



# Listening Post

Vietnam Veterans of Ventura County, Inc.  
P.O. Box 3218  
Ventura, CA 93006-3218

October, 2012

## Officers

Dave Betti, President  
(805) 648-3283  
Dave Wilson, Vice President  
(805) 469-0281  
Jane Smiley, Secretary  
(805) 647-5027  
Doug Temple, Treasurer  
(805) 984-0489  
Richard Camacho, Public Affairs  
(805) 384-9138

## Board of Directors

John Cabrera  
(805) 483-5139  
Ron Fitzgarrald  
(805) 659-2614  
David Ha  
(805) 482-3772  
Robert Holmes  
(805) 641-3880  
Larry Seguin  
(805) 320-4116

## Committees

Chaplain – David Ha  
482-3772  
POW/MIA – Dave Betti  
(805) 649-3283  
Listening Post – Jan Camacho  
(805) 384-9138  
James Ray Scholarship – David Ha  
(805) 482-3772  
Membership – Marie Pounds  
(661) 297-2464  
Parades – John Cabrera  
(805) 483-5139

## Presidents Column:

Greetings all:

I hope everyone has had a great summer, and now on to winter, I think?

The VVVC has a lot going on again before the year ends, such as the dinner at the American Legion (5th Wednesday) in October on the 31st which is also Halloween, and then the VVVC Color guard will be well represented on November the 9th for Veterans Day at Oxnard Family Circle, and of course the Marine Corps is celebrating their birthday on Nov. 10th, and then we have Veterans Day at Ivy lawn (Nov. 11th) which this year again is going to be outstanding, and then we have Thanksgiving (Nov. 22nd), and on to December, in which the VVVC will be participating in Pearl Harbor Day (Dec. 7th) and the VVVC is discussing a Christmas party (Dec. 15th) to celebrate their (27) years in existence! Busy, busy, busy!

Recently I went to Northern Calif. to visit some family, and my sister and I were invited to attend a birthday party for a veteran whom I have known for over (25) years, but never met in person?

We hooked up years and years ago when he started this group of veterans called LRRP (Long Range Recon Patrol) chat group.

Some of you may know him, his name is Bobby Ross, but he actually goes by Lt. Bobby Ross, that's how I know him. He was in the 101st Airborne Div. and was a Lieutenant, of course.

My sister and I attended his 65th birthday party at his ranch in Elk Grove, Calif. and while the guests were arriving, I realized that all of his guests he went to high school with, or was in the military with? That is pretty cool, so as I began talking to some of the vets, the discussion came up about how they are not getting the service they needed from the VA or their own Veterans Service Officers?

I was shocked to say the least, because some of these guys live in the bay area or Fremont, Calif. where they are supposed to have the best service for veteran's period. As we talked more, I could tell you stories they shared with me that we don't even deal with down here because our Veterans Service Officers don't even talk or treat veterans like that, I was shocked!!

But any way's, believe it or not, I gave them contact information for our Service officers down here our way, and they were very pleased, now if they call or not, that's up to them, but by God I can tell you this, we think we have it bad by sometimes the way the VA treats us, we have the icing on the cake from our Service officers here, while these guys have the left over's from the night before, and boy, you talk about wrong diagnosis, wrong medicines, wrong appointments for the wrong ailments, (6) months of waiting for results, and they have to go all the way to San Francisco or Martinez, Calif., for appointments, I told them they need to move down here, ha ha ha.

(Cont. pg. 2)

The birthday party was a success, and Lt. Bobby Ross is one hell of a promoter, by the way, for being 65 years old, he still works, he raises Bengal cats, exotic turkeys, chickens, and even has an oven he puts turkey eggs in for them to hatch, no kidding, little baby turkeys, and cute galore!

Well anyway, I better end this article so all of you can have room for your articles, so if you have some special stories about you or another veteran, let's hear from you, we want to know what you have been up to!

Take care, see you at the meetings!  
Dave Betti

### **Vice President's Message:**

At the viewing on Marine Cpl. Richard Rivera on Monday, August 27; Richard Camacho, Ron Fitzgerald, Larry Seguin and I had the opportunity to meet the other Marines of the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force stationed in Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii; who together served in Afghanistan.

Being the only non-Marine in the group, one of the team members who had a confused look on his face queried as to why we were there. I responded by saying that Richard, Ron and Larry are Marines who are combat veterans of the Viet Nam War and that I too am a combat veteran of that war and have come to show our respect for Cpl. Rivera's sacrifice and our support for his family and team members.

I reminded him also that all combat veterans are a band of brothers and that by showing our respects and honoring one fallen brother we honor all.

I am writing this on Sept. 12th. Yesterday we all remembered what happened on 9/11/01 and how the events of that day changed our lives. I can't help but remember the 44 passengers of United Flight 93 and those brave souls on that flight who became the first to stand up and fight against the terrorists. It reminds me that not all our heroes wear uniforms. It behooves us to respect and honor all who have sacrificed their lives for our freedom and liberty. "All gave some; some gave all".

Dave Wilson,  
VVVC Vice President

### **Expiring Memberships:**

The following memberships will expire in October:

John Barber October 2

Joseph Catrambone October 11

Wayne Eusano October 14

David Ortiz October 14

Larry Seguin October 14

Breanna Wilhelmi October 14

Please renew your membership if you want to continue to receive the LP Newsletter.

### **Scholarship Chair's Message:**

The Vietnam Veterans of Ventura County (VVVC) is pleased to announce the 2012 SSgt James M. Ray Scholarship winner.

Each individual received a \$350 scholarship award Congratulations to the following individuals:

Saamon Legoski  
Sean Hirrel  
Jonathon Tresner

They were at the September meeting along with their guests to receive their scholarship awards, and read their essays to the general membership.

David Ha,  
Scholarship Chair

### **2012 SSGT James M. Ray Scholarship Winners**



Sean Hirrel



Jonathon Tresner



Saamon Legoski

### Parade/Work Party Chair's Message:

Once again it has been a busy month. I have both sewing machines back now and have repaired 65 flags so far. I'd like to thank all of you that have helped at Ivy Lawn on the repairs. Starting in October, I'll have work crews again on Wednesdays. October 3<sup>rd</sup> will be the first Wednesday. We need pipe repairs, welding clips and drilling holes, putting on new clips. Ivy Lawn is talking about the old tank out again. We can just work around it.

The fifth Wednesday dinner, at the American Legion in Oakview is Wednesday, October 31<sup>st</sup>. Hope you can make it. We have a great time.

Veteran's Day is coming up and we need an Honor Guard for Nov.9<sup>th</sup> for Oxnard Family Circle. Please contact Dave Betti if you are interested in participating.  
Brother John

### A note from Dave:

I wanted to share with you all a little bit of what recently happened while I was having lunch with my wife while she had a break from jury duty a few days ago. We had gone to have lunch at Marie Calendars (on 9/11) here in Ventura, we got our seats, and we sat in the back of the restaurant.

I did my usual recon of the area and spotted a gentleman sitting by himself, he was dressed very nicely, and I noticed he was wearing his VFW shirt along with his VFW cap. I asked our waitress what he was having for lunch and I asked for his check. She told me she did not know, that she would get his waiter, so his waiter showed up and he told me this man was only having a drink.

I said could I have his check, and he replied yes, but I already paid for his first drink, and I said okay, and then let me have his check for the next drink, in which I did get. The waiter proceeded to tell me that he has nothing but admiration and respect for veterans and that the gentleman was sitting by himself, and although he was just sitting there the waiter could not help but think, what was the man thinking, was he thinking about his service, why was he alone, what was going through his mind?

I got up, went over and sat with the veteran, and he told me he had just taken the bus from the Veterans home (Ventura) after attending the 9/11 memorial services. The gentleman was a past Commander of the VFW in his hometown and was also past District 5 Commander of that whole area, which if you know the VFW it is huge!

(Cont. next column)

### A note from Dave (Cont.)

We finished our conversation, I went back to finish lunch with my wife, and the gentleman got up, said thank you, waved good bye, and proceeded to go out the door and catch the bus back to the Veterans home. I told him, see you at the meeting this Saturday John! He happily smiled, and waved good bye.

It was really good to see him out and about, he seemed very happy, great job John, oh, by the way everyone, it was VVVC member John Neil!  
Dave Betti

### Welcome Home Cpl Lopez :



The above is a picture of a Marine Cpl Joshua Lopez, who the Patriot Guard Riders got to honor this past Sunday. Cpl Lopez stepped on an IED in April and was recovering back on the East Coast. He returned to Lancaster this past Sunday September 9th. We were there to welcome Marine Cpl Joshua Lopez home.

David Ha



## Important Dates:

### Sat, Oct. 20<sup>th</sup> – VVVC Meetings

Veterans Home,  
10900 Telephone Rd, Ventura  
Board Mtg. – 5:30 PM  
General Mgt. – 6:00 PM  
Potluck, bring your favorite dish.

### Saturday, Oct. 31<sup>st</sup> – Halloween

### Tuesday, Nov. 6<sup>th</sup> – Election Day

### Sunday, Nov. 11<sup>th</sup> – Veterans Day

### Saturday, Nov. 17<sup>th</sup> – VVVC Meetings

Veterans Home,  
10900 Telephone Rd, Ventura  
Board Mtg. – 5:30 PM  
General Mgt. – 6:00 PM  
Potluck, bring your favorite dish.

### Thursday, Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup> – Thanksgiving

### Saturday, Nov. 14<sup>th</sup> – Santa Paula Christmas Parade

More information coming.

## Race against time to find US troops' remains in Vietnam:

In a remote valley in Vietnam, US investigators sift through piles of red soil. Despite recovering the remains of hundreds of fallen troops, the hunt goes on for many more still missing in a race against time.

With witnesses ageing, acidic soil eating into remains, and rapid development encroaching on areas where troops died during the Vietnam War, investigators warn there is little time left before all evidence is lost.

In May 1968, explosions shook the now-quiet valley in a battle around the Kham Duc Special Forces Camp in Quang Nam province -- an hour-long helicopter ride over green, terraced paddy fields from Danang airport, a former US base.

More than 40 years later a joint US-Vietnamese recovery team is hunting for the remains of those who were lost -- and must find them before all traces disappear.

"We most often find bits of metal fragments -- the area was heavily bombed. About 90 percent of what gets found (bone fragments and other remains) comes through the sieves," the team's anthropologist, Mindy Simonson, told AFP.

(Cont. next column)

## Race Against Time (Cont.)

In Kham Duc, Vietnamese workers in a long line pass buckets of earth from a shallow pit neatly marked out with twine to the "evidence station" where it is sifted through dozens of large sieves.

Nearly 60,000 American soldiers died in the bloody Cold War-era conflict, which also claimed the lives of up to three million Vietnamese civilians and soldiers before ending in 1975 with Vietnam's reunification.

When the guns fell silent, 1,971 Americans were left unaccounted for, according to figures from the US Joint Prisoners of War, Missing in Action Accounting Command (JPAC), which handles the search for MIAs.

Since then, 687 have been identified and repatriated and 586 are listed as "no further pursuit", meaning it is not possible to recover their remains. But JPAC is still hunting for about 700 missing individuals.

"It is no secret that the remains being recovered from most of the sites in Vietnam these days are fragmented and small," said JPAC's Ron Ward. "Remains are being lost to acidic soil, scavenging and land development."

The search is now a "race against time", he told AFP, but added there is "light at the end of the tunnel"

"We are relatively close to completing the majority of the excavations," Ward said.

At the Kham Duc dig, the team was guided by a younger, local witness who had stumbled upon the site while scavenging for scrap metal. "Witness" is the term used for people who know where the sites are.

Usually witnesses are elderly -- another factor JPAC is "racing against," said Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Keane. In many cases it is former soldiers who come forward with information.

"The Vietnamese witnesses are getting exceptionally old and we're losing those first hand witnesses. Once you lose a first hand witness, your ability to actually close a case... pretty much comes to an end," Keane told AFP.

Moreover, as Vietnam develops, more and more land is being turned into roads, hotels or coffee plantations.

"The third and fourth quarter of last year, every site we went to was in imminent danger" due to development, said Keane, the head of JPAC's operations in Vietnam.

(Cont. pg. 5)

## Race Against Time (Cont.)

The fact that remains are so fragmented and being eaten away by acidic soil makes it harder for JPAC scientists to do a positive DNA identification -- essential if a case is to be closed, he said.

When pressed on how long it would be until evidence disappeared, Keane said it was impossible to talk about exact timescales as there were many variables.

"There's no way to say 'well, in 6.2 years all the bones will be gone'. It's just we understand it is a concern, and it is something that we're racing against to ensure that we do find enough remains for the laboratory to be able to execute some sort of scientific (analysis)."

"The other factor that is important to us is we have mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, and children who are all waiting for word on their loved ones, and they're all getting older," he added.

Unidentified remains found on JPAC digs are placed in flag-draped coffins and flown to JPAC's labs in Hawaii where they are DNA-tested -- families are needed to provide samples.

After they have been identified, which can take some time depending on how quickly the DNA sequencing can obtain a positive identification, remains are flown to the mainland and returned to families for proper funerals.

According to JPAC's Ward, "the best-case scenario would be to reach a fullest possible accounting of (MIAs) within the lives of the immediate family members of the missing. There are very few parents left," he told AFP.

Bilateral cooperation has improved dramatically since the early days and the use of Vietnamese Recovery Teams -- local teams with a small American presence -- have speeded up the search.

"We want to pick up the pace so we can finish in time," said Colonel Dao Xuan Kinh, 61, who oversees the Vietnamese side of the dig effort for US remains.

The MIA issue was one of the first points of contact between the former enemies, which helped pave the way for the resumption of ties in 1995.

Vietnam also wants US help with finding its own missing soldiers, Kinh said.

Hanoi says about 300,000 North Vietnamese soldiers are still listed as missing from the war. The number of South Vietnamese MIAs remains unclear.

(Cont. next column)

## Race Against Time (Cont.)

A key factor constraining the speed of the mission is cost -- JPAC estimates their Vietnam operation's annual operating budget, excluding field operations, at about \$15 million.

This year, a funding boost has enabled the operation to field more recovery teams.

This has, Keane estimates, cut the estimated end date from 20 years to seven years -- if work continues at the current pace.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) organisation says the hunt must continue whatever the cost.

"As long as there is one Vietnam veteran alive, this mission will continue," said VFW's Adjutant General Allen F. Kent.

"The American soldier was always told -- you go into combat and you defend your country and your country will make sure you come home properly to be buried on the ground that you were born in."

## The Call for Photos:

The National Call for Photos is a campaign to collect a photograph for each of the more than 58,000 men and women whose names are inscribed on The Wall. Collected pictures will be used in the Education Center at The Wall and can also be found on The Virtual Wall.

### How to Submit a Photo:

#### ***E-mail your scanned image to VVMF***

If you have a scanner at home, you can e-mail it as an attachment (jpg, jpeg or gif preferred) to [vvmf@vvmf.org](mailto:vvmf@vvmf.org) with the subject "Call for Photos." In the body of the e-mail, be sure to include the service member's name, your name, a password and any other information you would like included in the remembrance.

#### ***Mail a copy of your photograph to VVMF***

Make a copy of your photo. *VVMF does not want original photos and cannot be responsible for returning photos to donors.* When having the photo copied, ask the photo professional to make it the highest quality possible, use a glossy finish and reproduce the photo at an 8 x 10 size, if possible. Fill out the photo **submission form** (available on our website) and package it up for mailing with the copy of the photo. When mailing, please indicate on the front of the envelope that a photo is enclosed. Mail to:

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund  
Attn: Call for Photos  
2600 Virginia Avenue, NW Suite 104  
Washington, D.C. 20037

For more information about how to add a photo to the collection, please contact us at (202) 393-0090 or via email at [vvmf@vvmf.org](mailto:vvmf@vvmf.org)

Vietnam Veterans of Ventura County, Inc.  
P.O. Box 3218  
Ventura, Ca 93006-3218

