

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

July 2009



Byron Sheldon, Chapter President, thanks Col. Wilkinson for his informative discussion after a VVA baseball cap was presented to him.
Photo by Len Ignatowski

OUR CHALLENGES

Col. Lawrence Wilkinson, USA (Ret), provided a unique perspective of today's challenges facing the Nation at the June 18th membership meeting. He has excellent credentials to comment on the challenges from his exemplary military career starting with the Vietnam War and ending with the current war on terror. He served as General Colin Powell's assistant in two capacities when he was Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff under President George W. H. Bush and as Secretary of State under President George W. Bush during his first term. He is a vocal critic of President Bush's Iraq War policy. This article is a brief summary of his very informative discussion.

The discussion started with an announcement that he had just attended a session where a previously classified document was released. It revealed that President John F. Kennedy had issued a secret presidential directive to initiate U.S. troop withdrawals from South Vietnam within twelve months in October 1963. His assassination in November 1963 altered this decision.

Today's challenges are an outgrowth of today's rapidly changing world, the challenges to the U.S. international leadership for the last eight years, and the failure to seriously question our national leadership of both political parties. As a republic, he felt the greatest threat to our freedoms is citizen apathy, which encourages political and business corruption. We need to be especially vigilant when politicians and national leaders espouse "Love of Country", religion, and fear and defer critical policy decisions to gain support for their political agenda and to identify opponents as being unpatriotic.

Many of today's challenges are the result of these attitudes and practices. Some of these challenges are the following:

- The Iraq War is the first war to be paid not with taxes, but with loans from foreign governments, such as China, Japan, and Saudi Arabia. The question is how long can this questionable financial policy be sustained without critical damage to our country's financial integrity. Leading industrial countries recently had a conference to discuss replacing the dollar as the world's currency, and the U.S. was not invited even after we asked for an invitation. Only Saudi Arabia's faith and trust in the U.S. is keeping the U.S. dollar safe as the world's currency.
- The same war is threatening our national security by exhausting our military manpower and equipment capability. The war is generating a \$60 billion equipment repair bill, which needs to be addressed now.
- Our leadership as the world's industrial power is gone. Financial services have become our economic power, but the growing national debt, our diminishing manufacturing base, and current financial crisis is seriously threatening that leadership.
- The federal budget is mostly military and entitlement expenses with no political action to increase taxes or reduce spending. He cited the defense industrial complex, which President Eisenhower had warned about, that strongly influences expensive weapon programs decisions and don't meet our defense needs, but they have tremendous political and economic impacts.
- Medicare and social security growth and abuses need to be addressed due to the declining funding base.
- The post-WW II U.S. economy is based on cheap energy, but it is no longer a reality when the world is paying \$5.00 a gallon for gasoline.

He has faith that the American people will rise to the challenge only after a major crisis threatens our basic freedoms and way of life. The cost will be high. Our children may have to endure a lower standard of living than we have. Our manufacturing and entrepreneurship needs to be resurrected to pay for our growing national debt and to restructure our social and political attitudes. Questioning our national leaders should be viewed as a civic responsibility, not as unpatriotic conduct. In a republic, diligent citizens discourage political corruption and insure responsive government. We should not rely on the 24/7 news celebrities and readily accept flag-waving slogans and fear tactics of current political agendas. We need to return to our founding fathers' days when our greatness was based on our own hard work and placing national interest before political agenda.

The chapter appreciates Col. Wilkinson for taking his valuable time to share his thoughts with us. The chapter welcomes opposing political views, and members can contact Len Funk at 703-820-8118 to arrange for guest speakers.



PTSD Unit honor guard of Vietnam and Iraq War veterans prepare to dismount after laying their wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Photo by Bill Shugarts.

LYONS VAMC VETS VISIT ARLINGTON

On June 20th, the chapter hosted the visit to Arlington National Cemetery for the PTSD Unit from the Lyons VAMC, N.J. as part of their recovery. The visit included a wreath laying at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier by four members and a visit to the cemetery's Visitor's Center. The wreath laying was made more inspiring when the sun interrupted a rain shower just as the honor guard was starting its march to the tomb.

Special thanks to Bruce Waxman for arranging the special visit and to Pat Harrington for serving as the cemetery tour guide. Other members who attended the visit were Byron Sheldon, Len Ignatowski, Paul Stancliff, Bill Shugarts, and George Jones. A visit to The Wall and the cemetery is set for August 5th. Hosts are needed. Contact Bruce Waxman at 703-323-0269.

STATE COUNCIL AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS

The VVA Virginia State Council presented five \$500 academic scholarships at the June 13th meeting. Daniel Ignatowski, son of Len Ignatowski, and Anna Huntington, the daughter of Chuck Harris, were two of the recipients. Dan is pursuing a Masters in Public Administration at The George Washington University, while Anna is a junior at the University of Washington, Seattle. She is earning a double major in French and European Studies.

The state council is commended for their decision to award a scholarship to each of the five applicants. A budget account with an accumulated surplus provided the extra funds for the three additional scholarships.

VVMF IS A PARTNER TOO!

Ever wonder what happens to your donation to the Vietnam Veteran Memorial Fund? Well, the VVMF is a viable partner in the chapter's hosting of the Lyons VAMC PTSD Unit visits to The Wall. The VVMF has provided assorted pins, brochures, calendars, and other mementos of The Wall to be distributed to the visiting veterans. Special thanks to Holly Rotondi, VVMF Vice President, who is personally involved with their participation. Also, Bill Shugarts, chapter member, was instrumental in forming this partnership with the VVMF through his volunteer work at The Wall. So, thank you Bill and Holly.

SUITS FOR VETERANS

The Memorial Day fund drive for the Suits for Veterans program resulted in the purchase of four \$500 gift cards for wounded soldiers at Walter Reed Medical Center and Bethesda Naval Medical Center. The MITRE employees contributed \$1930, and the chapter gave a grant of \$70 to round out the number of gift cards. The program is gaining a greater awareness when a Pentagon employee contacted MITRE about joining the program. The inquiry was referred to Chuck Harris.

OTHER SUCCESSFUL MISSIONS

- **LAMB CENTER:** Max and Fran Knouse made another large contribution of hotel size toiletries to the Lamb Center, which is the chapter's community outreach project. The Center provides daytime services for homeless families including personal showers, laundry service, snacks, counseling, and social services including Vet Center staff visits.
- **STATE COUNCIL MEETING:** Jim Thur, Vietnam veteran and chapter member, who is Virginia's Northern Regional Wounded Warriors Director, discussed the program at the council meeting on June 20th. The program mission is to assist Virginia military veterans, but the program is still in the developmental stage. The critical need is to communicate the program to veterans so they can apply for its benefits. Delegates recommended how to reach out to the veteran community. Jim will discuss the program at a future chapter meeting. Byron Sheldon, Len Ignatowski, and Paul Stancliff attended the meeting as chapter delegates.
- **VVA CONVENTION DELEGATES:** Paul Stancliff, Len Ignatowski, and Bruce Waxman will represent the chapter at the VVA National Convention this month.

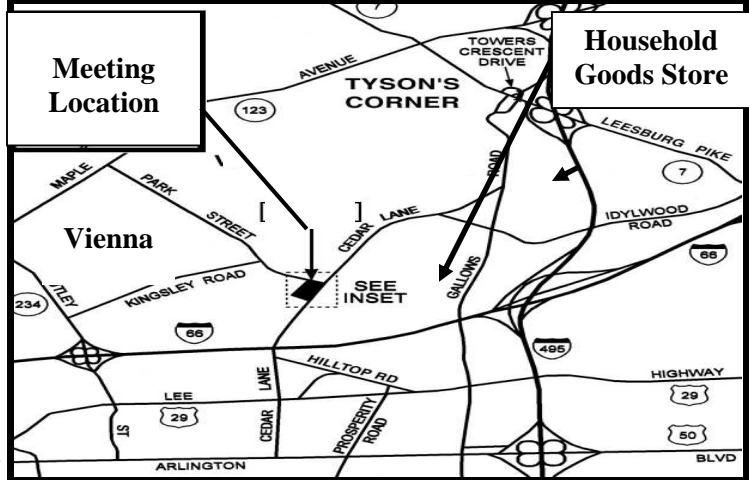
CHAPTER 227 DOG TAGS

July 2009



OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF CHAPTER 227

- President:** Byron Sheldon – 703-471-5018
- Vice President:** Bruce Waxman – 703-323-0269
- Secretary:** Vacant
- Treasurer:** Chuck Harris
- Sergeant at Arms:** Jonathan Olson
- Board of Directors:** Paul Stancliff, Len Funk, Len Ignatowski, Charlie Klein, Joe Celesnik, and Bill Bohuslaw.
- Past President:** Bill Dumsick
- AVVA Representative:** Margaret Stern
- Newsletter Editor:** Len Ignatowski 703-255-0353
- School 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
- 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

July 09: *** No Membership Meeting ***

- 16: No membership meeting
- 27- Aug. 02: VVA National Convention: See The VVA Veteran for information

Aug 09: *** No Membership Meeting ***

- 05: PTSD Unit Visit at the Wall @ Noon: Hosts are needed.
- 06: Board Meeting 7:30 pm: American Legion Post 270, 1355 Balls Hill Rd., McLean, Va.
- 09: Nationals' Veterans Appreciation Day: See you at the baseball game.

Sep 09

- 03 Board Meeting 7:30 pm: American Legion Post 270, 1355 Balls Hill Rd., McLean, Va.
- 16 PTSD Unit Visit at the Wall @ Noon: Hosts are needed.
- 17 Membership Meeting: Chapter 24th Anniversary Celebration: Speaker: Steve Kirtley, "Iran Embassy Hostage"
- 19: Virginia State Council Meeting: Richmond, Va.

WHY ARE YOU NOT IN ONE OF OUR PHOTOGRAPHS?



JULY AND AUGUST
NO MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

AUGUST 5th
LYONS VAMC PTSD UNIT VISIT
HOSTS ARE NEEDED!

AUGUST 9th
NATIONALS MLB's
VETERANS' APPRECIATION GAME

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".