

Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - PO Box 18631 - Milwaukee, WI 53218

In Service to America



Meeting Notice

20 February, '13

Elks Lodge

5555 W. Good Hope Rd.

Board Meeting 6 p.m.

Chapter Meeting 7 - 8 p.m.

Meetings are held on the third Wednesday each month. You are also invited to join members for conversation and discussion after the meeting.

Chapter web page :

National web page: www.vva.org

Future Meetings

2013

20 March, 17 April, 15 May, 19 June, 17 July,
21 August, 18 September, 16 October, 20 November,
18 December

Chapter 324 Officers

President - Paul Javins 358-2813

Vice President - Pat Moore 354-2533

Secretary - Dennis Symanski 453-3600

Treasurer - Kent Draper 963-0375

Director - Pat Ciofani 332-7734

Director - Ron Coppersmith 262-255-2832

Director - Michael Lang 355-1496

Director - John Morgan 871-9274

Director - Oliver Williams 538-4416

Waltz in the Valley of Death

By Daniel Shea © 2013

Trung Trắc and Trung Nhi
Daughters of Viet Nam
Ferocious Wild Flowers
Upon Monstrous Elephants
Dance with War and Death

A shy moon eclipses
Casting no shadows
Tet appears for the festivities
Harvesting Jackfruits and Betel Nut Smiles

Dragons breathe tongues of fire
Piercing the night, sabers of lights pirouette
Dancing Lions chase evil spirits away
Ghosts of ancestors are invited to feast

Uncle Sam comes bearing brooms
Chase luck away with Revenge
The Rolling Thunder of Boeing B 52s
Sweep away the children of Viet Nam

Puff the Magic Dragon
Tears flesh and bone indiscriminately
Operation Ranch Hand, Poisons
Jungles, Crops and Pregnant Mothers

Hamlets, Town and Cities perish
People are massacred
Marines and Army join the Dance
Murder, Rape, Torture their tune

Trung sisters once great warriors
Weep on Deaths' shoulders
Tears of blood, rivers run red
Souls leave the dance of life

Chose wisely partners in dance
Beware the tunes they whisper
in your ears, their kisses
may be your last

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
Milwaukee Chapter 324
January 16, 2013

Meeting called to order at 7:05 by Vice President Pat Moore

A Moment of Silence was observed for our brothers and sisters no longer with us and for all POW/MIA's and their families

Pledge of Allegiance

Self-Introductions: Dennis Szymanski, Joseph Murray, David Titter, John Zutz, Patrick Moore, Oliver Williams, Kent Draper, Ron Coppersmith, Bob O'Neil, Pat Ciofani

Treasurer's Report

OLD BUSINESS

Christmas Party at Serb Hall – Good Food, Good Friends, Good Time had by all – Event cost chapter a net of \$145

Candy Cane Lane – A mild evening brought out a huge turn-out of people and a good time was had by both spectators and volunteers – Over \$107,000 was raised for the MAACC Fund over the Holidays – Thanks to all who participated

Veterans Court Grand Opening – Chapter provided refreshment and snacks for event – Thanks to all for their help

State Fund Raiser for the Fisher House – Pat Ciofani presented idea of a state raffle for the Fisher House at the Dec. State Council Meeting and reported that there was no interest from any in attendance to help or participate in it. We tabled the idea and will look into other ways that we can help the Fisher House on our own

War Memorial Update – A final proposal has been submitted and if accepted, will keep control of the Memorial in the veteran's hands

NEW BUSINESS

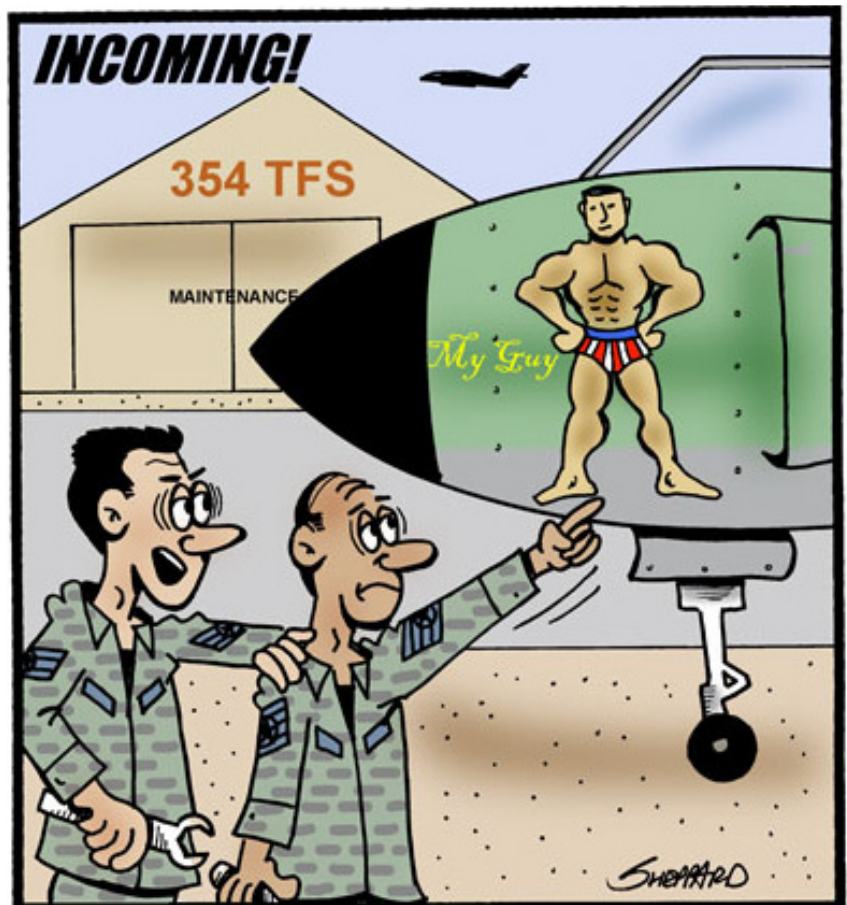
April Elections – Board of Directors elections will be held in April – This is a 2 year term open to any member in good standing – Please consider taking a leadership role in your chapter

Meeting at the War Memorial – We are looking into having one of our monthly meetings at the War Memorial – This is centrally located and hopefully would allow some of our Southside members to attend – Details will follow

Menomonee Falls Memorial Day Program – We have been asked to present a Missing Man Table at a Memorial Day Program on May 23rd at the American Legion Hall – More information will follow

Donations - Moved and passed to donate \$100 each to the Homeless Veterans Initiative Food Pantry and to Joe Murray and his U.S. Veterans Auto Service for their ongoing efforts to help needy veterans

Adjournment – 7:40



"@#! ing female fighter jocks!"*

This may be the first time symptoms are linked to current Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

Report: New vets showing Gulf War illness symptoms

Kelly Kennedy, USA TODAY January 23, 2013

WASHINGTON -- Veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan may be suffering from the 20-year-old set of symptoms known as Gulf War Illness, according to a new report released Wednesday by the federal Institute of Medicine. "Preliminary data suggest that (chronic multisymptom illness) is occurring in veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars as well," the report says.

This may be the first time that the symptoms suffered by veterans of the 1991 Gulf War have been linked to veterans of the current wars, which started in 2001 and 2003, said Paul Rieckhoff, CEO of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America.

It also means the Department of Veterans Affairs' definition of who qualifies for Gulf War veterans' benefits should include those who served in Afghanistan, said Paul Sullivan, a 1991 Gulf War veteran and founder of Veterans for Common Sense. Because Wednesday's report associates the symptoms with deployment, Sullivan said, the VA "should expand the geographical definition of the current Gulf War to include the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan."

The researchers investigated treatments for Gulf War illness, including any existing research, to see what worked for veterans. Their research included traumatic brain injury, which is caused by blunt force to the head or proximity to an explosion; post-traumatic stress disorder, which must involve exposure to trauma; respiratory problems, fibromyalgia and chronic pain.

Chronic multisymptom illness was formerly called Gulf War Syndrome, the Institute of Medicine report said. It includes symptoms in at least two of six categories: fatigue, mood and cognition issues, musculoskeletal problems, gastrointestinal problems, respiratory difficulties and neurologic issues that last for at least six months.

"We did redefine how we see the issue of chronic multisymptom illness," said committee chair Bernard M. Rosof, chairman of the board of directors at Huntington Hospital in Huntington, N.Y. He said the committee came out of the study with "no idea" what the cause might be, but that he expected data

from veterans of the current wars to help. "We feel that the complaints will be the same."

Rosof said the report will help veterans.

About one-third of Gulf War veterans -- or 175,000 to 250,000 people -- have Gulf War illness. The symptoms are too broad for any one treatment, the report said. "Based on the voluminous evidence we reviewed, our committee cannot recommend using one universal therapy to manage the health of veterans with chronic multisymptom illness, and we reject a 'one size fits all' treatment approach," Rosof, said. "Instead, we endorse individualized health care management plans as the best approach for treating this very real, highly diverse condition."

Researchers also said there may be no specific cause for the illness. "Despite considerable efforts by researchers in the United States and elsewhere, there is no consensus among physicians, researchers and others as to the cause of CMI," the report states. "There is a growing belief that no specific causal factor or agent will be identified."

Anthony Hardie, a Gulf War veteran and advocate, disagreed. "They've lumped together so many ill people that it's impossible to come up with one treatment," Hardie said.

Other recent research has shown possible causes for some of the symptoms suffered by Gulf War illness.

A large-scale study done by Robert Haley, chief of epidemiology at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, showed veterans have damage to their autonomic nervous system caused by exposure to nerve agents after the U.S. Air Force bombed a chemical factory. Beatrice Golomb of the medical school at the University of California-San Diego tested the value of giving doses of the coenzyme Q10 to Gulf War veterans and found that "every single" veteran found improvement from 20 symptoms.

For current war veterans, scientists have connected chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder and bronchiolitis to exposures in Iraq and Afghanistan, including to garbage pits that burned as much as 240 tons of waste in an open pit a day, as well as to dust proved to be laden with bacteria and heavy metals.

Veterans believed to be facing more challenges than ever, studies show

By Ben Baeder, [Los Angeles DailyNews] 01/25/2013

http://www.dailynews.com/news/ci_22453299/veterans-believed-be-facing-more-challenges-than-ever

When Anthony Vidales walked out of a lie detector test as part of his application process at the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department earlier this month, he wanted to cry.

He failed the test, he said, due to irregular breathing, a condition he contracted from radiation, pollution and burn pits he was exposed to while fighting in Iraq. "They told me come back with a doctor's note, and I'm going to do it. But I'm not stupid," he said. "I'm pretty sure my application process is over, or at least my application is being moved to the bottom of the pile."

Vidales, 27, has what he considers to be a major liability on his resume — an honorable discharge from the U.S. Marines.

Vidales is part of a population that, according to some estimates, makes up 20 percent of all suicides, suffers from high rates of unemployment and has generally high death rates. Recent studies from the Department of Defense and other sources highlight the difficulties of military life. Active-duty suicides dramatically peaked last year, according to research released this month. More members of the armed services die from suicide than from combat, the report found.

Veterans do even worse, according to advocacy groups. They often come home to broken relationships, bleak job prospects and a lifestyle that stands in stark contrast to the theater of war. Vidales, who lives in Upland and grew up in East Los Angeles, Montebello and other Southland communities, says he has not found a decent job since he returned from combat last year.

"I don't care what anybody says," he said. "There is a really negative stereotype about veterans. I see it every day."

The work available to veterans tends to be entry-level jobs, according to several experts and recent studies from advocacy groups, such as the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America.

The unemployment rate for veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars is 10.8 percent for veterans compared with 7.8 percent for the general population, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The unemployment rate for veterans has been steadily dropping, in part due to government efforts to educate veterans and also because companies such as Walmart

have committed to hiring veterans.

Vidales served in the Marines in Iraq from 2005 to 2006 and again in 2007, and said combat stress was severe. He was an assistant platoon leader whose main duty was coordinating communication between Iraqis and his unit, he said. His field interview notes and data were so accurate and informative, they were used for more than a year by other Marines after he left the Iraqi communities where the notes were generated, he said.

"When I went back for another tour, they were still using my notes from my first tour," he said.

Vidales said he's frustrated that his skills from Iraq seem to have almost no value to employers back home. The only jobs available so far are minimum wage security positions. And the trouble doesn't stop with poor job prospects, experts said.

East Los Angeles-based Veterans Affairs mental health counselor Manuel Martinez said warriors come home with "battlemind," a set of behaviors and thoughts that are useful during war but that can become a liability at home. Put simply, soldiers facing death are constantly paying attention to every tiny detail of their surroundings. They need to learn to relax and think through their decisions.

"In combat, you develop certain skills in a combat zone, but those skills are a liability in the United States," Martinez said. "With our population, we're seeing legal problems, a lot of relationship problems, a lot of isolating, which is another risk factor." And veterans also seem to be involved in riskier behavior than the general population. Former warriors also must deal with the emotional and physical trauma of bomb blasts and bullets. About one out of six veterans has post traumatic stress disorder, a rate attributed to the long tours of duty common to the post-9/11 wars.

Vidales said he definitely has post traumatic stress disorder. "I'm one of the few veterans who admit I have PTSD," he said. "I know I have it. I am diagnosed. I treat it. I work to control it. I go above and beyond to control this disorder." He knows the four letters — PTSD — scare employers.

He and other veterans said many employers don't understand that PTSD is a treatable condition.

Thank You For Your Service

By W.D. Ehrhart November 19, 2012

Over the past decade or so, it's become quite the fashion, when people learn that I once served in the Marines, to say to me, "Thank you for your service." I'm sure they mean well, but I wish they would take just a moment to reflect on what they are saying.

I went halfway around the world to a place called Vietnam, where I killed, maimed, brutalized and made miserable a people who had never done me or my country any harm, nor ever would or could.

I served proud, arrogant and ultimately ignorant politicians and statesmen who thought they could mold the world into whatever shape they believed it should have. But it was hardly service in the interest of my country or the majority of Americans, let alone in the interest of the majority of the Vietnamese, who wanted little else than for me to stop killing them and go back where I came from.

Do those well-meaning folks who thank me for my service really want to thank me for that? I surely hope not. It is not service I am proud of.

Back in the 1980s and 1990s, the stock genuflection to Vietnam War veterans was "Welcome Home." But what makes anyone think I've ever come home? Because I got out of Vietnam with all ten fingers and all ten toes? Because I vote and pay my taxes? Because I keep my shoe laces tied and don't drool? It's hard to feel at home in a country that learned so little from such a destructive and ruinous debacle.

And now I see that the Pentagon has launched a decade-long Vietnam War Commemoration Project to "thank and honor veterans of the Vietnam War." There's even a website that says, "A Grateful Nation Thanks and Honors You."

Hey, I could use some decent affordable healthcare, or even just a free tank of gas for my car. But what am I supposed to do with that website? Eat it? Take it to the bank? Meanwhile, consider the "service" I performed while in uniform. My nation is grateful for that?

And now "the other one percent" who fill the ranks of our so-called "volunteer" military today is carrying the entire blood burden of our latest wars, getting sent to Iraq and Afghanistan over and over again, while the rest of us go about our lives as if nothing at all out of the ordinary is going on.

What the military seems to have learned from the Vietnam War is: Get rid of the draft and you get rid of domestic opposition to foreign interventions. So far, it's working.

But the cost is steadily mounting. Suicides among active duty military and recent veterans have reached epidemic proportions. The Veterans Administration has a backlog of over 800,000 claims for medical disability. And substantial allegations have been made that the VA and the Department of Defense are falsely diagnosing veterans and soldiers with pre-existing "personality disorders" prior to their military service so that these veterans can be denied benefits for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, though the military was happy enough to sign them up when they first enlisted. Thank you for your service, indeed.

Frankly, I suspect that this whole Vietnam War Commemoration is less about a grateful nation thanking and honoring us Vietnam War veterans than it is about a frightened and nervous government trying to gloss over the follies and consequences of military adventurism so that the next generation of young Americans remains willing to place their trust in the hands of people who clearly believe that those they send to fight our wars are expendable (rhetoric notwithstanding; actions speak louder than words).

Instead of thanking our servicemen and women for their service, perhaps we ought to be asking less service from them and more service from ourselves. *Bill Ehrhart was a Marine sergeant in Vietnam and has a Purple Heart, a Navy Combat Action Ribbon and two Presidential Unit Citations. He is a nationally recognized poet and writer and teaches at the Haverford School outside Philadelphia.*

Appearing at Boswell Book Company

2559 N. Downer Av. ~ Monday Feb. 18, 7p.m.

Doug Bradley, Author of "Deros Vietnam"
tells stories of the REMFs

And

Erin Celello, Author of "Learning to Stay"
explores women's coping with their lover's PTSD

Two new works of fiction look at the lives of those who go to war and what happens when they return.

Sponsored by Veterans for Peace

Sign Up Now With Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 324

Anyone can join! Membership Options:

Vietnam Veterans (A copy of your DD214 must be included):

- Individual Member - 1 year \$20 • Individual Member 3 year \$50 • Life Member \$250
- Life Member Installment Plan (\$50 Deposit; \$25 per month for 8 Months)

Anyone Else:

- Associate Member - 1 year \$20 • Associate Member 3 year \$50 • Associate Life Member \$250
- Associate Life Member Installment Plan (\$50 Deposit; \$25 per month for 8 Months)

Please Print

Name _____ Membership # _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____ E-mail _____

I would like to help Chapter 324 by donating \$ _____

Make checks payable to VVA324 and mail with this application to:

VVA Chapter 324 - Membership, PO Box 18631, Milwaukee, WI 53218



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