

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

February 2009

VIETNAM AFTER HIROSHIMA

The February 19th membership meeting guest speaker is Professor Ronald Spector, a Vietnam veteran and George Washington University professor. He will discuss the crucial events that occurred in 1945 that set the stage for our involvement in Vietnam. Learn how defeated Japanese troops played a role. Come early and enjoy a great dinner and meet your fellow members and their families

FALLEN, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Col. Ward B. Nickisch's, USA (Retired), presentation on our country's MIA search destroyed any perception that it is not being performed with the highest degree of dedication and urgency. He is a Vietnam veteran and commanded the army's Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii. The entire recovery from the site search to remains interment and its many challenges were discussed. The lab's recovery operations span the globe, including in the U.S. The enemies are the passage of time, fading memories, terrain change, and open water losses. The jungle environment quickly deteriorates the remains, while the Korean cold preserves it longer. The current count includes approximately 120 lost in the Cold War, 1700 lost in the Vietnam War, 8,100 lost in the Korean War, and 78,000 lost in WWII. The first Gulf War has one MIA. Ward was involved with identifying the Vietnam Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. Modern laboratory technology and DNA is making almost 100% identification possible, especially with the collection of DNA from every new soldier.

The staff's dedication was highlighted at a radar site in Laos that had been attacked, and four of the eleven U.S. personnel remains could not be found on the mountain top. The NVA commander was flown to the site. He pointed out where the soldiers made their last stand. The team returned to Hawaii to make mannequins based on the missing soldiers' physical features. The mannequins were dropped into the jungle from the last fighting position, and their remains were found within a hundred feet of where the mannequins landed. It was also learned that when President Clinton normalized diplomatic relations with Vietnam to the consternation of many veterans, the Vietnamese government permitted the American flag to drape the caskets on their way to the airport. Until this time, our flag was placed over the casket only when it was inside U.S. aircraft.

One obstacle involved searching for remains in Laos. The Laotian government would not assist since it was claimed that the North Vietnamese occupied the country at that time. North Vietnam said that was not true since they did not want to acknowledge their presence at that time. The resolution was to have a joint-task force of U.S., Laotian, and Vietnamese personnel.

In response to a question about live MIA/POW reports, Ward explained that they were mostly Europeans who were involved with aid projects. He did tell the story of a successful resolution of a U.S. live sighting. An army master sergeant suffered amnesia after arriving at McGuire AFB. A California family accepted him as a homeless person. When the couple died, a social security worker in processing his benefit claim discovered that his name was not in the database. However, the soldier mentioned another name that he remembered and the worker went the extra mile to investigate. The new search showed that the name was of an MIA. A medical examination confirmed his identity and cleared him of any wrongdoing. He was returned to active duty as a 71 year old sergeant. He retired based on his service up to his return from Vietnam and united with his family. A name was removed from the MIA list with a happy ending.

Ward's presentation dispelled any reservations regarding our dedication to recovering missing soldiers. He will give his presentation to any group within a reasonable drive of his home. He can be contacted at wardnick@aol.com.

New members, Ron Ball, John Hall, Bill Shugarts, and George Jones attended their first meeting. Bill Lynch, who is a friend of John Hall, had invited John to the meeting. To his surprise, John replied that he was already coming. Also, long-time member, Roger Bultman, attended his first meeting. Hope to see you all at the February meeting.

SAIC SUPPORTS VETERANS

For the second consecutive year, the SAIC Corporation provided a \$1000 grant to the chapter's veteran assistance effort. The chapter extends its sincere appreciation to SAIC.

SUITS FOR VETERANS, CHAPTER 2

The Washington Post and The Falls Church News publication of our "Suits for Veterans" press release contributed to an additional donation of sixty business suits. Also, the War On Terror News website features the program

Each donation has a unique story behind it, but the most endearing one involved a new widow who had disposed her deceased husband's clothes except for his business suits. When she read the newspaper article on Suits for Veterans, she immediately knew that this was the reason for saving the suits. A special thanks goes to Chuck Harris, who drove miles to pick up the donated suits throughout Northern Virginia.

Sports suits with slacks, men and women business suits, and cash donations are acceptable. The clothing should be clean and on a hanger in a plastic bag. A tag with the size needs to be attached to the bag. Used clothing is provided to patients 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.

The "Suits for Veterans" is fulfilling our pledge, "*Never Again Will One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another.*"

HOUSEHOLD GOODS IS PAYING \$\$ DIVIDENDS

The opening of VVA sponsored thrift stores in Fairfax and Virginia Beach are contributing to an increase in the yearly chapter dividend from an average of \$2000 to a record of \$4,396 for 2008. The chapter is augmenting the effort by distributing collection bags at our meetings and community booths. If you want bags for your neighbors and friends, call Len Ignatowski at 703-255-0353. Remember to call for a donation pick-up (1-800-459-8387) or make a drop-off at the Unique Thrift Store, 2956 Gallows Road (the old Levitz store). You can shop for great bargains at the store too.

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

GATEWOOD LEADS THE WAY FOR JUSTICE

A group of retired Marines, including Wayne Gatewood of the chapter, successfully led an effort for a Capitol Hill restaurant to change its policy of not serving single Marines due to past disturbances. This grass roots effort resulted in the restaurant owner agreeing to serve military personnel and a written apology was issued, while a retired Marine officer will talk to the Marine Corps Barracks commander about the Marines conduct at the restaurant. It was agreed that police should be summoned for any disturbances. Wayne is one of the chapter's stealth members, who does not normally attend a meeting, but over the years, he has helped the chapter fulfill our mission of "*Never Again Will One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another.*" Thanks, Wayne, and all your fellow Marines. *Semper Fi!*

CONGRATULATIONS & FAREWELL TO ARNIE

Arnie Eversen and Ken Watts of Chapter 936 have successfully formed Chapter 1018 in Winchester, Virginia. Arnie is a founding member of Chapter 227, but he moved to Winchester upon his retirement a few years ago. Frustrated with not being able to attend Chapter 227 meetings, Ken and he took the initiative to form a chapter. Congratulations!

Arnie's effort reflects a chapter tradition of members forming new chapters near their home. Chapter members formed Chapters 617, 752, 917, and 936 in Virginia. Also, Ralph Garcia, who was recruited from the spectators as we marched in the Vienna's Welcome Home parade, founded Chapter 698 in Bluffton, Indiana, and served as the Indiana state council president.

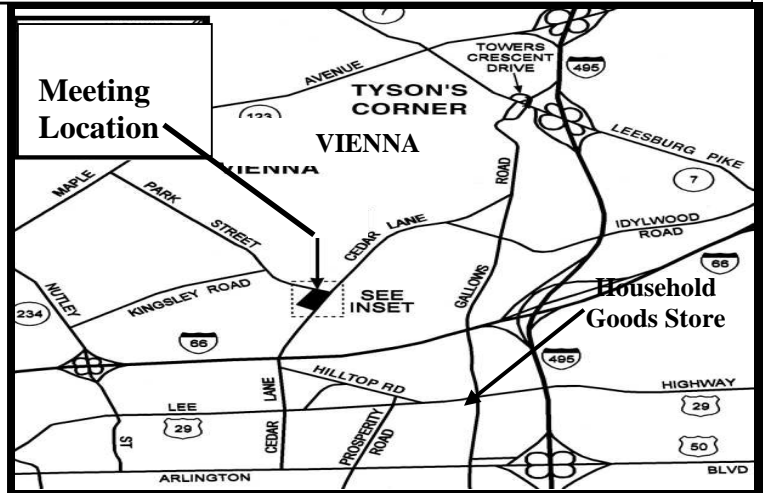
CHAPTER 227 DOG TAGS

February 2009



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DMZ To Delta@Dance: Len Ignatowski
Suits for Veterans: Chuck Harris 703-729-5665
Operation Sugar Plum: Fran Knouse 703-242-2308



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

Feb.

- 05: Board Meeting 7:30 pm: American Legion Post 270, 1355 Balls Hill Rd., McLean, Va.
Meeting is open to the membership
- 19: Membership Meeting: Speaker: Ronald Spector, "Vietnam After Hiroshima" Critical 1945 events that set the stage for our late involvement

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: Pat Robinson, "How VA's medical research is helping veterans."

WELCOME HOME!

(New Chapter Members)

230 Dave Singstock (Transfer) # 231 Henry Lockhart III (At-Large) #232 Susan Custis (At-Large)
233 Charles Henry (At-Large)

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS = CONVENTION DELEGATES!

The number of chapter delegates to the 2009 VVA convention is based on the number of members as of February 28, 2009.
If your membership expires before and on February 28, please renew you membership
NOW!

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

ARE DUE FEBRUARY 28th

ELECTIONS 2009

CALL LEN FUNK AT 703-820-8118
TO OFFER YOUR SERVICES

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”.