



PERIMETER REPORT

Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard, Inc.

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Together Then – Together Again

Volume 30—Issue 3

March 2010

The Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard, Inc., established in 1986 in Brevard County, Florida is a non-profit, non-partisan organization of veterans, their families and supporters dedicated to perpetuate the spirit of patriotism, service and remembrance to and for those who have served our nation honorably, risking life and status to insure its principles endure.

Legacy

Next month the VVB hosts its 23rd Reunion. Over the years our reunion has grown to become the premier event in the country. The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall stands separately from the entertainment and vendor areas and that sacred site now honors those from all conflicts. Here is where the old vets welcome the younger ones. It is where veterans reunite not only with those they served *with*, but with veterans who are now serving *for* them.

. Many vets attend every year and for others, it will be their first. Last year *PR* reported two amazing personal reunion



stories. One of them unfolded just an hour or so before I got there to take notes. Ted Whitlock called me as the two AF Security cops met for the first time in 40 years. I stumbled on the second story just as the reunion was ending. There must have been more I missed. If you've reunited with someone you served with 4, 24 or 44 years ago, I'd like to report it. That is the primary reason we host this event. It is also a place to make new acquaintances. Any story you think would interest our readers is something I'd like to hear. Regardless of our different paths, we all have service to our Constitution in common; including our families. There is no such thing as an anonymous legacy. Contact me at the reunion by calling 321 693 1201. That's my job.

Dick Lancaster, Editor,
Perimeter Report

Just What I Asked For—As I was preparing this issue for the web, I got a call from Mike Tartar. Mike was a door gunner for 1st CAV in 1967. He also happened to be one part of the two reunion stories mentioned above. I stumbled on to John Gailfoil at the end of last year's reunion and he told me about meeting Mike. They hadn't seen each other in 40 years. John was Mike's crew chief.

I never got to meet Mike because he was off to Ohio shortly after. His side of the story was done by phone. We kept in touch by e-mail [through his family] and he became heavily involved in veterans events and memorials back home.

Mike said, "I've met so many of the guys I served with in the last year since I was at the reunion. John [Gailfoil] put me in touch with a lot of them and they convinced me to get a computer. The 1st CAV had a reunion in Bronson [Missouri] last November and I met quite a few more.

"I found out my old friend Bill Flora lived just twenty minutes from me across the river in Kentucky. We go together like peas and carrots. You wouldn't believe how many guys I found from your reunion. I've about met them all. I tell everybody back home. I even put up one of your posters."

Mike went down a list of names like a morning muster. Then he choked up a little and said, "You know, Dick. If it wasn't for you guys [hosting the reunion], I'd be lost forever. I really would. Meeting all those guys again was just something else."

For those of you who work so hard to put this reunion together, this is what your efforts bring about. And there have to be many more Mike Tartar stories we're not aware of.

I told him that I had yet to meet anyone I served with, stateside or overseas. He said, "You will. And it'll happen when you least expect it."

Mike and his wife Gerry are already in the Melbourne area waiting for the reunion. Tarter left me with some advice for the younger vets attending the reunion now in increasing numbers. "Don't wait forty years to get in touch." We all know a special bond exists between those who served together. It's better to grow old together lest you find yourself walking past your old friend. As Mike put it last year, "I walked right by John [Gailfoil] and didn't recognize him. We were all so skinny back then."

Passings

Frederick Weyland, former Army Chief of Staff and the last commander of U.S. operations in Vietnam passed away last month at the age of 93.

Alexander Haig, former Secretary of State in the Regan Administration, Nixon's Chief of Staff during the Watergate scandal and Commander of NATO forces in Europe, died in Baltimore at the age of 85.

Jeanne M. Holm, the first female to attain the rank of Major General (Air Force, 1973) died at the age of 88 in Portland, OR.

President's Message

As the time for our 23rd Annual Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion approaches I have given much thought to what that event means to us. I know that if I asked that question of ten different veterans I would get ten different versions regarding why they attend the reunion and what it must mean to them. I know, we all come to visit with old friends, some that we haven't seen since last year; then there are those who come for a good time, you know, the bands, the beer, and the comradeship they experience even with those they don't know personally; and some come just to renew their hearts and souls for the coming year; and the list of reasons goes on. But there is a common thread that runs deep within this group of veterans that gathers each year in Wickham Park. We all come to pay our respects to our fallen brothers and sisters and to those who are unaccounted for.



As well as the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard I also belong to several other veterans' organizations. I have recently received my copy of the Veterans of Foreign Wars magazine. In that March, 2010 issue, they discuss the efforts that VFW National is making to work with veterans organizations in both Russia and China to encourage those governments to open their archives in an effort to resolve MIA issues from the Korean Conflict, the Cold War, and Vietnam. It appears that this effort may produce results where government-to-government contact has been ineffective. Let us hope so. As I read this article, I thought about how we are part of a long line of soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and others who have been willing to "risk it all" since the birth of our great nation to be sure this country remains the "greatest land on earth." There has never been a shortage of patriots in this country, and our current involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan proves that. We owe a debt of honor to those who came before us and to those who are coming after us. Having said that, I for one, will stop during this reunion event and pay my respects to all of those who have fallen in the defense of this country and to all of those whose resting places are "known but to God". It is the least I can do.

-- Floyd Merckle, VVB President

Chaplain's Message

Making a Difference--Dealing with imperfections in ourselves and others might not be easy. But love helps us to move on – smoothly. It pays to be gentle with ourselves and others, when there is an unintentional slip-up. We can moan and groan, complaining

about what's wrong; or we can do what counts to make things right. The philosopher Sophocles who lived centuries ago said in 406 BC, "One word frees us of all the weight and pain of life: That word is love."

Sacred Scripture beautifully states: Love is patient, love is kind. It seeks the truth and does not delight in evil." (Corinthians 1:13). Love can lead us to care about our country and one another, motivating us to work together in finding out what is broken; then doing what needs to be done to fix it.

To revive the greatness of the American spirit, we need to restore dignity and respect in the way we treat one another. Compassion (love in action) can overcome hatred and bigotry. Love (acceptance) can unite us, inspiring and motivating us to work together. Let us strive to live by the words we say when pledging allegiance to be "one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. "

We shall never be perfect. But surely we can do better in this new decade of the third millennium to make life here on earth more fulfilling. Your smile, your kind words, your noble deeds of self-sacrificing love CAN make a difference.

-- Chaplain Jim Peterman

POW/MIA



Bill Sauerwine is now the VVB's POW/MIA Chairman. VVB President Floyd Merckle mentioned a new approach that has U.S. veterans seeking help from veterans in China and the former Soviet Union, bypassing the government agencies. This is a novel idea and it remains to be seen how this will pan out. But time is running out for any live POWs still in captivity. HR111, the House Bill to set up another POW Committee has almost 250 sponsors. The bill was presented in January, 2008. With the health care obsession gobbling up almost all of Congress's energy the number of sponsors means little unless it *moves*. Bill Sauerwine's perspectives will be most welcome. He knows his history.

In House

Sickness and Distress—The VVB wishes the following members and their families a speedy recovery. For privacy reasons, details will only be disclosed with permission. If contact information appears, you may inquire.

Deer Feher, John Steer, Sr., John John Steer, John Barrett, Floyd Merckle, Paul Whitmore and Rod Smith

VVB Awards Ceremony will be held at the Veterans Memorial Center on Merritt Island on March 21 from 1 to 4 PM. All VVB members may attend this event. New members should know that this event honors and recognizes those in the community that support our efforts and assist us in continuing service to our veterans. Invitations were sent to those who are to receive awards. If you didn't receive an invitation but are a current member your attendance is welcomed. Please contact Ken Baker (back page) so we have an idea of how many are to attend.

Reunion/Wall Report-- Big news. The Reunion is April 18 - 25, 2010 and we need help. April 17th, a Saturday is a work day and of course the 18th we set the Memorial Wall up. That whole week we will be busy and need help doing a bunch of stuff. If you have health problems that prevent you from doing certain things, don't worry, we'll find something you can do.

From set up to take down and everything in between we can find something for you to do. You can help at the Wall or the quartermaster tent; work gates or help at the L Z. I promise if you show up I'll find something for you to do. Remember, this Reunion is put on by the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard. That means all of us, so come on out and help. By helping you might meet some new people and even get a friend out of it.

As I travel with the Wall, no matter where we are people have heard about Melbourne and have either been to it or they want to come to it. And you see our Reunion shirts all over this great land. We just finished the refurb on the Wall and it looks great, I have a few other things to do and we will be ready to show at the Reunion. We have a busy year ahead of us. We make 2 trips to Wisconsin, 2 to Mississippi, [and trips to] Nebraska, Ohio, West Virginia, Georgia, Texas, and North Carolina. To get exact locations and other info go to the website at www.TravelingWall.us. And remember, if you know a group that might want The Traveling Memorial Wall have them contact me. Also if you're on the road stop by and say HI.

So with that I'll close by saying see you at Wickham Park.

--Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall Manager, Greg Welsh

Congressman Possey's veterans support staff were present at our February meeting making it known that they were poised to assist in matters military. I put some questions to Chris Hill about some loose ends in a piece we presented last year regarding the Homeland Security Report that included veterans as *the most dangerous domestic terrorist threat*. I wanted to know what happened to that Congressional probe into the source that determined the danger of veterans and what happened to the actual *most dangerous domestic terrorist*, Ali Mohamed.

Chris told me that Rep. Peter King's effort to get a congressional probe went nowhere. But for your information, the source was the Southern Poverty Law Center. The SPLCs Mark Potok was the specific source as we reported last year. He also appeared recently on O'Reilly's show warning about another group comprised of military veterans, The Oath Keepers, a year old group which restricts membership to veterans, law enforcement and firefighters. I haven't delved into this group to deeply yet but Potok's problem with them is that they pledge not to obey unconstitutional orders.

As for the U.S. Army spy Ali Mohamed, Chris Hill sent me some extensive research. Mohamed who is responsible for al Qaeda's intelligence gains which resulted in American deaths throughout the 90s all the way up to 9/11 was convicted in 1998 but disappeared before his sentencing. Chris is confident he is in American custody and thinks he is cooperating with authorities but his status is unknown, even to a U.S. Congressman's office. From my own research into the intelligence failures under the Clinton Administration, it's just as likely Mohamed is in seclusion to prevent him from exposing those failures. Farfetched? How many live POWs do you think we left behind in Southeast Asia?

Chris also sent in a notice that there would be an Easter package drive to get some goodies over to the 920th Rescue Wing based at PAFB now overseas. There is to be a work party at the Veterans Memorial Center on Merritt Island on the 19th, the 22nd and 23rd of March. For further information on how you can help call 321 373 7046 and ask about the **AVET Project**.

The VMC is also the collection point for overseas packages we have been encouraging members to promote to their community organizations and churches. It was **Zach Brady's** request to his mother Tess, who really brought it home to me how important those packages are. Zach is actually in town these days visiting Tess and I regret missing his welcome home on March 6th.

We still recommend this short blurb to insert into church and community bulletins:

Did you know that the Pentagon does not meet every need of our troops fighting to protect our freedom? The Brevard Veterans Council collects and distributes needed items overseas. You can help by contacting Emma Meisner at 321 453 1776.

Walter 'Jack' Jackson, like other VVB members is active in other veterans groups and associations. In January, the Florida Chapter of the Long Range Detection Alumni Association at PAFB honored Jack as the Alumni's Member of the Year for 2009. The



Association is for members who served or are currently serving in the Air Forces' surveillance units established in 1947.

In the December issue of the Post-Monitor, the Association's newsletter a brief bio includes his continued service after retiring from the Air Force as a Veterans Employment Representative with the State of Florida for 22 years. He's also worked as a County Service Officer and brought Stand Down for homeless vets to Brevard. Jack's very active in the VVB serving on our Color Guard and both the Reunion and Wall Committees. Thanks, Jack for your service not only to our country but to those who also serve it.

*--Information Submitted by Ted Whitlock
Photo courtesy of the Post-Monitor Newsletter*

*Jack, (with T-shirt) with Assn. President
Lloyd French.*

General Membership Meeting High Points- Below is a review of the March 8 meeting not already covered:

Veterans Transitional Facility Director Paul Whitmore reports that we currently house 17 residents, 15 vets and 2 non-veterans. It is important to note that we receive assistance from various agencies through grants to run the program but non-veteran family members are solely supported by the VVB. How can you break up a distressed family? We don't; so fundraising efforts can never be lax. However, the community support we've received has been generous. Whitmore stressed that in his report.

Seven of our residents are looking for work as well as 8 others with various disabilities. If you can help, let us know. Last month we admitted 5 and discharged four. We're still in need of microwaves, convertible couches and living room chairs.

After the Reunion, we'll be planning a celebration of the facility's 20th anniversary.

VP Don Wassmer reported that we were accepted as an official member of the Florida Veterans Council.

Honor Flight provides an opportunity for WWII vets to visit the WWII Memorial in Washington, DC. Currently there are 90 chapters throughout the country and there is a move to bring a chapter to Brevard. Ken Baker has been looking into the possibility of the VVB lending its assistance to Terri White to get a chapter going here in Brevard. Due to the overload required to host the reunion we had to table that discussion until May.

Brevard News/Events

Brevard Stand Down is an event that brings homeless veterans and their families to the Cocoa Armory to determine and satisfy some basic needs. This is a multi-agency effort and the VVB has been a participant since its inception. This years' event will take place on March 20 from 8AM to 2PM. To find out what you can do call Bill Vagianos (back page).

The American Legion Riders, Post 1 will be hosting a Poker Run to raise funds for the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall on March 28. That's a Sunday and it starts with breakfast at 8AM at the Post location, 1281 N Hwy 1, T-ville. A rider's hand is \$15.00, passenger \$10. All others \$5. That includes the Bar-B-Que. For further info call 321 269 9959.

Poker Run Moved Up- Those who received the March issue in print should note that the Wild Dogs Poker Run set on the calendar for April 11 will not take place. Instead, it will be held on Saturday, April 17th, the day before the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall is escorted from BCC's Cocoa Campus to Wickham Park in Melbourne. This even is to support the Wall's maintenance. As you might guess, with all the loading and unloading of this monument it tends to get a little wear and tear. Greg and Mo Welsh keep our Wall in top condition for all the traveling it does. However, at some point in the next few years it's going to need a major overhaul. It doesn't hurt to start early to raise the funds to do that.

The *Support the Wall Poker Run* will start at the Hog Wild Bar-B-Q at 1547 Maple Ave. in Melbourne (between Eau Gallie and Aurora, 2 blocks west of US 1; behind Southern V-Twin). Doc Holiday will be performing. For more information on the event call Pete @ 321 269 6605.

New VA Facility in Florida-- A ground breaking ceremony was held recently to announce a Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) grant award and start of construction of Operation Home Front, a new **28-bed, women-only supportive housing facility** in Cocoa, Fla. for homeless female Veterans who have substance use and mental health disorders and their children. Operation Home Front will be the only female Veteran supportive housing in Central Florida that will provide a comprehensive array of integrated services including mental health, substance abuse, medical, housing, educational/vocational, financial, legal, spiritual, and post-traumatic stress disorder services on site.

--*Military.com, 2/22/10*

Veterans News/Events

We suggest you follow-up any information that applies to you through the Brevard County Veteran Services Team (see back page).

Vets on Social Security May Get Boost— If you served on active duty from 1957 through 2001 **you may qualify** for an additional \$1,200 per year in earnings that would be factored into your benefits. Called Special Military Service Credits the SSA has a convoluted explanation of these credits, who qualifies and who doesn't on its website, <http://www.ssa.gov/retire2/military.htm>. For instance, they separate service from 1957 through 1977 which credits \$300 per quarter up to \$1,200 annually (there are only 4 quarters annually so the "up to" statement also implies 'down to' and that could be nothing. But if you get 'up to' you get \$1,200); and for service from 1978 through 2001 they credit \$100 for every \$300 earned up to \$1,200 annually. You would have to earn less than \$300 per month not to reach the \$1,200 max figure. That was quite possible for a Vietnam Era E-1 through E-4 but not since the draft ended in 1973 (an E-1 made \$288 in 1972 and continued through 1973 when Nixon froze promotions). So if you were a post 1978 vet making less than \$300 per month it was because you were AWOL.

Vets who served from 1957 through 1967 will have their credits added automatically. Vets who served from 1968 through 2001 were already credited. So what would be the difference to the veteran? If you qualify, and you don't if you served less than 24 months after September 8, 1980, it might be prudent to go down to the Social Security Office with DD-214 in hand just to make sure.

From what we can tell, the extra \$1,200 annually is not the dollar amount in extra SS bennies, but is credited to your earnings to calculate the benefits. For those of you serving after 2001, you get nothing. Maybe they figure your chow was better. Most likely, they don't expect any Social Security to exist by the time you're eligible. We hope that was helpful.

Chemical casualties seem to be getting the attention of VA Secretary Eric Shinseki. Form **Agent Orange** to the **Gulf War Syndrome** the back log on these claims may be getting the priorities they deserve. There have been a number of illnesses that have been reclassified as presumptive of military service. That's a good step. But regardless of how sincere Shinseki is, he still has to work with what he's got.

Agent Orange exposure has been found to cause or contribute to three more diseases which a pending rule will make presumptive. Any veteran that set foot in Vietnam or its territorial waters could be eligible for disability compensation if they suffer from Parkinson's disease, B cell leukemia or coronary artery disease. Up to 185,000 veterans could qualify for disability at a cost estimated to be \$50 billion annually.

In addition, the VA may take letters from physicians supporting a veteran's claim to avoid backlogs in processing.

There's more. Thousands of widows may also be eligible for retroactive benefits. This will be a big budget biter. The rule is expected to take affect sometime this year.

Right now the backlog on claims averages five months. These new claims, particularly from reopening the Gulf War files are expected to jam the system and Shinseki estimates it will take two years or more just to get it back to the five month average wait.

Money may be another obstacle. Although the Obama Administration raised the VA budget by 25%, it also raised every other budget. Those that think we're passing on the debt to our grandchildren may want to consider if indeed we're not the grandchildren our grandparents were talking about.

Shinseki is out there among the veteran listening, a rare phenomenon these days. What priorities he sets with his budget will tell a lot about his leadership. So far, Shinseki has acted more like a veteran and less like a DC politician.

Before he can start Shinseki may have to rid the VA of Director of National Programs and Special Events, Diane Hartman. She allegedly took taxpayer funded golf and sailing trips and finagled the books to give herself hundreds of hours of leave. That's called grand theft in the civilian world. Hartman's alleged theft came out of the VA budget—the same budget that funds Gulf War Syndrome and Agent Orange treatments. What will happen to her is anyone's guess but if she's transferred to another federal agency that will tell a lot about the future of the VA.

Two NC State Senators have finally persuaded the Navy to study the effects of benzene **water contamination on Camp Lejeune** Marines. If you served at Camp Lejeune in the past two to four *decades* you need to stay informed. The contaminated wells were closed twenty years ago but the danger of benzene wasn't known until recently.

The Pentagon has settled a class action lawsuit that could raise disability ratings above 50% for over **4000 Vets suffering PTSD**. All individuals who (a) served on active duty in the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, or Air Force; (b) were found by a Physical Evaluation Board to be unfit for continued service due, at least in part, to the individual's PTSD; (c) were assigned a disability rating for PTSD of less than 50%; and, as a result, (d) were released, separated, retired, or discharged from active duty after December 17, 2002, and prior to October 14, 2008 (regardless whether such release, separation, retirement, or discharge resulted in the individual's placement on the Temporary Disability Retirement List) are represented. Check your status.

The Medal You Can't Wear—Billed as “the perfect companion to the Cold War Certificate” the Cold War Medal “is privately struck **and may not be worn** on the uniform of active duty military personnel”. The Certificate was authorized in 1987. “All eligible personnel must *apply* for the Certificate on their own behalf.” It seems a bit tacky to actually apply for an award; especially one you cannot wear on active duty. This Cold War Medal idea has been around a long time. Last November, three Senators introduced legislation (S 2743) to officially introduce the Medal and authorize both military and civilian ‘Cold Warriors’ to wear it. For some of us, it may be more of an effort to get the Medal than the effort exerted earning it. Others certainly earned such recognition. Search ‘Cold War Veterans Association’ for more info.



Frequent Wind- If you served during the last days of the Vietnam Era in any capacity on “Operation Frequent Wind”, you may be entitled to the **Humanitarian Service Medal**. The medal was issued in May, 2004 for specific ships and units. If you already have this medal, authorization has been approved to convert it into a Vietnam Service Medal.

As I understand it, vets with prior Vietnam service that later participated in “Frequent Wind” are authorized to wear the Humanitarian Service Medal. Those ‘Frequent Wind’ participants with no prior Vietnam service who were awarded the Humanitarian Service Medal may convert it to a Vietnam Service Medal, but not *both*. I have been unable to determine what ‘any capacity’ of participation means. If you were in the Philippines or Guam assisting refugees you may qualify. But with all the phony vets running around and the determination of real vets to expose them, I wouldn't put any extra color on my chest until you check with your branch of service. This is just a head's up.

Tyranny and Compassion--As a side bar to the Constitutional issue raised by Promise Keepers, did you know that a defendant's right to a lawyer is not found in the Constitution? That ‘right’ was interpreted into the Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments and accepted law through a series of Supreme Court decisions dating back only to 1932; in federal cases only. It wasn't until 1963 that the Supreme Court ruled that even the states had to provide mandatory legal counsel for defendants.

For those who argue that our new potential ‘right’ to access a medical doctor is unconstitutional; you are correct. However, as with our recently bestowed right to a lawyer indicates, it may not require a Constitutional Amendment to make it so. But it may be a hard sell to invent a medical right.

The Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments provided a solid base for due process to create a concept of appointment of counsel for indigent defendants and did not stray outside that scope. The Constitution and many of its Amendments deal heavily if not solely with legal matters. That is because legal matters *are* government's responsibility. The Constitution is completely silent on medical issues.

It hasn't yet come to the point where a defendant is fined for refusing a public defender as the proposed health care legislation intends to fine citizens for refusal to purchase health care. Today, emergency health care is statutorily mandated; meaning the law could change by Congressional action; and burdens the state, not the citizen (in fact, it only burdens the health care facility who must integrate the loss somewhere else). If he's conscious, a citizen can refuse emergency care (some reasonable exceptions exist for children of cult members and such). But general health care as proposed is not a right. Health insurance will be a mandate not on the state where it belongs, but on the citizens where such impositions are prohibited by the Constitution where they are not specifically allowed. There can be no rights asserted or burdens imposed on matters silent in the Constitution.

The states are a different matter. Under the Tenth Amendment each may impose a health care mandate as it wishes.

For veterans, our health care comes from federal authority and is a statutory right for those under contract such as retirees and medical discharge cases. For the rest of us, it's a privilege. But there is one thing aside from tyranny that trumps rights and privileges; and that is funding. If there is no money there will be no privileges first, then, no rights.

If we look closely at the current state of the VA, we now have an active and competent Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric Shinseki working with a budget increased by 25 percent. Yet we still have a backlog of 4,000 waiting for resolution for problems related to PTSD (and more coming), thousands of chemical casualties ignored by past administrations and countless other veterans with a myriad of legitimate claims still in limbo. Why? Money.

Shinseki can rid the VA of corruption and fraud, he can streamline operations and he can ask for more money. But he can't stop Congress from spending it on Pennsylvania airports that employ more people than it serves. The federal money all comes out of the same pool—ours. So when the \$8 million annual maintenance bill is paid to service 600 annual passengers at the Pennsylvania airport there are thousands of Agent Orange cases still waiting for treatment.

The bizarre path taken by this health care bill and its secrecy are not signs of a compassionate government. The Constitution is not a compassionate document. If it was it would specifically tell us we all have a right to a free doctor, free land, free food and maybe even a free lawyer. But it doesn't. Its basic purpose is to set up a government that will protect its citizens from itself. When we get to the point where we are finally convinced that government compassion costs too much, well—we may just see another tea party.

Inflation

All about Ernie

Ernie, a high school senior on a class trip to Parris Island liked what he saw and joined. The Marines immediately recognized the value of this man and shipped him off to Vietnam as a bulldozer operator (an occupation whose life expectancy was 15 seconds) where he continued to clear LZs under heavy fire for six months. Since he had survived more than 15 seconds many times over, the Marines once again re-recognized his value and assigned him to their elite 'Silent Forces' unit charged with rescuing POWs.

While he and his men were successful in their mission, unfortunately all but Ernie were killed on the way out. Evidently the Marines failed to supply his unit with a radio. Ernie found himself in hand to hand combat while waiting for evacuation by using a mirror to contact the dust off (Marines issue mirrors when they can't get Army hand-me-down radios). Shot 23 times, he survived to serve out the rest of his three and a half year tour in Nam.

He was promoted to Sgt. 1st Class (an exclusive honor rank which the Army reserves only for 'special' Marines) at the tender age of 19 and over the next three years successfully rescued over 500 POWs while racking up a record of over 4,000 confirmed enemy kills. (The POWs of course, were ordered to keep silent about their rescue because Ernie's Silent Forces unit is still classified. But the 4,000 dead enemy soldiers and civilians Ernie wasted have all signed notarized statements confirming his claim.)

The War took its toll on Ernie. But he did receive an Honorable Discharge along with two Purple Hearts and two prestigious Gold Stars (one more than he received from Sister Agnes in second grade). When he returned Stateside (to the Marine Corps Processing Center in Houston, the only Marine to be discharged from that Base set up exclusively to discharge Ernie) he encountered chants of "baby killer" and had rotten fruit thrown at him (by anti-war protestors allowed on base by the Marines to greet him).

Life after the Marines was hard on Ernie which is why he racked up a reputation as a petty criminal (according to court records obtained by the POW Network) and a serial killer (according to Ernie).

Ernie's legal problems finally forced him to admit to authorities that he is a disabled vet with PTSD. His experience, his pain and his service are all chronicled in a DVD Ernie produced titled, *The Rebel God Fought for Because...* available now for only a \$100.00 donation. This daring Marine proudly displays his Marine tattoo while speaking to church groups about his remarkable life and his turn to Jesus.

Of course, Ernie is a nut which is why we determined it would be best not to reveal his full name (and we could only find one source). Research done by the POW Network and other organizations following the phonies in uniform rarely come up with such an entertaining fraud but most do rate a chuckle or two trying to match their story to units, dates and even nomenclature.

Missed the Wizard

Legitimate Vietnam veteran Gary Amster drove around for two years with a Medal of Honor license plate. When he was challenged and charged, Amster claimed he received the Medal of Honor in the mail and assumed the Army had just discovered he was a hero way back when. C'mon, Gary. Even the lion had to see the Wizard in person to get his courage. Like the scarecrow, it might have been worth the trip to secure a brain before you settled on that story.

Captain Colorado

The most convincing phony vet was the founder of the Colorado Veterans Alliance (CVA). Rick Duncan was a Marine Battalion Commander who served three tours in Iraq before being wounded and forced to retire as a Captain (only 'special' Captains are allowed to command battalions; all other Marine Battalion Commanders must be a Lt. Col.) For two years he helped homeless vets and those suffering from PTSD recover. He was energetic and dedicated.

Duncan immersed himself in the anti-war movement and lent his assistance to Democrat politicians in the 2008 race. While pursuing their legal status as a non-profit organization, the CVA Executive Board discovered some inconsistencies. They investigated and discovered that their founder was actually a check forging, bipolar car thief. Bummer.

They found that when he was being wounded in Fallujah he was also stealing an SUV in Nevada. While he was risking his life saving fellow victims at the Pentagon on 9/11 he was also sharing meals with fellow inmates in a lock up in Montana. Can there be more? Well, Yea.

While he was the beloved Rick Duncan at the CVA and left wing anti-war rallies, he was Rick Glen Strandlof to his mother and law enforcement. He ought to get a Silver Star for that incredible undercover work; and in fact, he had one.

Your Right to Brag Shall Not be Infringed...

The Stolen Valor Act (SVA) became law in 2006 to make a crime out of what Ernie, Gary and Rick do to degrade genuine military award recipients. It is actually an amended law to close some loopholes in previous legislation that made it a crime only to *wear* high unearned military awards. The SVA now covers *all* awards, rather than the previously protected top tier honors and claiming, displaying or purchasing any unearned award is illegal. However, two cases now pending are constitutionally challenging the SVA. One of them is Strandlof's.

George Washington University Law professor Jonathan Turley, a periodic pundit on MSNBC claims the Stolen Valor Act restricts free speech. It is not against the law to brag about yourself. "Half the pickup lines in bars across the country could be criminalized under that concept," he says.

Well, maybe. There might be a phony that's tried a line like: "Hey, baby. See these gold stars? I got 'em for killin' lots o' low lifes to save Bob Hope and his whole show from bein' overrun." This is a factual account if you consider the exterminator who was hired to get rid of the cockroaches behind the stage a few days before Bob Hope opened at the Brevard Center for the Performing Arts. *Implying* you're a hero wouldn't be a crime. And as Ernie knows full well, elementary schools issue gold stars for high academic achievement, not valor. Jonathan Turley should have plenty of them.

But this scenario is not what the Stolen Valor Act is all about. An idiot in a bar with two gold stars is hardly a public spectacle. A phony receiving accolades, VA benefits or speaking fees is.

...unless You're Military

Turley may have an arguable point on technical aspects if he is focused on civilian rights. Since he never served he may not be aware that the military, by necessity does not enjoy the same rights he does; not even after active duty. Ever hear of Stop Loss or Ready Reserve? Congress has Constitutional authority over the military and that extends to military matters beyond service such as classified information, awards and rank. Congress can promote, demote, issue an Honorable or Dishonorable Discharge award medals, remove and create medals retroactively or even create new veterans as it did last year with the Women' Air Force Service Pilots. It can do this at any time after your service or even after you're dead. So Congress can pass a Stolen Valor Act that limits the free speech rights of veterans if that speech or demonstration interferes with the duties or readiness of the military. If it wants to, Congress can even draft Jonathan Turley. The draft is dormant, not gone.

For civilians, the law leaves enough ambiguity for a challenge. Ernie's sale of his DVD autobiography is legal if he sells it as fiction. Prosecutors have discretion. In Ernie's case, those that believe him may be as nutty as he is. It may be better for society to keep Ernie and his audience safely contained at his lectures than have them loose on the streets.

On the other hand, there are laws that restrict or prohibit the wearing of military uniforms by civilians. Technically, your mother could be arrested for wearing your old field jacket. It is only prosecutorial discretion and the failure of an aroused veteran crusade against her that keeps her out of the slammer. There is, however, a crusade growing against phonies. Strandlof is one of them.

The Good Fraud

His con was so sophisticated that it actually developed beyond his control into a very real and very positive organization. That benevolent group was built on Strandlof's persona as a legitimate war hero. When he was exposed, the CVA could not contain the damage and folded. For the vets it helped, the feelings were mixed. How do you condemn a man who helped you through some difficult adjustment? But how do you respect him when your recovery was nothing more than a side bar to his primary goal of self-aggrandizement? And what about the subjective residue? When a vet needing assistance with some emotional difficulties seeks help, can he now be sure that he won't be used by another narcissist seeking adulation at his expense? No. He can't.

It is important to remember that the Stolen Valor Act covers phony military awards, not phony vets. This is the linchpin for those that argue free speech rights for civilians that claim receipt of awards of valor. (There is a federal statute governing the legal use of military uniforms [Title 10, Chap. 45, § 772] against impersonating a soldier in uniform but I could find no law against claiming veteran status by a civilian *without* wearing awards or the uniform.)

To Protect and Serve

Jonathan Turley suggests that fraud is the crime for which phony vets should be charged; and only those cases where specific harm can be proven. Maybe that *is* a valid argument. But let's look closer at the host a phony vet feeds on.

There are few civilian occupations that require the loss of some rights and exposure to danger that the military accepts. Law enforcement, firefighting and intelligence are the most obvious examples of varying degrees. If Ernie flashed a law enforcement badge to impress a conquest at a bar, he is subject to arrest. Regardless of the charge (and it wouldn't be fraud) or his entertaining delusions,

Ernie's detention is foremost to protect the public trust. The public needs to trust that any man with a badge *is* the authority he proclaims to be. If not, no one would ever pull over for a traffic stop. The same pathology that drives a phony cop drives a phony vet.

Parasites

In comparison, the military forfeits more rights than its civilian counterparts to secure the full rights for others. Most join to serve their country and give back in some manner what the Constitution has given them. Regardless of the job description, all military personnel are to participate in the defense of their country and its principles. They go and do what they're told, like it or not.

This requires sacrifice and in war time, extreme sacrifice. Human nature is to admire and respect those who sacrifice for others. In turn, those who are admired and respected perform better knowing that they have the support and appreciation of those they sacrifice for. The wheel turns; everyone benefits.

Introduce an individual who wishes to be respected as a decorated veteran without sacrifice and you have a nuisance. Introduce a few individuals seeking respect as pretenders and you have a problem. Introduce enough phonies that legislation is called for to combat their proliferation and you have a diluted pool of respect for those who sacrifice because that sacrifice has been tainted. The public, little by little loses its trust in the military. The military, little by little loses its trust in its heroes. When a parasite feeds on its host, the host always loses something. Let the parasite feed all it wants and the host dies. Can any Vietnam Era veteran deny that?

Respect Inflation

Counterfeiting is illegal. Printing more money makes the money that exists worth less. It's called inflation when the government does it but it never prosecutes itself. With few exceptions, a military award for valor is given with a stingy hand. The higher the award the more scrutiny it gets. When a soldier wears a medal of valor, it commands respect and breeds humility, the same trait that triggered the act worthy of the award. When a phony wears one, it *demand*s respect; and respect can never be demanded. It is only earned. Phony medals in effect, *cause respect inflation*. They diminish that spiritual fortitude called valor. It dilutes humility. Honor is the most revered concept to an American fighting man second only to his God. An award of valor most likely means the recipient was willing to lay down his life for his brothers. Many veterans have witnessed just that; ordinary individuals doing extraordinary things to secure Jonathan Turley's right to defend and promote the phonies that dishonor those heroes.

The fraudulent display of a law enforcement badge isn't free speech. It is impersonating an officer; a serious crime. Fraudulent display of a military honor is not free speech either. Since 2006 it is the theft of valor. You don't steal someone's book draft, patent idea or architectural designs and call it fraud. You call it theft (of intellectual property). In a more collective sense, a phony war hero steals spiritual property. He steals it from every honored vet, a little at a time; almost unnoticed. They drip a steady corrosive assault on the soul of honorable individuals first; then , if left unchecked, to the honor of the Armed Forces as a whole. We've been there before. Many Vietnam Era veterans can remember the first time they were honored for their service *because it was so recent*. It's taken us two decades to clean up the damage caused by that generation's phonies; not phony vets, phony peace activists who may or may not have burned down the recruiting office. Phony vets aren't the same threat as the anti-war movement of the 60s, but the anti-war movement wasn't the big threat at its first *Cum-bay-ya* either. Does anyone want to go back there?

Author's note: Jonathan Turley is not involved in the Stolen Valor Act litigation. When I read his comment trivializing the theft of valor with pickup lines, I thought he should be involved in the discussion.

Dick Lancaster 2/15/10

Perimeter Report is published monthly by the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard, Inc. We welcome submissions from the members and others interested in the VVB. Please review the Submission Guidelines on the Website. All submissions, comments, delivery problems or other matters related to this publication should be forwarded to the Editor, Dick Lancaster at hancrafters@bellsouth.net, or fax to 321 956 2115. All submissions are subject to editing.

Please note the changes in the publication dates. Deadlines will be the Friday prior to the General Membership meeting. The Perimeter Report will print on that weekend. This means that any event scheduled for the first two weeks of any month must be submitted **five weeks before the event**. For instance, events scheduled for the first two weeks of December should be submitted by the first week of November. The mailings go out on the day of the General Membership meeting. Net posting should be one week later.

Submissions by e-mail must contain the subject line: 'VVB Newsletter' to be timely noticed. Your editor works out of town a lot and 200-300 e-mails is a lot to pour through when I return. Thank you for participating.

Editor: Dick Lancaster 321 693 1201

Publication Supervisor: Ken Baker Technical Assistant: Brenda Lancaster Webmaster: Bob Williamson
Front Page Photo Courtesy of Welsh Photography (at the 2009 Reunion).

Note: In January I was informed that I am also the VVB public information representative. This is an important assignment that shouldn't be in one man's hands. If you have never served as a drill instructor and would like to help, call me. —the Editor

The Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard---About Us

A small group of Vietnam veterans in Central Brevard started to meet in 1985 to help each other to deal with lingering issues from the Vietnam War. In 1986 it developed a philosophy and a purpose to attract other Vietnam vets and formally organized. The primary goal was to assist other veterans. The camaraderie was the glue that developed into a program to help those with PTSD symptoms and the concomitant problems associated with it such as substance abuse and homelessness.

An area of great concern was the POW/MIA unresolved problem and the actions of the government to deal with it honestly. It is still a frustrating matter that we continue to pursue.

Within two years, the VVB organized and hosted its first Vietnam Veterans Reunion. This event eventually became famous throughout the country and today is *the* premier event of its kind. After the Gulf War it became evident that the problems faced by Vietnam veterans were not much different than those faced by subsequent generations and we began a systematic effort to welcome all veterans into the VVB. We changed our name in 2000 to reflect that commitment at that year's reunion and by 2003 the Vietnam Veterans of Brevard officially became the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard (we still abbreviate to VVB to, well, to abbreviate).

From the start efforts were made to find a place for distressed veterans to go to regroup and get back on their feet. The story cannot be told in this brief synopsis but suffice it to say, we stumbled our way to it. In fact, we did it ourselves and the hard work and perseverance of those who got it off the ground cannot be understated. We call it the Veterans Transitional Facility and since 1990 it has helped thousands of local vets, which include their families, get back on track. Today the program houses 20 vets and their family members at any given time and sets the pace for a smooth transition back into the mainstream of life. Those that have taken advantage of the opportunity never forget.

Our Reunion depended on various organizations to provide the sacred centerpiece, a mobile Memorial Wall. Getting those commitments coordinated were sometimes nail biting scary. In 2005 we came close to not having one; so we decided to build one. In less than a year, with the committed efforts of several local businesses, Brevard citizens, a laid off vet and other VVB volunteers we had our own Wall on display at our Reunion in 2006. In addition, we make The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall available for other events throughout the country.

Those are the stars of the VVB but in no way are the only services we offer to the veteran community here in Brevard and even beyond. We have a Color Guard and Rifle Team who manage to come together for local events and memorials in spite of the fact that they must coordinate their own work schedules to accomplish those duties. We provide veterans to speak to school students about the experience of war firsthand, beyond what they find in the history books. There is a mobile museum available for community events where citizens can touch the experience; even smell it. Our newsletter has been published since day one and is the source for other events, projects and activities in which we and other veterans groups are involved.

So what about membership? The most common theme heard at reunions for not joining is—I'm not a Vietnam vet. But that isn't a requirement to join. We are an organization dedicated to the support of our local *veteran community*. A veteran who served in peacetime, a veteran's family and any citizen that wishes to lend hands-on support of veterans is part of that community. The Vietnam veterans who started the VVB never intended it to be an exclusive club. They recognized that family members and friends were also affected by the times in which the War took place and as we grew, new generations and their families were welcomed as their own Eras unfolded.

The only requirement for membership in the VVB is a \$15 check and a desire to support your veteran community. Many members will assist at the reunion. Others find they're best suited for other activities. So if you like what you've read so far, give our Membership Chairman a call (back page) or fill out the application below and join; even if it's just to stay informed through the newsletter.

For more about us and our work check out the website at www.vietnamandallveteransofbrevard.com.

--The Membership

2010 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION - CHANGE OF ADDRESS - RENEWAL FORM VIETNAM AND ALL VETERANS OF BREVARD, INC. 1125 W. King Street - COCOA, FL 32922-8505

Membership in the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard is open to all concerned at a yearly fee of \$15 (Jan-Dec).

After July 1 all new members \$10. You need not be a Veteran to join, but if you are, we need a copy of your DD-214. We also have a Life Membership for a non-refundable fee of \$175, prorated with age 55-64 \$125 age 65 and up \$75.

() - 2010 Membership \$15

() - Life \$ _____

Name (As listed on card) _____ Spouse _____
 Address _____ Home Phone _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip+4 _____ Work Phone _____
 Occupation _____ E-Mail Address _____
 Branch of Service _____ Rank _____ Dates _____
 Units in Service _____
 Location in Service _____ Dates _____
 Birth Dates: Self _____ Spouse _____ Kids _____
 Marriage Anniversary Date _____ Recruited In VVB By _____
 Comments _____ Member # _____

- I Do Not Want To Join Now, Send Me Your Next Newsletter So I Can See What the VVB Is All About

2010 VVB Officers

***President:** Floyd Merckle 264 0581 ***Vice Pres.:** Don Wassmer 726 6752 ***Treasurer:** Ralph Earrusso 453 7498
Secretary/ Quartermaster: Linda Marhon 453 9824 ***Sgt. @ Arms:** John Schaefer 504 7680
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Ken Baker 632 4928 ***Membership Chairman:** Billy Valashinas 323 6475 ***Past President:** Bill Vagianos 431 0364
***Chaplain:** Jim Peterman 635 8911

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Titusville Veterans Memorial: Bob Socks bobbysocks@cfl.rr.com; 321-848-1630
American Legion Post 22: 241 Peachtree St., Cocoa 32022
Melbourne Vet Center: 2098 Sarno Rd., Melbourne 32935; 321 254 3410
VVB Annual Reunion: Wickham Park, Melbourne; (Entrance on Parkway Drive between Wickham Road and US 1). Ralph Earrusso Ph. 321 453 7498; e-mail: Daydrmr333@aol.com
Brevard County Veteran Services Team: 321 633 2012
Veterans Administration, Viera: Benefits Information, Ph. 321 637 3693; Patient Advocate, Ph. 321 637 3788 X 3534
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Color Guard: Tom Hart; 321 254 3514.
School Speaker Program: Rod Smith; rsmith2580@bellsouth.net; 321 632 6702
Perimeter Report: (VVB Newsletter); e-mail; hancrafters@bellsouth.net



Florida's 23rd Annual Vietnam & All Veterans Reunion April 22nd - 25th, 2010

Memorial Walls April 18- 25, 2010 At Beautiful Wickham Park, Melbourne, Florida
Wall Escort 10AM, April 18, 2010 - Web Page: www.floridaveteransreunion.com
Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall - Web Page: www.travelingwall.us

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