietnam veterans are now at the age that this cancer shows up, so they should watch for the above symptoms and get medical care immediately.

## **VAMC PHOENIX AZ UPDATE FBI Opens Investigation**

FBI Director James Comey on 11 JUN told members of the House Judiciary Committee that the bureau's Phoenix office has opened an investigation. The FBI is looking into allegations that VA staffers at its Phoenix facility lied about veterans' wait times for medical care so they could receive a bonus. "We will follow wherever the facts take us. The Phoenix office is where we opened it, because that was the primary locus of the original allegations. We are working with the VA IG," Comey said, responding to questions on if the FBI will expand its investigation. Multiple reports have found that the manipulation of wait time data at VA facilities is a systemic, nationwide issue. The decision comes after Richard Griffin, the VA's acting inspector general, told members of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee that it was investigating 69 VA facilities—not including Phoenix—for allegations including criminal wrongdoing. Griffin added that his office is working with DOJ, but it remains to be seen whether the Justice Department thinks that altering the wait times for veterans to receive care rises to the level of a criminal prosecution. "Once someone loses his job or gets criminally charged for doing this, it will no longer be a game. And that will be the shot heard around the system," he said. Lawmakers from both parties have increasingly called for a criminal investigation into whether VA officials potentially committed fraud by lying about wait times so they could meet performance measures that would—in turn—get them a bonus.

## **SERVICEMEMBERS' CIVIL RELIEF ACT How to Submit a Complaint**

The Justice Department has announced an enforcement action against the nation's largest servicer of federal and private student loans, Sallie Mae, which was found to be systematically violating the legal rights of U.S. service members. Sallie Mae has been ordered to pay \$96.6 million in restitution and penalties. Service members who have an issue with their loan servicers should submit a complaint to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). To get answers to your questions call the CFPB at 855-411- 2372). To submit a complaint:

- 1) Visit the CFPB website at [www.consumerfinance.gov/complaint](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/complaint);
  - 2) Call the toll-free phone number at 855-411-CFPB (2372) or TTY/TDD phone number at 855-729-CFPB (2372); or
  - 3) Fax the CFPB at 855-237-2392; or
  - 4) Mail a letter to: Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, P.O. Box 4503, Iowa City, IA 52244. Also, call the CFPB at 855-411-CFPB (2372) to get answers to your questions. [Source: Military.com article Jun 2, 2014 ++]
- 

## **► OTHER NEWS**

### ***PENDING LEGISLATION OF INTEREST TO VETERANS***

#### **H.R.32: MILITARY SURVIVING SPOUSES EQUITY ACT**

A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to repeal the requirement for reduction of survivor annuities under the Survivor Benefit Plan for military surviving spouses to offset the receipt of veterans dependency and indemnity compensation.

Sponsor: Rep Wilson, Joe [SC-2] (introduced 1/3/2013)      Related Bills: S.734

Committees: House Armed Services

Latest Major Action: 1/31/2013 Referred to House subcommittee. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

#### **H.R.164: DISABLED VET SPACE A TRAVEL**

A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit veterans who have a service-connected, permanent disability rated as total to travel on military aircraft in the same manner and to the same extent as retired members of the Armed Forces entitled to such travel.

Sponsor: Rep Bilirakis, Gus M. [FL-12] (introduced 1/4/2013)      Related Bills: S.346

Committees: House Armed Services

Latest Major Action: 1/31/2013 Referred to House subcommittee. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Readiness.

#### **H.R.241: VETERANS TIMELY ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE ACT**

A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish standards of access to care for veterans seeking health care from Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities, and for other purposes.

Sponsor: Rep Ross, Dennis A. [FL-15] (introduced 1/14/2013)

Committees: House Veterans' Affairs

## **POW/MIA FOREVER STAMP**

### **Formal Petition to USPS Planned**

John Fruit can't visit his uncle's final resting place because no one knows where it is. He hasn't forgotten his mom's older brother, who is one of more than 83,000 U.S. service members missing in action. Ralph V. Jackson was serving in an Army military police unit when he was sent out on a search and rescue mission on Nov. 30, 1950, in what's now North Korea. "Some mortars came in and hit near his jeep and apparently the jeep and my uncle ended up in a ravine. The jeep was found, he was not," said Fruit, 50, who served in the Marines in the 1980s. Jackson's family in Richland Center received a telegram reporting him missing in action. He was 20. Three years later the Army declared him dead.

It's part of the American military ethos to never leave anyone behind. But the reality is that in war it often happens. Planes disappear from radar. Soldiers sent out on patrol never come back. Dead and wounded on battlefields are overrun by the enemy. Ships sink beneath waves. Memories of the missing in action remain fresh in the minds of those who loved them. But for anyone else who has never been touched by the tragedy of losing a friend or family member in combat, it's easy to forget or simply not to know. That's why Wisconsin's American Legion as well as legionnaires in other states are trying to persuade the U.S. Postal Service to create a Forever stamp featuring the black POW/MIA flag. Because the POW/MIA flag was represented on a stamp in 1995 and is no longer in circulation, the U.S. Postmaster has declined to make it a Forever stamp.

"It's an effort by veterans to remember. We always remember," said Ken Rynes, Wisconsin commander of the American Legion. At last summer's American Legion state convention in Wisconsin, members began circulating petitions calling for the post office to create a POW/MIA flag Forever stamp. American Legion members will update their lists of signatures at the state convention in Appleton next month, later meet with Wisconsin's congressional delegation and make a formal petition to the U.S. Postal Service, said American Legion State Adjutant David Kurtz. "We feel the MIA/POW stamp would be an appropriate means to keep the issue alive in peoples' consciousness so they do remember the MIAs and the unknown fate that the families struggle with and the burden they continue to carry," Kurtz said. Attempts last year to pass legislation directing the Postmaster General to provide a Forever stamp honoring service members who have been prisoners or are missing and unaccounted for did not make it to the House floor.

---

## **► BRINGING THEM HOME**

### **CHOSIN RESERVOIR KIA COMES HOME**

On May 19th, 2014, the Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced that the remains of Marine **Cpl. Harold W. Reed, 23**, of Rochester, N.Y., missing from the Korean War, have been identified and were returned to his family for burial with full military honors on May 24th in Toledo, Ohio.

In November 1950, Reed was assigned to Weapons Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, when his unit disengaged from the enemy and began a fighting withdrawal to a more defensible position south near the village of Hagaru-ri.

On Nov. 29, 1950, Reed was killed in action from a missile wound while fighting on the western side of the Chosin Reservoir. For 63 years, the Marine's remains were buried with several hundred unidentified Korean War veterans.

Corporal Reed's remains were buried in 1954, after removal from a shallow grave near a creek in North Korea, with several hundred unidentified Korean War veterans in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific — commonly known as the Punch Bowl — in Honolulu.

## **SEVENTEEN RECOVERED FROM 1952**

The Department of Defense announced on June 25 that 17 service members have been recovered from a C-124 Globemaster aircraft that was lost on Nov. 22, 1952.

U.S. Army **Lt. Col. Lawrence S. Singleton, Pvt. James Green, Jr., and Pvt. Leonard A. Kittle**; U.S. Marine Corps **Maj. Earl J. Stearns**; U.S. Navy **Cmdr. Albert J. Seeboth**; U.S. Air Force **Col. Noel E. Hoblit, Col. Eugene Smith, Capt. Robert W. Turnbull, 1st Lt. Donald Sheda, 1st Lt. William L. Turner, Tech. Sgt. Engolf W. Hagen, Staff Sgt. James H. Ray, Senior Airman Marion E. Hooton, Airman 1st Class Carroll R. Dyer, Airman 1st Class Thomas S. Lyons, Airman 1st Class Thomas C. Thigpen, and Airman Howard E. Martin** have been recovered and will be returned to their families for burial with full military honors.

On Nov. 22, 1952, a C-124 Globemaster aircraft crashed while en route to Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska, from McChord Air Force Base, Washington. There were 11 crewmen and 41 passengers on board. Adverse weather conditions precluded immediate recovery attempts. In late November and early December 1952, search parties were unable to locate and recover any of the service members.

On June 9, 2012, an Alaska National Guard (AKNG) UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter crew spotted aircraft wreckage and debris while conducting a training mission over the Colony Glacier, immediately west of Mount Gannett. Three days later another AKNG team landed at the site to photograph the area and they found artifacts at the site that related to the wreckage of the C-124 Globemaster. Later that month, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and Joint Task Force team conducted a recovery operation at the site and recommended it continued to be monitored for possible future recovery operations. In 2013, additional artifacts were visible and JPAC conducted further recovery operations.

DoD scientists from the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) used forensic tools and circumstantial evidence in the identification of 17 service members. The remaining personnel have yet to be recovered and the crash site will continued to be monitored for future possible recovery.

## **KOREAN WAR SGT'S REMAINS RETURNED**

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced 11 JUN that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing from the Korean War, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. Army **Sgt. Delbert D. Kovalcheck**, 20, of E. Millsboro, Pa., will be buried June 11, in Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. In late 1950, Kovalcheck was assigned to Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 31st Regimental Combat Team (RCT), deployed east of the Chosin Reservoir, in North Korea. On Nov. 29, 1950, the 31st RCT, known historically as Task Force Faith, began a fighting withdrawal to a more defensible position. Following the battle, Kovalcheck was reported missing in

action. Between 1991 and 1994, North Korea turned over the U.S. 208 boxes of human remains believed to contain 350 - 400 U.S. servicemen who fought during the war. North Korean documents, turned over with some of the boxes, indicated that some of the remains were recovered from Sinhung-ri, near the area where Kovalcheck was believed to have died. To identify Kovalcheck's remains, scientists from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools, including DNA comparisons. Two types of DNA were used; mitochondrial DNA, which matched his maternal-line niece, and Y-STR DNA, which matched his paternal-line cousin.

## **REMAINS OF THREE WWII KIA RETURNED**

The Defense POW/MIA Office announced the identification of remains belonging to three American servicemen who had been missing in action since World War II. Identified are:

Army **PFC. Cecil E. Harris**, 179th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Division, lost in France on Jan. 2, 1945. He was accounted for May 29 and will be buried with full military honors on a date and location to be determined.

Army Air Forces Staff **Sgt. Robert E. Howard**, 450th Bomber Squadron, 322nd Bomber Group, Medium, was lost over Germany on April 16, 1945. He was accounted for May 28 and will be buried with full military honors on June 19 in Moulton, Iowa.

Army **PFC Lawrence S. Gordon**, Reconnaissance Company, 32nd Armored Regiment, 3rd Armored Division, was lost near Ranès, France, on Aug. 13, 1944. He was accounted for on May 27 and will be buried with full military honors this summer in Canada. *A RFTW contingent will be traveling to Canada to escort PFC Gordon's remains. See story in this issue.*

## **KOREAN WAR SGT. RETURNED**

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced 13 JUN that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing from the Korean War, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. **Army Sgt. Paul M. Gordon**, 20, of Dry Ridge, Ky., was buried June 20, in Williamstown, Ky. In 1951, Gordon was assigned to Company H, 2nd Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, deployed in the vicinity of Wonju, South Korea. On January 7, 1951, following a battle against enemy forces, Gordon was listed as missing in action. In September 1953, as part of a prisoner exchange, known as Operation Big Switch, returning U.S. service members reported that Gordon had been captured by the Chinese during that battle and taken to a prisoner of war camp, where he died in June 1951.

Between 1991 and 1994, North Korea gave the U.S. 208 boxes of human remains believed to contain 350 - 400 U.S. servicemen who fought during the war. North Korean documents, turned over with some of the boxes, indicated that some of the remains were recovered from a POW camp in North Hwanghae Province, near the area where Gordon was believed to have died. To identify Gordon's remains, scientists from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools, including DNA comparisons. Two types of DNA were used, mitochondrial DNA, which matched his sister and brother, and Y-STR DNA, which matched his brother.

## **KOREAN WAR POW RETURNED**

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced 13 JUN that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing from the Korean War, were recently identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. **Army Cpl. Lucio R. Aguilar**, 19, of Brownsville, Texas, will be buried June 13, in Corpus Christi, Texas. On the night of Nov. 27, 1950, elements of the 25th Infantry Division (ID) and 35th Infantry Regiment (IR) established a defensive position at Yongsan-dong, North Korea, about 10 miles north of the Ch'ongch'on River, when Chinese forces attacked their position. Due to extensive losses and casualties, Augilar's unit began a fighting withdrawal. On Nov. 28, 1950, Augilar was reported missing in action. When no further information pertaining to Aguilar was received and he failed to return to U.S. control during prisoner exchanges, Operation Glory and Operation Big Switch, a military review board changed his status from missing in action to presumed dead on Dec. 31, 1953. In 1956, his remains were declared unrecoverable. Between 1991 and 1994, North Korea turned over to the U.S. 208 boxes of human remains believed to contain 350 - 400 U.S. servicemen who fought during the war. North Korean documents, turned over with some of the boxes, indicated that some of the remains were recovered from the vicinity where Aguilar was believed to have died. In the identification of Aguilar's remains, scientists from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and Armed Forces DNA Laboratory (AFDIL) used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools, such as mitochondrial DNA, which matched his maternal-line sister and nephew.

### **TARAWA MARINE RETURNS HOME**

The Defense POW/MIA Office announced the identification of remains belonging to Marine Corps PFC Randolph Allen, Company F, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, who was lost on Tarawa on Nov. 20, 1943. He was accounted for on June 17 and was buried with full military honors June 28 in Arlington National Cemetery.

### **KOREAN WAR POW COMES HOME**

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office announced 23 JUN that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing from the Korean War, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. **Army Cpl. William N. Bonner**, 23, of Sault Sainte Marie, Mich., will be buried June 28, in his hometown. On Nov. 2, 1950, Bonner was assigned to Medical Company, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, when his unit was attacked by Chinese forces near Unsan, North Korea. Bonner was reported last serving as a litter bearer near the battalion aid station when the area was overrun by enemy forces. In 1953, as part of a prisoner exchange, known as Operation Big Switch, returning U.S. service members reported that Bonner had been captured by the Chinese and died from malnutrition in early 1951, in the prisoner of war (POW) camp known as Camp 5, near Pyoktong, North Korea. During Operation Glory in September 1954, United Nations and Chinese forces exchanged the remains of war dead, some of which were reportedly recovered from POW Camp 5. When a military review board declared the remains as unidentifiable, the remains were transferred to Hawaii to be buried as unknown in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, known as the "Punchbowl." In 2013, due to advances in forensic science, scientists from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) determined there was a possibility of identifying the remains. After extensive historical and analytical research, the unknown remains were disinterred for analysis and possible identification. To identify Bonner's remains, scientists from JPAC used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools, including radiograph comparisons and dental records which matched Bonner's records.

### **JPAC ACCUSED OF REFUSING TO ID SOME REMAINS**

From Stars and Stripes, December 4, 2013

By: Matthew M. Burke

Pvt. Arthur “Bud” Kelder survived the horrors of the Bataan Death March in April 1942, but succumbed to malaria, pellagra and diphtheria Nov. 19 at the Cabanatuan Prisoner of War Camp in Luzon, relatives said. The 26-year-old Army medic was buried in communal grave 717 along with 13 other Americans who died that day.

After the war, overwhelmed American Graves Registration Service personnel opened grave 717 and were able to identify four of the individuals using prisoner-maintained burial records, identification tags and military dental records, according to records and former JPAC officials. The remaining 10 Americans were buried as unknowns at the cemetery in Manila, lost to the limits of the day’s technology, a never-ending roster of war dead and confusion following the war. The burial records were classified, and the Kelders were told that their beloved son’s body was “not recoverable.”

Kelder is one of 73,652 servicemembers unaccounted for from the war. His family believes he belongs to an even more exclusive group, the more than 8,500 American servicemembers from World War II who are buried as unknowns in American cemeteries around the world.

Families of the missing and JPAC whistleblowers believe modern technology and the analysis of war and postwar documents can easily identify a great number of these World War II unknowns but say JPAC has chosen to ignore them.

JPAC officials say that steps are being taken to address the issue, but critics remain skeptical.

“I thought it would be difficult to identify Bud’s remains but that was the easiest thing to do,” said Kelder’s cousin, John Eakin, who is suing the government for a timely identification on behalf of the family. Eakin works with other families to ID their loved ones.

In 2009, Eakin began studying declassified records pertaining to the 10 unknowns from grave 717. Kelder’s file indicated that the Army knew he was one of the 10 unknowns.

Eakin contacted family members and discovered that Kelder had gold inlays in his teeth, courtesy of his dentist brother. Two of the 10 unknowns had dental patterns that matched Kelder, yet only one had gold inlays. Those remains, designated as Manila #2 X-816, were buried beneath the white cross in grave A-12-195.

Eakin vehemently believes this is his cousin. His conclusions have been backed by two forensic dentists, both of whom have consulted with JPAC, and the former deputy chief of JPAC’s World War II Research and Investigation Branch, Rick Stone, who said that Kelder’s documented physical characteristics matched those of the remains in A-12-195.

“Why they won’t do it is just inconceivable,” Eakin said.

Stone told Stars and Stripes that he recommended the disinterment and DNA testing for all 10 of the grave 717 unknowns, but top JPAC officials refused to sign off and buried the report.

Eakin said that Johnie Webb, JPAC’s deputy to the commander for external relations and legislative affairs, verbally denied his request for disinterment and said there was no evidence to support continued investigation. Scientific director and deputy to the command for Central Identification Laboratory operations, Thomas Holland, stated in a memo written Jan. 28, 2013, that the case did not meet the standard of “scientific certainty” necessary to justify disinterment for DNA identification. JPAC commander Maj. Gen. Kelly McKeague used



Holland's memo as the basis for JPAC's opinion and forwarded the case to the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office for a decision — virtually ending Eakin's quest.

“My investigative reports at JPAC on the 10 cases recommended that DNA be obtained from the families of all the possible matches and then all 10 unknowns be disinterred simultaneously and tested against the family DNA to make the final identifications,” Stone said. “In the real world, it would take any competent medical examiner less than two weeks” to make the identifications.

## **Burden of Proof**

The revelations are the latest affront to JPAC's credibility.

In July, The Associated Press exposed an internal review written by a management consultant that chronicled turf wars and questionable recovery results that the JPAC brass had covered up. The agency was labeled “acutely dysfunctional.” A Government Accountability Office report mirrored those findings.

JPAC was bound by congressional mandate three years ago to recover at least 200 fallen troops a year from overseas battlefields by 2015, but officials have said they will not be able to meet that goal. Currently the Hawaii command averages fewer than 70 identifications a year.

In October, JPAC admitted that they had been holding phony repatriation ceremonies for seven years, with honor guards carrying flag-draped coffins off cargo planes as though they held remains returning that day from old battlefields.

Lawmakers then proposed giving the Defense Department one year to detail how they intend to clean up the “mess” that has become the nation's accounting apparatus.

JPAC officials declined to comment on the Kelder case due to the pending litigation but said that JPAC has implemented a program to research and identify more than 2,900 unknown remains buried at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, called the Punchbowl. They are also researching cases for disinterment around the world and are looking for more efficiencies.

“Recently, JPAC's Central Identification Laboratory has expanded the disinterment program to include unknown remains from World War II buried in American cemeteries in the U.S., Europe and the Pacific,” said JPAC spokesman Army Maj. Jamie Dobson.

Dobson said there are significant challenges to identifying World War II remains: the sheer number of unknowns, the lack of historical records and a high burden of proof before the final resting place of an unknown can be disturbed. JPAC has disinterred 25 sets of World War II remains in the past 10 years, compared with 63 from the Korean War. Out of 25 World War II disinterments, 28 bodies have been identified, due to comingled remains.

“A decision to disinter a set of remains now marked as ‘unknown’ must be based on sufficient circumstantial and anatomical evidence which when combined with current forensic science techniques would lead to a high probability of positive identification,” DOD disinterment policy established in 1999 states. The memo goes on to state that if JPAC can narrow the number of potential candidates down to the point where DNA can identify the unknown, they will gather the DNA and test.

“If the Central Identification Laboratory-Hawaii believes positive identification is highly probable, it will coordinate with the appropriate cemetery authority for disinterment.”

In 2012, the accounting community’s stakeholders established new procedures to streamline the approval of requests for disinterment of unknowns. Even still, only one World War II unknown was disinterred in 2013, and none was disinterred in 2012, Dobson said. The Secretary of the Army is the approval authority for disinterment cases.

“Since JPAC has the inherent responsibility to ensure that disinterred remains bear a high probability for identification, the disinterment group painstakingly works to develop strong historical and forensic evidence to validate and justify a disinterment,” Dobson said. “The disinterment decision-making process is continually reviewed and evaluated in order to ensure that the probability is as high as possible that a disinterred unknown will be identified.”

Many believe JPAC’s burden of proof is too high. If you need 100 percent proof before you test, why are they marked as unknowns to begin with?

### **Focus on Tarawa**

Stone, a highly decorated former Dallas Police Department officer who had a minor role in the 1976 House Select Committee on Assassinations’ investigation into the death of President John. F. Kennedy, joined JPAC in June 2011.

He worked many cases over the course of the year, one month and 11 days he was with JPAC, but his primary focus was on identifying 103 sets of remains recovered from the Battle of Tarawa buried as unknowns in the Punchbowl. There are 513 missing from the battle, the majority of which are buried in mass graves on the atoll.

Stone used a police technique called “random incident statistical correlations” to try to narrow down the number of potential candidates for each unknown so DNA testing could take care of the rest. He prepared historical and biometric profiles on each of the missing from the battle and compared it with the historical and biometric profiles for each of the unknowns. He would then look for correlations.

Perhaps a loss date narrowed the field of candidates or perhaps only a handful of the 513 missing had the same height, weight, hair color or matching dental features as unidentified remains in Hawaii. Setting up the data was painstaking work. Of the 103 unknowns buried in the Punchbowl, he worked 94 cases; documentation had been lost for the other nine, he said. Some he was able to narrow down to between as few as two servicemembers, others he narrowed to a handful of potential matches.

For example, one of the sets of remains belongs to a soldier of short stature. At approximately 5-foot-2, the body could only belong one of two of the missing, Stone said. His records indicate that when he was found, he had the bars of a second lieutenant in his pocket. One of the two possible candidates was a second lieutenant, Army Air Corps 2nd Lt. Stanley Alenier. To Stone’s knowledge, these remains have never been disinterred and tested. Alenier is listed as missing on the DPMO website.

Another example is the set of unknown remains in grave number 12, Section E, with the date Jan. 21, 1944, two months after the main battle. The only casualties on Tarawa on that day came from two separate B-24 bomber crashes. Out of the 20 men on board, whose names are known, only 12 cases remain unresolved. Some survived the crashes and some of the bodies were identified. So right away, the remains are narrowed down between 12

people, Stone said. They can be narrowed down to seven potential matches when comparing the physical characteristics of the remains with those of the missing.

This led Stone to discover another gap in the accounting process. Stone contacted the U.S. Army Casualty Office to see how many family reference DNA samples they had for the 12 unresolved Army Air Corps casualties from Jan. 21, 1944. The case manager claimed that he had not been informed by JPAC there were any Army casualties from Tarawa that were unaccounted for. Stone provided them with the names but ultimately, nothing was done, Stone said.

Out of the 94 cases he worked, Stone recommended a full forensic review for 80 that he believed could be solved. Not a single report was accepted by Holland. Stone claims that he was told they weren't even being read as they went up the chain.

"I couldn't even get them to read the reports," Stone said of his work at JPAC, which ended with his resignation in August 2012.

"It's simple deductive reasoning. ... Nobody at JPAC has given any interest to these cases at all."

Stone's assertions were backed by other former JPAC employees who declined to be identified for fear of reprisal.

Dobson said that all reports generated by JPAC investigators are read and evaluated.

"The Tarawa cases are more complex than people realize because missing servicemembers from Tarawa include the graves of the unknowns at Punchbowl as well as remains still on the island that have yet to be recovered," Dobson said. "Later this fiscal year, JPAC will submit to DOD a request to disinter all 94 unknown caskets at Punchbowl so as to begin the identification process in a more deliberate and effective manner." Stone called the move to disinter all 94 ridiculous.

"I believe that the lack of leadership and management skills at JPAC, the inability of the JPAC lab to show a track record of credible results of more than five or six dozen identifications a year, the JPAC lab's failure to build a DNA database to make these identifications quickly and easily and JPAC's admission that the average length of time it takes the laboratory to make an identification already exceeds 11 years makes the proposal by JPAC to disinter all the Tarawa remains in the Punchbowl a ridiculous suggestion," Stone said.

He said the Defense Department had collected family reference samples of DNA for less than 1 percent of the missing from World War II at the time of his resignation. In addition to taking far too long to make identifications, Stone said the JPAC lab — which ships all its samples to the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory in Dover for analysis and coding — has more than 1,000 sets of remains in backlog and is technologically behind the times.

"As much as I would like to see any of my Tarawa kids get identified and sent home to their families, it makes absolutely no sense to blindly disinter all of the Punchbowl remains just so they can be added to the 1,000 or so cardboard boxes that now sit on JPAC shelves that the lab cannot ID," Stone said. "Why wouldn't they just disinter a few of the cases where I found only a few most likely matches, after they had the DNA comparisons in hand for those few possible matches, and test the system? For example, in the Alenier case, JPAC needs two DNA samples to make the comparisons, not 513, to determine if it is who the investigation says it is." Dobson said there are more than 1,000 boxes of remains at the JPAC laboratory in Hawaii, but it is not a backlog.

Some belong to those who cannot be identified so they accumulate over time. He said that all of the remains have been examined.

“It’s such a big mess,” Stone said. “It’s heart-wrenching to think of these families and what they go through.” Stone says that he sees the photos of the missing when he closes his eyes. In July, he traveled to the Punchbowl and the Jan. 21, 1944, unknown gravesite, saddened that he could do nothing to help identify one of the 12 missing who is buried in the grave.

“Every detective hopes to find the smoking gun,” he said. “This was one, where, holy cow, here it is. I’m thinking, ‘I can bring this kid home. I can put a name here.’ But a couple of years later and nothing’s been done.”

## **NAMES ADDED TO THE WALL**

By Gunny 5-6-14

It was a great weather weekend at The Wall, with lots of tour groups, Honor Flights, 8<sup>th</sup> graders from Ohio and more. Great group of Volunteers—Michael ‘Christmas’ Coale, Tom ‘Robert Redford’ Forbes, Michael ‘Cannonball’ O’Brien (back from his heart attack), ‘General’ Dan ‘Black Ops’ Kirby, Barbara Warner, Jeri McMahon, Annmarie, ‘Admiral’ Jim Debenport, Jennifer Hay.

Jim and Kirk from Colorado were in town this past weekend and added 13 names to the Memorial. In addition, they changed the status of 3 from ‘unknown’ to ‘declared dead.’ Initially, we had heard that 14 names were to be added and 8 status changes to be made. It appears there was a conflict regarding spelling with the family of one of men whose name was to be added, so a decision was made simply to not add the name this year until the issues is resolved. (Chester Statun or Staten?) And even though there were 8 sets of remains identified, 5 of them already had a ‘diamond’ – so only 3 *status changes* were made on the Wall.

So...

There are now *58,299 names on The Wall.*

- *360 names have been added* since 1984
- There were 57,939 on The Wall at the 1982 dedication □□□ There were 1,256 ‘+’ symbols on the Wall at dedication
- *523 ‘+’ symbols have been changed* to diamonds
- There are *now 733 ‘+’ symbols* on The Wall
- The Department of Defense web site lists 1,642 ‘unaccounted for’ in southeast Asia (including China) from the Vietnam War.
  - o The difference of 909 between ‘The Wall’ and DoD is primarily one of definition.
    - ‘The Wall’ truly is ‘*status*’...either dead ‘diamond’ or status unknown ‘+’
    - DoD’s higher number of 1,642 is ‘unaccounted for’
    - So ‘The Wall’ number of 733 ‘status unknown’ assumes that most of the 1,642 number that DoD uses as ‘unaccounted for’ are ‘dead’ as their *status*...even though the body was not recovered.
  - o The example is well shown with Michael Blassie – the Air Force pilot who was initially interred in the ‘Tomb of the Unknowns’ in Arlington, later exhumed and identified as Blassie. Although most of the tour guides say that Blassie had a ‘+’ symbol when the Wall was dedicated and that it was later changed to a ‘diamond’...that is NOT correct. Blassie always had a ‘diamond’ next to his name. His ‘status’ was dead – as other pilots watched his plane get shot down – with no parachute, distress signal

from the ground, etc. – so he was declared dead as his ‘status’ – and had a diamond on The Wall from the day it was dedicated. The fact that his remains were later found and identified would have changed DoD’s number as he went from ‘unaccounted for’ to ‘accounted for’ – but it did not change his ‘status’ on the Wall with a ‘diamond.’

- o So...when a visitor asks ‘how many missing in action are there from the Vietnam War’?...the answers could be-
    - The Wall shows 733 ‘status unknown’
    - DoD lists 1,642 as ‘unaccounted for’
- 

## ► REUNIONS

### Colorado Springs, CO July 31 – Aug 3, 2014

The Colorado RFTW group is sponsoring the July reunion in 2014 and has invited the RFTW Board of Directors to attend and hold their first face-to-face meeting of the fiscal year. Another big plus... if you are planning on attending the Sturgis 2014 rally, this is on your way because that event begins August 4th.

- Host hotel is Colorado Springs Marriott, 5580 Tech Center Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80919.
- The hotel advises to avoid booking issues, please have all reservations made by July 1, 2014. However, the deadline is July 8, 2014 for group rate.
  - On-line reservations: Book your group rate: Run For The Wall August 2014 (**Note:** If booking dates are before July 31 or after Aug 2, use Phone reservation or else the electronic reservations might fail)
  - Phone reservations: 800-932-2151, speak the words "Run For The Wall August 2014"
- The coordinators are Dick McKay, John Staub and the cast of Colorado RFTW if you have activity questions.
- Be sure to check out the nearby New Day Cafe at 5901 Delmonico Drive. This restaurant is frequently used by RFTW Colorado.
- For a list of other good restaurants in the area, [check here](#).
- "Meet and Greet" Thursday evening the 31st in the beautifully provided Hospitality room set aside for RFTW.
- Guided and unguided group rides are planned. Check this link for [Planned Activities](#) schedule.
- Local Colorado Springs attractions include Pikes Peak, Pikes Peak Cog Railway, Garden of the Gods, Fallen Firefighters Memorial, Peterson AFB, Fort Carson, and the Air Force Academy to name a few.
- Felix Claudio of "Ride Like a Pro CO" will be offering a class on Saturday, August 2nd at 9 AM in the lower hotel parking lot offering reduced RFTW rates. The regular cost is \$160, the "Early Bird" price is \$150. However, if you use the special discount code **RFTW2014**, the cost of the course is reduced to \$120. You won't regret it!! Plus you'll have a great time with a great instructor. Go to this link to [sign up now](#). Click on the 08-02-2014 class date.
- Banquet on Saturday evening, August 2nd, where you will get a chance to ask the RFTW Board of Directors questions and express concerns.

## Angel Fire, NM

**August 29 - 30, 2014 - Labor Day weekend**

The host hotel is the Laguna Vista Lodge, 51 Therma Dr, EagleNest in Eagle Nest (575-377-6522). It's already full, so try the Cottonwood (575-377-3382), Gold Pan (575-377-2286), or Econo Lodge (575-377-6813). See CR hotel list for more hotels.

### FRIDAY:

- Meet & Greet at Laguna Vista Saloon Courtyard at 4 p.m, with light hors d'oeuvres.

### SATURDAY:

- 7:30 a.m. - Need help moving the bricks from storage to the walkway at the Memorial.
- Brick laying along the pathways at the Angel Fire Vietnam Veterans Memorial. We may lay 500 bricks, including 8 MOH bricks.
- Lunch at amphitheater, provided by the David Westphall Veterans Foundation.
- 5 p.m. Riders Forum at the Senior Center.
- Dinner at the Senior Center 6 p.m. Meal choices will be announced on the website Forum. Cost is \$20, which includes Reunion ride patch and 2014 bar. Make reservations with Barbara "Happy Feet" Montoya, as she needs to know how many people to expect. [leobjm@aol.com](mailto:leobjm@aol.com).

### SUNDAY:

- 9 a.m. Chapel service
- One-hour ride in the Enchanted Circle area after Chapel, with a special guest who would like to ride with some RFTW people.

## Kerrville, TX

**September 26 - 28, 2014**

Ready for a great time in the Texas Hill Country to catch up and reminisce on the recent ride? Here is your opportunity to see old friends and make new ones with riders attending from both central and southern routes.

The YO Resort is a full-facility hotel with restaurant, lounge and conference rooms. This hotel provides us with everything we need for a relaxing fun weekend with our RFTW friends and family. A block of hotel rooms is being held until noon. on August 25th. Ask for the RFTW group rate. 877-967-3767

- **Friday** – Arrival day is open for those interested in the Friday rides or catching up with friends.
- **Saturday morning /afternoon** -Various rides and meetings are being planned. More details later.
- **Saturday evening** - A buffet dinner is being served in a private room for the group. The dinner will include coffee and tea service. Adult beverages will be available from the lounge.
- **Sunday morning** is open for breakfast and coffee with friends before heading home.
- **Saturday's dinner and a RFTW 2014 Reunion rocker are included in the, non-refundable, registration fee. For first timers to YO RFTW Reunion a reunion patch is included.**

- Registration cost: Now until September 10<sup>th</sup> - \$30.00
- Registration cost: September 11<sup>th</sup> – September 17<sup>th</sup> - \$45.00
- Deadline for the registration is September 17<sup>th</sup> paid in advance. The deadline is required by the hotel to confirm head count for Saturday’s dinner. So tell your friends. Prior registration and payment is required.

\*\*\*\*\*

**(Please print clearly)**

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Road name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Attendees: \_\_\_\_\_

FULL Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Send checks payable to: Janice Wentworth (paypal payment is available – call or email  
 PO Box 192 for details. \$1ea. extra for paypal registration)  
 Gorham, KS 67640

For more info, contact me at: [stitchnbitch1@earthlink.net](mailto:stitchnbitch1@earthlink.net) Cell: 214-906-5357

An email receipt will be sent upon payment. The email receipt will be your dinner ticket/confirmation.

► **SICK CALL**

**Paladin**

In June Paladin’s cast was removed from his foot, and the bone is healing nicely. He recently tried a short ride on his bike and he’s happy to be in the wind again.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

► **TAPS Chester Nez**



Michael Nez

The last of the 29 original Code Talkers passed away on June 4 at the age of 93, at his home in Albuquerque. He was a member of the all-Navajo 382nd Marine Platoon. To the end of his life, Chester Nez recalled the first message he sent over the radio while serving at Guadalcanal: “Enemy machine gun nest on your right. Destroy.” Receiving the message, American forces eliminated the threat.

Mr. Nez, a former United States Marine, had sent the message not in English but rather in a code he had helped create. It originally went much like this: “Anaai (Enemy) naatsosi (Japanese) beeldooh alhaa diloni (machine gun) nishnaajigo nahdikadgo (on your right flank). Diiltaah (Destroy).”

His first name was not Chester, nor was his surname Nez. The real ones had somehow got lost at boarding school, where the white world tried to civilize the rangy eight-year-old, born to a mother from the Black Sheep Clan (Dibé Lizhini) and a father of the Sleeping Rock People (Tsénahabilnii). The Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school that he attended assigned him the name Chester, after President Chester A. Arthur.



At the boarding school, they made him speak English, a language he had never heard. To get rid of the dirty gobbledygook he insisted on using, the matron brushed his teeth with bitter Fels-Naptha soap.

Nez enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1942 and was honorably discharged in 1945 with the rank of corporal. He also served in the Marine Corps Reserves and returned to combat in the Korean War.

After serving stateside in the Korean War, Mr. Nez worked for many years as a painter and muralist at what is now the Veterans Affairs hospital in Albuquerque. He spent many of his last years in speaking engagements about the Code Talkers.

Of the more than 400 additional Navajo Code Talkers that followed the original 29, there are about 35 still living.

---

## ► CLOSING THOUGHTS

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wq0X0bwMprQ&feature=youtu.be>

Hometown Battlefield by J.P. Cormier

JP Cormier, a Canadian songwriter and singer, wrote this song in about 10 minutes. He said it's important everyone know that too many soldiers come home from war with PTSD. The melody is beautiful and the words haunting. Here are the lyrics.



## HOMETOWN BATTLEFIELD

By JP Cormier

He got home from the service  
As the spring began its turn  
12 long months away

He folded up his uniform  
With the medals tucked inside  
Started living for today

But the present could not find him,  
Nor could his wife and kids  
He was there but he was gone

Soon his only comfort  
Was a bottle and his gun  
Something right that went so wrong

And the silence keeps on coming  
As the movie plays again

You can smell that yellow  
Dust and death  
Hanging on the wind

And we thought the war was over,  
But the headlines do reveal  
That another soldier died today  
On the hometown battlefield

He sits outside the courthouse  
With his pant legs tucked away  
No one knows his name

One wrong step there in the sand  
Put him where he is today  
One more just the same

All his memories live there  
In the space below his knees  
Back when he was whole

But that IED didn't just  
Relieve him of his legs  
It blew apart his soul

And we thought the war was over,  
But the headlines do reveal  
That another soldier died today  
On the hometown battlefield

And if you're wearing loafers  
You ain't walked the burning sands  
And you ain't never had to shoot  
Another living man

It don't matter if we won  
It don't matter if we lost  
They were following their orders  
No matter the cost

So I remember what they're given  
When I see my flag unfurled  
Free against the sky

The way we seem to lose them  
When they get back to the world  
Can someone tell me why?

And we thought the war was over,  
But the headlines do reveal  
That another soldier died today  
On the hometown battlefield

Yes we pray the war is over  
But the headlines do reveal  
Than another soldier died today  
On the hometown battlefield.

## NONE FORGOTTEN

By Shadow

The word had spread across the nation, of a group of people with grit and determination.  
Those who ride for those who can't, None forgotten is their chant!  
Veterans, families and supporters too, all riding together under the Red, White and Blue.

Their eyes on The Wall, they all answered the call.  
Three routes and one Mission, All coming together with distinction.

What was begun long ago, has carried on and continued to grow.  
Another year's successful tradition, and planning begins for next year's Mission.

Our work is never done, not until they are all home - every mothers son. For now we rest and plan, so next year we will ride again.

RFTW and those who ride, did so with honor and pride. And so until next year's Run, we will not forget...no not one!

## ***You Are Not Forgotten***

