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FALL 2009



Memorial Day, Remembrance & Day Life Photo

VVA & CSC MEETING DATES & EVENTS

Full Council Meetings:
October 23-25, 2009 - Fresno
January 23-25, 2010 - Fresno
March 23-25, 2010 - Fresno
CSC State Convention - June 3-5, 2010 - Fresno
August 27-29, 2010 - Fresno

WELCOME HOME



whvvd.org

California First State In Nation To Establish March 30th As Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day

By Pete Conaty and Dana Nichol

September 11 at midnight was the deadline for the California Legislature to adjourn for 2009. However, because of 11th hour wrangling over the fates of hundreds of bills and high level negotiations concerning water, prisons, renewable energy, and a new stadium for Los Angeles. The Assembly subsequently stayed in session until 6 am Saturday morning. One of the rays of sunshine during the late night legislative sausage making was the unanimous passage of AB 717, the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day bill by Assemblyman Paul Cook (Yucaipa). AB 717 was sponsored by the California State Council and supported by AM-VETS, California Department of Veterans Affairs, American Legion, Armed Forces Retirees Association of California, California Association of County Veterans Service Officers, and the National Guard Association of California. The bill is expected to be signed by the Governor.

AB 717 will require the Governor to annually proclaim March 30 as "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day" and to additionally encourage schools to conduct exercises on March 30 to recognize the contributions of those involved in the Vietnam conflict. On March 30, 1973, the United States Armed Forces completed the withdrawal of combat troops from Vietnam. California is the first state in the nation to legislatively designate a Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day. Vietnam veteran Jose Ramos of Whittier and founder of Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day, Inc. (<http://www.whvvd.org/>) has been a leading force behind a similar measure enacted in Congress. Assemblyman Cook praised the efforts of Mr. Ramos saying "José has been, and continues to be, a strong voice for veterans nationwide. His tireless efforts were integral to passing this legislation and giving California's Vietnam veterans the appreciation they are long overdue". Due to political events beyond the scope of this bill, AB 717 faced many hurdles in the legislative process that were not related to the bill's policy aims. However, thanks to efforts on the



Gov. Schwarzenegger signs AB 717 - Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day. CSC Pres. Johnston left, Jose Ramos behind.



Gov. Schwarzenegger shakes the hand of Col. Lewis Millett, MOH recipient Korea

part of Assemblyman Cook, his staff, legislative leadership in the Senate and Assembly, and late night lobbying by myself were we able to adapt and overcome.

This bill also drew the attention of film actor Jon Voight, who has adopted the cause of Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day, and who threw his weight behind this bill by contacting the Governor's office.

Assemblyman Cook is a Vietnam veteran, a retired Marine Corps Colonel and a recipient of two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star. Cook has been the author of many bills to help veterans and military members and their families.

BILL SALUTES VIETNAM VETERANS

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Thirty-six years after the United States completed the pullout of combat troops from Vietnam, California is on the verge of officially welcoming them home. Legislation to declare an annual "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day" was passed by the Legislature this month, and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is expected to sign it. Recognition by the nation's most populous state is expected to add momentum to campaigns nationwide to salute Vietnam veterans. "It's not about the war," said Assemblyman Paul Cook, R-Yucca Valley. "It's about the individuals who fought the war and paid the price." Schools and state offices would not close on the special day of remembrance, but teachers would be encouraged to conduct "suitable commemorative exercises." Similar legislation is pending to honor the late San Francisco gay rights activist Harvey Milk with the yearly recognition currently afforded to John Muir, teachers and the California golden poppy. The American public was deeply split over the Vietnam War, in which 58,000 U.S. troops died and more than 300,000 were wounded. "I'm not glamorizing war but I think it's imperative for us to remember a group of individuals that has largely been forgotten," said Cook, a Vietnam veteran whose actions earned him a Bronze Star and two Purple Hearts. Cook's bill, Assembly Bill 717, attracted no organized opposition, but critics question whether designating a day for Vietnam veterans will spark similar requests by veterans of other wars. Veterans Day and Memorial Day already honor the memory of U.S. troops, and California built a Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Capitol Park more than two decades ago. John Reiger, a Sacramento peace activist, said he supports giving Vietnam veterans the support services they need to overcome effects of that war. "At the same time, I'm reluctant to support (AB 717) because it would turn into a pro-military, support-the-Vietnam-War Day," Reiger said. "I would feel more comfortable if the effort to recognize sacrifices that the Vietnam veterans made were incorporated into the broader Veterans Day," he said. Jose Ramos, a Vietnam veteran who pushed for introduction of AB 717, said he can remember arriving from Southeast Asia in October 1968 and watching television accounts of the war one day while sitting in a bar. "(Soldiers) were the bad guys," he said. "It was a total mind-blower." For

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Who Are The Vietnam Veterans Of America?
 Founded in 1978, Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. is the only national Vietnam veterans organization congressionally chartered and exclusively dedicated to Vietnam-era veterans and their families. VVA is organized as a not-for-profit corporation and is tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Service Code.

VVA'S FOUNDING PRINCIPLE
 "Never again shall one generation of veterans abandon another."

PURPOSE
 The purpose of Vietnam Veterans of America's national organization, the state councils, and chapters is:

To help foster, encourage, and promote the improvement of the condition of the Vietnam veteran.

To promote physical and cultural improvement, growth and development, self-respect, self-confidence, and usefulness of Vietnam-era veterans and others.

To eliminate discrimination suffered by Vietnam veterans and to develop channels of communications which will assist Vietnam veterans to maximize self-realization and enrichment of their lives and enhance life-fulfillment.

To study, on a non-partisan basis, proposed legislation, rules, or regulations introduced in any federal, state, or local legislative or administrative body which may affect the social, economic, educational, or physical welfare of the Vietnam-era veteran or others; and to develop public-policy proposals designed to improve the quality of life of the Vietnam-era veteran and others especially in the areas of employment, education, training, and health.

To conduct and publish research, on a non-partisan basis, pertaining to the relationship between Vietnam-era veterans and the American society, the Vietnam War experience, the role of the United States in securing peaceful co-existence for the world community, and other matters which affect the social, economic, educational, or physical welfare of the Vietnam-era veteran or others.

To assist disabled and needy war veterans including, but not limited to, Vietnam veterans and their dependents, and the widows and orphans of deceased veterans.

FUNDING
 Vietnam Veterans of America relies totally on private contributions for its revenue. VVA does not receive any funding from federal, state, or local governments.

the first five years after returning home, Ramos said, "When I went looking for a job, I told people I served in Germany." Ramos said Vietnam veterans are aging now, in their late 50s or 60s. "It really stuck in my craw that we're dying now, and nobody ever said 'thank you' or 'welcome home,'" Ramos said. Cook, a former Marine Corps infantry officer, remembers being called a "killer" and said someone spit on the face of a close friend. "We were kind of abandoned when we came back," he said. "I think people didn't want to talk to us ... It really was very, very demoralizing." The passage of years has not dimmed the

hurtful memories – and AB 717 is a long-overdue attempt to ease the pain, Cook said. "California is finally saying, 'We appreciate what you did,'" he said. AB 717 does not propose additional spending. Maggie Coulter, president of Sacramento Area Peace Action, said she would like any day of remembrance to touch upon the full gamut of tragedy from the Vietnam War, including Vietnamese deaths and the legacy of birth defects from chemical weapons. "This was a sad, tragic mistake of our country's foreign policy and we should do our best to correct the errors, which is to pay Vietnam for the damage we

did, take care of our veterans, and to do what we can to prevent this from happening again," Coulter said. Five Capitol visitors interviewed randomly about AB 717 supported the bill when told of it. "It wouldn't hurt," said Sarah Pratt, 19. "Better late than never,"

said Jason LaFrance, 24. "I think it would be a good incentive to remember that time – I know they were treated unfairly," said Joel Morin, 55. AB 717 is nearly identical to a separate Cook bill, AB 264, that was vetoed by Schwarzenegger on Sept. 8 after he threatened to kill any bill until the Legislature tackled water, prison and other key issues. By amending his proposal into a separate bill, Cook avoided a fight with the governor about the prospect of overriding his veto. California does not ignore the Vietnam War in classroom studies. U.S. history curriculum, for example, requires 11th-graders to trace the origins and geopolitical consequences of the Cold War and containment policy, including the Vietnam War, and to examine the 1960s anti-war protests in studying the effects of foreign policy and domestic policy upon each other.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

By Pete Conaty and Dana Nichol

The Legislature sent 13 veterans and military related bills to the Governor's desk in September. One of them was supported by the VVA CSC:

AB 1459 - Davis (Los Angeles) Multifamily Housing Program for Veterans Summary: Amends existing law that authorizes a sponsor of a supportive housing development to restrict occupancy to persons with veteran status if the development is located on property that is owned or leased by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or the State Department of Veterans Affairs and is leased for a specified period. Deletes the requirement that the development be located on property owned or leased by the departments for a specified term. Authorizes restriction to veterans in certain units.



The other 12 bills sent to the Governor were:

AB 3 - V. Perez Workforce development: Renewable Energy Workforce Readiness Initiative: local workforce investment boards. It is the intent of the Legislature to establish the "California Renewable Energy Workforce Readiness Initiative" in order for the California Workforce Investment Board (CWIB) to prepare California's youth, military veterans, and adult workers for the economy of the future.

AB 716 - Huber Veteran services: state agencies and departments. Under existing law, the Department of Veterans Affairs has specified powers and duties relating to veterans. This bill would state the intent of the Legislature that the Department of Veterans Affairs enter into memorandums of understanding or interagency agreements with other state agencies and departments, as specified, to ascertain the veteran status of all persons receiving services, benefits, or assistance from those state agencies and departments, as provided. This bill would provide that the Employment Development Department and the Department of Motor Vehicles may, in consultation with the Department of Veterans Affairs, make available in their field offices brochures, forms, and posters in order to inform veterans of benefits and services. This bill would also require the Employment Development Department and the Department of Motor Vehicles to collect and send any voluntarily completed forms to the Department of Veterans Affairs on at least a quarterly basis, and to add a link to their Internet Web sites that will direct parties to the Department of Veterans Affairs Internet Web site.

AB 1051 - Fletcher Veterans: Pooled Self-Insurance Fund. Under existing law, the Department of Veterans Affairs has specified powers and duties relating to veterans, including the administration of insurance reserve funds. This bill would create the Pooled Self-Insurance Fund to receive various reserves and moneys, and

would allow the department, from the moneys appropriated from the fund, to purchase insurance related to its veteran home loan program.

AB 1330 - Salas Veterans: pilot project: cooperative housing. Under existing law, the Department of Veterans Affairs has specified powers and duties relating to various programs serving veterans. This bill would authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs to establish a pilot project for the purpose of operating establishing a cooperative housing project, as provided. This bill would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to prescribe the rules, regulations, and conditions necessary to implement the pilot project. The bill would require that any cooperative housing project established pursuant to those provisions be restricted for use and occupancy by military veterans and their families for a period of at least 55 years.

AB 1567 - Committee on Veterans Affairs Employment training panel: 3-year plan: training programs: veterans. Existing law establishes the Employment Training Panel (ETP) in the Employment Development Department, and prescribes the membership and functions and duties of the ETP with regard to the development and implementation of specified employment training programs. Existing law requires the ETP, among other things, to establish a 3-year plan, as specified, that is required to be updated annually, as provided, and requires that the updated plan be submitted to the Governor and the Legislature not later than January 1 of each year. Existing law requires the ETP, in carrying out its responsibilities related to the plan, to maintain a system to continuously monitor economic and other data required under the plan, and requires that the plan include specified components to identify and address employment training needs in the state. This bill would additionally require that the plan include a statement describing the employment training goals, objectives, and strategies that may be implemented to support target populations in need of employment training, including military veterans.

AB 1571 - Committee on Veterans Affairs Mental health services: county plans: veterans. Existing law, the Bronzan-McCorquodale Act, contains provisions governing the operation and financing of community mental health services for the mentally disordered in every county through locally administered and locally controlled community mental health programs. Existing law, the Mental Health Services Act, an initiative measure enacted by the voters as Proposition 63 at November 2, 2004, statewide general election, establishes the Mental Health Services Fund to fund various county mental health programs. The act may be amended by the Legislature only by a 2/3 vote of both houses and only so long as the amendment is consistent with and furthers the intent of the act. The Legislature may clarify procedures and terms of the act by majority vote. Existing law requires each county mental health program to prepare and submit a 3-year plan to be updated at least annually and approved by the department after review and comment by the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission. Existing law requires the plan to be developed with specified local stakeholders. Would require the local stakeholder planning group to include veterans and representatives from veterans organizations and would require the department, as part of its review of the county plan, to inform the Department of Veterans Affairs of county plans that have outreach programs specifically for veterans or that provide services specifically for veterans.

SB 285 - Wright Disability benefits: attachment. Existing law prescribes the procedures to obtain a writ of attachment and to determine the amount that may be attached. Existing federal law prohibits payments or benefits due to a disabled veteran, as specified, from being assigned or liable to attachment, levy, or seizure by or under any legal or equitable process. This bill would provide that benefits awarded to vet-

erans for service-connected disabilities, as provided, shall be exempt from the claim of creditors, and shall not be liable to attachment, levy, or seizure, as provided, except as otherwise authorized under federal law, as specified. This bill would declare the intent of the Legislature to conform to existing federal law.

SB 419 - Committee on Veterans Affairs County veteran service officers: funding. Existing law authorizes each county board of supervisors to appoint a county veteran service officer, and permits the county to provide the officer with any assistance and facilities that it determines to be necessary. Existing law requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to disburse funds, appropriated to the department for the purpose of supporting county veteran service officers pursuant to the annual Budget Act, on a pro basis, to counties that comply with certain conditions. Existing law finds and declares that 50% of the amount annually budgeted for county veteran service officers is approximately \$5,000,000, and that it is an efficient and reasonable use of state funds to increase the annual budget for county veteran service officers in an amount not to exceed \$5,000,000. This bill would make changes to those findings and declarations by declaring that 50% of the amount annually budgeted for county veteran service officers is approximately \$11,000,000. This provision would become operative only if SB 418 of the 2009-10 Regular Session of the Legislature is .

SB 469 - Veterans' cemeteries: fees. Existing law provides for the establishment and operation of certain state-owned and operated veterans' cemeteries. Existing law authorizes honorably discharged veterans and their spouses and children to be interred at these cemeteries, and provides for a fee to be charged for each spouse or child interred at the cemetery, as specified. This bill would authorize the fee for the interment of the spouses and children of honorably discharged veterans in these cemeteries to be waived if the cemetery administrator determines that the families of the spouses or children do not have sufficient means to pay for the costs of interment, and would require any costs for these interments to be paid from funds. This bill would require the cemetery administrator to seek reimbursements, as specified, and would authorize the cemetery administrator to solicit private donations, to offset any fees lost as a result of this fee waiver.

SB 548 - Huff California Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise Program. Under existing law, the Department of General Services, except in the case of contracts for professional bond services, is the administering agency of the California Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise Program, which requires state agencies and all other state entities contracting for materials, supplies, equipment, alteration, repair, or improvement to have at least 3% participation goals for disabled veteran business enterprises. Existing law specifies the duties of the Department of General Services and the Department of Veterans Affairs in meeting that requirement, and sets standards for the program's participation goals, as provided. This bill would require an awarding department, upon completion of an awarded contract for which a commitment to achieve a disabled veteran business enterprise goal was made, to require the prime contractor that entered into a subcontract with a disabled veteran business enterprise to certify to the awarding department certain information pertaining to the contract, and that all payments under the contract have been made to the disabled veteran business enterprise. This bill would also require an awarding department to keep that certification on file. This bill would specify that a person or entity that knowingly provides false information is subject to a civil penalty, as specified, and that an action for a civil penalty may be brought by any public prosecutor in the name of the people of the State of California. The bill would authorize a prime contractor, subject to the approval of the Department of General Services, to replace a

disabled veteran business enterprise identified by the prime contractor in its bid or offer, as provided, with another disabled veteran business enterprise.

SB 644 – Civil service examinations: veterans' preference. Existing civil service law requires that veterans be allowed preference points for civil service employment, as specified. Existing law provides that disabled veterans who become eligible for certification from eligible lists by attaining the passing mark established for an entrance examination held on an open basis are allowed 10 additional points. Other veterans are allowed 5 additional points. This bill would instead provide that disabled veterans shall be allowed 15 additional points and other veterans shall be allowed 10 additional points.

SB 809 – Committee on Veterans Affairs Sales and use taxes: consumers: veterans: itinerant vendors. The Sales and Use Tax Law imposes a tax on retailers measured by the gross receipts from the sale of tangible personal property sold at retail in this state, or on the storage, use, or other consumption in this state of tangible personal property purchased from a retailer for storage, use, or other consumption in this state, measured by sales price. That law, with certain exceptions, defines a retailer as a seller who makes any retail sale of tangible personal property and as a person who makes more than 2 retail sales of tangible personal property during any period, and defines a retail sale as a sale of tangible personal property for any purpose other than resale in the regular course of business. This bill would specify, until January 1, 2012, that a qualified itinerant vendor, as defined, is a consumer, and not a retailer, of tangible personal property owned and sold by the qualified itinerant vendor, except for alcoholic beverages or items sold for more than \$100, so that the retail sale subject to tax is the sale of tangible personal property to the qualified itinerant vendor.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Bob Johnston, Sr., VVA CSC President

It has been a very busy period since my last message. I have taken an 1100 (+) miles motorcycle trip to Southern California and rode in the first leg of the "Run For The Wall", a cross country motorcycle ride from Ontario, California to Washington DC. The trip concludes with riding into the US Capitol and arriving at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on Memorial Day. It was estimated that there were approximately several thousand, if not tens of thousands of bikes this year. (See my article in the MRG Sit-Rep section of the Zephyr or on the CSC Web site.)

In June I attended the VVA Region 8/9 Joint Pre-Convention Conference held in Reno, Nevada at the Silver Legacy Casino and Hotel, site of the 2005 12th VVA National Convention and the 2011 15th National Convention. It was very well attended by members of the CSC and CA. state chapters, and provided informative sessions on the upcoming National Convention regarding proposed amendments and resolutions and a few of the declared candidates were there to answer questions. Overall it was a good meeting. Nice job done by John Newman of Region 8 and Dick Southern of Region 9!

During the week of July 28 thru August 2nd, 2009 I had the Honor to attend the VVA's 14th National Convention in Louisville, KY, and represent the California State Council, along with several CSC Board Members and delegates from the state's chapters. In all we had 28 delegates registered and in attendance out of an authorized state total of 79. I am sure that the location of the convention and the current economical situation was a major impact on the reduced participation of state representatives, as it was the case throughout the rest of Region 9, and other West Coast and Western US Regions. Hopefully that will all change for the better when the 15th National Convention is held again in Reno, NV.

in 2011.

Although the convention itself did not start until Wednesday, July 29th, I attended a meeting of the Conference of State Council Presidents (CSCP) on Tuesday evening, immediately after the VVA National Board of Directors meeting. It was informative, and I am proud to announce that I was able to introduce and have passed a motion that the Conference will present to the VVA National BOD at the October 2009 meeting, encouraging National to approve the VVA Motorcycle Riders Group as a national project to be overseen at the individual State Councils (SC) and local chapter levels, if there is an interest, and at no expense to National. Several other State Councils have already created a state level project and have had events already. The interest is growing steadily as the project is becoming known, and it is looking favorably.

The convention officially opened on Wednesday morning, and the CSC was in full attendance with all of our registered delegates. The Opening Ceremonies were very entertaining with the presentation of the Colors by an Honor Guard from the US Army Armor School at Fort Knox. The individual Service flags were trooped in and VVA members were asked to stand when their Branch flag and song were played. A tribute of Patriotic songs were sung by Blue Eyed Soul, former members of Dean Martin's Goldiggers and Dingalings, Michelle DellaFave and Lindsay Bloom, a favorite at past VVA conventions and other veteran functions. A very moving and inspirational speech was made by the Guest Speaker, LTG (Ret) Honore, Commanding Officer of US Military Forces in New Orleans during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. After the usual convention committee reports, the delegates broke for lunch, and during this time the AVVA hosted their Luncheon.

That afternoon, there were Committee Hearings, at which the proposed resolutions were discussed, along with other topics of interest relative to the committee. Being a member of both the POW/MIA and Constitution Committees, I attended each hearing and participated in the discussions. Later that evening, I went to the Region 9 Caucus to listen to several of the candidates who were running for election. The questions asked of each of the candidates were well thought and required them to think about their answers.

On Thursday we reconvened on the convention floor and received updates from the Credentials Committee, reporting that there were a total of 636 registered and checked-in delegates, 53 from Region 9, and of that 29 from California out of 79 authorized. Not too bad for the state of the economy and having to travel across the USA. We will work on increasing our attendance to near maximum at the 2010 convention when it returns back to Reno. Work on the convention floor continued with an updated report from the Elections Committee on the names of the candidates. Following was the presentation of VVA National Awards which included Newspaper of the Year, Electronic Newspaper of the Year, Chapter of the Year, and VVA Member of the Year. A special recognition award was made to Blue Eyed Soul from the State Council Presidents where they had visited and performed for a VVA function. I was part of that group and presented Michelle and Lindsay with a CA. state flag pin and a CSC pin, for their participation in the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the CA. Vietnam Veterans Memorial last December in Sacramento.

We then went to work on and discuss the proposed Constitutional Amendments and Resolutions, passing most of them and only returning a few to committee for rewrites. The afternoon session of work was concluded and the delegates had some free time to take in the sights of Louisville. Later that night the Region 9 Caucus was held to allow the remaining candidates to address the delegates.

Friday morning began with the Women Veter-

ans Breakfast, to which I was glad to offer my ticket to Kate O'Hare Palmer so that her Service Member friend from out of state could attend. I understand it was a very nice event, and was enjoyed by Kate and her friend. Election voting began early that morning, conducted by the Election Committee with the assistance of the local League of Women Voters. It was very well run, with almost no delays in getting the delegates in to vote and out. All delegates were finished voting well within the allotted time frame. We reconvened on the floor to conclude discussion and voting on those Resolutions returned to committee, and presentation of the Mike Nash Scholarship Awards. That afternoon following lunch was the POW/MIA Ceremony conducted outside the hotel by the local VVA Chapter, and was very well attended.

Following the POW/MIA Ceremony on the agenda was a special screening of the HBO Movie "Taking Chance", based on the true story of USMC LTC Mike Strobil's experience escorting the body of Marine Lance Corporal Chance Phelps to his hometown in Wyoming, after his death in Iraq by a roadside IED. The movie showed the effects this journey had not only on LTC Strobil, himself a Desert Storm combat veteran, but how it touched everyone who witnessed or were a part of it, the ticket clerk and ground crew who loaded and unloaded the casket, the airline pilot who was a USAF Vietnam combat Vet, and hundreds of others along the route. I am not ashamed to say that it seriously touched me and brought tears to my eyes, even now as I write about it. It was very well done and should be seen if possible. HBO's CEO Bill Nelson, another Vietnam Vet, was there and made DVD copies of the film available for all of the delegates. I hope to be able to show the film at an upcoming CSC meeting to share its story.

In lieu of attending this showing of the film, I was invited to join members of the POW/MIA Veterans Initiative Project (POW/MIA-VIP) to travel to the nearby town of Bardstown, the home of Charlie Battery, 2nd Bn., 138th Artillery, KY National Guard. Of the 117 men in the Battery, 105 were either from Bardstown or the surrounding community. On June 19th 1969, Fire Base Tomahawk, where they were stationed, came under heavy attack by NVA forces, and 5 Native Sons died as a result of the fighting. We met three of the survivors of that battle, and together visited the small memorial standing outside the Town Square and Courthouse, dedicated to those men. Don Parrish, one of the veterans owns a small bookstore and had copies of "The Sons of Bardstown", a book written by Jim Wilson about that small American town and the effects the war in Vietnam and the battle at FSB Tomahawk had on it. Each of us purchased a copy and had them signed by the three survivors, Don Parrish, Kent Bischoff, and Dan Tucker. Information was developed regarding the possible location of a mass grave site of dead NVA that were buried after the battle. This will be followed up on to determine a more specific location and will be developed into a working case by the VIP to turn over to DPMO/JPAC and the Vietnamese Government.

Friday concluded with an evening of entertainment as "Blue Eyed Soul" presented a USO Style show for all of the delegates, their families and friends.

Saturday morning began with the traditional Legislative Coordinator breakfast, leading into the final sessions of the convention with the introduction and speech from former Miss America 2000, Heather French, daughter of a disabled Vietnam Veteran, and her personal campaign addressing veterans issues the "Our Forgotten Heroes, Honor Our Nation's Homeless Veterans". Following was the presentation of the VVA Legislator of the Year Awards to Congressman Chet Edwards, and Bob Filner, Chair of the Senate Veterans Sub Committee. Both gentlemen spoke about the future of veteran's benefits and the changes that are scheduled to take place in the VA.

Following this was a presentation by Jose Ramos, founder of the "Welcome Home, Vietnam Veterans Day" initiative that is moving across the USA, seeking in states and the US Congress to pass legislation declaring March 30th of each year as a National Day of Healing the wounds of the Vietnam War and the way America treated her returning military from that conflict. Speaking in favor of this movement was Jon Voight, who first became aware of it in March this year at the WHVVD Ceremonies in Whittier, CA.

The last action of the convention was for the Election Committee to announce the results of the voting, with the new Board of Directors receiving their Oath of Office by Jon Voight, acclaimed actor who won an Academy Award for his portrayal of a paraplegic Marine Vietnam Veteran in the 1978 film "Coming Home".

After the VVA National Flag was traditionally passed from the current Convention Host State Council Kentucky to the 2010 Convention Host State Council Nevada, the closing ceremonies were conducted with the retiring of the colors by the Nevada State Honor Guard, who also acted as convention Marshalls, and the convention was declared closed.

NATIONAL CONVENTION REPORTS

Ken Holybee, 1st VP

The week started out with the Mike Nash Golf Tournament. I golfed with JD and Digger from Illinois and Marshall Mudge from Massachusetts. We had a score of 9 over par which was not even good enough for honorable mention.

General Honore' was our key note speaker; he was not as dynamic as speakers in the past, but he did cause people to think and ask questions.

As part to the constitution committee I attended the constitution committee hearing. It was well attended there was lively discussion on some of the amendments. When all was done the delegates did a very good job on the floor with debate and voting. This far into our life the constitutional changes are not as dramatic as in past years.

The time spent on the floor of the convention is getting to be less each year. The resolutions actually had some good debates with some passing, some failing to pass, some being amended and some retired. I enjoyed the debate and using parliamentary procedure (I was the first to speak at a microphone at this convention.) I think this year brought back some of what was missing in the last convention.

With the work being done early we had afternoons freer for the films and other activities. Some even had time to see the Louisville. Since it rained so much I spent a lot of time with members from other areas discussing what we have in common or not in common. I attended the POW Ceremony on Friday afternoon. It seemed to not be very well advertised and hard to locate the ceremony. It was a nice, short and simple ceremony.

Henry Iasiello, Northern District VP
PTSD Committee, Chair

First of all I want to thank our membership for sending me to the National Convention and, all the other delegates for their attendance. As usual it was an informative and educational experience.

This report is not intended to document all the information that will come from National (election results/ resolutions) but rather, offer my observations based on my involvement.

I traveled and roomed with 'Doc' Croucher, our

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Central District Director. It was his first National Convention and we got to know and understand how better to work together.

This was not my first Convention but it was the best attended. There were some 700 delegates from all over the country. I spent a good amount of my time meeting and talking with these representatives, getting to hear their point of view and understanding their diverse concerns. This experience confirmed for me that VVA reflects as diverse a population as our great nation. I met most of the candidates at our Regional Caucus and spoke personally with those individuals who seemed most qualified and most attuned to the membership of the California State Council.

The election was very well organized and very well run by the League of Women Voters who deserve an enthusiastic 'thank you'.

As you know the National Officers ran untested so, we'll have another two years of New York. It seems their primary agenda will be to recover from the financial crisis.

I skipped the National BOD meeting, New Delegates Briefing, Press Club Meeting and golf outing; arriving late Tuesday evening. I attended the Opening Ceremonies on Wednesday morning.

The NCO Academy provided an outstanding color guard and the Nevada State Council provided friendly and effective security for the whole event. The 'Ding-a-lings' sang an operatic rendition of the Star Spangled Banner and many other standard patriotic songs.

I can't say however, that I was overly impressed by the chosen guest speakers. Congressman Bob Filner was as always well received and spoke articulately and accurately to the needs of veterans. Heather French (Miss America 2000) was an enthusiastic and buoyant supporter.

The VA representative talked up the VA, then ... promised the VA can and will do better.

There was a lot of talk about heroes and heroism but the claims backlog is now nearing one million.

After paying lip service to veterans, Lt. General Honore, of New Orleans (Hurricane Katrina) fame, spoke mostly in favor of promoting the military and, militarism. He gave us a motivational speech, calling for a "million man army" and ended with references to the importance of "sheepdogs", reflecting a traditional military contempt for the "sheep". Although funny and charming I thought his talk was inappropriate and irrelevant. Gen. Honore was on a speaking tour promoting a right-wing political agenda and, his book on disaster preparedness (especially military), for both natural disasters and terrorism ... although he is recently retired he had little to say about veterans.

I also thought speaker Jon Voight was irrelevant and inappropriate. One heckler shouted out "we'd rather hear from your daughter" although most didn't seem to know that Angelina Jolie and her father are estranged over his political views. Also charming and funny, Jon obviously, and admittedly, was trying to mediate his guilt

for not being more patriotic 'back in the day', for which he blamed "Marxist teachers" and liberal associates and, for which he pleaded for forgiveness.

Jon was there to support Jose Ramos and the "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day" initiative currently seeking congressional approval but, he readily digressed into a lengthy personal rant about politics and heroes. His message was very patriotic, very pro-military and conservative but had little to do with veterans or veteran's advocacy.

I later attended the PTSD/Substance Abuse Committee hearing on proposed resolutions. Dr. Tom Berger introduced Dr. Tom Hall who will replace him as VVA National PTSD Committee Chair and together they addressed the issues of the day:

Announcements of an injectable monthly shot to combat the craving for alcohol and, Suboxone (a combination of pain and anti anxiety medication), being used to taper from narcotic/opioid dependency.

Discussion of cultural stigma surrounding PTSD ("killing our brothers and sisters"). Suicides are above last year's statistics among the active duty. A five year research project has been initiated (\$50 million). Although we have no statistics we know it's up among veterans too.

Discussion of efforts to deny PTSD as a "real diagnosis" (Psychiatric Times; July 9, 2009) and the argument that "Financial compensation is an important reinforcing factor suggesting secondary gain." ... VVA responds no one who has it wants it.

Discussion of Women Veterans who are showing up more among the homeless (see Marsha Four's Senate testimony).

Discussion of Veterans Incarcerated led by Gordie Lane; readjustment problems among returning veterans hired by police departments and what is being done about it, recruiting police departments to aid in identifying and assisting veterans (notable quote: "when a veteran who has been trained never to retreat encounters a police officer trained never to retreat, somebody is going to get hurt" - Gordie Lane)

Discussion of Veterans Health Council; number one hit on web site "Vietnam PTSD", sexual trauma and substance abuse hits on Persian Gulf and Global War on Terror increasing.

I once again made the point that while promoting legislation and testifying in favor of diagnosis and treatment is very important the PTSD Committee's mission also includes educational efforts - many chapters and State Councils still do not have PTSD Committees informing and educating their membership. While the National PTSD Committee Chair acknowledges this need, nothing is being done.

On Saturday afternoon I attended the screening of the HBO film "Taking Chance", the story of Marine LTC Mike Strobels' experiences escorting the body of Marine LCP Chance Phelps to his home in Wyoming. While this movie is a tear-jerker and based on a true story, I wouldn't consider it very representative. Nor does it pretend to be ... this is really the story of an LTC 'desk jockey' trying to deal with survivor guilt.

First of all, as acknowledged in the movie, it's very rare for such a senior officer to escort home the body of a PFC (which I believe Chance Phelps' rank was when he died). Secondly, and not to diminish Chance Phelps' sacrifice or, that of his family ... it's clearly an overt portrayal of white, rural, Christian America. It did not address the complex reasons or backgrounds of those who serve and was purely patriotic.

The movie did however show the care and re-

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA, INC., CALIFORNIA STATE COUNCIL - FALL 2009

Chapter	Address/Phone	E-Mail/ Web Site	Primary Contact	Meeting Information
47	PO Box 4277 Riverside 92514-4277 951-781-6137	nebuskfan@aol.com www.vva47.com	Steve Mackey	3rd Saturday, 10 am at LifeFall church Social Hall located at the corner of Columbia and Main St. in Riverside. Board meets prior to the meeting (check web site for special meeting locations & times)
53	PO Box 7000-185 Redondo Beach 90277 310-540-8820; FAX:310-257-9053	n9140y@ca.rr.com www.vva53.org	Jerry Yamamoto	Monthly at 7 p.m., 4th Wednesday at Billy's Restaurant, 5160 W. 190th St., Torrance, CA 90503 (except in December)
201	PO Box 26203 San Jose 95159-6203 408-847-5477	vva201@aol.com www.nichecom.com/vva	Robert Beresford	3rd Monday, 7:30 pm, American Legion Post 564, 2120 Walsh Ave., Santa Clara, CA 95050
218	PO Box 2214 Santa Barbara 93120-2241 805-455-3365	ksperk@verizon.net www.vvachapter218.org	Keith Perkins	Meetings on 2nd Tuesday at 6:15 pm at Veterans Memorial Building, 112 West Cabrillo Blvd., Santa Barbara, 93101
223	PO Box 1583 Santa Rosa 95402-1583 707-526-4218	vets@vva223.org www.vva223.org	John Crooker	3rd Tuesday 7 pm, Santa Rosa Veterans Building, 1315 Maple Ave., Santa Rosa.
355	PO Box 2986 Canyon Country 91386-2986 661-2212-4377	the51504sure@yahoo.com	Nick Callas	3rd Sunday of each month, 11 am. at one of two local restaurants
357	PO Box 4021 Redding 96099 530-242-1596	coonradt@snowcrest.net	Dennis Hipley	2nd Tuesday each month, 7 pm at Shasta County Veterans Memorial Hall
368	PO Box 1566 Mariposa 95306 209-966-2292	orland123@yahoo.com	Dennis Croucher	1st Wednesday, 5:30 pm at the American Legion Hall on Bullion St., Mariposa
391	PO Box 5391 Sonora 95370 209.928-3848 - Fax same #	southern@lodeline.com www.vietnamveterans391.org	Dick Southern	General Meeting, 2nd Tuesday, 7 pm.; Board, 1st Tuesday 7 pm. Both meetings held at Sonora Veterans Hall, 9 N. Washington St, Sonora, 92370
400	200 Grand Ave., # 208 Oakland 94610 510-444-5235	fdrdocent@comcast.net	Bill Hodges	3rd Tuesday, 6:30 pm; alternate between Oakland Vets Bldg, 200 Grand Ave. (upstairs), and Fremont Veterans Memorial Bldg.
441	782 N. Brundage Farmersville 93223 559-594-5710	rod6768@mindfall.com	Rod Hughes	2nd & 4th Mondays, 7:30 pm
446	1000 E. Walnut St. Pasadena 91106 626-795-8141 (also Fax)	vva446@att.net	James Maddox	Board meets 1st Friday each month, 7:30; General Meeting 2nd Tuesday, 7 pm, at chapter office conference room
464	PO Box 25540 San Mateo 94402 650-303-2725	leomcardle@hotmail.com	Leo McArdle	Veterans Memorial Senior Center, 1455 Madison Ave, Redwood City (Goldstar Room) on the fourth Saturday each month at 10 a.m.
472	2115 Park Blvd. San Diego 92101-4792 619-239-5977	vva472@yahoo.com www.vva472.oef	Sal Pellerito	Combined membership and board meeting on second Saturday each month, 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Veterans Museum and Memorial Center, lower level, 2115 Park Blvd, San Diego, 92101
500	PO Box 255484 Sacramento 95865-5484 916-481-6020; Fax: 916-485-9910	vva500@sbcglobal.net www.norcaltravel/vva500.html	Mary Lou McNeill	General Meeting, 3rd Tuesday, 7 pm; Board - 1st Tuesday, 7 pm. Both meetings held at: Roseville Veterans Memorial Hall, 110 Park Drive, Roseville (Royer Park)
526	PO Box 1442 Culver City 90232-1442 310-429-4512	wmctaggart@pmcos.com	John Hamilton	American Legion Hall, 5309 Sepulveda Blvd., Culver City; First Thursday each month at 7:30 p.m.
535	PO Box 37 Grass Valley 95945 530-798-9967	http://www.nccn.net/%tevvanc/	Joseph Sanders	1st Thursday, 7 pm. Grass Valley Veterans Memorial Bldg., 255 South Auburn, Grass Valley (in Remembrance Room)
547	PO Box 884 Kentfield 94914 415-457-8005; Fax: 415-454-2737	webmaster@vietnamveteransmarin.org http://www.vietnamveteransmarin.org/	Pat Williams	3rd Wednesday, 7 pm. American Legion, Post 313, Club Room, 12 Ward St., Larkspur, CA 94939
563	PO Box 751284 Petaluma 94975-1284 707-762-9078	johnc85393@aol.com	John Cheney	Veterans Memorial Bldg., Petaluma Blvd., Petaluma, 4th Thursday each month at 6:30 p.m.
582	PO Box 3070 Paradise, CA 95967 530-893-8435	zashiban@sbcglobal.net	Stephen Wilson	3rd Wednesday each month, Veterans' Memorial Hall, 554 Rio Lindo Ave., Chico, CA 95928
643	PO Box 745 Dinuba 93618 559-528-2811 / Fax: 559-528-2384	geodrid@sbcglobal.net	Peter McManus	2nd Wednesday, 7 pm at Dinuba Memorial Building, 249 S. Alta Ave., Dinuba, CA 93618
691	PO Box 2226 Merced 95344-0226 209-388-9729	www.mymerced.com/0704k163.html	David Alvarez	3rd Monday, 7 pm, Citi Bank, 19th & M, Merced. Board - 1st Monday, 7 pm
702	PO Box 525 Yountville 94599 707-252-7537 / Fax:707-944-0955	rosssvva@aol.com	Ross Hall	1st Tuesday, 7 pm at Yountville Veterans Home in conference room B. Board meets 3rd Saturday, 8 am in temporary canteen, building D.
756	PO Box 90994 Long Beach 90809 562-433-6756	aircop72@gmail.com www.vva756.org	Max Stewart	1st Wednesday, 7 pm at VFW Post 8615, 2805 South St., Long Beach
781	1100 Main St. PO Box 102 Ferdale 95536 707-725-6946	carlhandup@suddenlink.net www.vva781.org	Carl Young	2nd Tuesday each month, 7 pm, Ferndale Veterans Memorial Hall, 1100 Main Street, Ferndale, 95536
785	2345 Barraca Parkway Irvine 92606 714-932-2014	kenbartend@yahoo.com www.vva785.org	Ken Porizak	1st Wednesday, 6 pm (social hour prior), at US Army Reserve Training Center Armory, 2345 Barranca Parkway, Irvine, CA
880	508 Riddle Court Modesto 95356 209-416-0200	emg@msn.com	Errol Green	3rd Tuesday, 6:30 pm at American Legion Hall, 1001 S. Santa Cruz, Modesto
933	PO Box 26256 Fresno 93720-6256 559-297-5253	sdoak@unwiredbb.com	Stephen Doak	1st Tuesday, 6 pm, at Clovis Veterans Memorial Bldg., 453 Hughes Ave., Clovis 93612
951	PO Box 1313 Lakeport 95453 707-262-5651	deanvva951@hotmail.com vva951.org	Dean Gotham	2nd Tuesday at 801 N. Main St. 6 p.m. (St. Mary Immaculate Hall Parrish Hall), Lakeport, 95453; potluck 6 pm, General Meeting 7 pm
982	4814 Talmage Rd. Moorpark, CA 93021 805-233-2201	halfaro12000@yahoo.com	Henry Alfaro	American Legion Post 371, 1025 Guadalupe St., Guadalupe, CA; last Saturday each month at 11 a.m.
1024	North Orange County	contact So. Dist. VP Steve Mackey		

spect given to our soldiers who are KIA, as well as document the military rituals designed to deal with survivor guilt.

A highlight of the Convention for me was the banquet. I had inadvertently ended up with an extra ticket which I could have sold (I paid for it) but instead gave it to the AVVA delegate from

Georgia, Jerri Wallis. I discovered Jerri's husband was on active duty, about to be deployed to Afghanistan and, that her twenty-one year old son had already been deployed and was in

Afghanistan. Jerri had brought her three girls (one aged nine and two aged thirteen) and was not going to the banquet because she couldn't afford the ticket. I was very pleased to help support this family and although it was a small thing Jerri was very grateful.

Finally, I have to say I was disappointed (again) to see that the only religious service on the Convention Agenda was a Catholic Mass and, the invocations were all delivered only by a Catholic priest.

Overall I thought there was way too much flag-waving and religion and not enough veterans advocacy.

Confessions of a 1st time Delegate to a National Convention: Louisville and Back
Dennis Croucher, Central District VP

Where to start? Oh yeah, the beginning. It's been almost 30 years since I got on a big jet and I was kinda nervous. Kinda? Heck, to tell the truth, I said a full novena. I used to love to fly when I was in the Army but that was over 40 years ago and I, like most my age, felt invincible then. Now that I have grown-up kids with children of their own, I'm feeling very mortal. Back to the story.... So I cheated death and after a brief stop in Dallas/Fort Worth we landed in Louisville, Kentucky. After my roommate and I grabbed a cab to our hotel, we unpacked our overloaded suitcases and tried to settle in. My body was on California time and the desk clock said it was 2:30 in the morning. Somewhere along my route I had lost three hours. Will I ever find it? I wasn't really tired yet but wake-up time was 7 a. m. We had to get our credentials and be seated for the opening ceremonies by 9 a. m. I had never been to Louisville, much less the Galt Hotel and it was big and beautiful. It was a quick walk from our hotel, amid the rain showers and blustery wind. I hadn't seen rain in a couple of months and almost didn't recognize it. The Galt Hotel is a cluster of tall towers and artifacts reminding folks that this is the home of the Kentucky Derby. We followed the crowd to the registration area set up along one wall that you could have parked a 747 in. Did I say crowd? Mob would be more like it. There were men and women all over the place and they were all here for the most invigorating experience of a life time. The most disconcerting thing was that they all looked like my father and mother's friends. When did I get so old? After getting my badge attached to a little green lanyard we proceeded around the corner to the main convention meeting room. Did I say room, more like an enclosed city block! There were over 700 chairs set across this vast floor space with 8 by 11 inch pieces of paper attached to the back of each one. Letters like NY, KY and CA printed on them so it was easy to spot where your delegation was to park its collective butt. After passing a phalanx of security people, all with gold metal stars encased in leather holders hanging around their necks that read MARSHALL, each one checking your badge to make sure no unauthorized person purporting to be a Vietnam Veteran should pass their station. So now it's Show Time. Two huge screens were displayed at the very front with a horse garlanded with a horseshoe around its neck with Vietnam Veterans of America National Convention written in Big Bold Letters. I had arrived! On the podium were the current National Officers of the VVA: President John Rowan, Vice-President Jack Devine, Secretary Barry Hagge and Treasurer Alan Cook along with a few others yet to be introduced. Does the phrase Roar of the Greasepaint, Smell of the Crowd bring an image to your mind? That's how it felt. These were actual live bodies up there, not a picture in the VVA Veteran. Hmmm, I thought John was a figment of my over active imagination. He's a little bigger and broader too in real life. John, time for a little diet ole buddy. So now the lights blink and its time for the delegates to get seated so the show can begin. "Please rise for the presentation of our National Colors". Boy, talk about

goose bumps when 700 plus people pop to their feet and come to attention. All of a sudden 40 years melt away as I stand ridged with my hand snapping up in a sharp salute like when I was on the parade ground at Fort Ord! My drill sergeant would have been proud. I can't think of a time when my heart felt the way it did and how proud I was to be a part of this amazing adventure. The color guards were all current members of the NCO Academy. After the color guard placed the flags in their respective holders, Michelle DellaFave & Lindsay Bloom ("Blue Eyed Soul"), former members of Dean Martin's Goldiggers and Dingallings, sang our National Anthem. After taking our seats the guests of the Convention were introduced, among those were CA congressman Bob Filner, Former Miss America (2000) Heather French Henry, Actor Jon Voight, and Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré, of Hurricane Katrina Fame. Next up were Committee reports and Adoption of the Convention's Agenda. By now things had settled into my mind and the rest of the day flew by. That evening Regional Caucuses were held in several meeting rooms. This was our chance to meet the delegates who were running for different offices within the VVA. I was disappointed to learn that no one was challenging the current leadership positions except that of Treasurer. Alan Cook decided to step down after years of service and he will be missed! One good thing that came out of his decision is we in California will be able to see a lot more of him. Thus Spoke Zarathustra and I ended my first day of the National Convention. Too bad my body was still in another time zone, as it would be for the whole week. Needless to say, I didn't get a whole lot of sleep.

VVA Chapter 951 Lake County, CA

We had the honor and privilege to present the Vietnam Veterans Memorial "The Moving Wall" at the Lake County Fairgrounds in Lakeport, CA. "The Moving Wall" was presented June 11 - June 15, 2009. Presenting the "Wall" was a true community event. Veterans groups, businesses,



civic organizations and government agencies all made significant contributions. People from all over the state, country and world attended; three guest books were filled with signatures. One of the more heartwarming components of the presentation was the diversity of visitors to the "Wall"- people of all ages, ethnicity, veterans of many wars, relatives and friends of those honored on the "Wall".



The participation of members of Chapter 951 was an outstanding example of chapter teamwork. The "Wall" was installed in less than two hours and taken down in less than two hours. In addition to the "Wall", Chapter 951 did an Avenue of Flags display-fifty burial flags of Lake County veterans on 15-foot flagpoles were placed behind the "Wall" and defined the entrance to the display area. Lake County Sculptor, Rolf Kriken, generously donated the use of three of his large statues to augment the "Wall" display. Rolf did the bronze statues and murals at the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Sacramento. Each statue contributed to a specific part of the "Wall" display. The main entrance was graced by Rolf's statue, "Prophecy"- "The Wounded Warrior"; the entrance to the "Wall" had the "Stepped Out" statue and the end of the "Wall" had the statue called "Passage"- a POW/MIA memorial that was placed next to the POW/MIA table.

The level of participation and support from the community was, also, outstanding. "The Moving Wall" brought Lake County together in such a manner that no one could remember a similar circumstance. President John F. Kennedy stated: "A Nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces, but also by the men it honors and the men it remembers". Lake County revealed itself by the support of "The Moving Wall", Vietnam veterans, and pride in the efforts of Chapter 951.

Chapter 951 would like to thank the following VVA Chapters for their support with donations for "The Moving Wall": Marin Chapter 547 was a five-star sponsor, Sacramento Chapter 500 was a four-star donor, and Santa Rosa Chapter 223 was a two-star donor. Many California members sent in donations. California State Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America made a donation in the memory of Barnett Hoffman. Most of the veteran service organizations in Lake County made donations, as well. Thank you to The Lake County Military Honors Team who presented colors and performed the appropriate ceremonies to open and close Chapter 951's presentation

Chapter 951 is proud and humbled by the opportunity to honor, respect, and remember those brothers and sisters who made the ultimate sacrifice. Although Chapter 951 is the youngest veteran organization in Lake County, an indelible memory has been etched in Lake County.

VVA 446

Chapter 446 members attended a Veterans Information Seminar presented by the Orange County (CA) Veterans Advisory Council on September 19, 2009. It was a very informative and useful seminar.

The organization putting it on is a non-profit Where Communities Serve Veterans, which was founded to help our military and veterans integrate back in to the civilian workplace when they return home and leave their military service. Also, to eradicate veteran homelessness as over 25% of veterans are homeless. We want to be a resource to help our veterans reintegrate into civilian life and jobs and have the quality of life that they have provided for all of us.

From their web site, their mission: Welcoming home our men and women doesn't end after the crowd disperses, it MUST continue on for the life of the Veteran! They've served us, now we will serve them with programs that work so they reintegrate into society.



VVA 446 members attend a veteran seminar 9/19/09

The Southwest Veterans' Business Resource Center, Inc., (SWVBRC) in concert with the support of communities will serve Veterans and active duty members that have served in any military component, and with exception, spouses through outreach and education programs.

VVA 47

A now annual fundraising event for Chapter 47 has become fun too. Every year San Bernardino shuts down a large portion of the city for its annual Route 66 Rendezvous, which is a multi day event running from Thursday to Sunday the third week of each September. Everything from "Show & Shine" to open header contests, burn-



VVA Chapter 47 President, Steve Mackey reads the newspaper as they wait for the crowds.

ing tires (sometimes until they explode), vendors, etc. Chapter 47 got into the event taking care of a Pepsi booth, and when it is hot (as it was this year) business is brisk. Chapter members volunteer in shifts throughout the event, sharing with each other and exposing Vietnam Veterans of America to the public. It has become both a fundraiser and a public relations (outreach) event. Not only do people attending the event come to get refreshments, they also open their wallets and donate to Chapter 47's next major project - a full-scale presentation of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to be built at Riverside National Cemetery. The memorial is being funded by private donations and the chapter has spearheaded the efforts both through the Riverside National Cemetery Support Committee (which has many chapter members on its Board of Directors) and the community awareness.

CA VETERANS BENEFITS FUND

cavbf.org



VVA 472 members participate in parade.

The California Veterans Benefits Fund was created as a 501 (c) 3 Not for Profit Corporation to raise money to help support Veteran projects in California. Since we began our fundraising we have dedicated part of our income to support the California State Council (CSC). We have also dedicated a portion of our fundraising to support the CSC Veterans Benefits Program.

This fiscal year we have granted over \$7,600 dollars to the CSC and supported the following projects in the name of the CSC; the 2nd Annual Assembly Veterans Recognition Luncheon with a \$2,500.00 donation naming the CSC as co host with Mary Salas, chair Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee. We have committed to continue this project in the future. We also granted \$1,500.00 to Humboldt State University, Veterans Project and \$500.00 to the Missing in America Project.

At our last meeting we granted \$1,000.00 to the California Department of Veteran Affairs (CDVA) Women Veterans Conference, \$1,000.00 to the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) Faces of Agent Orange project and \$2,500.00 to the CDVA Vet Fund golf tournament for the California Gold Star License Plate Program. We have made these donations in the name of CSC rather than our own name to keep CSC in the forefront of the public and other organizations that participate in these events. Doing this does not take any funding away from the projects of CSC. Work in these areas is more of a public relations and awareness program that can assist both the CSC and the CVBF in being recognized in both funding and legislative awareness. This recognition has been a great asset to the efforts we have been putting into legislative and lobbying efforts pertaining to veteran issues.

We are hoping that with increased efforts in fundraising and people being aware of who we are and what our goals are, we will be able to raise more money to put directly into the CSC for their programs and other worthwhile programs we provide grants to.

Mission Statement

California Veterans Benefits Fund was established to provide funding for the education of elected officials about veteran issues and assistance to veterans and their families located throughout California. The Corporation shall provide funding for education and assistance to veterans and their families through veteran service officers located in California. The Corporation shall also fund certain programs requested by other tax exempt veteran service organizations.

VVA CSC Motorcycle Riders Group

First Event Report
Robert W. Johnston Sr.

On Tuesday May 11th, after a rocky start and taking care of some mechanical problems, I traveled down to Southern California on my motorcycle, a 1999 Harley Davidson Softail Custom (see photo), for a multi-function visit to the LA and Orange County area. I rode in full leathers, with my VVA Motorcycle Riders Group (MRG) prototype patch logo on the back and full face wrap helmet. Open road riding is fun, but traveling down US Interstate 5 with all the big rig trucks and cars, I choose safety over style. I admit that I also carried my brain bucket helmet for wearing later when I did local traveling, but for the long hauls, it was safety first. After all I did want to

complete my trip and return home to my wife and family.



The trip down to Southern California took a little longer than I had originally planned, with a few more stops

than expected. Guess my backside could only take about a hundred miles, before it started yelling at me to stop and give it a rest. Sucks, getting old!!! I rode directly into Ontario where I made base camp for the next few days' activities. I had planned to meet with members of VVA Chapter 446, Pasadena for dinner that evening, but due to unexpected changes had to cancel, but would try to reschedule for Thursday evening.

On Wednesday morning, May 12th, I had the honor to represent the CSC in the "Run For The Wall" the California to Washington D.C. 10 day cross country motorcycle run which joins up with other riders on Memorial Day and "Rolling Thunder". The assembly area was in the parking lot at the Victoria's Garden Shopping Center in Rancho Cucamonga, off US Highway 15. On the ride over from my motel, I joined up with 6 other riders down from Oregon, who were headed for the RFTW. All along the way to the assembly area, I saw groups of riders headed to the AA. Upon arriving, as I was directed into the parking area, the entire lot was full of motorcycles. I would make a guesstimate (WAG) at approximately close to 1,000. The site was awesome and breathtaking. As I attempted to check in with registration, I ran into Jerry Yamamoto and a few other members from Chapter 53, who were there to see the run off. I got signed in and parked my bike with the other riders in the Southern Route group. Each route, Southern and Central, had about 500 bikes each, along with support vehicles; vans for supplies, parts and equipment not carried on bikes, and pickup trucks with trailers in case of break-downs or other use needs. Each route contingent looked like a military convoy, and was actually structured similarly, with groups of riders assigned to platoons. I rode with 2nd platoon. I was not going to be able to make the entire trip, due to other commitments and work, but participated in riding with the Southern Route out to Indio, the first scheduled stop for fuel. I bid my farewells to my fellow riders as they continued on toward Williams, Arizona, the first day's destination and night stop. I traveled solo back to Ontario, but saw several other riders heading back from Indio that had also ridden that far with the group, but didn't continue for whatever reason.

Later that evening I traveled to Brea and attended the meeting of CSC's newest chapter, VVA Chapter 1024 North Orange County, and had the pleasure to present their VVA National Charter to the Officers and members. They are an active and enthusiastic group and I look forward to seeing them involved in upcoming CSC meetings and other events.

On Thursday I traveled to visit our Veteran Service Officer, Karen at the Long Beach VA Hospital, and met her office volunteer and apprentice, Mike Dunne. We discussed what he does there and the possibility of him becoming a VSO with training thru the CSC VSO Program. We also talked about what assistance and help she could use from the CSC, and the support she receives from the local VVA Chapters. After my visit was finished, I contacted James Maddox, VVA Chapter 446 President and inquired about rescheduling of dinner meeting, however he informed me that everyone whom had planned on the Tuesday get together was busy that evening also. We will try again next time I am down in the LA area, with better advance planning and coordination. I look forward to it and hopefully doing the same

with other chapters in the area.

Friday morning I broke camp and traveled up to Fresno for the CSC Finance committee meeting, at the Holiday Inn. I arrived a little after the meeting had started and participated for the remainder of the day working on the Proposed CSC Budget for FY 2010. That night, all of the members of the committee attended a BBQ hosted by Chapter 933 President Steve Doak and his wife at their house. The food was delicious and plentiful and the company was great, made up mostly of chapter 933 members and family. The next morning we resumed working on the budget and also on revising the CSC HGDP Chapter contract and cover letter. After we finished on all matters before the committee at this meeting, I decided to head on home, declining to stay over another night.

Having traveling over 1,100 miles, I was only 45 miles from home when I stopped for fuel in Los Banos. Having filled up my bike with gas, and myself with a cold beverage, I climbed back on my Harley and prepared for the final leg of my journey. Fate is a harsh and cruel jokester at times, and this was one of those times. I wasn't able to start my bike, something with the battery, same as at the start of my trip. No power to the ignition. It was after 10 PM and I was on the east end of town. I wasn't able to get any road assistance from AAA so had to call my oldest son Jerry to come save his Dad. He and his wife drove over from Morgan Hill, after picking up my trailer at my house. After 5 days on the road and 1,105 miles of open Highway and LA/Orange County Freeway traveling, I finished my trip sitting in my son's truck, trailering my bike home the last few miles. I cringe to hear the comments from a certain CSC board member who had already kidded me about having his trailer ready for me if I needed it earlier in the week. Oh well, like Forrest Gump said "Stuff happens!"

Despite the disappointing last few miles of my trip, the entire sojourn was a great success and productive, besides being FUN!!! I look forward to doing the entire Run for The Wall hopefully next year, time and money permitting! But this trip was a heck of a trial run. On a sidebar, this was a good exposure of the VVA Motorcycle Riders Group to other veterans, riders and the public. We are just starting our travels and adventures!

Here are two proposed logo designs for the MRG. Look them over and let me know which one you would like for the MRG. This is just a straw poll of those members here in CA. A similar poll will be taken in other states that have an interest in the MRG, and after we hopefully receive VVA National approval of the MRG as an official sanctioned program, we will move toward

Vietnam Veterans of America



Motorcycle Rider's Group



VVA 464 event - members work an information/display table.

adopting an official logo and patch.

On a personal note, I like the eagle design as a back patch, and the wings as a chest or badge design. Just my own opinion.

PTSD IS A VALID DIAGNOSIS: Who Benefits From Challenging Its Existence?

Rachel Yehuda, PhD and Alexander C. McFarlane, MD

Dr Yehuda is director of the PTSD Program at James J. Peters Veterans Affairs Medical Center in the Bronx, and professor of psychiatry at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City. Dr McFarlane is professor of psychiatry and head of CMVH University of Adelaide Node at the Centre for Military and Veterans' Health at the University of Adelaide, Australia.

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PTSD filled a nosological gap by providing a way to characterize the long-lasting effects of trauma exposure. 1 This led to a plethora of previously lacking scientific observations. Now the existence of PTSD is being called into question because some of the original assumptions that helped make the case for it have proved to be incorrect. 2-4 However, it is possible to update some of the flawed assumptions of PTSD without rescinding the diagnosis. There is no reason to throw the baby out with the bath water.

It is true that when advocates argued for the centrality of trauma exposure as a cause of PTSD, they lacked the perspective that PTSD is only one of many possible outcomes following trauma exposure-including resilience. 1 However, the diagnosis is not invalidated by the fact that trauma exposure does not always-but sometimes does-result in PTSD. 5 In medicine, diagnoses are not invalidated when not all persons express symptoms associated with a pathogen. Not all persons who are infected with Mycobacterium tuberculosis get clinically manifested pulmonary disease. Yet this does not call into question the role of the bacterium. Nor do we call into question the diagnoses of pulmonary tuberculosis because it shares symptoms with pneumonia and sarcoidosis.

The PTSD construct is valid independent of symptoms of overlapping disorders. 5,6 The argument that "symptom overlap" calls the PTSD diagnosis into question reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of the purpose of diagnostic categories-which is to organize symptoms around a common cause to effectively provide the needed intervention. Treating specific symptoms outside the framework of a diagnosis is problematic. 7 The idea here is that one arguably treats behavioral manifestations of panic attacks that come "out of the blue" differently from similar physiological reactivity provoked by traumatic reminders in PTSD. The PTSD diagnosis implies a failure of homeostatic mechanisms involved in stress recovery. 8 In the absence of trauma exposure, some of the same symptoms might reflect a different neurobiological process and treatment intervention.

We agree that the diagnosis of PTSD almost entered a cul-de-sac when it initially postulated-back in the days before functional neuroimaging in psychiatric research-that symptoms resulted from an organic brain change occurring secondary to stress-induced arousal. Fortunately, advances in neuroscience disconfirmed this, while providing the constructs for a more nuanced way of understanding enduring brain effects resulting from environmental perturbations including gene-environment interactions, epigenetic modifications, and other molecular mechanisms. 9-11 These advances have not only explained mechanisms involved in enduring stress effects but have also revealed individual differences that explain why long-term illness develops in only some trauma exposed persons. 9 That initial theories about pathophysiology may have been erroneous does not jeopardize the validity of the PTSD construct any more than the concept of schizophrenia was jeopardized when its cause was considered to be the "schizophrenogenic mother." 12

So too, the "errors" that can be made in the diagnosis of PTSD underscore the need for better training. Also, there is every reason to believe that scientific advances will yield PTSD biomarkers that differentiate this condition from others, particularly, those with overlapping symptoms. Progress in this area has already been made, and the yield from the rapid development of methodologies for unbiased genome-wide genotyping, gene expression, and molecular approaches are only beginning to be realized. 9-11 Soon it will be more difficult for those who have never seen PTSD clinically to dismiss the "validity" of the PTSD diagnosis.

What is it that really bothers people? Could it be the high price tag of caring for persons disabled with PTSD? Could it be resentment that some persons fake symptoms for secondary gain?

"Malingering" is a strong fear for doctors, but being able to fake an illness does not invalidate it as a diagnostic entity. 13 Could it be that if we continue to assert that trauma exposure really can result in a mental health syndrome, our society will need to shoulder some of the responsibility for primary prevention and start making the world safer from violence, accidents, and disasters that threaten our citizens?

The fact that many persons choose not to continue mental health treatment for PTSD after they become service-connected is often used to "prove" that the injury was never really there and that the diagnosis was only a vehicle for compensation. Anyone who works with veterans or civilians battling the courts in an attempt to obtain compensation for PTSD would understand that severity of PTSD would be high during this process. It is stressful to recount explicit details of traumatic material-even with appropriate support, corrective information, and anxiety-reduction techniques in therapy. Imagine needing to do so in the context of an adversarial process in which the veracity of one's report of trauma or level of distress is questioned. It is unfortunate that some veterans link the experiences of seeking compensation with mental health treatment at the VA and do not return. It is also true that the compensation-seeking process promotes avoidance behavior, accounting for more dropouts. Because there are still barriers to care, it is important not to draw conclusions about the prevalence, severity, or reality of any mental illness based on treatment-seeking behavior. Indeed, only a minority of those with PTSD seek any treatment. 14,15

A constructive solution to the problem of the high cost of PTSD-related disability is to invest in the development of novel PTSD treatments and strategies for its prevention. One of the benefits of asserting that PTSD is not a result of brain damage secondary to stress exposure is that this opens up many new vistas for intervention. The validity of PTSD does not depend on its being a permanent condition-this is another assumption

PROJECT: GOLD STAR NEEDS YOUR HELP

Memorial Day was observed a few months ago, but its significance and sacredness never should, nor should we ever let the memory of our fallen drift away. To ensure that their sacrifice, and that of their families, will always be remembered, "Project: Gold Star" was launched. In November 2008, Governor Schwarzenegger signed SB 1455 – the Gold Star Family License Plate Bill authored by Senator Dave Cogdill of Modesto. This bill authorizes a uniquely designed special license plate for families whose loved one is killed while serving on active duty in the military. The start-up costs for this license plate however - estimated to be approximately \$300,000 - must not impact the state's general fund and, therefore, must be raised from private sources.

To date, we have received only \$16,611 in donations. This is why we need your help. In spite of these difficult economic times we are asking that you find a way to donate to this most worthy and important cause. Whether you send a few dollars, a few hundred or a few thousand, all donations are welcome and will propel us to our goal. Your donations are tax deductible and you will receive a receipt and a thank you letter for your contribution. A donation form is available on the next page of this newsletter or on our website: www.calvet.ca.gov. As well, you can call us at (916) 653-2192 and we will mail one to you.

We can think of no better way to both sanctify the sacrifice of our fallen heroes and honor the families whose lives were changed forever than by getting these Gold Star License plates produced.

Please feel free to contact the Office of Public Affairs at (916) 653-2192 if you have questions regarding Project: Gold Star.

Please see the attached Donation Form.

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War. The estimated population of the United States on 1 July 09 was 307,041,000. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 226,706,000 are in the work force. Throw in another 20,000,000 illegal aliens (no one really knows with certainty how many illegal aliens are in the United States), and you have a population base of roughly 327, 041,000 that is being defended by 1.4 million. That equates to only four tenths of a percent (.4%) of the population is defending the other 99.6%. If you include the 1.3 million in the Guard and Reserve who are now used as if they were active duty forces, there are a total of 2.7 million people defending the 327,041,000, or roughly eight tenths of a percent (.8%) defending the other 99.2%. In 1970, there were over 45 million living veterans in the United States. In 1999 here were nearly 30 million veterans of which 18 million were in the work force. Today, the BLS reports there are 22,196,000 living veterans of which 12,169,000 are in the work force. Depending on the survey, upwards of 1,700 veterans now die each day!

Historically, the unemployment rate for veterans has been one to three percent below the national average. In June 09, the unemployment rate for all veterans was 7.8% while the national unemployment rate was 9.5%. These numbers will probably rise in the July unemployment report. Historically, members of the Guard and Reserve faced a full call up during World War II and a partial call up during the Korean War. Of the 37,000 Guard and Reserve members who fought in the Vietnam War, all but about 200 were volunteers. But since 1991, there have been over 20 full call ups of the Guard and Reserve! Many of the activations have been for one and two year periods. Employers look on the component members as their human asset on loan to DoD, not as DoD's asset. Consequently, employers are quietly fighting back and not supporting the DoD call up policy. At present it appears that employers want to hire retired military, transitioning military that have completed their obligated service, and make great effort to hire our wounded and disabled warriors. But when it comes to hiring component members of the Guard and Reserve, employers will not hire them for solid economic reasons. This has manifested itself in the many reports from all over the country of companies using the excuse of the recession to target and lay off employees who are active members of the Guard and Reserve. Component Guard or Reserve member who have been laid off are requested to forward the information to contact@vetjobs.com who is collecting real examples for future testimony before Congress

that could be corrected without even altering the diagnostic criteria. When treatment options based on a more precise characterization of the cause and biology of PTSD become available, the price tag associated with PTSD disability will be reduced. Rescinding the diagnosis will stand in the way of these developments.

It seems disingenuous, invoking DSM-V to use the convenience of having been wrong about some things to obliterate a diagnosis that has been so on-target in so many ways for so many trauma survivors. It is not clear why the dialogue is set up in a binary manner to either confirm or deny the existence of PTSD as currently formulated. The question going into DSM-V is whether we can restructure a more precise diagnosis that will be more resistant to the superficial criticisms currently used to challenge its existence. Once we acknowledge that PTSD is a specific type of response to trauma, many of the conceptual "problems" related to refining Criterion A, bracket creep, or symptom overlap dissipate.



Chapter 53 President Jerry Yamamoto, with Kate O'Hare-Palmer (GSC Women's Veterans Chair)

The issues regarding PTSD have faced other diagnoses that are also sometimes difficult to delineate as a result of symptom overlap or because some patients fall into the cracks of often arbitrary and dichotomously parsed diagnostic criteria. That PTSD has become the whipping post for the challenges that emerging knowledge brings to the classification of mental disorders suggests it has had a strong cultural impact... let's not shoot the messenger.

VETERAN STATISTICS

Today, there are roughly 1.4 million on active duty, less than half the nearly 3.5 million people on active duty we had at the end of the Vietnam



VVA 53's 25th Anniversary Celebration

This data has many ramifications. With 37 years of an all volunteer military, America now has two generations of citizens that have no idea of what really goes on in the military and the importance of having a strong military. This lack of understanding impacts political and social attitudes towards the military. The population base for veteran service organizations is dwindling rapidly which is why many are changing their membership rules in order to maintain membership in a rapidly declining demographic environment. Today, there are fewer defenders of our freedoms living who understand the importance of maintaining a strong military. And without a strong military, we cannot maintain our freedoms, our free market capitalist economy and our constitutional republic. Remember these numbers when you talk to your representatives in Congress.

AGENT ORANGE IN AMERICA

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – "Vietnam Veterans of America applauds the conclusions and recommendations of a Ford Foundation-funded report issued today by the National Organization on Disabilities on the effects of Agent Orange in Vietnam," said John Rowan, VVA National President. "While VVA feels compassion for the many adults and children injured and made ill by exposure to Agent Orange and the many other toxins used in Vietnam during the war there, it

is now time to fully deal with the same effects on Americans who served in Vietnam and other areas that were also contaminated. The effects of these toxins on the children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren must similarly be addressed."

The U.S. government currently is not studying the possible intergenerational effects of exposure to Agent Orange, nor are they doing any morbidity studies at the Department of Veterans Affairs, the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or anywhere else.

Rowan called for "the immediate de-classification of all Department of Defense information that pertains to exposure of U.S. military servicemembers to any toxin at any time, to include the Vietnam Era" and to take immediate steps to begin epidemiological studies, birth defects registries, and outreach necessary to scientifically document the problems suffered by our veterans and their offspring.

"Dow Chemical is not going to fund these studies," Rowan said. "Only the U.S. government can reasonably be expected to fund this vital research, and they have not been doing their job. In fact, it would appear that for the last decade that our government has been doing everything possible to prevent such studies from being done.

"That the Administration is adding another \$3 million to the \$3 million already pledged from the Ford Foundation for work to help those suffering in Vietnam is fine and good," Rowan said. "However, there needs to be at least a commensurate commitment by the U.S. government and the Ford Foundation to American veterans and their families. Under a new President, now is the time for a dramatic change of direction for our country. Similarly, now is the time for a new direction from the Ford Foundation."

From VVA National

Open letter to all VVA and AVVA members: We need 15 minutes of your time to help the VVA. One of our potential advertisers asked if we had any current information on what kind of products our members own and are we really patriotic or is that just Veteran hype? The truth is we don't know and that's why we need your help.

If you are in a market that has lost your local newspaper recently or if you follow the media (Readers Digest which sold for several Billion dollars a few years ago, filed for bankruptcy last month) you know it is not a good time for publishing. We continue to publish the Veteran and overall we have been doing okay. But, we can do better and this survey will help us pursue advertisers that we have never had and at prices that are much higher than what we are currently

getting.

Yes, this is a marketing survey and once the idea got started we sent it to the Membership committee to see if they would like to join in. They did and we have added their questions to the survey. So, you will be helping both Public Affairs and the Membership committees to serve you better.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Individual membership is open to Veterans who served on active duty in the US Military (for other than training purposes) from February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975 or from August 5, 1964 and May 7 1975 for Vietnam-era Veterans.

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No personal information will be collected about you. This is a blind study, which means we will take all of the information and combine it into one big profile. Then we will be able to present a true picture of our membership to potential advertisers.

We need you to do TWO things: complete the survey yourself and forward the survey link to your VVA and AVVA member e-mails. We do not want you to answer the survey more than once, but we would rather you get this request 5 times than not at all. Please click on the link below and complete the survey on line: www.intellitrend.com/VVA

Thanks for your time and consideration. I have personally completed the survey and the company that is compiling the information is owned by a fellow Vietnam Veteran (door gunner) and is one of my business teaming partners. We have a signed confidentiality agreement in place. The National VVA officers have reviewed this study and both committees have approved its release.

Keith King, Chair Public Affairs Committee, Bill Meeks Jr., Chair, Membership Affairs Committee



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