

# INTERCHANGE ONLINE



THE OFFICIAL ONLINE NEWSPAPER OF THE  
NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL

Vol. 31 Issue 04

Veteran's News that needs to be Read

WINTER 2021



## IN MEMORIAM



VVA #20 Grant M. Wideman

VVA #49 David Hall, Fred Hillmann, Tom Mazzola, Charles Schiavo.  
Arthur Smith

VVA #72 Peter Manolio

VVA #77 Donald M. Kraft, Michael "Mike" Walker Western District  
Director, Larry R. Fuller

VVA #82 William Lomnicki

VVA #377 Rene A. Sylvester

VVA #803 Michael J. Hughes

At-Large Patrick B. Doyle, Anthony Franzone

**MATHEY REST IN PEACE**

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*Hope that you have PEACE in your world,  
and JOY in your heart this Christmas, Chanukah,  
Ramadan, Kwanza, & Feliz Navidad and all year round!*



**VVA-NYSC Meeting Dates 2022**  
 January 21, 22,  
 April 08, 09  
 June 17, 18,  
 Sept. 23, 24

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

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**President's Report**

Ned D. Foote

This edition may or not be here before Christmas but Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all.

This past 2 years have taken a toll on VVA, and we are getting back to meetings and such, but I still do not see allot of our enthusiasm we had prior to COVID, and we need to get that back.

In this issue you will see allot written on the Convention. I hope not to repeat what members wrote but I do need to write about President Rowan. We all need to thank him for his leadership at the helm of VVA for past 16 years. John has been one of my best friends since I first met him back in 1981. He was that giant redhead who talked constantly and me saying to myself who is that guy. Over the years I got to know who that guy was and there can be no one who could lead this group like he can. Yes, he still might talk too much, but we would have not gotten anywhere with Congress if not for John Rowan. His ability to talk with those powers and they recognized who he was and what he knows. The many times he has testified in Congress and Senate on whole host of Veteran issues he was the one to stand out. Not to belittle the other organizations but if our legislators did not write those Commanders name down, they would forget who they are as they change every year. John is a constant and they only refer to John as John. Not his title and they only ask most questions to John.

That I think is what VVA has lost in the latest election. I will give new President McManus congratulations and think he will lead us as we go forward. He also has been around forever, and I believe will give his best for this organization as John has for 16 years. Jack may not have the gift of gab but I am sure of his ability to lead us.

Thank you, John, and do not think you have the value anymore but we in NY still believe in you and need you to stay active with us.

We have lost too many members of late and key members in our State Council and recently Mike Walker our Western Director. The Western District will be electing a new Director in January and I am sure that person will show the same commitment to the State Council as Mike Walker had given to us. Mike will be missed for sure. We also have Joe Ingino recovering from his bladder cancer and still in Nursing home, but we hope he gets better soon and comes back to us. We will have State Council elections in June as per our VVA-NYSC By-Laws.

We just held our BOD meeting beginning of month. We did not meet last year because of COVID so we did have very productive meeting. We did go over the amendments and resolutions that were passed at Convention. There is nothing we need to change to our by-laws so that is good. Big resolution that was passed is that we will be a last man organization. Do not know what that will all mean but the new leaders will have to figure that all out. One thing I know is we cannot keep kicking that can down the road. Each year we get older, and we lose more members each year. Let's get this figured out.

**(Continue on pg. 5)**



### New York Vietnam Veterans Foundation

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

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

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

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

We have an updated database of agencies that provide:

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

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

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

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

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

President Francisco Muñiz III

Vice President Ned D. Foote

Treasurer Grant T. Coates

Secretary Nick Valenti

Directors Sam Hall

Stan May

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

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

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National meeting will start again this January we hope. I will be attending as State President as I had stepped down prior to Convention as Chair of National Finance Committee. I served on this committee since 2004 and as Chair since 2009. I felt I have done all I can in this position and time for another to take a turn. I have stated to new Officers that I am around if they ever need my help and have not disappeared. I do intend to join the Benefits Committee as I need to know what is going on with our Service Officer program. Dee and Butch are working extremely hard up there in Buffalo and I do not hear anything from National level.

So New Year begins and hopefully we return to normal.

### Secretary's Report

Francisco Muñiz III

I am sorry to inform you that the State Council, VVA-NYSC E-Newspaper, Interchange, did not win the E-Newspaper award this year. It went for the third time to the Florida State Council, RECON. I am giving you the link for you to peruse their newspaper and give input on how I can make our newspaper better! Their link is: VVA Florida State Council E-Recon ([campaign-archive.com](http://campaign-archive.com)). I want to thank all those Chapters that submitted articles for each edition.

### VVA NATIONAL AWARDS CRITERIA

AND THE NOMINEES ARE... Each convention year, VVA presents awards to VVA members and organizations. Those awards are for outstanding service and dedication to Vietnam veterans and the issues affecting them and their families. Nominations are submitted by VVA leaders or are a result of a committee recommendation. Award decisions are made by VVA's national officers, by the National Board of Directors, or by the National Awards Committee, depending on the type of award. An exception to the criteria for the nominations in the following categories may be considered only by the VVA National President.

### State Council Newspaper & E-Mail Newspaper of the Year

The submission process for Chapter Newsletter and E-Mail Newsletter of the Year and State Council Newspaper and E-Mail Newspaper of the Year is by self-nomination. For the Chapter Newsletter and Email Newsletter of the Year award, nominations should be submitted by the Chapter President and contain his or her signature, as well as that of the Newsletter Editor and the State Council President. The State Council President also must attach a letter of support to the nomination form. If no State Council President exists, the nomination form with signature and letter of support should be submitted by the Regional Director.

For the State Council Newspaper and E-Mail Newspaper of the Year, award nominations must be submitted by the State President and contain his or her signature, as well as that of the newspaper editor and the regional director. The regional director also must include a letter of support. To be eligible for an award, a newspaper, newsletter, or e-mail newsletter (1) must be published by a VVA State Council that is tax-exempt under Section 501(C)(19) (war veterans organizations) of the Internal Revenue Code; (2) must have a publisher who is an officer or director of the VVA State Council; and (3) must say that it is the publication of the VVA State Council. A newspaper or newsletter that is published by an organization that is tax-exempt under Section (501)(c)(3) (religious, charitable, scientific, or educational organizations) is not eligible for an award. A nomination for the newsletter or newspaper award must include the official nomination form, along with five copies of the three most recent editions of the publication. **(Continue on pg. 6)**



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**Publications will be judged on editorial content, readability, organization, clarity of expression, layout, and graphics.**

### **VVA CHAPTER AND STATE COUNCIL WEBSITES OF THE YEAR**

The submission process for the Website of the Year is by self-nomination. Nominations should be submitted by the Chapter or State Council President and contain his or her signature, as well as that of the Webmaster. The State Council President also must attach a letter of support to the nomination form. If no State Council President exists, the nomination form with signature and letter of support should be submitted by the Regional Director. To be eligible for an award, the Website (1) must be published by a VVA Chapter or State Council that is tax-exempt under Section 501(C) (19) (war veterans organizations) of the Internal Revenue Code; (2) must have a publisher who is an officer or director of a VVA Chapter or State Council; (3) must say that it is the website of a VVA Chapter or State Council; and must not be the work of a contracted professional. A Website that is published by an organization that is tax-exempt under Section (501) (c)(3) (religious, charitable, scientific, or educational organizations) is not eligible for an award. A nomination for the Website must include the official nomination form, along with the URL (website address), and will be judged on editorial content, readability, organization, clarity of expression, layout, and graphics.

### **The VVA Convention:**

You will find many articles on the convention in this issue. My impression was that it was not presented in a professional manner. We had no representation of local mayor, local, state or federal elected officials to Welcome Us to their city. It felt like they did not want us there!

The Constitutional Amendments went very professional with chair of the Constitution Committee, Leslie DeLong. The Resolutions were a cluster\$%%&&&^. Individual in charge of 2021 Resolution Committee was not all there. Didn't know what tab or sections we were discussing.

The buffets were a disaster. Franks, hockey pucks and missing rolls, buns, & salads! Difficult for handicapped (wheel chair, walkers, canes) veterans to carry their food to no available tables. A waste of \$40 per person! The main dinner was not any better with any choice of meats, fish or vegan. The only winner was Ted Wilkinson and Charlie who were able to eat all the meats that people were giving away! Even the hotel restaurants were not doing their dinners but only buffets for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

The Election: quite a surprise for everyone! Most thought that the same ticket would run again. It was a shock to hear the day that most of us arrived that Jack McManus from Michigan would run off the floor, as it is permitted in our Constitution and Election rules, against incumbent John Rowan.

The position of Vice President was won by Tom Burke (incumbent) against Jake Barsottini. The Treasurer's position was won by Linda Schwartz (CT) who ran off the floor against Wayne Reynolds. The position of Secretary was unopposed and Bill Meeks won.

Region II (NY, NJ, PA, Del.) and Region V (MI, OH, IN, IL) voted for John Rowan **(Continue on pg.. 7)**

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while the rest of the regions went for Jack McManus. Unfortunately, NY did not have their full contingent of delegates because some Chapters did not send any delegates to this convention. It felt like the memberships are closing down Chapters and is not interested in its functions.

Region II had 90 delegates, while Region III had the most with 161 delegates. All Region Directors ran unopposed except Region IV. All incumbent Region Directors won the election.

The At-Large Directors, 7 out of 18 that were running were incumbents. We have three new At-Large members elected. I hope that this new leadership group will lead VVA to reach its goals for veteran's healthcare, benefits and for the future of the new veterans. Congratulations to all who won!

Next major event: **2022 VVA NATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE**

Join us at our next major event for our National Leadership Conference at the Hyatt Hotel in Greenville, South Carolina on August 9, 2022 – August 13, 2022

PS; This is the link you need to download to send to National and State Council for Deceased Notification:

<https://vva.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/VVA-AVVA-Deceased-Member-Information.pdf>

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEWLY ELECTED OFFICERS OF VVA NATIONAL

<b>President</b> Jack McManus (MI)	Votes 400	<b>Vice President</b> Tom Burke (OH)	Votes 377
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<b>Secretary</b> Bill Meeks (TX)	546	<b>Treasurer</b> Linda Schwartz (CT)	436
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<b>At-Large Directors: (10)</b>	Votes		Votes
Dottie Barickman (NE)	482	Richard Lindbeck (WI)	324
Charlie Hobbs (TN)	443	Dan Stenvold (ND)	315
Sandie Wilson (MI)	386	Charles Montgomery (VA)	312
Gumersindo Gomez (MA)	347	Dennis Howland (UT)	307
Kerwin Stone (TX)	346	Pete Peterson (OK)	306

<b>Region Directors: (9)</b>	Votes
Region 1 Skip Hochreich (MA)	28
Region 2 Ted Wilkinson (PA)	80
Region 3 Rossie Nance (NC)	126
Region 4 Spence Davis (GA)	42
Region 5 John Riling (MI)	97
Region 6 John Margowski (WI)	37
Region 7 Dennis Andras (LA)	36
Region 8 Francisco Ivarra (WA)	26
Region 9 Dick Southern (CA)	56

**Western District Report****VVA Chapters #20, #77, #193, #268, #459, #865, #978****Michael M. Walker**

June 28, 1949 - November 10, 2021

Walker, Michael M.; November 10, 2021; dearest father of Lisa (Jim) Cox and Susan (Blaine) Witt; devoted grandfather to Owen and Todd; he was predeceased by siblings, and survived by his former wife Irene Walker, nieces, nephews and his special companion Marcia Murphy. Michael was past president of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 77 and the Western District Director of the NYS Council of Vietnam Veterans. Michael dedicated his retirement to the well being and recognition of all veterans. The family and friends were present Wednesday, November 17th at the (Amherst Chapel) AMIGONE FUNERAL HOME, INC.. Family and friends attended the celebration of a Mass of Christian Burial Thursday, November 18th in St. Mary Church. Interment was held on Monday, November 22nd at 11 AM in WNY National Veterans Cemetery, 1254 Indian Falls Road, Corfu, NY. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to VVA Chapter 77, 47 Main Street, Tonawanda, NY 14150. Share condolences online at [www.AMIGONE.COM](http://www.AMIGONE.COM)

VVA-NYSC Officers and Board of Directors members would like to extend our heartfelt sympathy to the family of Mike Walker. We would like also to acknowledge his outstanding leadership as president of VVA #77 and for his leadership as Western District Director for the many years that he served in that position.

**May He Rest In Peace****To Western District only:**

Ned D. Foote—President VVA-NYSC

The passing of Mike Walker has left his job as Western Director open and according to our by-laws we must hold an election as the first order of business at next State meeting.

Our next meeting is scheduled for January 22nd. Grant Coates will be running the election for Western District delegates at 8:30 Saturday morning and we convene SC meeting at 9.

We have a weighted voting system depending on number of delegates you are allowed. One delegate can hold 5 votes. So if your chapter is allowed 2 delegates and you send one they would have 5 votes. If you send 2 then you have 10 votes.

All candidates send your letter of intent to Grant as soon as you can so we can arrange ballots and such. You will be allowed 5 minutes to address your district.

Letters can be sent, [gcoates@stny.rr.com](mailto:gcoates@stny.rr.com).

**VVA Chapter 865, Jamestown**

R. Jay Book—Vice President

On 18 Dec 21 we will be having a children's Christmas Party, and as in the past I will be the Grinch

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stealing the presents (in fun). This will be followed by are Adults Ugly Sweater party.

We have been experiencing vary sparce turnouts for our meeting due to ill health, we have 3 members that I know of that have COVID.

At the convention I attended the Constitutional outbreak session, the Homeless Veterans outbreak session (recruited on to that National committee), and I cannot recall the other outbreak that I went to. I do agree with Ned, that the buffet style serving of the food. We are getting to old for that type of crap.

**REGION 2** | Delaware, New Jersey,  
New York, Pennsylvania

### Ted Wilkinson Membership Report

The covid 19 pandemic has lasted over a year and a half and during this time period New York State VVA membership has increased by more than 250!

### Welcome to the VVA members that have transferred into a local New York State chapter

Vincent J. Aceste	Chapter 49	Robert R. Risi	Chapter 72	Jerome J. Merkle	Chapter 77
John J. McGuire	Chapter 82	William E. Baker	Chapter 82	Kevin B. Cassin	Chapter 82
Don Amblo	Chapter 82	George Reif	Chapter 82	Richard A. Jeranek	Chapter 82
Andrew F. Carson	Chapter 82	Wayne A. Vigietta	Chapter 82	Mark W. Walsh	Chapter 82
Arthur Adair	Chapter 82	Robert A. McCarthy	Chapter 82	William P. Maloney	Chapter 82
James E. MacDonald	Chapter 82	William J. Howard	Chapter 82		

If your chapter would like wants a list of at large members in the locale of your chapter contact:  
twilkinson@vva.org 585-322-6722

### IMPORTANT UPDATE

Ned D. Foote

**On our January 22nd meeting we will again hold our Memorial Service for our members who have passed away. We always had this in January but due to COVID last January we did not have but we did last September. Our turnout was not that great and we want to go back to January time frame.**

**Here are our meeting dates for 2022.** We had to **change April meeting** to the 9<sup>th</sup>. These are Saturday dates only: Please make hotel reservations soon. If you reserve all the dates then it will be much easier to cancel because this hotel fills up and you will not get a room. And if you do need to cancel and don't you will be charged. Tioga Downs, (607) 699-3900.

**Jan: 22<sup>nd</sup> Ap. 9<sup>th</sup> June 18<sup>th</sup> Elections for all positions Sep. 24<sup>th</sup>**

**August 9th to the 13<sup>th</sup> 2022 National Leadership Conference in Greenville SC. Check website for VVA.org for updates on hotel reservations.**

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 NYSC Membership Affairs Committee 2021 Winter Interchange									
		Chapter	District	1-Dec-21 Members	28-Feb-'21 Members	19-Jun-21 Attendance	25-Sep-21 Attendance	FY '21-'22 Delegates	Convention Delegates
0	0	AT LARGE		976	966			10	8
1	8	ALBANY	E	65	63			2	2
2	11	SUFFOLK	S	525	521			11	2
3	20	ROCHESTER	W	619	618	X	X	13	0
4	32	QUEENS	S	239	239	X		5	1
5	49	WESTCHESTER	E	358	362	X	X	8	2
6	72	BROOKLYN	S	188	194	X	X	4	2
7	77	BUFFALO	W	694	682	X	X	14	7
8	79	GLEN FALLS	E	71	72	X	X	2	2
9	82	NASSAU	S	330	319	X	X	7	3
10	85	ONEONTA	C	41	42	X	X	1	0
11	103	SYRACUSE	C	198	200	X	X	4	2
12	126	MANHATTAN	S	110	111	X	X	3	3
13	140	ORANGE COUNTY	E	124	121	X	X	3	0
14	193	WARSAW	W	158	141	X	X	4	1
15	268	NIAGARA COUNTY	W	116	117			3	1
16	333	ROCKLAND	E	207	211	X		5	4
17	377	FINGER LAKES	C	94	94	X		2	0
18	421	STATEN ISLAND	S	266	267			6	5
19	459	DUNKIRK	W	41	46			1	0
20	480	OWEGO	C	81	82		X	2	0
21	541	PUTNUM/DUTCHESS	E	36	36	X	X	1	1
22	704	AUBURN	C	47	47	X	X	1	1
23	803	ELMIRA	C	240	242			5	0
24	827	HERKIMER	C	23	22			0	0
25	865	JAMESTOWN	W	153	153	X	X	4	1
26	869	DUTCHESS/COLUMBIA	E	32	32			1	0
27	896	ENDICOTT	C	43	43			1	0
28	944	UTICA	C	153	154			4	1
29	978	FREWSBURG	W	37	37	X	X	1	0
<b>TOTALS</b>				<b>6265</b>	<b>6234</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>EASTERN DISTRICT</b>			<b>7</b>	<b>893</b>	<b>924</b>	<b>5</b>		<b>22</b>	
<b>SOUTHERN DISTRICT</b>			<b>6</b>	<b>1658</b>	<b>1604</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>36</b>	
<b>CENTRAL DISTRICT</b>			<b>9</b>	<b>920</b>	<b>878</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>20</b>	
<b>WESTERN DISTRICT</b>			<b>7</b>	<b>1818</b>	<b>1777</b>	<b>5</b>		<b>40</b>	

Each Chapter shall be entitled to one (1) vote for its first 25 members. A Chapter which has fifty (50) members shall be entitled to a second vote at the Convention. For each full block of fifty (50) members thereafter, the Chapter shall be entitled to one (1) additional vote. In the event that a Chapter shall have less than twenty-five (25) members, the chapter shall receive no vote, but the members thereof shall be included in the number of non-affiliated members for representation by the State Council, as set forth by PVA Constitution. Chapter delegates to the convention must be selected from the Chapter membership or from the membership of the state in which the chapter is located. Updated 11/3/21

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## Central District Report

Nick Valenti

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

My Chapter participated in the finalization of their Cayuga County Vietnam Veterans Memorial on September 30, 2021.

### VVA Chapter #704 Report

James Bryant, Corpsman

## *Cayuga County Vietnam Veterans Memorial*

*30 September 2021*

*"Our Journey"*



On Thursday, September 30, 2021 a journey that began in 2005 came to a long-sought end. VVA Chapter #704 of Cayuga County witnessed the assembly of the Cayuga County Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Centerport Aqueduct Park located at 2462 New York Route 31 in the Town of Brutus. VVA Chapter #377 out of Dryden, New York joined the Cayuga County Chapter on this celebrated day. A dry eye was hard to find as all in attendance witnessed a one-of-a-kind memorial taking shape before their eyes. A memorial dedicated to **remembering** the sacrifices of our Vietnam veterans and their families, **honoring** the service of each veteran and **teaching** future generations that there is a cost to freedom.

Each panel of the Memorial has a story to tell.

The front center panel has a detailed map of Vietnam showing the location of each one of our County's dead. It also puts the country of Vietnam into perspective with Southeast Asia.

The rear center panel of the Memorial carries the 40-year history of our involvement in that country.

The two front inside panels contain the facial images of the 29 Cayuga County service personnel killed in Vietnam along with their dates of death, home of origin, where they are interred and their branch of service.

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The rear two inside panels reflect the loss of life by those men and women in uniform who served in Vietnam and died upon returning because of their service. These are perpetual panels and names will be added as the effects of various exposures and the effects of PTSD take their toll on those who made it back home.

The two front outside panels depict some of the armament and military equipment used in Vietnam as well as our warriors and support personnel in various roles.

Not all the members of Chapter #704 who began this venture were there to see it finally happen. Eugene Davis, Robert McDuffie, Kent Howland, James Miller, Tom Minnoe, Melvin Spurling, Raymond Riley, Luigi Lombardi, Richard Spriggs, Leonard Brewster, and Francis E. Bell Jr. come to mind. I cannot help to think they are smiling down at all of us for a job well done.

### Cayuga County Vietnam Veterans Memorial arrives at Centerport



Aqueduct Park in Weedsport, NY.  
Volunteers arrive to install the memorial.



Approximately 50 people arrive on this early rainy Thursday morning to observe the assembly of the memorial.



Barnett Memorials, of Auburn NY, carefully laid the base of the monument

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Center Panel, Front View

Locations in Vietnam where we lost service members from Cayuga County



Each of the two inner panels identifies the 29 Cayuga County servicemen killed in Vietnam with a picture of their faces.



The inner two panels explain what the “In Memory” Program is and identifies those veterans who returned from the war but died because of their service.





The final back panels are blank to be filled in as more names of those who returned from Vietnam but died because of their service are added.



Eleven members of the VVA Chapter 704 died before seeing the memorial assembled. This structure lives on for them as well as the living



From Left to right:

VVA Chapter #377 members Jim Evener and Gary Napieracz; VVA chapter #704 members Lou Patti, Al Leonard, American Legion Commander Del Jenner, American Legion Post #1776 Carnicelli-Indelicato member Peter Quirk, VVA Chapter #704 member Jerry Fulmer, Nicholas C. Valenti, Bob Jorolemon, James Bryant and Dick Bryant. (Not shown VVA #704 members Leon Gaklik and David Gould).



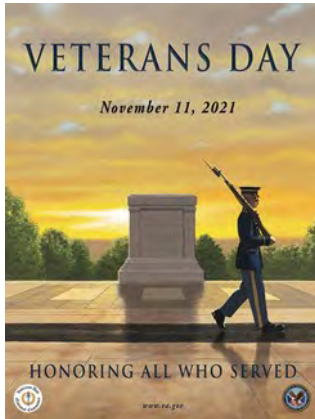
we never forget, those who did not make it home  
The monument has taken 15 years of research, design and fundraising but will forever remind us of their ultimate sacrifice.

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**Eastern District Report  
Sam Hall**

**VVA Chapters #8, #49, #79, #140, #333, #541, #869**

**VVA Chapter #333 Report**



Sunday, November 14, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.

10:00 - Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter #333  
Veterans Memorial Park, Orangeburg, New York 10962  
Veterans Day Ceremony at the VVA Memorial

Bringing Home SSG Booman's Purple Heart

Howard Goldin

On Wednesday, November 10, at 11:15 a.m. there was a ceremony at Spring Valley High School in which we will be bringing "home" SSG Boorman's Purple Heart.

The Purple Heart will be mounted inside the High School for all to see what sacrifices a student of theirs (class of 1940) gave his life for so they can have the freedoms they have today.

Stanley H. Boorman is a 1940 graduate of Spring Valley High School. He was killed in action as mentioned below. His Purple Heart Medal was found in a street fair and returned to Purple Hearts Reunited. The Purple Heart is now mounted on a plaque and our organization wanted to return it to the family. There are no living relatives left and as the current Commander of Chapter 120, Military Order of the Purple Heart and a graduate of Spring Valley High, class of 65, we thought the honorable thing to do was have this Purple Heart returned to the last place he is known to have his roots, Spring Valley High School. We are seeking to put this plaque with his Purple Heart and short information about Mr. Boorman in a showcase at Spring Valley High School.

SSG Stanley H. Boorman

SN: 32432423

Born: 11 APR 1921

871st Bomber Squadron, 497th Bomber Group, Very Heavy

KIA: 10 JAN 1945

Air Medal & Purple Heart & NY Conspicuous Service Cross #13815 (Awarded 26 JAN 1967)

Hometown: Rockland County, NY

77 Scotland Rd, Spring Valley, NY

Buried: Brick Church Cemetery, Spring Valley, NY

Father: Julian S. Boorman (1894-1947)

Louise H. Boorman (B: 12 SEP 1894) (D: 22 MAR 1986)

Enlisted in the Army Air Corps and completed Radar Training. Joined 'Crew A-46' during B-29 aircraft transition and combat crew training at Pratt Army Air Field, Kansas. In September 1944, deployed to the Central Pacific Theatre of Operations and was assigned to 20th Air Force, XXI Bomber Command, 73rd Bomb Wing, 497th Bombardment Group (VH), 871st Bomb Squadron stationed at Isley Field on Saipan in the Mariana Islands. On 9th January 1945 he flew as the Radar Operator aboard a Boeing B-29 Superfortress nicknamed 'MIS BEHAVIN' (Serial #42-24655) tail code: A-Square-46. **(Continue on pg. 16)**

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It was one of 72 aircraft launched in a multi-group formation to bombard the MUSASHINO Aircraft works and NAKAJIMA Aircraft engine factory near Tokyo, Japan. After the bomb run, his #2 engine was struck by an out of control NAKAKIMA KI-44 'Tojo' fighter plane. His bomber was last sighted by B-29 A-Square-48 ten miles east of Choshi Point off mainland Japan at 20,000 feet and under attack from 15 enemy fighter planes. He was killed when his aircraft crashed in the KATORI District of Chiba Prefecture on the east side of Tokyo. The next day a B-17 'DUMBO' search plane was dispatched to the ocean area off Choshi Point, but no wreckage or survivors were ever found. He was declared killed in action one year later.

### **Honor Guard:**

Spring Valley Police (reason – before Stanley was in the military, he was a resident of East Ramapo and a student of the Spring Valley school system, with SV High being his last school). Post 199 American Legion (only military active organization in the village).

### **Chapter 333 Members,**

Well we just completed the first leg of our Holiday Fund raising at the Palisades Mall with another weekend to go in December. If I were to begin with all the names of the Chapter volunteers who spent time helping in this endeavor it would read like a roster. So, Thank you to each of you who did take time away from your family these past two days to not only fund raise, but promote our Chapter and Vietnam veterans overall.

As usually is the case, all at one time or another engaged in speaking with folks from all walks of life, people who took the time to "THANK" us for our service and especially those expressing appreciation for the small "thank you for your support" small envelope containing the name of a fellow Nam brother who made the ultimate sacrifice which we handed out to any who wished to have one regardless if he/she made a donation.

In a time of division in our Country on more than a few matters, interacting with shoppers young and maybe some a little older like we are, the chance to shake hands, smile with one another and actually teach/inform those curious about our time as young soldiers (that includes all branches!) it is a pleasure in doing so. This I believe is also an obligation on our part as we are living history, the opportunity to share with all our story which was received graciously and respectfully. So again, thank you to all of my Chapter members who helped share in this entire experience, I hope each found this as enriching as I do.

For those who could not attend these past two days and would care to do so, next month we will return to the same place for part 2 of our Chapter fund raiser, all are welcome to join in for any length of time you choose! By the way, we raised a total of \$680.00 for the past two days. Thank you! Roy

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## 2021 VVA NATIONAL CONVENTION CHAPTER 333 REPORT.

*Greetings to Chapter 333 members along with all other interested parties. The following is a detailed synopsis from the four chapter delegates who were in attendance at said convention in Greensboro North Carolina beginning Monday November 1, through Saturday November 6, 2021.*

*The four delegates Howard Goldin, Ed Frank, Marcus Arroyo and I, Roy Tschudy arrived on Monday checking into our hotel rooms via our confirmation from earlier dates.*

*Many other delegates from all over the entire Country were doing so at the same time, each representing their own state. We had an exchange of quick greetings with many other delegates in the lobby area inquiring how long each one's journey was and from where they reside.*

*Tuesday the four Chapter delegates arrived at the VVA Convention registration office to receive our proper credentials which is required to attend any and all meetings along with the voting process.*

*That evening the four of us attended the WELCOME HOME PARTY, although the food was lacking in quality the meeting and interacting with other delegates was invaluable. Speaking with these other veterans from all corners of our Country and exchanging ideas along with sharing a few personal thoughts is immeasurable!*

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*Wednesday November 3 began the real part of why we were in attendance, at 08:30 hours the convention floor was opened for all delegates, at 0900 began the convention opening session.*

*In order was the Invocation, the presentation of colors, our National Anthem, Pledge of Allegiance, introduction of officers, a WELCOME statement from the then president John Rowan, same from the State Council President and finally from the AVVA Janna Henshaw.*

*The keynote speaker was Lt. General Ronald Ray Blanck who spoke on his respect and appreciation of the VVA and the Vietnam veteran. Following a five minute break we were then presented instructions from the following committees as per protocol.*

*We attended Credentials Committee, Rules Committee, Adoption of Agenda, Constitution Committee, Resolutions Committee, Elections Committee and then at last, Announcements.*

*Later that afternoon our Chapter delegates divided between the four members to attend Committee hearings on resolutions, AGENT ORANGE, POW COMMITTEE, PTSD & SUBSTANCE ABUSE COMMITTEE, VETERANS INCARCERATED COMMITTEE.*

*After attending those particular committees, the chapter delegates again divided to attend the following, MEMBERSHIP AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE AND VETERAN BENEFITS COMMITTEE.*

*After a short dinner the four of us met for a Regional 2 Caucus led by State president Ned Foote to discuss the entire day's events.*



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*Thursday at 9 Am the Convention floor was opened for the General Session for another full day of events.*

*The Credentials Committee addressed the delegates followed by Elections Committee, Announcements, and Announcements of VVA Awards (OF WHICH CHAPTER 333 WAS SHUT OUT MUCH TO OUR DISPLEASURE) Recognitions and Introductions, Delegates act on Constitution amendments and then reading and action on resolutions.*

*7 PM N.Y. once again held a Caucus discussing the day's events.*

*Friday morning beginning at 7 AM there was an outside POW/MIA ceremony led by Grant Coates who performed a highly solemn thirty minute reflection on sacrifice and loss.*

*9 AM VVA elections/voting for President and Officers.*

*Friday evening was the "Friday Night Special" a dinner and show with a headliner performer Connor Lorre who was a big hit that evening.*

*Saturday 9 AM the Convention room opened*

*10 AM Convention General Session-Results*

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*Chapter 333 would like to thank former President John Rowan who for many years led the fight for justice, for veteran's rights before Congress on the "HILL". Whether one agree or disagree on all issues, one point cannot be denied, John loves his brother veterans.*

*At the same time, Chapter 333 would like to congratulate and welcome our new incoming President Jack McManus who also has served with the VVA for numerous years. Jack has extensive experience on veteran's affairs and will continue to provide the very best of leadership moving forward.*

*Election Committee, the Announcements, Announcements of VVA Awards (Once again Chapter 333 was shut out much to our displeasure) and finally the VVA AWARDS BANQUET that evening.*

*The following reports submitted on the committees attended by Chapter 333 delegates are as follows:*

*Roy: AGENT ORANGE AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS*

*Marcus: PTSD AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MEMBERSHIP AFFAIRS*

*Howard: POW COMMITTEE AND HEALTH CARE*

*Ed: VETERANS BENEFITS AND HOMELESS VETERANS & ETBO*

## AGENT ORANGE COMMITTEE

*As most of us are aware or should be aware, in the year 2021 three new diseases or as the VA likes to call them "CONDITIONS" have been added to the to the Agent Orange presumptive list.*

*Bladder Cancer*

*Hypothyroidism*

*Parkinsonism*

*I addressed the committee with regard to Hypothyroidism stating the VA even if acknowledging a veteran has been diagnosed with said "CONDITION" they have been issuing a ZERO RATING to the veteran UNLESS he/she has an underlying attached condition. If so, that veteran should ensure his/her doctor will document same for the VA to consider.*

*Another push to file claims is for veteran families with children/grandchildren, if you believe that your child or grandchild has a health issue that "MAY" be linked to your exposure while serving, have them file a claim with the assistance of an accredited VSO. EXPECT THESE CLAIMS TO BE DENIED!!! The important thing is to get these children registered in the VA system! These claims are filed on VBA Form 21-0304, are then sent to the VA regional office in Denver Colorado.*



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## **PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

*Much was what discussed at this particular committee is already in place concerning our Chapter. The ideas to self promote our chapter and or members were a subject of interest to a few delegates on which avenues would best serve each.*

*Again, I addressed said committee stating Chapter 333 endeavors to make us available in a variety of ways such as creating and performing presentations for MEMORIALS, our School program led by Howard Goldin & Ed Frank to educate students and faculty alike has done so many years educating documented number of over 80,000 to date.*

*The subject of SCHOLARSHIPS was also mentioned and once again our chapter has been in the forefront providing numerous scholarships to students and veterans.*

*Notification to newspapers, T.V. stations was additional subject matter but for us chapter 333 it is "old news". One suggestion that was viable is to notify County school boards and make available a veteran to speak at any local H.S. one day a year. Once again, chapter 333 has been doing so at Suffern H.S. for*

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*the past twelve years. In summation, Chapter 333 is the poster child for all mentioned on Public Affairs!*

*The importance of the VVA CONVENTION is much more than the actual minutia of requirements based upon the Constitution, discussing rules, adopting agendas and resolutions.*

*The physical interacting between Vietnam veterans from all over the Country is a marvel. Although separated by states and even some thoughts on our eventual outcome, we are all BROTHERS! Personal stories were shared and some quite heartbreaking to say the least. Camaraderie among us all during this Convention was firmly established. Either simply while standing in a long line to vote, sitting at a dinner event having other delegates sit down at the same table breaking bread and learning from each other. These are elements which cannot occur if done via electronically or even a Zoom meeting. Creating both new friendships on a personal level along with establishing ties between chapters is a fundamental reason why we as Vietnam veterans are indeed a special group of warriors.*

*In closing, the delegates from chapter 333 worked long and hard on everything presented before us with due diligence. I like to think we did our chapter proud as well as N.Y.S state led by President Ned Foote and our state council members.*



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### Memorandum

To: VVA 333 Treasurer & Board of Directors

From: Edward J. Frank, VVA 333 Convention Delegate

Subject: VVA National Convention- Greensboro, NC  
November 1 - November 7, 2021  
Delegate Report

I participated in a number of breakout sessions while a delegate at the Convention. I attended the Veterans Benefit Committee, the Homeless Veterans Committee and the Economic Opportunities Committee. I will provide an explanation of each committee that I attended.

#### **Veterans Benefits Committee**

Moderator John Reilly

A total of 5 resolution offered for retirement by this committee because the VA had satisfactorily completed each of those requests since the conclusion of the last Convention.

VB - 6 Just Compensation for Injuries Sustained by Active-Duty Personnel

VB - 9 DVA Implementation of U.S. Court of Appeal for Veterans Claims

VB - 10 Veterans Benefits & Services

VB -11 Veterans Benefits System

VB - 16 Copy of Military Records upon Discharge



## Resolutions Adopted by the Committee

### **VB-XX PROPOSED RESOLUTION 13**

**Issue:** Ensure that taxpayer-funded medical examinations provided to veterans by the VA are adequate.

**Background:** The VA has never succeeded in implementing a system to ensure compliance with CAVC (Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims) standards when outsourcing C & P examinations. With the standards not clearly defined there were inadequate exam reports produced each year. This resulted in adjudicators who are prohibited from making medical decisions at C & P exams to issue denial of benefits rulings resulting in a waste of taxpayer money.

**Proposed Position:**

- 1) Work with Board of Veterans Appeal, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and Congress to ensure proper training, resources, and time provided to examiners employed or contracted by the VA.
- 2) Work with BVA, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and Congress to promote policies that hold individual examiners and contractor scheduling companies accountable when they produce inadequate examinations.

### **VB -XX**

### **IMPROVED QUALITY AND LEGAL ACCURACY IN VA DECISIONS**

**Issue:** VVA VSO report that the VA DEPT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS has often failed to implement decisions rendered by the CAVC, renders poor quality decisions and continues to create unnecessary delays to claims adjudication.

Background: In the nine years that the CAVC has been in existence many times the DVA is reluctant to follow the courts instructions resulting approximately 75% of the denials are appealed or granted and remanded to the BVA.

Resolution: The Veterans Benefit Committee issued a 7-step program that would help to remedy the problem and provide due process and help the expeditious processing of claims.

**VB - 12 Amendment**

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (DVA)  
SERVICE - CONNECTED DISABILITY COMPENSATION  
PAYMENTS & MILITARY RETIREMENT PAY OFFSET**

Issue: Military retirement pay is offset by the amount of Department of Affairs compensation payable.

Background: Inequities exist where Federal Government retired employees can receive VA disability compensation which does not offset their Federal retirement benefits.

Military Retirement pay is offset for retirees since 2004 who have a less that 50% service- connected disability rating.

Resolution: All veterans should be entitled to concurrent compensation regardless of their combined DVA ratings.

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### **HOMELESS VETERANS COMMITTEE**

Moderator: Sandy Miller

A total of 5 resolutions were offered for retirement because it was determined that they should be combined into a single resolution and adopted by the Committee. HVC 6,7,8 11, and 14 were retired and the Committee offered the below measure.

#### **HVC- XX VA HOMELESS GRANT AND PER DIEM FUNDING**

Issue: Funding and support of the VA HGPD Program has proven to be the most effective too in addressing veteran homelessness

Background: The VA views the program as a reimbursement program when it is recommended that it be a payment program.

Resolution: VVA urges the VA to provide payments for services rather than reimbursement for services it presently provides for transitional housing. Support legislation to establish Supportive Services Staffing Grants for VA Homeless Grant and Per Diem Service Center Grant Awardees. Identify Best Practice Models to address unique needs of women. Continue monitoring and holding accountable entities receiving and distributing funds to assist vulnerable Veteran Families.

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**ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE**

Moderator: Marc Goldsmith

This Committee discussed each of the 5 resolutions adopted at the 19<sup>th</sup> National Convention held in Spokane, Washington on July 15 - 20, 2019.

E-1 Job Opportunities in the Public Sector

E-2 Job Training and Other Services

E-3 Veterans Business

E-18 Comprehensive Employment Resource Development

E-19 Meaningful Job at a Living Wage

All of the above measures dealt with veterans with a preferences when hiring, retaining, and promoting within the public, private, federal, state, and local sectors.

The need for job training, vocational training, competitive testing training and incentives for veterans.

Encouraged the Small Business Administration to provide assistance to veterans seeking to start a business and especially assist disabled veterans in this venture.

Provide continued employment to veterans so that they can secure a stable quality of life and have a meaningful job that provides a living wage.

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Rockland County, NY

2021 - VVA National Convention  
Greensboro, North Carolina - November 1 - 7, 2021

Summary of Convention - 20<sup>th</sup> VVA National Convention/Election  
40 years as an organization

*National Headquarters of VVA, known as The Corporation shall be located in the D.C. offices within or without of New York State. VVA shall maintain in NYS a registered office and agent as required by the Not For Profit Corporation Law of New York State.*

National Board:

*Except as otherwise provided by law or in the Constitution Control & Management of the Corporation and its Funds shall be vested in the National Board.*

*Number of Directors shall be 24> 4 elected officers, 10 at large directors, 9 regional directors and the chair of the conference of the State Council.*

National Convention: *The corporation shall hold a national biennial convention in odd number years at such times, dates and places may be designated by the National Board.*

*Each chapter shall be entitled to 1 vote for its first 25 members. Chapters that have 50 members entitled to a second vote at the*

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*convention for each full block of 50 members thereafter, entitled to 1 extra vote.*

**Fiscal Year:**

*The fiscal year of the corporation shall begin on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of March and end on the last day of February in each year.*

In order to get into the Convention (Hotel & meeting rooms) you had to go through a Covid screening check which required your vaccine card, temperature check. These processing centers were "manned" by VA nurses who did this screening every day and you got a color-coded sticker to show you have passed Covid Screening. One delegate and his spouse had Covid and was confined to their room for the entire convention.

Also, upon checking in, your four delegates were handed a pin from the Tennessee delegation which said "Don't Give Away the VVA". There was an undercurrent for change and members were not happy about bringing in other organizations.

We also learned that 70 percent of today's veterans have a college degree or better. AVVA has over 10,000 members and this will come up later as a major importance.

Region 2 came to the Convention with 62 delegates and there was a total of 684 delegates nationwide.

**Delegate Assignment:**

*As your delegate, I was assigned to the **POW Committee** which was moderated by Grant Coat, who heads this Committee. Grant has been back to Vietnam as a National Board Chair, bringing back information of the possible whereabouts of remains and has established a clear rapport*

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*with his Vietnamese counterpart. It costs about one million dollars per dig.*

*We also had former POW (7 ½ yrs.) Bill Robinson with us, who informed us that there are only 404 Vietnam POWs still alive and will meet at the Nixon Library 2023 for their reunion.*

*To date, we still have 1,584 missing in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, South China sea. WWW:DPAA.mil (Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency lists all stats on POW/MIA's) Should you ever need or want posters re: POW/MIA day requested them free of charge from the National League of Families.*

*My next assignment was the Health Care Committee who had several speakers.*

*The VA is pushing for privatization i.e.: QTC and Urgent Care centers on weekends if your centers allow it. We must use what we have or we will lose it.*

*It was decided that we will keep HEP C testing in all facilities. The VVA is demanding Community Care by properly funded in a timely fashion. The VA is taking funding internally to fund projects externally.*

*The VVA is also carefully watching the Care Givers Program (Mission Act) of 2018 to make sure someone rated 70% or more can be cared for by a loved one.*

*Homeless Veterans & special needs population is now rated at 37,252 Vets.*

*We had the Director of the VA as one of our keynote speakers.*



***Agent Orange handout: The rainbow of herbicides of the Vietnam War ERA:***

***Agent Green 2,4,5T used 1962 365 drums, 20,056 gallons.***

***Agent Pink 2,4,5T used 1961-63 1,315 drums, 72,256 gallons.***

***Agent Purple 2,4-D, 2,4,5T used 1962 - 1965 12,475 drums, 685,474 gallons***

***Agent Blue Cacodylic Acid used 1966-1972 29,330 drums, 1,611,619 gallons.***

***Agent White 2,4D Picloram used 1966-1972 104,800 drums, 5,758,528 Gallons***

***Agent Orange 2,4D 2,4,5T used 1965 - 1960 208,330 drums, 11,447,272 gallons***

***A total of 356,615 drums, 19,595,205 gallons DIXON  
And you wonder why we and our children suffer from side effects?***

***7:00 - 10:00 pm Regional Caucuses, all candidates made presentations  
with Q&A***

***OBSERVATION: in our last convention it was hammered that we will be a light's out organization. There was NO discussion of this at this convention. In our last convention we realized that there is no way two members can handle all the breakout rooms with importation information that has to be brought back to the membership.***



*Last convention is cost over \$12,000.00. Keeping this in mind that we have a fiduciary responsibility to this chapter, we chose to drive to North Carolina, unlike most of our fellow New Yorkers who flew. Our approximate bill this time should be around \$5,200.00.*

*I went into this convention with the thought that we bring in the Iraq/Afghan vet. It is clearly understood that they do not want our help. They are a tech savvy organization that does not want to have traditional meetings, but rather zoom/tweeter or whatever other resources they have.*

*For me, there is nothing better than getting together at a National Convention with an exchange of ideas and the fraternization that comes with that. We need to continue to have a voice in our future and apparently our future is now going to be in the hands of the AVVA. The AVVA is our spouses and children, who will eventually take over our organization. We are leaving a legacy of problems by gifting our children and grandchildren with the effects of Agent Orange and they need to be able to defend themselves with our out-reach. They are our future.*

*This report is respectfully submitted by Past President & delegate*

*Howard Goldin*

*Nov. 13, 2021*

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## POW/MIA REPORT

Grant T. Coates

On October 1, 2021, Rear Admiral Jon Kreitz, USN (Ret), former DPAA Deputy Director for Operations (DDO), joined the National League of POW/MIA Families as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), replacing Ann Mills-Griffiths, who retired after the League's 2019-2021 Board of Directors voted overwhelmingly to approve his hiring. We wish Ms. Mills-Griffiths much happiness in her retirement from the CEO position.

The last active duty assignment Rear Admiral Jon Kreitz, USN (Ret) held was Deputy Director for Operations of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency where he led record increases in the return of Americans missing from past conflicts. He retired from the U.S. Navy in December 2019 after 37 plus years of service.

Ms. Mills-Griffiths was reelected by the Board to again serve as Chair of the Board. In the capacity of Chair, she will continue the work of the League Office, and participate in and chair the quarterly Board of Directors Meetings.

The POW/MIA Committee and Veterans Initiative Program of Vietnam Veterans of America have maintained a very positive relationship with the League in efforts to continue awareness and educational programs. Past meetings with both Rear Admiral Kreitz and Ms. Mills-Griffiths have assisted VVA with positive informational dissemination, educational programs and general history of the continuing mission to obtain the fullest possible accounting of all missing U.S. personnel for all conflicts.

According to the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Agency (DPAA), as of 10 August, 2021 there are 1,584 still missing from the Vietnam War.

The countries and number of missing are Vietnam-1,244 (North Vietnam-442, South Vietnam-802), Laos-285, Cambodia-48, and the Peoples Republic of China-7.

The total accounted for since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is 998 Americans. Since the April 30, 1975 end of the Vietnam War, recoveries were made in the following countries: Vietnam, 673; Laos, 280, Cambodia, 42 and the PRC, 3. In addition, 63 US personnel were accounted for between 1973 and 1975, and recovered in the following countries: 9 were from Laos, 53 from Vietnam, and 1 from Cambodia, equating to an overall total of 1,061.

As of 6 October, 2021, DPAA (Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Agency) has announced the identification of 351 of the 394 Sailors and Marines missing from the U.S.S. Oklahoma, sunk in Pearl Harbor on 7 December, 1941. Including the historical identifications (35 prior to 2007), there have been 386 identifications. There remain 43 unidentified from the sinking of the U.S.S. Oklahoma.

The Veterans Initiative Program needs your help. Objects taken from the battlefields of Vietnam are more than souvenirs or war trophies. Maps, stories, after-action reports, pictures, military items may have a story that could result in finding the location of missing war dead. Contact the Veterans Initiative at:

Veterans Initiative Program  
Vietnam Veterans of America  
8719 Colesville Rd., Suite 100 Silver Spring, Maryland 20910 vi@vva.org

**VVA National Convention Greensboro, N.C. November 2 - 6 2021**  
**by Nick DeLeo**

Delegates at the 2021 VVA National Convention held in Greensboro, N.C. had to endure Covid-19 protocols when checking into the Sheraton hotel. Masking was required in all common areas of this convention center and proof of vaccination had to be provided and temperature taken before a preregistered delegate could receive their packet of information and VVA backpack.

Medical personnel were provided by the local VA facility in Greensboro. They were friendly and very professional when interacting with delegates and their significant others. Volunteers with Greensboro VVA Chapter 860 assisted with this process to verify each person is fully vaccinated.

When entering the convention floor all delegates had their temperature taken and had a colored sticker placed on their lanyard along with a Covid Vaccinated sticker. This took extra time to seat delegates each day of the convention resulting in a few snide comments to those performing these tasks. Delegates had to wear masks during all sessions and in the hearings.

There were several SNAFUs during the reading of the resolutions that caused consternation among the delegates due to a concern the chairpersons weren't prepared to address proposed resolutions before those assembled. These delays were highlighted by repeated requests by delegates to thoroughly understand the changes offered. Challenges were made to ensure that delegates had the most accurate information presented. Those in leadership positions had a difficult time convincing many delegates they had control of the situation and good solutions.

Hearings on proposed resolutions were at times chaotic due to delegates asking to have certain changes not reported out or retired to be voted upon to be brought back to the convention floor for consideration and further discussion. Locations of several hearings were moved and didn't correspond to the location listed on the schedule. It made delegates late to hearings and led to unnecessary delays. Problems with logistics should have been taken into consideration when planning the hearing sessions. Overall committee chairs and assistants did a good job.

At the 2019 Convention delegates passed GA-21 asking National Officers to investigate the requirements to change the name of VVA. These proposed changes would be presented to delegates at the 2021 convention for ratification. After meeting with younger veterans, it was determined they weren't interested in forming a new veteran's service organization. Delegates allowed this resolution to remain to prevent National's BOD from changing the name of VVA.

Several delegates made a point to stress delegates are the final authority in decision making for the direction and future of Vietnam Veterans of America. This also may have been a possible reason for the election of a new National President Jack McManus for the first time in 16 years or 8 conventions. John Rowan was instrumental in VVA becoming the leader when addressing Congress during his time as President. It remains to be seen whether this will continue in 2022.



**CHAPTER MEMBER PROFILE****BEIKIRCH, GARY B. Medal of Honor Recipient**

Rank and organization: Sergeant, U.S. Army, Company B, 5th Special Forces Group, 1st Special Forces.

Place and date: Kontum Province, Republic of Vietnam, 1 April 1970. Entered service at: Buffalo, N.Y.

Born: 29 August 1947, Rochester, N.Y.

Citation: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Sergeant. Beikirch, medical aidman, Detachment B-24, Company B, distinguished himself during the defense of Camp Dak Seang. The allied defenders suffered a number of casualties as a result of an intense, devastating attack launched by the enemy from well-concealed positions surrounding the camp.

Sergeant. Beikirch, with complete disregard for his personal safety, moved unhesitatingly through the withering enemy fire to his fallen comrades, applied first aid to their wounds and assisted them to the medical aid station. When informed that a seriously injured American officer was lying in an exposed position, Sergeant. Beikirch ran immediately through the hail of fire. Although he was wounded seriously by fragments from an exploding enemy mortar shell, Sergeant. Beikirch carried the officer to a medical aid station. Ignoring his own serious injuries,

Sergeant. Beikirch left the relative safety of the medical bunker to search for and evacuate other men who had been injured. He was again wounded as he dragged a critically injured Vietnamese soldier to the medical bunker while simultaneously applying mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to sustain his life. Sergeant. Beikirch again refused treatment and continued his search for other casualties until he collapsed. Only then did he permit himself to be treated.

Sergeant. Beikirch's complete devotion to the welfare of his comrades, at the risk of his life are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit on him, his unit, and the U.S. Army.

**Gary Beikirch, Medal of Honor, First President Chapter 20 & NYSC**

Nick DeLeo, VVA New York State Council Treasurer

Gary Beikirch, an Army Green Beret Medic, was awarded the Medal of Honor for selfless acts of heroism when his Special Forces Camp was attacked by the North Vietnamese Army on April 1, 1970. After being severely wounded, refusing medical treatment and being paralyzed from the waist down he instructed a 15-year-old Montagnard fighter to carry him to administer medical aid to his fallen soldiers and indigenous warriors. During the battle when a rocket propelled grenade was coming toward Gary, this young fighter jumped on his back to absorb the full brunt of the explosion. He was blown apart saving the life of a man they called doctor.

After enduring months of painful recovery from his several wounds Gary was sent to Fort Devens, Massachusetts to complete the terms of his enlistment. During this time back in the world Gary went AWOL



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for over 3 weeks and his base commander tried to have him prosecuted under the UCMJ. Fortunately, this commander was persuaded not to charge Gary due to his heroism being considered for the Medal of Honor by Congress. He was medically discharged.

After returning home to Rochester, NY Gary enrolled again at SUNY Brockport, but decided to leave college due to the uninviting atmosphere for returning Vietnam veterans in the early 1970's. He then moved to New Hampshire to attend another college and after being unable to assimilate with other students in his apartment building moved into a cave in the mountains to deal privately with his PTSD. When Gary was in town, he met a young woman who he started dating and Loreen or Lolly became his wife. It was the beginning of their lifelong relationship.

In the late 1970's Gary completed Divinity School and became an ordained Baptist minister and his young family moved back to the Rochester area. In the fall of 1980 Tom Cray, one of the founders of Veterans Outreach Center, a self-help veterans service agency for Vietnam veterans set up an Agent Orange Registry for local Vietnam Veterans to sign up for potential benefits. Gary was contacted by Tom and became involved with assisting his fellow Vietnam veterans.

In February 1981 using names from the Agent Orange Registry Tom, Gary, Tom Leckinger, Bill Reddy, and a couple of other Vietnam veterans decided to form a Vietnam Veterans of America chapter. After a couple of long meetings an election took place in April 1981 to form Chapter 20. Gary was elected President, a position he held for 3 one-year terms. In April 1982 Gary was elected the first President of the newly formed VVA New York State Council and served 2 years.

In early 1987 Gary became Executive Director of Veterans Outreach Center for 18 months. Upon completion of his master's degree in educational counseling Gary became a guidance counselor in the Greece, NY School District. He graduated from Greece Olympia High School in 1965. While working for the school district Gary had reoccurring back problems from shrapnel near his spine and missed several months of work over a period of a couple of years. It caused his young superintendent to attempt to have Gary fired for missing too much time during those two years. This ended when the superintendent was told the reason for Gary missing work due to injuries and wounds as a Medal of Honor recipient. He was told if his plan was made public this superintendent would never work in education in the state of New York for firing a true American hero due to a disability. Fortunately, Gary was able to retire with a full teacher pension at a time of his choosing. Gary served on various committees promoting all veterans.

In the 1990's Gary became involved with The Medal of Honor Society, a group comprised of a highly elite American heroes. During his time with the MHS Gary has held various leadership positions and has welcomed the most recent group of heroes from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. He has attended the elaborate ceremonies over 3 days that's a contrast to the one-day event when Gary was awarded the Medal of Honor in October 1973 by President Richard Nixon. Gary participated in a ceremony at the 2019 Super Bowl representing his fellow Vietnam heroes. Gary continued to travel the country addressing several civic and veteran organizations.

When he was in Vietnam Gary was exposed to herbicides such as Agent Orange and as a result has suffered from diseases related to his military service in the United States Army. In 2016 he was diagnosed with Stage 4 colon cancer and after several treatments of chemotherapy Gary was

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declared cancer free in 2019. He attributed his miraculous recovery to the power of prayer. Unfortunately, in November 2020 Gary was diagnosed with liver cancer and he's currently undergoing treatment for this most recent medical setback. He continues to have a positive attitude despite his second bout of cancer due to the exposure to toxic chemicals in Vietnam.

In May 2021 a portion of Highland Park in Rochester, NY was dedicated in honor of Gary Beikirch and this signage is located adjacent to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial of Greater Rochester. It was a great honor for a true American hero who said he wants people to see a sign that says, "Welcome Home." Gary said these words mean so much to those who were scorned and mocked for their military service in Vietnam. He added that we remember, we honor, and that we will never forget their sacrifice and service to keep our homes and our communities free. In October 2021 Greece Olympia High School renamed a road to the athletic fields as Gary Beikirch Way to honor one of the most famous students in the school's history.

In August 2021 I saw Gary at the Veterans Outreach Center's Founders Day Celebration and he was recovering from the effects of his ongoing liver cancer treatments. His voice wasn't strong that day, but his spirit as always was truly amazing. This is his strength as a Vietnam veteran by being a humble servant of his Lord and savior. He signed my copy of his book *Blaze of Light, For His Honor*, Gary and Lolly Beikirch. Despite his health issues Gary continues to inspire others.

### **Gary Beikirch Park**

By Marc Leepson

Medal of Honor recipient Gary Beikirch, one of Vietnam Veterans of America's earliest leaders, received another honor on May 13 when Monroe County, New York, dedicated a section of Rochester's Highland Park in his honor.

"Gary Beikirch is an American hero in every sense," County Executive Adam Bello said during the dedication ceremonies of the new Gary Beikirch Memorial Park. "His selfless act on behalf of our country will live on forever in the hearts and minds of our community, and all those who have gotten to know Gary throughout his life." Renaming the portion of the park near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial of Greater Rochester in his honor, Bello said, "is a perfect tribute to this incredible man who has dedicated his life to Monroe County and the United States."

Born and raised in Rochester, Gary Beikirch joined the Army in 1967, volunteered for Special Forces, and arrived in Vietnam in July 1969 as a medic with a Green Beret A-Team in a remote Montagnard village in the Central Highlands. On April 1, 1970, an NVA force numbering in the thousands launched a surprise human-wave attack on the camp. During the fighting Beikirch was wounded three times, including a spinal cord injury that knocked him unconscious while tending to a wounded buddy. After regaining consciousness, he carried on fighting, and—without the use of temporarily paralyzed legs—helped rescue wounded Americans and Montagnards and treat them before being medevaced out of the fight.

Soon after Vietnam Veterans of America was founded in 1978, Gary Beikirch joined the

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fledgling organization and helped form Rochester Chapter 20. He served as the chapter's first president, was elected the first president of VVA's New York State Council, and served a term on the National Board of Directors.

During the early eighties, Beikirch ran Rochester's pioneering Veterans Outreach Center and served as a team counselor there. In 2013 he retired after twenty-five years as a counselor at Arcadia Middle School in his hometown. Since his retirement Gary Beikirch has traveled the country speaking to students, church groups, veterans, and others about overcoming adversity through faith and what he has called "loving others more than myself."

It is "my hope," Beikirch said at the park dedication, "that as people enter this park and walk among the heroes who are honored and remembered here that they will hear each hero say to them, 'Live your life believing that there is something greater in life than me. Live your life caring for others, loving others.' "

The 150-acre Highland Park, dedicated in 1888, was designed by the famed landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. Chapter 20 was the driving force behind the park's 2.5-acre Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which was dedicated in 1996. Its many features include a grove of 3,401 trees honoring Medal of Honor recipients. The Chapter 20 Honor Guard participated in the Gary Beikirch Memorial Park dedication ceremonies.

For more on the Rochester Vietnam Veterans Memorial, go to Marc Leepson's 2017 article.

### Southern District Report

Joe Ingino

#### VVA Chapters #11, #32, #72, #82, #126, #421

I am doing much better and continuing my physical/occupational therapy at the New York State Veterans Nursing Home in Stony Brook, NY. I am progressing slowly but will be ready for the January State Council meeting, God willing!

Any Chapters that need help do not hesitate to contact your Southern District Director by phone or E-mail.

I am getting ready for the June elections to run again for the position of Southern District Director. Thanks for your support through out this medicals ordeal that I am facing.. Please keep in touch.

### VVA Chapter 72 Report

Dan Friedman—President

VVA Chapter 72 has resumed in-person meetings. We have had 3 meetings at VFW 107 because the VAMC will not yet allow group meetings. We had a float in the NYC Veterans' Day Parade which was covered live by ABC TV. We are now purchasing new winter clothing for homeless vets. We provide support for the 15W Rehab Ward at the Brooklyn VAMC (about 20 vets); the SUS Bushwick Veterans' Shelter (about 48 vets), and the VA Domiciliary which is expected to reopen about 12/01/2021 (about 36 vets). We will also be providing holiday parties for some of these veterans.

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**VAVS Report**  
Dan Friedman—Chair

**VAVS Report**

Brooklyn VAVS has been conducting quarterly Zoom meetings. Our last meeting was 11/01/2021. VAMC reports they are giving Pfizer and J&J vaccines to all vets and spouses and care givers. VAMC reports veterans are now being seen in clinics but can also get zoom or telehealth appointments. Martina Parauda, Director of NY Harbor Healthcare System (which includes Brooklyn and Manhattan VAMC) will be retiring at the end of this year. She is not yet aware who will be succeeding her.

Director Parauda states her budget is good for FY2022, and there were no cuts. VAVS has been renamed Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE?), nationwide. There was a heated discussion concerning PTSD Groups, with some losing their group leaders and being designated Social Groups. This was especially difficult for the Hispanic Veterans PTSD Group. This led to a follow up Zoom with doctors from the Psychiatry and the PTSD Program. The issue was that some groups are to be taken over by Peer Specialists who are fulltime VAMC employees but not mental health professionals. Not all “social” groups will get peer specialists due to staffing issues.

The main problem is that groups not led by mental health professionals are not designated as therapeutic, and in fact may not be therapeutic to the detriment of these veterans who still suffer from PTSD. A side effect of these type of groups is there are no therapeutic notes entered into the veterans’ health records which can lead to the loss of VA SC Compensation benefits for these vets. The VA doctors did not appear to be aware of this.

I advised the VA that VVA 72 strongly supports designating all PTSD groups as therapeutic and be led by mental health professionals. The matter was not resolved but all agreed to follow up. Gene DiGiacomo, President of VVA 421/Staten Island expressed interest in becoming a Deputy Representative at the Brooklyn VAMC. I sent a letter to Ken Rose requesting Gene’s appointment. I did not receive any reports from other VAMC’s Reps or Deputy Reps.

**VVA Chapter #72 Convention Report**

Dan Friedman—Delegate

**Convention Report**

I attended all sessions, the regional caucus, and three committee meetings (Veterans Benefits; Homeless Veterans, and ETBO/Economic Affairs). John got bushwhacked, the hotel food and service sucked, but it was great to see everyone’s eyes again and try to guess if you know that person. Ned and Grant showed great leadership and Charlie kept Ted in line.

Hope to see you in January.

**VVA Chapter #32 Report**

Chapter 32 still has 3 delegates attending: Dominick Yezzo, Al Ranni, And Gary Buschini





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**Delegate Summary Report/Notes**  
**(Marcus V. Arroyo)**  
**2021 VVA National Convention**  
**Greensboro, North Carolina**  
**November 1- 7, 2021**

**Opening Comments**

As a Board Member and Chaplin for VVA Chapter 333, I was asked by the Chapter President, Roy Tschudy, to represent Chapter 333 as a voting Delegate at the National Convention. Each Chapter in the United States, from the Nine Regions, was allowed to send a number of voting delegates, based on the numbers of the respective membership population of each Chapter; Chapter 333, sent four voting delegates, Roy Tschudy, Howard Goldin, Edward J. Frank, and Marcus V. Arroyo. The Convention was attended by approximately 1000+ persons, of which there were 684 voting delegates, from all fifty states. It was a moving experience to be with Vietnam Brothers from all over our great nation, we may speak and think differently, but when duty called we all answered the bell, we all were once young Soldiers, Marines, Airmen, and Sailors.

I would like to thank the Chapter 333 membership and our Chapter President for allowing me to represent our Chapter as a delegate.

This was my first opportunity to attend a VVA National Convention. Attending this convention was an honor, a privilege, and a tremendous learning experience. Part of this experience was observing the greatness of the United States and how our democracy works, this was an extra ordinarily well planned and well run convention, every delegate had ample opportunity present their respective opinions, both “Pro” and “Con” and everyone was respectful. One Marine Veteran spoke of his PTSD (the invisible wound) from being raped, he received thunderous applause.

For me, attendance brought back many memories of my military, Vietnam, civilian life (w/o my GI Education Benefits, I may never have gone to college) and VVA Chapter experiences. Attendance to the Convention also prompted me to reflect on the accomplishments of VVA National, the various Chapters across our great United States of America, and especially the accomplishments of our Chapter 333.

They call World War II Veterans, the “Greatest Generation,” and not to take anything away from WW II Vets, but America was a grateful nation then and could not do enough for the WW II Veterans. In contrast Vietnam Veterans were not treated well when we returned home and had to fight for every benefits (Medical, Education, Housing, Disability Compensation, etc.); someday Vietnam Veterans might be called the 2<sup>nd</sup> Greatest Generation. Whether or not Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans know it, they are in fact the beneficiaries of the struggles and fights of the Vietnam Veterans. It would be a tremendous loss if the legacy of the VVA is not perpetuated forward for future generations of Veterans, my own Son a graduate of USNA (2001-2005) and active duty 2005-2012, is a beneficiary of VVA accomplishments. Seventy % of today’s Iraq/Afghanistan Veterans have a college degree or better, Masters and Phd’s; after his service my son got his Master’s on the GI Bill. The Key Note Speaker, Lt. General Ronald Blanck, MD, is a proponent of passing on the VVA legacy to Iraq/Afghanistan Veterans. The General spoke to the tremendous loss of life in Vietnam 58,287, to Iraq 4431, to Afghanistan 2462, servicemen death; and the severely wounded, 5284 Vietnam amputees, 1572 Iraq/Afghanistan amputees. He also spoke to the military medical accomplishments and advancement, from the National Military Medical Center (Walter Reed), new battlefield tourniquets, new prosthetics, he even believes that someday medical research will be able to grow limbs.

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Based on this convention experience, I was also compelled to seek historical knowledge of VVA, from its' inception. The reason I sought historical knowledge is because there have been and continues be many discussions about the future of VVA National, and the various VVA Chapters across the nation (National is planning dissolution by 2028; 333 is still discussing our future). It said that Iraq/Afghanistan are not interest in running with VVA accomplishment now, but that could change in the future.

One consideration for the future of VVA, that was again discussed at the Convention, was the consideration for VVA to be rolled up into and taken over by the AVVA. AVVA is a legitimate chartered organization, comprised of mostly surviving wives of deceased VVA members, there is NO requirement that an AVVA member be a Vietnam Veteran. AVVA representatives were in attendance at the convention, they were very knowledgeable and well spoken of the VVA Constitution and all ongoing VVA matters and concerns. If further discussion of who and what the AVVA is, what their accomplishment have been, and what their plans for the future are, we may need to further inform Chapter 333 membership.

I have been informed that Rockland County, once had a AVVA Chapter.

When I first heard of the AVVA proposal, I was against this consideration, however after my attendance to the convention and hearing representatives from the AVVA speak and present their positions and plans for the future, I need to reconsider and open my mind to the AVVA proposal, and I believe Chapter 333 should be open to discussions regarding the AVVA proposal. It would be a tremendous loss for all the accomplishment of VVA, over the past 43 years to be abandoned. From our VVA inception, the founding principle is **“NEVER AGAIN WILL ONE GENERATION OF VETERANS ABANDON ANOTHER.”**

Another topic of extended discussion in the full General Session was the petition for Republic of Korea (ROK) veterans who served in Vietnam, with US Forces, at the direction of the United States, (approximately 330,000 Koreans serve in Vietnam during the 10 year conflict) to receive VA benefits. Some of these Koreans now live in the US, some are US citizens, but none receive any VA benefits. This is not a new issue, and nothing new was resolved at this convention, maybe the new VVA President will advocate the US Congress for legislation for the ROK's; there were about 20 ROKs in attendance at the convention.

By now all Chapter members know that John Rowan, current VVA National President was defeated by Jack McManus, VVA National Treasurer, in the election. Rowan served honorably for 8 terms, for 16 years, he was the longest serving President, and the delegates decided it was time for a change.

### VVA National History of Presidents

**Bobby Muller** – 1<sup>st</sup> VVA president 1978-1987

Mary Stout – 2<sup>nd</sup> VVA president 1987-1991

James L. Brazee Jr. – 3<sup>rd</sup> VVA president 1991-1997

George C Duggins – 4<sup>th</sup> VVA president 1997-2001

Thomas H. Corey – 5<sup>th</sup> VVA president 2001-2005

John Rowan – 6<sup>th</sup> VVA president 2005-2021

James McManus – 7<sup>th</sup> VVA president 2021-\_\_\_\_\_

Each of these past presidents brought major accomplishment for all Veterans and are all worthy our respect, gratitude, and loyalty for their efforts to serve all Veterans. **(Continue on pg. 43)**

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Veterans Incarcerated Committee Report and Proposals

Administrative Law Judge, Dominick Yezzo, Vietnam Veteran, was drafted into Army, and arrived in Vietnam in August 1968. Yezzo defends Veterans in NYC.

Yezzo contends that many incarcerated veterans are casualties of military experiences combat and non-combat related. Many incarcerated veterans entered military service right from High School, served honorably, and then released from service with no direction and nowhere to go; no family; girlfriends and wives have moved on; no job; no real work experience except for their military service, and not being able to communicate with their military buddies, etc. Some of the incarcerated veterans, that experience combat in the theaters of war, sustained a TBI and or experienced things that inflicted PTSD, the invisible wounds. These Veterans had little, to no nurturing when they returned from Vietnam, and other conflicts and wars, i.e., Iraq and Afghanistan, they had great confusion and made a bad decisions, a minor 2 second decision, that now is costing them years and possibly the rest of their lives in jail. It could have been a bar fight, some domestic violence dispute, drug and/or alcohol addictions (these are not a crime they are an illness) or maybe a law enforcement resisting arrest charge. Yezzo does not deny that some veterans did break the law should be incarcerated, but some may be innocent.

In contrast, Dominick Yezzo stated that after Vietnam he had a family to come home to; his mother organized a welcome home party, with great Italian Food, and had all extended family members came to welcome Dominick home. But shortly after when mother Yezzo found Dominick moping around the house, she told Dominick to “wash his face, comb his hair, and go get a job.”

Yezzo advocates for Veterans to be tried in “Veterans Treatment Courts”

Some of the audience committee delegates with Law Enforcement and Correction Officers backgrounds advocate for incarcerated veterans to be grouped with other incarcerated Veterans in the same cell block, so they have some common grounds to relate over. Veterans in the same cell blocks behave better and police themselves to be model inmates.

According to a 2016 survey of incarcerated veterans, it was estimated that 107,400 Veterans are in Federal and State jails.

**The Following are a Stream of Conscientious thoughts for Chapter 333 to consider, should we as a Chapter consider addressing Incarcerated Veterans in our geographic area of responsibility. The question is do we want to take on this responsibility:**

- might the incarcerated veteran be innocent
- might the incarcerated veteran have been over charged
- might the incarcerated veteran have been given bad legal advice
- might the incarcerated veteran have pled to a charge to avoid heavier charges and longer sentences
- might the incarcerated veteran have been poorly represented by a Public Defender or a lousy inexpensive defense lawyer, (OJ was acquitted because he had the best lawyers money could buy)
- might the incarcerated Veteran, received a proper sentence in accordance with sentencing guidelines; or did a heavy handed Judge go to the max

- even if the Veteran did commit the crime and received a proper trial and sentence does anyone care

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about incarcerated veteran

- is the incarcerated veteran being treated fairly in jail
- does the incarcerated veteran have a family or friends that visit or is the Veteran just abandoned meat
- if we find an incarcerated Veteran who we believe to be innocent, do we contact "Project Innocence," etc.

Something to remember Author Norman Mailer, assisted Murder Jack Henry Abbott to be released from prison; Abbott then murdered Richard Adan.

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Since my Chapter 333 Delegate colleagues, have already addressed the proposed constitution amendments, resolutions, approved and not approved, I will not readdress them again in this report.

To Chapter 333, thank you for the opportunity to represent the Chapter,

## VETERANS NEWS

**Reverend Viviana DeCohen** has been appointed **Director of the New York State Division of Veterans' Services**. Reverend DeCohen is a Veteran of the United States Marine Corps and most recently served the City of Mt. Vernon as its Commissioner of Veterans Services.

Previously she served as Director of Military & Veteran Affairs and Adjunct Professor at Concordia College where she began an On-Campus Resource Program to ensure student veterans have access to food, shelter, clothing and more. Prior to her work at Concordia College, Reverend DeCohen was the Veterans Advisor at Mercy College where she began as a student.

While pursuing her undergraduate degree, Reverend DeCohen established the first Veteran's center to support academic achievement and markedly improve veterans' graduation rates. She designed programs, such as "Operation Buddy Up" and "Operation PUSH" that improved the overall grade point averages and pushed a record number of veterans to go on to graduate school. She is a member of the Women Marines Association, NY-6, American Legion Post 1038, New York Council Navy League, and Military Adviser to the Barbara Giordano Foundation as well as Clergy Committee Member with the Alzheimer's Association.

Reverend DeCohen also serves as Associate Pastor, alongside her husband, Reverend Troy P. DeCohen, of the Mount Vernon Heights Congregational Church. Her military service allowed her to earn a Bachelor of Science in Behavioral Science, a Master of Science, in Health Service Management, both from Mercy College, and her current pursuit of a Doctorate in Educational Leadership & Gerontology, at Concordia University, Chicago.

**Editor's Note:** State legislators are trying to elevate the Division of Veterans' Affairs to a Commissioner's level—a department. Need your support

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### **Max Cleland, Vietnam War veteran who led VA and served in Senate, dies at 79**

Max Cleland, an Army captain whose injuries during the Vietnam War left him a triple amputee and propelled his career in public service, including leadership of the Veterans Administration and one term in the U.S. Senate, died Nov. 9 at his home in Atlanta. He was 79.

The cause was congestive heart failure, said his personal assistant, Linda Dean.

Mr. Cleland, a moderate Democrat from Georgia, was elected to the Senate in 1996 after heading the VA under President Jimmy Carter and serving as Georgia's secretary of state. He was known primarily as an impassioned advocate for veterans and their families, launching counseling programs and championing services for post-traumatic stress disorder, which the VA began to recognize as a legitimate condition during his tenure.

### **Colin Powell, trailblazing soldier and statesman who made case for Iraq invasion, dies of Covid at 84**

General Colin L. Powell, former U.S. Secretary of State and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and a Vietnam Veteran.

Born in Harlem to parents who immigrated from Jamaica, Powell was an American success story. He grew up in the Bronx and graduated from City College of New York in 1958. He joined the U.S. Army through ROTC, starting as the youngest second lieutenant commissioned in the dawn of a newly desegregated Army.

Powell served two combat tours in Vietnam; he was injured during both. Injuries sustained in a helicopter crash from which he pulled two fellow soldiers earned him medals for bravery during the second tour.

Almost two decades later, in 1987, President Ronald Reagan named Powell national security advisor. The president later named him chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the highest military position in the Department of Defense. The appointment made Powell the youngest chairman ever and the first of Afro-Caribbean American heritage. He was also the first former ROTC member to hold the position.

After 35 years of service and with the rank of general, Powell retired from the military.

In 2001, Powell was appointed, confirmed and sworn in as the first Black secretary of state. He resigned in 2004, following a prostate cancer diagnosis.

After retiring from public service, Powell wrote the second of his two books, *It Worked for Me, Lessons in Life and Leadership*, while continuing his relationship with the Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership at City College of New York. He spent his later years as a senior statesman to the world, addressing audiences across the globe

### **Renowned war reporter Joe Galloway, 'We Were Soldiers' author, dies at 79**

Legendary combat journalist and "We Were Soldiers Once... and Young" author Joe Galloway died in North Carolina on Wednesday from heart failure at age 79.

Galloway was an award-winning correspondent whose on-the-ground reporting spanned more than 50 years. During the Vietnam War, Galloway accompanied the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, who became swarmed by enemy combatants in the Ia Drang Valley in November 1965. The ensuing battle, called The Battle of Ia Drang, was one of the first of the Vietnam War.

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### THANKS FOR THE DONATION



Thanks for Donation to VVA-New York State Council did this once already. Scott Dieter, Chapter 193 and President Ned D. Foote



### -R VVA Chapter #333

Marcus Arroyo, Eddie Frank, Outgoing National VVA President John Rowan, Incoming National VVA President Jack McManus, Roy Tschudy, Howard Goldin, Frank Mahoney (Continue on pg. 47)

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I am heartened and excited by the interest in strengthening and restructuring New York State’s Division of Veterans’ Services. We also strongly support its elevation to Department status, and I’ll elaborate on that in my testimony.

My testimony is based on a Foundation report titled “A Strategic Roadmap to Enhance the Role and Impact of the New York State Division of Veterans’ Services.” It was prepared by the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University.

The report examined what high-performing state veterans’ agencies across the country look like, compared and contrasted New York to those, and made detailed recommendations. Specifically, it breaks things down into three categories: (1) organizational structure, (2) financial stability, and (3) service delivery innovation.

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**The VVA Veteran**

Michael Keating  
Editor

Due to a significant paper shortage, the print order for the new issue of The VVA Veteran was about 20,000 copies short. Many members, including you, will not receive a paper copy of the November/December issue. Names were chosen randomly. However, you can read the magazine at [www.vvaveteran.org](http://www.vvaveteran.org)

I am very sorry for this unavoidable inconvenience. The printer assures me, however, that there will be enough paper to fulfill the January/February issue.

On behalf of the staff and writers at The VVA Veteran, I wish you the happiest of holidays and the sincere hope that the pandemic—and its aftereffects—will go away in the new year.

Best regards,



**NYSHealth Testimony on Strengthening the New York State Division of Veterans’ Services  
NYSHealth’s President and CEO testified at a New York State Assembly Committee  
on Veterans’ Affairs hearing on opportunities to strengthen New York State’s Division of Veterans’ Services.**

On October 21, 2021, the New York State Assembly Committee on Veterans’ Affairs held a hearing on restructuring the New York State Division of Veterans’ Services (DVS). NYSHealth’s President and CEO, David Sandman, testified before the hearing to outline opportunities to strengthen New York’s DVS.

Thank you to Chair Barrett, Chair Hunter, and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify today. I am David Sandman, the President and CEO of the New York State Health Foundation (NYSHealth). The Foundation is a private, independent, and statewide charitable organization dedicated to improving the health of all New Yorkers. That includes the more than 700,000 veterans who call New York home. Our staff has been honored to participate in the Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Veteran Suicide, and we’ve worked closely with the New York State Division of Veterans’ Services (DVS) on that program and several others throughout the years.

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The full report is available on the Foundation's website.

### **New York's Veterans**

In the next few weeks, the Foundation will release a new and in-depth profile of New York's veterans. New York has the fifth-largest veteran population of any state in the nation.

Most veterans return from deployments and transition to civilian life relatively smoothly; they're healthy, ready to work or go to school, and eager to settle back into life at home. But for some, the adjustment isn't so easy. They may struggle with physical injuries and disabilities, and they may also be dealing with the invisible wounds of war: mental health issues including PTSD, suicidal ideation, and substance use. They may also be challenged by food insecurity, lack of employment, or homelessness.

The needs of New York's 700,000-plus veterans are many and varied. A robust, stable, well-funded Division of Veterans' Services is required to serve them well.

### **Elements of a High-Performing Division of Veterans' Services**

What does a high-performing DVS look like? The analysis we commissioned from IVMF identifies several characteristics.

First, in the area of organizational structure and political standing, one of the most important takeaways is that leadership matters. The strongest DVS organizations across the country have steady leadership, with directors in place for three or more years. New York, of course, has not had stable leadership at DVS, with numerous vacancies and interim leadership that make it hard to gain and maintain momentum. I commend the efforts of the entire staff at DVS. They have worked with purpose and dedication to serve veterans, and especially to connect them with benefits. Yet, the lack of stable leadership is a disservice to New York's veterans. In leading states, the Division of Veterans' Services is an independent agency—rather than being folded into a broader department like Military Affairs—and its director has a seat in the Governor's cabinet, as is the case in New York. Where New York is behind top-performing states is that the director does not report directly to the Governor. That matters when it comes to DVS effectiveness. Elevating the Division of Veterans' Services to a Department could make a meaningful difference for New York's veterans. On this point, the experience of New York City is highly instructive. In 1987, Mayor Ed Koch created a Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs. For decades, it remained a small office. As recently as 2015, it had an annual budget of only \$600,000 and only six employees.

In 2016, leadership by the City Council elevated the office to a full-fledged agency led by a Commissioner. That move immediately increased its size and expanded its role. In its first full fiscal year, in 2017, the Department had 33 employees and a budget of \$3.8 million annually. Today, in fiscal year 2021, its budget is around \$6.4 million and it has 49 staff positions. That supports an enhanced portfolio of work that includes benefits enrollment, employment and housing assistance, mental health services like Buddy Check calls and referrals to mental health resources, and food and nutrition programs.

To better serve all of New York State's veterans, establishing a permanent Department with stable and highly qualified leadership must be the starting point.

Second, money matters. New York's DVS is substantially underfunded,

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with an annual budget of less than \$20 million. By comparison, states with similarly-sized veteran populations have budgets around \$90 million—more than a 400% difference. New York, unlike leading states, has also not enjoyed stable federal or state funding over the years for general or special funds. Reliable funding would allow DVS to conduct long-term planning and set priorities. Today, the services delivered by New York DVS are limited, with an almost exclusive focus on benefits and claims assistance, rather than service delivery and coordination, whereas other states offer a wide variety of direct services, from employment counseling to mental health programs. Greater parity in funding for New York's DVS could support critical enhancements like public-private partnerships in communities, new programming, an updated assessment of New York veterans' needs, and a robust communications strategy.

Third, there needs to be alignment and coordination of roles, missions, and responsibilities with stakeholders across New York State. Understanding how DVS fits in with other public and private entities throughout the State that are also focused on veterans' issues—and even those that could be, but aren't currently—is an important step to maximizing the division's impact. What are its unique strengths, and where might others be better positioned to take the lead? In the highest-performing states, for example, the department of veterans' affairs serves as a central coordinating body, but decentralizes the actual administration of benefits and claims assistance to the county level. New York could take a similar approach, or possibly a hybrid that makes the most of our State's and counties' particular strengths.

Next, we need to improve cross-sector/agency collaboration and community coordination for health care. Top DVAs across the country have carved out a role as a statewide health care coordinating body. These collaborations can help identify and address gaps in veteran services, ensure coordination, and facilitate veterans' connections to local resources. (In Michigan, a model state, these are known as VCATs, short for Veterans Community Action Teams.) This approach may be increasingly important as more veterans seek out care in community settings, rather than through the VA.

Another critical element is getting an accurate, current understanding of New York's veterans' needs by listening directly to them. As they say, "Know your audience." DVS needs to understand what New York's veterans need and want in order to provide the most appropriate services. A needs assessment would inform the priorities, resource allocation, and engagement strategies not only of DVS but also of other organizations throughout the State who care about the veteran population.

Finally, DVS needs a tailored communications and outreach strategy. As the committee's notice for today's hearing pointed out, only 17% of New York's veterans are estimated to be accessing their earned benefits. Veterans need to know about available resources in order to take advantage of them. New York could do a better job of ensuring that its communication and outreach activities are tailored to the specific media channels and platforms that different demographic groups (for example, older vs. younger veterans) are most likely to use. Florida offers a good model, with dedicated resources to engage veterans who are difficult to reach, such as those in rural communities. They maintain a strong online presence to engage with younger and middle-aged veterans, but at the same time, go as far as purchasing signage on top of gas pumps in rural counties to reach older rural veterans.

That's a concise summary of the Foundation's strategic roadmap. I encourage you to review the full report for more details and case studies.

**Conclusion**

**(Continue on pg. 50)**

My colleague Derek Coy, a Marine veteran who served in Iraq, often reminds me of a common saying in the military: “Don’t see things as problems, only opportunities.” Today, we have the opportunity to re-structure, revitalize, and strengthen DVS. I have described some of the areas where New York falls short when compared with other states. More importantly, I’ve also described a path forward to make New York State a national leader in providing veterans with the services and supports they need. I ask that you consider the recommendations I’ve outlined today.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I deeply respect and appreciate the commitments to New York’s veterans that we all share and I hope you’ll continue to look to the New York State Health Foundation as a resource for your important work.

## HAPPY NEW YEAR 2022



**Home to home  
And heart to heart**

**Thinking of you  
And wishing you**

**Very good thing  
Throughout the New Year!**

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