

INTERCHANGE ONLINE



THE OFFICIAL ONLINE NEWSPAPER OF THE
NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL

Vol. 33 Issue 02

Veteran's News that needs to be Read

SUMMER 2023



In Memorial—May They Rest In Peace



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Please forward your deceased members
with photo, obituary, cause of death to:

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VVA 20

Barry R. Culhane
Thomas A. Monk (Charter Member)
John DiJames
Mark J. Donahue
Don W. Nealon
Daniel Nussbaum
Robert C. LaBlanc

VVA 32

Louis E. Baldasty

VVA 49

Michael D. Sparago

VVA 72

Stephen A. Carretto
Edmund D. Gillet

VVA 140

Maryann Birchenough
Miguel A. Escobar
Robert J. Fabrizio
Mary A. Dall

VVA 377

William D. Mayers
Samuel A. Frederick
Julien (Jute) Shufelt
Francis (Fran) Carrier
Eugene F. Bartell
Edwin C. Moore
Norman A. Mordue, (DSC)
John Van Buren Rice
Thomas Ferretti
David R. Dunlap
Raymond L. Stevens
Ellard L. Savocool

Gerald Ralyea
Robert J. Cornell, Jr.
Treavor R. Bilodeau
Peter M. Sheridan
James R. May, Sr.
Gordon F. Wheeler, Jr.
Kenneth J. Walsh

VVA 421

Mel O. Hansan
Nick Mazzella

VVA 459

Daniel R. Polowy

VVA 704

Thomas E Bryant

VVA 803

Gerald P. Barnes
Lee. E. Taylor

VVA 865

Chester H. Ball, Jr.

NYS At-Large Member

Richard T. Johnson

Prayer:

Yisgadal ve yiskadosh shmei rabos...

*Extolled and hallowed be the name of the
Lord in the world which He created ac-
cording to His Will*



VVA-NYSC Meeting Dates 2023
 June 16, 17, 18
 September 29, 30, Oct. 1

On-Line INTERCHANGE is the Bimonthly publication of the VVA-NYSC. Comments and contributions are encouraged and can be sent to: **VVAINTERCHANGE@AOL.COM**
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The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of this organization. Individuals with different viewpoints and opinions are invited to submit them to the VVA-NYSC by the **deadline**. Editor reserves the right to edit for length, grammar and reject any libelous or obscene material.

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President's Report

Ned D. Foote

Just finished up our April meeting with one of the best turnouts we had since COVID. Much was discussed and very productive.

Some issues that all should know. Veteran Voices of America, (VetsVOA) is a new foundation that VVA has an MOU. It is strictly set to file claims for Veterans as we do now. What will happen over time is our service officers and lawyers will file new claims under VetsVOA. Our Service Offices will become dual accredited with VetsVOA and open new claims under that name. We then will be communicating with our existing claims and ask that the claimant switch POA to VetsVOA. What you need to understand is they are the same people working the claims now.

VVA will be going away at some point and not at all that far down the road and we must do something with the claims under VVA. We cannot just give them to another organization. It just does not work that way. We are still responsible whether we go out of business or not. So, our best option was to help organize VetsVOA to handle our claims.

Much discussion on how we need to proceed to that light switch. This was mandated by the delegates at the last convention, and we are moving in that direction. We cannot Nationally; States and chapters just walk away. VVA was organized under New York State. There are rules and a process we must use to dissolve. We must start with step one and follow those steps. Many members do not understand the process and need to be open and let some of leaders to help us proceed down that road. It is not easy, and we must make sure we do it properly and lawfully. None of us are experts on this but remember The Officers, nor the BOD makes the final decisions. It is the delegates at the conventions.

This convention coming up is very important and information and probably some motions will need to be discussed. 2025 Convention we will be closer to that switch. So please send delegates so you all have a voice on where and how we do this dissolution.

None of us want to leave VVA. I have been a member for over 40 years, and this has been my life that has kept me going. But I know we have a shelf life and that is coming. Weekly I am hearing of another Veteran death. So, emotions need to be put on back burner and let's deal with this the best we can.



New York Vietnam Veterans Foundation

We provide grants to Vietnam Veterans of America-New York State Council, (VVA-NYSC) a veteran's service organization that advocates for legislation at the State and Federal level of government to provide housing, education, health and mental care services to veterans and their families.

We provide funding for VVA-NYSC Veteran's Service Officer program that assist veterans with their military disability compensation and pension claims from the Veterans

Administration.

We advocate for better Federal and State veteran's benefits and veteran preferences in government employment. VVA Chapters within New York State, assist widows, widowers, and orphans of our veterans. The organization organizes programs that enrich the lives of Vietnam veterans, as well as veterans from past, current wars, and their families.

We have an active Agent Orange committee that helps Vietnam veterans receive up to date information on prostate cancer, diabetes, and other chemically-related diseases.

We have an updated database of agencies that provide:

- Listings of Veteran Job Fairs offered by county or veteran service organizations;
- Counseling for veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD);
- Outreach programs that support returning veterans' reentry into civilian life;

For disabled veterans, this can be even more difficult than a tour of duty.

We do this all year long, but without your gift and the gifts of other supporters, nothing can be done to help those that are so deserving of it. However, we have much more to accomplish.

We, the New York Vietnam Veterans Foundation, have a mission to keep advocating for and helping these veterans. We ask you to join us in our mission to provide assistance, guidance, training, and education to all veterans of past, present, and future military conflicts.

So let us continue to work together to ensure our national heroes receive everything that they are entitled to receive for their sacrifice and service to our nation.

President Francisco Muñiz III

Vice President Ned D. Foote

Treasurer Grant T. Coates

Secretary Nick Valenti

Directors Sam Hall

Stan May

You can send your tax deductible donation, to the extent allowed by law, directly to the Foundation at NY Vietnam Veterans Foundation, 48 March Lane, Westbury, NY 11590-6302.

NOTE: The Foundation has lost its fundraising contract and is in need of funds to support our Service Officer's Program. Please send donation to the above address.

Legislative Committee Report
Bing Markee

RE: UPDATE-2023 STATE LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Dear President Foote:

As I've indicated in past reports, in odd-numbered years all legislation that was not passed in the previous even-numbered year's session must be re-numbered to be re-introduced by the sponsors. Because of this, as I reported to you in the beginning of February, since the commencement of the New York State Legislature's 2023 scheduled legislative session on January 4, bills drafting had been working feverishly, and there were already more than 7,000 bills in print. As of today, there are 13,260 in print!

The vast majority of these bills are simply old proposals that required re-numbering, because they had died in committee in previous sessions. However, that number represents proposals from both the senate and the assembly, and the majority of those are what are known as "same as" bills, meaning a bill in one house is identical to its companion in the other house. That is an important point because, for a measure to advance to the point where both houses have passed it, it must be "same as" to then be transmitted for gubernatorial action.

As you are aware, the first opening months of each year's legislative session are typically dominated by the budget and its negotiations. This year's budget (albeit "conceptually" agreed to yesterday, but not yet reduced to print) is later than it has been in recent years. Hopefully, the budget is actually finalized and will be signed into law next week.

However, between now and the end of the scheduled legislative session, there are just 20 scheduled session days left before the scheduled closing on June 8.

Having said the above, of the more than 13,000 individual bills proposed in both houses to date, it is safe to assume that there are approximately 6,000 companioned bills that are currently ready to move further in the process, with just 20 scheduled days left/

To date, just 127 of those measures have been enacted into law, with zero vetoes. Just one of the 127 chaptered measures dealt with a veteran-related issue: Chapter 14, which authorized "public requests for information from any county, city, town, or village desiring to have any memorial located within their municipality listed within the veterans memorial registry; to amend the veterans' services law, in relation to directing the department of veterans' services to establish a veterans memorial registry ...".

As I indicated in my last report, notwithstanding the fact that she was recently elected, I have known the new Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security & Military Affairs, Senator Jessica Scarcella-Spanton since before her election, as she was a staff member for former Senator Diane Savino, a personal friend and ally of mine for more than 20 years. Her new Legislative Director, whom I've known also for more than 20 years, is an experienced legislative staffer and knows the ins-and-outs of the legislative process, which serves to smooth the path for the new chair's initiatives.

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(Continue from pg. 5)

With respect to the new Chair of the Assembly Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, Assemblywoman Kimberly Jean-Pierre, I did not know her personally before her ascendency to the chair of the committee, but I have established a good relationship with her and her new staff.

I have also met, albeit briefly, with the Commissioner of the (newly-designated) NYS Department of Veterans' Affairs, Viviana DeCohen, a Marine Corps veteran. I impressed on her the fact that VVA's stated goal is to help all veterans, regardless of when or where they served. I reminded her that VVANYSC submitted testimony in October 2021 in support of the transition of the former NYS Division of Veterans Services into a full-fledged cabinet-level department in the Executive Branch of NYS government.

Getting back to the budget, until it is in print and voted on, I am reluctant to predict what will ultimately survive the final cuts. However, I have it on good authority that the funding for VVANYSC that you request each year will be included. I also understand that there will be more monies (although presumably nowhere near what is truly needed!) to fund homeless veteran housing. Further, the establishment of "a legal services veterans tax credit of up to \$1,500 for any attorney who performs a minimum of fifty hours of pro bono legal services to a veteran or disabled veteran during a taxable year." That last piece should help to alleviate the increased burden on VSOs as a result of the recent additions to the list of presumptive compensatory illnesses/diseases. Again, I strongly caution all to wait for enactment before counting chickens.

Once the budget is in place, I will be recommending several bills to you that I believe VVANYSC should issue formal memoranda of support for, as we do each year. I have also informed the chairs of the respective veterans' committees that we are prepared to issue support memoranda for any

veterans-related measures, regardless of whether they apply to Vietnam or Vietnam-era veterans, for which they want our formal support.

Very truly yours, and *Semper Fide/is!*



Bing Markee
President

Secretary's Report

Francisco Muñiz III

Hope that we get to see everyone at the Convention. This is a very important Convention in that the future of VVA will be addressed. There will be many Resolutions dealing with Dissolution of the organization.

When sending in your TAP listing for your Chapter, please include a Next of Kin so that our Chaplain can send a Sympathy card from the State Council. Please go to VVA.org and link to "Info for Members, then link to file "Membership Information, Guides and Forms, look for "Deceased Member Notification and fill out /Send to National Office.. This listing that you see on page 1 was obtained from the list that Father Phil Solois has on his TAP Column. If you want a copy of the PowerPoint Memorial of your Chapter listing, please, send me your request to SECRETARY@NYVIETNAMVETS..ORG

When you send in your Chapter Reports for the VVANYS SC Interchange, please, place the District that you belong on the Subject line so that I can compile reports in the appropriate district. Please send all Chapter reports for the Interchange to the following E-mail: VVAINTERCHANGE@AOL.COM
Reminder—If you send a printed newspaper or magazine article for print in the VVA Interchange, you will need to get authorization from the newspaper or author for reprint. Without it I cannot print article in the VVA Interchange for fear of lawsuit! Thanks

Homeless Committee Report

Jay Book—Chair

Resolutions that are currently on file from last National Convention.

HVC-1 Homeless Veterans as a Special Need Population: Though the VA has taken many steps, the committee continues to feel that all agencies providing funding for housing of any kind should focus on homeless veterans. We continue to urge the VA and the Interagency on Homeless to require that all nonprofit organizations provide a veteran-specific accounting of all homeless veterans receiving veteran-specific services. This includes a review of all funding for the applicable organizations and agencies.

HVC-15 VA Homeless Grant and Per Diem Funding: The committee continues to urge the VA to provide funding on an equal and time-sensitive basis for services provided to all eligible homeless veterans. Continued monitoring of these payments must be practiced. The additional need for Per Diem Service Center grants is imperative in achieving the overall goal of eliminating veteran homelessness across the country. Accountability is the key.

National Call Center for Homeless Veterans - Free Help for Homeless Veterans

Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness—and their family members, friends and supporters—can make the call to or chat online with the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans, where trained counselors are ready to talk confidentially 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Who Can Call

Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

Family members, friends and supporters calling on behalf of Veterans

VA Medical Centers and other VA facilities and staff

Federal, state and local partners

Community agencies and providers who serve Veterans who are homeless (Continue on pg. 8)

(Continue on pg. 7)

Why Make the Call to 1-877-4AID VET OR (877-424-3838)

It's free and confidential

You'll get access to trained VA counselors

It's available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

You'll get information about VA homeless programs, health care and other services in your area

What Happens When Veterans Make the Call

A trained VA staff member asks a few questions to find out what you need

Then, you're connected to the nearest VA staff person who can help

What Happens When Others Make the Call

Family members and non-VA providers receive information about available homeless programs and services

They can keep their information confidential or leave contact information so staff can follow up

PTSD COMMITTEE REPORT

Tom Harris - Chair

So, here we are...talking about PTSD again, will we ever stop having this topic on our mind? I doubt there will be a "cure" during our lifetime but hopefully by this time, over fifty years has passed and we're better able to cope with the sharp edges of remembering the trauma that got you there. As we've mentioned getting older isn't a cure for PTSD in many cases.

Unfortunately I've recently had a few health related experiences in my own life and how to deal with these situations makes me think about my veteran friends that are still in the fight.

I'm going to try to make a long boring story kind of short-luckily I'm not there to adlib this topic.

Being interested in my own health care and also being a 'worry-wart' I had the occasion to read the medical reports filed on my behalf by several doctors. What struck as interesting is two of these doctors made a note that I was 'anxious'. At first I'm thinking 'this is good right?'; Like going on a first date anxious. I go to doctor's appointments totally prepared, I've read everything I could find, delved into my bloodwork and test results and I go into the appointment with a list of questions and important information the doctor should hear. Text book educated patient earning my Doctor Goggle degree. (Doctors just roll their eyes)

Well, the more I thought about these appointments I'm now thinking this comment (being anxious) was not a passing remark but perhaps a diagnosis. NAHHHH I say! I'm an easy going, happy-go-lucky type of fellow. Anxious in a clinical way just doesn't fit, so I think.

SO, back to Dr Goggle I head.

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(Continue from Pg. 8)

I think it's acceptable to be prepared, alert, ready for action before going to a medical appointment. (Just like going out on a patrol, right?) Does this make me a person that has an Anxiety Disorder?

The quick definition an Anxiety Disorder (one of the symptoms of PTSD in some) that people worry and fear constantly, it just overwhelms your life. There are several different examples such as panic attacks or phobias). Friends of mine that suffer from 'anxiety' say it's like something that steals your soul.

So, back to me, am I showing signs of having an anxiety disorder. I say NO still. The fact that I 'may over think everything thus taking any joy out of it' is just me. Been that way all my life. Not that I've been thinking about this way too much BUT for example, I played sports in high school and college. I was great (my memories anyhow) playing defense. Always thinking ahead, planning the 'what if's' strategies). Even in the service, I was a Navy radioman communicating with destroyers on the gun line, I was always thinking ahead.

This brings me to the point, phew you say, if you think you may have an anxiety issue try identify the stressors that are causing you to go into 'over thinking mode'. I try to write down what's bugging me, keeping me awake, and ruining my day. Next to each problem I write down possible solutions. I also note what I have NO control over and what someone else needs to do.

Sometimes just listing stuff works (kinda empty's your brain) to take the sting out of them. Sometimes I revert to science, psycho-babble stuff.

You have to try this, for me I tried it a lot before it worked...

It's called the 3 3 3 rule:

It involves looking around your environment to identify three objects and three sounds and then moving three body parts. Focus on what you are seeing and feeling...some people use 5-5-5 rule-same concept. Another vet friend counts from 100 backwards to give his thoughts a 'reset'.

Lastly, per Dr Goggle, drink more! WATER! Seriously. Dehydration is a problem.

Thanks for listening guys & gals. I feel better already.

VAVS/CDCE Report – April 2023

Danny Friedman – Chair

No new reports from any other VAVS Reps. VAVS has been renamed and rebranded as CDCE which is Center for Development and Community Engagement. NY Harbor's chief has retired and replacing her has so far been a challenge, as well as so many other key staff.

Tim Graham is the new director for NY Harbor. He is not a veteran, but he is a career VA executive. Our VAVS/CDCE Reps continue to meet quarterly via video and telephone.

(Continue from pg. 9)

Health/Aging Veteran Committee Report

Tom Harris—Chair

Reading the VVA Veteran I often see stuff that national is talking about now that we brought to light ten years ago. Ahead of our time, I SHOUT!

Tidbits that we need to stay ahead of as we age.

HEARING: There's so much new information about hearing solutions that I can't decide what's true and what's not. If you feel you have a service connected hearing loss bring it up to the VA folks. Maybe you'll be eligible for compensation and if necessary a set of really cool hearing aids. As a hearing aid wearing person (non service connected) of over ten years I totally recommend getting checked out by an audiologist. The great parts of hearing aids I can actually hear people talk-more importantly I can have a conversation with my 3 yr. old grandson. The tough spots still are going into stores with music playing, trying to listen to young women talking fast over the phone (seriously guys), talking to someone wearing a mask. Today's hearing aids are better than five years ago, so I've been told (I think that's what I heard the audiologist say).

WALKING: Still one of very best therapies for what ails you. Physical, psychological, it's the perfect solution. Cheap, fun, you can go alone or with someone or with a gaggle of veterans. Now that summer is almost here get out.

EAT HEALTHY: Staying in your weight class can make all the difference. What you eat and when is important. This bit of advice is coming from someone who ate 'corn beef hash and canned corn' for lunch today with my toddler wingman.

FIND A PURPOSE: Could be working your butt off for your VVA chapter. While back ago, I found clearing nature trails with a group to be rewarding and doing volunteer work for an agency helping poor people kept me in my game.

Lastly, I have found staying in touch with people from my Navy days to be a hoot.

Thanks to Facebook I'm chatting with a boot camp buddy from Boston.

When life gets me down I reach out to a boss from my days working in a Veterans Office on campus.

We haven't talked in 50 years but we can rely on each other. Ditto for my shipmate from NavCommSta Philippines days over 50 years ago.

Just a quick note and I'm in a much better mode!

So, friends, hang in there! Keep your head up and be proud!

Agent Orange Committee Report

Tom Patton—Chair

I've heard that those who have filed for hypertension are receiving a 0-disability rating. My recommendation is for those who have worked with a Service Officer or whomever helped you file the claim to continue with your SO. The good news is if you were not in the VA system you are now.

Sometimes there are times that you have to fall back on the experts in this case Sandie Wilson, Chair of the Agent Orange Committee. In the paragraph anytime you see the word committee its referring to the Agent Orange Committee. I'm reprinting her column here as it should answer questions and should shake your head in wonderment at bureaucracy at its best.

» [Agent Orange & Dioxin Committee Update March/April 2023](#)



BY SANDIE WILSON, CHAIR

It is the time to reflect upon our progress on Convention resolutions in which delegates set out the committee's mission and goals. We hope VVA members will consider our progress and discuss the situation before the upcoming Convention.

The PACT Act expanded the toxic exposure problem to include families of veterans of the Persian Gulf and Iraq and Afghanistan wars. An additional 41 or more toxins were used in those environments. That expands the products of concern and requires VVA's involvement with newer veterans.

The committee has several resolutions related to research on the health effects from the forever toxins (chemical warfare) in Vietnam. In addition, other substances used in the more-recent wars have not been adequately researched. The VA and Congress keep replying to our concerns with, "more research is needed."

The National Academies of Science, Environment and Medicine and the VA have had their budgets for medical research increased. Some additional medical research is being conducted from non-governmental funds.

A law to provide for research on the offspring of Vietnam War and more-recent wars was signed by President Obama. During the Trump Administration, efforts to implement this research were ignored, as were requests by congressional sponsors of the legislation. The current VA secretary claims the research cannot be done because methods are not advanced enough and there is no national birth defects registry.

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(Continue from pg. 11)

The Department of Defense has provided less than \$1 million to researchers at Boston College to study Gulf War veterans and their families. This amounts to 731 families and includes a blood sample. More years of deployment may be studied as research funds become available. The war lasted 20 years. My math says the final report will be available in 2045.

The latest privately funded medical research concluded that Gulf War syndrome was the result of sarin gas becoming airborne when Iraqi chemical warfare storage facilities were bombed. Sarin gas effects the central nervous system and is passed down for twelve generations (240 years). Those results have not been duplicated or confirmed, however.

VVA has been trying to get honest, appropriate medical research done on the effects of toxic exposure since 1989. A working group of the committee has been meeting with the AV and the Air Force about Operation Ranch Hand data for the past two years. After 33 years, a final report is being written. We thought the law that required medical toxic effects research for veterans' children and grandchildren would be a step toward providing healthcare for those effected. The committee has been trying to get the VA to implement the law for eight years.

Here is a rundown on the state of AO Committee resolutions:

AO-2 calls for support of the Agent Orange/Dioxin Registry. The purpose of this registry has expanded to include more than these toxins and the children of Vietnam War veterans. The registry now includes children of veterans who served in Vietnam and elsewhere during the war, as well as those who served in the Gulf wars, and the general public with birth defects. The registry can supply the data for the quickest and most economical human research. The questions designed by scientists provide a comparison of diseases and exposures by people effected. The registry is a private, nonprofit organization supported by donations.

AO-7 is supported by **AO-2**. The goal is to provide health care and support for children effected by their parents' exposure to toxic substance during military service.

AO-9 and **AO-10** refer to the manufacture, sale, or use of some toxic substances. Our efforts to succeed in these areas have not been successful. Economic concerns have by far exceeded the desire to relieve the pain and suffering of the effects. Three years ago, the Environmental Protection Agency gave Dow Chemical a five-year permit to make and sell herbicides containing 2,4 D and glyphosate (Round-up).

AO-17, which limits the service connection to one year for a range of health problems, remains an unsolved issue.

AO-12 involves support for the U.S. Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to provide funding for research in Vietnam. Vietnamese families with children whose health problems are believed to be related exposure to toxins are being compensated although research has not been done.

AO-8, the Agent Orange/Dioxin Network, is alive and well. The Agent Orange/Dioxin seminar at the Leadership Conference continues and has been expanded to include other military toxic exposures.

AO-13 Along with other groups, we continue to be involved in Agent Orange Awareness Month and Agent Orange Recognition Day in August. With pandemic restrictions eased, we can now schedule in-person Town Hall meetings. New guidelines are on the VVA website. Two new employees in the National office are reviewing our publications.

AO-4, The Agent Orange/Dioxin Guide, along with other publications, continues to be updated and available

If you have any questions, you should by now know where to find me. It took me to reach the age of 70 to have the best nonpaying job I could hope for. As time goes on, I promise to get better at it!!!!

Bill Paton

Blpaton36@gmail.com

716-208-5211

Veterans Incarcerated and In the Justice System Committee Report

Nicholas C. Valenti - Chair

We did it. Finally, we have a meeting scheduled for May of this year. I wonder how many of us were musing about our incarcerated - brothers and sisters and what will evolve from our humble movement.

It appears that the Group (Veterans Group of Auburn) is moving in the right direction. Here is the breakdown: 1) Evening Call-outs will be on different days. For instance, the Crochet Donation Program is held on Monday evenings from 1930 hours (7:30 PM) to 2110 hours (9:10 PM); 2) the regularly scheduled Veterans Group of Auburn will be held on Thursday evenings during the hours' of 1930 hours (7:30 PM) to 2110 hours (9:10 PM); and 3) The VGOA Board meetings will be held on first Thursday of each month. By keeping everyone's time periods the same a little consistency is established.

The Crochet Squad has heightened interest in getting more yarn. A staff advisor is assigned to me. He will handle the gate passes.

The colors that were band from New York State Facilities in 2022/2023 included the following: BLUE; BLACK; GREY; ORANGE and MULTICOLORED YARN. These colors represent gang colors that DOCCS works real hard not enable.

As of the 20th December I have received emails from the remaining three districts – Western, Southern and Eastern promising yarn. Leaving nothing to chance I keep on letting people know, hoping to bring a modestly empty SUV to the State meeting and bringing back yarn to be culled, packaged and delivered. We cannot have an effective impact as of December, 2023. Sadly, that ship has sailed – however, in December 2024 we can invigorate the program. Worsted yarn works the best if there is a choice. We have an opportunity to pick up where we left off. Let's give it a try. If the April 29, State Council meeting isn't plausible, give me a call or email me. We will communicate and get it to work.

My email address is nickvalenti46@yahoo.com. I will be available at the conference to talk with you, as my better half of 49 years and 7 months will be helping me as I am color blind.

Central District Report

Nick Valenti

VVA Chapters #85, #103, #377, #480, #704, #708, #803, #827, #896, #944

Since our February 2023 State council meeting, it has been one activity after another at every imaginable organizational level. Our enthusiasm hasn't ebbed. The governing bodies from the Chapter to the Board of National Directors finds itself shaping the mind set of a grateful Nation and recognizing that we needed to do what we did in order to help ourselves and future generations of warriors. Our purpose, **"NEVER AGAIN WILL ONE GENERATION OF VETERANS ABANDON ANOTHER."**

It helps when the "The Wall That Heals" Exhibit is in an upgraded remodeled condition. What it means to ALL of Upstate New York, is exposure to the awesome impact of its presence and bring healing to those who need it the most.

Activities dating back to March of this year include Daughters of the American Revolution surviving family members to the same event. evolution conducting a Commemorative "Lapel Pinning" for our VVA Chapter #704 members while inviting surviving family members to the same event. **(Continue on**

(Continue from pg. 13)

The offering of a separate “PIN” gave these families what I am led to believe is a dignity, that before was missing. The Masonic Temple, on South Street, Auburn, NY made sure we had a beautiful, safe setting for such an honorable event. Cookies, brownies, coffee were enthusiastically enjoyed by all while building the bonds of military service and self-sacrifice. Past current and future generations showed, without hesitation, their comradeship. One of the most endearing facts is that it was conducted on March 29th now remembered as Vietnam Veterans Day.

April 2023 soon rolled around and I with Chapter #704 Chaplin Jerry Fulmer found our ourselves “Rocking ‘n Rolling in Fair Haven, New York in the Town of Sterling. The date was April 1st. The band “Held Hostage” was playing a weekend Veterans Appreciation Day Concert with several other bands. They played, sang and jammed the night away. The winery venue was at Colloca Estate Winery. A beautiful winery set on Lake Ontario. Tom Collier the band leader wrote a song he called “Show Me The Way Back Home.” A song very much close to home – a song about his brother’s returning home from Vietnam and having adjustment issues. There have already been several remixes of the song. Each one more powerful than the 1st. The Band asked Jerry if he would sit in on drums and play a Doors song. Well, if you know Jerry, he leapt at it and didn’t drop a stick. Thanks to all performers and the audience for a memorable evening.

April 2023 is also a month for attending American Legion, VFW, I.A.W.V. meetings. It is that time of year where elections begin to loom their collective heads along with our own quickly approaching deadlines. At my end I have to shake the bushes in order to gather the interest in bring “The Wall That Heals.” It will be on display 24/7 from midnight of Thursday September 14th thru Sunday, September 17th at 2:00 PM. At 2 pm volunteers will be gathered to dismantle this most powerful exhibit. Then onto the next site for the Washington team.

As of May 2023, I have a seat as a board member to the Veterans Service Agency providing support for the new Director. The Cayuga County Veteran Service Agency has been rebuilt from the ground up with new staff and updated training. I encourage everyone, friend or foe, to find out what you may be entitled to. It costs nothing. You served, you earned, now it is time to reap what we sowed. Whatever you do, do not leave your significant other behind. It is absolutely imperative you make sure that team work is at play and whatever happened in the past does not haunt you and your loved ones in the future. We still have a bit of a ways to go, however, the “Pact Act” did enhance our collective.

June 2023, there will be another “Special Olympics” Torch Run” being conducted on the 6th of June, 2023. The runners make several stops on their way to the NYS Troopers Barracks just west of the City of Auburn. VVA Chapter #704 will provide a Color Guard at the Veterans Memorial Park, Auburn, New York on West Genesee Street next door to the Cayuga County Office Building. Also, in June of 2023 we have the State Council meeting to attend in Nichols, New York. The date is Saturday, June 17th. Check your calendars, do not let the opportunity for companionship, instilling comradeship, and just spending good one-on-one time, hold you back. Now it would be a shame to have come so far and not to have met once and all tell of our tall tales and exploits.

**CLINICAL CONTACT CENTER
AVAILABLE 24 HOURS EVERY day!!!!
(800) 877 – 6976**

Do you have an “Community Based Outpatient Clinic” (CBOC)?

Are you trying to help get the word out to people who can fare for themselves or have someone who can stand by them and enable the patient and be their advocates for quality Health needs.

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If you do. Do what ours does. The Auburn, New York location hands out a rectangular shaped piece of paper with the following. The VSO thank services their hands on driven approach and passes out identifying information to empower health. A great partnership.

- *Talk to a provider
- *Medication questions
- *Medication refills / renewals
- *Assistance with referrals / consults
- *Schedule appointment
- *Schedule appointment
- *Re-schedule / Verify appointment
- *Patient education
- *Address Mental Health concerns

Prepare yourself with as much information as is possible about your health and what you can do to make life just a tad better.

VVA Chapter #377 Report

Gary Napieracz – President

NYS has three Medals available for NYS Veterans depending on your service and when. They are nice, and easy to apply for, will need DD214. You can download form at <https://dmna.ny.gov>> awards at Division of Military and Naval Affairs.

Black Vietnam-Era Army Officer To Receive Medal Of Honor.

Army Col. Paris Davis, one of the first Black officers to lead a Special Forces team in combat will receive the Medal of Honor nearly 60 years after distinguishing himself during the Vietnam War.

On 18 June, 1965 during a pre-dawn raid on a North Vietnamese army camp in Bong Son, Davis repeatedly sprinted into an open rice paddy to rescue each member of his team, using his pinkie finger to fire his rifle after an enemy grenade shattered his hand. His entire team survived the battle. Paper work recommending Davis, now in his 80s, for the Medal of Honor twice disappeared. He was eventually awarded a Silver Star, but members of his team have long argued that race was a factor in how his recommendation was handled. In 2021 Davis's case was reviewed and Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller argued that awarding Davis the Medal of Honor would address an injustice. On March 3rd President Biden awarded Davis the Medal of Honor in a White House ceremony.

Member Dan Baker spoke of the preparations for the Motorcycle Tribute Ride for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway of Valor (NYS Rte 38) this summer July 15. He also spoke of the motorcade escort for "The Wall that Heals" (mobile Vietnam Wall). It will be on 9/12/23 from Groton to Auburn for the 9/13 Event.

Tompkins/Cortland VA Clinic has made its move to Cayuga Mall, off Triphammer Rd, Lansing. The new number 607-257-2045 is not working yet, so contact is temporarily 315-425-8280. Anytime you need immediate help (other than common sense 911), contact VA Health Connect at 1-800-877- 6976, a 24/7 nurse manned line.

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VVA Chapter #377 Report

Paul Pagliaro

I was invited by a friend William Standinger a retired NYS Trooper currently a county legislator for Tioga County NY to the Vietnam Veteran's Appreciation Day ceremony at Owego NY on the 29th of March. This federal holiday is held all over the country. I believe some of our chapter members went to the ceremony in Cortland County at the Living History Museum. Mike Middaugh, the Tioga County Veteran's rep and a decorated combat vet himself, put together a ceremony that consisted of an honor guard for the wreath lying at the monument of the Vietnam War for the fallen from Tioga County. The honor guard from Binghamton, NY was made up of Lao-Hmong soldiers who were paid by the CIA and trained by the Special Forces to fight the communist forces in the secret war in South East Asia. Later further activities were held at the VFW Post where more speeches were made honoring the veterans who died the surviving vets and the families. All Vietnam veterans present stood behind the podium and were presented pins and a challenge coin. The audience responded with hearty applause. Afterwards a meal of chicken and biscuits was enjoyed by all the participants. Compared to the "welcome" we received when we came home this was really appreciated.

Greg Harvey spoke of the great experience at the Homeville Museum's Vietnam Veterans Day at the Living History Center in Cortland on 3/29. There were about 70 VN & Era Veterans there. Nice lunch. Speaker was Joseph Sheridan, a Cortland native, who was a Cobra Pilot in VN, and wrote a book "Angel in the Cockpit" about his experiences and its effects on his life. Well received!

Editor's Note: Are those deceased members listed on Page 1 were members of your Chapter?

Western District Report**Bill Paton****VVA Chapters #20, #77, #193, #268, #459, #865, #978**

Just coming back from what I personally thought was a great New York State Council Meeting. Our District was 100% represented again. I know Ned was happy to see Danny McGill from Chapter 459 as it had been 10 plus years since they had been together. Bill Auble of Chapter 20 introduced the new Chapter President Charles Klauck and New Board Member Rosemary Rossi-Williams. All three are also State Council Delegates. Chapter 77 President Tom Thompson was proud to announce that the membership was at 708, specifically that we could finally get one of our very much alive members back to the living with National.

It is very important that the New York Chapters send as many delegates to the Conventions as possible. Starting with this Convention there will be resolutions from National and from the floor. The majority will be good, some will walk the line, and some should probably, well let's just say is interesting to listen too!!! So, I am asking you all to start looking at what you can do.

If you have any questions or suggestions please contact me at either below!

Bill Paton

Blpaton36@gmail.com

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VVA Chapter #20 Report

Charles Klauck – President (305-9557) or chask809@outlook.com

First I would like to thank all those who were at the April meeting to participate in the election of new officers for the Chapter. The following were elected to serve as officers of the Chapter for the next two years:

Charles Klauck President	Larry Strassner Secretary
Lynn Gursslin Vice President	William Schrader Treasurer

Re-elected to Board of Directors: Ken Allocco Dick Oleksyn

New Board Members: Sam Otto Rosemary Rossi-Williams

I would like to thank Val Gatto, Hank Wallace, Dick Pearce, Jerry McDermott, Mike Sanfilippo and Fred Elliott for the many years they have served the Chapter in various positions. Their leadership has served the Chapter well.

May will be a busy month for the Chapter as we prepare for and participate in Memorial Day observances. All members of the Chapter are invited to march in both the parades. • Irondequoit parade is on May 28th at 3:00 PM. Line up at the High School on Cooper Road begins at 2:00 PM. • The Rochester parade is on the 29th at 10:30 AM. Lineup at East Ave and Alexander St starts at 9:30. (You do not have to be in the marching unit to participate in these parades.) 4 • Our Memorial Service at the Memorial at Highland Park will begin at 1:00 PM on May 29th. We need a large turnout of members to participate in presenting the colors and firing the rifles. Please arrive at the park no later than 12:30.



VVA Chapter #77 Report

Tom Thompson - President

We are happy to announce that we now have 710 members. Our gains come from word of mouth and letters to (at large members) sent out by Paul Petrowski.

On March 29th National Vietnam War Veterans Day the Erie Niagara Sunrise Exchange Club provided breakfast for any and all Vietnam Veterans along with food and a generous monetary donation for our Veterans food pantry.

The seventh and our last April fools Dance was held on March 31, 2023 at the Sikora Legion Post. Even though we did raise some money it was decided by the BOD that the venue was remaining to loud with the live band. Much to our dismay we are all getting older.

The month of May will be busy. The Pist’N Broke Car cruise Club of North Tonawanda has asked us to provide our grilling service of dogs, sausage, water and soda as a fund raiser for Chp.77 each Monday of the month. On Memorial Day Monday May 29 the proceeds from their 50/50 ticket sales to the 500-600 vehicles present will generously be donated to VVA Chapter 77.

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The Orange Blossom fund raisers (the Agent Orange awareness event) led by Joe Pasek will be held May 20 at Niagara Produce Transit & Millersport and on May 27 at the new Elma Niagara Produce at 3131 Transit. Both events are held from 10 am until 5 p.m. Any members help is greatly appreciated even for a couple of hours.

The annual joint fund raiser Fill the Helmet with VVA Chapter #77 and Legion Post 264 will be on Saturday May 13 from 10 am – 2 p.m. Help also appreciated, meet at VVA Chapter at 9:00 am.

The two events for Memorial Weekend are as follows. First on Sunday May 28 the Tonawanda's Veterans Council will hold a Ceremony at 12:00 noon on the Renaissance Bridge. Second on Monday May 29, Memorial Day VVA Chapter 77 will hold a Ceremony at the Vietnam Monument at The Buffalo Naval Park at 1:00 pm.

We will have another Chivetta's Chicken BBQ fundraise on June 3, 2023. Drive through only, Rain or Shine, see attached flyer.

All the fundraisers proceeds go to helping veterans, community aid, paying rent for our chapter museum/meeting room and the next door food pantry where any needy Veteran is given food weekly and gift card once a month.

Come have coffee and a donut at chapter Wednesday and Saturday morning 8:30 to 12:30.

Please attend our monthly meetings 6:00 pm the third Thursday of every month at the chapter except July and August. We provide pizza and pop after the meeting.

Have a summer and be safe.

VVA Chapter #459 Report

Danny McGilll - Vice Pres./Secretary

Getting together for meetings finally on what appears to be a long winter. Chapter 459 is still hanging in there with a short group of 40 with several members living out of state---yet still staying with the Chapter instead of doing a transfer. It seems every time we secure a new member, we lose one but we still try to recruit. We are planning on helping Nick Valenti on his quest for yarn for the folks at the Auburn Correctional facility. I, myself attended the April meeting of the New York State Council and dropped off two 30 gallon trash bags full of yarn. The appeal went out and several came forward with a promise of additional yarn going forward. It seems the pandemic must have been good for something as people stayed home and pursue their hobby but is now not needed

The Chapter has one member accepted for an upcoming Honor flight this coming September with a few

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others waiting after all the paper work is completed. Pictures and information brought back to us is expected.

As VP & Secretary for Chapter 459 and one unable to drive long distances having had what is called a “stroke to the eye,” I have lost frontal vision in one eye and depend of help reaching State Council meetings. I wish to thank Brother Jay Book from the Jamestown Chapter 865 for providing recent transportation to the meetings which goes to prove we are brothers in the bond and help each other and appreciated very much.

Our Chapter is fortunate (as well as extremely grateful) to have been given an annual stipend of \$1,000 for several years which allows us to help the needy which we also truly appreciate.

We wish all a good spring & summer and best wishes for all your planned activities. May the good Lord give help and guidance your way.

VVA Chapter #140 Report

William (Bill) Long – President 845.283.0497

Dear Chapter Members, Thank you for your vote of confidence in making me your next President. I will do the best I can to bring this Chapter forward. I look forward to working with each of you to keep our Chapter viable for as long as we can. See you at the next meeting! The other Officers are the following:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1st Vice Pres Leo Ortiz | 2nd Vice Pres Robert Tanzillo | |
| Treasurer Bruce Marley | Secretary Don Collica | |
| 3 Yr. Director Tom Jablonski | 2 Yr. Director Eugene Rose | |
| 1 Yr. Director Charlie Czochanski | Trustee Ed Pavlich | Trustee Bob Beemer |

VVA Chapter #268 Report

Gordie Bellinger

At our 28 March 2023 meeting, the Daughters of the American Revolution Niagara County New York presented a Vietnam War Commemoration 50th Anniversary Lapel Pin to each of our forty (40) members that attended this meeting; also the Chapter received a certificate of recognizing the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter #268 with a 3’ x 5’ Vietnam War Commemoration flag.

Our membership as of 4 April 2023 is 122 members; at our monthly meetings we have average 35 members at each meeting.

We wish all good health and take care of yourself.

Left to Right:
 VVA #268 President Robert Hull, Daughters of the American Revolution
 Niagara County, Chaplain Melody Burow and VVA #268 Secretary
 David Benedict



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VVA Chapter #333 Report

Ray Furlong - President

VVA #333 is working to have this legislation pass in NYS. They will be working with our Legislative Advocate Bing Markee in New York State legislature. New Jersey has it in their book already!

STATE OF NEW YORK

2965

2023-2024

Regular Sessions IN ASSEMBLY

February 1, 2023

Introduced by M. of A. PHEFFER AMATO, BRABENEC, D. ROSENTHAL -- read once and referred to the Committee on Real Property Taxation

AN ACT to amend the real property tax law, in relation to establishing a real property tax exemption for veterans who have a one hundred percent service connected disability

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

- 1 Section 1. Section 458 of the real property tax law is amended by
- 2 adding a new subdivision 3-a to read as follows:
- 3 3-a. Real property owned by a disabled veteran who has a one hundred
- 4 percent service connected disability, and his or her spouse, and consti-
- 5 tuting the primary residence of such persons shall be deemed fully
- 6 exempt from all taxes imposed upon such property by a municipal corpo-
- 7 ration.
- 8 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately.



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Tom Carroll <tomcarroll5@verizon.net>

Last night I attended the initial meeting of State Senator Bill Weber's "Advisory Council" meeting at the Legion Post in New City. Also attending from the Chapter were Marcus Arroyo, Cliff Fromm, and Irv Abel.

Technically speaking, as the Haverstraw Elks Veterans Chairperson, I had two hats on. Here is my "take" on the meeting:

As with any initial meeting, it was both informative and chaotic. There were discussions on issues like Veterans State and Local tax exemptions, but there were also moments of folks just airing complaints and grievances pertaining to both State and Federal issues. While he did promise he would forward some of the issues to Mike Lawler, a couple of people took entirely too much time discussing those issues.

There were about 40 veterans in attendance. I would say 90% of the attendees were Korea and Vietnam era veterans. With that many people I think calling it a "Veterans Advisory Committee" is a little misleading. Might be a more productive process if it was comprised of one or two representatives from various county veteran groups, who could consolidate the issues and present them in a smaller group setting. It would eliminate a lot of the "table chatter" while someone was speaking.

Mark Woods gave a very informative presentation of events at Bridges. Details of those events are on the Bridges website - www.bridgesrc.org Click on the Veterans tab.

Vietnam Memories, Stories Left At The Wall

Vietnam Memories Felix Festa Middle School/ Nanuet High School

This is a yearly presentation by VVA #333 – Rockland County with Howard Goldin and his crew during the month of March at the two above named school. This program has been going on for many years and is well received by the students and teachers of the school.

‘The book from the enemy’: A lifetime after Vietnam, U.S. veteran delivers a diary to its home

Megan Burrow and Nhung Nguyen USA TODAY Network 3/28/2023

This is a story of Peter Matthew, from NJ who is a member of VVA Chapter #333, Rockland, NY.

Ky Anh District, Ha Tinh Province, Vietnam – On a spring evening at the end of January, Ha Huy My received the phone call his family had been waiting for.

A few days before, local officials had contacted him looking for information about his uncle, who had died in 1967 in the war.

At his family home, nestled beneath its red tile roof among a village of blue and green houses by the sparkling sea, Huy My wondered: Why are they asking? About his uncle who had gone to war and died so long ago, a man named Cao Van Tuat, a man he never really knew?

Then, a short time later, he heard a rumor about a fallen soldier’s diary that had been found by an American veteran.

The diary was elegant, apparently, with poetry and drawings etched amid the entries. The American soldier had found it on a battlefield. For his job, for wartime strategy, the thing to do would have been to hand it over to military intelligence. But the book was too beautiful to hand over.

So he had kept it, hidden away, for more than 50 years. In the space of so much time, the American vet had come to realize the book was not too beautiful to hand over. It was too beautiful to keep.

The American was a man named Peter Mathews. He had no idea who had written the diary. But he wanted to find that Vietnamese soldier’s family and give it back.

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At first, Huy My couldn't imagine how he was involved. He had been only 2 years old when his uncle left for the war and never came back.

"I personally did not know his handwriting," Huy My said. He had never even seen his uncle's picture.

Even as he started to realize why local officials had called him, Huy My was unsure.

The book was reportedly filled with poems by renowned Vietnamese poets like Te Hanh and To Huu, which Huy My assumed his uncle had not had the chance to study in school before he left for war.

The worst thing, he thought, would be to take this diary as his uncle's and be mistaken.

"It would be a tremendous sin and guilt had the diary belonged to some family's loved one," he said. "We would be like robbing away their deceased member's memento, a treasure to the family."

But then, the official called and confirmed the names of the soldier's parents – Huy My's grandparents – and the soldier's older sister – Huy My's mother.

"That was when we were sure it was my uncle's," he said.

He poured cups of warm lid eugenia tea and sat down in his home. It was early March by now, and outside, the peach and apricot trees dotted the village with blossoms.

Huy My, a rice and soybean farmer, was more than 60 years old himself. Though he remembered almost nothing of the day his uncle left home in 1963, he knew that tomorrow would be a day just as important for his family.

The American veteran, Peter Mathews, was set to arrive. He would come to the village of Cao Thang. He would meet the family. He would be carrying Cao Van Tuat's diary.

"Now," Huy My said, "we just want to be able to touch it, to see it for ourselves."

Peter, 1967

The four days of fighting came amid one of the longest and bloodiest battles of the Vietnam War.

Mathews, an Army sergeant with the 1st Cavalry Division, was sweeping through an area of South Vietnam's Central Highlands near Dak To with his unit. In November 1967, they had flown in to help the 4th Infantry Division, which was engaged in the fight for a nearby airstrip.

They were preparing to leave when Mathews found the book.

The soldiers in his unit had been rifling through backpacks left at the bottom of a hill, known to the Americans as Hill 724, named for its elevation above sea level.

North Vietnamese soldiers would often drop their backpacks in a staging area rather than carrying the heavy packs up a hill while fighting, Mathews said.

Mathews' pale blue eyes scanned the stash left on the ground. His team's job was to look for anything useful, any notes that could give them an inside look at battlefield plans.

Instead, wrapped in plastic, he found a work of art.

Mathews was struck by the elegance of the book's pages, which were decorated with intricate drawings of flowers and landscapes and what appeared to be poetry, songs and journal entries.

He didn't know what the handwritten words meant, but it looked as if the booklet was a personal diary, not a military document. Instead of handing it over to commanders, Mathews put it in his pocket.

And there it remained for much of the next month until his tour ended in December 1967. **(Continue on pg. 23)**

"I just thought it was such a beautiful thing," he recalled. "I was amazed by the detail, the artistic ability. "Maybe I should have turned it in, but I just couldn't part with it," he said. "It didn't look to me like military or secret information. I didn't show it to anyone. I just put it in my pocket."

Vietnam, 1967

Cao Van Tuat was 21 and living with his family in a small village in the province of Ha Tinh. His village lay beneath the distant mountains, on a small river near a sparkling sea. His family earned a living growing rice and catching fish. They sent him to school, but by 1963, he was ready to fight.

The village and surrounding region had sent a flow of thousands of young people in North Vietnam heading to the southern front to fight the Americans in the war.

Ha Tinh, government reports show, sent 92,912 young men and women – more than 10% of the province's population – and mobilized more than 330,000 civilians and 10,600 young volunteers in the war effort.

By the war's end, 28,455 of them would not return.

Tuat joined the North Vietnamese troops and left home in March 1963.

He left behind his parents, an older sister and two younger sisters. His family did not even have a photograph of him to hold on to.

The soldier sent one letter home shortly after he enlisted. It would be nine years later before they received his death certificate.

The story they had of the end of his life had no artwork, no poetry, nothing to remember him by.

"We did not know where he was, how his life was on the battlefield. We didn't even know where he died," Huy My said. "For the whole nine years before we heard of his death, our family was thinking, and wishing, he was alive. He did not send many letters. All communications were complicated and rare back then."

All they knew from official records was that he had been killed, somewhere on the battlefield, in 1967.

Peter, 1967

In December 1967, about a month after he found the diary, Mathews returned to New Jersey. He wanted the war put behind him, so he tucked the diary away.

All the same problems he had when he left before the war were still there waiting for him, plus the new burdens he brought home.

Mathews had come to the United States from the Netherlands four years earlier, in 1963. He landed just a week before the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

He had lived in New Jersey and worked odd jobs for a few years before he found someone willing to sponsor him for a green card.

Then, just months after getting the documentation, he had been drafted into the U.S. Army.

"When I was drafted I was young and stupid," he said. "I was a young guy and I went along. I had to – they gave me the option to go home or go there."

Mathews was a machine gunner during the war. He eventually became a squad leader in the 1st Cavalry, which was tasked with flying in to help other units if they needed backup.

Finally, in 1967, he came home.

By the time Mathews returned, "school was secondary," he said. "I had to make a living."

He applied for citizenship, thinking he was immediately eligible because of his military service, but he was denied because the Vietnam conflict was not a formally declared war. By the next summer, those rules had changed, and Mathews became a U.S. citizen.

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He got married shortly after returning home, but that marriage lasted just four years, ending in divorce, he said, because of his drinking problems and depression.

He remarried, began a small construction business and focused on raising his four children. The diary he had stuffed in his pocket on the battlefield now stayed in a box in his attic in Bergenfield, New Jersey.

But every once in a while, someone would come to visit, and he would pull the book out to let them see. People called it “the book from the enemy.”

Vietnam, 2023

Just a year after Tuat was killed, his youngest sister, who loved singing and dancing and was almost finished with school, died in a bombing.

As a strategic zone and a main traffic hub for troops and the flow of materials from the North to the Southern battlefields, as well as Lower Laos and Cambodia, the province of Ha Tinh was a prime target for American airstrikes. According to Vietnamese records, 200,000 tons of bombs were dropped on the province during the war.

One of those bombs fell as the 17-year-old girl was hanging out with friends after school. It tore off her legs, and she bled to death. At the time, in 1968, the family had not yet learned of Tuat’s death.

“Before she died, she was still thinking she could meet her brother at the other end of the war,” Huy My said. “It turned out they died just months apart.”

Tuat had a girlfriend from the same village, who is now in her 80s. They promised each other that after his return, his family would visit her house to ask for her hand.

“But it was wartime, I think few would hold out their hope,” Huy My said.

Huy My, the little boy whose uncle had gone away to war, had been the first grandchild in the family. As a child he lived with his grandmother, who gave him stories to remember.

“My aunts and uncle showered me with love,” he said. “My uncle, I was told, loved taking me out to the beach to play in the afternoons. He liked carrying me around on his back, roaming around the village.”

Huy My grew, and eventually he also went to war, in 1981 in Cambodia, fighting against the Pol Pot regime.

“At the time I thought of my uncle, of how he gave up his life for the peace of this country,” he said. “I wanted to follow his footsteps.”

Time passed and Huy My became a farmer like his family. He lived long enough that he has to pause to remember some things now. To remember how his family moved from the home where they lived by the beach then – it’s a seaside resort now. To remember the dates his other relatives have died.

But it’s his job to remember. As the family’s only son, Tuat would have traditionally been the one expected to continue the bloodline, take care of his parents as they got older, and after they died, care for their altar, a place in Vietnamese homes where families traditionally pay homage to their ancestors.

In Vietnamese culture, family members who die are honored at an altar with incense, prayers, flowers and other offerings.

Tuat’s family never learned where his body was buried. His sister’s family has cared for his altar since his death.

But in time, Tuat’s sisters grew older. As their health declined, Huy My had to take over. For the past seven years, he has been the one to honor his uncle.

On Lunar New Year this year, Huy My’s family, and families all across Vietnam, again lit incense at their altars and called to their relatives who had died. It was Jan. 22, 2023.

That day, as with each Lunar New Year, Huy My worried about who would eventually care for his uncle's altar. The next generation would have no way to remember Tuat – not even a picture of him.

Four days later, on the other side of the world, a newspaper story appeared. In it was a man with pale blue eyes and a shock of silver hair, carefully cradling the yellowing pages of a diary.

Peter, 2023

More than a half century after he left Vietnam as a soldier, Mathews, now 77, was reminded of his time in the Army as he was working in a client's home. He spotted a nón lá, a traditional conical straw Vietnamese hat, in the man's home fice.

The client had adopted two children from Vietnam and had visited the country several times.

Mathews told him about the diary, and he offered to have one of his friends translate some of its pages.

Mathews began posting pages from the diary on social media, looking for more information in the hopes of one day returning the book to the soldier or his surviving relatives.

As he got some of the pages translated, to Mathews' surprise, one of them held the soldier's name and address.

Mathews' social media posts seeking answers got him only so far. So he contacted a reporter in New Jersey. A story about his quest on northjersey.com caught the attention of a reporter in Vietnam.

Mathews already knew the idea of a lost soldier's diary held a special place in Vietnamese popular imagination.

In 2005, a wartime diary found by an American soldier had become a sensation when it was published in Vietnam. The diary, published as "Last Night I Dreamed of Peace," was a personal account of the war experiences of Dang Thuy Tram, a young doctor who cared for wounded Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldiers before she was killed in 1970. It sold nearly half a million copies within a year and a half.

Peter had even made inquiries about getting this diary published, but they never seemed to go anywhere. A newspaper story, though, has a way of changing things.

When the Vietnamese reporter noticed the story about Mathews in 2023, he noticed the soldier's home address was listed as in the province of Ha Tinh.

How the story began: He found an enemy soldier's diary after a Vietnam War battle. Now he seeks its owner

Vietnam, 2023

When a Vietnamese reporter forwarded him information about an American newspaper story, Tran Nhat Tan, the provincial chairman of Ha Tinh, set about his work quickly.

Tan scoured records and called family members to verify dates and information gleaned from the diary's pages.

The search for Tuat's identity was complicated by just two small letters in a middle name. The book carried the name "Cao Xuan Tuat." The file of soldiers from Ha Tinh listed an entry for "Cao Van Tuat."

Records showed 36 soldiers from Ky Anh District with the last name Cao who had died in the war, nine with the name Tuat, and just one with both.

The names that the soldier had written of his father, mother, sister and hometown address were identical to the ones that Huy My had given. Another soldier from Ky Xuan commune who joined the army at the same time as Cao Van Tuat recognized the handwriting from a photo.



Vietnam vet seeks owner of enemy soldier's diary

Megan Burrow
northjersey.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

After four days of intense fighting in one of the longest and bloodiest battles of the Vietnam War, Peter Mathews, an Army sergeant with the 1st Cavalry Division, swept through an area of South Vietnam's Central Highlands near Dak To with his unit as they prepared to leave.

As he rifled through a group of backpacks left by North Vietnamese soldiers at the bottom of a hill, he came upon a small booklet covered in plastic to protect it from the elements.

Its lined pages were decorated with beautifully intricate drawings of flowers and landscapes and what appeared to be poetry, songs and journal entries.

Mathews didn't know what the handwritten words meant, but it looked like the booklet was a personal diary, not a military document, so he stuck it in his pocket, where it remained for much of the next month until his tour ended in December 1967.

See DIARY, Page 11A

of-

(Continue on pg. 26)

With that information, Tan and other local officials confirmed the diary's author was Tuat and called his surviving relatives to give them the news.

This time Huy My knew that the rumors he had pushed out of his mind were true. The diary had belonged to his uncle.

His family would even be able to explain the confusion about the name. Tuat, at birth, had been given the common middle name Van. But like many people, he tired of his middle name and casually used another one. As an artist and poet, he chose Xuan, meaning "spring."

Local officials soon arrived in Cao Thang, a quiet village that sits somehow untouched by the industrial development that has stormed much of Vietnam. They were there to see Huy My's mother and aunt – Tuat's sisters.

With them, they brought pictures of the pages from within the diary, their brother's handwritten notes and drawings. When the two women saw the pages, they wept.

Peter, 2023

At home, Mathews held a diary that had been with him for 56 years. He understood it would not be his for long. Its next journey was already beginning.

Tan, the local official in Vietnam, had emailed the reporter in New Jersey and also asked Shannon Gramse, a writing professor at the University of Alaska Anchorage who had recently visited Ha Tinh as part of an educational exchange program, to help him connect with Mathews.

Within days, Mathews was flooded with requests from Vietnamese publications looking for interviews.

To accommodate the 12-hour time difference, he would give late-night interviews over Facebook Live. More than a dozen pieces were published in Vietnam, detailing the search for the soldier and his family's emotional response to the book's discovery.

Two weeks after the initial story broke, Mathews and his wife, Christine, were planning a trip to the country he had left 56 years ago as a young soldier.

Vietnam Airlines had offered to fly the couple from San Francisco to Vietnam. The journey would mean a long flight, then a shorter one, then a long drive, then a shorter one as local authorities would shuttle them closer. Their destination would be a village below the mountains, near the mouth of a small river, where blue and green houses cluster together by a sparkling sea.

Mathews would be going back to a country he had known only as a soldier, carrying the diary that belonged to the enemy, to give it to a family he had never met.

And he quietly made a promise.

He had shown the diary to people in the past, to friends and visitors who called it "the book from the enemy." But now that he knew who wrote it, and knew to whose family it belonged, he promised himself that when he arrived in Vietnam, they would be the first ones to see it.

Becoming reality: Vietnam vet traces war diary author after amazing sleuthwork. Now he'll visit the family

Vietnam, 2023

Tuat's family waited.

They had spent six decades not knowing anything about the man they lost. Now, they would see his handwriting, his drawings, perhaps even his last thoughts.

"It's like having him send us a message years after the war," Huy My said.

Huy My sat, pouring tea, in his family home.

(Continue from pg. 26)

His mother, Tuat's sister, was overjoyed at the news of the diary, he said, but because of difficulty walking after a stroke, she did not plan to attend the next day's ceremony.

Instead, she looked forward to meeting Mathews at her home. It would be the first time "she ever sees an American in flesh," Huy My said.

The family hopes information in the book will lead to the discovery of Tuat's grave. Some of the book's pages detail where the Tuat's unit was stationed, and names of some of the people who were there.

Some of those soldiers are still alive, Tan said, and officials plan to meet with them to learn more.

Huy My said he was grateful to the veteran for keeping the diary safe and in good condition through so many years.

"Without him the diary would hardly make its way back home. Not a single drop of hatred or grudge we ever hold against him," he said.

"We lost our beloved uncle, but I understand it was war, and they were on different sides of the battlefield and had to shoot each other for their life."

Outside, a thick layer of springtime haze hung over the village, obscuring the mountains beyond.

"It was war," he said. "I used to be a soldier, so I know. People died when others survived."

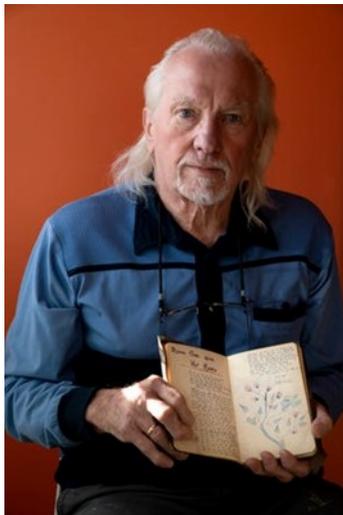
When the family sees the book and touches its pages, it will be like bringing a piece of his soul home, he said.

But that was not all. Now, even for a man with no photograph, there would be something to remember him by.

Though he had not yet touched his uncle's diary, he had seen photos of its pages, and had transcribed some into a notebook of his own.

"He wrote for his mom, as if he knew his fate," Huy My said. As if he did not expect she would see him again.

One passage had been written and dated the eve of the Lunar New Year. Families would have been gathering that night, but Tuat was writing in his diary without his family, far from home.



The nephew reached for his own copy and began to read aloud.

*I am away from you, missing you a thousand times
Even though there are mountains and rivers between us
I could feel you are waiting for me in the middle of this cold night*

...
*I pray for your better health
Don't yearn for my return.*

Peter, 2023

It had already been a long trip, and Mathews hadn't even reached his destination, when he emerged to face a wall of cameras.

There had been the 22-hour flight from the U.S. Then another two hours in the air to Vinh, a city near the coast, which was the closest airport to Tuat's home village. Next would come car rides and ceremonies and handshakes.

But as soon as Mathews and his wife landed, the questions began. A dozen reporters and camera operators at the airport. More reporters waiting in the hallway of their hotel. A circle of other television crews a few steps away.

How do you feel getting back to Vietnam after nearly 60 years? they asked. Are you happy that you are about to meet the family of the diary's owner? Do you still keep in touch with other veterans? What do they think of you returning to Vietnam to give back the diary? How did your wife help you with postwar PTSD? What is your wish for the future of the U.S. and Vietnam?

Mathews, sitting in a hotel armchair with a beer placed next to him, tried to answer them all without looking tired, and without making it a political event.

"I am not a politician," he answered the last one. "I am not here for that. I am here on a humanitarian mission between myself and Vietnam."

Then the reporters asked him to show the diary to the crowd and the cameras.

"No," he said. "I had promised myself before, that as this notebook now is finally in Vietnam for the first time after 56 years, I want the family to be the first one to take a look at it and to touch it."

Sunday morning arrived, and with it, crowds.

Since early morning, neighbors had come in and helped Huy My prepare a few pots of hot tea, dishes piled with peanuts and local peanut candies called Cu-do.

Outside, a crowd of neighbors gathered. Local authorities, traffic police and security amassed in the yard and spilled around the low concrete fence.

Mathews was being followed by a Vietnamese newspaper and at least two documentary crews. Other media outlets also followed his journey, some step by step.

When Mathews' caravan arrived, it included leaders and officials from all levels in Ha Tinh, a doctor, along with the throngs of media and security. Curious locals pressed at the edges, their phones held high.

But really, there were just a few people he was there to see.

Mathews and his wife filed into the three-room home. Huy My stood with the couple by the altar, amid a loud buzzing noise, trying to show them the pictures of the deceased family members, and the one who was missing a photo.

Now, his diary would be there, they said, replacing the hollow space on the altar.

The men then held hands, and together stepped out to the yard to take a family picture with the lost soldier's two sisters. Mathews sat next to the older sister, Cao Thi Dieu, who was in a wheelchair, trying to exchange words amid the frenzy.

Mathews and Huy My walked to the minibus parked at the gate waiting for them, still with cameras pointing at them from all angles, their hands squeezed tight together. The caravan zigzagged through rice paddies and acacia-covered hills to the communal hall for the ceremony to mark the diary's return.

The building sits next to a memorial that honors members of local armed forces. It honors those who were killed in wars it calls the Anti-French and Anti-American Wars, and the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War.

Here, dozens of stone plates list the names of soldiers who died, with their dates of birth, enlistment and death. Nearly all of them were in their late teens or early 20s when they died. One of the names is Cao Van Tuat.

Inside the communal hall, the stage was draped with red and green curtains and decorated with a white bust of Ho Chi Minh, and his quotes addressed to Communist Party members written in yellow on red boards. On top of the display was a board: “Glorious Vietnamese Communist Party.”

Mathews walked in, a shock of silver hair in a blue and white shirt. His pale eyes surveyed the crowd, which included Vietnamese veterans who fought for the northern army.

“It’s been a long time, 56 years since I’ve been in Vietnam,” he said. “And last night I had several interviews with some of the TV crews, and I was very tired and feeling sick all the time. But just thinking about today, the tiredness was gone.”

The group was helped to the stage: Mathews and his wife. Huy My and his wife. And Cao Thi Nong, 78, Tuat's younger sister.

Mathews shook Nong’s hand, and held it for a moment, before handing her the dark brown notebook.

She nodded a few times and tried to smile. Camera shutters burst all at once. Then, she was guided to a glass box prepared nearby. She placed the book on a red velvet tray inside.

The book had been with him since the war, Mathews said. When he would, on occasion, show it to people, they would call it “the book from the enemy,” he said, his voice breaking.

“But every time people said that, and I showed them the book, there’s this power of him that turns it around, and the word ‘enemy’ was not used anymore.

“The power of the book is that even the people who are skeptical and call it ‘the book from the enemy,’ every time they see the drawings and the writings, the word ‘enemy’ disappears.”

Reprinted with permission: USA TODAY Network 3/28/2023

Book Review: Daring Greatly - Brené Brown

How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead

In a world where “never enough” dominates and feeling afraid has become second nature, vulnerability is subversive. Uncomfortable. It’s even a little dangerous at times. And without question, putting ourselves out there means there’s a far greater risk of getting criticized or feeling hurt. But when we step back and examine our lives, we will find that nothing is as uncomfortable, dangerous, or hurtful as standing on the outside looking in and wondering what it would be like if we had the courage to step into the arena. Daring Greatly is a practice and a powerful vision for letting ourselves be seen.



Membership Affairs Committee

Ted Wilkinson, Chair
 VVA Region 2 Director-DE,NJ,NY,PA
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Last year New York State Council averaged eighteen (18) chapters per meeting and congratulations to the ten Chapters made all 4 NYSC meetings!

Chapter 20 Rochester	Chapter 49 Westchester	Chapter 77 Buffalo
Chapter 82 Nassau,	Chapter 85 Oneonta,	Chapter 126 Manhattan
Chapter 193 Warsaw	Chapter 421 Staten Islan	
Chapter 704 Auburn	Chapter 865 Jamestown	

Membership and delegates numbers

000 at-large	1023	11	268 Lockport	122	3
008 Albany	66	2	333 Rockland	212	5
011 Suffolk	522	11	377 Finger Lakes	96	2
020 Rochester	615	13	421 Staten Island	256	6
032 Queens	230	5	459 Dunkirk	40	1
049 Westchester	364	8	480 Owego	81	2
072 Brooklyn	177	4	541 Putnum/Dutchess	35	1
077 Buffalo	703	15	704 Auburn	44	1
079 Glen Falls	68	2	803 Elmira	251	5
082 Nassau	333	7	827 Herkimer	23	0
085 Oneonta	41	1	865 Jamestown	150	3
103 Syracuse	195	4	869 Dutchess/Columbia	31	1
126 Manhattan	110	3	944 Utica	169	4
193 Warsaw	155	4	978 Frewsburg	36	1
			TOTALS	6267	128

Monthly and Yearly Growth Percentages

New York State VVA							
Monthly Growth	Oct2022	Nov2022	% +/-	Monthly Growth	Oct 2022	Nov2022	% +/-
	6218	6231	0.20%		89,180	89,318	0.16%
Yearly Growth	Nov2021	Nov2022	% +/-	Yearly Growth	Nov2021	Nov2022	% +/-
	6267	6231	-0.57%		89,104	89,318	0.24%

(Continue on pg. 31)

(Continue from pg. 30)

Monthly and Yearly Growth Percentages

New York State AVVA				National AVVA			
Monthly Growth	Oct2022	Nov2022	% +/-	Monthly Growth	Oct2022	Nov2022	% +/-
	700	709	1.3%		10,184	10,205	0.21%
Yearly Growth	Nov2021	Nov2022	% +/-	Yearly Growth	Nov2021	Nov2022	% +/-
	699	709	1.4%		9,910	10205	2.98%

Top 24 VVA Chapters In Membership

Rank	Chapter	State	Members	Rank	Chapter	State	Members
1	172	MD	955	13	941	ND	442
2	862	PA	906	14	317	M0	428
3	203	TN	880	15	137	TX	401
4	1036	FL	874	16	299	IL	384
5	154	MI	800	17	628	WV	378
6	77	NY	695	18	165	WA	373
7	1067	AL	663	19	227	VA	364
8	20	NY	615	20	12	NJ	359
9	391	CA	608	21	49	NY	352
10	451	MD	536	22	295	IN	349
11	11	NY	520	23	47	CA	343
12	1054	SD	491	24	82	NY	331

POW/MIA/Veterans Initiative Committee Report

Grant T. Coates - Chair

As of April 11, 2023, the number of Americans missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War is 1,579. The countries are Vietnam - 1,239; Laos-285; Cambodia-48; Peoples Republic of China territorial waters-7. These numbers fluctuate due to investigations resulting in changed locations of loss.



On April 7, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced that U.S. Air Force 1st Lt Frederick M. Hall, age 25 of Waynesville, NC, and U.S. Air Force Major Ernest L. De Soto, age 37, of Manning AR, were accounted for March 23, 2023.

On April 12, 1969, De Soto was the pilot and Hall was the navigator on a F-4D Phantom II assigned to 390th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 336th Tactical Fighter Wing. De Soto's (Continue on pg. 32)

aircraft was one in a flight of three which departed Da Nang airbase for a bombing mission in an unstated area and were returning from a cancelled strike mission near Quang Nam Province, Vietnam, when the aircraft ascended into heavy cloud cover. The lead aircraft noticed Hall's plane was not in sight and immediately began an aerial search without success.

On March 9th, the FY 2024 President's Budget was submitted to Congress; it includes \$196M of Operations and Maintenance (O&M). Again approved by DoD, the \$46M increase from FY 2023 will fund additional research and analysis, and field and laboratory activities. Congress has already commenced its review of the budget request.

Field Operations. Vietnam War. Three RTs conducted excavations in Laos, with each recovering possible osseous material and possible life support equipment; two of the teams recovered ID media belonging to the unaccounted-for Service member. Field operations are currently underway in Laos and Vietnam. In Laos, there are one RT and one Investigation Team (IT) investigating 12 cases.

Two RTs and one IT (investigating 12 cases) are in Vietnam; DPAA's Vietnam counterpart, Vietnamese Office Seeking Missing Persons (VNOSMP) reported these recovery sites were in jeopardy of being lost to economic development.

Planned Field Operations. In April, an IT is scheduled for joint work with our Republic of Korea (ROK) two cases with leads uncovered by ROK. In May, two RTs, one IT, one partner IT with Scripps Institute of Oceanography, and one underwater RT with the U.S. Army's 7th Engineer Dive Detachment will operate in Vietnam. DET-3 in Laos, conducted a repatriation ceremony for three separate sets of potential osseous material recover.

Editor's Note: Grant T. Coats, Chair of the National POW/MIA & Veteran Initiative Committee, is in Vietnam seeking further information about our missing soldiers, sailors and Air Force personnel lost over North & South Vietnam.



Veterans Affairs Committee Report

Sam Hall- Chair

This year, 7,089 Legislative grants were approved in NYS for a total of 14 millions dollars that were awarded. VA backlog of 2019 is still going on but has been reduced to 1,291 and should be completed by September of this year. The Pact Act is working for the veterans and if you were denied before for hypertension – it is advised to reapply ASAP. The VA will not review your existing claims for reduction of compensation.

Government Affairs Committee Report

John Rowan - Chair

On Jan. 13, the 120th anniversary of Korean American Day, Rep. Mark Takano (D-Riverside), ranking member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, reintroduced the Korean American Vietnam Allies Long Overdue for Relief (VALOR) Act, (H.R. 234) bipartisan legislation that would create a pathway for Korean American Vietnam veterans to access VA healthcare.

On 4/28/2023, Today, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs passed the bipartisan *Korean American Vietnam Allies Long Overdue for Relief (VALOR) Act* (H.R. 366), sponsored by **Ranking Member Mark Takano**. Since 1958, through its Allied Beneficiary Program, the VA has been furnishing healthcare services to veterans of any era who served in the armed forces of European nations that were allies of the U.S. during World War I and World War II. The *Korean American VALOR Act* would expand the eligibility of these benefits to veterans who served in the armed forces of the Republic of Korea during the Vietnam War and have since become naturalized U.S. citizens.

This is similar to what the naturalized Philippine veterans from World War received.

Southern District Report**John Rowan****VVA Chapters #11, #32, #72, #82, #126, #421****VVA Chapter #72 Report Brooklyn**

Danny Friedman—President

VVA Chapter 72, Brooklyn is now meeting permanently at VFW Post 107 in Gerritsen Beach. Our mailing address remains the same.

We continue to support the hospitalized and homeless veterans through the Brooklyn VAMC and the SUS Homeless Veterans Shelter in Bushwick, Brooklyn. We provided a holiday party and gifts of clothing for the veterans secluded in ward 15 West of the Brooklyn VAMC. We also continue to provide them with pizza parties on various occasions. We provided holiday gifts of clothing to the veterans at the SUS Homeless Veterans Shelter.

We have provided financial support to the VVA Florida State Council, and the VAVS (now CDCE) baby shower for expectant veteran and active duty families. We also provided

Continue on pg. 34)

(Continue from pg. 33)

support for Brooklyn’s 156th Memorial Day Parade.

We had a float in NYC’s Veterans’ Day Parade, and Brooklyn’s Memorial Day Parade. We participated in the Heroes of the Hudson event which provided a canoeing experience for wheelchair veterans. We participated in Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day ceremonies in NYC and Fort Hamilton.

Our challenges going forward is getting our members out for meetings and events. Although our membership has remained more or less constant, turnout has dwindled.

VVA Chapter #82 Report

Rich Guevara EST Vice President

On May 3, 2023 members of Chapter 82 as a member of the Hicksville Veterans Organization met to plan for the town’s Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony.

On May 13, 2023 – Chapter 82 along with the Air Force Association will hold a Vietnam Medal Ceremony at the Armor Museum recognizing approximately 30 Veterans for their service in Vietnam. We will provide the color guard and will line up to welcome home our veterans.

On May 15 members of Chapter 82 along with other veterans groups will finalize the plan for Hicksville Memorial Day events.

On May 19, 2023 we will provide the color guard at the Town of Oyster Bay veteran’s recognition ceremony.

On May 28, 2023 Chapter 82 members will lay down flags at the graves of American Veterans at Plain Lawn Cemetery. We will also provide the color guard at Eisenhower Park for Nassau County’s Memorial Day Ceremony and the unveiling of the Afghanistan and Iraq Veterans Monument. We will then participate in the Long Island National Cemetery honoring our deceased veterans.

On May 29, 2023 we will provide the color guard and march in the Hicksville Parade honoring our deceased veterans.

VVA Chapter #421 Report

Sal Napolitano – State Council Delegate

Chapter 421 activities and events through May, 2023:

March 5th the annual Staten Island St. Patrick’s Day parade



(Continue on pg. 35)

(Continue from pg. 33)

15th annual Vietnam Veterans Day hosted by Senator Lanza



Chapter 421 Color Guard



March 29th Staten Island District Attorney McMahon and Staten Island Borough President Fossella hosted the Annual Vietnam Veterans Welcome Breakfast



VVA Chapter 421 President Gene DiGiacomo, accompanied by his wife, received award

(Continue from pg. 34)

Also in attendance was Marine Sgt. Michael Sulsona, who appeared in the movie, “Born on the Fourth of July”, and the documentary, “Hearts and Minds”. He also received a national award for his play, “Who We Are/How We Love” His bio can be found [Michael Sulsona - U.S. Marine Corp 1969-71 — USA WARRIOR STORIES](#)



April 19th Kiwanis club honored Vietnam Veterans with a dinner/dance



Judge
Michael Brennan

April 20th Dinner for the BIG APPLE HONOR FLIGHT

April 29th. Street Co/naming for Mr. Jimmy (Vincent, Jimmy, Anthony)Navarino

May 3rd Evening To Honor Dinner to support the Memorial Day Parade

May 9-13 annual food pantry drive

May 17 – Our Chapter’s Annual golf outing

May 20 Striped bass tournament

May 29th Monday Memorial Day Parade

VETERAN NEWS

Commentary: How to address the quiet crisis of veteran suicides

Efforts must account for the value veterans place on firearm ownership. And they must engage messengers whom veterans trust.

Derek Coy and Gabriela Khazanov The Times Union April 9, 2023

As a veteran and a clinician who works with veterans, we are heartbroken that 17 U.S. veterans die each day from suicide — and we worry that these numbers may soon rise nationwide and in New York.

Firearms are a frequent cause of death by suicide, and for veterans, the risks are even greater: Suicide rates among New York veterans are nearly twice as high as those of their civilian counterparts. Veterans are also more than twice as likely to own a firearm. It's a truly deadly combination: The proportion of New York veterans using firearms in suicide attempts has increased during each of the past seven years. The record-breaking rates of firearm ownership in New York state — 2021 saw 50,000 new gun owners in New York State, according to the FBI — call for renewed action and dedicated, tailored resources to address firearm safety and suicide prevention. To best help veterans, these efforts must account for the value veterans place on firearm ownership. And they must engage messengers whom veterans trust on firearm safety, such as fellow veterans and law enforcement.

One promising effort from New York state's Governor's Challenge project on preventing veterans' suicides is a new website, www.worriedaboutaveteran.org, that focuses on engaging and educating family and loved ones to encourage firearm safety among veterans at risk for suicide. It provides information about the connection between firearms and suicide, video clips demonstrating how to recognize signs of suicidal ideation and limit access to firearms during periods of risk, and links to local resources providing firearm storage options and information on state firearm transfer laws.

The same team is working to develop complementary workshops that will be delivered by county-level suicide prevention coalitions in partnership with local firearm experts.

There are additional actions we can take now to address veteran firearm suicide. They include training clinicians to talk to vet patients about firearms and other means of suicide; providing free firearm locking devices; raising awareness of suicide risk and strategies for prevention in gun shops, ranges and police armories; and allowing for exceptions to firearm transfer laws in cases of suicide risk.

It will take all of us working together — veterans, family members, clinicians, legislators, gun shop owners and trainers, and community members — to curb veteran suicide and see sustained improvements. But we must address this quiet crisis.

Derek Coy is a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps and the veterans' health senior program officer at the New York Health Foundation. Gabriela Khazanov is a research psychologist at the Corporal Michael J Crescenz VA Medical Center in Philadelphia.

A Historic Female Unit Will Be Deactivated as the Marine Corps Continues Integrating the Force

<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2023/05/03/historic-female-unit-will-be-deactivated-marine-corps-continues-integrating-force.html>

The [Marine Corps](#) has announced that it is deactivating a historic training battalion at [Parris Island](#) as a sign that it is making serious progress toward integrating men and women into a single training pipeline at its iconic training base.

In a press release issued Wednesday, the Corps announced that it will deactivate the 4th Recruit Training Battalion -- a unit that has trained female Marines since 1986 -- in a ceremony on June 15, 2023.

"Today, successful recruit training standardization makes an all-female training battalion unnecessary, as all recruits have been training in gender-integrated companies since 2022," the service explained in its statement.

(Continue from pg. 36)

Army Expects to Miss Its Recruiting Goal Again This Year

https://www.military.com/daily-news/2023/05/02/we-are-going-fall-short-army-will-miss-its-recruiting-goal-year.html?ESRC=eb_230503.nl

The *Army* does not expect to hit its ambitious recruiting goal of 65,000 new soldiers this year as the pool of young Americans eligible to serve continues to shrink.

"We are not going to make that goal," Army Secretary Christine Wormuth told lawmakers at a congressional hearing Tuesday.

Failure of Leaders to Respond to Reports of Sexual Harassment at the VA Black Hills Health Care System in Fort Meade and Hot Springs, South Dakota

<https://www.va.gov/oig/publications/report-summary.asp?id=5271>

VVA supports Veterans' Rights/Jack McManus-President

When I joined VVA more than 30 years ago, I found respect and appreciation; programs to help veterans adjust to civilian life; support and resources for veterans' physical and mental health; and a renewed sense of camaraderie.

Perhaps more than anything, VVA provided a platform to advocate for veterans' rights. I'm proud to share our 2023 Legislative Priorities and hope America's veterans can count on your support.

It's our duty as proud Americans to make sure that the men and women our nation sends off to war are treated with respect and dignity.

In the spirit of that obligation, VVA extends our services and resources to each new generation of America's veterans, who face the same terrible challenges that Vietnam veterans did so many decades ago.

In 2022, our work on Capitol Hill resulted in several legislative victories for America's veterans. One of the most important was the passing of The PACT Act, which expands VA health care and benefits for veterans exposed to toxic substances.

In the spirit of that obligation, VVA extends our services and resources to each new generation of America's veterans, who face the same terrible challenges that Vietnam veterans did so many decades ago.

In 2022, our work on Capitol Hill resulted in several legislative victories for America's veterans. One of the most important was the passing of The PACT Act, which expands VA health care and benefits for veterans exposed to toxic substances.

Planning for Aging Veterans Act

Will address the long-term care of veterans, including the implementation of policies for the administration of state homes.

Women Veterans TRUST Act

Will require the VA to conduct a nationwide analysis of the need for specific programs that treat and rehabilitate women veterans with drug and alcohol dependency.

The Major Richard Star Act

Will allow veterans with a combat-related disability and fewer than 20 years of creditable service to receive retirement pay, without reduction, concurrent with disability compensation.



Colonel Kim Campbell. AC

https://youtu.be/t09qPMKR1_w

10 Ways To Take Care Of Yourself When You're Grieving

There is no one way to feel better, but there are little things you can do every day to help you move through grief. By Jillian Wilson
https://www.huffpost.com/entry/self-care-tips-grief_1_640f7011e4b0cfde25c08f38

One of the toughest — and often most traumatic — experiences in life is grief, a part of our journey that impacts everyone and doesn't get any easier the more times you go through it.

Understand that there is no right or wrong way to grieve.

Make sure your basic needs are met.

Allow yourself to put your grief aside.

Be careful of what you say yes to.

Find ways to express your emotions, like journaling.

Try mindfulness/Meditation technique

Learn how to narrate the story of your loved one's death.

Reach out to loved ones when you need support.

If you're really struggling, seek help.

And know that grief is ongoing.

This Is What Grief Physically Feels Like

Mourning a loved one isn't just emotionally painful.

By Caroline Bologna

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/what-grief-physically-feels-like_1_63ebce65e4b0808b91c30816

When thinking of grief, it's common to picture people crying and feeling sadness or despair. But emotions aren't the full extent of how grief manifests. For many, there are physical, bodily symptoms as well.

Headaches and mental fog are common.

You may experience sensory changes.

Digestive issues can crop up, too.

There are often body aches.

You may feel generally run-down.

Sleep tends to be affected.

Heart issues may arise.

And your mental health might be impacted.

Grief can be compounded by other feelings and experiences.

Here's how to cope with physical feelings of grief.

"Grieving is hard," Reidenberg said. "Many of us want to avoid it and just hope it will go away quickly or easily. My best advice to anyone struggling with grief and loss is to allow it to be part of your life while you are in it.

Don't push it away.

Don't try and deny that it is real.

Don't minimize how much it hurts, and definitely don't set any time frames on how long you might feel one way or another."

(Continue on pg. 39)

Texas Army base Fort Hood is renamed for Hispanic 4-star general Richard Cavazos

By Joe Hernandez

<https://www.npr.org/2023/05/09/1174967595/fort-hood-texas-renamed-richard-cavazos-hispanic-general>

Fort Hood, one of the U.S military largest bases, located about 70 miles north of Austin, Texas, was re-designated on Tuesday as Fort Cavazos in honor of the late Gen. Richard Edward Cavazos, a Texas native who served in the Korean and Vietnam wars.

"General Cavazos' combat proven leadership, his moral character and his loyalty to his Soldiers and their families made him the fearless yet respected and influential leader that he was during the time he served, and beyond," said Lt. Gen. Sean Bernabe, III Armored Corps Commanding General.

Age is Just a Number!

[https://mail.aol.com/webmail-std/en-us/suite#:~:text=Age%20is%20just%20a%20number.mp4%20\(11.4%20MB\)](https://mail.aol.com/webmail-std/en-us/suite#:~:text=Age%20is%20just%20a%20number.mp4%20(11.4%20MB))

Mark Woods, Jr., Director of Veteran Peer Services: Joseph P. Dwyer Peer Support Program, is on the air! Mark hosts a radio show on WRRCR 1700 AM. The show: *Thank You For Your Service*, will air once a month on the 4th Monday at 9:30 a.m.

Veterans can call in and ask questions about Veterans issues. The call-in number is: 845-429-1700. Mark will discuss Veteran issues and events in and around Rockland County.

Please tune in to the show -- 4th Monday of each month -- 9:30 a.m. on WRRCR 1700 AM radio. You can also hear the show live on WRRCR's website: <https://www.wrcr.com>.

Book Review: Please check out Vietnam veteran Roy Tschudy's book, "Endless." Roy is a past President of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter #333, and writes about a variety of experiences that our Vietnam vets encountered.

As with all good books, be prepared to experience a lot of emotions with this: you will be intrigued, angry, surprised, maybe shed a tear or two, and laugh out loud at some of the shenanigans in this enjoyable tale of fact, fiction and myth. All proceeds of "Endless" go to help veterans. The book is available in paperback or Kindle edition from Amazon:

https://www.amazon.com/Endless-Roy-Tschudy/dp/1524668516/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Roy+Tschudy+Endless&qid=1638898608&sr=8-1#customerReviews

"Endless" is the second book authored by Roy Tschudy. His first book also had great reviews.

"Up Close and Personal" is available through Amazon as well.

New Data Snapshot

"Veteran Suicide in New York State (2011–2020)"

New York State is home to more than 600,000 military veterans. Although New York has one of the lowest veteran suicide rates in the nation, suicide remains a persistent challenge. Recent data from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs show that the rate has barely budged over the last 10 years despite numerous federal, state, and local investments in prevention efforts.

https://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001q98iDK9wfi0RfnUBV-5R7hqmu4HKDFiKgkMriMbdSWfChbZ82ttbVxy7I-Ob33kMngJpIQKzXIktprsrk9h10JXUes82YZ9ZR3c517s_KMPNAhGBmzKIKLdf7GVJiNT4wtNj4laCnJNAh16crC0CGTaQvm20awzefcwj5nXI9opMj50tbrO2GPdKWGEsMIugNkwzBiB_isMlpvgWe7rOekUO8pmp1l4rVtJ-MedQZwaHgrKQ17MnFcVuHIUsixidKdDBSSUxo0COvvXSP_e2tv0wJFrOL3esnT1mzl7ZyWjo6vu7xMkXqiTxzrJxgVrWX3O-xfSYWp7qomk_vHk6-xSQ27MvFw5FI0NeNmesKrGM9GJ-Yb0oPKFa9BmWdugazBbdj79VhW07q0wTP_1npVYFZufXQTG9&c=WVGrPvv3ZvUS9Pzih2gZtv_IF-4zDZBmkY9HKOmSfaD-smHZHn4m3g==&ch=psZN49raD9KsRn2IOuNLRJ3QeyURuNMRE9rUxsaOkMnPfy9yumLIVA==

Last Minute NEWS

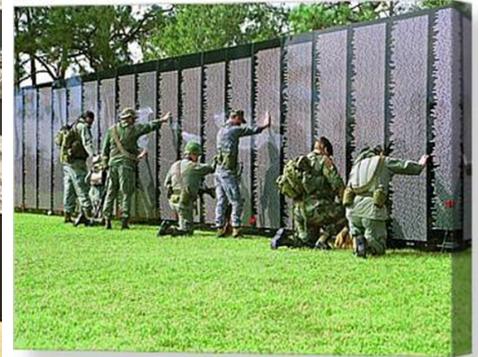
Below is a press release that was created for our Spring 2023 VVA-333 school Patriotism awards.

This is part of our teaching program where we go into middle & high schools to teach the students about the Vietnam Era from the beginning, middle & end. We teach a balanced course and offer students (13 year old students) to submit their interpretation of what they got out of the program through different mediums as stated below. The Wall was hand painted by this student and the names listed are real. This is a true "wall hanger" and it shows the quality of what the students have learned from our two weeks in their school.

Howard Goldin

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Felix Festa Middle School Celebrates Seven Student Winners of the American Patriotism Contest, Sponsored by

**VVA Chapter 333**

West Nyack, New York - May 2023 - Felix Festa Middle School is proud to announce that seven students have been honored as winners of the American Patriotism contest for 2023. The contest, sponsored by Vietnam Chapter 333, received over 100 submissions and gave students the opportunity to research and create visual, audio, or physical representations of American Patriotism and the Vietnam War, including letters and poems. We are grateful to Vietnam Chapter 333 for their generous sponsorship of the American Patriotism contest and their long-standing partnership with Felix Festa Middle School. The contest allows our students to reflect on the significance of the Vietnam War and the role of American patriotism in the conflict. The following students were selected as winners for their outstanding contributions:

- Laura Bramblik, a student of Mrs. Buttigieg, for her outstanding wall hanging quality painting of the Vietnam Wall.
- Oliver Cirlin, a student of Mrs. Morris, for his War Box & Pop up War Book with poems.
- Cooper Polakoff, a student of Mrs. Morris, for his Art & Poem "Then & Now."
- Julian Heaney and Tommy Mavrommatis, students of Mrs. Morris, for their joint project, The NAM helmet, along with a letter of explanation.
- Isabella Higgins, Lauryn Hylton, and Lilly Tang, students of Mrs. Morris, for their heartfelt letters.

On June 1st, at 7:30 pm, Vietnam Chapter 333 will present each of the winners with a certificate of appreciation and a generous award during a ceremony at their meeting. We would like to express our gratitude to all students, parents, and teachers who supported the contest. Felix Festa Middle School is honored to have had the opportunity to participate in the American Patriotism contest and we are proud of our students for their exceptional creativity and research skills. We look forward to continuing our partnership with Vietnam Chapter 333 and providing our students with similar opportunities in the years to come.

VVA Chapter #82 – Nassau County

Rich Guevera

Three VVA Chapter 82 members who spoke at the students at the Uniondale Middle School.

Too bad we got this photo too late for the Interchange. It would have been a great picture for the Interchange.

Good morning,

Thank you all again for joining us last week. It was incredibly powerful for all of the students and staff involved. We appreciate your partnership and look forward to working again in the future. Please see some pictures of the day below:

David Hollander
Director of Social Studies
Uniondale Union Free School District



Significance of Memorial Day 2023

Memorial Day 2023 formally known as Decoration Day, is a federal holiday observed yearly on the last Monday of May. Memorial Day 2023 is a day that commemorates all men and women who have died while serving in the military for the United States of America.

History of Memorial Day

The history of Memorial Day 2023 dates back to the American Civil War. It started as an event to honour soldiers who had died during the war. It is said to be inspired by the way people in the Southern states honoured the dead. The original national celebration of Decoration Day took place on 30 May 1868. There was over twenty four cities and towns across the United States that claim to be the birthplace of Memorial Day. Waterloo (New York) was officially declared the birthplace of Memorial Day by President Lyndon Johnson in May 1966. In the late 19th century, the holiday (previously known as Decoration Day) became known as Memorial Day and was expanded to include the deceased veterans of all the wars fought by American forces. Originally, the holiday used to be celebrated on May 30, regardless of the day of the week that it fell on. In 1968, the Uniform Holidays Bill was passed and as a result the day changed.

Traditions of Memorial Day

Traditionally Memorial Day is viewed as a time of honour and remembrance. Throughout the United States it is common to visit cemeteries, particularly military ones, and decorate graves of the deceased with flowers, small flags and wreathes. Other common traditions of Memorial Day 2023 that are still practiced today include the raising the U.S. flag quickly to the tops of flagpoles, slowly lowered to half-mast, and then it is raised again to full height at noon. The lowering of the flag at half-mast is meant to honour the fallen soldiers who have died for their country over the years. While re-raising the flag is meant to symbolize the resolve of the living to carry on the fight for freedom so that the nation's heroes will not have died in vain. On the United States Capitol Building's West Lawn, a Memorial Day concert is held annually and is broadcasted live around the country. Additionally, there are thousands of Memorial Day 2023 parades all across the country in cities small and large. Many will wear or put on a display of red poppies on this day as a symbol of fallen soldiers. This tradition grew out of the famous poem by Canadian John McCrae known as 'In Flanders Fields', where Moina Michael conceived an idea to wear red poppies on Memorial day in honour of those who died serving the nation during war.



REMEMBER THOSE WHO MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE FOR OUR LIBERTY

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