



JUL/AUG 2016
VOL 2 NO 4



"Welcome Home" **NEWSLETTER**

"Member Feature"

Robert Senatore – U.S. Army – 1968-1970
I served in 24th Corps 1/39 Artillery, Phi Bai-Hue support of Infantry. I was in three different fire fights and was blown out of my bunk and hit with sharpened metal pieces, received skin and body damage as well as hearing loss. I was diagnosed with TBI and PTSD. I was awarded the Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal, Valorous Unit Award, Vietnam Service Medal, National Defense Campaign, and the Vietnam Campaign Ribbon w/device. I earned the Sharpshooter Badge with Pistol Bar and the Marksman Badge with Rifle Bar.

Notes from the President

Lee White

"NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT"

A quick review of events since the last May/June Newsletter.

Our VVA Chapter 1106 had a very successful "Poppy Give-A-Way/Donation Drive" on Saturday, May 28, 2016. Over 1200 poppies were given away and many conversations with fellow veterans.

The Honor Bell arrived in Denver from Cincinnati, Ohio, on Tuesday, May 24, 2016. Three members of VVA Chapter 1106, Patti Ehline, John Vargas, and myself drove to Pueblo in the morning to meet the arrival of the "bell" from Ft. Lyons and joined the escort to the Colorado Freedom Memorial with an additional stop and ceremony in Colorado Springs. For more information go to: www.honorbell.org

On Friday, June 10, 2016, members of VVA Chapter 1106 in conjunction with Rolling Thunder Chapter 1, CO, departed for Taos, NM to honor our "Missing In Action Ceremony" to be held on Saturday, June 11, 2016. Despite a few showers, "tears from heaven", the ceremony went well.

Now, some VVA Colorado News:

State Council Elections and "swearing in" were conducted on Saturday, June 4, 2016.

Results: New Officers

Lee White – President, Chapter 1106
Manuel Pedraza – 1st.VP, Chapter 1075
Open - 2nd. VP
Milt Omoto - Secretary, Chapter 1106
David Ramey - Treasurer, Chapter 1075

Board Members:

John Pascenta, Chapter 1071
Joe Plant, Chapter 1106 (Chaplain)
Larry Peterson, Chapter 1075
David Lyons, Chapter 1106 (Delegate)

The main focus and goal will be to develop a pathway to increase the number of VVA chapters in Colorado. (Ft. Collins, Pueblo, Grand Junction)

Upcoming Events/Activities

Saturday, July 2, 2016, VVA Chapter 1106 Monthly Meeting
Monday, July 4, 2016, Highlands Ranch 4th of July Parade
Saturday, August 6, 2016, VVA Chapter 1106 Monthly Meeting

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Friday/Saturday, August 19-20, 2016, Salute to America's Veterans, Cripple Creek

Military Trivia

What is a **Squeegee Sharpener**? See answer at the end of the Newsletter

Poppy Drive Huge Success

Here are the final results from our VVA Chapter 1106 Poppy Drive on Saturday, May 28, 2016:

Landing Zone 1 - King Soopers, Hampden & Tower Road, Team Leader: Hazel Simeon Team Members: Paul Seppo, Mary Seppo, Dave Lyons, Dee Lyons, Mike Karsh, John Grace

Donations: \$875.41

Landing Zone 2 - Sam's Club, Park Meadows, Team Leader: Milt Omoto Team Members: Patti Ehline, Jerry Liechti, Jerry's daughter, Bob Easter, Joe Langran

Donations: \$639.83

Landing Zone 3 - King Soopers, Red Cedar Dr., Highlands Ranch, Team Leader: Lee White Team Members: Bob Rotruck, Joe Langran

Donations: \$531.80

Landing Zone 4 - King Soopers, Iliff & Buckley, Team Leader: Joe Plant Team Members: John McMaster, Sonny Gorsuch

Donations: \$902.10

Grand Total: \$2956.14

October 2015 Grand Total: \$2132.21

BRAVO ZULU

Guest Speaker

Jaime Stanz from Thrivent Financial was the June guest speaker. He has supported the chapter with his time as well as establishing a donation portal for Thrivent members. Thank you Jaime for your support.

Membership!

VVA - 50

AVVA - 17

Welcome New Members:

VVA - Ray Mendenhall, Mark Nickell

AVVA - Teresa (Terry) Newkirk, Cathie Nickell, Prudence (Dee) Lyons

"Remembering America's MIA"

By Milt Omoto

Rolling Thunder Chapter 1 and Chapter 1106 of the Vietnam Veterans of America conducted a tribute and recognition of America's missing in action at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Angel Fire New Mexico on Saturday, June 18th. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial State Park in Angel Fire was initiated by Dr. Victor Westphall and his wife Jeanne in memory of their son Marine Corps Lieutenant David Westphall who was killed in action in Vietnam in 1968. The ceremony included the posting of colors by our brothers at VVA Chapter 996 (Santa Fe, NM), welcome and introduction by Mike Messenger, President of Colorado Rolling Thunder, a message by Suzanne Sigona, the reading of Colorado and New Mexico Vietnam MIA's by Mike Messenger and Lee White. The Missing Man Table ceremony narrated by Terry Newkirk. Despite the thundershowers that began exactly at the start of the ceremony, the rain added to the solemnness of the event.



Angel Fire Memorial Entrance

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UH-1 Huey at the Memorial



Chapter 1106 in yellow and Rolling Thunder wearing black. A great looking crew!



Wendell Wallace, Chapter 1106 Bagpiper



VVA Chapter 996 Color Guard

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Mike Messenger – President of Rolling Thunder,
Chapter 1 – Colorado



VVA Chapter 1106 President – Lee White



Missing Man Table Ceremony



Special tribute by Suzane Segona

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Inside Chapel at Angel Fire Vietnam Memorial

Board of Directors/Officers

Lee White - President

Bob Easter - Vice-president

Paul Seppo - Treasurer

Hazel Simeon - Secretary

Board Members – Milt Omoto, Patti Ehline, Patrick Surrena, Joe Plant

Working Committees

(Folks are needed to fill some spots!)

Agent Orange/PTSD - Patti Ehline (need a couple more volunteers)

Membership Chair - Lee White

Membership Outreach - Mike Karsh , Jim Marcille

Newsletter Editor - Bob Rotruck

Fundraising/Grants - Milt Omoto

Marketing/Media - Pat Surrena

POW/MIA - Mike Messenger

Women Veterans - Patti Ehline

Scholarship Program - Hazel Simeon, Bob Easter, Joe Langran, Bob & Barbara Rotruck, Paul Seppo, Mary Seppo

Veteran Emergency Assistance Committee - Joe Plant, Dave Lyons, Bob Rotruck
Webmaster - Robert Senatore

America's bald eagle always reaching up to guard America's skies!



Photo: Nick Lucey – NICKLUCEY.COM

Douglas County Veterans Monument
Castle Rock, CO

Book/Articles Published by Members

A POEM by Al Felker, Vietnam Vet

No honor and no dignity, no self-respect or pride,
Not for those of us who lived, and not for those of us who died.
It's not wrong to talk like this, I've got to get it said,
Maybe it'll let me rest more easily, after I am dead.

This country used to be so proud, it's soldiers stood so tall,
And then the money-grabbers came, and made us take the fall.
But coming home was something else, and the people made it clear,
You were wrong! An animal!, from us you'll get no cheer.

They said our hearts were full of death, our eyes were filled with fire,
But that's not true.. We are your sons, what is it you require?

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From other wars the men were proud, they hold their heads up high,
But from "ours" they hang their heads, and sometimes even cry.

You held the world before us, we were following your rules.
If wasn't we who started that war, we were fighting one of YOUR duels.
Don't despise us for our principles, and condemn us all our lives,
The dictum was "A Drum is Beating.... Head the playing of the fifes"...

A war against all evil, we know God justifies,
But a war to boost the economy, is nothing else but lies.
It wasn't a war I've heard it said, we're just a "helping hand",
But 58,000 dead boys later, we've given up this mighty stand.

They say that time can heal all wounds, for some this may be true,
But Agent Orange now sets the rules, and the body counts are not through.
There's one more thing that must be said, and I want it said aloud,
Had we been in your war Dad, would we have made you PROUD?

Tellin' it like it was....

By Mike Messenger VVA #1106

One of my greatest pleasures as a Vietnam Veteran is to share my experiences with our youth. Our experiences in war time and in peace time, is something that we Veterans can leave our children and grandchildren in hopes they may never have to go to war and to have learn something about honor, duty and sacrifice. We were presented with this opportunity on Friday Dec 4th at VFW Post 2461 in South Denver.

When the post commander, Ray Kneen, asked me to participate in a taped interview with mid-schoolers with Kent Denver, I eagerly accepted. I and 4 other Vets who are also members of this post welcomed 16 young people who were also eager to find out who we were and what we did in

Vietnam or Iraq. Kent Denver School is a private, co-educational, non-sectarian college preparatory high school and middle school in Cherry Hills Village, Colorado.

Once the students arrived we set up 5 tables (1 per Veteran) in the VFW Banquet hall and invited everyone to find a table. These young people were no amateurs as each table had a video/audio camera and tri-pod set up to record each interview. Once the cameras were set and rolling, we began the interview process.



The questions asked were related to our youth, enlistment choices and what our job functions were during our service years and particularly in Vietnam or Iraq. I spent an hour telling my story and these young people hung on to every word I said. As their time was limited, I could sense they wanted to hear more. When the cameras stopped, they had a better understanding of what it was like for a young soldier, not much older than themselves, to spend a night in a sand bag bunker, thousands of miles from home, during war time conditions, doing their duty as an American, for God and country. They know what it means to be a veteran.

I want to thank the teachers Chris and Casey, who attended and a huge thanks to the young people of Kent Denver for taking an interest in those who served. May you also find peace? The

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students and teachers are submitting the interviews for archiving with the Library of Congress.



NEVER FORGET!!!

Spies in Vietnam? Hell yeah!

By Patrick Surrena, CTR2 United States Navy

When I tell people I was in the U.S. Navy and a Vietnam Veteran, they assume I was on a ship floating around in the Gulf of Tonkin in the South China Sea and therefore not seeing any "real" action. Well, I was, but before that, I was flying recon missions out of Da Nang Airbase where there was plenty. When people think of Vietnam, I believe the visual that comes to mind is the Army and Marines in the jungles because those are what they see on TV. That was a huge part of it, but many others worked in many other ways. Here's a little about a "boots on the ground" job few know about.

Call me crazy, but here's the short story. I volunteered for the Navy (I had kind of a middle draft number so it looked like I would go anyway) and then volunteered for Vietnam duty (maybe that was a family thing because my family has been in every conflict since the Revolutionary War and War of 1812, the Civil War and more, so maybe it's just something we do). Anyway, off to

boot camp just after Valentine's Day at Great Lakes Naval Training Center and they wanted me to pick three jobs I wanted to do while serving my time in the Navy. So I rattled off a few, waited six weeks and was told I had been assigned NONE of them. I was told I would be a Communications Technician and that it was a Top Secret job under the auspices of NSA and they had no idea what it was but they were sending me to Florida for school.

I show up at Corry Field in Pensacola, Florida and find out I'm in spy school training to be at CT "R" brancher and getting my Top Secret Security Clearance after being checked out by the FBI. We learned Morse code so we could intercept it by listening in on enemy radio transmission SIGINT (Signal Intelligence) while other guys had the same job title and were learning foreign languages, HFDF (High Frequency Direction Finding), maintenance of the equipment while still others learned to send and receive the high level communications. Add it all up and it's a pretty complete group of spy's capable of intercepting most any enemy communication. This is in a naval organization called the Naval Security Group Command.

That training over, they shipped me to NAVCOMMSTA (Naval Communications Station) Philippines at San Miguel in the fall of 1969. I was only there a couple months when I got orders to Da Nang, Republic of Vietnam, but before that, off to SERE Training in Coronado, CA. SERE, is one of the SEAL Training activities, the acronym standing for Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape. Turns out if you'll be flying in enemy territory, in this case Vietnam, and you have a sensitive job, and know stuff they would like to know, and have a chance of being shot down or captured, you went through SERE Training. It's a simulated POW camp with the barbed wire, gun turrets the whole POW scenario where they turn you loose and have you try to avoid them (yeah, right) water board you, interrogate and beat on you, stick you in one of those three foot by three

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foot boxes with a can to pee in, all to see if you can be broken and how far you'll go and what you'll say before you do. If you can't handle it, they don't send you.

Got through that, back to the Philippines and sent to Da Nang Air Base where I was attached to Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron One (VQ-1), Operation Biglook. We were flying several types of spy planes including EC-121's, EP3B's and A-3's. We'd go up for many hours at a time intercepting Vietnamese communications to give our guys on the ground a heads up of what might be happening before it happened whether it be their ground operations or aerial activities.

Da Nang, it seems, was always under attack from NVA mortars and rockets trying to blow up our planes and the airbase and with small arms fire every time we took off on a mission. Speaking of taking off, our planes were so heavily loaded with electronic spy gear, and the plane just precisely balanced so we couldn't carry any armament that when we started our takeoff roll, if we weren't in the air in 45 seconds, we weren't getting off the ground. We'd sit in our ditching stations looking at our watches and counting "41... 42... 43..." and that big old bird would just begin to put space between the wheels and the tarmac. Often, when we'd return, Da Nang Airbase was under attack and we'd have to fly to Korat, Thailand, an Air Force base, until they could repair the runways in Da Nang and we could return. On one of those tips we got locked on by a SAM. It never hit us and we never knew why. I'll take it!

While we weren't armed, we would often get chased by NVA Mig Aircraft. Since we were spying on them, we knew when that was happening and our pilots would call to the ground or to an aircraft carrier for F-4 support to remove the Migs. We'd do an immediate nose-dive and hope was there soon. I flew 770 hours of combat missions that way all contributing to my PTSD. By the way did I mention Da Nang Airbase was the third most sprayed Agent Orange location in

Vietnam? That's another story but am now 100% VA disabled because of it.

Left Da Nang with two, almost three Air Medals (ranked right after the Bronze Star) and Aircrew Wings as a Naval Aviator among other awards.

After that, was duty aboard the U.S.S Benjamin Stoddert, a guided missile destroyer (DDG-22) in the Gulf of Tonkin. Since CT's weren't a part of their normal crew of 300-330 men, they had to affix an outside space for us from which to work. Running dark during wartime, no lights were available so while heading to my midnight watch during a typhoon in the Gulf to the outside shack, the ship suddenly took a 47 degree list to port and I nearly went overboard, and I'm sure, never to be seen or heard from again. The ship then righted itself and I scrambled into the shack. The next day I learned the ship was not supposed to withstand a 47degree list but it did. Thank you Lord!

That's the abbreviated Vietnam part. From there, back to Pensacola for "C" School and higher level training in HFDF. Then to NAVCOMMSTA Rota, Spain, home of VQ-2 (VQ-1's counterpart flying recon missions in the Atlantic) and a substantial intelligence base operation where our time was spent tracking all things Russian including their submarine fleet. From one group of bad guys to the next.

If I told you, I'd have to kill you.

AR K (In Morse code, end of transmission.
Transmit back if you wish.)

Memorial Day 2016 Event

By Milt Omoto

The 70th Annual Community Memorial Day Service to honor the memory of Japanese Americans from Colorado who fought in the 442nd Infantry Regiment during WW-II was held at Fairmont Cemetery in Denver. The service was held at the Nisei War Memorial at the cemetery

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and was well attended. The guest speaker was Rick Crandall, host of the "Breakfast Club" morning show on KEZW 1430 AM Radio and who is most noted for spearheading the "Colorado Freedom Memorial, a monument dedicated to all Coloradoans killed or missing in military action which will honor all vets from the Spanish American War to the present." Crandall stated that there needed to be a place where families who lost loved-ones can go and feel at home, and share stories and memories in a peaceful, quiet setting. The Colorado Freedom Memorial provides that dignified setting.



Color Guard - Colorado Freedom Memorial



Rick Crandall – Guest Speaker

Agent Orange – The Problem Hasn't Gone Away

More than 40 years after the Vietnam War ended, many are asking whether Agent Orange, a toxic herbicide sprayed on North Vietnamese jungle hideouts, could be causing long-term health problems! Some in Washington, D.C., say yes, and they have been fighting Congress for years to get Veterans Administration benefits extended to the sailors.

The federal government acknowledges that Agent Orange caused severe health problems for Vietnamese and U.S. troops on the ground. Navy veteran and New Orleans native Michael Gaspard spent his two deployments to Vietnam on the water, but still has no doubt that he and the 90,000 other Navy sailors who served offshore were exposed. Gaspard enlisted in the Navy on Feb. 27, 1969, after his older brother, Charles did the same. "As an 18-year-old, I was draft bait for the Army and Marine Corps, so I had a choice," Gaspard said.

On board a Navy ship, he said he had it better than most. "Not tromping around in the jungle, you know, I enjoyed that," Gaspard said. "Because I had some friends who didn't come back, quite a few." Gaspard said the service men and women who did return were shamed. "We got spat upon, you know, for our service, our sacrifices," he said. Sacrifices continue to this day for many veterans, who are suffering the long-term health effects of exposure to Agent Orange. "Agent Orange is a herbicide they used to defoliate the jungle to expose hiding places of the North Vietnamese, Viet Cong, and it got into the water supply," Gaspard said. "It was all over." Gaspard said plumes of the spray washed over ships at sea. According to testimony before the U.S. Senate Affairs Committee, even more Agent Orange seeped into the water, giving the toxin a plausible pathway to sailors stationed offshore who distilled seawater to bathe and drink.

Gaspard supports the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act, which is being pushed by a grassroots group of veteran volunteers called the

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Military Veterans Advocacy. Military Veterans Advocacy wants all Vietnam veterans to get help from the VA for illnesses traced back to Agent Orange. John Wells, the group's executive director, a retired Navy commander from Slidell, testified that those benefits are offered only to veterans who set foot on land or entered one of the country's internal rivers or streams.

When one of Gaspard's shipmates died of cancer, his widow called, concerned about Agent Orange. "He was severely handicapped, and it gradually ... it killed him," Gaspard said. "And that's not the first one." Gaspard's brother Charles recently died. His illness has not been linked to Agent Orange. "He was 68 years old, and he had health problems," Gaspard said. "I don't know if it was directly from that, but he suffered with other ailments, and it was very difficult." Gaspard will lay his brother to rest on Tuesday while Wells continues the fight for benefits on Capitol Hill. For the past five years, the group has tried to get the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act moved, but the veterans can't get a hearing in the U.S. House. One issue is funding.

The VA, the Congressional Budget Office and Military Veterans Advocacy disagree on how much the bill would cost if it were passed. In fact, they're not even close. The VA estimated a 10-year cost at \$4.4 billion. The advocacy group projected \$1 billion or less for the same 10-year span. In 2012, the Congressional Budget Office put its estimate at \$2.74 billion for the same 10 years of coverage, but is reconsidering that estimate. The Military Veterans Advocacy's estimate is \$1 billion or less.

Light Side

Charley, a new retiree-greeter at Wal-Mart, just couldn't seem to get to work on time. Every day he was 5, 10, 15 minutes late. But he was a good worker, really tidy, clean-shaven, and sharp-minded and a real credit to the company and obviously demonstrating their "Older Person Friendly" policies.

One day the boss called him into the office for a talk.

"Charley, I have to tell you, I like your work ethic, you do a bang-up job when you finally get here; but you're being late so often is quite bothersome."

"Yes, I know boss, and I am working on it."

"Well good, you are a team player. That's what I like to hear".

"Yes sir, I understand your concern and I will try harder".

Seeming puzzled, the manager went on to comment, "I know you're retired from the Armed Forces. What did they say to you there if you showed up in the morning late so often?"

The old man looked down at the floor, then smiled. He chuckled quietly, then said with a grin, "They usually saluted and said, Good morning, Admiral, can I get your coffee, sir"?

Trivia Answer

Squeegee Sharpener – A gag item said to newly arriving young sailors aboard ship. "Hey boy, our squeegee is dull. Run down to the Machine Shop and ask to borrow their squeegee sharpener!" They were usually sent all over the ship in search of it until somebody took pity on the newbie and clued him in!!!!

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	Monthly Membership Meetings VISITORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME! 3rd Saturday of each month at 10:00a.m. Our meetings are held at: VFW Post 2461 1350 S Broadway, Denver, CO 80210	 APPLEWOOD PLUMBING HEATING & ELECTRIC SINCE 1973 Applewood Plumbing Heating & Electric Main Billing Office: 5000 W 29th Ave. Denver, CO 80212 Phone: 303-232-6611 Fax: 303-477-4310 Email: custservice@applewoodfixit.com
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