



# Listening Post

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

November 2024

## Officers

Richard Camacho, President  
(805) 630-7657  
Joe Richardson, Vice President  
(805) 207-1670  
Debora Ehrich, Secretary  
(805) 775-9987  
Kay Gray, Treasurer  
(805) 890-7645  
Ron Fitzgarrald, Public Affairs  
(805) 218-3489

## Board of Directors

Jess Echavarria  
(805) 200-7386  
Donald "Skip" Thomas  
(N/A)  
Ed Evans  
(805) 524-3594  
Howard Tench  
(805) 312-1977  
Fred Hoff  
(N/A)

## Committees

### Chaplain/Housing Improvements

Luis Morris  
(805) 207-8692

### Merchandise

Open

### Parades/Work Party

Open

### Fundraising

Open

### POW/MIA

Ron Fitzgarrald  
(805) 218-3489

### Listening Post

Bob Citron  
(805) 673-6184

### James Ray Scholarship

Joe Richardson  
(805) 207-1670

### Membership

Joe Richardson  
(805) 207-1670

## President's Message:

The views and opinions I express in the monthly president's messages are my own opinions only, and not necessarily those of the other Officers or Board Members of the VVVC.

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38 Years with the VVVC

My first visit to the Moving Wall was in March 1985 in Santa Barbara, CA. I remember I drove to Santa Barbara from Ojai by myself that night. When I got there, I could not remember a single name of the Marines I served with in Vietnam.

My second visit to the Moving Wall was the week of Thanksgiving 1985; the Vietnam Veterans of Ventura County were hosting the Moving Wall at the Ventura Government Center, where it had rained all week. I remember hearing the names of places that I had been in Vietnam and had forgotten. Dong Ha, Phu Bai, Hue, Cam lo. I was handed a black arm band that read Vietnam Veteran.

*(Continued on page 2)*

*(President's Message, continued from page 1)*

I would often stop by the VVVC food booth at the Ventura Street Fair, talking with the guys working it. Then in June 1986, I became an annual member of the VVVC.

During the election nominations of 1986, then Board member Richard Brandl asked me if I would consider running for VP? I said yes, what harm would that cause? I was elected to the position, and Robert Keuser (Fox) was reelected to President. The very next day, Robert called and advised me that due to personal reasons, he would not be able to fill the position of president. I contacted the Board and notified them that I would take over the position of president, a position I held until 1992, when I stepped down after the loss of my youngest son. During the last eight plus years, I have collaborated with Congresswoman Brownley as well as Assemblywoman Irwin, on veteran issues.

During my 36 years with the VVVC I have held every position as an Officer and Board Member. Until 1996, my life was the VVVC.

I would not change any of the experiences that I encountered while leading the VVVC, my only regret is that I did not attend the kickoff barbeque held at Camp Comfort for the VVVC, which at the time was only 5 minutes away from where I lived in Ojai. Through the VVVC I served on the original committee for the Veterans Home, as well as working with then Congressmen Robert Lagomarsino and Elton Gallegly. I was invited to Hope Ranch to meet President Reagan. I have worked with many of the Ventura County Supervisors as well as county staff on Veteran issues as well as some of the Mayors of this County. One of my proudest achievements was ACR 135, the renaming of Pacific Coast Highway through Ventura County to Ventura County Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway and raising \$20,000 for the four signs.

In 2019 when I lost my wife Jan to cancer, it was the VVVC that kept me going with Color and Honor Guards. I am thankful for that. As well as the many members that came to say their final goodbyes to Jan in her last days.

Thank you for allowing me to serve along with you all during the last 36 years.

Until next month

Respectfully,

**Richard F Camacho**

**President**

### **VVVC - Oct 2024** **Membership Report**

Annual Members:	34
Life Members:	108
Total Members:	142

**VP/Membership Chair**  
**Joe Richardson**

### **Sick Call...**

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

Robert Martinez (passed)  
Laurie Richardson (recovering)  
Barry Jenkins (myeloma)  
Richard Cabrera (passed)  
Manuel Gonzales (broken foot)

*“War is delightful to those who have no experience of it.”*

*- Desiderius Erasmus*

## POW/MIA REPORT Sept '24 – Oct '24

**10 Brothers-in-arms have been accounted for and/or returned home &**

**6 remain MIA and unaccounted for**

### **European & Pacific Theaters: 7**

U.S. Army Sgt. **Jack Zarifian**, 19, of Bridgeport, Connecticut, was accounted for May 10, 2024. His body was unable to be recovered due to intense fighting against German forces holding the town. He will be buried in Providence, Rhode Island, on a date to be determined.

Army First Lieutenant **Herman J. Sundstad**, 26, of Perley, Minnesota, was accounted for on June 24, 2024. He will be buried in Lafayette, California, on Nov. 11, 2024.

Merchant Marine Wiper **Elvis N. Spotts**, 18, of Kansas City, Missouri, was accounted for on Sept. 13, 2018. On Feb. 23, 1944, Spotts was buried with military honors in the U.S. Marine Cemetery on Betio Island. In 2017, members of History Flight, Inc., a non-profit organization, discovered a coffin buried in Cemetery #33 on Betio, which contained possible osseous remains. These remains were transferred to the DPAA laboratory for examination and identification. He will be buried in Armstrong, Missouri, on Nov. 9, 2024.

U.S. Army Private **Joseph M. Cocco**, 22, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, missing in action during World War II, was accounted for May 15, 2024. He will be buried in Yeadon, Pennsylvania, in mid-November 2024.

U.S. Army Air Forces Corporal **Melvin L. Huff**, 19, of Iowa Falls, Iowa, was accounted for on July 30, 2024. He will be buried in Iowa Falls, Iowa, on a date to be determined.

U.S. Army Tech Sgt. **Thomas O. Moss**, 31, of Brim, Virginia, was accounted for August 6, 2024. He will be buried in Salisbury, North Carolina, on Nov. 22, 2024.

U.S. Army Pvt. **Jeremiah P. Mahoney**, 19, of Chicago, Illinois, killed during World War II, was accounted for May 6, 2024. He will be buried in Arlington National Cemetery, on a date to be determined.

### **USS California: 1**

Seaman 1st Class (S1c) **Aaron L. McMurtrey**, 27, of Durant, Oklahoma, was accounted for on July 31, 2024. In 2018, DPAA personnel exhumed the 25 USS *California* Unknowns from the Punchbowl for analysis. To identify McMurtrey's remains, scientists from DPAA used anthropological analysis. Additionally, scientists from the [Armed Forces Medical Examiner System](#) used mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), and Y chromosome DNA (Y-STR) analysis.

He will be buried in Arlington National Cemetery, on a date to be determined.

## **Total from World War II: 8**

Currently there are 71,992 Americans (approximately 26,000 are assessed as possibly-recoverable) still unaccounted for from World War II

## **Korean War: 1**

U.S. Army Pfc. **Clem D. McDuffie**, 18, of Hamlet, North Carolina, was accounted for August 26, 2024. He will be buried in Hamlet, North Carolina, on Nov. 30, 2024.

Currently there are 7,445 Americans still unaccounted for from the Korean War.

## **Vietnam: 1**

U.S. Navy Reserve Lt. Cmdr. **Larry R. Kilpatrick**, 28, of Stone Mountain, Georgia, was accounted for May 18, 2018. Kilpatrick's name is recorded on the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. , and the [American Battle Monuments Commission](#)'s Courts of the Missing at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, along with others who are unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War. A rosette will be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for. He will be buried in Gwinnett County, Georgia, on Nov. 15, 2024.

Currently there are 1,574 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**

**\*\*To respect the next-of-kin, individuals are only displayed as “Accounted For” in the grids and case profiles when (1) DPAA has made the identification, and (2) the next-of-kin has been notified.\*\***

## **Veteran Resources:**



***For VA emergency care, call (844) 724-7842***

***Note: Beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>, the Veteran Services Office is relocating to The Palms, 2000 Outlet Center Drive, Suite C-220, Oxnard, CA 93036.***

**Federal Benefits:** [https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits\\_book.asp](https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book.asp)

**CalVet Benefits:** [https://www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/Documents/Veteran%20Resource\\_%20Book.pdf](https://www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/Documents/Veteran%20Resource_%20Book.pdf)

**CalVet Benefits Checklist:**

[https://www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/Documents/2012%20VeteransBenefits\\_Checklist.pdf#search=CHECKLIST%20FOR%20BENEFITS](https://www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/Documents/2012%20VeteransBenefits_Checklist.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/tgV60laOui0> (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](http://www.vchsa.org/veterans)

- Note that after January 2025, you will no longer be able to use the **MyHealthVet** user ID and password to sign into your account at the online VA health website. You will have to switch to an account with one of VA's sign-in account providers: **Login.gov** or **ID.me**. Your account isn't going away, the sign-in options have just changed.
- The Ventura CBOC now offers eye care in addition to its other services like Primary Care, Dental, and Mental Health care.
- Need Notary services? Veterans are free:



- The Dept of Veterans Affairs (VBA) has a telephone assistance service number to obtain information regarding claims and/or benefits. **Call: 1-800-827-1000 or go to [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov).**
- There will be a Veteran Services Orientation meeting (in person) at the Oxnard America's Job Center to provide information about counseling and rehab to getting back to work after transitioning to civilian life, and VA Education, Medical, Local and Federal benefits. It will be held on **Dec 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024 from 10 am – 11:30 am. For details call: (805) 288-8400.**

## Recent Events/Ceremonies

- On October 5th, members of the VVVC attended and provided a Color Guard for the annual “Reins of Hope” event in Santa Paula. This event provides Equine Assisted Psychotherapy to help individuals get coping skills to overcome significant obstacles and trauma, by interacting with horses.



- A Town Hall meeting was held on October 23<sup>rd</sup> to discuss issues with appointment scheduling at the Ventura CBOC. The meeting was held at the Mission Church on Walker Street in Ventura. Robert Merchant, Director of the WLA VA Health Care System, chaired the meeting and answered questions brought up by the audience. Mr. Merchant indicated that improvements have been made and that appointment wait times have been reduced significantly but a target of 45 days or less is still the goal. In response to this, VVVC member Bob Citron stated that his October 2<sup>nd</sup> appointment with his new Primary Care doctor was cancelled, and he was told that the soonest next availability is February 20<sup>th</sup> of next year (almost 5 months out). He mentioned that he subsequently was able to get one through Medicare in 5 days. Mr. Merchant said that one of the biggest issues is, in fact, obtaining Primary Care doctors. Apparently, they just aren't applying for the job. Bob



suggested that if money is the problem, then maybe a bill needs to be proposed to offer **more competitive salaries** to potential candidates. It would help in retention as well.

**VVVC members in attendance included:** Richard Camacho, Debra Ehrich, Bud and Kay Gray, Joe Richardson, Howard Tench, Bob Citron, John Cabrera, Manuel and Helen Gonzales, Will Ray and Louis Morris and others (quite a showing). Members of **Congresswoman Julia Brownlee's Staff** were also present.

## **Upcoming Events/Ceremonies:**

- On **November 8<sup>th</sup>**, the Ventura CBOC will be honoring all Ventura County veterans who have passed in the last year. It will be held at **11:00 am, at the clinic**.
- The annual **Veterans Day Ceremony** will be held on **November 11<sup>th</sup> at Plaza Park in Oxnard**. The ceremony starts at **11:00 am**, and the VVVC will be presenting the colors.
- On **November 13<sup>th</sup>**, there will be an event at the **Many Mansions Veterans site at Ormond Beach**, to celebrate its 5-year anniversary. Pending enough VVVC participants, we will be presenting the Colors at this event as well.
- There will be a **Memorial Service Ceremony for fellow VVVC brother, Richard Cabrera on November 15<sup>th</sup>**. It will be held at **Riverside National Cemetery**, which is located at 22495 Van Buren Blvd, Riverside, CA **at 11:45am**. It is just off the 215 frwy near the March Field Air Museum. A remembrance gathering with food will then be held at the Fairfield Inn Marriott located at 30140 Town Center Drive, in Menifee, CA.
- **Memorial Services for local Pastor and Veteran David Burgeson (retired)**, will be held on Saturday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Camarillo United Methodist Church located at 291 Anacapa Drive in Camarillo. **Services begin at 11:00 am**. Pastor Burgeson enlisted in the US Navy in 1967 and served aboard the aircraft carrier USS Bonhomme Richard (CVA-31) as an ordinance mechanic.

## **General News Updates:**

- Last month (October issue), an article was presented regarding land usage at the West LA VA campus. Apparently, UCLA leases a 10-acre parcel for its Jackie Robinson baseball stadium and Brentwood School leases a 22-acre parcel for its athletic field. A federal judge is disputing this usage and ordered the VA to build 2,500 housing units there for low-income veterans.

On Tuesday, October 29<sup>th</sup> a local news report indicated that a tentative agreement had been reached between the VA and the land used by UCLA. No details were disclosed; stay tuned.

- A bill has been reintroduced to expand service members' rights to file claims of medical malpractice, including those received on large naval vessels such as aircraft carriers (CVN), landing helicopter assault ships (LHA), and landing helicopter dock (LHD) ships when those ships are not engaged in combat operations. The bill is known as the "Seaman Danyelle Luckey Military Medical Accountability Amendment Act" (**H.R.9943**). This legislation builds upon the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act, which initially created a system for service members to file medical malpractice claims against military medical treatment facilities.

# Horse Town USA



At a recent High School Reunion of Norco, CA (my first in 55 yrs), I was able to meet up with other veterans, 3 of whom were also Vietnam Vets. Now, where is Norco? It's located between Orange County and Riverside, just north of the 91 freeway and south of the 60 freeway. I came to find out that my old stomping grounds hosts the George Ingalls Veterans Memorial, located high on up on the hillside above the high school. It is part of an equestrian center where events are held throughout the year. SP4 George Ingalls, US Army was a Norco native who, in 1967 threw himself onto a grenade to save the rest of his squad during the Vietnam War.

As we drove down Main St and into town, I noticed the old weld metal arch stretching over the street with the words "Horse Town USA". That pretty much describes it; when you go through residential areas, kids ride around on horses instead of bikes. Hadn't changed much in 55 years. As we drove up the hill and reached the equestrian center I could see the memorial

just below it, with a view of the entire city of Norco. We parked the truck and when I walked into the memorial area, I was amazed by what I saw. Attached below are just a few of the photos I took. If you are ever in the area, you owe it to yourself to see it; it is very moving.



Plaza area near the flagpole. Each of the bricks is dedicated to a local veteran.



Marine Corp motto: "always faithful"



No captions are necessary



I hope you enjoyed these photos as much as I did in taking them.

Sincerely, LP Editor