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Special Notice: If you are a veteran in emotional crisis and need help RIGHT NOW, call this toll-free number 1-800-273-8255, available 24/7, and tell them you are a veteran. All calls are confidential.

VVA & CSC MEETING DATES & EVENTS

Full Council Meetings:
 April 3-5, 2009 - Fresno
 June 12-14, 2009 - Region 8/9 Pre-Convention Conference - Reno, NV
 July 27 - August 2, 2009 - Louisville, KY, National Convention
 August 7-9, 2009 - Fresno
 October 23-25, 2009 - Fresno



LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Pete Conaty, VVA CSC Legislative Advocate
 March 2009

About your lobbyist

Let me introduce myself, I am a member of the Vietnam Veterans of America, a U.S. Army retiree, and a wounded Vietnam Veteran. I am a lobbyist at the state Capitol and have 23 years experience at the Capitol, both as a staff person, policy consultant, and lobbyist. After I retired from my 21 years with the Army in 1986, I went to work for the Legislature. I rose from a staff level position dealing with member services, to policy consultant for several committees, and finally as Chief Policy Consultant in 1995. I also served as Chief of Staff to the late Assemblyman Mickey Conroy for four years.

In 1996 I founded "Pete Conaty & Associates," a lobbying firm which provides clients with expert, knowledgeable, and effective guidance in the complexities of a "term-limited" California State Legislature. Over the past 13 years, I have taken a hands-on approach to developing relationships with new members of the State Legislature and their staffs, while maintaining personal contacts throughout the State Capitol, state agencies, and regulatory bodies.

Besides the VVA, I represent several other military and veteran clients including AMVETS, American Legion, Armed Forces Retirees Association of California, California Association of County Veterans Service Officers, National Association of County Veterans Service Officers, and the National Guard Association of California.

ABOUT LOBBYING

In the era of term limits, it is very important to have a presence at the state Capitol and to take positions on legislation. 28 new legislators were elected in November; this represents a 23 % turnover of the total 120 legislators. This means that almost a quarter of the Legislature has no knowledge of veterans and military issues. Add to this a constant turn over of committees, staff members, consultants, and state agency employees and it is a full time job just keeping track of who is where and then educating them on the issues important to veterans and their families.

One useful tactic that I have developed over the years is to urge my clients to become well known to the Legislature by taking an active role in legislation and policy discussions. The way to do this is to take positions on bills which are favorable to veterans. The client's support

for a bill helps the legislator that is authoring the bill move the legislation forward in the process. The obvious upside of this is that it enables legislation beneficial to veterans to be signed into law. The upside for the client is that it has established that organization as an active participant in the legislative process and that organization now has become a "go to" resource for legislators and staff on all matters pertaining to veterans.

THE 2009 STATE BUDGET UPDATE

On February 20, Governor Schwarzenegger signed a series of bills known as the "budget package", which seeks to address California's \$42 billion deficit. This budget exercise was unprecedented in that it covered an 18 month time period and that it was negotiated by the Big 5. Normally, each budget covers one fiscal year, however the budget that was passed last year fell short due to the troubled economy, therefore the budget package had to also include revisions to the last half of the FY 08-09 budget. The normal budget process was also circumvented and all negotiations occurred between the Governor and the 4 legislative leaders (Big 5).

Some of the highlights of the budget are a 1 cent temporary sales tax increase beginning April 1, an increase in the Vehicle License Fee, increase in income taxes, cuts in school funding and higher education, and cuts to SSI/SSP recipients.

Many aspects of the budget will also be decided by the voters in two upcoming elections. There will be a Special Election on May 19 in which voters will decide whether to create a rainy day fund and extend tax increases, make changes to the state lottery (so the state can borrow against it), shift Prop 63 mental health funding monies, shift early childhood funding monies, restore monies borrowed from education funding, and eliminate salary increases for lawmakers during tight budget years. During the June 2010 Primary election, voters will decide whether to create the open primary system.

VETERANS AFFAIRS BUDGET

Despite the bleak news on the rest of the budget, the California Department of Veterans Affairs fared fairly well. Veterans service programs were not reduced for the 09-10 budget and the 08-09 mid year budget. The West LA, Lancaster, and Ventura veterans homes remain on track.

SENATE AND ASSEMBLY

VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEES

Both houses of the Legislature have named the full membership of their Committees on Veterans Affairs. Assemblywoman Mary Salas requested and was granted the chairmanship of the Assembly Veterans Committee for 2009. This is the third year that Salas holds this chair. The committee also now has three veterans and one currently serving member of the military. Vice-Chair Paul Cook is a retired Marine Colonel and a Vietnam Veteran. Chuck DeVore is a re-

tired Lt.Col. from the California National Guard, Danny Gilmore is a former Marine, and Ted Liu is currently a Major in the Air Force Reserve. Lori Saldana from San Diego will be serving her third year on the committee while Alyson Huber, Manuel Perez, and Mariko Yamada are freshmen legislators joining the committee. Eric Worthen continues to serve as Chief Consultant of the Assembly Veterans Committee.

The Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs has a new chair, Senator Jeff Denham, who is an Air Force veteran with service in Desert Storm and Restore Hope. Senators Lou Correa (Vice-Chair), Negrete-McLeod, Pat Wiggins, and Mark Wyland are long serving members of the veterans committee. They will be joined this year on the committee by Gil Cedillo and Abel Maldonado. The Senate committee was increased in size from five to seven members this year. Donald Wilson remains the Chief Consultant for the Senate Veterans Committee.

Bills are being introduced in large numbers as the bill submission deadline approaches, and we will be studying and tracking bills of interest to the State Council.

VETERAN'S PENSIONS UPDATE

If you are a wartime veteran with a limited income and you are no longer able to work, you may qualify for a Veterans Disability Pension or the Veterans Pension for Veterans 65 or older. Many veterans of wartime service are completely unaware of the fact that if they are 65 or older and on a limited income they may qualify for a VA Pension without being disabled. An estimated 2 million impoverished veterans and their widows are not receiving the VA pension they deserve because they do not know about it. The VA has had limited success in getting the information to them. Generally, you may be eligible if:

- You were discharged from service under conditions other than dishonorable, and
- You served at least 90 days of active military service 1 day of which was during a war time period. If you entered active duty after September 7, 1980, generally you must have served at least 24 months or the full period for which called or ordered to active duty (There are exceptions to this rule), and
- Your countable family income is below a yearly limit set by law (The yearly limit on income is set by Congress), and
- You are age 65 or older, or, you are permanently and totally disabled, not due to your own willful misconduct.

With the advent of the Gulf War on 2 Aug. '90 (and still not ended by Congress to this day), veterans can now serve after 2 Aug. '90 during a period of war time. If your countable income appears to be near the maximum you should apply. VA will determine if you are eligible and notify you. If you do not initially qualify, you may reapply if you have un-reimbursed medical expenses during the twelve month period after VA receives your claim that brings your countable income below the yearly income limit (i.e. These are expense

IN THIS ISSUE:

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The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of VVA, the State Council or its members.

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.

you have paid for medical services or products for which you will not be reimbursed by Medicare or private medical insurance). Countable income for eligibility purposes includes income received by the veteran and his or her dependents, if any, from most sources. It includes earnings, disability and retirement payments, interest and dividends, and net income from farming or business. There is a presumption that all of a child's income is available to or for the veteran. VA may grant an exception to this in hardship cases.

There is no set limit on how much net worth a veteran and his dependents can have, but net worth cannot be excessive. Net worth means the net value of the assets of the veteran and his or her dependents. It includes such assets as bank accounts, stocks, bonds, mutual funds and any property other than the veteran's residence and a reasonable lot area. The decision as to whether a claimant's net worth is excessive depends on the facts of each individual case. All net worth should be reported and VA will determine if a claimant's assets are sufficiently large that the claimant could live off these assets for

a reasonable period of time. VA's needs-based programs are not intended to protect substantial assets or build up an estate for the benefit of heirs. The Maximum Annual Pension Rates (MAPR) effective 1 Dec. '08 for both living and deceased veteran's

2009 Legislative Platform**Vietnam Veterans of America, California State Council**

Veterans' Employment; Develop legislation initiatives to improve the climate for veterans employment throughout California, including governments municipalities at all levels and the private/corporate and non-profit sectors.

Veterans' Education; Develop legislation initiatives to ensure that all California colleges and universities provide information and assistance to all veteran students regarding Federal VA education benefits and how to apply for them.

Veterans' Homelessness and Reduction and Treatment;

- 1) Treating the root causes and thereby reducing its incidence among veterans;
- 2) Improving veterans' employment opportunities;
- 3) Encouraging the full implementation of California's alternative sentencing law and Veterans Court;
- 4) Increase substance abuse prevention programs and substance abuse treatment programs;

California Veterans Homes;

- 1) Maintaining funding to provide a high-level of care for existing homes.
- 2) Maintaining funding to ensure that construction of the future homes remains on track.

Veteran Hot Line; Support the hotline being established by CDVA

Women Veterans; provide a watch for Women Veterans Issues and legislation.

Congressman Phil Hare (D-IL) said: "Like the mandatory funding legislation I introduced in the last Congress, advanced appropriations is the means to an end. That end is ensuring veterans receive the best care possible from a VA that has access to timely, sufficient, and predictable resources. I enthusiastically support this bill and commend Chairmen Akaka and Filner for introducing it."

Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA) said: "One of the best ways we can honor the service of our brave veterans is by providing them with the high-quality health care and services they need. Advance funding for veterans health care will allow the VA to make strategic budgetary decisions that will improve the care provided to our veterans."

Senator Bernard Sanders (I-VT) said: "The VA needs to receive its budget in advance so it can hire the right number of staff to take care of our veterans without waiting for Congress to pass their spending bill. How

can we expect the second largest agency in the federal government, which provides health care to over 5.5 million people, to function when they don't know when they will get their budget? That is why the time for advanced funding for the VA has come. I look forward to working with the president, Secretary Shinseki, Chairman Akaka and our nation's veterans' service organizations to make sure this bill is signed into law this Congress."

Senator Mark Begich (D-AK) said: "Our veterans deserve to know that they will receive the health care they need in a timely and predictable fashion. This is just one small way we can thank them for their service to our country. By authorizing two-year budget authority for the VA, the nation's largest health care provider will have the funding and stability to adequately plan and prepare to deliver a level of service and care that our nation's veterans so richly deserve and have so honorably earned."

Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) said: "We owe our veterans and their families the best quality care we can provide. Our soldiers and sailors do their duty to protect America, so it's our duty to provide for them when they return home."

Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) said: "Setting funding two years in advance will help ensure that no veteran is ever turned away, and I am pleased to support this important legislation introduced by Senator Akaka."

Congressman Mike Michaud (D-ME), Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health, said: "Too often in recent years, VA has been funded after the beginning of the fiscal year and in one case, so underfunded that they required a supplemental appropriation. This cannot be allowed to occur when we are dealing with the health care of our veterans. There must be a timely, sufficient, and predictable funding stream for VA health care. That is what this legislation will achieve."

Senator David Vitter (R-LA) said: "Veterans' health care is a particularly important issue, and as our servicemembers return from combat theatres in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Veterans' Administration has seen a significant growth in demand for health services. Historically, the VA's health care budget has been delivered late, and appropriations levels have been often too low. This bill would allow the VA to plan better by allowing appropriations to be made for the upcoming and following fiscal years."

The Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act is supported by the Partnership for Veterans Health Care Budget Reform,

surviving spouse/children cannot exceed the following:

- Veteran or widow/er with no dependents \$11,830 or \$7,933.
- Veteran with spouse and child or widow/er with a child \$15,493 or \$10,385.
- Veterans or survivor with additional children: add \$2,020 to the limit for each child.
- Housebound veteran or widow/er with no dependents \$14,457 or \$9,696.
- Housebound veteran or widow/er with one dependent \$18,120 or \$12,144.
- Veteran or widow/er who needs aid and attendance and you have no dependents \$19,736 or \$12,681.
- Veteran or widow/er who needs aid and attendance and you have one dependent \$23,396 or \$15,128.

Some income is not counted toward the yearly limit (for example, welfare benefits, some wages earned by dependent children, and Supplemental Security Income). It's also important to note that your medical related expenses are considered when determining your yearly family income. VA pays you the difference between your countable family income and the yearly income limit which describes your situation. This difference is generally paid in 12 equal monthly payments rounded down to the nearest dollar. You can apply by filling out VA Form 21-526, Veteran's Application for Compensation Or Pension. If available, attach copies of dependency records (marriage & children's birth certificates) and current medical evidence (doctor & hospital reports). You can also apply on line through the VONAPP website <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>. For More Information Call 1(800) 827-1000.

LEGISLATION TO SECURE TIMELY FUNDING FOR VETERANS' HEALTH CARE

House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Chairmen joined by bipartisan cosponsors, major veterans' organizations and a former VA official in calling for passage

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI), Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, was joined by a bipartisan group of lawmakers in reintroducing legislation today to secure timely funding for veterans' health care through the advance appropriations process. Chairman Akaka joined House Veterans' Affairs Chairman Bob Filner (D-CA), other members of Congress, leaders from military and veteran organizations, and a former VA executive in calling

for prompt consideration of the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009.

Under the bill, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) would be funded one-year ahead of the regular federal funding process. Currently, VHA's budget is subject to delay and uncertainty, hampering budget planning and threatening health care quality for wounded and indigent veterans. The Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act has already received broad support from its Democratic, Republican, and Independent sponsors in Congress.

Senator Akaka said: "We are a step closer towards securing timely, predictable funding for the nation's largest health care system – the Veterans Health Administration. Our plan would create a transparent process that will help VA use its funding more efficiently and care for veterans more effectively than it has in the past. I am proud to be joined by a bipartisan group of Congressional leaders and major veterans service organizations in calling for an end to VHA's unpredictable funding."

Congressman Filner said: "I appreciate the sentiments of Secretary Shinseki to approve and implement future VA budgets on time, but we must also recognize the various obstacles that frequently prevent this from happening. This bill is a way to explore a new manner in which to fund the VA. We need to consider a historic new approach to guarantee that our veterans have access to comprehensive, quality health care that they deserve and have earned. For too many years, VA has had to make do with insufficient budgets resulting in restricted access for many veterans. When funding is short, it is our veterans who pay the price."

Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME) said: "The breakdown in the process of providing funding for our veterans has a bipartisan history spanning over two decades – under Republican and Democratic control of the White House and Congress. However during this time, health care funding for veterans has only been approved on schedule three times! This is unconscionable. With this bipartisan initiative, we can ensure our veterans and their families truly benefit from the healthcare that these patriots have rightfully earned and deserve."

Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) said: "It's about time we take the uncertainty out of the annual funding for VA health care. Making sure all veterans have access to quality, affordable health care so they don't have to come to Congress every year with hat-in-hand is a promise we owe all men and women who served in uniform."

a coalition of major veterans service organizations including The American Legion, AMVETS, Blinded Veterans of America, Disabled Veterans of America, Jewish War Veterans, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Vietnam Veterans of America. The bill received unanimous support from a panel of six veterans organizations at a recent Senate hearing.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Ask Your Member Of Congress To Support Advanced Funding for Veterans Health Care Take Action!

H.R. 1016 and S. 423

Nine of the largest national veterans organizations, including VVA, joined by a coalition of 35 other veterans and military organizations, and the nation's largest federal union, praised Senate and House Veterans' Affairs Committee leaders for introducing bipartisan bills on February 12, 2009 to reform the VA budget process that would assure sufficient, timely and predictable funding for veterans' health care programs. This new legislation, the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act, would require Congress to approve health care funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) a year in advance of the beginning of its fiscal year.

The Partnership for Veterans Health Care Budget Reform (<http://www.fundingforvets.org>) worked closely with the bill sponsors in drafting this key legislation. The bill will guarantee no further delays in VA health care funding, and will break the cycle of perpetually late budgets that has disrupted operations and delayed veterans' care in the nation's largest health care system 19 of the past 22 fiscal years. While VA health care funding has increased in recent years, especially the last two years, it is still consistently late, and often months late.

The Senate bill (S. 423) was introduced by Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Daniel Akaka (D-HI), and co-sponsored by Senators Olympia Snowe (R-ME), Tim Johnson (D-SD), Jon Tester (D-MT), Mark Begich (D-AK), Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Russ Feingold (D-WI), Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), John D. Rockefeller (D-WV), Bernard Sanders (I-VT), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), John Thune (R-SD), and David Vitter (R-LA).

The House bill (H.R. 1016) was introduced by Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner (D-CA), and co-sponsored by Representatives Walter Jones (R-NC), Phil Hare (D-IL), Stephanie Herseth Sandlin (D-SD), Mike Michaud (D-ME), and John Hall (D-NY).

What is needed now, more than ever, is a grassroots effort. It is critically important that VVA members – and your families – reach out to your Senators and Member of Congress. Ask them how they stand on the issue of funding for veterans' health care. If they profess their support for sufficient, timely, and predictable funding, ask them not only to support, but to co-sponsor H.R. 1016/S. 423. If they agree, thank them. If they demur, raise the heat – at town hall meetings and via letters and e-mails.

Achieving sufficient, timely, and predictable funding is VVA's highest legislative goal. With the support of the President, it is within reach. And your efforts can make a difference.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Bob Johnston, Sr., March 2009

It has been a very busy time since my last Message in the Zephyr. During that time I have traveled extensively back and forth to Sacramento,

attending planning meetings for the December 2008 20th Anniversary Celebration of the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial Dedication. In addition I have traveled, visiting chapters and attending other meetings and functions, representing the State Council.

Of course, the big event was the 20th Anniversary event in Sacramento in December. Regrettably due to a personal family tragedy, my plans to be in Sacramento at the beginning of the events were postponed and I didn't arrive until very early Friday morning. However, I hit the ground running that morning, attending the Press Conference at the CDVA Bldg. I spent Friday afternoon getting ready for the CSC Sponsored Recognition Dinner for the Original Memorial Commission later that night. The evening's activities were a success and we accomplished our mission of paying respect and giving recognition to the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial Commission, and all those sponsors who helped us put on the Anniversary event.

The parade on Saturday morning was quite impressive, with over 50 participants, including marchers from all over the state and a few out of state. There were two helicopters on flatbed trucks, adding an icon presence to the parade. There were several chapters from throughout the state with Color Guards and marching units. It was my Honor and Privilege to lead the State Council contingent, consisting of several members of the Board of Directors and other members of the CSC and CA AVVA. Despite less than hoped for pre-event publicity and coverage by the local media, it was well attended by spectators along the route.

The Dedication Anniversary Program, held in front of the Memorial was also well attended by Veterans of the Vietnam War, and other American Military wars and conflicts, families, friends, and those who came just to pay respect and honor those to whom the memorial is dedicated. It was MC'd by Stan Atkinson and included speeches by Vietnam Veteran Medal of Honor recipient and Former POW Jon Cavianni, Chairperson of the original California Vietnam Veterans Memorial Commission Sister Linda McClennahan - Vietnam Veteran, BT Collin's sister Maureen Collins, American Legion National Commander Dave Rehbein - Vietnam Era Veteran, VVA National Vice President Jack Devine - Vietnam Veteran, and Vietnam War Journalist Joe Galloway - Ia Drang Valley Veteran.

Secretary of California Department of Veterans Affairs Tom Johnson - Vietnam Veteran, presented me with a framed copy of the California State Legislation, ACR 151, which declared December 10 thru 15, 2008, as the official state "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Week". Following the Program was a USO-Style Entertainment Show, featuring music from the Vietnam Era, which was enjoyed by all.

Sunday morning brought the end of the activities with a Sunrise POW/MIA Ceremony at the Memorial, which concluded with the release of 178 black and white balloons, representing each of the Californians who are listed as POW/MIA.

In January, I attended the VVA Conference of State Council President's meeting in Oklahoma City, OK, where we discussed several important issues that had been raised at the VVA National Board of Directors meeting the previous weekend. National President John Rowan was there to address the meeting, and respond to questions. Special arrangements were made by the Oklahoma State Council that resulted with us going to the NBA Oklahoma City Thunders' game against the Detroit Pistons on Friday evening. On Saturday afternoon, we traveled to the local VA Hospital and visited with the patients there. A special show was done by Bleu Eyed Soul, for the wounded warriors there.

The January CSC meeting was very successful, with workshops on the CSC Budget for Committees and the BOD, and also on Chapter Incorporation

requirements with the state of California in Sacramento, presented by Finance Committee Chair Barry Schloffel and myself. This workshop was presented as a result of a new policy from the VVA National Board of Directors, passed at their January meeting, requiring each State Council President to file an annual report, listing chapters who are not in compliance with Federal and State Non-Profit laws and regulations, by Feb. 28th. During the check of CA State records in Sacramento, several chapters were found not to be current in their filing with either the Secretary of State's Office or the Office of the Attorney General, Registry of Charitable Trusts. Barry Schloffel was tasked with overseeing this issue, and working together with the District Vice Presidents, and has gotten most of the chapters updated and corrected where needed. There are still a few chapters who need their California Incorporation and Non-Profit status brought current and Barry is continuing to work on that.

On February 12th, I had the solemn duty and Honor to represent the CSC in Lakeport, at the Memorial Services for Barnett Hoffman, past CSC Finance Committee Chair. The service was well attended by family, friends, and fellow veterans from many organizations. Chapter 951, which Barnett was instrumental in helping to form, provided assistance and help in paying respect to their fallen Brother. Also in attendance from the CSC were Ken Holybee, Henry Iasiello, Kate O'Hare Palmer and my wife Barbara.

The CSC has entered into the California State Legislative Issues arena, with the hiring of Pete Conaty, a licensed Legislative Lobbyist and VVA member, to represent us in Sacramento before the state legislature regarding veterans' issues, and advising us on proposed legislation which affects veterans' affairs. He is working under the Government Affairs Committee, and will be presenting a workshop at the April meeting on the workings of a Lobbyist.

Chapters will be holding elections of Officers and Board Members in April, as required by the VVA National Constitution. To help chapters with the election process, a workshop will be held at the April CSC meeting, to discuss this and the upcoming 14th VVA National Convention. It will be held in Louisville, KY, July 27th thru August 2nd. Early registration of Chapter Delegates must be postmarked by June 15, 2009, after that delegates must register on site at the convention. As in the past, Regions 8 & 9 will be holding a Pre-convention joint conference in Reno, NV. June 12th to 14th, at the Silver Legacy Resort. Additional information on these events are available on the CSC and National Websites.

Due to personal matters, Ed Mentz Jr. resigned from his position as Chair of the CSC POW/MIA Committee. This leaves that committee chair vacant. If there are members who are interested in being considered for that position, please contact me by email at BobJ201@yahoo.com. I would like to be able to announce the new POW/MIA Chair at the April CSC meeting.

I look forward to seeing all of the Chapter Delegates at the April meeting, and hope that other chapter members will also attend, to see what happens at our meeting, and get an understanding of the workings of the California State Council.

VETERANS INCARCERATED

Bob Chaney

To all the incarcerated veterans who are reading this column, I am in the process of compiling a list of all contacts for each prison, and camp. You can be of assistance by having your sponsors and/or contact persons forward their names and addresses to me at the following address: Veterans Incarcerated, PO Box 3007, Riverside, CA 92519. I also have a number of 20th Anniversary Books from the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial that I would like to

send to your library. Please forward the name and address of your Senior Librarian or Community Resource Manager to the aforementioned address. More news, there are two major bills dealing with the incarcerated veteran being introduced in the state legislature this year. They are AB589, which allows the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation or local law enforcement agency to contract with County Veterans Service Officers in the county where the state or local correctional facility is located to assist an incarcerated honorably discharged veteran and veteran's dependent's in presenting and pursuing any VA claims. AB1013 requires the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to conduct an interdisciplinary assessment of new inmates who have combat experience with the United States military, or are on active duty, reserve, or National Guard status and to develop specialized treatment protocols for those inmates. I will keep you updated on these two bills through this column.

From time to time you will see information about homeless veterans in this column. Homelessness and the Incarcerated Veteran go hand in hand. Many times the veteran is incarcerated because of a homeless issue, returned to prison because he/she cannot find temporary housing while trying to find employment. This year there is one bill in the legislature that should be watched. It is AB710 the Veterans Housing and Assistance Program. It establishes the veterans housing and assistance program, under which the Department of Housing and Community Development would be authorized to make grants from the Veterans Housing and Assistance Fund, to local governments and nonprofit organizations to provide emergency or temporary housing for homeless veterans.

At present there are 63 assembly bills dealing with veterans issues. I am sure you will see many articles on these bills in the coming issues of the Zephyr. I will continue to keep you informed on the Incarcerated and Homeless legislative issues in this column. In closing, I am requesting that all sponsor/contact information be submitted before June 30, 2009

VETERAN SERVICE OFFICERS LONG BEACH VAMC, CA

On February 4th I went to the Long Beach Veterans Hospital (LBVH) to spend a little time and inspect the office facilities and to talk with our two VSO's. I arrived about 10:00 AM and found that Karen Olszewski was busy with one of her clients and a waiting room of six more veterans waiting to see her. Her clients sign in on a sheet she maintains outside her office. I spoke with one Vietnam veteran scheduled about third down the list and asked him why he didn't just see one of the other VSO's from a different service group. He responded that she has the reputation of being the best and he feels very comfortable talking to her.

I apologized to the next in line and crowded in so Karen and I could talk. She showed me her office and desk computer. She explained a program (I believe it was called Vet Pro) that one of the State employees used and wanted to see if we could acquire. I told her to find out where to purchase and let Dick Southern, our Chief Service Officer, know her desire and we would move in that direction if the cost was warranted. She had been working on a spreadsheet to list all her clients and asked that I help with the Excel program to establish tabs for each alphabet. The current total equaled about 1145 listed. I showed her how to accomplish the task without reviewing confidential information by merely merging each separate file to one spreadsheet file with the 26 tabs. She proceeded to show me her office where she had one tall cabinet with client information. Additionally she showed me another office where extra hard copy files are maintained in a locked room and well secured locked cabinets.



Redondo Beach Veterans Memorial -Tax ID: 95-6000767



Contribution Form for One Brick on the Redondo Beach Memorial Brick for Veterans Walkway

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Print, complete and mail this easy ordering form or call (310) 318-0652 to complete an order over the phone (credit only please). Choose a memorial message up to 42 characters to be displayed on up to 3 lines. Special text characters like stars are easily included. Use one order form for each brick. Contributors are charged at a rate of \$100.00 each brick.

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 CREDIT CARD # _____ EXP. DATE ____/____/____

SIGNATURE _____
 Make checks payable to: **Redondo Beach Veterans Memorial**
 Mail order form(s) to: City of Redondo Beach, Attention: City Treasurer
 415 Diamond Street, Redondo Beach, CA 90277

Her office is located in an area that has a waiting area surrounded by four offices maintained by other service officers. In a hall way just off the waiting room area are additional offices with more service officers and the office she showed me that has a copy machine and her extra locking cabinets. Another one of these offices is slated for Gary Colletti in the near future. All offices are getting new furniture provided by the hospital and the change out is scheduled towards the end of February 2009.

Gary came in about 11:00 AM and he and I reviewed what he was doing in order to help get current with the many files that are considered open. He is also matching letters with files and determining what, if any, actions need to be taken.

Due to a lack of space we went to the cafeteria and stayed there thru lunch. Rex Jennings, the Chief of Volunteer Services, joined us about noon and stayed until nearly 2:30 PM. We spoke extensively about the VVA's VSO program and how pleased he was with Karen and Gary's service.

Karen joined us about noon and shared in on the conversations and heard first hand some of Rex's praises of her dedication and commit-

ment.

Before I left, I prepared a new electronic time sheet to be used each pay period by both Karen and Gary. These timesheets are designed to capture not only their work times each day but it also captures any volunteer time they spend during the pay period. This was shared with Dick Southern and John Weaver so they can use to provide our volunteers and any other employees we might hire.

Tim Forrest, CSC Treasurer

VVA 535 Stand Down Needs Assistance

The folks at the Nevada County Stand Down need assistance. Nick DeZaparkanszky, a member of our chapter, needs to step down as Treasurer of the Stand Down organization. He has asked if there are any VVA members who would be interested in assisting by preparing checks and keeping the books. I have also been informed that the organization needs a chairperson and vice chair.

The Stand Down meets at 6:00 on the second Tuesday of each month at the Veterans Memo-

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

Chapter	Address/Phone	E-Mail/ Web Site	Primary Contact	Meeting Information
47	PO Box 3007 Riverside 92514-4277 951-781-6137	nebbuskfan@aol.com www.vva47.com	Steve Mackey	3rd Saturday, 10 am at Lifespring 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	barbj201@aol.com www.nichecom.com/vva	Barbara Johnston	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 661-200-	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	coonrad13@charter.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@lodelink.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@mindSpring.com	Rod Hughes	2nd & 4th Mondays, 7:30 pm
446	1000 E. Walnut St. Pasadena 91106 626-795-8141 (also Fax)	contact@vva446.org	Steve Malmberg	Board meets 1st Friday each month, 7:30; General Meeting 2nd Tuesday, 7 pm. Senior Center, 85 E. Holly St., Pasadena
464	PO Box 25540 San Mateo 94402 650-697-9100	leomcardle@hotmail.com	Leo McArdle	3rd Saturday, 10 am, 895 Laurel Ave., San Carlos
472	2115 Park Blvd. San Diego 92101-4792 619-239-5977	vva472@hotmail.com www.vva472.oef	John Weaver	7 pm, the Saturday prior to 4th Wednesday each month at 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 (Royler Park)
526	PO Box 2222 Culver City 90232	wmctaggart@pmcos.com	John Hamilton	1st Tuesday, 7:30 pm
535	PO Box 37 Grass Valley 95945 530-274-1413	http://www.nccn.net/%7evvanc/	Richard Sheridan	1st Thursday, 7 pm. Grass Valley Veterans Memorial Bldg., 255 South Auburn, Grass Valley (in Remembrance Room)
547	PO Box 884 Kentfield 94914 415-388-8939	webmaster@vietnamveteransmarin.org http://www.vietnamveteransmarin.org/	Frank Lurz	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 except Nov. & Dec.
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	nafw@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 209-723-5221	rainbojim@aol.com www.mymerced.com/0704k163.html	Jim Sutherland	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	rossisvva@aol.com	Ross Hall	1st Tuesday, 7 pm at Yountville Veterans Home on the first floor of the hospital by the nursing offices. Board meets 3rd Saturday, 8 am in the Tavern in Section G, Madison Hall
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 Ferndale 95536 707-725-6946	carlhndup@suddenlink.net www.vva781.org	Carl Young	2nd Tuesday each month, 7 pm, Ferndale Veterans Memorial Hall, 1100 Main Street, Ferndale, 95536
785	2345 Barranca 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	PO Box 578726 Modesto 95357 209-550-0890	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 559-260-2704 / FAX 559-297-0726	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 805-529-1313	halfaro12000@yahoo.com	Henry Alfaro	

rial Building.

If you are interested (or know of someone who may be interested) or have questions, please contact Nick or Eve (contact chapter).

THE AVVA CORNER

California Associates are preparing for their State elections to be held Saturday April 4, 2009 during our Associate meeting held in conjunction with the CSC meeting.

Offices to be determined will be: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Alternate Delegate to the AVVA National Convention.

If you are an Affiliate Chapter Representative,

VIETNAM
Store<http://www.vvastore.com>

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Vietnam Veterans of America and Medals of America are proud to bring you VVA merchandise exclusively.

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with a current membership, now is your chance to voice your opinion. Each Chapter Representative is allowed one vote for her/his chapter.

At this time, CA Associates do not have an At-Large Representative. This position would represent all At-Large members in the State of CA, and would be given the opportunity to vote in state elections representing the At-Large members. If you are interested in learning more information about this position, please contact me.

I am happy to report that I had the pleasure to meet with a group that is in the process of forming a new CA VVA chapter. I went "armed" with all the reasons why each chapter should have an active AVVA, and to my surprise they had already decided on the person that would, hopefully, be elected as their AVVA Chapter Representative. It looks like they are starting in the right direction. We will look forward to working with them.

I have started to receive a few Chapter Election Result forms and would like to say a "heart-felt thank you" to Carol Southern for all of her years of dedication as the Affiliate Representative for Chapter 391. Carol is currently the Region 9 Director. Nina Schloffel will now be the Affiliate Representative for Chapter 391. We know that Nina will do good with this new job, also.

Sacramento Chapter 500, Affiliate Representative Kris Hollinger will be stepping down and passing his position onto a new AVVA Chapter Rep. Thank you Kris for your dedication to AVVA, also.

Thank you all for your continued membership in AVVA. Thank you to all the VVA members who have put your trust in us, by joining AVVA.

CA Associates Meeting & Elections
Saturday April 4, 2009 11:00 AM Rm. # 179 during the April 3-5 CSC meeting

Region 8/9 Pre-Convention Conference
June 12-14, 2009 Silver Legacy Resort, Reno, NV; Region Directors will be holding an informational workshop.

Current CA AVVA Officers:
President - Elayne Mackey
Secretary - Nina Schloffel
Treasurer - Carol Southern

Proposed Officers seeking Election:
President - Elayne Mackey
Vice President - Chelli Croucher
Secretary - Nina Schloffel
Treasurer - Carol Southern
Alternate Delegate Carol Southern

Welcome Home
Elayne Mackey
cysticfib@aol.com

THE LAST HOUSE ON THE BLOCK

Matt Davison - AVVA Chapter 53

In 2006, I was coordinating a pilot program for the Department of Labor, called the Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program (IVTP). Since this was a pilot program, there was always the option that the Department of Labor could discontinue it. In the Fall of 2007, I got word that IVTP was being terminated. Knowing that the non-profit I was working for at the time could not afford to keep me on the payroll without this funding, I thought about where I would most like to continue my service to veterans. I had known

about New Directions, Inc. They had an excellent reputation for their holistic approach to serving veterans in need and at risk. Fortunately, there was an opening. More fortunately, I was able to fill that opening.

The moment you enter the center, you will see the mural "Healing," created by artist Lucia Vinograd, which covers the circular exterior of the building's first floor conference room. The mural incorporates selected lines from Wendell Berry's essay of the same name, and symbolizes the journey undertaken by many of the residents here. Veterans who traveled from combat to addiction to homelessness find at New Directions a family of healing and renewal. When I saw the mural and read the words, I knew I was home.

New Directions offers a range of services for veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless; these include long-term transitional housing, substance abuse treatment, mental health and PTSD support, counseling, remedial education, vocational training and employment assistance, family reunification, par-



enting classes, and help in obtaining permanent housing. Currently being served are chronically homeless veterans, both men and women, veterans diagnosed with substance abuse, mental illness or both, veterans returning from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Permanent supportive housing is being developed for disabled veterans, both older men and women, and OEF/OIF veterans.

New Directions began in 1972, when John Keaveney returned to the U.S. after serving two tours of duty in Vietnam. Suffering from untreated PTSD, John soon fell into a vicious cycle of abusing drugs and alcohol, becoming homeless, and spending 11 years in and out of prison. In 1983, John was court-mandated to a Veterans Affairs drug rehabilitation program called New Directions. In 1990, John partnered with Larry Williams and Toni Reinis, a public policy advocate who had developed programs and services for homeless people in the community. In 1992, John, Toni and Larry established New Directions, Inc., a nonprofit 501 (c) (3) organization named after the VA program that saved John and Larry's lives.

In 1994, New Directions became the first social service agency in the Nation to establish a residential treatment program designed for female veterans dealing with issues of homelessness, trauma and addiction. Known as "The Last House on the Block", the 3-story building located on the West Los Angeles VA campus houses up to 156 male veterans, a 24-bed detoxification and assessment center, dining room and kitchen, em-

ployment center, gymnasium, and classrooms for remedial education, computer training and construction management. Another building on campus is geared to veterans with co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorders. In 2007, New Directions partnered with A Community of Friends to sign a 75-year lease for two buildings on the Sepulveda VA campus in North Hills. These structures will be developed into 147 units of permanent supportive housing to serve the needs of disabled veterans.

It all begins with Outreach. Staffed by veterans, the Outreach team visits parks, skid row, recreational areas, jails and prisons, shelters and VA medical centers. They accompany incarcerated vets to court hearings in the hope of securing their release into our custody and into the New Directions detox center for assessment. Earnest is the spiritual center of this team. He watches out for their safety and brings harmony to places of great despair. The Employment Center empowers veterans to return to families and society. Some of these veterans face significant barriers such as felony convictions, mental health issues or spotty job histories. Nevertheless, the New Directions vocational team has been highly successful in helping these individuals return to the workplace. In addition to Employment Services, the Education Services, in partnership with the Los Angeles District's Adult Division, teaches reading, writing, and mathematics to veterans since 1997.

New Directions even has its own choir that travels around California and brings joy to all who attend their performances. They say that when one door closes, another door opens. The door that opened for me over a year and a half ago opened wide and welcomed me home. The veterans of New Directions are turning their lives around, and I feel honored to assist. To quote Wendell Berry...

The most creative works are all strategies of health. Good work finds the way between pride and despair. It graces with health. It heals with grace. By it, we lose loneliness: the scattered members must be brought together.

AN OPEN LETTER TO VETERANS

From Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki

WASHINGTON (March 13, 2009) - Following is an open letter to Veterans from Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki:

"My name is Ric Shinseki, and I am a Veteran. For me, serving as Secretary of Veterans Affairs is a noble calling. It provides me the opportunity to give back to those who served with and for me during my 38 years in uniform and those on whose shoulders we all stood as we grew up in the profession of arms.

"The Department of Veterans Affairs has a solemn responsibility to all of you, today and in the future, as more Veterans join our ranks and enroll to secure the benefits and services they have earned. I am fully committed to fulfilling President Obama's vision for transforming our

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In Memoriam

California VVA Remembers Its Members Who Have Passed On To The Other Side

The inscription on Panel 1 East of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial reads:

IN HONOR OF THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES WHO SERVED IN THE VIETNAM WAR. THE NAMES OF THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES AND OF THOSE WHO REMAIN MISSING ARE INSCRIBED IN THE ORDER THEY WERE TAKEN FROM US.

The inscription on Panel 1 West of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial reads:

OUR NATION HONORS THE COURAGE, SACRIFICE, AND DEVOTION TO DUTY AND COUNTRY OF ITS VIETNAM VETERANS. THIS MEMORIAL WAS BUILT WITH PRIVATE CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. NOVEMBER 11, 1982.

They Are All Together Once Again

Chapter 500 - Remembering George Bouchard

May 30, 1949 - January 28, 2009

One of the saddest things we had to report last month and now in the newsletter is the sudden passing away of one of our most loved members, George Bouchard.

While George suffered from MS for many years, he did very well except for a few memory lapses that we all enjoyed. George would always say, "I might have told you this already, but"..... and he would continue on with his story that we had probably heard many times before. George did remember his time in Vietnam well. He enlisted into the Army in August, 1971. He spent his time on base, at Phuoc Vinh maintaining helicopters. George often said, that was one of the best times of his life. He enjoyed his time there.

Another best thing in George's life was marrying his wife Judy, whom he loved with all of his heart. There were a couple of things that George never forgot; when the Get-A-Way was coming up and that Judy's birthday was just before it. He also enjoyed coming to the State Fair each year and spending the day with all of the members who came throughout the day and evening to visit and help man the VVA 500 booth.

But the Get-A-Way was his major event of the year. George brought the snacks each year. So Judy would pack up the snacks and George and he was ready for a weekend with his brothers and sisters at the campfire. By the time the Christmas party came along each year, he was already thinking about the next year's Get-A-Way coming up in October.



Judy also faithfully brought him to the monthly meetings and the Christmas parties, even though they had moved to Live Oak. But she knew he enjoyed being with his Vietnam brothers and sisters. So, we thank Judy for letting him be with us as long as he could. We will miss him and there will be a big empty spot in all of our hearts at meetings, the fair and the Get-A-Way.

The chapter is arranging for a brick to be placed in his honor at the Veterans Memorial Plaza, at Mather Hospital.

(left) George, his brother-in-law and Judy at the 2008 Christmas Party. Thanks to Grace Calles for the picture.

Dewey Lee Alexy - Chapter 781

Dewey Lee Alexy born in Portland, Oregon, on August 15, 1946, died November 6, 2008, at the age of 62. He came to Eureka around the age of 4 with his family.

Dewey's family spent a lot of time traveling from place to place before finally settling down here in Eureka. Dewey grew up most of his youthful years in Cutten. He graduated from Eureka High School in 1964. He immediately joined the Navy where he spent 2 years at sea on the U.S.S. Hassayampa and then went to Vietnam 1965 to 1969 where he received many medals and citations for valor (meritorious awards).

Dewey was a well known commercial building contractor and in the past few years was becoming known as the "Door Man." He was a member of the National Street Rod Assoc. (NSRA), Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), Harley Owners Group (HOG), USA Dance and the Elks Club.

Dewey was very proud of being a Vietnam vet, as most of you who knew him know. So remember, "Be proud, wear your colors!"

He is survived by his wife, Deedra Alexy; son, Doug Alexy; daughter-in-law, Dulcie Alexy; and grandson, Devin Lee Alexy. He is also survived by his nieces and nephews, Jennifer, Dave Valadao, Jeff and Holly Sellars, Jessica, Preston Skillman, Brandy Cyphers and Janel Skillman; beloved great-nieces, Taylor Cyphers, Jordan Valledao, Alyssa Valledao, Jaden Skillman, Aliana Sellars; great-nephews, Gannon Cyphers, Tyser Skillman and Assika Skillman.

He was preceded in death by his father and mother, Nick and Peggy Alexy; and by his second son, Steven Russel Alexy.

A Celebration of Life was held at the Moose Lodge, 4328 Campton Road, Eureka, on Saturday November 15, 2008, from 11 to 1 p.m., Dave Wilson officiating.

Arrangements were under the care of Sanders Funeral Home, Eureka.
Memorial contributions may be made to Paralyzed Vets of American or Socks for Soldiers.



Barnett Hoffman - Chapter 951

January ended on a sad note for Chapter 951. Founding member and Treasurer, Barnett Hoffman passed away on Friday, January 30th. Barnett returned home on Thursday, January 22, from the San Francisco VA Medical Center. Barnett was under the care of his family, friends, and Hospice of Lake County. Barnett passed away peacefully surrounded by his family and friends.

Barnett was initially hospitalized on December 22nd, 2008. Sutter-Lakeside Hospital in Lakeport, CA stabilized Barnett until he was well enough to be transported to the San Francisco VA Medical Center. Under the care of the VA, Barnett improved dramatically. Barnett used to tell me how much he hated the SFVAMC; however, he had nothing but good words for the care that the staff provided. He commented to me that he particularly enjoyed the bath, shaving his beard, and shaving his head. I visited Barnett on January 4th, the afternoon after his arrival. "Cue-ball" was in good spirits, off the ventilator, and wanted to talk about our chapter's next project-"The Moving Wall."

On a personal note, Barnett and I had an interesting relationship. Despite our cantankerous, contentious/head butting style, we had a deep relationship (OK, I did threaten to cut his oxygen tube a few times). Barnett and I shared the goals of the VVA organization; we supported one another in times of turmoil; we trusted each other and we had each other's back.

The last conversation that Barnett and I had illustrates our bond. On the morning of Thursday, January 22, Barnett called me from his bed at SF-VAMC. He said "Dean, I am coming home to die". He then talked about his one request—put a picture of our "Moving Wall" on his grave. I made Barnett make an agreement with me: he would walk "point" for us. The last words that Barnett said to me were "Love you, Bro"

Barnett was instrumental in the formation of Chapter 951. Barnett, Terry Rose, and Randy Sutton initiated the necessary steps to form the chapter. Ken Holybee and Henry lasiello provided the necessary information and charter requirements. Barnett, Terry, and Randy put out the word that a VVA chapter was forming. An advisory meeting occurred on December 7, 2004. Seventeen Vietnam veterans attended the initial meeting. Five weeks later, Chapter 951 was born.

Barnett was a strong supporter of veterans and VVA. Prior to the formation of Chapter 951, Barnett was a member of Santa Rosa Chapter 223. Barnett cared deeply about homeless and/or challenged veterans; he insisted that outreach be a chapter priority. Barnett's knowledge and experience with VVA was invaluable to the progress of Chapter 951. Barnett served the chapter with honor and distinction.

On Thursday, February 12th, a Memorial Service for Barnett took place at our chapter meeting location - the Parish Hall of St. Mary Immaculate Church. Over one hundred guests and family attended a traditional Jewish Memorial Service. The attendee's represented a broad spectrum of people. Tax clients, Rotary friends, VVA chapter members, friends in the community, and family members from all over the country gathered to honor and respect Barnett. Special thanks to representatives of the California State Council who attended the service: CSC President Bob Johnston and wife, Bobbie, CSC 1st Vice-President Ken Holybee, and Northern District Vice-President Henry lasiello. God Bless Barnett. -- Dean Gotham

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department so that it will be well-positioned to perform this duty even better during the 21st Century. We welcome the assistance and advice of our Veterans Service Organizations, other government departments and agencies, Congress, and all VA stakeholders as we move forward, ethically and transparently, so that Veterans and citizens can understand our efforts.

"Creating that vision for transforming the VA into a 21st Century organization requires a comprehensive review of our department. We approach that review understanding that Veterans are central to everything VA does. We know that results count, that the department will be measured by what we do, not what we promise, and that our best days as an organization supporting Veterans are ahead of us. We will fulfill President Lincoln's charge to care for "... him, who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan ..." by redesigning and reengineering ourselves for the future.

"Transforming any institution is supremely challenging; I know this from my own experience in leading large, proud, complex, and high-performing organizations through change. But the best organizations must be prepared to meet the challenging times, evolving technology and, most importantly, evolving needs of clients. Historically, organizations that are unwilling or unable to change soon find themselves irrelevant. You and your needs are not irrelevant.

"Veterans are our clients, and delivering the highest quality care and services in a timely, consistent and fair manner is a VA responsibility. I take that responsibility seriously and have charged all of the department's employees for their best efforts and support every day to meet our obligations to you. Our path forward is challenging, but the President and Congress support us. They have asked us to do this well-for you. Veterans are our sole reason for existence and our number one priority—bar none. I look forward to working together with all VA employees to transform our department into an organization that reflects the change and commitment our country expects and our Veterans deserve.

"Thank you, and God bless our military, our Veterans, and our Nation."

Eric K. Shinseki, Secretary Veteran Affairs

CALIFORNIA STATE MILITARY MUSEUM NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

During the past year, the California State Military Museum has accomplished a great deal. They have increased visitation, improved their reputation, participated in major historical commemorations and started down the road to becoming a world class museum for which the people

of California and the members of the California National Guard and State Military Reserve can be proud of. Among the Museum's accomplishments are:

Implementation of the PastPerfect museum management software that includes automated artifact management. Completion of the Sgt. Maj. Doris Drennan Multi-Purpose room. The addition of four employees funded by the American Association of Retired Persons. Host of the annual State Military Museum conference and training session. Management of the military living history portion of Sacramento Gold Rush.

This coming year the California State Military Museum wants to build on their success and accomplish the following:

Establishment of an image library for the collection, preservation and digitization of photographs. A new California in the Middle East and Afghanistan exhibit. A major exhibit on California in the Civil War in cooperation with the California State Parks to be placed in the State Capitol. Upgrading current exhibits, to include new signage. Replacement of library shelving and display cases in order to meet safety, security, and Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

Now, the California State Military Museum seeks your support to keep their doors open. Donations are not limited to monetary support, but can include your time and talents. For more information contact the California State Military Museum at (916) 442-2883.

To donate money you may print and complete this form: www.militarymuseum.org/appeal.pdf and mail it along with your donation to the California State Military Museum, 1119 2nd Street, Sacramento, CA 95814.

VET RECEIVES AWARD

Thompson awards local man's efforts in health care for veterans
Donna Tam/The Times-Standard

Even after he has long retired from the service, veteran Jack Alderson continues to fight for the men who fought with him.

A former member of the United States



Navy, Alderson has been working for the last 10 years to ensure that his men and others affected by covert biological and chemical weapons testing done by the Department of Defense during the 1960s and 1970s get the health care they deserve.

Alderson was the commander of a group of light tugboats in the northwest Hawaiian Islands during the testing.

"For him, it's not really about him, it's about the men he still feels responsible for," Alderson's daughter Sheree Shapiro said Friday after North Coast Congressman Mike Thompson presented her father with a surprise award at the Rotary Club of Southwest Eureka's luncheon. Shapiro said when her father retired about 10 years ago, the cause became his full-time job.

"This guy's a real hero," Thompson said as he was presenting the award acknowledging Alderson's hard work and dedication.

"We've got a lot more to do and I want you there by my side," Thompson said before the room gave Alderson a standing ovation. The Rotary Club added to the award by donating \$200 to Disabled American Veterans in Alderson's and Thompson's names, adding that they were taking additional donations from any members who wanted to contribute as well.

Thompson said it was only with Alderson's help that he and Congressman Denny Rehberg, R-Mont., were able to introduce the bill that provides health care to veterans subjected, many unknowingly, to biological and chemical weapons tests. Until several years ago the Department of Defense never admitted the tests took place.

The tests were conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs, who now have to assume that the toxins used in the weapons tests of Project 112 – which included classified military operation Project Shipboard Hazard and Defense, or Project SHAD, in which chemical and biological agents such as VX nerve gas, sarin nerve gas and E. coli were tested with the help of Alderson and his crew – caused injury to veterans, making them eligible for medical benefits and compensation for their conditions.

A Ferndale resident, Alderson himself has experienced malignant melanoma, prostate cancer and high blood pressure, which he believes were the direct result of Project SHAD.

Shapiro said she is immensely proud of her father who continues to respect his country and government to this day despite what happened to him.

Wearing a tie featuring tiny anchors and the words, "Don't give up the ship," Alderson accepted the award and said he wants to continue fighting for the rights of all those affected by the



The Region 8/9 Pre-Convention Conference

Announcement

June 12 - 14, 2009
At the
Silver Legacy Resort Casino
407 N. Virginia Street
Reno, NV 89501

- VVA Registration Fee _____ \$40.00
- AVVA and/or spouses Fee _____ \$35.00
- Children 16 & under _____ Free (no meal)

Add \$5 for registration the day of the conference

REGISTRATION FEE INCLUDES A BUFFET LUNCH

&

CONFERENCE HANDBOOK

Registrations received after May 13 will be charged a \$5.00

LATE FEE

For reservations:

Call the Silver Legacy Resort, Reno, NV.

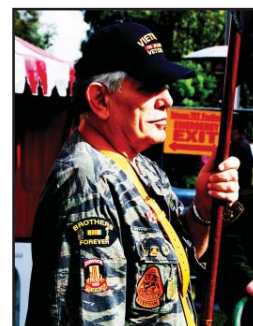
1-800-687-8733

Reservation Code: VVA09

Room Rate: \$ 99.00 plus 13.5 % Tax & \$3 Resort Fee

Room reservation deadline is: *May 13, 2009*

This is a firm cut-off date. Get your room early!



covert tests, including the widows of men who have died from ailments linked to the tests.

Alderson said he continues on because of his men and their dedication to their duty and praised Thompson for his willingness to listen and work with him.

"I have so much respect for the Congressman Mike Thompson. We owe him a lot," Alderson said.

Donna Tam - dtam@times-standard.com.

VVA 472

Chapter Joins In San Diego Tet Celebration

As special invited guests of the Vietnamese Community of San Diego, Chapter 472's Color Guard and veterans joined in celebrating the 4th Annual Lunar New Year TET Festival 2009, held in late January over a three day period in Balboa Park. Hosted by the Vietnamese American Youth Alliance, in this year of the Ox, the chapter joined a contingent of US Marine Color Guard as well as a group of Vietnamese Old Guard patriots in Saturday's Welcoming Ceremonies. The two US Marines, both of Vietnamese ancestry stood proudly with the Chapter Color Guard. On hand for the Festival was Mayor of San Diego, Jerry Sanders, and a host of Board of Supervisors, as well as the Assistant Chief of Police and other dignitaries, who sponsored the three-day event.

The Alliance youth exhibit a creative energy and fervor to carry on the Vietnamese cultural pride here in the community and abroad. Over a hundred of these young men and women, dressed in different attire to match their particular duties, welcomed the visitors, handed out brochures and directed many to the areas where food, wares and the traditional events and games were being held. It was a very well organized and sponsored event, now in it's fourth year. Many of the sponsors are very prominent in the community and displayed their support of the community service by their generous donations and attendance. Twenty young women, dressed in their traditional native dress were on hand for the Miss Vietnam of San Diego contest. These proud well spoken young women exemplify the tradition and love for their former homeland and a place they have never been. One spoke eloquently of her hopes and dreams of visiting home as well as the hardships their parents endured. They do not take their community and religious obligations lightly. These are proud Americans, all doing well in high school and college. The Chapter is proud to be a part of this celebration and look forward to many more. They were pleased that anyone in military garb were admitted free of charge.

Photos: Nino Martinez - Color Guard flag left to right: Led by Don Armitage Rifle Guard, Sal Pellerito, Paul Guedon, and Eddie Martinez (top); Associates: Lita & Inez Martinez, Mrs. Kim Dang, Vice President, Vietnamese Community, Associates: Kelly Bonsavage and Caryn Boxer of Chapter 472 (middle); Sal Pellerito, V-President Chapter 472, a proud Vietnam Veteran. (bottom)

Spring 2009 page ten

CONCORD AND KHE SANH

January 22, 2009

In his inaugural address, President Barack Obama summoned the memories of epic American fights for freedom, reciting battle sites that every school child knows: Concord. Gettysburg. Normandy. But he added one that has not ranked among those famous battles of the American Revolution, the Civil War and World War II.

"For us," he said, "they fought and died, in places like Concord and Gettysburg, Normandy and Khe Sanh."

The siege of Khe Sanh, in the first months of 1968, was one of the bloodiest battles of the Vietnam War. It lasted 77 days and claimed about 200 American lives, according to official U. S. figures. Some accounts put the death toll much higher. The siege, and the Tet Offensive that started around the same time, helped turn American public opinion against the war.

Obama's reference to Khe Sanh was brief, but it was probably noticed by millions of Americans—some who fought in the war, some who protested against the war, and some who just remember that agonizing time in American history.

In listing Khe Sanh with three epic battles for American freedom, Obama as much as said: We're past one generation's long political divide over Vietnam. What we remember, what we honor, is the sacrifice of more than 58,000 American

soldiers who died and tens of thousands who were wounded.

That was a nice touch in a fine speech summoning Americans to find courage for the days—and battles—ahead.

Perhaps Obama included that reference out of respect for the man he beat for the presidency, Sen. John McCain, whose resilience and courage as a Vietnam prisoner-of-war has inspired many Americans.

One sentence in one speech won't lay to rest the lingering political divide over Vietnam. But did you notice that this campaign for president avoided the "what did you do during the Vietnam War" political harangues of recent campaigns?

There were no questions about draft dodging, which Bill Clinton faced in 1992. No questions, as Sen. John Kerry faced in 2004, about his service record on a swift boat and his protests against the war. No questions, as Dan Quayle faced in 1988 and George W. Bush faced in 2000, about whether joining the National Guard was a dodge.

Not that Vietnam was entirely absent. Republicans tried to make an issue of war protester William Ayers' ties to Obama. But the issue was Ayers' radical tactics, not his opposition to the war.

Maybe this is the reason that the politics of Vietnam was blessedly missing from the politics of campaign 2008:

McCain served with unquestioned distinction and has been a leader in achieving reconciliation both with Vietnam and within our own country.

Obama, like many voters, was too young to serve in that war or march in protest. For them, it's all ancient history.

Whatever the reason, it was a relief.

Concord, Lexington, Normandy, Khe Sanh. We honor those who gave their lives.

RIGHTFULLY REMEMBERING

KHE SANH

Chicago Tribune, January 26, 2009
Re: "Concord and Khe Sanh," Editorial, Jan. 22.

Perhaps the prime lesson America learned from the Vietnam War is that regardless of how unpopular a war may be on the home front, all members of our armed forces that serve and sacrifice during such a divisive conflict deserve to be treated with dignity and respect when they return. No matter its outcome.

That's why we now cheer contingents of Vietnam War veterans just as loudly as we do WW 2 and Korean War and all of our current war vets whenever they proudly march by in parades. Because we have finally and thankfully stopped judging military veterans by which war(s) they served in.

So when President Barack Obama cited the

siege of Khe Sanh during the Vietnam War right along with Concord and Gettysburg and Normandy in his inaugural address, I said to myself, "right on!" Our new commander in chief gets this sometimes confounding concept right from the get-go. Yes!

Ah, but the Chicago Tribune seems troubled by the mentioning of Khe Sanh with the others. Heaven forbid we remember all the brave Americans who "For us, they fought and died" in places like Vietnam without also wringing our hands over all those "who protested the war" during "that agonizing time in American history."

News flash to the Chicago Tribune: Our new president is pretty smart and savvy and knows exactly what he's talking about. American battle sites like Khe Sanh in wars like in Vietnam are not dirty words to hiss and spit at. Quite the contrary. So Obama really didn't need your (dis) qualifying remarks on the subject. This blame game is now officially over? Hallelujah! Get used to it.

—Bill Barker



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For reservations:

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Reservation code: VVA09

Room Rate: \$ 99.00 plus 13.5% Tax and \$3 resort fee

Room Deadline is May 13, 2009

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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Individual membership or Associate membership Dues:
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 \$250 (age 49 and under) \$225 (50-55) \$200 (56-60) \$175 (61-65) \$150 (66+)
 For individual membership a DD214 is required if not already on file.
 Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America is an adjunct organization with VVA. Both Veterans and non-Veterans may join. If joining AVVA you are eligible to be a member of VVA Yes ___ No ___
 Print this page and fill out and mail with DD214 (if needed) to our address above.

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Our mission at WHVD is to insure ALL HONORABLY discharged veterans are received with more than just a pat on the back when they have completed their tour of duty. Our promise is:

Make all veterans aware of what their entitlements are to include their job/education possibilities. Care for the veteran and his family. To seek justice for the veteran. Provide outreach to veterans and their families who are in need of food, shelter, etc. Provide an outlet for veterans to express their opinions and needs. To continue with Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day celebration every March 30 until all states participate in welcoming all veterans of all wars.

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VVA CA State Council contact info inside - page 2

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