

Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - PO Box 18631 - Milwaukee, WI 53218

In Service to America



Meeting Notice

16 March, 2022

5555 W. Good Hope Rd.
Board Meeting 6:30 p.m.
Chapter Meeting 7 - 8 p.m.

Future Meetings

20 April, 18 May, 15 June, 20 July, 17 August
Chapter web page: www.vietnamvetschapter324.com
National web page: www.vva.org

Chapter Officers

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John is listed in the phone book - good luck finding one

No February Meeting



Bill Morse

January 10 at 3:54 AM · 🌐

Cambodian Self Help Demining is in mourning. On Monday, 10 January, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team 3 was responding to a call-out in Preah Vihear Province. There was an explosion, resulting in the deaths of 3 team members and the injury to a fourth.

These brave men have risked everything for years in the service of their country and humanity. On Monday they sacrificed their lives to make others safe. We honor their lives, and their sacrifice.

An investigation of the incident has begun and is ongoing. As it proceeds CSHD will have more information to provide.

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
Milwaukee Chapter 324
January 19, 2022

Meeting called to Order by President Pat Ciofani at 7:00 pm

Attendance: Pat Ciofani, John Morgan, John Zutz, Pat Moore, Dennis Szymanski

Minutes of November 17, 2021 meeting reviewed and approved

Treasurer's Report – Pat Moore - \$2655.51 balance in our checking account

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Allied Veterans Meeting Update – Pat Ciofani

Website – Contact Pat Moore with items of interest for the website

OLD BUSINESS

Christmas Party - \$358.50 was spent for our annual party

Tornado Relief - \$500.00 was donated to the Kentucky State Council to be used for tornado relief for those affected by the deadly late season tornadoes in Kentucky

NEW BUSINESS

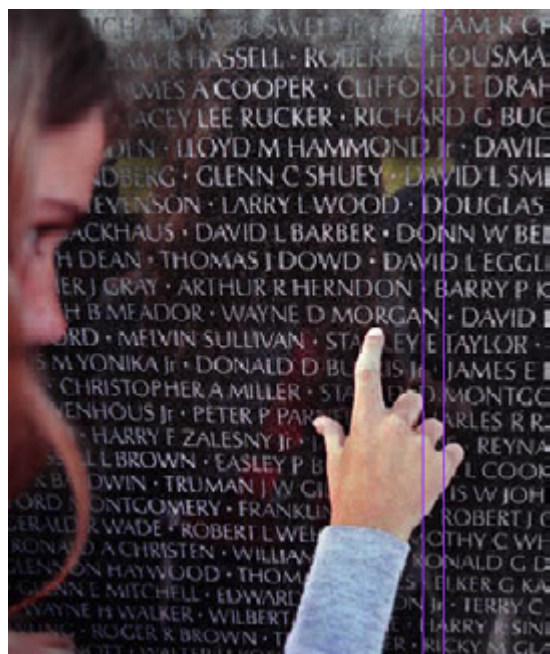
Allied Veterans will hold elections on January 27th

Adjournment 7:30pm

‘The Wall That Heals’ is coming to Franklin in 2022

Erik S. Hanley, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Soon Vietnam veterans, and anyone with interest, can visit a replica of the Washington, D.C.,



Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Franklin.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund created a scale replica known as “The Wall That Heals” built to travel across the United States. Unveiled in 1996, The Wall, which bears the names of the 58,281 men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam, will visit 29 communities in 2022.

Its only stop in Wisconsin will be Franklin, from June 30-July 3.

Franklin’s common council on Dec. 21 unanimously approved a contract with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Inc. to host The Wall and a Mobile Education Center.

The Wall itself is made of synthetic granite panels and is backlit with LED lights to illuminate each name. It requires a soft surface display site of at least 400 feet by 150 feet. The Mobile Education Center and other elements, like flags, need an area 80 feet by 50 feet, according to the contract. Donation boxes will be installed at the display site if visitors want to contribute to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.

“Bringing The Wall home to communities throughout our country allows the souls enshrined on the Memorial to exist once more among family and friends in the peace and comfort of familiar surroundings,” the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund website says. “The traveling exhibit provides thousands of veterans who have been unable to cope with the prospect of facing The Wall to find the strength and courage to do so within their own communities, thus allowing the healing process to begin.”

Since its inception, the wall has been displayed in nearly 700 communities, according to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund website. The 27th season of The Wall That Heals starts March 24, with the first stop in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi.

The tour ends in Cabot, Arkansas, on Nov. 13.

VHA must remain the primary provider of veteran care

BY SUZANNE GORDON AND RUSSELL B. LEMLE, OPINION CONTRIBUTORS — 12/16/21

<https://thehill.com/opinion/healthcare/586213->

When then-President Trump's Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Robert Wilkie established rules in 2019 under the VA MISSION Act allowing veterans to swiftly bypass the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) for the private sector, he violated the intent of the law, as well as the wishes of important stakeholders, chief among them veterans service organizations.

Specifically, Wilkie's standards channeled veterans to private sector providers if they faced a 30- to 60-minute drive to a VHA facility or a 20- to 28-day wait-time for an appointment. Troublingly, these unrealistic standards apply only to VHA, while private sector providers are let off the hook for meeting any standards at all.

Fortunately, the MISSION Act requires a three-year evaluation of its access and quality standards, one the VHA is now undertaking by collecting comments through the Federal Register and seeking other data on the new Veterans Community Care Program (VCCP). This much-needed reassessment offers President Biden's VHA leaders an opportunity to revisit and rewrite the rules to protect veterans and the health system they overwhelmingly support.

In survey after survey, veterans recognize that the VA health care system is the only one that specializes in treating their complex, service-related health care conditions. That's why they say they want it to be strengthened and improved, not privatized. Wilkie's standards made this mission impossible. His drive and wait-time standards guaranteed a massive outsourcing of veteran care to the private sector, regardless of timeliness or quality of private sector services or whether VHA could deliver higher-quality services more quickly and at lower cost.

A recent study of veterans obtaining private cataract surgery confirmed that the Wilkie standards lead to unnecessary referrals with more than one-quarter of those procedures occurring in facilities further than the closest VHA facility. Another study found that veterans who receive private sector emergency room care have higher mortality at higher costs than VHA care. A report from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) stated unequivocally that the quality of private veteran care was not only "unknown," but unknowable since "no national system of quality reporting exists in the United States."

Paying for private-sector care of "unknown" and unknowable quality is cannibalizing the VHA budget, making it impossible to improve and strengthen the system. As the CBO report highlights, "VHA's costs for community care grew from \$7.9 billion in 2014 to \$17.6 billion in 2021." That's a more than 100 percent increase.

The new health care realities created by the COVID-19 pandemic also make changing these standards imperative. When it was written, MISSION Act supporters assumed that care would be rapidly available from private-sector providers. This assumption ignored long-standing shortages in multiple health care professions, from primary care to mental health, to nursing. COVID-19 has transformed what had been considered shortages into catastrophes. It is now almost impossible to find a primary care provider accepting new patients in either urban and rural America. Private sector hospitals are reeling from nursing shortages and can't discharge patients and quickly free up beds because of lack of staff in nursing homes and rehabilitation facilities. In New York — a state with the fifth-largest veteran population — the governor has recently deployed National Guard troops to help staff in nursing homes.

The problems in mental health capacity are equally severe: 37 percent of Americans live in areas with severe mental health provider shortages, and 60 percent of American counties have no psychiatrists at all. Even in supposedly well-resourced urban areas, it's difficult to find a therapist because so many people are suffering from anxiety and depression. A recent New York Times article on therapist overload bluntly stated the facts, "Nobody Has Openings."

Whatever mental health care that veterans do receive via the VCCP may also be compromised by the fact that private sector providers aren't held to any rigorous quality standards. In his comments to the Federal Register, Rick Staggenborg, a retired VA psychiatrist, highlighted this problem, "I saw far too much non-evidence-based psychotherapy practices when I was in community care to feel at all comfortable with referring the most vulnerable of our veterans to inadequately trained providers," Staggenborg wrote.

As VHA leaders review VCCP access

Continued next page

Care continued standards, they must follow the letter and intent of the law, utilizing private-sector care only when clinically necessary and when VA cannot provide needed care to veterans. They must assure that there are uniform access standards that apply not just to VHA but to VCCP providers as well. Bob Carey, executive vice president of The Independence Fund, concurred with this last suggestion during the recent VA meeting reviewing VCCP access standards. During public comment period, Carey affirmed he was philosophically in accord with having universal standards.

Given the COVID-19 pandemic, it would also be reckless not to rigorously assess whether a private sector system stretched to the max can accommodate

millions of veteran patients when it can't even take care of desperately ill non-veterans.

Finally, as Peter Dickinson, senior adviser to the Disabled American Veterans, eloquently stated in the access standards meeting, VA must remain the primary provider and coordinator of veteran care. This can only be done, Dickinson astutely noted, if VA has the resources to end the kind of staffing shortages that lead to delays in care.

Suzanne Gordon is author of "Wounds of War" and is a senior policy analyst at the Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute

Russell Lemle is a senior policy analyst at the Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute and was formerly chief psychologist at the San Francisco VA Health Care System

Thich Nhat Hanh, Vietnamese Zen Master, Dies at 95

By Joan Duncan Oliver, Jan 21, 2022, <https://tricycle.org/trikedaily>

Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh—a world-renowned spiritual leader, author, poet, and peace activist—died on January 22, 2022 at midnight (ICT) at his root temple, Tu Hien Temple, in Hue, Vietnam. He was 95.

"Our beloved teacher Thich Nhat Hanh has passed away peacefully," his sangha, the Plum Village Community of Engaged Buddhism, said in a statement. "We invite our global spiritual family to take a few moments to be still, to come back to our mindful breathing, as we together hold Thay in our hearts in peace and loving gratitude for all he has offered the world."

Born Nguyen Xuan Bao in central Vietnam in 1926, Nhat Hanh was 16 when he joined Tu Hieu Temple in Hue as a novice monk in the Linchi (Rinzai in Japanese) school of Vietnamese Zen. He studied at the Bao Quoc Buddhist Academy but became dissatisfied with the conservatism of the teachings and sought to make Buddhist practice more relevant to everyday life. (Tellingly, he was the first monk in Vietnam to ride a bicycle.) Seeking exposure to modern ideas, he studied science at Saigon University, later returning to the Buddhist Academy, which incorporated some of the reforms he had proposed. Nhat Hanh took full ordination in 1949 at Tu Hieu, where his primary teacher was Zen master Thanh Quý Chân Thậ.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, Nhat Hanh assumed leadership roles that were harbingers

of the prolific writing and unrelenting activism that his future held in store. In the early 50s, he started a magazine, *The First Lotus Flowers of the Season*, for visionaries promoting reforms, and later edited *Vietnamese Buddhism*, a periodical of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), a group that united various Buddhist sects in response to government persecution at the time. In 1961, Vietnamese Buddhism was closed down by conservative Buddhist leaders, but Nhat Hanh continued to write in opposition to government repression and to the war that was escalating in Vietnam.

Nhat Hanh first traveled to the United States in 1961, to study comparative religion at Princeton University. The following year, he was invited to teach Buddhism at Columbia University. In 1963, as the Diem regime increased pressure on Vietnamese Buddhists, Nhat Hanh traveled around the US to garner support for peace efforts at home. After the fall of Diem, he returned to Vietnam, and in 1964 devoted himself to peace activism alongside fellow monks. Nhat Hanh became a widely visible opponent of the war, and established the School of Youth for Social Service (SYSS), a training program for Buddhist peace workers who brought schooling, health care, and basic infrastructure to villages throughout Vietnam. In February 1966, with six SYSS leaders, he established the Order of Interbeing, an international sangha

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Hanh continued devoted to inner peace and social justice, guided by his deep ethical commitment to interdependence among all beings.

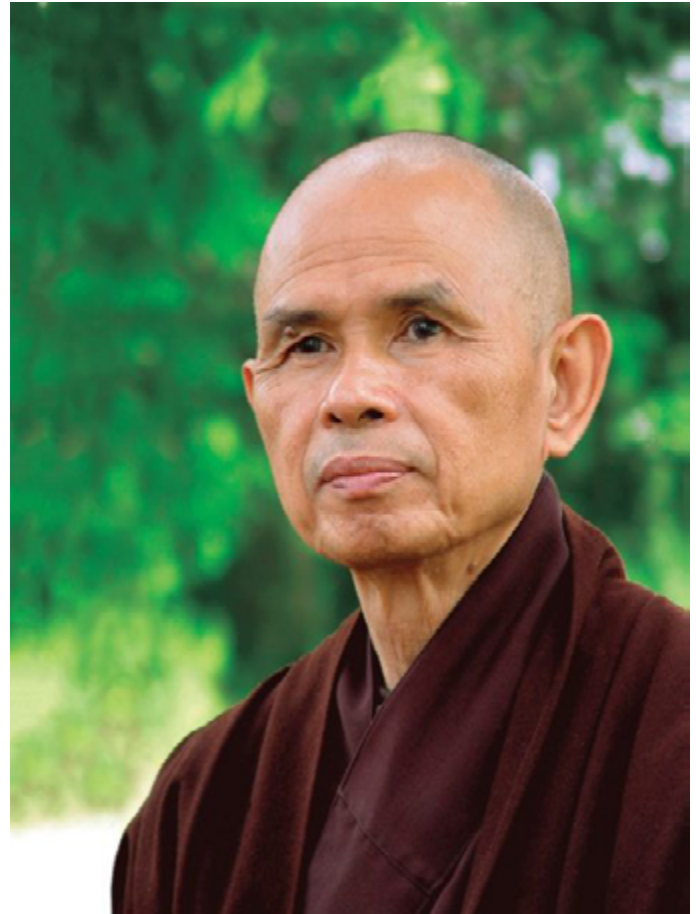
On May 1, 1966, at Tu Hieu Temple, Nhat Hanh received dharma transmission from Master Chan That, becoming a teacher of the Lieu Quan dharma line in the forty-second generation of the Lam Te Dhyana school. Shortly thereafter, he toured North America, calling for an end to hostilities in his country. He urged US Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara to stop bombing Vietnam and, at a press conference, outlined a five-point peace proposal. On that trip he also met with the Trappist monk, social activist, and author Thomas Merton at Merton's abbey in Kentucky. Recognizing a kindred spirit, Merton later published an essay, "Nhat Hanh Is My Brother."

While in the US, Nhat Hanh urged the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to publicly condemn the war in Vietnam. In April 1967, King spoke out against the war in a famous speech at New York City's Riverside Church. A Nobel Laureate, King nominated Nhat Hanh for the Nobel Peace Prize in a letter to the Nobel Committee that called the Vietnamese monk "an apostle of peace and nonviolence, cruelly separated from his own people while they are oppressed by a vicious war." Nhat Hanh did not receive the Nobel Peace Prize: in publicly announcing the nomination, King had violated a strict prohibition of the Nobel Committee.

Thich Nhat Hanh's anti-war activism and refusal to take sides angered both North and South Vietnam, and following his tour of the US and Europe, he was barred from returning to his native land. He was granted asylum in France, where he was named to lead the Buddhist peace delegation to the Paris Peace Accords. In 1975, Nhat Hanh founded Les Patates Douce, or the "Sweet Potato" community near Paris. In 1982, it moved to the Dordogne in southwestern France and was renamed Plum Village. What began as a small rural sangha has since grown into a home for over 200 monastics and some 8,000 yearly visitors. Always a strong supporter of children, Nhat Hanh also founded Wake Up, an international network of sanghas for young people.

After 39 years in exile, Nhat Hanh returned to Vietnam for the first time in 2005 and again in 2007. During these visits, he gave teachings to crowds numbering in the thousands and also met with the sitting Vietnamese president, Nguyen Minh Triet.

Though greeted with considerable fanfare, the trips also prompted criticism from Nhat Hanh's former peers at UBCV, who thought the visits granted credibility to an oppressive regime. But consistent with his stand of many years, Nhat Hanh made both private and public proposals urging the Vietnamese



government to ease its restrictions on religious practice.

Fluent in English, French, and Chinese, as well as Vietnamese, Nhat Hanh continued to travel the world teaching and leading retreats until his stroke in 2014, which left him unable to speak. But Nhat Hanh's legacy carries on in his vast catalogue of written work, which includes accessible teachings, rigorous scholarship, scriptural commentary, political thought, and poetry. Beloved for his warm, evocative verse, Nhat Hanh published a collection of poetry entitled *Call Me By My True Names* in 1996. His instructive and explicatory work includes *Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire*, published in 1967, and such best-sellers as *Peace is Every Step* (1992), *The Miracle of Mindfulness* (1975, reissued 1999), and *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (1995).



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