



PERIMETER REPORT

Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard, Inc.

www.vietnamandallveteransofbrevard.com

Together Then – Together Again

Volume 32—Issue 12 Summer 2011

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.

President's Message

We have somehow survived (well at least most of us have since I have not yet fully recovered), another reunion. The 24th Annual Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard's Reunion is now history. Having participated in this event since 1992 I can personally say that it was among the best we have organized since I have been involved. I have said before and I reiterate that it continues to be a source of amazement to me that an organization as small as ours is able to conduct such an event. Forgive me for not naming individuals, as I am afraid I will forget someone, when I offer thanks to our organization for the dedication and work that it takes to make this event a success. We had so many people involved that the list would be very long indeed.

Some of the highlights included our guest speaker, Mr. H. Ross Perot, who I am advised wishes to return next year and spend two days with us; the return of the memorials honoring those public service personnel who perished during the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center and the memorial to our soldiers who have given their "last full measure of devotion" in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

During closing ceremonies I mentioned that it was important to me personally to be able to come to "the Wall" and to the other memorials to offer my thanks to those who have sacrificed their lives and made it possible for us to freely organize and put on such an event. I speak to others about how they feel about this event and what it means to them. I had a Vietnam veteran tell me that our event had made it possible for him to finally come to terms with his experiences in Vietnam and that his first visit to "the Wall" and to friends lost in Vietnam was made during our event in Wickham Park.

Each year for the past four years a mother has brought her children to visit with me in the tent where I hang out. They bring me a card that they make themselves thanking me for my service. For the past three years they have brought pictures of the kids I had taken the year before as they visited with me. They come on Saturday and I have come to look forward to their visit and would truly miss them if they failed to come. A mother, two little girls, and a young man who will be forever influenced by what we do.

Next year will be the 25th Annual Reunion and I expect to see them again. Those are only a couple of instances that I am personally aware of that illustrate the importance of this event. I know of others and I can't even begin to guess how many soldiers, family members, and others are lifted in some way by what we do. So to all who participate, this event is more than just a few days in the park and we offer our sincere thanks to you for making all of this possible. Hope to see you next year. Floyd

POW/MIA

BOISE, Idaho – The father of the only U.S. soldier held captive in the Afghan war appealed to the Pakistani military for help in freeing his son in a video posted on YouTube. The parents of **Spc. Bowe Bergdahl** have declined to say much publicly since their son went missing from his base in southern Afghanistan on June 30, 2009. While it's unclear where the 25-year-old soldier is being held, a video released on the Internet in May shows him standing next to a senior official in the al-Qaida-linked Haqqani network in Paktika province in Afghanistan.



Spc. Bowe Bergdahl

Idaho resident Bob Bergdahl urges members of the Pakistani military to help secure his son's release. He directly references Pakistan Army Chief of Staff Ashfaq Parvez Kayani and Lieutenant-General Ahmad Shuja Pasha, the head of the country's intelligence service. "Our family is counting on your professional integrity and your honor to secure the safe return of our son," he said. "And we thank you. Our family knows the high price that has been paid by your men in the army and the frontier corps. We give our condolences and thanks to the families of those who have fallen for Pakistan."

Idaho National Guard spokesman Col. Tim Marsano, a liaison for the U.S. Army in Idaho, confirmed that Bob Bergdahl is the man in the video. Wearing a long beard he began growing just after his son's capture, Bob Bergdahl speaks in both English and Arabic in the video, and he talks directly to members of the Haqqanis and their military commander, Mullah Sangeen. "Strangely to some, we must also thank those who have cared for our son, for almost two years, Mullah Sangeen, the Haqqanis, and others who have played a role in sheltering the American prisoner," he said. "We know our son is a prisoner and at the same time a guest in your home."

The U.S. considers the Haqqani group to be its greatest enemy in Afghanistan. U.S. Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, complained last month that Pakistan's military-run intelligence service maintains links to the Haqqani network. The Haqqanis are Afghan Taliban who control parts of eastern Afghanistan and have bases in Pakistan's North Waziristan frontier tribal region. Speaking to his son, Bob Bergdahl offered reassurances that the family has done all it can — and that they want him home safe. "We have been quiet in public, but we have not been quiet behind the scenes," Bob Bergdahl said. "Continue to be patient and kind to those around you. You are not forgotten."

In the video, Bergdahl appears to reference the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the government founded by the Taliban in 1996 that was toppled from power in 2001. "We understand the rationale the Islamic Emirate has made through their videos," Bergdahl said. "No family in the United States understands the detainee issue like ours. Our son's safe return will only heighten public awareness of this. That said, our son is being exploited. It is past time for Bowe and the others to come home."

Bergdahl does not indicate to whom he's referring to with the phrase "the others." There are no other U.S. soldiers in captivity in Afghanistan. The Bergdahls, who live in a home outside of Hailey near the tourist resort of Sun Valley, have largely shunned media attention following their son's capture. Last year, Bowe Bergdahl's mother, Jani Bergdahl, attended an elementary school ceremony after students wrote President Barack Obama urging him to help bring about the captive's release. *John Miller, Associated Press*

(*Bits N Pieces* May 2011) H.Res 111 - 58 Co-Sponsors and Counting – H.Res 111 calls for the formation in the House of Representatives of a Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs. Please contact your congressional representative asking they sign on as a co-sponsor for this important legislation. Our POWs and MIAs need H. Res 111.

Court orders VA to overhaul mental health care system

Stars and Stripes Published: May 10, 2011

Noting that an average of 18 veterans a day commit suicide, a federal appeals court ordered the Department of Veterans Affairs to dramatically overhaul its mental health care system. In the strongly worded ruling, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said it takes the department an average of four years to fully provide the mental health benefits owed veterans. The court also said it often takes weeks for a suicidal vet to get a first appointment. The "unchecked incompetence" in handling the flood of post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health claims is unconstitutional, the court said.

VA Automating Educational Benefits under Post-9/11 GI Bill

By U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has successfully deployed a new automated system that is delivering faster, more accurate payments to Veterans attending school under the Post-9/11 GI Bill. "VA is relying upon the latest technology to provide a high-tech solution for administering the most generous educational benefits since the original GI Bill in 1944," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. The technology relies upon information from Veterans and specialized rules-based software to streamline the process for calculating Veterans' benefits.

"The new GI Bill is the first example of VA's use of an agile approach to software development," said Roger W. Baker, VA's assistant secretary for information and technology. "Our success on this project is already being leveraged to ensure the success of other large software projects within VA." The new processes and software available to VA's claims personnel replace the interim tools in use since August 2009, when the Post 9/11 GI Bill became effective.

VA has issued more than \$8 billion in Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit payments to nearly 440,000 students and their educational institutions. The Post-9/11 GI Bill pays schools directly for the tuition and fees incurred by eligible Veterans and active-duty personnel. Those payments are based upon the maximum rate in each state for tuition and fees at the in-state level for undergraduates. A monthly housing allowance is also provided.

Also included is a maximum \$1,000 annual stipend for books and supplies, and a one-time payment of \$500 for students who reside in specific rural areas. Further information about the Post-9/11 GI Bill is available on the Internet at www.gibill.va.gov

VA Begins Paying Benefits for New Agent Orange Claims

By U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has begun distributing disability benefits to Vietnam Veterans who qualify for compensation under recently liberalized rules for Agent Orange exposure. "The joint efforts of Congress and VA demonstrate a commitment to provide Vietnam Veterans with treatment and compensation for the long-term health effects of herbicide exposure," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

Up to 200,000 Vietnam Veterans are potentially eligible to receive VA disability compensation for medical conditions recently associated with Agent Orange. The expansion of coverage involves B-cell (or hairy-cell) leukemia, Parkinson's disease and ischemic heart disease. Shinseki said VA has launched a variety of initiatives – both technological and involving better business practices – to tackle an anticipated upsurge in Agent Orange-related claims.

"These initiatives show VA's ongoing resolve to modernize its processes for handling claims through automation and improvements in doing business, providing Veterans with faster and more accurate decisions on their applications for benefits," Shinseki said. Providing initial payments – or increases to existing payments – to the 200,000 Veterans who now qualify for disability compensation for these three conditions is expected to take several months, but VA officials encourage all Vietnam Veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange and suffer from one of the three diseases to make sure their applications have been submitted.

VA has offered Veterans exposed to Agent Orange special access to health care since 1978, and priority medical care since 1981. VA has been providing disability compensation to Veterans with medical problems related to Agent Orange since 1985. In practical terms, Veterans who served in Vietnam during the war and who have a "presumed" illness do not have to prove an association between their illnesses and their military service. This "presumption" simplifies and speeds up the application process for benefits.

The three new illnesses – B-cell (or hairy-cell) leukemia, Parkinson's disease and ischemic heart disease – are added to the list of presumed illnesses previously recognized by VA. Other recognized illnesses under VA's "presumption" rule for Agent Orange are: Acute and Subacute Transient Peripheral Neuropathy; Chloracne; Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia; Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2); Hodgkin's Disease; Multiple Myeloma; Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma; Porphyria Cutanea Tarda Prostate Cancer; Respiratory Cancers; Soft Tissue Sarcoma (other than Osteosarcoma, Chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or Mesothelioma); AL Amyloidosis. Veterans interested in applying for disability compensation under one of the three new Agent Orange presumptives should go to www.fasttrack.va.gov or call 1-800-827-1000.

US, Iraqi Army donates school supplies

By Sgt. Raymond Quintanilla, 305th MPAD, USD-S PAO

BASRA, Iraq - A special visit from the United States and Iraqi armies brought excitement to Iraqi children at one of Basra's primary schools as part of the Army's civic action development. Maj. Kyle Upshaw, a native of Fort Lauderdale and the advisor to the Iraqi Army's 14th Division, assigned to 1st Battalion, 68th Armored Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, accompanied Iraqi Army Col. Mohammad Tahir, the civil military operations officer with the 14th IA Div., in delivering school supplies to the children of Al Fatih Al Mubien Primary School in Al Zharnar district, Basra.

"It's a new type of mission," Upshaw said. "The goal is to do the first two missions with the U.S. alongside the Iraqi army, with the third on their own." Upshaw said the IA donated backpacks filled with school supplies in an effort to establish rapport between them and the community. "Our intent is to partner the Iraqi army with their local schools," Upshaw said. "To place them in a good light, be a positive role model for the local children."

"We need to put a positive spin on the Iraqi army as a future profession," said 2nd Lt. Joseph Marshall, a native of Boyers, Pa. and Baker Co., 2nd platoon leader. "More than anything," Upshaw said, "it's an opportunity for the children to see their military's ability to provide security for them, as well as some of their basic needs." "These missions demonstrate the new Iraqi army's willingness and capabilities to assist them through food drops and school supplies," Marshall said. "It increases community support that will allow them to prosper in the future." Marshall said by delivering the school supplies, the mission also emphasizes the importance of education.

"I believe the mission helps Iraqi children," Marshall said, "It illustrates the importance of an education and will be a huge piece of laying the foundation for a free Iraq that will last for generations to come." As some children lined up for backpacks handed out by Tahir, Iraqi soldiers distributed additional school supplies amongst the children. For the Iraqi army, although they have done similar missions in the same district such as food drops, Tahir said the school was chosen because of its special conditions, with many of the children coming from low income households.

"We selected this school in the same area to help the children here," Tahir said. "The school is very old and in need of repairs. Some students sit on the floor, because the lack of desks." Teachers attempted to maintain classroom discipline, but the students were overcome by excitement. Although the IA spearheaded the mission, one American Soldier could not help but share a special moment with the anxious children and their new school supplies as he went from room to room.

Al Fatih Al Mubien Primary School currently has approximately 650 students from 6-to-12 years of age. "These civic act exhibits the coming generation of Iraq," Marshall said, "a positive memory of their new government and the U.S. forces, strengthening the future of our working relationship."

Reunion Report

I want to thank all of the VVB members and workers who made the 24th Reunion a success, by putting in long hours and hard work. If you didn't come out and help I have good news for you - we'll do it all over again next year. With everything that was going on a lot of people came to see the Memorial Wall, we even had people waiting in line for help to find a name, and that is a good thing.

Reunion meetings have been changed to the 2nd Thursday of each month, at Kay's BBQ on Hwy 520 in Cocoa.

If you are not getting reunion emails and you're on the committee send me an email to vets2gether@cfl.rr.com and I'll add you to the mail listing. Please mark your calendars for Sunday, August 21, 2011 from 1 – 4 pm; we will host our Reunion Thank You Luncheon at the New Century Buffet in Merritt Island. See you there! Greg

The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall

The 2011 schedule is set with 14 events with one pending. This will be the first time we have ever done that many events in a year and because of that we are taking reservations for 2012 and we have 6 events ready to book. This year we'll have another first as we will be set up in Florida 4 times and that includes the Reunion. We will go to Michigan for the first time with repeats in Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Nebraska. We will wind the year up in Temple, AZ for Veterans Day. It will be a busy year but we will give a lot a people an opportunity to see the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall. Check our web site for more info www.travelingwall.us See ya on the road. Greg

Reunion Reflections

The Wall was escorted from BCC Cocoa campus to Wickham Park by over 1,000 vehicles, in perfect weather. Thanks to the coordination of the Brevard County Sheriff's Office and various local police departments everything went smoothly. We arrived at the park, where many workers stood ready to assemble the Wall. A great lunch was then provided to those who volunteered their time.

At Opening Ceremony we had the pleasure of a performance of the Navy Hymn (which actually encompasses all branches of the service) by Merritt Island High School. Their arrangement and presentation of this classic song was the most beautiful I have ever heard.

The weather was perfect throughout the week and the Reunion was well attended. Everyone appeared to having a great time and the large number of vendors present looked busy. At Saturday's Massing of the Colors we were visited by Ross Perot who shared several stories of the experiences of some fellow veterans he knows. Mr. Perot flew in from Texas that morning just to visit our Reunion, and although he could only stay briefly, he saw enough to want to return and spend more time with us next year, and we hope he will. Next year will our 25th Reunion and we are working to make it the best one yet! Don Wassmer



Ross Perot addresses Veterans



Wall Escort



Honoring our Fallen Heroes

Members Ill and Distressed

Our prayers for a speedy recovery go out to: Frank and Linda Marhon, Sue and Floyd Merckle, Michael J Martin, Joe Clark, Brenda Lancaster, Peggy Ritchie,

In House

Veterans Transitional Facility – The July report shows 18 in residency: 11 men, 5 women, 1 spouse and one child (2 year-old boy). Adult clothing is needed, as well as furniture and household items. If you have items to donate, or have any questions, please call Paul Whitmore at 321-409-8167.

By-Law Amendment - Article VII - Offices Section 7.2 reads as follow: "All Officers and Directors must be registered regular members. To serve in the office of President, or Vice President you shall be a veteran who served in a military organization ***that fulfilled a combat role***, and received an honorable discharge as shown on their DD Form 214. All Officers claiming veteran status must hold an honorable discharge with a DD 214 on file." The recommendation to amend the by-laws is requesting the removal of "that fulfilled a combat role". The vote for this by-law change will take place at the Annual Membership meeting held in January 2012.

Both the **Color Guard**, commanded by Bill Sauerwine and the **Rifle Team**, headed by Bob Bodine are constantly searching for new members. Both units perform at about 6-8 events each year and are always featured at our Reunion.

Member of the Quarter – It's that time of year again to place a vote for your favorite VVB member. Examples of a Member of the Quarter would be a person who volunteers for projects, or has done something to help a veteran in need, etc. Please submit your nomination to Jennifer Day at jday2@cfl.rr.com.

The VVB has a **Blood Bank** that is available to VVB members and their kin. When you give blood please specify it is to be held in the VVB account **#A48**. Of course, if you need it tell you medical caretakers where to get it as well. **A48**. Several members have had to use it recently and it is a lifesaver.

Perimeter Report is published by the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard, Inc. We welcome submissions from members and others interested in the VVB. Please note our website address on the front page where you will find back issues and links to other relevant sites.

All submissions, comments, delivery problems or other matters related to this publication should be forwarded to dmwassmer@yahoo.com. All submissions are subject to editing.

Deadlines will be the Friday prior to the General Membership meeting (2nd Monday of the Month). 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 **four weeks before the event**. The mailings go out on the day of the General Membership meeting. Net posting should be one week later.

Editor: **Denise Wassmer, 321 726 6752**; Associate Editor: **Jennifer Day**; Publication Assistants: **Karen Templeton and Donna Rogers** ; Webmaster: **Bob Williamson**

2011 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL/CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM

Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard, Inc.

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Cocoa, FL 32923-7225

Membership in the VVB is open to veterans, family and supporters at annual dues of \$15.00 on the calendar year. New member dues after July are \$10.00. Veterans should include a copy of your DD-214. Non-refundable Life Memberships are: Age 54 and under, \$175.00; 55-64, \$125.00; 65 and up, \$75.00.

New Member:___ Renewal:___ Change Address:___ Enclosed: Life:___ \$_____ Annual:___
\$15.00/\$10.00

Name:_____

Spouse:_____

Address:_____ St.:_____

Zip:_____

Primary Phone # (H, W, C):_____

Email:_____

Service Branch:_____ Rank:_____

Dates:_____

Units/Duty

stations:_____

2011 VVB Officers

***President:** Floyd Merckle 264 0581 ***Vice Pres.:** Don Wassmer 726 6752 ***Treasurer:** Ralph Earrusso 453 7498 ***Secretary:** Donna Rogers ***Quartermaster:** Linda Marhon 453 9824 ***Sgt. @ Arms:** John Schaefer 504 7680 ***Membership Reps.:** Billy Valashinas; Sue Merckle 264 0581; Rod Smith 632 6702 ; Bob Bodine 242 1904; Linda Sulzer 243-8755 ***Membership Chairman:** Billy Valashinas 323 6475 ***Past President:** Bill Vagianos 431 0364

Contacts and Locations

VVB Bunker: (Veterans Assistance Program)- Ph. 321 690 0805; Fx. 321 690 0106

VVB Transitional Housing Facility: 700 Fee Ave., Melbourne 32901; Ph. 321 409 8167

Veterans Memorial Center/ Memorial Gardens: 400 S. Sykes Creek Pkwy., Merritt Island 329953; Ph. 321 453 1776

Legal Services: Shelly Campbell: 386 255 6573 X 2441; e-mail: shellyc@clsmf.org

Lawyers for Warriors: Michael Cook: 607 349 9658; e-mail: Michael.cook@lawyersforwarriors.org

Melbourne Vet Center: 2098 Sarno Rd., Melbourne 32935; 321 254 3410

VVB Annual Reunion: Wickham Park, Melbourne; 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

Rifle Team: Bob Bodine; 321 242 1904, kbob4wic@juno.com

Color Guard: Bill Sauerwine; 321 610 7650

School Speaker Program: Rod Smith; rsmith2580@bellsouth.net; 321 632 6702

Perimeter Report: Denise Wassmer, dmwassmer@yahoo.com



Florida's 25th Annual Vietnam & All Veterans Reunion April 26-27-28-29, 2012

Memorial Walls April 22 - 29, 2012 at Beautiful Wickham Park, Melbourne, Florida

Wall Escort 10 AM April 22, 2012 - Web Page: www.floridaveteransreunion.com

Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall - Web Page: www.travelingwall.us

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