



The Sentinel

Vol. 3 No. 81

Vietnam Veterans of America – Chapter 1002 – Wallkill Valley
P.O. box 463, Vernon, NJ 07462 - 973-271-2413

September 2016

Website: www.VVA1002.org

President: John Harrigan

1st Vice President: John Brady

Secretary: Carl Ohlson

2nd Vice President: Walt Hazelman

Chaplin: George Burns

Treasurer: Owen Martin

Sergeant at Arms: Ted Andrews

FROM THE MINEFIELD:

Submitted by John Harrigan

As you know we were asked to be the Color Guard for the opening Ceremony of the Farm and Horse Show this year and again our members stepped up to do this as we had 7 members show up to carry the Colors in and represent our Chapter. We received a rousing ovation from the people in the stands and were Thanked for attending and showing our support for this event

Our Chapter was asked if we would like to have a table in the Veterans Information Tent and we shared a table with the Cemetery. I would like to Thank all of the members who helped out at the Tent for the 10 days and as you know it was one of the hottest Fairs in its history. We made some new contacts and sold hats and shirts and had a pretty good time regardless of the heat.

On August 27th I along with some other Chapter members attended the Veterans Picnic at the American Legion on RT 23 in Wantage. This event is put on every year by the Division of Senior Services and had over 100 people in attendance.

The next day was the Chapter picnic at St Francis with around 100 members and their family attending. I would like to thank Matt Fredericks and Ray Buell for helping out with the cooking and also Walter who shucked about 3 ears of corn out of the 150. We again had DJ Todd as our disc jockey and said he will see us for the Christmas party.

Our can shakes are still going on so please check the newsletter for the time and date's and please come and give us a hand in reaching our goal for the Scholarships.

As was stated in the last newsletter we still need some people on the committees so please think about signing up for one of these. Also we are still looking for advertises for the newsletter so if you know of a business

that might be interested let us know so we can contact them.

We have a trip scheduled to Lancaster Pa on November 16th to the American Music Theater for the Christmas Show. We will be leaving at 11am from St Francis and will be stopping at the Plain & Fancy Farm Restaurant for an early dinner. Payment has to be in by September 30th to Jerry Magnus 973-875-3364. Get your tickets early as they are selling fast.

That's it for now See you at the meeting.

1st VICE PRESIDENT:

Submitted by John Brady

I recently gave a talk to the senior group at St. Francis de Sales about flag etiquette. While doing my research I came upon the Symbols for the Folds of the Flag. I know many of us have seen this before but considering the recent observance of the 15th anniversary of 9-11 and the consequences that followed, I thought it fitting to review this subject.

Symbols for the Folds of the Flag

The **first** fold of our flag is a symbol of life.

The **second** fold is a symbol of our belief in eternal life.

The **third** fold is made in honor and remembrance of the veteran departing our ranks, and who gave a portion of his or her life for the defense of our country to attain peace throughout the world.

The **fourth** fold represents our weaker nature; as American citizens trusting in God, it is to Him we turn in times of peace, as well as in times of war, for His divine guidance.

The **fifth** fold is a tribute to our country, for in the words of Stephen Decatur, "Our country, in dealing with

Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another!

other countries, may she always be right, but it is still our country, right or wrong.”

The **sixth** fold is for where our hearts lie. It is with our heart that we pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The **seventh** fold is a tribute to our armed forces, for it is through the armed forces that we protect our country and our flag against all enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries of our republic.

The **eighth** fold is a tribute to the one who entered into the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day, and to honor our mother, for whom it flies on Mother’s Day.

The **ninth** fold is a tribute to womanhood, for it has been through their faith, love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great have been molded.

The **10th** fold is a tribute to father, for he, too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of our country since he or she was first born.

The **11th** fold, in the eyes of Hebrew citizens, represents the lower portion of the seal of King David and King Solomon and glorifies, in their eyes, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The **12th** fold, in the eyes of a Christian citizen, represents an emblem of eternity and glorifies, in their eyes, God the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost.

When the flag is completely folded, the stars are uppermost, reminding us of our national motto, “In God We Trust.”

After the flag is completely folded and tucked in, it has the appearance of a cocked hat, ever reminding us of the soldiers who served under Gen. George Washington and the sailors and Marines who served under Capt. John Paul Jones and were followed by their comrades and shipmates in the U.S. Armed Forces, preserving for us the rights, privileges and freedoms we enjoy today.

SERVICE OFFICER:

Submitted by Skip Kays

If you want any further information, or have any suggestions you can contact me at

973 459-9392 or at skays1@embarqmail.com

Donations of used prosthetics / artificial limbs

A man I know builds artificial limbs and prosthetics and he is willing to take any used items as donations. He will provide a receipt for a tax deduction and will re-use the parts that are able to be used. Contact me with any inquiries and I will provide his contact information.

Call Bill Schwing at 631 786-7233

Veterans PTSD support group in Newton

The group is peer led-by trained veterans who have experienced post-traumatic stress themselves as a result of their service. Meetings will be held every second and fourth Wednesday of the month from 7:30 to 9 p.m.

Participation in the group is free and pre-registration is not required. Any veteran seeking further information about the group can call 973 865-0605.

Free Flu Shots

The VA and Walgreens are working together and vets who are in the VA Health Care System can get free flu shots.

For questions or more information about the program, call 866-964-1812 or go to eHealth.va.gov/immunization.asp and fill out the flu vaccination form

Bring the completed form, your VA ID card and a photo ID to your neighborhood Walgreens or Duane Reade location

Walgreens or Duane Reade will automatically update your VA Electronic Health Record in the VA Health Care System

To find a location near you, call 800-WALGREENS (800-925-4733) or visit Walgreens.com/FindAStore

VA health care clinic to open in Newton / Sussex County

The projected opening date for the clinic to open was September 1, 2016. That doesn’t seem to have happened yet, but it is in the process. I spoke with personnel at the Morristown Clinic and they said the building was being wired, etc. and they expected lose about a third of their patients when Newton opens. No phone number as of yet.

The VA had approved an outpatient health care clinic, after nearly two years of lobbying by local advocates.

It will be located at 222 High St., in a medical office building.

The clinic will be VA's 10th outpatient facility in New Jersey, Hours will be Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. A staff of seven will include one doctor, four nurses and two medical support employee. When it opens that is.

WOMEN VETERANS:

Submitted by Walt Hazelman

No report.

POW/MIA:

Submitted by Bob Gilbert

- Pfc. Kenneth R. Miller, U.S. Army, Company K, 3rd Battalion, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th



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- Infantry Division 4/23/1951, North Korea - 9/12/2016
- Cpl. Donald R. Hendrickson, U.S. Army Headquarters Battery, 57th Field Artillery Battalion, 31st Regimental Combat Team, 7th Infantry Division, 12/6/1950, North Korea - 9/7/2016
- Cpl. Wayne Minard, U.S. Army Company C, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, 11/26/1950 North Korea - 9/7/2016
- Pfc. James S. Smith, U.S. Marine Corps Company C, 2nd Amphibious Tractor Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, 11/20/1943, Tarawa Atoll - 9/6/2016
- Pfc. Nicholas J. Cancilla, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Company B, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines, 2nd Marine Division, 11/20/1943, Tarawa Atoll - 9/6/2016
- Cpl. Vernon D. Presswood, U.S. Army, Heavy Mortar Company, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, 12/2/1950, North Korea - 9/6/2016
- Cpl. David T. Nordin, Jr., U.S. Army Company K, 3rd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, 11/28/1950, North Korea - 9/6/2016
- Sgt. 1st Class Louis M. Baxter, U.S. Army Headquarters Battery, 57th Field Artillery Battalion, 31st Regimental Combat Team, 7th Infantry Division, 12/6/1950, North Korea - 9/6/2016
- Sgt. James J. Hubert, U.S. Marine Corps Company H, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Division, 11/21/1943, Tarawa - 9/1/2016
- Pfc. Ben H. Gore, U.S. Marine Corps, Special Warfare Group, 2nd Defense Battalion, Fleet Marine Force, 11/25/1943, Tarawa - 9/1/2016
- Pfc. John W. Mac Donald, U.S. Marine Corps Company F, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Division, 11/20/1943, Tarawa - 9/1/2016
- WT1c Walter Sollie, U.S. Navy USS Oklahoma, 12/7/1941, Pearl Harbor - 8/18/2016
- Seaman 1st Class Murry R. Cargile, U.S. Navy USS Oklahoma, 12/7/1941, Pearl Harbor - 8/12/2016
- Fireman 1st Class Jim H. Johnston, U.S. Navy USS Oklahoma, 12/7/1941, Pearl Harbor - 8/12/2016
- Pvt. Virgil B. Adkins, U.S. Army Company B, 1st Battalion, 65th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, 7/17/1953, North Korea - 8/10/2016
- Pfc. Wilbur C. Mattern, U.S. Marine Corps Company M, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, 11/21/1943, Tarawa Atoll - 8/9/2016
- Sgt. Fae V. Moore, U.S. Marine Corps Company E, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, 11/20/1943, Tarawa Atoll - 8/9/2016
- Cpl. Ronald M. Sparks, U.S. Army Company D, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, 2/12/1951, South Korea - 7/27/2016
- Sgt. James L. Campbell, U.S. Army 31st Regimental Combat Team, 12/2/1950, North Korea - 7/26/2016
- Master Sgt. Ira V. Miss, Jr., U.S. Army Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, 2/5/1950, South Korea - 7/25/2016
- Cpl. Curtis J. Wells, U.S. Army Company C, 65th Engineer Combat Battalion, 25th Infantry Division, 11/27/1950, North Korea - 7/21/2016
- ENS Verdi Sederstrom, U.S. Navy, USS Oklahoma, 12/7/1941, - 7/21/2016
- Machinist's Mate 1st Class Earl Melton, U.S. Navy, USS Oklahoma, 12/7/1941, - 7/21/2016
- Cpl. Larry M. Dunn, U.S. Army Company B, 2nd Engineer Combat Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division, 12/1/1950, North Korea - 7/16/2016
- 2nd Lt. Marvin B. Rothman, U.S. Army Air Forces, 311th Fighter Squadron, 58th Fighter Group, 4/11/1944, New Guinea - 7/15/2016

- Cpl. Charles A. White, U.S. Army Company G, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, 12/3/1950, North Korea - 7/14/2016

AGENT ORANGE:

Submitted by Owen Martin

MCB Camp LeJeune, NC Contaminated Water Rule

VA to provide presumptive service connection for related diseases

As part of VA's ongoing commitment to provide quality care to Veterans and their families, the [VA today proposed](#) to establish presumption of service connection for eight diseases associated with exposure to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune, NC.

Based on evidence from several internationally recognized scientific authorities, including the National Academies of Sciences, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Bob McDonald has determined there is sufficient scientific and medical evidence available to establish a presumption of connection between exposure to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune and the following eight diseases: adult leukemia, aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, liver cancer, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and Parkinson's disease.

This change would apply to all active duty, reserve and National Guard personnel who served at Camp Lejeune for no less than 30 days from August 1, 1953, through December 31, 1987. The days can be either consecutive or cumulative.

In addition, VA proposes to establish a presumption that individuals who served at Camp Lejeune during this period and later developed one of the presumptive diseases were disabled during the relevant period of service, thus establishing active military service for benefit purposes.

VA acknowledges that current science establishes a link between exposure to certain chemicals found in the water supply at Camp Lejeune and later development of one of the proposed presumptive conditions. However, VA experts agree that there is no scientific underpinning to support a specific minimum exposure level for any of the conditions. Therefore, VA welcomes comments on the 30-day minimum service requirement and will consider other practical alternatives when drafting the final rule. VA also notes that the proposed 30-day requirement serves to establish eligibility for service connection on a presumptive basis; nothing in this proposed regulation prohibits consideration of service connection on a non-presumptive basis.

The proposed regulation can be viewed at this link: www.regulations.gov. The 30 day public comment period will be open until Oct. 10, 2016.

COMMUNITY/PUBLIC AFFAIRS:

Submitted by Lou Storms

On September 13th, myself, Bob Lewis, Carl Ohlson and Steve Maksymiuk again went to the PTSD Inpatient Unit at Lyons VA Hospital. On this trip we brought the vets a meal courtesy of Inserra Supermarkets' ShopRite of West Milford. The food previously had been purchased at a discounted price of \$200.00 from Milano's Restaurant in Vernon. As you all know, the Chapter's source of revenue from the clothing bins has disappeared and it was uncertain how long the Chapter could continue with the bi-monthly dinners. I wrote to Inserra Supermarkets requesting their help to continue our program.

Those of us who are familiar with ShopRite's charitable contributions to the communities they serve know that they are very generous. In late August Mr. Inserra approved our request for the next year by allowing us \$400. of catered food for six visits. That's an entire year at no cost to the chapter. The food was wonderful and the staff at the West Milford store was exceptional, from the Manager and Assistant Manager to the ladies who handle the catering. They all made us feel we were more than welcome.

The new menu was a big hit with the vets in the PTSD Unit and the ladies in the 3rd floor unit. They all loved the food. We had a great visit with the vets and look forward to November's dinner.

Anyone wanting to join us for our November visit please sign the sheet up front or contact me at stormy2@optonline.net or 973-728-3859.

Scheduled Meetings:

Meetings are held at 2:00 p.m. the 4th Sunday of each month unless otherwise **noted**.

2016

25th September

23rd October

27th November

3rd December (Christmas Party)

Calendar of Events:

Oct. 1st – Can Shake, ShopRite, Warwick

Oct. 8th – Can Shake, ShopRite, Newton



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Visit www.VVA1002.org for information on upcoming events.

NEW MEMBERS:

“WELCOME HOME”

No report

PASSINGS:

No report.

CONGRATULATIONS/CONCERNS:

Happy Birthday to:

Joseph Siems (9/17)

Teri Deaver (10/15)

Lenny Weakland (10/31)

Happy Anniversary to:

Sharon & Jack Ratzer (9/9)

Don & Kathy Schulz (10/2)

Linda & Andy Skellenger (10/5)

Bea & John Harrigan (10/9)

MEMBERS CORNER:

Submitted by Skip Kays

Why We Fought & Why We Would Do It Again

September 2003

by James Webb, *The American Legion Magazine*

Against a backdrop of political mismanagement and social angst, history has failed to respect those who gave their all to the war in Vietnam.

Forty years ago, Asia was at a vital crossroads, moving into an uncertain future dominated by three different historical trends. The first involved the aftermath of the carnage and destruction of World War II, which left scars on every country in the region and dramatically changed Japan’s role in East Asian affairs. The second was the sudden, regionwide end of European colonialism, which created governmental vacuums in

every second-tier country except Thailand and, to a lesser extent, the Philippines. The third was the emergence of communism as a powerful tool of expansionism by military force, its doctrine and strategies emanating principally from the birthplace of the Communist International: the Soviet Union.

Europe’s withdrawal from the region dramatically played into the hands of communist revolutionary movements, especially in the wake of the communist takeover of China in 1949. Unlike in Europe, these countries had never known Western-style democracy. In 1950, the partitioned country of Korea exploded into war when the communist North invaded South Korea, with the Chinese Army joining the effort six months later. Communist insurgencies erupted throughout Indochina. In Malaysia, the British led a 10-year anti-guerrilla campaign against China-backed revolutionaries. A similar insurgency in Indonesia brought about a communist coup attempt, also sponsored by the Chinese, which was put down in 1965.

The situation inside Vietnam was the most complicated. First, for a variety of reasons the French had not withdrawn from their long-term colony after World War II, making it easy for insurgents to rally the nationalistic Vietnamese to their side. Second, the charismatic, Soviet-trained communist leader Ho Chi Minh had quickly consolidated his anti-French power base just after the war by assassinating the leadership of competing political groups that were both anti-French and anti-communist. Third, once the Korean War armistice was signed in 1953, the Chinese had shifted large amounts of sophisticated weaponry to Ho Chi Minh’s army. The Viet Minh’s sudden acquisition of larger-caliber weapons and field artillery such as the 105-millimeter Howitzer abruptly changed the nature of the war and contributed heavily to the French humiliation at Dien Bien Phu.

Fourth, further war became inevitable when U.S.-led backers of the incipient South Vietnamese democracy called off a 1956 election agreed upon after Vietnam was divided in 1954. In geopolitical terms, this failure to go forward with elections was prudent, since it was clear a totalitarian state had emerged in the north. President

Eisenhower's frequently quoted admonition that Ho Chi Minh would get 75 percent of the vote was not predicated on the communist leader's popularity but on the impossibility of getting a fair vote in communist-controlled North Vietnam. But in propaganda terms, it solidified Ho Chi Minh's standing and in many eyes justified the renewed warfare he would begin in the south two years later.

In 1958, the communists unleashed a terrorist campaign in the south. Within two years, their northern-trained squads were assassinating an average of 11 government officials a day. President Kennedy referred to this campaign in 1961 when he decided to increase the number of American soldiers operating inside South Vietnam. "We have talked about and read stories of 7,000 to 15,000 guerrillas operating in Vietnam, killing 2,000 civil officers a year and 2,000 police officers a year – 4,000 total," Kennedy said. "How we fight that kind of problem, which is going to be with us all through this decade, seems to me to be one of the great problems now before the United States."

Among the local populace, the communist assassination squads were the "stick," threatening to kill anyone who officially affiliated with the South Vietnamese government. Along with the assassination squads came the "carrot," a highly trained political cadre that also infiltrated South Vietnam from the north. The cadre helped the people prepare defenses in their villages, took rice from farmers as taxes and recruited Viet Cong soldiers from the local young population. Spreading out into key areas – such as those provinces just below the demilitarized zone, those bordering Laos and Cambodia, and those with future access routes to key cities – the communists gained strong footholds.

The communists began spreading out from their enclaves, fighting on three levels simultaneously. First, they continued their terror campaign, assassinating local leaders, police officers, teachers and others who declared support for the South Vietnamese government. Second, they waged an effective small-unit guerrilla war that was designed to disrupt commerce, destroy morale and clasp local communities to their cause. And finally, beginning in late 1964, they introduced conventional forces from the north, capable of facing, if not defeating, main force infantry units – including the Americans – on the battlefield. Their gamble was that once the United States began fighting on a larger scale – as it did in March 1965 – its people would not support a long war of attrition. As Ho Chi Minh famously put it, "For every one of yours we kill, you will kill 10 of ours. But in the end it is you who will grow tired."

Ho Chi Minh was right. The infamous "body counts" were continuously disparaged by the media and the antiwar movement. Hanoi removed the doubt in 1995,

when on the 20th anniversary of the fall of Saigon officials admitted having lost 1.1 million combat soldiers dead, with another 300,000 "still missing."

Communist losses of 1.4 million dead compared to America's losses of 58,000 and South Vietnam's 245,000 stand as stark evidence that eliminates many myths about the war. The communists, and particularly the North Vietnamese, were excellent and determined soldiers. But the "wily, elusive guerrillas" that the media loved to portray were not exclusively wily, elusive or even guerrillas when one considers that their combat deaths were four times those of their enemies, combined. And an American military that located itself halfway around the world to take on a determined enemy on the terrain of the enemy's choosing was hardly the incompetent, demoralized and confused force that so many antiwar professors, journalists and filmmakers love to portray.

Why Did We Fight?

The United States recognized South Vietnam as a political entity separate from North Vietnam, just as it recognized West Germany as separate from communist-controlled East Germany and just as it continues to recognize South Korea from communist-controlled North Korea. As signatories of the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization, we pledged to defend South Vietnam from external aggression. South Vietnam was invaded by the north, just as certainly, although with more sophistication, as South Korea was invaded by North Korea. The extent to which the North Vietnamese, as well as antiwar Americans, went to deny this reality by pretending the war was fought only by Viet Cong soldiers from the south is, historically, one of the clearest examples of their disingenuous conduct. At one point during the war, 15 of North Vietnam's 16 combat divisions were in the south.

How Did We Fight?

The Vietnam War varied year by year and region by region, our military's posture unavoidably mirroring political events in the United States. Too often in today's America we are left with the images burned into a weary nation's consciousness at the very end of the war, when massive social problems had been visited on an army that was demoralized, sitting in defensive cantonments and simply waiting to be withdrawn. While reflecting America's final months in Vietnam, they hardly tell the story of the years of effort and battlefield success that preceded them.

Little recognition has been given in this country of how brutal the war was for those who fought it on the ground and how well our military performed. Dropped onto the enemy's terrain 12,000 miles away from home, America's citizen-soldiers performed with a tenacity and quality that may never be truly understood. Those who believe the war was fought incompetently on a tactical level should consider the enormous casualties to which



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the communists now admit. And those who believe that it was a “dirty little war” where the bombs did all the work might contemplate that it was the most costly war the U.S. Marine Corps has ever fought. Five times as many Marines died in Vietnam as in World War I, three times as many as in Korea. And the Marines suffered more total casualties, killed and wounded, in Vietnam than in all of World War II.

Another allegation was that our soldiers were over-decorated during the Vietnam War. James Fallows says in his book “National Defense” that by 1971, we had given out almost 1.3 million medals for bravery in Vietnam, as opposed to some 1.7 million for all of World War II. Others have repeated the figure, including the British historian Richard Holmes in his book “Acts of War.” This comparison is incorrect for a number of reasons. First, these totals included air medals, rarely awarded for bravery. We awarded more than 1 million air medals to Army soldiers during Vietnam. Air medals were almost always given on a points basis for missions flown, and it was not unusual to see a helicopter pilot with 40 air medals because of the nature of his job.

If we compare the top three actual gallantry awards, the Army awarded:

- 289 Medals of Honor in World War II, and 155 in Vietnam
- 4,434 Distinguished Service Crosses in World War II, and 846 in Vietnam
- 73,651 Silver Stars in World War II, against 21,630 in Vietnam

The Marine Corps, which lost 103,000 killed or wounded out of some 400,000 sent to Vietnam, awarded:

- 47 Medals of Honor (34 posthumously)
- 362 Navy Crosses (139 posthumously)
- 2,592 Silver Stars

Second, although the Army awarded another 1.3 million “meritorious” Bronze Stars and Army Commendation Medals in Vietnam, this was hardly unique. After World War II, Army Regulation 600-45 authorized every soldier who had received either a Combat Infantryman’s Badge or a Combat Medical Badge to also be awarded a meritorious Bronze Star. The

Army has no data regarding how many soldiers received Bronze Stars through this blanket procedure.

Atrocities?

We made errors, although nowhere on the scale alleged by those who have a stake in disparaging our effort. Fighting a well-trained enemy who seeks cover in highly contested populated areas where civilians often assist the other side is the most difficult form of warfare. The most important distinction is that the deliberate killing of innocent civilians was a crime in the U.S. military. We held ourselves accountable for My Lai. And yet we are still waiting for the communists to take responsibility for the thousands of civilians deliberately killed by their political cadre as a matter of policy. A good place for them to start holding their own forces accountable would be Hue, where during the 1968 Tet Offensive more than 2,000 locals were systematically executed during the brief communist takeover of the city.

What Went Wrong?

Beyond the battlefield, just about everything one might imagine.

The war was begun, and fought, without clear political goals. Its battlefield complexities were never fully understood by those who were judging, and commenting upon, American performance. As a rifle platoon and company commander in the infamous An Hoa Basin west of Da Nang, on any given day my Marines could be fighting three different wars: one against terrorism, one against guerrillas and one against conventional forces. The implications of these challenges, as well as our successes in dealing with them, never seemed to penetrate an American populace inundated by negative press stories filed by reporters, particularly television journalists, who had no clue about the real tempo of the war. And one of the most under-reported revelations after the war ended was that several top reporters were compromised while in Vietnam, by communist agents who had managed to gain employment as their assistants, thus shaping in a large way their reporting.

Most importantly, Vietnam became an undeclared war fought against the background of a highly organized dissent movement at home. Few Americans who grew up

after the war know that a large part of this dissent movement was already in place before the Vietnam War began. Many who wished for revolutionary changes in America had pushed for them through the vehicles of groups such as the ban-the-bomb movement in the 1950s and the civil-rights movement of the early and mid-1960s. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the infamous antiwar group Students for a Democratic Society was created at the University of Michigan through the Port Huron Statement in 1962 – three full years before American ground troops landed at Da Nang. The SDS hoped to bring revolution to America through the issue of race. They and other extremist groups soon found more fertile soil on the issue of the war.

Former communist colonel Bui Tin, a highly placed propaganda officer during the war, recently published a memoir in which he specifically admitted a truth that was assumed by American fighting men for years. The Hanoi government assumed from the beginning that the United States would never prevail in Vietnam so long as the dissent movement, which they called “the Rear Front,” was successful at home. Many top leaders of this movement coordinated efforts directly with Vietnamese communist officials in Hanoi. Such coordination often included visiting the North Vietnamese capital – for instance, during the planning stages for the October 1967 march on the Pentagon – a few weeks before the siege of Khe Sanh kicked into high gear and a few months before the Tet Offensive.

The majority of the American people never truly bought the antiwar movement’s logic. While it is correct to say many wearied of an ineffective national strategy as the war dragged on, they never stopped supporting the actual goals for which the United States and South Vietnam fought. As late as September 1972, a Harris survey indicated overwhelming support for continued bombing of North Vietnam – 55 percent to 32 percent – and for mining North Vietnamese harbors – 64 percent to 22 percent. By a margin of 74 percent to 11 percent, those polled also agreed that “it is important that South Vietnam not fall into the control of the communists.”

Was It Worth It?

On a human level, the war brought tragedy to hundreds of thousands of American homes through death, disabling wounds and psychological scars. Many other Vietnam veterans were stigmatized by their own peers as a classic Greek tragedy played out before the nation’s eyes. Those who did not go, particularly among the nation’s elites, were often threatened by the acts of those who did and as a consequence inverted the usual syllogism of service. If I did not go to a war because I believed it was immoral, what does it say about someone who did? If someone who fought is perceived as having

been honorable, what does that say about someone who was asked to and could have but did not?

Vietnam veterans, most of whom entered the military just after leaving high school, had their educational and professional lives interrupted during their most formative years. In many parts of the country and in many professional arenas, their having served their country was a negative when it came to admission into universities or being hired for jobs. The fact that the overwhelming majority of those who served were able to persist and make successful lives for themselves and their families is strong testament to the quality of Americans who actually did step forward and serve.

On a national level, and in the eyes of history, the answer is easier. One can gain an appreciation for what we attempted to achieve in Vietnam by examining the aftermath of the communist victory in 1975. A gruesome holocaust took place in Cambodia, the likes of which had not been seen since World War II. Two million Vietnamese fled their country – mostly by boat.

Thousands lost their lives in the process. This was the first such diaspora in Vietnam’s long and frequently tragic history. Inside Vietnam, a million of the south’s best young leaders were sent to re-education camps; more than 50,000 perished while imprisoned, and others remained captives for as long as 18 years. An apartheid system was put into place that punished those who had been loyal to the United States, as well as their families, in matters of education, employment and housing. The Soviet Union made Vietnam a client state until its own demise, pumping billions of dollars into the country and keeping extensive naval and air bases at Cam Ranh Bay. In fact, communist Vietnam did not truly start opening up to the outside world until the Soviet Union ceased to exist.

Would I Do It Again?

Others are welcome to disagree, but on this I have no doubt. Like almost every Marine I have ever met, my strongest regret is that perhaps I could have done more. But no other experience in my life has been more important than the challenge of leading Marines during those extraordinarily difficult times. Nor am I alone in this feeling. The most accurate poll of the attitudes of those who served in Vietnam – Harris, 1980 – showed that 91 percent were glad they’d served their country, and 74 percent enjoyed their time in the service. Additionally, 89 percent agreed that “our troops were asked to fight in a war which our political leaders in Washington would not let them win.”

On that final question, history will surely be kinder to those who fought than to those who directed – or opposed – the war.



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Remembrances

Growing up WWI was the standard military experience for us. It was only over a few years, the books and movies were still being written and made, and every adult I knew had been involved in some way, either in one of the services, or in war work.

There was a small building in back of a diner in my home town that was a VFW or some organization where the old veterans (WWI, I would guess) attended and it was rumored that they showed “smokers” at their meetings.

While there was a lot to look at on TV and in the movies, almost to a person I don’t remember any of the adults I knew talking about their wartime experiences except in very general terms.

I watched this movie about the capture of a German U Boat, a true story that was made within the past few years and of course was Hollywooded up. The movie want’s that good, but in watching the features there was an interview with the director and he said something to the effect that those men (WWII) were heroes and asked the question as to how men do that sort of thing. Meaning be brave, risk your life, etc.

MISCELLANEOUS:

1. **Special Note: If you are a veteran in emotional crisis and need help RIGHT NOW, call (toll free 24/7) 1-800-273-8255 and tell them you are a veteran. All calls are confidential.**
2. Jackets (\$60 (summer) & \$70 (winter)); t-shirts (\$15); hats (\$10); golf shirts (short sleeve \$28; long sleeve \$33) are still available. See Owen Martin for purchases or to place an order (pre-payment for orders are appreciated).
3. Important note to families of deceased veterans, and/or requestors:

Submitted by Bob Caggiano

It is the right of every deceased Veteran to have a Military honors team attend the graveside service, to present the Flag at no charge to the family.

Honors Teams are sent out, at the expense of the US Government.

In January 2000, Congress passed legislation guaranteeing Veterans the right to at least two uniformed servicemen, a flag ceremony, and the playing of TAPS at their funeral. Unfortunately, there are not enough buglers to play TAPS, so the historic melody has been played on a CD player at many Veterans' last ceremony, or more currently on a bugle that plays Taps using an electronic insert. The volunteer organization "Bugles Across America" (a.k.a. BAA) was created to honor the service of veterans by providing Taps live by a bugler using a real instrument (such as a bugle, trumpet, cornet, or flugelhorn) at funerals or any other ceremony requiring a bugler. There are currently over 7500 volunteer buglers nationwide in all 50 states, and some overseas who stand ready to serve. BAA volunteers perform Taps as a free service.

As a Vietnam era veteran member of VVA Chapter 1002 and a BAA volunteer bugler, I am available to play for anyone who needs a bugler for Taps (or other appropriate bugle calls) for any honorable discharged veteran or related military ceremony. In the event I cannot play because of a scheduling conflict, I can generally still provide a substitute bugler so please contact me - Bob Caggiano, USAF Veteran, (973) 222-7591 (cell) or FinalTaps@gmail.com.



Editors Corner:

By Linda Skellenger (AVVA)

Please have information to be included in the October newsletter to me by Sunday, October 16th (email skelle@ptd.net) or by snail-mail to: Linda Skellenger, 174 Lewisburg Rd., Sussex, N.J. 07461