

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

“Never Again Shall One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another”

February 2013

LIFE AS AN “MIA” DAUGHTER

The February 21st membership meeting features Ms. Pam Cain, the daughter of Col. Oscar Mauterer, USAF, who was lost while flying a combat mission over Laos during the Vietnam War on February 15, 1966. He was an A-1E pilot. His wing man observed that Col. Mauterer had landed safely in his parachute, but the rescue helicopter could not establish radio contact or visual contact with him. His wingman did observe ground fire in the area where he landed. She will discuss her childhood challenges of a missing-in-action daughter.

Come early to enjoy a great meal and meet your fellow members! Spouses and family are always welcome. Better yet, bring a fellow veteran with you. No drinking of alcohol beverages are allowed during the meeting.

SHADOW WARRIOR

Paul White, a retired U.S. State Department Foreign Service Officer, provided the January membership meeting with a unique civilian perspective about the Vietnam War, especially as it impacted Laos where he served as an English language teacher and economic development aid official from the fall of 1966 to the fall of 1973. A 4F draft deferment did not stop him from serving his country in Asia during that complex period in our history.

His major base of operation was the village of Sam Thong, Xieng Khouang Province, Kingdom of Laos, where he taught English at a teacher training school. His duties eventually expanded as he became a U.S. Government refugee relief and rehabilitation officer, providing social and economic assistance to Hmong refugees generated from the constant seesaw battle fronts around the Plain of Jars between the Laotian army and Hmong units on our side and the NVA regular army and Pathet Lao guerilla troops on the Communist side.

As a part of his assignment, he tried to learn as much as possible about the history and culture of the ethnic hill tribe people that he worked with, and also tried to position himself as a civilian aid worker rather than someone involved in the complex political and military actions raging in the northeast Laos war zone where families were sometimes on opposite sides of the struggle just like in our civil war. However, a military commander of a self-defense force in a village where Paul often stayed informed Paul that his interest and inquiries into the tribe's past history and culture, while greatly appreciated, was a much different approach than that employed by the Communists who also visited that village. While Paul talked about the past, the Communist operatives talked about the future; about the better life that would come once the Americans and other foreigners were defeated and driven from Laos. From that conversation, Paul understood that there can be no convenient neutrality in war; you are always seen in a political/military context even if you are a development worker. With that understanding, Paul converted from a volunteer aid worker to become a Foreign Service Officer fully engaged in the complex politico-military aspects of our involvement in Southeast Asia as it related to the Hmong and other ethnic hill tribe warriors fighting to defend their homeland in Laos against Communist invaders.

An amusing story was about an elderly Hmong leader who would walk around the large fleet of Air America helicopters and aircraft assigned to the refugee operation in northeast Laos. As they started their engines for warm-up and take-off, this uneducated and seemingly unsophisticated Hmong would listen carefully to the sound of the engines. After he reported on several occasions that aircraft engines sounded ‘funny’ and later those aircraft experienced engine trouble, this considered to be primitive tribesman was recognized by the Air America and Continental pilots as someone whose talent for problem recognition exceeded that of the highly trained western mechanics. The lesson was that while we in the West tend to place heavy reliance on education and technology, the hills tribe people depend more on common sense and an intimate relationship with and knowledge of their surroundings, which in this case, even included sophisticated technology. Continued on Page 2



Paul White (L) with his new VVA baseball cap answers Don Drunic's question about Paul's Tour of Duty in Laos. Photo by Norm Gottlieb



Bill Buckley (R) stands beside an Iraq War veteran after Bill pinned our American/Veteran flags lapel pin on the veteran's jacket after our welcome at The Wall for the Lyons VAMC Combat PTSD Class. Photo by Bill Shugarts

CHAPTER BRIEFS

- **Northern Virginia Senior Softball League** contributed \$ 410 from to the chapter's Suits for Vets program. The donation included league proceeds and individual donations. The league is a strong supporter for the last several years. Thank you.
- **Winterhaven 2013:** Bill and Leslie Lynch and Bob and Frieda Omasta managed the Ladies and Children Clothing Station at Winterhaven 2012, the DC VAMC sponsored homeless veteran standdown on January 12th. This is the fifth year that the chapter operated this station. Thanks to all.
- **Lamb Center:** Joe and Sharon Celesnik made a large donation of travel size toiletries to the Lamb Center, a day time homeless shelter. The items are supplied to the people who use the facility's showers. The center provides space for Vet Center staff to service homeless veterans. Thanks, Joe and Sharon.
- **Lyons VAMC Combat PTSD Class Visit:** The chapter hosted another successful visit of the combat PTSD class that included Vietnam veterans on January 23rd. The visit included Section 60 in Arlington National Cemetery, where Iraq/Afghan veterans

visited the graves of fallen comrades. Special kudos to Bill Buckley, Len Ignatowski, and Bill Shugarts for hosting the visit despite very freezing weather conditions.

STATE COUNCIL SCHOLARSHIP

The Virginia VVA state council is offering two \$500 scholarships for a veteran and a veteran family member. See eligibility and application on the council website at <http://www.vva-vasc.org/scholarship.pdf>. Grandchildren are eligible. A raffle selects the scholarship winner.

SHADOW WARRIOR (Continued)

Paul addressed the age old question of "Was the war worth it?" He said that each person has to decide based on his or her own experience. His assessment was that it was worth it, but that often the wrong assessment parameters are used. He said that he went to Asia with the words of John F. Kennedy as his motivating influence – that U.S. dollars, U.S. technology and U.S. good will would enable his generation to 'change the world.' Looking back almost 50 years later, Paul said that he now realizes that rather than changing the world that the world profoundly changed him. He said that the impact of his years of service in Asia could better be measured in a much simpler way – one person at a time.

Paul gave two examples of this. Decades after the war, he was serving as a senior officer at the State Department in Washington. A group of Hmong elders along with a young Hmong spokesperson came to his office to seek help in returning to Laos so they could be buried with their ancestors. The young Hmong spokesman had excellent English. After the meeting, Paul asked him about his English language skills. He said that he learned English at the teacher training school at Sam Thong from a young black volunteer. Paul had touched this young man's life in a positive way. On a trip to Bangkok a few years ago, Paul saw a Hmong history quilt for sale in a local market. The quilt, woven as the Hmong do with icons of the history of their lives and times, portrayed the village of Sam Thong, including the air field and the teacher training school. It pictured an African-American riding a scooter at the school – the same red motor scooter that Paul rode as a volunteer teacher at that school – another life touched in some perhaps small but positive way. Worth should be measured in people known and lives touched rather than in more grandiose and difficult ways.

Paul concluded his presentation by stating how proud he was of the U.S. military and the service rendered around the world to keep Americans free and safe, and he praised the chapter's current effort to help military veterans and the community. Members remained long after the meeting ended to discuss Paul's experiences with him and to share their own experiences.

The meeting had other highlights too. Norm Gottlieb, who arranged for Paul to speak, attended the meeting which resulted in his name being removed from the AWOL roster. A surprise birthday celebration was held for Ken Stanley, prospective member, whose wife, Jan, supplied a delicious cake for the event.

The January meeting marked the beginning of another great year, which can only be better than 2012, if everyone supports the chapter efforts in one way or another. The first step is to join the chapter's Minuteman Alert email list so that you can be informed of chapter immediate and scheduled events that are too late for the newsletter.

CHAPTER 227 DOG TAGS

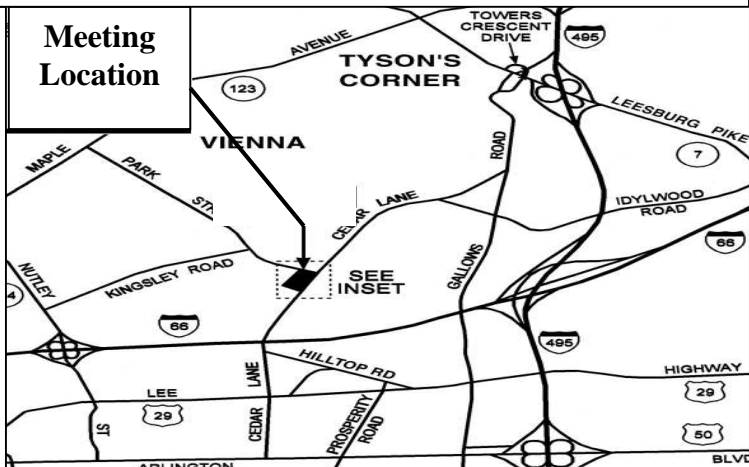
February 2013



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Meeting Guest Speaker: Len Funk 703-820-8118
DMZ To Delta@Dance: Len Ignatowski
Suits for Veterans: Chuck Harris 703-729-5665
Lyons PTSD Visit: Ben Buckley 703-978-9179

Meeting Location



CHAPTER INFORMATION: 703-968-0686

CHAPTER WEB SITE: www.vva227.org

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 OPERATIONS PLAN

February

07: Board Meeting 7:30 PM: American Legion Post 180, 330 Center Street, N., Vienna, Va.
21: Membership Meeting 7:30 PM: Speaker: Pam Cain, "Life as an MIA Daughter"

March:

06: Lyons VAMC Combat PTSD Class Visit. Meet at the flagpole at 11:00 AM.
07: Board Meeting 7:30 PM: American Legion Post 180, 330 Center Street, N., Vienna, Va.
21: Membership Meeting 7:30 PM: Speaker: Dan Sheehan, author of "After Action", the combat experiences of a Marine cobra pilot in the Iraq War.
23: Virginia State Council Meeting in Richmond, Virginia.

Vince Kaspar Prizes for Excellence in the Arts

The 16th Annual Vince Kaspar Prizes for Excellence in the Arts is officially opened. The chapter and the Memorial Day Writers Project sponsor the program to recognize local high school talent in poetry and the visual arts. Prizes for each medium are \$250 for 1st Place, \$150 for Second Place, and \$ 100 for Third Place.

The contest is open to high school juniors and seniors who reside or attend school in Arlington and Fairfax Counties, the Town of Vienna, and the cities of Falls Church, Alexandria, and Fairfax. The deadline is March 2, 2013 and the awards will be presented at the May 16, 2013 membership meeting.

Art judges are needed for this year's contest. Entry submission directions and "frequently asked questions" are on the chapter webpage at www.vva227.org. Questions or art judge recommendations can be directed to Bruce Waxman at 703-323-0269 or email at bruce_waxman@vva227.org.

VVA CAR DONATION PROGRAM 1-800-Help Vets

VETERAN'S HOTLINE 1-800-273-8255

**24 HOURS/ 7 DAYS A WEEK
DON'T HESITATE! CALL NOW**

February 21st MEMBERSHIP MEETING
Life as an MIA Daughter

Lyons VAMC Combat PTSD Visit

March 6, 2013

“Great Opportunity to help new and Vietnam veterans!”

Want To Support the Veterans Outreach Efforts?

Join the Minuteman Alert

By giving your email address to

Len Ignatowski at grunt69@gmail.com

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA ® INC.
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Address Service Requested



OUR MISSION

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