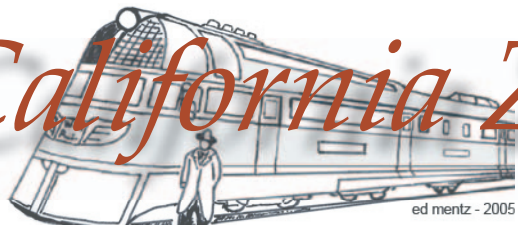




# The California Zephyr®



Official Publication of the VVA California State Council  
An Organization Chartered By The U.S. Congress



A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 11 - FALL 2006

## IN THIS ISSUE:

- Mt. Soledad Memorial Update
- PTSD Information
- Redding CBOC Update
- Reader's Opinions & Stories
- And more...

## CSC MEETING DATES

**OCTOBER 27-29, 2006, CSC MEETING, FRESNO, CA**  
**JANUARY 12-14, 2007, CSC MEETING, FRESNO, CA**  
**MARCH 9-10, 2007, CSC MEETING, SACRAMENTO, CA**

A heads up on the next Full State Council meeting. The location has been changed (see article below). Check your e-mail or the state council Web site for additional information about the hotel and surrounding restaurants.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It seems like we are coming up with new issues every week. We have been dealing with the Redding VA clinic with issues regarding veterans losing their fee bases for counseling and medical care. Henry and Carl have spent a lot of time and energy with the VA administrators and doctors trying to solve the problems. Barry Clausen from Redding attended our CSC meeting to give us an update and information. I wish he could have stayed longer but I was pleased that he got the information to us. We must all keep an eye on what is happening in Redding since this can happen at any clinic or hospital at any time. We need more contact with the local CBOC and VISNs. If you can help or would like more information please contact your local board member or Carl Jensen.

We also get into issues sometimes without being totally aware of what the issue is. I was asked recently about the Veterans Memorial in San Diego. There has been a lot of misunderstanding about this "Memorial". There are evidently people that want us to, as an organization, endorse this as a memorial. I feel that we as an organization should support memorials and stay open minded on any issue brought to us. We are not the only group that I feel that we were misled and not entirely informed of what the "Memorial" is or was. I think every member of VVA should do the research on the "Mount Soledad Memorial" and make an informed choice as to where you stand. This issue was brought to the board and has been discussed in committee. It will probably come to us again. (see page 8 for more info)

One of the things I feel we need in the CSC meetings as well as board meetings is a better understanding of how to present a motion and what to do with it once it has been presented. I am going to do a workshop on motions and parliamentary procedure. We need to start teaching our delegates how the process works to get the most out of motions and discussions. I feel at times members do not feel comfortable when a motion is made and what they can do. We work under "Roberts Rules of Order" these rules can be used to run an orderly meeting as long as most members understand them. I would like to have more of our members know what the process is and what power the membership has when using these rules. I think we can do the workshop in the Saturday morning session at our next meeting. I think this can be helpful to our committee chairs, chapter representatives and anyone planning to attend the next National convention.

We had our first meeting to plan the events for the 20th anniversary of the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Sacramento on December 10th thru the 14th. Members attending this meeting were Barry Schloffer, Jerry Yamamoto, Mike McCoy, Gregory McNeill, John Marrs, Bob Johnston and Tom Hohmann. We had a good discussion and have a starting place now. We are going to put up a web site to start the preparations. Tom will be doing this for the CSC. We also dis-

## NEW CSC MEETING LOCATION ANNOUNCED!

By Dick Southern

The California State Council will be moving to a new venue for the October 27-29, 2006 State Council meeting. The property that was chosen is the Holiday Inn Fresno Airport at 5090 E. Clinton Way in Fresno, 559-252-3611. When registering use code VVA for our rate.

Besides having a very personable and knowledgeable staff, the Holiday Inn Fresno Airport also features 207 guest rooms and 8,500 square feet of function space and there is also great space for social settings in the indoor atrium and terraces.

The hotel is located directly across from the Fresno Yosemite International Airport and offers the following amenities for their guests:

- Complimentary High Speed Wireless Internet Access
- Complimentary airport shuttle
- Complimentary parking
- Skyline Café: their full service restaurant
- Room service from 6 a. m. -10 p. m.
- Spacious Lounge • Indoor heated pool with waterfall and spa
- Outdoor pool with sundeck
- Fitness facility
- Valet laundry and self-laundry services

This spacious property will have three meeting rooms for us. We will have a large room (1360 sq ft) for the General meeting and separate break out rooms (800 sq ft each) for our committee meetings. This will do away with cramped hotel rooms for committees and give them space to do business in a better and more professional manner. With the better property for our meetings, the room cost will increase. Rooms are now going to be \$85 a night plus 12% tax, but we think that the cost will more than be made up by the amenities, the meeting rooms and the fact that we won't have to make changes to our meeting schedule to accommodate double booking by the hotel. We have guaranteed space.

More details will be available through email notification to your chapter representative to CSC and on the CSC website [www.vvacalsc.com](http://www.vvacalsc.com). Your CSC Board encourages attendance at CSC meetings for all of those that are interested in helping vets and their families. Don't forget to register on the CSC website too, so we will get a head count for attendees.

cussed the importance of having AVVA and Sons and Daughter in Touch involved in the program. We are also looking forward to any of the original committee members who built the memorial and put on the program, assisting us if they wish to. There will be more on this as we continue.

## MEETING PLANNER'S REPORT

CSC MEETING Highlights

August 25 - 27, 2006

By Dick Southern

The weekend started out with a Friday arrival at the Quality Inn Ashlan in Fresno. The CSC BOD met that evening and Steve Mackey was proposed to chair the CSC Membership Affairs Committee and Barnett Hoffman was proposed to chair the CSC Finance Committee. The other items covered were the chapter filings with the Secretary of State in CA, Chapter suspensions with National, the 2008 CA Vietnam Memorial 20th anniversary, meeting locations and the 2008 convention among other things. Friday night also saw meetings for the Veterans Benefit Committee and the Finance Committee.

Saturday morning at 9:00 a.m. there were 20

chapters in attendance along with representatives from the AVVA and SDIT and all of the CSC BOD. Bob Johnston was proposed for CSC Constitution Committee Chair and was accepted as were the two other proposed committee chairs.

After a short break, the District Meetings were started at 11:00 a.m. This new meeting within a meeting was implemented as a way for the chapters in the different districts to get together and discuss issues with their District Directors.

After lunch the tiers were held:

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| Tier 1 | Government Affairs Committee<br>Finance Committee  |
| Tier 2 | PTSD Committee<br>Minority Affairs Committee<br>Constitution Committee   |
| Tier 3 | POW/MIA & Veterans Incarcerated Committee<br>Public Affairs Committee<br>AVVA Meeting                          |
| Tier 4 | ETaBO Committee<br>Agent Orange Committee<br>Veterans Benefits Committee<br>CA Vietnam Memorial 2008 Committee |
| Tier 5 | Membership Affairs Committee   |

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Published Quarterly to all members of California VVA and AVVA as part of their membership.

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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.

On Saturday evening there was social time with dinner and drinks around the pool. It was perfect weather for meeting new friends and networking with everyone.

Sunday morning the meeting started at 9:00 a.m. and, after the opening of the meeting, we heard a presentation by the United States Volunteers Joint Services Command. Committee reports were read and acted upon as necessary. It was announced that the Zephyr deadline will be 9/15/06 so there could be an issue out before the next CSC meeting in October. The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

This is for the person that took a Dark Blue CSC polo shirt to try on for the proper size. You forgot to come back and pay for it. Send your check or money order to the CSC mailing address.

## A POW STORY

This is a true story of one POWs family, recently discovered among family mementoes my Mother-In-Law kept with all her paperwork, past and present. My Wife's, father was a flight engineer in the Air Force and was close to retirement, when a fishing accident ended his life. After sixteen years of being a widow, her Mom remarried a Marine who fought in the Pacific, in places like Guadalcanal. This is his family's story. He was a proud Marine, yet combat fatigue would sneak up on him at times, known today as PTSD.

From photographs he kept in his personal belongings we discovered "Pops" as we affectionally called him, had brothers, and sisters, from his first marriage, four children and another photo showed his Son and his family. One of Pops treasured mementos, however; was one, I never recall him mentioning. This is the story of his brother, Royce E. Smith, United States Air

Force, taken from letters and an old newspaper clipping.

Found in a photo frame was a brown faded photo on a newspaper clipping with the headlines: "Second Lt.. Royce Smith Reported Prisoner of War". Mr. and Mrs. William J. Smith today learned in a telegram from the war department that their son, Second Lt.. Royce E. Smith is a prisoner of war in Germany.

Lt.. Smith was report-

ed missing in action over Germany in January of this year and this is the first word that the parents have heard since that time. He was a pilot on a bomber based in England, he was sent to England in December, 1943.

Before entering the army air corps, he was employed by the Big Lakes Box Company and the Klamath Molding company (No date was available, however, I believe it was in the Klamath Falls, Oregon paper).

A post card to Pops from his brother, "Kriegsgeländepost, GEPROFT 87, was postmarked "8.44.13", with the return address: Lt. Royce E. Smith, Gefangenenummer 5026, Lager-Bezeichnung: M, "Stammlager Luft 3, Deutschland (Germany), stamped 11075 Censor, with a US postmark, at Portland, Oregon, Sept. 20, 9 PM, 1944. The Datum (date) written was June 16, 1944, on the back his brother wrote, in pencil:

Dear Brother: Am sitting at the table with my roommates "Americans". Waiting for evening snack 1 piece bread. Today I attended 1 hour French class, cloudy today, almost every day. On sunny days I suntan myself. Am holding my own. Still on the go I hope? I get enough sleep here. Occasionally I play games, read, run. See you soon. Write Red Cross. Royce

Just over a year later, Mr. and Mrs. Smith received a letter from the war department that their son First Lieutenant Royce E. Smith was absent without leave from Douglas Army Air Force Base, since 10 November, 1945. (One can only imagine the trauma, grief and disbelief his family must have experienced after the joy of their son and brother, coming home alive from his German POW camp after the war.)

Among Pops personal items was a small laminated copy of a letter dated 24 May 1950, from the Department of the Army, Office of the Adjutant General, Washington, D.C. addressed to: Mr. and Mrs. William J. Smith (Pops Father) 1110 1/2 East 11th Medford, Oregon

References is made to previous correspondences regarding your son, First Lieutenant Royce E. Smith, (service #) United States Air Force, who is shown on the records of the Department of the Army as absent without leave since 10 November, 1945.

The records of this office show that your son, while stationed at Douglas Army Air Force Base, Douglas, Arizona, sustained minor injuries when he either jumped or fell from a rapidly moving taxicab on 2 November 1945, while returning from a trip to Agua Prieta, Mexico. After treatment at the base hospital, for these injuries, he was requested to report to the Flight Surgeon for observation. It had been indicated that your son's behavior was somewhat unusual after the above mentioned injuries, and he was scheduled for further physical examination. However, he left the hospital during the night, and when his whereabouts became unknown, he was subsequently reported as being absent without leave.

An extensive investigation has been in progress by the military authorities, civilian authorities, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, to try to ascertain the whereabouts of your son. A report has now be received from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, through the Provost Marshall General of the Army, which reveals that remains found in a gravel pit located approximately two hundred yards south of the site of the formal United States Air Force Base at Douglas, Arizona, are those of Lieutenant Smith, who met his death from a gunshot wound in the right temple by a party or parties unknown. Therefore, his previous status of "absent without leave" has been stricken from the records of the Department of the Army. All records will show that your son died at Douglas, Arizona, on 9 November 1945, the last day he could have possibly been alive. Since Lieutenant Smith was on active duty at the time of his death, it has been determined that his death was not the results of his own misconduct.

AGPO-CO 201 Smith, Royce E.

The circumstances surrounding the death of your son are most disturbing and I am keenly aware of the grief this message will bring you. Please accept my sincere sympathy in the great loss you have sustained.

Sincerely yours,  
Wm E. Bergin  
Major General, USA  
Acting The Adjutant General of the Army

This is a very tragic and unnecessary lost of life and must have had a severe impact on not only his parents, but Pops as well. One can only speculate, however, it appears on the surface, that Lt. Smith, while on his trip to Agua Prieta, Mexico, may have seen something he was not suppose to, and may even have been pushed out of the taxi, when that did not work, taken from the hospital and executed? Former, WW II POW, First Lieutenant Royce E. Smith, will not be forgotten.

CURRENT STATUS OF UNACCOUNTED  
- for Americans Lost in the Vietnam War  
As of May 1, 2006

Original Missing  
Vietnam 1,981  
Laos 572  
Cambodia 83  
China 10  
Total missing 2,646

Repatriated and Identified  
Vietnam 601  
Laos 208  
Cambodia 29  
China 3  
Total 841 (total includes the 63 Americans who were returned and /or ID from 1973-1975.

Remaining Missing  
Vietnam 1,380  
Laos 364  
Cambodia 54  
China 7  
Total still missing 1,805

Defense POW/Missing Cold War and Korean War Statistics: as of April 18, 2006

Cold War Loss  
On April 15, 1969, North Korean fighter aircraft shot down a U.S. Navy EC-121 aircraft carrying a crew of 31 over the Sea of Japan. U.S. Navy Ships recovered two remains; 29 U.S. service members are still unaccounted for as a result of this incident.

Note: Your POW/MIA Chair was a AC&W Supervisor aboard an AF EC-121 which not only took part in locating any survivors but manned the station vacated by the loss of the Navy EC-121.

Korean War  
Number of unaccounted for in Korea - 8,104  
Remains recovered 480  
Remains identified, 1982-present 51

Ed Mentz  
VVA CSC  
POW/MIA Chair

## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Let me introduce myself. I am Steve Mackey, President of Chapter 47, Inland Empire, life member of VVA. I have been an active member of Chapter 47 since 1996. I just retired from the State of California so I can now devote more time to VVA. I would like to thank Ken Holybee and the rest of the CSC for trusting in me to do a good job as Membership Chair. I am in the process of getting the California at large membership list. Once I receive the list I will make sure every chapter has a copy. Each chapter can then send the at large member a letter letting him/her know there is an active chapter in his/ her area. Hope-

fully, the at large member may want to transfer to that active chapter. A good thing to include with your letter of introduction is a brief description of what your chapter is all about. If you have an AVVA, include that also, so they know that families are welcome. I did this with Chapter 47 a few years back and we received about 12 transfers into the chapter.

The weekend of September 9, 2006 my wife and I traveled to Santa Maria, CA. to assist Central District Director Ed Mentz with the new chapter that is being started in the central coast. We met with Henry Alfaro, who will be the new chapter president, and approximately 25 of the new chapter's members. We advised Henry on what paperwork had to be filled out to get the chapter going. He already has 28 members (their applications and checks are in my hands) and was able to get 21 of the needed 25 signatures on their petition. He was going to spend the rest of his weekend trying to get the other 4 he needed. He is one dedicated man. Once Henry has 25 signatures he will mail me all the paperwork and I will forward it to the State Council President for his signature. We will then forward it to our national office and, maybe, by the next CSC meeting in October, we will have another California Chapter up and running.

Any chapters with any questions, please, fell free to contact me. I am here to help in any way I can.

Steve Mackey, Chair  
VVA CSC Membership Committee  
E-mail: nebuskfan@aol.com  
Phone # (951) 231-7268

Chapter 47, Inland Empire, honored POW/MIA recognition day on Saturday September 16, 2006 at the Inland Empire Military Museum in San Bernardino, CA. We had two guest speakers in attendance. Fran Masterson, wife of Michael J. "Bat" Masterson, USAF, POW/MIA since October 13, 1968. Michael J. "Bat" Masterson is Chapter 47's official POW/MIA. Barbara is also the author of "Is Anybody Listening?" Both spoke about what they have gone through over the last 38 years trying to get information regarding the status of their husbands. Both of these wonderful ladies have a tremendous amount of fortitude. It was be a remarkable day of information.

Chapter 47 continues to help Riverside National Cemetery Support Committee with fundraising for the Wall West. An exact replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is planned for the future at Riverside National Cemetery.

## PTSD REPORT

We had a very well attended PTSD Committee meeting on August 26. Most of the time was spent listening to Barry Clausen from Redding (Chapter 357). Barry brought with him updates on the situation there with the local Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) along with several letters by local veterans outlining and personalizing the effects of cutbacks in the fee-basis PTSD therapy program.

Close to 300 Shasta/Butte area veterans are affected with some 40 having services curtailed and an unknown number of others reduced.

In response to a formal query by the CSC I received recently a letter from Lawrence Sandler, Director of the VA Northern California Healthcare System (VANCHCS) which informed me that a new Associate Chief of Staff for Mental Health, Dr. Maga Jackson-Triche, has been appointed to look into the matter.

He wrote:

"In an effort to thoroughly investigate your concerns, Dr. Jackson-Triche has initiated a review of all VANCHCS Mental Health programs including the fee-basis program."

I'm not impressed and, I look forward to meeting Dr. Jackson-Triche. The CSC has asked specifically that a veteran's advocate be included in the review process but apparently that's not likely to happen. We will however continue to follow this issue.

The review is expected to be complete by October 30, 2006 and they plan to hold a public forum at that time to inform Redding area veterans of the result and answer questions. I think a public forum should be held prior to the review and will convey this recommendation to Mr. Sandler and Dr. Jackson-Triche. I'll keep you posted.

The Committee noted that this current review is simply a different approach to the last attempt to review 70,000 PTSD cases and that perhaps the DVA considers it will have more success on the local level, targeting veterans individually. Also noted is that this is consistent with the general decline in Mental Health services nationwide in the private sector as well.

There are several issues that need to be addressed here:

1) The stigma of mental illness.

Let's face it ... nobody wants to appear 'weak', complaining, or to admit they have a problem. We all have 'problems'. There are many veterans still dragging their knuckles on the ground though, coping as best they can. There is a misguided notion being promoted that this is your patriotic duty ... it is not. Your suffering will not help anybody. PTSD does not mean you're "crazy", it means you're human. PTSD comes in all colors and sizes, many cases are undiagnosed because they are non-compensable..

Bottom line: there are limits to human endurance. If you are asked if you can get by with less services, fewer sessions or, sessions with an assigned VA therapist with whom you have little rapport and less trust, say no. Unless we insist, mental health services will be cut, and cut, and cut. It is difficult for an individual veteran to fight this, especially if that veteran has PTSD, but please remember that you are not alone.

If you are having problems getting services I want to know about it ... the California State Council wants to know about it, VVA National wants to know.

2) Therapy is expensive.

That's not our problem. The DVA and the Congress are responsible for providing "timely and appropriate treatment". More and more veterans are being asked to accept less services, fewer sessions or medications in lieu of therapy ... this is not appropriate.

Somehow, there is this idea that in a time of adversity we veterans should 'buck up' and 'do our share'. We've already done our share. It's time for the DVA and Congress to shoulder their responsibilities. We should not accept excuses. If we do, those who follow will suffer the consequences.

3) Fee-basis

This goes back to "timely and appropriate treatment". Excessive travel is a hardship. If you are eligible and need treatment the VA can't provide, fee-basis is appropriate. Or, if you are faced with a medical emergency fee-basis will cover a visit to the nearest emergency room. However, they will transfer you to a VA facility asap.

With mental health this is a little trickier. The VA will often grant an initial period to see a private therapist. Many Clinics employ private providers on a contract basis but the idea is to get you into the VA system as quickly as possible. Therapists are people too and you can't 'open up' with one you don't trust.

The VA doesn't expect PTSD to get better, but

with maintenance it can be managed. Without "timely and appropriate" treatment it will get worse. This is a very individual matter and the Clinic Director has the last word on who gets to see a private therapist, of their own choosing and, how often. Trust is the issue. It is important to find a safe place ... anything less is a hardship.

One last thing about fee-basis therapy for PTSD ... it gets you connected to your local community, a little closer to home.

The PTSD Committee also heard from Dr. Ed Ryan (Chapter ) who encouraged us to pay special attention to the budget cutbacks in brain injury research. Dr. Ryan pointed out that brain injury is common particularly among veterans returning from Iraq. Brain injury can be responsible for devastating effects in the entire body and is still not well understood. The CSC has recommended Dr. Ryan to sit on the National PTSD Committee and he will be addressing the Committee at it's next meeting in October.

PTSD is corrosive, untreated it will eat you, your family and your friends. I would encourage every Chapter to establish a PTSD Committee to keep the Chapter current, aware and educated to the issue of PTSD. It is, and will continue to be, a factor in our lives and in our Chapters. Know your enemy.

I am pleased to report that the National Leadership Conference in Tucson was very productive (I attended July 11-16) . I had the opportunity to bring the attention of National Officers, BOD members and Committee Chairs to the healthcare issues now facing Northern California veterans, especially in rural communities dependant on Community Based Outreach Clinics (CBOCs).

It's no secret that Northern California is bigger than most States and we have a large number of veterans living in rural communities. At issue is the long distances to VA Medical Centers (VAMC) in Martinez and San Francisco and the use of fee-basis providers. I assume you all are aware from my previous reports that I and the CSC have been focusing on the Redding CBOC. What we hope to accomplish there is an understanding that although fee-basis is granted at the discretion of the CBOC Director what constitutes a hardship depends entirely on the situation of individual veterans.

I have been informed that the new Associate Chief of Staff, Mental Health for the VA Northern California Health Care System (VANCHCS), Dr.. Maga Jackson-Trische, is conducting a review of all VANCHCS mental health programs including the fee-basis program. This is expected to be completed by October 30, 2006 and they plan to hold a public forum at that time to inform Redding veterans of the results and answer questions. I'm going to recommend a public forum be held both before and after the review.

Fee-basis healthcare is a very contentious issue because it's expensive. The DVA would prefer to put you in a van and transport you to the nearest VAMC which, for those living in the Shasta/Butte area is a three to four hour ride (each way) ... plus however long it takes to get from your home to the CBOC to get on the van. Many veterans have several complicating healthcare issues which can make this a hardship. This issue will of course become increasingly important as we get older.

Let me remind you, the expense of seeing a private provider in your local community through the fee-basis program is not your responsibility ... it is the responsibility of Congress and the DVA. Their obligation is to provide timely and appropriate healthcare and, appropriate funding. The Director of your local CBOC has currently a lot of discretion in granting fee-basis care but it will not likely be offered, you will have to ask ... perhaps even demand your request be considered.

There are a lot of needs for which a VAMC is your best option, most are 'teaching hospitals' that have contracts with medical schools providing interns and residents who are very up-to-date on new procedures but, where continuity of care is an issue (as with PTSD) you may want to insist on a local provider. Especially if travel is a hardship. With PTSD it is important to have a therapist with whom you can establish trust and rapport ... you do not have to accept anyone you do not trust. If you have questions about this issues please, contact me.

At the Leadership Conference I also had the opportunity to investigate funding sources.. I attended several other workshops while in Tucson, most notably; Homeless Veterans, Legislative Affairs, PTSD and, several on the mechanics of our organization.

On July 28-29 I attended the Transitional Meeting of the new Board of Directors and accepted, again the post of PTSD Committee Chair. I'll have more to say about that in my Committee report.

At the regular CSC meeting (August 25-27) we held District meetings and I am pleased to report that the Northern California District was well attended. It was a pleasure to meet with all the delegates and we discussed how best we can assist and support each other. It's real easy to get isolated in our own Chapters and of course each Chapter has it's own identity and concerns, strengths and weaknesses. We agreed to establish an internet discussion list where we can address Northern California issues and share common interests. I am hoping this will generate excitement and strengthen our community. These are tough times for veterans and it's easy to give in to despair ... let's not go there, we have much to do yet.

Henry Iasiello  
CSC Northern District Director  
PTSD Committee, Chair

VA ON THE CBOC ISSUE, RECEIVED IN E-MAIL

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Northern California Health Care System is committed to providing the highest quality of health care services to our nation's veterans. As part of that commitment we want to make sure veterans are aware of the wide array of services available in the Redding area.

At the VA Redding Outpatient Clinic we provide a full range of health care services including primary care, mental health, urgent care and a wide range of specialty and ancillary services. We provide outpatient medical services Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. through 4:30 p.m. We also have an "open access" scheduling system which improves access and convenience by giving veterans the ability to obtain same day appointments in primary care, urgent care and mental health when needed.

While we do refer some patients to community providers for care, the majority of care is provided in VA-managed clinics and hospitals, which are staffed by physicians and nurses that are trained to treat the unique medical conditions of veterans. In our facilities, we can ensure the highest quality and cost effective care through a rigorous credentialing and privileging process, implementation of evidence-based medicine practices, utilization of leading technologies (including the finest electronic medical record), performance management program and culture of safety. In addition, there is improved continuity of care when all health services are provided by one health system and all the medical information is part of a single health record.

In addition, Congress has passed laws which allow us to pay for non-VA emergency hospital care provided to certain eligible veterans after our regular clinic hours, when specific circumstances exist, and when the urgency of the vet-

eran's medical condition is such that it prohibits transport to the nearest VA medical center. Our staff at the Redding clinic are happy to meet with veterans to discuss their specific eligibility for care or answer any questions they might have regarding VA benefits and services.

The Redding clinic is staffed by an outstanding team of professional and highly qualified employees who are dedicated to honoring America's veterans by providing exceptional health care. The team is led by clinic director Mrs. Linda Reynolds, CHE, and staffed by many veterans including Mental Health Clinic Manager, Dr. Greg Nelson, an experienced and exceptionally qualified clinician who is also a highly decorated combat veteran.

The quality of care we provide has been recognized by area veterans who, in recent national VA patient satisfaction surveys, have rated services at the Redding clinic as "outstanding" in areas such as access, courtesy and continuity of care. In fact, Redding clinic survey scores have exceeded the national VA average in nine of eleven categories for the second and third quarters this fiscal year, compared to exceeding the national average in just seven of eleven categories in the first quarter.

At VA, we are proud to be a part of a team of dedicated staff and volunteers who work hard each and every day to keep our promise to our veterans, as they have kept their promises to us.

Sincerely, Lawrence S. Sandler, Director  
(Note: For more information please contact Public Affairs Officer, Karen Pridmore at (925) 372-2346).

## NEW WEB SITE

SACRAMENTO, Ca. – A new, comprehensive Web site for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Northern California Health Care System, was formally launched this week. The Web site is VA's latest effort in providing improved access to local health care and facility information for veterans throughout Northern California.

The user friendly Web site provides the latest information on local VA health care services, including contact numbers and directions, online prescription refills, benefits and services, and online VA health and wellness programs.

"This new Web site provides Northern California veterans convenient access to a wide range of services and information," said Lawrence Sandler, Director VA Northern California Health Care System, based at the Sacramento VA Medical Center in Rancho Cordova. "Now, more than ever, veterans are turning to the Internet to access important health information, obtain online prescription refills, and learn about health services available in their community. We want to make it as easy as possible for veterans to find information about the wide array of benefits and services available."

Last year VA Northern California Health Care System treated over 60,000 veterans at its health care facilities in Sacramento, McClellan Park, Martinez, Redding, Chico, Fairfield, Vallejo and Oakland.

The site also compliments the significant strides VA has made in becoming a recognized leader in the use of technology in the health care environment, including implementation of a fully electronic medical record, electronic physician order entry, and bar coded medication administration.

The Web site also has information from -- and links to -- other federal agencies and organizations that offer benefits and services to veterans. The new Web site is located on the Internet at [www.northerncalifornia.va.gov](http://www.northerncalifornia.va.gov)

## AVVA REPORT

Sonja Holybee  
CA. State President

In July AVVA elected its officers for the coming two years. Re-elected was Mary Miller, President, Elaine Simmons of West Virginia, Vice President, and also re-elected were Patsy Varnell, Secretary and myself as Treasurer. Also passed out at the meeting were Insurance packets, covering the state for forgery and misappropriation.

During the last state council meeting the largest number of associates, since the Ontario convention, gathered together to discuss projects and goals.

The first order of business was to appoint a Secretary; we now have a full slate of offices with the appointment and approval of members present of Nina Schloffel as Secretary.

The October meeting we will collect items for the homeless, to be distributed at local stand downs and homeless projects as noted. Chapters 47 and 391 sent reports in and I will include them here.

Chapter 47 AVVA and VVA continue to work together on many worthwhile projects.

Our biggest project is fundraising for the Riverside National Cemetery Support Committee. Plans are being made for The Wall West to be constructed at Riverside National Cemetery, Riverside CA. Blueprints for this Wall, an exact replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, have already received approval from the National Cemetery Administration (NCA). No date has been determined, yet, as to the construction start date.

We continue to support the nursing home at the VA Medical Center in Loma Linda, CA. Visits are made to the patients and bags of supplies, books and magazines are distributed. We are also in the process of collecting clothing to be donated to the Psychiatric Unit at the hospital. It was brought to our attention, by the nursing staff, that they are the forgotten floor. We want to support this cause for many reasons, one being, many of these veterans are suffering from PTSD.

November 18, 2006 Chapter 47 VVA/AVVA will be supporting The Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's Bowl For Breath in Riverside. The CFF is Chapter 47's official charity. We support with donations and volunteer hours offered.

Memorial Day 2006, Members of Chapter 47 placed 830 flags on grave sites at Riverside National Cemetery. These flags were then removed following Memorial Day. It is planned for placement of 1500 flags prior to Veterans Day 2006.

One project that we are very pleased with is our "Then & Now" project.

AVVA has asked all Chapter 47 members to submit a picture of Then...when they were in the military. A current picture is taken...Now. The pictures will be displayed randomly on a board, not side by side. Those wishing to take part in the "guessing" will then try to match the 2 pictures. The person with the most correct answers will be presented a gift certificate from Ch. 47 Product Sales.

The photos will then displayed in a permanent display and added to with new members that wish to submit a picture

Reported by Elyane Mackey

Our group of Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America affiliated with VVA Chapter 391 and became active in June, 2006. As of August 2006 we have nine (9) members. Dick Southern has been an AVVA Other (VVA) member since 1999.

All the members have been involved with VVA Chapter 391 for a number of years.

Activities we have participated in along side of VVA Chapter 391 since March 2006 have been: helping with the dinner meetings held every other month at a different restaurant in Sonora, serving at the American Legion Pancake Breakfast on the 1st Sunday of each month, participating in the Cinco de Mayo Festival Dinner/Dance on May 5th, worked in the beer booth at the Father's Day Fly-In event at Columbia Airport, working in the beer booth at the Mother Lode Fair in July, helped at the 5 Annual Golf Tournament put on by VVA Chapter 391 and American Legion Post 58 in August, selling hawkker items at various events and helping with the Chapter 391 BBQ at Railtown 1897.

Although we are still a new group, we do anticipate growing. We are a very dedicated group and enjoy working alongside Chapter 391.

Reported by Carol Southern

## DISABILITY COMMISSION INFO

By Arthur H. Wilson, National Adjutant DAV

Ever since legislation creating the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission was passed, there have been concerns about whether the deck is stacked against veterans. And after a year of meetings, site visits, field hearings and public comment, it is still an open question. That's understandable, considering the political climate in which the commission operates.

The 13-member panel was established after some rather heavy-handed attempts at sweeping changes to veterans disability compensation failed in Congress. However, the same political forces are still at work, both on and off Capitol Hill, making it difficult for disabled veterans to remain optimistic about the outcomes.

Optimism was in short supply at the commission's March 16-17 meeting as some of its members maneuvered to authorize collecting data about Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits paid to veterans who also receive VA disability compensation. That was done with a view toward an offset of disability insurance if the veteran receives disability compensation from the VA.

A move to sidestep proper procedures and hold a secret ballot on the matter was postponed, but the issue is expected to resurface at the commission's meeting in May. If so, it could lay the groundwork for cutting or eliminating veterans benefits as a way of saving the government money.

The idea that disability compensation is some kind of income security or welfare program cheapens the service and sacrifice of disabled veterans. That kind of thinking might also open the door to cutting off VA compensation when a disabled veteran becomes eligible for Social Security retirement benefits.

Veterans benefits are separate and distinct from Social Security, so receiving payments under both programs is not dual compensation for the same disability, as some have tried to argue.

Service-connected disability compensation from the VA is an earned benefit, awarded only on the basis of eligibility to a special class of persons. Payments under this program are recompense from the government for the life-long effects and consequences of a disabled veteran's extraordinary sacrifice in service to our nation. And a service-connected disability doesn't magically disappear when a veteran has a job, either.

SSDI benefits, on the other hand, are not compensation for a disability, but rather cash payments to a person who is unable to work for a year or more because of a disability. Most U.S. workers who have paid Social Security taxes are covered by the program. Benefits usually continue until the person is able to work again on

**VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA, INC., CALIFORNIA STATE COUNCIL - FALL 2006**

Chapter	Address/Phone	E-Mail/ Web Site	Primary Contact	Meeting Information	Activities
47	PO Box 3007 Riverside 92514-4277 951-781-6137	nebhuskfan@aol.com www.vva47.com	Steve Mackey	3rd Saturday, 10 am at Lifespring 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)	Vietnam Wall project at Riverside National Cemetery; veteran assistance; hospitalized veterans; Ronald McDonald House donations; product sales - membership recruitment; speakers; Cystic Fibrosis Bowl-For-Breath donation, help
53	PO Box 7000-185 Redondo Beach 90277 310-540-8820	n9140y@comcast.net www.vva53.us	Jerry Yamamoto	Billy's Restaurant, 5160 W. 190th St., Torrance, 4th Wednesday, monthly at 7 p.m.	Hermosa Beach memorial activities; legislation support; vet highway signs
201	PO Box 26203 San Jose 95159-6203 408-246-2288	mayday55@pacbell.net www.nichecom.com/~vfw/vva.html	Robert Beresford	Board meets on 3rd Monday at 8 pm; chapter social on 3rd Monday at 7 pm. Both held at VFW Post 3982, 1313 Franklin St., Santa Clara	vet center assistance; Flag raising ceremony; Veterans Day parade
218	PO Box 2241 Santa Barbara 93120 805-965-2161	vva218@vva218.org www.vva218.org	Dennis Hartman	Meetings on 2nd Tuesday at 6:30 pm	adopt-a-veteran (on duty); membership recruitment; legal support requests
223	1352 Maple Ave. Santa Rosa 95402 707-521-4218	vets@vva223.org www.vva223.org	Richard Jones	2nd Tuesday 7 pm. Board; General Meeting 3rd Tuesday 7 pm. Vets Building, 1315 Maple Ave., Santa Rosa. 3rd Saturday is a chapter breakfast.	air show booth; homeless outreach; vet claim assistance; planning stand down; membership recruitment
355	PO Box 2986 Canyon Country 91386-2986 818-508-9626	lostpatrol@msn.com	Frank LaRosa	3rd Sunday of each month, 11 am, at a local restaurant	Freedom Flight POW Balloon involvement; new methods of communication;
357	PO Box 4021 Redding 96099 530-275-8912 or 530-242-1596	coonrad@snowcrest.net	Rocky Cantrell		highway cleanup; Color Guard activities; sponsor local boxer; fundraising for Salvation Army; MLK event participation; sponsor beauty contestant
368	PO Box 1566 Mariposa 95338 209-966-4039	rainbow@sti.net	Larry Coan	1st Thursday, 7 pm at the VFW Hall in Mariposa	
391	PO Box 5391 Sonora 95370 209-928-3848	chap391@lodelink.com www.vietnamveterans391.org	Dick Southern	1st Tuesday, 7 pm. Board - 2nd Tuesday 7 pm, at Sonora Veterans Hall, 9 N. Washington St, Sonora, CA	casino night fundraiser; hospitalized vet program; holiday food baskets; hospitalized vets; retired citizens assistance; monthly dinner; wood for needy
400	200 Grand Ave., # 208 Oakland 94610 510-444-5235	fdrdocent@comcast.net	Bill Hodges	3rd Tuesday, 7 pm, Oakland Vets Bldg, 200 Grand Ave.	Veteran Forum participation - homeless veterans shelter and healthcare; membership recruitment;
441	782 N. Brundage Farmersville 93223 559-594-5710	rod6768@mindfall.com	Rod Hughes	2nd & 4th Mondays, 7:30 pm	
446	87 N. Raymond Ave., Suite 210 Pasadena 91103 626-795-8141	vva446@earthlink.net	James Maddox	2nd Tuesday, 7:30 pm, Senior Center, 85 E. Holly St., Pasadena	Vietnam vet oral history project work with University of Houston.
464	PO Box 747 San Carlos 94070-0747 650-513-5586	vva464@yahoo.com theveteran.net/vva464	Ponce Gonzalez	1st Wednesday, 7:30 pm at American Legion Post 666, 757 San Mateo Ave., San Bruno 94066	
472	2115 Park Blvd. San Diego 92101-4792 619-239-5977	vva472@hotmail.com www.vva472.com	John Weaver	Member meeting held quarterly, announced on Web site; Board meets 4th Wednesday 7 pm at Veterans Memorial Center, 2115 Park Blvd., San Diego	Veteran Day parade week; Veteran Museum Memorial work
500	PO Box 255484 Sacramento 95868 916-481-6020	vva500@sbcglobal.net www.norcaltravel/vva500.html	Ted Adams	3rd Tuesday, 7 pm; Board - 1st Tuesday, 7 pm. Veterans Memorial Hall, 110 Park Drive, Roseville (Royer Park)	Hands Across the World project; Incarcerated Vet program; meeting guest speakers; state fair; work with Young Marines; stand down; Veterans Day parade
526	PO Box 2222 Culver City 90232 310-260-6910	wmctaggart@pmcos.com	John Hamilton	1st Tuesday, 7:30 pm	
535	PO Box 37 Grass Valley 95945 530-470-8507	wreddekkop@sbcglobal.net http://www.nccn.net/%7evvanc/	Harold Graves	1st Thursday, 7 pm. Grass Valley Veterans Memorial Bldg., 255 South Auburn, Grass Valley	Fundraising at Nevada County Fair; help needy veterans at Christmas; Friends of Nevada County Military, packages; stand down
536	1120 Golden State Ave. Bakersfield 93301 661-868-7313		Don Waak	2nd Wednesday	
547	PO Box 884 Kentfield 94914 415-454-8823	cjjens@hotmail.com http://www.vietnamveteransmarin.org/	Carl Jensen	3rd Wednesday, 7:30 pm. American Legion, Post 313 12 Ward St., Larkspur	Working with 2150 Military Intelligence Brigade; working with local high schools about Vietnam Era, making members available for interviews
563	PO Box 751284 Petaluma 94975-1284 707-762-9078	johnc85393@aol.com	John Chaney	Veterans Memorial Bldg., Petaluma Blvd., Petaluma, 4th Thursday each month except Nov. & Dec.	Tri-chapter picnic September; November 11 parade
582	1017 5th Ave. Corning 96021-3004 530-824-2100 (10 am to 2 pm only)	kencorning@sbcglobal.net members.fortunecity.com/vva582	Ken Correlle	2nd Saturday each month at Scotty's Landing on River Road (outside of Chico on the Sacramento River), board meets at noon, members' meeting 1 pm	Member daughter won trip to DC, chapter donated, also individual member too, she reported trip; chapter BBQ; car show fundraiser; chapter reinvigorating itself
643	PO Box 745 Dinuba 93618 559-591-0566	nafw@softcom.net	Peter McManus	2nd Wednesday, 7 pm at Dinuba Memorial Building, 249 S. Alta Ave., Dinuba	Held annual tri-tip sale; continue with ongoing chapter programs
691	PO Box 2226 Merced 95344-0226 209-356-1938	csc_vvaed@sbcglobal.net www.mymerced.com/0704k163.html	Ed Mentz	3rd Monday, 7 pm, Citi Bank, 19th & M, Merced - 6:30 pm for potluck dinner. Board - 1st Monday, 7 pm Community Center in Castle Vista	Farmer's Market booth every Thurs. during summer; raffle of POW lamp in Sept.; candle light ceremony for POW/MIA Recognition Day
702	PO Box 525 Yountville 94599 707-252-7537	rossisvva@aol.com	Ross Hall	1st Tuesday, 7 pm at Yountville Veterans Home in the Lee Lounge (second floor of main building). Board meets 3rd Saturday, 8 am in the cafeteria	Yountville Vets Home memorial service for those who have passed, chapter does Taps; recruiting veterans, program for those without funds; Wall planning
713	Contact So. District Director Gary Colletti	gmcolletti@aol.com			
756	PO Box 90994 Long Beach 90809 562-596-5170	stumpfires@verizon.net	Dave Stumpf	1st Wednesday, 7 pm at VFW Post 8615, 2805 South St., Long Beach	Chapter held elections, new president; continue office at VA as main project; Long Beach memorial oversight
781	1100 Main St. PO Box 102 Ferndale 95536	bugland@aol.com	Mike Pratt		
785	2345 Barranca Parkway Irvine 92606 714-777-3918	gunnymims@aol.com www.vva785.org	Bill Mimiaga	1st Wednesday, 6 pm (social hour prior), at US Army Reserve Training Center Armory, 2345 Barranca Parkway, Irvine, CA	Operation Lift Off main chapter project, two large vans to transport vets and Camp Pendleton Marines for treatments; Operation Jump Start, wounded Marine Luncheons, help with benefit info, LB VAMC involvement
880	508 Riddle Court Modesto 95356 209-523-3880	emg@msn.com	Errol Green	3rd Tuesday, 6 pm at American Legion Lodge, 1001 S. Santa Cruz, Modesto	Food drive for needy vets; potluck at chapter meetings; Moving Wall assistance
933	1851 E. Muncie Fresno 93720 559-297-5253	sdoak@sbcglobal.net	Steve Doak	1st Tuesday at American Legion Post 509, 3509 N. 1st Street, Fresno	VAMC visits; working on new Vietnam vet memorial; POW balloon for festival in Sept.; weekly radio spot; Operation Purple, Fall camp for kids of deployed; stand down; Veterans Day parade; Warriors Medal of Valor
951	PO Box 1313 Lakeport 95453 707-262-5651	barnett@tgaxpro.net vva951.org	Dean Gotham	Board - 1st Tuesday at 290 N. Main St., 7 p.m.; General Meeting - 2nd Tuesday at 801 N. Main St. 6 p.m. (St. Mary's Hall), Lakeport	helping vets get to meetings; donations to Lake Co. Vet Council; Poker Run in Sept.; scholarship fund; Lake Co. Fair

a regular basis. When a person receiving Social Security disability benefits reaches retirement age, those benefits automatically convert to Social Security retirement benefits.

Rather than protecting the public purse, implementing a policy regarding offsets to VA disability compensation and Social Security disability and retirement benefits would have the effect of punishing disabled veterans. I can think of no greater insult to the men and women whose service and sacrifice have kept America free and safe. We are mindful that this is only in the discussion stage, but I would hope that the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission would reject even the suggestion of such an ill-advised scheme.

URL: [http://www.dav.org/news/news\\_20060502.html](http://www.dav.org/news/news_20060502.html)

## AILING VETS OVERWHELM SYSTEM

BY CRAIG GORDON

Newsday Washington Bureau - March 20, 2006

WASHINGTON -- At Ground Zero in lower Manhattan, Larry Provost said, he spent a week digging through the still-smoldering pile for survivors who weren't there.

His Army Reserve unit touched down in Afghanistan a year to the day after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. Then it was onto Iraq a year later, where every trip off base could be deadly, and Provost knew three fellow soldiers who died in a Baghdad roadside bomb attack.

It's why back home, he swerves to avoid a piece of trash in the road, or tries to avoid large crowds -- things that would have been danger signs in Iraq, a hiding place for a bomb, or a bomber. Some experiences, he just can't forget, no matter how hard he tries.

But when he sought counseling at a Veterans Affairs hospital near his home in Virginia Beach, Va., he said he felt like the message was, "Take a number." He said he's been waiting several weeks for a counseling appointment and was told by one doctor it could be two months before getting in.

"I say to them, 'Why?' And they say back to me that 'Unfortunately, it's because of all you guys coming back, and we just can't handle you. It's nothing personal. It's just the way it is,'" Provost, 27, recalled.

Provost's story illustrates the worst fears of military advocates and even some in the sprawling federal Department of Veterans Affairs itself -- that a health-care system already stretched to the limit in some key areas will be swamped by an influx of veterans straight off the plane from Iraq and Afghanistan.

One internal committee of VA experts on post-traumatic stress disorder raised the alarm last year, warning of several years of shrinking capacity and saying the system isn't big enough to deal with today's patients and make room for new ones.

"We can't do both jobs at once," the report said.

Nearly 150,000 Iraq and Afghanistan vets have shown up on the doorsteps of VA health centers since 2001 -- and about one third, 46,000, have been seen for mental health issues, the agency says. Veterans' advocates say those figures point to cost increases ahead, with two wars in progress.

VA officials and the White House insist they are ready to deal with this ongoing human cost of war, marked not by fatalities alone but also by those who survive.

They say President George W. Bush's budget proposal next year would mark a 69 percent increase in veterans health-care spending since

he took office, to \$34.3 billion. About \$300 million in new spending in the past two years has shortened waiting times for care and largely erased the problems outlined by its post-traumatic stress disorder committee, the VA insists.

But many veterans groups -- from newcomers like the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America to mainline stalwarts like the American Legion -- say Bush's spending still shortchanges the needs of veterans and leaves the VA ill-prepared to deal with what's still to come.

They point to proposed fee increases that would bump 200,000 higher-income veterans off the rolls, projections of \$1 billion in management efficiencies that Congressional auditors call dubious and spending hikes they say fall short of what's needed to cut down wait times for specialty appointments, spotty care in rural areas and other problems.

"The White House is playing Enron games with the numbers," said Paul Rieckhoff, an Iraq war vet who runs Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. "These guys are not projecting the true cost. It should have been part of the original Iraq war planning but now there's no excuse."

Pentagon officials fret that a doubling of costs in its retiree health-care program is eating into money they'd rather be spending on wars today, already costing \$1 out of every \$12 in defense spending. They've proposed a fee hike critics say will push 600,000 retirees out of the program.

### Working the numbers

Even the VA is trying to make its numbers look good by building in fee increases likely to be rolled back in Congress and projecting a decrease in medical-services spending in 2008 -- something even Bush budget officials admit isn't realistic.

For one thing, more soldiers are surviving wounds that once might have killed them, thanks to improvements in soldier protection and battlefield medicine. Of the 17,000 wounded in Iraq, for instance, more than 380 are amputees -- saved by body armor that protected their torsos even as it left limbs exposed.

Also, the nature of combat in Iraq -- urban and up-close, with dangers approaching from any side, at any time -- seems a fertile breeding ground for the mental health disorders now showing up in its veterans, particularly post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD. Once commonly known as "shell shock," it is marked by symptoms such as anxiety, irritability, sleeplessness and "hypervigilance," being ever alert for danger even outside the war zone.

Today, it is the fastest-growing disability condition among VA clients, with cases up 80 percent in five years, to 215,871 in 2004, at a cost of \$4.3 billion in benefits. Those numbers don't account for Iraq and Afghanistan but are mostly Vietnam veterans seeking treatment.

### Mental health help sought

Of the 46,000 veterans of current wars seen for mental disorders, 20,638 of those veterans have received a possible diagnosis of PTSD that requires follow-up monitoring, the VA said.

On Long Island, about 1,000 Iraq veterans have sought services at the Northport Veterans Affairs Medical Center since the conflict began, said chief psychiatrist Charlene Thomesen. Of them, 255 have been treated for various mental disorders, including about 100 who have been diagnosed with PTSD.

She said although Northport has not had to turn anyone away so far, her staff case loads are full. And because PTSD often does not show its symptoms for months or years, doctors at Northport said caseloads there could grow even more.

Thomesen said Northport will receive an additional \$800,000 this year to hire another psychiatrist, three more psychologists, two social workers and an addiction therapist. The additions would bring the staff totals to eight psychiatrists, five psychologists and four social workers.

Still, some advocates are accusing the VA of seeking to publicly downplay the prevalence of PTSD out of worries over making an already unpopular war in Iraq seem even more harmful.

"It seems to be such a political hot potato right now," said Joy Ilem, a national legislative director of Disabled American Veterans. "We want to make sure people don't fall through the cracks."

The VA staunchly denies any political motives but is quick to point out shortcomings in a recent study showing that one-third of war-on-terror vets sought mental-health services upon returning home. Dr. Matthew Friedman, the head of the VA's National Center for PTSD, suggested that by asking the questions so soon after deployment ends, researchers might have skewed the numbers higher.

"If I hurt my knee in Iraq, and there's a question about knee problems, it might not have occurred to me to report a problem if someone hadn't asked," Friedman said.

And the agency's top leaders have drawn fire from an internal committee studying PTSD care, which reported that the system was struggling to keep up even before the Iraq war -- with fewer visits per patient every year. One in five centers reported in a survey that they couldn't handle any new patients.

Dr. Antonette Zeiss, deputy chief of VA mental health services, said the infusion of cash -- plus another \$339 million proposed for next year -- is eliminating those issues. She also cautioned that the early possible diagnosis among some patients doesn't mean they ultimately will be diagnosed with mental-health disorders but that the VA is committed to spending what it takes to confront the issue.

"We feel like there's been a real recognition of those needs and real funding," Zeiss said.

And to some extent, even Provost doesn't disagree. Provost was receiving VA counseling while living in Syracuse and was surprised to find difficulties getting it in a timely way when he moved to Virginia Beach, where the Hampton VA hospital serves an area more populated with veterans.

Hampton VA officials said they couldn't discuss any individual cases, due to patient privacy laws, but questioned why anyone would tell Provost of a possible two-month delay, when they are striving to see high-priority Iraq veterans within a week.

Provost, who speaks occasionally at IAVA college forums, admits that he has found his readjustment to life in the States difficult at times. After months of being on constant alert, it's hard to turn off those instincts.

"You're very much on guard while you're driving, you're very much on guard while you're walking in public place, you're looking around, you don't let people get too close to you," he said.

"I've obviously trained my mind to realize there is a difference between overseas and back home, and that's where the difficulty lies" for many veterans, Provost said. "It's very difficult for them to make that adjustment, and what if they can't? That's something we have an obligation to take care of."

Staff writer Martin C. Evans contributed to this story. Copyright 2006 Newsday Inc.

# Opinions, Information and Reminiscences

## WHY MT SOLEDAD IS A BIG DEAL

There has been an Easter Cross on Mt. Soledad since 1913.

The site has been City owned parkland since 1916. No one but Christians have ever used the site for religious ceremonies. The Cross has been stolen, burned, storm damaged and replaced several times.

The current (and largest) Mt. Soledad Easter Cross was dedicated to "Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" on Easter Sunday 1954 by the grandmother of William J. Kellogg, President of the Mt. Soledad Memorial Association (a private religious organization).

The Mt. Soledad Easter Cross has been a religious shrine for nearly a hundred years. Up until 1989 its geographic designation on maps was the "Mt. Soledad Easter Cross."

So why has this become a veterans issue?

Well it wasn't, until 1989 ... when a local citizen objected to it's presence on publicly owned land, owned by the City of San Diego and illegally occupied by private parties (The Mt. Soledad Association). The Courts ordered it removed and a nearby church did offer to take the Cross but, in an effort to appease local voters and 'save the Easter Cross', the City attempted to sell the land under it (twice) to the defenders of the Cross. Had it been erected on private land there never would have been a problem.

The Courts said 'No', the sale clearly violated both the State and Federal Constitution.

The private parties appealed and, while still in litigation, built concrete walls around the Cross and, decorated them with granite plaques honoring veterans. Plaques were offered for sale by the Mt. Soledad Association and bought by defenders of the Cross to finance the project. And on Veterans Day 1989, a few months after the Courts had ordered the Cross removed, the defenders re-dedicated the site as the "Mt. Soledad Veterans Memorial".

The six concentric concrete walls are 6' tall, surrounding the 29' Easter Cross which sits on a 14' pedestal (43' total). It seems quite obvious that the veterans were brought there (posthumously) to defend the Cross of Jesus, by the Mt. Soledad Memorial Association.



And what does this have to do with VVA?

The Courts have been consistent for 17 years while the private parties pursued appeal after appeal and lost, again and again.... finally, on May 3, 2006, a federal judge ruled that the Mt. Soledad Cross must be removed from the property within 90 days, or the City of San Diego would be fined \$5000 a day. U. S. District Judge Gordon Thompson Jr. declared that "It is now

time, and perhaps long overdue, for this Court to enforce its initial permanent injunction forbidding the presence of the Mount Soledad Cross on City property."

The defenders appealed to Congress. "It's a Veterans Memorial" they claimed and a bill (HR 5683: "An Act To preserve the Mt. Soledad Veterans Memorial in San Diego, California, by providing for the immediate acquisition of the memorial by the United States") was proposed to establish the site as a National Veterans Memorial (Hunter, R-CA, June 26, 2006)... including, of course the religious symbol of Christianity.

And this is how it came to VVA and the CA State Council (CSC). Our National Legislative Director was approached by congressional representatives for a position statement. He, in turn, contacted the President of the CA State Council who, not knowing much about the bill or the issues, offered his personal opinion... he supported the idea of a National Veterans Memorial in California.

Now all this happened before the first, transitional meeting of the newly elected CSC Board of Directors and at that meeting (July 28-29) President Ken Holybee brought up the topic as an agenda item... "do we [CSC] have an argument in favor of the Mt. Soledad Veterans Memorial [ HR 5683 ]?"

What's the problem?

No one argued against establishing a National Veterans Memorial... the issue was the Cross. The issue has always been the Cross. Should we (CSC) support a bill which establishes a religious shrine, illegally placed on public lands, as a National Veterans Memorial... is it not still, as it always has been, a religious site? Is not the Cross exactly what the "Mt. Soledad Preservation Act" is meant to preserve?

Defenders of the Cross argued that the Cross was an integral part of a historic site and should be preserved... the opposition argued that the VVA CSC had no business promoting any single religious belief over others and that our business was to advocate for veterans (that's our priority)... all veterans... of all faiths. And all should be respected and feel welcome at a National Veterans Memorial.

The discussion was heated. We did not reach an agreement. President Holybee, feeling further debate was time consuming and pointless (and that we had more important things to do), ended the discussion. Did we have an argument favoring HR 5683?

The answer was no.

However, there was a problem. After consulting with the CSC, through President Holybee, and National Minority Affairs Committee Chair Jerry Yamamoto (a Southern Ca. resident), VVA National had "favored" the bill. Also, Central District Director Ed Mentz, and others, had already informed their congressional representatives that VVA "favored" HR 5683).

The bill passed and was signed into Law shortly thereafter (mid August). Like it or not VVA had been committed to defending the Cross, in what has become a national issue. The VVA logo had been affixed, figuratively speaking, to the Cross of Jesus at Mt. Soledad.

Is this identity theft?

The time had passed to simply stay out of what was clearly a religious issue. It was now not only a veterans issue but also a VVA issue. Through inattention and misunderstanding, the CSC had allowed VVA to be drawn into the national de-



bate over the separation of Church and State.

To say nothing at this point was to agree to continue supporting the law and, the Cross. To withdraw support for the law now would require a public, position statement.

Let's be very honest here, we're not arguing over a National Veterans Memorial (we'll likely get that anyway). The issue has become whether VVA, as a Veterans Service Organization, should be promoting the Cross and religious favoritism. Is VVA now a "Christian" organization, pursuing religious priorities?

Questions and answers.

I did some research on the Cross issue and shared the information with the other BOD members, we had a phone conference and the BOD was more divided than before. Supporters were not interested in further discussion; after all, they had already "won" by default.

The issue here is not about the individual veteran, living or dead, expressing an individual religious preference. You can put whatever religious symbol you want on your hat or your shirt or your grave.

The urban legends website has done a good job of debunking the claim that the ACLU is seeking to have cross-shaped headstones removed from federal cemeteries. It's just not true.

Please see:

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/religion/cemetery.asp>

There is no other National Veterans Memorial so dominated by a Cross or other religious symbol.

A majority of the citizens of San Diego had voted



to keep the Easter Cross in place but, they are a small minority of Californians and Americans to whom the National Veterans Memorial will belong

(and who will pay for its maintenance).

The American Legion supports the new law and the Cross:

"We are a nation established on Judeo-Christian principles," [National Commander] Thomas L. Bock said. "We are pleased to see the U. S. Congress and the President walking in 'the footsteps of the founders' in recognizing the sanctity of this veterans memorial."

"We expect more litigation and I assure you the American Legion will be in the fight," Bock said.



Please see: [http://www.legion.org/?section=pub\\_relations&subsection=pr\\_listreleases&content=pr\\_press\\_release&id=380](http://www.legion.org/?section=pub_relations&subsection=pr_listreleases&content=pr_press_release&id=380)

The Jewish War Veterans of America have filed a lawsuit challenging the law.

“Veterans of all faiths have served and died, and continue to serve and die in the war against terrorism, to uphold the tenets of our Constitution, including the separation of Church and State. It is an affront to non-Christian veterans for their service to be commemorated by a cross.”

“The JWV condemns this property transfer as an attempt to circumvent previous rulings and feels confident that future judicial rulings in this case will deem the cross on federally-owned property to be unconstitutional.”

Please see:

<http://www.jwv.org/communication/jwvdetail.cfm?ID=182>

The Law is likely to be found unconstitutional; both the State and Federal Courts have consistently ruled so for 17 years. The Supreme Court has refused to hear the case on several occasions already, thus upholding the lower courts decisions.

Is VVA prepared and committed to continue defending this Cross? Will we defend the Cross elsewhere or, ... other religious sites under other religious symbols on public lands as public veterans memorials?

For those interested, there is a comprehensive and unbiased overview of the history and issues regarding the Mt. Soledad Easter Cross / Veterans Memorial available at ( [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount\\_Soledad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Soledad) ). The site is constantly under peer review which makes it a reliable source and difficult to use as a propaganda tool.

Parliamentary procedure.

President Holybee thought more discussion was a waste of time and at the following CSC BOD meeting (August 25), referred the matter to the CSC Government Affairs Committee, for comments and recommendations.

The Government Affairs Committee met the next day (August 26) and addressed the issue, with the advantage of having some detailed background and issues information available. Eighteen people were present but, only seven voted; four were in favor and three against withdrawing VVA support for the Mt. Soledad Easter Cross / Veterans Memorial.

The Government Affairs Committee was careful to note that it continued to support the individual veteran's right to express personal preference at individual gravesites and memorials. A right which, in fact, is not being threatened.

After an hour or so of discussion the Government Affairs Committee commented as follows:

“The CSC Government Affairs Committee has been asked to comment on the passage of HR 5683:

‘An Act To preserve the Mt.. Soledad Veterans Memorial in San Diego, California, by providing for the immediate acquisition of the memorial by the United States’.

We recognize that the Mt. Soledad Easter Cross / Veterans Memorial has become an issue of national interest and importance.

After careful consideration the CSC Government Affairs Committee would like to clarify its position in support of the free expression of religious belief for all veterans and, honors all veterans of all faiths.

In keeping with this philosophy we support the personal expression for religious preference particularly on individual graves and, at public veteran memorials. However, we do not feel it is appropriate for a National Veterans Memorial to be dominated exclusively by the sacred symbol of any one religious belief, as is currently the case at the Mt. Soledad Veterans Memorial.

At a National Veterans Memorial on Federal (public) land, all veterans of all faiths should feel honored equally.”

The following day (August 27), the Government Affairs Committee's recommendation was read out as a Committee Report and CSC President Holybee then asked for a motion.

The Government Affairs Committee's recommendation was then put forth as a motion.

This obviously was a very emotionally charged issue and President Holybee allowed for a short discussion period. Hoping to avoid further emotional argument, and dispense with the issue, President Holybee then called for a vote ... and the delegates voted it down.

PLEASE NOTE: at no time has a motion ever been put forth supporting the new law, which includes the 43' tall Easter Cross at the new Mt. Soledad Veterans Memorial in San Diego. The CSC delegates simply voted not to object or, withdraw the support already committed without their previous knowledge or approval, thus VVA CSC indirectly 'ratified' support for the law (and the Cross).

The heart of the matter.

Apparently the VVA CSC has abandoned it's commitment to veterans; favoring and defending Christianity as a higher priority instead. VVA National has also thusly been declared a “Christian” organization... we have become defenders of the Cross.

We can and should revisit this issue.

Every VVA member should search their hearts and consider carefully if this is the direction they really want our organization to go; that VVA should be a Christian organization ... pursuing Christian religious priorities.

Every member should consider if VVA welcomes and honors and respects all veterans of all faiths, without favoritism or prejudice.

It is time we in VVA discussed this issue openly and honestly. I don't have any problem with freedom of religion but I don't think veterans, or the VVA, should be used to promote any particular religious belief.

Do we or do we not support the Mt. Soledad Easter Cross / Veterans Memorial? I would expect statements from VVA National officers to be forthcoming.

Respectfully,  
Henry Iasiello  
VVA CSC, BOD  
PTSD Committee, Chair

## TREATMENT RETURNING HOME

Well, I didn't write my original message clearly enough. When I asked about your experience coming home from VN and whether you were mistreated, some of you responded that I should “Get over it!” and forget about convincing some dweeb on e-mail that we were not treated well. Actually I agree.

What I MEANT to convey to you was that an e-mail conversation got me to thinking that it is important to capture the memories lest they die with us.

Why not just let it go? I think it is important that our children and grandchildren learn some of the myths and truths of the Vietnam war. Not to vindicate you and me, but to illustrate for them how important it is to think for themselves and be wary of following the lead of the mainstream media. For example, can they think for themselves and see through the agenda of some reporting from Iraq today?

When I speak to high school or college classes about the Myths and Truths of the Vietnam war, I pose the question “Why should this ancient history matter to you?” At the end of the discussion I answer the question - “Because if you know how the truth and history has been twisted out of shape by lefty activists and a pack mentality media, you might be better equipped to think for yourself, be critical of both sides and decide where you believe the truth lies. Not just about Vietnam, but about all the issues in your future that will be far more important to your life.”

So I'm thinking about a book with a target audience the children and grandchildren of Vietnam veterans. Some of it is already written. If I do it the book will focus on a number of vets, one short chapter on each one, to help get the message across that the national attitude about Vietnam was a loss for our country, that America lost knowing we should be proud of these men and women who served with honor and courage.

One small part of the book might be some personal examples of how we were treated when we came home. [IF I USE ANYTHING YOU SENT ME I WILL FIRST GET YOUR PERMISSION, THEN PERHAPS I WILL PUT IT IN AFFIDAVIT FORM FOR YOU TO SIGN AND SEND BACK ALONG WITH A COPY OF YOUR DD214 TO PROTECT YOU AND ME FROM WANNABES. IF YOU CHANGE YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS, PLS SEND ME A PHONE CONTACT].

FYI here is my sense of the answer to the question - how were vets treated? I think the spitting and throwing feces and in-your-face “baby killer” stuff did happen but were isolated incidents, concentrated at the CA airports and maybe a few other spots. I think the spitting incidents are exaggerated by many who know somebody with a friend . . .

. . . but most of us saw the overt hostility if not in person then on the TV news. In a hundred ways we knew the country hated the war and that hatred somehow stuck to us. The leftist attitude of hostility to the military seemed to be pervasive in some settings, like a college campus.

But I still believe the overt hostility was rare, exaggerated.

Even in the answers some of you have sent to me I sense a few are so extreme they must surely be exaggerated. But then some of you said you had no trouble at all. I do believe the more subtle disapproval was widespread. Things like turned backs, being treated like you are invisible, not wanting to hear about the VN experience, military uniforms being unwelcome, not considering VN vets for jobs, etc., the kind of things very strong people shrug off as they get on with life, the kind of rejection that eat at some guys forever.

This inquiry is not intended to be whining about the past, the important thing is preserving the truth so that we can say with our actions and words - (1) Never again should America send its young people to war, then treat them like 2nd class citizens when they return, and (2) we hope our children and grandchildren will be smart enough in the future to see through the kinds of myths that shrouded the Vietnam war.

Thanks for indulging me this message, I wanted to clarify for some who were irritated by my 1st message.

Terry L. Garlock US Army cobra pilot with 334th AHC, 145th CAB, Bien Hoa, supporting ground

troops in III Corps, 1969 Peachtree City, GA

there.



At VVA's National Convention in 2005, the keynote speaker was VVA member Allen Hoe, now a lawyer in Hawaii, who served in combat with the 196th Light Infantry Brigade in Vietnam. Allen quietly told the hundreds of assembled delegates how he had taken his young son to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial years ago and how his son later became an Airborne Ranger and a young lieutenant who was serving as a platoon leader with the 196th Light Infantry Brigade in Iraq when he was killed in combat in January, 2005.

When Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) was formed more than twenty-five years ago, its founding members vowed that: "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another." VVA continues to embrace its promise to the nation's veterans today by supporting the needs of the Iraqi and Global War on Terrorism veterans.

**Why We Care**

Vietnam veterans remember well how it felt to come back from a controversial war and to re-join the civilian world or to continue serving in the military. VVA does not want veterans of Iraq and the global war on terrorism to go through what Vietnam veterans did, particularly we know that sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans and VVA members are among those who have served, are serving, or will be serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other places.

VVA's newspaper, The VVA Veteran, has used the Warriors: A Tradition of Service series to display pictures of fathers who served in Vietnam and children who are serving or have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Children of Vietnam veterans and VVA members are among the more than 2,000 Americans who have died in Iraq and the more than 15,000 who have been wounded

VVA knows that over 160,000 Vietnam veterans are receiving VA disability compensation for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and that thousands of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are already experiencing symptoms of PTSD. Some reports of homeless returning veterans have already emerged (See Most Often Asked Questions Concerning Homeless Veterans).

All across the country VVA members and VVA chapters are reaching out to and assisting returning veterans and their families. We know that veterans often have problems getting benefits they earned from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. VVA's trained and accredited service representatives are already assisting some returning veterans with claims for benefits. We know that the rising cost of veterans health care is a concern, but we believe that the nation has an solemn obligation to care for those who were wounded or injured while serving in the armed forces.

VVA cares because our members have been

there and back. VVA's VETSCONNECT effort may have different forms and varying activities in different places, but reaching out to and helping returning veterans and their families is how VVA lives its founding principle: "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another." When it's as close to home as your own son or daughter, there is no alternative.

**Our Mission**

By the end of 2005, several hundred thousand members of the military will have served in the Iraq theatre of operations, Afghanistan, and other places in the ongoing global war on terrorism. These numbers will grow as the conflict continues. Another generation of war veterans is being created and Vietnam veterans know what that means for the new veterans, their families, and their communities. They recognize the challenges of reintegration from combat to civilian life.

To ensure that those challenges are effectively addressed, VVA has launched the VETSCONNECT program. VETSCONNECT funds projects in support of today's veterans and current military. VETSCONNECT will utilize the proven resources of VVA, its associates and members to provide services, assistance, advice and support directly to those who served on active duty after September 11, 2001 and/or their families.

The aim is to connect Vietnam veterans with recent veterans and current members of the military so that VVA's experience, particularly in the areas of veterans' benefits and veterans' health care, can be used to help them and their families.

**WHILE YOU WERE IN VIETNAM**

by Dr. Trace Pirtle'

This was written about my generation...I am sure that our children and grandchildren will write this about our sons, daughters, family members who are serving today... let us never forget about the soldiers who served us back then as well as the ones who serve us today...

While you were in Vietnam in 1964-1966 losing your innocence of childhood, know that you were protecting me while I was still innocent in elementary school. Even then, I heard of you on black and white television. Walter Cronkite told me of your sacrifices and although you didn't know me, I looked up to you.

While you were in Vietnam in 1967-1969 losing innocence, losing limbs, and losing friends, know that you were protecting me while I was also losing my innocence in junior high school. I saw you on television, we listened to the same music, and I looked up to you. I looked up to my cousin who had just returned from your war. He was different.

While you were in Vietnam in 1970-1974 losing your innocence, losing your life, and gaining new strength, just know that you were protecting me while I was running free in high school. I clearly saw you on television and wondered if I would be seeing you there myself. You didn't know me then either and I looked up to you.

While you were returning from Vietnam, trying to adjust to the "World" you left behind, I was the one active duty. I no longer saw



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you on television but I knew you were there. I promised to always remember...to never forget. You didn't know me then, but from my Minuteman II ICBM missile launch control center (LCC), I stood alert so you no longer had to worry about your back. I had it. From my launch control console 60 feet underground or from my mobile LCC with the Ground Launched Cruise Missile, I looked up to you.

While you were adjusting to life after your war, I was adjusting to mine after MY "Cold War." I didn't see you and you didn't see me, but we somehow knew each other was there. We were both being protected by others who somehow looked up to us and said, "rest...I have the watch...you need not worry." I not only looked up to you, but to them as well.

So, here we are. I am still your little brother looking up and respecting you for your sacrifices. And although you don't always like to be acknowledged for your "suffering" or for your selfless acts that were truly "heroic," know that they are to me. I have earned the right to acknowledge you for the true resilient spirit that defines who you have become. I know you...crew chief/door gunners; helicopter pilots; donut dollies; nurses and ground pounders of all types. Each one of you has come alive in my world and I am enriched because of it. It is an honor to call you "friend." "Welcome Home" from a little brother who missed you in your absence and sees you for the hero's you have become.

"Bringing Enjoyment Back to Teaching and Parenting"

Dr. Trace Pirtle Associate Professor, Texas A&M International University LunaRise Educational Consulting 956-251-0183

## VA ID CARD

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that VA health care facilities are beginning an aggressive campaign to assure that enrolled veterans with old versions of its ID cards are issued the new Veterans Identification Card (VIC). VA decided to initiate the mass replacement to reduce veteran vulnerability to identity theft and to demonstrate VA's commitment to securing the confidential personal information of all enrolled veterans. VA indicates that prior versions of its identification cards display sensitive information such as social security number and date of birth on the front of the card. The new VIC removed the sensitive information from the face of the card. Since the new VIC was introduced in MAR 04, approximately 2.4 million enrolled veterans have been issued the new VIC. Estimates are that between 3 and 4 million enrolled veterans have not yet been issued a new VIC. VA hopes to complete the massive replacement program within the next 12 months.

## Join VetFund and Support Our Veterans



# VetFund Veterans Day Golf Tournament

California Department of Veterans Affairs  
invites you to participate!

**Friday, November 10, 2006**  
**4103 Eagles Nest Road - Sacramento, CA**



Registration	10:00 AM
Putting Contest	10:30 AM
Brunch	10:30 AM
Shotgun Tee Off	11:30 AM

\$125 includes golf, lunch, cart, prizes, and FUN.

### SPONSORS AND PLAYERS NEEDED

Call 916-503-8095 for details

There are many Veterans Day events, but very few actually give back to our veterans. All contributions to VetFund are used to fund projects for California Veterans and are considered tax deductible. See you there!

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Company \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to be partnered with the following individuals for my foursome (each person must complete a registration form).

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



VetFund of CDVA  
1227 O Street, Rm 314  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
916-503-8095  
916-653-2291 Fax

Fax registration to 916-653-2291 or  
call 916-503-8095

For more information about the new VIC card, contact your Medical Center's Eligibility & Enrollment Office or visit the VA's Eligibility Web site at [www.va.gov/healtheligibility](http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility).

## AGENT ORANGE LAWSUITS UPDATE

The Veterans Benefits Administration held a meeting 7 Sept. to brief VSO/MSO organizations on their ongoing information security upgrades and improvements. They also brought the attendees up to date on VBA's reaction to the recent Agent Orange (Haas v. Nicholson) decision by the Court of Appeals for Veterans Affairs.

This decision opens Agent Orange presumptive conditions to all personnel who were recipients of the Vietnam Service Medal and includes those personnel aboard ships and vessels who were off the coast and did not actually set foot "in-country." VBA is currently working with the Department of Justice to perfect their appeal of this decision. They claim that if this decision is allowed to stand then VBA will have to hire an additional 230 full time employees to review approximately 500,000 cases. They also stated that they would expect approximately 86,000 new applications for the benefits and 14,000 DIC claims. It would also cost in excess of \$3 billion, as many of the claims would be retroactive which would be very costly.

The VBA will accept and acknowledge any new claims based upon the "Haas" decision with letters stating that they have received the claim but any decision on that particular issue will be delayed pending further instructions from VA Headquarters. Current guidance requires each RO to control these claims with a discreet control number (end product) for tracking and control purposes. VA will continue working on any new claims made that are from other medical issues. The briefer also stated that the Haas decision, if allowed, will totally paralyze VA and nothing else would get done. The question arises that if this would have such a detrimental impact on VA's ability to perform why can't they go to Congress and request additional funding to comply with the court's mandate.

### 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.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

Individual membership or Associate membership Dues:  
\$20 for Annual \_\_\_ / \$20 for Renewal \_\_\_ / \$50 for 3 Year Membership \_\_\_

Life Memberships:  
\$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.

If you are a current member, to renew provide your Membership # \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter \_\_\_\_\_



[www.cdva.ca.gov/calvet](http://www.cdva.ca.gov/calvet)

# HUMOR - IN AND OUT OF UNIFORM

## THE COWBOY AND THE YUPPIE

A cowboy was herding his cows in a remote pasture when suddenly a brand-new BMW advanced out of a dust cloud towards him. The driver, a young man in a Brioni suit, Gucci shoes, Ray Ban sunglasses and YSL tie, leans out the window and asks the cowboy, "If I tell you exactly how many cows and calves you have in your herd, will you give me a calf? "

The cowboy looks at the man, obviously a yuppie, then looks at his peacefully grazing herd and calmly answers, "Sure, Why not? "

The yuppie parks his car, whips out his Dell notebook computer, connects it to his Cingular RAZR V3 cell phone, and surfs to a NASA page on the Internet, where he calls up a GPS satellite navigation system to get an exact fix on his location which he then feeds to another NASA satellite that scans the area in an ultra-high-resolution photo.

The young man then opens the digital photo in Adobe Photoshop and exports it to an image processing facility in Hamburg, Germany.

Within seconds, he receives an email on his Palm Pilot that the image has been processed and the data stored.

He then accesses a MS-SQL database through an ODBC connected Excel spreadsheet with email on his Blackberry and, after a few minutes, receives a response.

Finally, he prints out a full-color, 150-page report on his hi-tech, miniaturized HP LaserJet printer and finally turns to the cowboy and says,

"You have exactly 1,586 cows and calves. " "That's right. Well, I guess you can take one of my calves, " says the cowboy. He watches the young man select one of the animals and looks on amused as the young man stuffs it into the trunk of his car.

Then the cowboy says to the young man, "Hey, if I can tell you exactly what your business is, will you give me back my calf? " The young man thinks about it for a second and then says, "Okay, why not? "

"You're a Congressman for the U. S. Government", says the cowboy. "Wow! That's correct, " says the yuppie, "but how did you guess that? "

"No guessing required," answered the cowboy. "You showed up here even though nobody called you; you want to get paid for an answer I already knew, to a question I never asked. You tried to show me how much smarter than me you are; and you don't know a thing about cows... Now give me my dog back. "



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