

THE JOURNEY

Vietnam Veterans of America Inc. Chapter 227

The Dean K. Phillips Memorial Chapter

"Serving Veterans and the Community in Northern Virginia"



In Service to America

January 2009

FALLEN, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Col. Ward B. Nickisch, USA (Retired), will discuss the current search and recovery process of POW/MIAs from prior U.S. wars at the January 15th membership meeting. The presentation features an actual recovery mission using the scientific process to identify the body remains of our MIAs from WWII and the Korean War. This provides a clear understanding and appreciation of our Nation's commitment to recovering our fallen soldiers and recognizes the dedication of those who perform this sacred duty. Col. Nickisch has a 30 year army career including a Tour of Duty in Vietnam in 1970 and 1971. His last command was as Director of Casualty and Memorial Affairs, which had responsibility for the body identification lab in Hawaii. He has personally participated in recovery operations in Vietnam.

Step-off the New Year on the right foot by attending the January membership meeting. Get the inside story of the MIA recovery operation. Better yet, come early for a great dinner and renew your veteran camaraderie with fellow chapter members and their guests. Ward's presentation is a great way to introduce fellow Vietnam veterans to the chapter.

SUITS FOR VETERANS KICK-OFF



Chapter members, Chuck Harris, Byron Sheldon, and Len Ignatowski, Jeannie Hohowicz of Walter Reed Hospital, and MITRE Corporation employees, Theda Parrish and Tom Tierney (l to r) officially inaugurate the "Suits for Veterans" partnership. Chuck is a MITRE employee too. Photo by Robert A. Atkins.

The "Suits for Veterans" partnership between the chapter and MITRE Corporation employees was officially launched on December 12th with Jeannie Hohowicz accepting a check and several business suits. Partnership members were represented by Len Ignatowski, Chuck Harris, and Byron Sheldon of the Chapter and Theda Parrish and Tom Tierney of MITRE Corporation. Chuck Harris, who is a MITRE employee, initiated the partnership proposal.

The program provides new and used business attire for severely wounded men and women service members who are completing their medical rehabilitation at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the Bethesda Naval Medical Center.

The program provides a \$500 gift card to Jos. A. Bank, where the individual receives a generous discount and customized tailoring to provide an air of confidence and professional appearance for (Cont. Page. 2)

Suits for Vets (Continued)

employment interviews, college interviews, public events, and personal activities. Mr. Boudi Hayek, Store Manager of the Reston store, was instrumental in the program's initial development and its continued success. The hospital administration determines the eligibility of each recipient, most of whom are amputees.

The late Dr. Bob Shepherd, of the MITRE Corporation started the program in 2004 in response to his neighbor's request, Jeannie Lehowicz, who works with wounded soldiers at Walter Reed and Bethesda Hospitals. Rick Micker, Tom Tierney, Doug Hoff, and Theda Parrish continued the program after Dr. Shepherd's death. Chuck Harris, a MITRE employee and member of Chapter 227, initiated the partnership. The campaign has collected \$ 3,510, including \$ 2,934 from MITRE employees, \$576 from Chapter 227 and its members, and over a dozen used suits since October 2008. Charles Klein, a chapter member, was responsible for Men's Wearhouse, a men's clothing store, donating over 100 business suits to the program.

Theda Parrish, who served in Vietnam as a government civilian, said, "One of the reasons I like the program so much is that tying a bunch of yellow ribbons to a tree is fine, but these soldiers deserve so much more than that. They need a chance to show what they can do once they leave the military."

Used business attire is accepted in addition to cash donations. The clothing should be clean and on a hanger in a plastic bag. A tag with the item size needs to be attached to the bag. Used clothing is provided to wounded soldiers and to their family members who attend special and personal events and forget to pack a suit or dress, or can't afford one.

Cash contributions can be made by writing a check made payable to VVA Chapter 227. "Suits for Veterans" should be written on the check and mailed to VVA Chapter 227, P.O. Box 5653, Arlington, Virginia 22205. 100% of each contribution purchases gift cards. Contact Chuck Harris at 703-729-5665 to arrange for a used business attire donation. And don't forget that women's business attire is also being accepted.

The Suits for Veterans program fulfills the chapter's national pledge, "*Never Again Will One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another.*"

MEMBERS ATTEND COURT RALLY

On December 17th, Roy White and Len Ignatowski attended the VVA rally at the federal courthouse in Washington D.C. The rally informed the public about VVA and the Veterans of Modern Warfare lawsuit against the Veterans Administration's failure to act in a timely way on veteran claims. CNN and local TV crews recorded the rally. Henry Lockhard, who attended the rally with his friend and chapter member, Roy White, decided to join the chapter from the Virginia at-large member ranks. He was impressed with the chapter activities. Thanks Roy, for finding a home for Henry in the chapter. Also, the CNN cameraman, a Vietnam veteran, also joined VVA.



Students show their Vietnam War projects to Chuck Harris. Photo by Len Ignatowski

SPEAKER'S PANEL

Chuck Harris and Len Ignatowski made the Speaker's Panel first appearance at the Nysmith School in Herndon, Virginia, on December 2nd. Ms. Jennifer Hogan invited the chapter to speak to her 7th grade American history class.

Chuck and Len shared perspectives of their Tour of Duty. Chuck served two Tours as a helicopter gunship pilot, and Len served as an infantry officer in an engineering unit. Each perspective was unique, and Chuck offered a vast difference between his two Tours, one during the height of the war and one during the drawdown. The chapter's format of pairing a combat veteran and a non-combat veteran proved to be a success again. Throughout the question and answer period, they had similar and different experiences and answers. After class, the students showed their projects to the two speakers. Ms. Hogan said that we will be invited back again.

“HOLIDAY CHEER” – Mission Accomplished

☺ ***“MAKE CHARLIE RIDE THE HOOD!” Did He?***

The chapter's Holiday Party was another smashing success. Both old and new members attended the gala event that was hosted by Bill and Cheryl Dumsick. Good food, the holiday spirit, and veteran camaraderie filled the house. The event had a special reunion when George Jones, a new member, met Bill Dumsick. Bill and George had worked together several years ago, but neither knew that each other was a Vietnam veteran. The festivity ended with packing the children gifts and clothing into Jonathan Olson's car. Again, Charlie escaped "riding the car's hood" as Jonathan's co-pilot. More members' attendance is needed for this to succeed. The Sullivan House, which is a part of the Arlington-Alexandria Coalition for the Homeless agency, was the recipient of the chapter's Holiday Cheer sharing. The donation serves as the agency's last minute toy appeals. The donation fulfills the chapter community outreach that started with our low-income student tutoring program in Arlington over 20 years ago.

☺ ***“OPERATION SUGAR PLUM”***



Diane Ignatowski, Fran Knouse, and Max Knouse (l to r) prepare to unload a van full of holiday gifts for four military families as part of Operation Sugar Plum, Ft. Belvoir, Va.

Max and Fran Knouse initiated the Chapter's participation in Operation Sugar Plum, a holiday assistance to Army Families and DoD Civilians assigned to Ft. Belvoir who are experiencing financial need. The Army Community Service manages the program. Chapter members, Max and Fran Knouse, Len and Diane Ignatowski, Joe and Sharon Celesnik, and Margaret Stern, answered the call. A family toy list was provided to each of them. A grocery store certificate was added to provide for a hearty holiday meal.

Max and Fran Knouse and Diane delivered the gifts on December 12th which required Max to remove most of the seats in his mini-van.

The AVVA has adopted the program as their veteran outreach program for 2009. Bruce and Sarah Waxman and Tom and Joanee Stryer have already volunteered for 2009. You can join by calling Fran at 703-242-2308.

Max, who is a retired army SFC, displayed his leadership by directing the toys delivery,

getting a soldier to take photographs (the soldier committed a time honored protocol: don't stand still if you don't want to be a volunteer!), and cheerfully talked to all the nearby soldiers.

Diane Ignatowski was impressed with the wide range of donors from officers to privates who had taken time to assist their own less fortunate. Of course, we who served in the military know that one of our hallmarks is that we always have time and heart to help the less fortunate, even on the battlefields of Vietnam and even if it meant additional hardship on us.

This emotional effort was summed up in Max's heart-warming comment, "No child should go without Christmas, especially those of our young military who are serving quietly around the world and away from their families." Thank you, Max and Fran, for allowing the chapter to share in your generosity for Operation Sugar Plum.

AT-LARGE CAMPAIGN SHOWS PROGRESS

In the spirit of our chapter namesake, Dean K. Phillips, who was an early and very vocal Vietnam veteran advocate and decorated Vietnam veteran, the chapter's campaign to find a home for at-large members showed significant progress during 2008.

The most significant step was when John Rowan, national president, instituted a policy that a special welcome letter will be sent to new at-large members informing them on how to join a local chapter. Previously, the same welcome letter was sent to all members. This action was the result of John listening to Len's At-Large Member presentation at the Region 3 Conference. Also, the same program educated several chapter presidents who were not aware of the at-large membership roster and the state council management of the list.

The joint state council and chapter at-large member recruitment has resulted in a 27% success rate so far. The chapter prepared a chapter information package with postage that was mailed by the state council to at-large members in our area. One of the new members is George Jones, a past fellow colleague of Bill Dumsick. He is very excited about finding a home in the chapter and renewing his friendship with Bill.

The Virginia State Council approved a chapter proposed amendment to the state council's Recruitment Policy that each forming chapter will receive the names of at-large members who live in the chapter's area. The new policy makes it mandatory.

The state council has initiated a new policy in that the name of an at-large member whose membership expired will be given to a local chapter for membership renewal and recruitment.

On December 6th, Len Ignatowski spoke at the Pennsylvania State Council Annual Membership Workshop to about 20 chapter membership affairs chairpersons. His presentation was well received, and he shared many of the chapter's successful membership recruitment tools including the newsletter, the "Living Wall" display, and the Minuteman Alert email list. Chapter press releases and our special recruitment application were provided too. Len challenged the Pa. Chapters to reduce their At-Large Member roster by 5% by next December. The workshop was not a one-way street. Len learned a few things from the workshop and has instituted a monthly membership log to better manage chapter membership affairs.

The Pa. State Council policy provides the at-large member roster and additional recruitment tools to all attendees with the understanding that one does not recruit an at-large member at the other end of the state. The policy has been successful without any complaints.

IGNATOWSKI TO SERVE AT VVA

Len Ignatowski was appointed to the VVA Membership Affairs Committee at the VVA October board meeting. Len attended his first committee meeting that week. The committee addresses all membership issues and policies. His appointment is definitely an added asset to the committee. He joins Bill Dumsick as the second chapter member to serve on a national committee. Bill serves on the Agent Orange Committee. Congratulations!

ART JUDGES NEEDED NOW!

For personal considerations, Marj Watson, the chapter's artist in residence, is stepping down as the coordinator of the Vince Kaspar Prizes for Excellence in the Arts. She has judged the art entries from the program's inception. Marj, an associate VVA member, will be missed. Her work on behalf of the Kaspar prizes was outstanding.

An example of the program's success is a recent thank you from Aaron Eby, a 2007 winner. He is working on a statue for the Riley Children's Hospital in Indianapolis, Indiana, while attending the Schuler School for Fine Art in Baltimore.

To keep this successful project alive, one or more artists are needed to judge the student art entries. We are hopeful that we will find them among our current VVA/AVVA family, but expressions of interest from others are welcome, especially from local artists. If you can help with the judging, please contact Bruce Waxman, program coordinator, at bruce.waxman@vva227.org

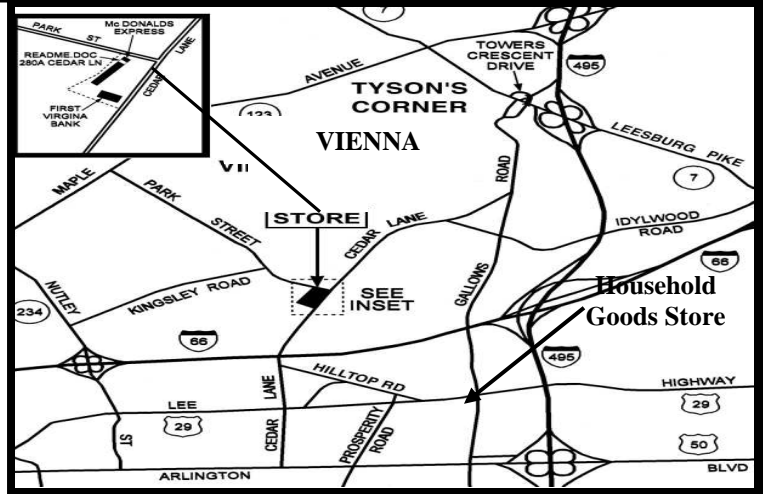
CHAPTER 227 DOG TAGS

January 2009



OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF CHAPTER 227

President: Bill Dumsick – 703-968-0686
Vice President: Byron Sheldon – 703-471-5018
Secretary: Bruce Waxman
Treasurer: Chuck Harris
Master of Arms: Jonathan Olson
Board of Directors: Paul Stancliff, Len Funk, Len Ignatowski, Charlie Klein, Joe Celesnik, and Bill Bohuslaw.
VVA Va. State Council POC: Paul Stancliff
AVVA Representative: Margaret Stern
Newsletter Editor: Len Ignatowski 703-255-0353
Speaker's Panel: Len Ignatowski
Meeting Guest Speaker: Len Funk 703-820-8118
DMZ To Delta@Dance: Len Ignatowski
Suits for Veterans: Chuck Harris 703-729-5665



MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Neighbor's Restaurant, 262D Cedar Lane
 Vienna, Virginia (Park St. & Cedar Lane)
Pre-Meeting Dinner (Optional): 6:45 PM
Meeting Time: 7:30 PM **Phone: 703-698-8010**

CHAPTER INFORMATION: 703-968-0686

CHAPTER WEB SITE: www.vva227.org

CHAPTER OPERATIONS PLAN

Jan.

- 01: Happy New Year
- 08: Board Meeting 7:30 pm: American Legion Post 270, 1355 Balls Hill Rd., McLean, Va.
- 15: Membership Meeting: Speaker: Col. Ward Nickisch, "Fallen, But Not Forgotten"

Feb.

- 05: Board Meeting 7:30 pm: American Legion Post 270, 1355 Balls Hill Rd., McLean, Va.
- 19: Membership Meeting: Speaker: Ronald Spector, "In the Ruins of Empire" Post WWII Vietnam History

Mar:

- 05: Board Meeting 7:30 pm: American Legion Post 270, 1355 Balls Hill Rd., McLean, Va.
- 07: Va. State Council Meeting
- 19: Membership Meeting: Speaker: Col. Lawrence Wilkinson, USA (Ret.) Topic TBA

WELCOME HOME!

(New Chapter Members)

John Miska	Mike Sutton	Chuck Alexander	Steve Titunik	Jim Sheahan	John Hall
George Jones III	Charles Stuler	Ron Ball	Ed Nidever	Franklin Hart	Bill Shugarts III

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL

Jim Thur, newly appointed Northern Regional Director of the Virginia's Wounded Warriors Program
 Jonathan Olson was elected commander of American Legion Post 1775.
 Bill Musgrave was elected the State of Illinois DAV Commander.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

START THE YEAR OFF RIGHT!

ATTEND THE JANUARY MEMBERSHIP MEETING

AND

LEARN ABOUT THE MIA RECOVERY EFFORT

FROM

A VIETNAM VETERAN WHO DID IT

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA ® INC.
CHAPTER 227
DEAN K. PHILLIPS MEMORIAL CHAPTER
P.O. Box 5653
Arlington, Virginia 22205-0653

Address Service Requested



OUR MISSION

**To “Serve Vietnam Veterans, Their Families,
Our Community, and Our Country”.**