Chapter Membership Information

Life memberships are now $50.00. There is no longer a yearly membership. YOU MUST SUPPLY A COPY OF YOUR DD - 214 WHEN APPLYING. NO 214, NO MEMBERSHIP! NATIONAL SAYS THE 214 IS DESTROYED WITHIN 30 DAYS OF RECEIPT.

Contact Ron Clark at 715-421-4615 if you have membership questions or need help.
Breakfast Note

NO ACTIVITIES FOR THE NEXT MONTH(S) OR UNTIL THE GATHERING OF PEOPLE IS ALLOWED AGAIN.

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American Heroes Cafe' Activities
Crossview Church – Wisconsin Rapids

Courtesy of Bill Haack

The Heroes Café will remain closed for the month of April. The date for opening is TENTATIVELY May 6th. This is dependent on what is happening in the area at that time.

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Current Chapter Officers
President - Bill Haack.
Vice-President - Dave Posey.
Secretary - Tom Heiser.
Treasurer - Bob Skerven.
Sgt-at-Arms - Allan Brown.

Meeting Night

The chapter meets each Second Thursday of the month except for January, February and August.

Meeting Location

All meetings are held at VFW Post 2534 which is located at 2711 Reddin Road, Wisconsin Rapids. Reddin Road is off of Hwy. 34 North as you are leaving Wisconsin Rapids.

We do have a July summer meeting at a different location which is our shelter located at Lyons Park. The park is located just off the west side of the Riverview Expressway bridge and can be accessed off of 2nd Avenue South.

All Vietnam War and Vietnam Era Veterans are invited to join our chapter. The cost is $50 for a lifetime membership.

Newsletter

The newsletter is published monthly in print and electronic media. To save on costs it is preferable if you would receive it via e-mail. To receive the newsletter electronically send your e-mail address to: stack@wctc.net with “Newsletter” in the subject line and you will be added to the list. Thank you - Jim.

Biblical Quotes - For we all are sinners

A Nun Grading First Grade Papers

1. Jesus enunciated the Golden Rule, which says to do unto others before they do one to you. He also explained a man doth not live by sweat alone.

2. It was a miracle when Jesus rose from the dead and managed to get the tombstone off the entrance.

3. Christians have only one spouse. This is called monotony.
Looking Ahead

At the time this newsletter is being put together ALL April Activities are cancelled. Below is a possible list of May activities.

If things change sometime in April, we will adjust accordingly. We will make the call on May activities by the 24th of April. If the virus is under control by May 1st, the schedule will be as follows:

VVA budget meeting May 2nd.
VVA breakfast May 4th.
VVA meeting May 14th.

Back in my day... there was so much toilet paper, people used to literally string it up in the trees of their enemies!

VVA Monthly Raffle

The "Monthly Drawing" is now being done among those who are present. The 50/50 Drawing continues to be done as before.

Bob Holtz won the "Monthly Drawing" and Frank Maly won the 50/50 drawing.

New T-shirts and Hoodies

Dave Posey has been talking with MADA about new T-shirts and hoodies like he arranged for us last year. The ash and blue colors will be available this year again and in the same sizes as before. Cost for each item will be based on the quantity and color ordered, as was done last year. Questions, call Dave at: 715-424-5384.

Front and back designs shown above. Top - Ash / Bottom - Royal

2020 Brat Fry's

The season of Brat Fry’s is coming upon us and below are the current dates for both the VFW and the VVA:

VFW - To be held at the West Grand IGA Quality Foods on June 13th, 27th and July 11th.
VVA - To be held at the Baker Street IGA Quality Foods on 30th. May 2nd and 16th are CANCELLED.
Chapter Meeting Notes  
(Courtesy of Tom Heiser)

VVA Meeting Minutes of March 12, 2020

The meeting was called to order by President Bill Haack.

There were 29 members present. The meeting opened according to ritual.

A motion was made by Dave Posey seconded by Ron Clark to approve the December 2019 meeting minutes, motion carried. Correspondence was read.

A motion was made by Tom Sachs seconded by Dave Posey to approve the January and February 2020 Treasurer’s Reports, motion carried.

Senator Patrick Testin and Representative Katrina Shankland received Honorary Life Membership to VVA Chapter 101. (Representatives Scott Krug and Nancy VanderMeer were unable to attend).

Thank you to Bob Holts and all that participated as color guard in the local parades and events.

OLD BUSINESS:

Bill Haack gave an update of the events at the Heroes Café and they will be closed for the month of March. Quilts of Valor will be in May and the LHS band will perform.

June 5th and 6th will be the dates for the Orange Blossom distributions. Brat fry schedule is May 2, 16, and 30th at Baker Drive IGA; June 13, 27 and July 11 at West Grand IGA.

The donation to The High Ground for 20/21 will be discussed at the Budget Meeting. Monsoon party is on hold.

Chapter 101 is allocated 3 delegates to the State Council. A motion was made by Tom Sachs, seconded by Dave Posey to pay only 1 mileage per meeting, motion carried. A motion was made by Roger Sampson, seconded by Al Brown that only 3 per diems will be paid, motion carried.

If anybody wants to order t-shirts see Dave Posey, price to remain the same. Minimum order is 12-24 shirts.

NEW BUSINESS:

April breakfast will be 4/6/20 at Chat-R-Box at 9:00 am.

Newsletters to be sent to our Honorary Life Members

Elections will be held in April.

A motion was made by Mike Sullivan, seconded by Tom Doan) to cast a unanimous ballot for the current officers: President Bill Haack,

Vice President Dave Posey, Bob Skervin Treasurer, Tom Heiser Secretary, and Sgt.-at-arms Al Brown. Motion carried.

The State web site is found at www.vvawi.org

A motion was made by Harry Hiligers, seconded by Jim Zwicke to continue the 2019/2020 budget for one month. Motion carried.

Dave Loomis had a heart attack and is in ICU, a card was sent.

GOOD OF THE ORDER:

A motion was made by Harry Hiligers, seconded by Jim Zwicke at 7:42 pm to adjourn, motion carried. Next meeting is April 9, 2020 at 7:00 pm.

Monthly meeting drawing winner – Bob Holtz. 50/50 drawing winner – Frank Maly.
OTH - Other Than Honorable
Thousands Turned Away

For decades, the Department of Veterans Affairs "unlawfully" turned away thousands of veterans with other-than-honorable discharges -- leaving some of those most in need bereft of care, according to a recently released study. The "Turned Away" study was conducted by the Veterans Legal Clinic at the Legal Services Center of Harvard Law School, Veterans Legal Services and a law firm on behalf of OUTVETS, a veteran service organization for LGBTQ vets. The report uses government data collected through Freedom of Information Act requests, painting a stark depiction of veterans in crisis refused the care they've earned.

One of those was Marine Corps veteran Dwayne Smith, who shared his story for the report. While Smith survived an Afghanistan deployment, he almost didn't live through his transition out of service. With both signature wounds of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq - - post-traumatic stress disorder and a traumatic brain injury -- Smith went to VA for help. But VA turned him away. When VA staff found that Smith had an other-than-honorable discharge, they shut him out again and again, the report said. Smith was discharged from the military for what he said was self-inflicted wounds of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq -- Smith went to VA for help. But VA turned him away. When VA staff found that Smith had an other-than-honorable discharge, they shut him out again and again, the report said. Smith was discharged from the military for what he said was self-medication to cope with his PTSD, and for leaving his post when a family member was diagnosed with cancer. Each time Smith sought care and was turned away, VA was violating the law, the report says.

The law required VA staff to help Smith apply for health care, ensure his application was properly reviewed, a written eligibility decision issued and that he knew his appeals rights. It took Smith years, with the help of a pro-bono lawyer, before he could apply and be approved for VA health care and benefits. And he's not alone. Smith is one out of a majority of veterans with so-called "bad-paper" discharges who are not enrolled in VA health care, many because they were rejected by VA, according to the report. In addition to those turned away over the years, the report estimates another 400,000 are at risk of being rejected by VA "from services they may be entitled to" because of misunderstandings or misapplication of the law by VA. "Many frontline staff at VA healthcare facilities have improperly turned away former service members seeking health care, telling them that they are ineligible due to their military discharge statuses — without even allowing them to apply," the report says. "This is not just unfair, it is unlawful. It is time for VA to stop this cycle of misinformation and stigma and to honor that every person who has served in the military has a right to apply for VA care."

More than 13,000 troops who were recently removed from the military with other-than-honorable discharges have PTSD, traumatic brain injuries or other service-connected health conditions, according to a 2017 report from the Government Accountability Office. The National Veterans Council for Legal Redress and the Yale Law School Veterans Legal Services clinic argue that as many as a third of the 2 million veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq may have service-connected mental health concerns. Veteran service organizations including Vietnam Veterans of America have reported that as many as 13 percent of post-9/11 veterans have bad-paper discharges. Those discharges are given for misconduct that can range from serious crimes adjudicated in military courts, to insubordination and other infractions that never see a courtroom -- military or otherwise.

Advocates have called on VA and the Defense Department for years to address the needs of a vulnerable population, including providing VA benefits the agency itself says are life-saving. VA has repeatedly said that veterans outside VA are more likely to die by suicide than those under VA care. A Navy and Marine veteran class-action suit could help vets with 'bad paper' discharges Veterans with bad-paper discharges have higher rates of mental health conditions, suicide, homelessness and unemployment, the report says. Many have service-connected disabilities. Some received bad-paper discharges because of military sexual trauma, sexual orientation or sexual identity. "Veterans with bad paper, therefore, are some of the veterans most in need of VA's healthcare services -- yet they are being wrongfully excluded from those services without due process," the report says.

Veteran Kris Goldsmith was discharged after surviving a suicide attempt that the Army characterized as "misconduct". He spent more than 10 years trying to get his discharge upgraded. It finally came through last year with help from a lawyer. Goldsmith is chief investigator and associate director for policy and government affairs for Vietnam Veterans of America and he's become an advocate for veterans like him. "That's what I've been fighting for all this time -- to make sure every veteran is afforded the opportunity to survive the way I did," Goldsmith told Connecting Vets. VA says suicide prevention is a top priority, "but saying isn't doing the work," he said. "Doing the work is getting people into VA health care and that is something they have utterly failed at . . . Every administration since the 1980s has allowed this problem to fester and more vets to die by suicide."

VA officials did not provide the number of benefits decisions the department has made that involved bad-paper discharges but said VA has done more to reach other-than-honorably discharged vets in the last few years "than ever before."

(Continued on Page 6)
**OTH - Other Than Honorable, cont.**

One of those efforts was sending nearly half a million letters to those veterans with information on mental health benefits they may qualify for. To send those letters, VA used their home addresses listed in Pentagon records, which could be decades old, dating back to service during the Vietnam, Korean or Gulf wars. Some of them may even have gone to the homes of the veterans' parents.

Veterans with bad-paper discharges can lower their risk of suicide if they receive mental health care, according to a report from the American Journal of Preventative Medicine last year. But in 2018, just 2,580 veterans with bad-paper discharges got care at VA, the department said last year. "It's thanks to VA that I'm still alive today," Goldsmith said. "PTSD left untreated is a death sentence and VA is complicit in allowing veterans to die because of their lack of dedication to really fixing this." According to VA policy, every veteran has the right to apply for benefits regardless of their discharge status. And each of those veterans has the right to receive a written decision on their benefits and information on how they can appeal that decision. Veterans with other-than-honorable discharges can be eligible for VA health care for service-connected disabilities, up to 90 days of emergency mental health treatment, bereavement counseling and more -- as long as they're not turned away first.

"It's hard to tell someone to keep fighting," Goldsmith said. "But what people should know is they've got allies in the fight." He pointed to veteran service organizations, veteran legal services such as those that helped author the report, and journalists willing to help those able to share their stories. Since 1980, more than 575,000 troops have gotten bad-paper discharges. About 81 percent of those were not discharged by court-martial. "The biggest mistake of the 20th century was allowing this many veterans to become this vulnerable because of administrative discharges," Goldsmith said. Many veterans with bad-paper discharges who appeal the decision spend years in the process, like Smith and Goldsmith. The military review board overwhelmingly denies those requests. A Vietnam veteran with a bad-paper discharge had to deal with his PTSD for 50 years alone after he was denied by VA, the report says. He would eventually receive his benefits, but only with a lawyer's help.

At least part of the problem stems from inside VA, according to internal documents obtained for the report. A training manual at the Pittsburgh VA used just thumbs-up or thumbs-down emoji's in descriptions of honorable or general discharges and other-than-honorable or dishonorable discharges, among other examples of, at best, unclear or unspecific guidance for VA staff. The report provided multiple recommendations for how VA can improve its staff training, oversight and guidance on helping veterans receive the benefits they're entitled to, including outreach to the thousands of veterans it turned away unlawfully. The longer they wait, the more men and women will die."


(From ConnectingVets.com | Abbie Bennett | March, 5, 2020)

**We Tried! (Tom and Ellen's trip to Australia)**

We got home safely last night (3/19), (left here 3/14). Don't have much to write about. The tournament that I was to judge was cancelled while we were in route. We found out when we landed in Los Angeles. We had about an hour to make a decision on what to do. We asked and there were no travel alerts or advisories listed for Australia. So we decided to proceed and make the best of all the activities that we had booked.

When we landed in Melbourne, all passengers were told that they had to quarantine for 14 days. We were able to go to our hotel. This was about 6 am their time. We were met at the door by the hotel manager and told we could check in, but we were not to have any contact with anyone, not even each other. We had to stay in our room. They brought us food via room service and left it outside our door. We didn't even have a view of the beautiful city. Our rooms faced the back of a building and some ventilation fans and pipes. So, we spent our day trying to make arrangements with our travel agent to get back home and with the time differences it took awhile. But she came through for us and we were able to leave on the 4th day. We were able to get tickets for the last Delta flight to leave Melbourne. They are no longer flying to the US. We have second-guessed our decision to leave in the first place, but now know that our travel insurance wouldn't have covered anything if we had chosen not to go just because of "fear" of the virus. But, because we were officially quarantined, we will be able to recover some of our costs.

Australia is about a week behind the US. Their schools are still open. The quarantine for us took effect at Midnight and we arrived in the country at 5AM. We were 5 hours too late to have been able to enjoy at least some of Australia. But we can say we were there and are very thankful to be home.

We left on March 14 (March 15 there) and left on March 19 (there) and arrived home March 19 (here). We were in quarantine 3 full days, left on the 4th day.
Finding Old Landmines with Today's Technology

Researchers are using AI to search satellite images for unexploded bombs dropped in Cambodia during the Vietnam War.

The system uses object recognition algorithms that detect the unique features of bomb craters, including their shapes, colors, textures, and sizes. These algorithms then scan satellite images for signals of the craters.

The Ohio State University team first used the system to find craters in a village in the province of Prey Veng, a heavily bombed area around 30 kilometers from the Vietnam border.

The model increased the bomb crater detection by more than 160 percent over standard objective recognition algorithms.

The researchers then combined the model with military records of bombs dropped in the area and demining reports on unexploded ordnance in the ground.

This led them to estimate that 44% to 50% of carpet bombs around the village remain unexploded.

A new approach to demining

In March 1969, the US began secret carpet-bombing raids in Cambodia to stop North Vietnam transporting soldiers and supplies through the nation and into South Vietnam. By the time the four-year campaign was over, hundreds of thousands of tons of explosives had been dropped on the Southeast Asian country.

Millions of active mines still litter the Southeast Asian country. The Mines Advisory Group (MAG) estimates that more than 64,000 people in Cambodia have been killed or injured by explosives since 1979. Every week another body is added to that total.

Clearing these mines is a dangerous and laborious process. Deminers typically have to search fields for bombs with metal and radar detectors, and then dig them out with shovels. The Ohio State University method could provide a better way to find them.

“The process of demining is expensive and time-intensive, but our model can help identify the most vulnerable areas that should be demined first,” said Erin Lin, an assistant professor at Ohio State University who co-led the study.

Vietnam War POW Meets Widow of Pilot who Shot His Plane Down

Lt. Col. James Williams has something better than a bucket list.

“I don’t like the word ‘bucket list’ because it makes it feel like you’re getting ready to die,” said the North Memphis native and Vietnam War veteran. “I call it my ‘living list.’”

Williams completed a significant piece of that list in November, when he returned to Hanoi, Vietnam, to gain closure from his time at war. North Vietnamese forces captured Williams after his jet was shot down in May 1972 and held him prisoner until March 1973.

“The whole purpose, in a nutshell, was it being a healing mission to put us back in that environment,” said Williams, 75, of the trip organized by the Valor Administration, Vietnam-USA Friendship members and North Vietnamese combat veterans.

What Williams didn’t know was he would meet the widow of the North Vietnamese pilot who shot his jet down. Through Nguyen Thi Lam, he learned more about her late husband, Do Van Lanh.

Williams felt uneasy when he first met her. Once they started talking through an interpreter, the tension began to fade and Williams found some closure. Lam shared pictures of Lanh, and she said she was sorry it had to be her husband who shot Williams down. “That kind of broke the ice a bit,” Williams said.

Williams was soon to wrap up his tour when his F-4D Phantom fighter jet got shot down on May 20, 1972. “It was air-to-air engagement,” Williams said.

His jet, hit by a missile from Lanh, forced Williams to eject and North Vietnamese forces captured him. He ended up imprisoned at the “Hanoi Hilton.”

Earlier this year, Williams connected with a Valor Administration representative who notified him of the trip to Vietnam, a golden opportunity to complete part of his living list.

“Some of the guys kept saying, ‘Have you told Colonel what we plan on doing?’” Williams said. “The plan for me was to meet the pilot who shot me down, but he passed away in 1980, so they had me meet his wife.”

Beyond meeting Lam and North Vietnam veterans, Williams got to experience how much Hanoi had changed since he left as a just-released prisoner of war in 1973.

“It was something that I wanted to do but didn’t think I would have the opportunity to do,” Williams said.

(Military.com / 1/6/2020)

(Thomas Macaulay / Neural / 3/25/2020)
Upcoming Events / Articles

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4. Page 4 - Meeting notes.
5. Page 5 - Other Than Honorable.
6. Page 6 - A Trip to Australia, NOT!