



Listening Post

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

April, 2023

Officers

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Joe Richardson, Vice President
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(805) 200-7386
Bud Gray
(805) 890-7645
Bob Citron
(805) 320-7767
Howard Tench
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Committees

**Chaplain/Housing
Improvements**
Open

Merchandise
Open

Parades/Work Party
Open

Fundraising
Open

POW/MIA
Ron Fitzgarrald
(805) 218-3489

Listening Post
Bob Citron
(805) 320-7767

James Ray Scholarship
Joe Richardson
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Membership
Joe Richardson
(805) 659-2387

President's Message:

On March 9, 2023, I attended the monthly Military Collaborative meeting at the County Veterans Service Office in Oxnard. Ventura County Veteran Service Officer Jim McHugh gave the following update regarding the PACT ACT:

As of March 4, 2023, the VA has received more than 362,000 toxic exposure-related claims from veterans since the PACT ACT legislation passed on August 10, 2022. In the past six months, the VA has completed nearly 158,000 PACT ACT-related claims for all veterans and survivors.

As you can see, the VA is overloaded with claims at this time, and they are in the process of hiring more employees.

On March 16, 2023, the following VVVC members traveled to San Luis Obispo, to join other Color Guards for the Opening of The Wall That Heals:

Ron Fitzgarrald, Debora Ehrich, Bud Gray, Jess Echavarria, Richard Pina, John Cabrera, and myself.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

Later we were informed that those in attendance were very impressed with the VVVC Color Guard, with our uniforms and how we conducted ourselves. Great job guys and Debora. Later we had lunch at the local Olive Garden, which the VVVC picked up the cost.

Before this edition of the Listening Post will go to print, the VVVC will provide Colors for a fellow Vietnam Veteran Yaquil Joe Asebedo's Celebration of Life at the Ventura College.

At the April VVVC General Membership meeting, I will have new VVVC pins, that I had John Cabrera order. These pins are like the original pins that the VVVC once had in the 80s. I believe I'm the only person that still has the original pin.

Until next month.

Respectfully,

Richard F Camacho, President

VVVC Feb/March 2023
Membership Report

Annual Members: 19
Life Members: 97
Total Members: 116

VP/Membership Chair
Joe Richardson

Sick Call...

Please continue to think about
and say a prayer for our brothers
and sisters:

Laurie Richardson
Joe Richardson
Dave Wilson
Bobbie Mills
Ed Evans
Mike Logie
Howard Tench (recovering)
Manuel Gonzales

***“What counts is not necessarily the dog in the fight – it’s the size
of the fight in the dog”***

-President Dwight D. Eisenhower

POW/MIA REPORT Feb '23 – Mar '23

**9 Brothers-in-arms have been accounted for and/or returned home &
6 remain MIA and unaccounted for**

European & Pacific Theaters: 7

U.S. Army Air Forces Tech Sgt. **Frank C. Ferrel**, 31, of Roby, Texas, was accounted for Jan. 10, 2023.

U.S. Army Air Forces 1st Lt. **William B. Montgomery**, 24, of Ford City, Pennsylvania, was accounted for Jan. 10, 2023.

U.S. Navy Aviation Radioman First Class **Wilbur A. Mitts**, 24, was accounted for Feb. 23, 2023.

Army Tech Sgt. **Matthew L. McKeon**, 25, of Euclid, California, was accounted for Jan. 12, 2023.

U.S. Army Sgt. **Gregory V. Knoll** 22, of Garden City, Kansas, was accounted for Jan. 3, 2023.

U.S. Army Air Forces Tech. Sgt. **John Holoka Jr.**, 25, of Cresson, Pennsylvania, was accounted for Jan. 24, 2023.

U.S. Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. **Edgar L. Mills**, 25, of Tampa, Florida, was accounted for Feb. 13, 2023.

USS *Oklahoma*: 0

Total from World War II: 7

Currently there are 72,233 Americans (approximately 26,000 are assessed as possibly-recoverable) still unaccounted for from World War II

Korean War: 2

U.S. Army Sgt. & POW **Lawrence J. Robidoux** 22, of Cumberland, Rhode Island, died in May 1951 at Prisoner of War Camp #5 during the Korean War, was accounted for Jan. 24, 2023.

*U.S. Army Cpl. **Carmen Carrillo**, 20, of Lompoc, California, was accounted for Feb. 3, 2023.

Currently there are 7,496 Americans still unaccounted for from the Korean War.

Vietnam: 0

Currently there are 1,568 American servicemen and civilians still unaccounted for from the Vietnam War

Iraq Theater & Other Conflicts: 6

Operation El Dorado Canyon, 1986 MIA: 1

Capt. **Paul F. Lorence**, of San Francisco, U.S. Air Force, was lost on April 15, 1986, over Libya.

Operation Desert Storm, 1991 MIA: 2

Lt. Cmdr. **Barry T. Cooke**, of Austin, Texas, U.S. Navy, was lost on Feb. 2, 1991, in the Persian Gulf.

Lt. **Robert J. Dwyer**, of Worthington, Ohio, U.S. Navy, was lost on Feb. 5, 1991, in the Persian Gulf.

Operation Iraqi Freedom, 2003-2010 MIA: 3

Mr. **Kirk Von Ackermann**, of Albuquerque, N.M., DoD contractor, was lost on Oct. 9, 2003, while working in Forward Operating Base Pacesetter, Iraq.

Mr. **Timothy E. Bell**, of Mobile, Ala., DoD contractor, was lost on April 9, 2004, while working in Baghdad, Iraq.

Mr. **Adnan al-Hilawi**, of Orlando, Fla., DoD contractor, was lost on March 3, 2007, while working in Baghdad, Iraq.



Ron Fitzgarrald
POW/MIA Chairman

Helpful Resources:

- **The VVVC Website:** Note that the site is still being updated.
- **Now you can get prescription refills right on your phone.** Just download the **VA:Health & Benefits App** from the App Store on your phone. There are numerous other features you can use in tracking your healthcare, just like on the MyHealtheVet website.
- Vets and their survivors can learn more about the **PACT Act-related benefits** by visiting www.va.gov/PACT, or by calling 1-800-698-2411.
- **Homeless Veteran Resources:** If you need help, call 1-877-424-3838. Available Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm ET.



- Issues with the Community Care Network/Tricare (including the Ventura CBOC)? The following is the contact person to communicate it: michail.chiodo@VA.GOV or (818) 891-7711 ext 31306.
- If you disagree with VA's decision on your service-connected disability claim, you can request a **higher level review**. Information on how to do this can be found at www.va.gov/decision-reviews/higher-level-review.
- Effective January 1, 2023 the copay rates for VA and VA-Approved healthcare were set and can be viewed at www.va.gov/health-care/copay-rates.
- Veterans and Gold Star Families can get a **free, lifetime pass to national parks, wildlife refuges, and other public lands**. All you need is your Veteran Healthcare Card, Veteran ID Card, or Veteran designation on your driver's license to take advantage of this great benefit.

Your Ventura County Veteran Services Office

We're available to serve you online, by phone, email, fax, drop-off/mail-in services, and in person.

Main Office
2901 N. Ventura Road, 3rd Floor
Oxnard, CA 93036
Call with questions or to schedule an appointment:
805-477-5155
www.vchsa.org/veterans

FIELD OFFICES

Camarillo	Simi Valley
Gold Coast Veterans Foundation (GCVF) 4001 Mission Oaks Boulevard, Suite D ▶ Walk-in hours of availability Wednesdays, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.	America's Job Center, East County 2900 N. Madera Road, Suite 100 ▶ Walk-in hours of availability Wednesdays, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
Thousand Oaks Supervisor Linda Parks' Office 625 West Hillcrest Drive ▶ Thursdays, 9 a.m.-noon By appointment only	Simi Valley Senior Center 3900 Avenida Simi ▶ To schedule an appointment please call: 805-583-6363 1 st Wednesday, 9 a.m.-noon
Thousand Oaks Senior Center 1385 East Janss Road ▶ Walk-in hours of availability Second Tuesday, 1:30-4 p.m.	

Walk-in clients are seen on a first-come, first-served basis within office hours.

Federal Benefits: <https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits-book.asp>

CalVet Benefits: <https://www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/Documents/Veteran%20Resource%20Book.pdf>

CalVet Benefits Checklist:
<https://www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/Documents/2012%20VeteransBenefits%20Checklist.pdf#search=CHECKLIST%20FOR%20BENEFITS>

Veterans Collaborative of Ventura County
<https://www.ventura.org/human-services-agency/veteran-collaborative-ventura-county-2/>

Veteran in crisis? Call 1 800 273-8255, press 1
<https://youtu.be/tgV60la0ui0> (veterans' mental health – you are not alone)

In Humble Service,

Tammy Bender
Veterans Program Coordinator
HMC, USN (Ret.)

(805) 477-5155 (main office)
(805) 477-5485 (desk number) (805) 477-5418 (fax)
Website: www.vchsa.org/veterans

Recent Events/Ceremonies:

- On March 4, 2023 the VVVC presented a Color Guard for the funeral presentation of Sid Russell, an Air Force Veteran. The ceremony was held at Ivy Lawn Cemetery in Ventura:



Portrait of Sid Russel, U. S. Navy Veteran at grave site



Military Service Members Sculptures of all Branches saluting to the Fallen Heroes & their Families.



VVVC Color/Honor Guard – John Cabrera, Jesse Echevarria, Richard Pina, Bob Citron, Ed Evans, and Richard Camacho (Debora L. Ehrich behind her phone camera)

- On March 16, 2023 members of the VVVC presented the Color Guard at the traveling “Wall That Heals” display at the Madonna Meadow in San Luis Obispo, California. Founders of the wall was the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund:

The United States of America Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of Vietnam War



John Cabrera's friend, a Fallen Hero, David Balades, U.S.M.C name is on this panel



Right end of The Wall That Heals
Madonna Meadow, San Luis Obispo



VVVC Color Guard was called the “Sharpest Veteran Organization Color Guard” of all the Veteran Organizations – Richard Camacho, Bud Gray, Doug Temple, John Cabrera, Ron Fitzgarrald Jesse Echevarria, & Richard Pina CONGRATULATIONS! (Debora Ehrich behind the phone camera)

Upcoming Events:

- **Golf Tournament:** On **Sunday, May 7, 2023** the Ventura Elks #1430 will be sponsoring a golf tournament at the Olivas Links golf course as a fund raiser for the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Chapter 24 of Ventura. It will be a Scramble format, with prizes and a BBQ afterwards at the lodge which is located at 2126 Knoll Dr., Ventura 93003. For further information and registration call **Rayner Spencer at (805) 407-3405**.
- VVVC members will be speaking at local schools about their experiences in Vietnam. The dates/locations are:
 - 4/12** – Anacapa Middle School (Joe Richardson, Ron Fitzgerrald)
 - 5/15 and 16** – Newbury Park High School (Tim Tobin, Joe Richardson)
 - 5/17 and 18** – Foothill High School (Ron Fitzgerrald, Ed Evans)
 - 5/23** – Thousand Oaks High School (Richard Camacho, Ed Evans)
 - 5/26** - Moorpark High School (Joe Richardson, Ed Evans, Richard Camacho)
- A request has also been made for the VVVC to present a Color Guard on **June 6, 2023** at the Palm Garden Hotel in Newbury Park for a Garden Club Convention. Time is **4:00 pm**.
- On **Memorial Day (May 29, 2023)** at 1:00 pm there will be a special event for **all Veterans** put on by the American Legion Post 482 of Ojai. The “Wall of Remembrance” will be at **Libby Bowl in Ojai**. See the flyer on page 10 for details.

Story Board

The SMALL WORLD and CROSSING PATHS of two Vietnam Veterans

Prior to a VVVC meeting in 2019 before Covid, member Manny Gonzales told to me in passing that he would be bringing someone to the meeting that month that wanted to meet me. He said no more and as I rarely missed a meeting didn't really think about it much. At the meeting Manny called me aside and introduced me to Leonard Urquidez who had come to the meeting to join up with us as a life member. This meeting was held shortly after the School Presentation Group had been out doing our Vietnam talks at the local schools we had been doing for over 25 years.

Leonard explained to me that he had been in the Marines in Vietnam and that since getting back, he had only met a few other Vets who were there at the same time he was, and that he had NEVER run across an Amtrac'r in the four decades he had been home. He said that his granddaughter had told him there was a Marine who gave a talk at her school, and that he had pictures of those 'big things' he had served in when he was in Vietnam ... those things being Amtracs.

I told him that I had been in Vietnam from April of 66 till Sept 67 with half my time in the DaNang area and then at CauViet, and that I was part of the original team sent to establish the perimeter at the mouth of the river.

He started to talk and related this story to me (all the while I stayed absolutely silent). He had gone through Amtrac training at Camp Pendleton and ended up assigned to H6's which were LVTP5's modified to carry troops and supplies. It had a 105mm Howitzer mounted in order to provide artillery support immediately on or during an amphibious assault landing. After schooling, he got orders to Vietnam. The first site that his platoon was assigned to was the mouth of the CauViet River, where a new base was to be built and needed artillery support.

I told him to be sure and come to the next meeting as I would have something special for him.

A month later I brought the following photos I had taken after the first two weeks at CauViet, when my unit was reinforced by a platoon of H6's. Yes, the first time we crossed paths in the U.S. 4 decades after we had been in Vietnam ... I had pictures of him and his platoon on their FIRST landing in Vietnam.

Over the years as a member of the VVVC, the incidents of members who crossed paths from the war zone have been a surprise and also a source of warmth to my heart about the brotherhood of Marines I served with in Vietnam.

Joe Richardson



ATTENTION ALL VETERANS

Your presence is cordially requested



Ojai VFW Post 11461

Presents

Ojai Memorial Day 2023

MONDAY, MAY 29

1:00 P.M.

LIBBEY BOWL

Speakers/Singers 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

THE WALL OF REMEMBRANCE

View Ventura County Veterans' Photographs

Concert 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.: Free to All

Barbeque to Follow –

American Legion Ojai Post 482

843 East Ojai Avenue, Ojai, CA

Barbecue 3:00 p.m. \$10.00 /Veterans Free – Be Early