



February 3rd 2012

CHAPTER NEWS

Presidents Report:

Hello everyone; I've been busy helping Veterans. We had a Veteran that was behind on his rent and started a new job and we were asked if we could help him or he would be evicted and then become homeless. He needed \$425.00 to get him caught up on his rent, so I talked to the Jerry Ambrose Veterans Council and they said they would put up \$200.00 and we would come up with \$225.00. So I contacted our Board Members and they said yes we should help him. This veteran also signed a promissory note to pay the loan back.

Also, we will not be in the Winterfest this year as we didn't meet the deadline to participate.

For those who do not know, we are in the process of placing a Vietnam Veterans Memorial down at the memorial park / railroad park in Kingman. You can go to our website and see the memorial at: www.vva975.org. The city of Kingman is working on the planters that the memorial is going on and we hope to have a dedication in about 3 or 4 weeks. We will keep you updated on this.

We also had a rummage sale at Forrest Blackstock's house on Friday the 20th and Saturday the 21st. On Friday we made about \$1,500.00 and about \$200.00 on Saturday. I want to thank Forrest for the use of his garage and also thanks to everyone that helped out at the Rummage Sale.

Thanks to all our active members who make this Chapter (in my opinion) the best in Arizona

Ralph Mckie
President, V.V.A. Chapter 975

1st V.P. Report:

Hi there, hope everything is going well into the new year for everyone. This year will probably be very busy with events and activities so start gearing up. As of now I am assuming the duties of Communications Officer, due to Jim Crumly's stepping down. Any communications needed should be forwarded to me.

There will be a short but, important memorial; hosted by the "Remembering the Fallen Organization" to bring a special wall to Kingman containing the names of those from Arizona; who have died during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. The ceremony is on Saturday 2/11/12 at 8:30 AM. The Kingman Patriot Guard Riders will escort the "Wall" on Friday 2/10/12 and remain until Sunday, 2/12/12. Full attendance of the V.V.A. members would be appreciated to show our organizations commitment to the families and soldiers who so bravely gave their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Hope everyone stays well and has a great year. Hope to see ya all at the upcoming meetings and events.

Dave Stafford, U.S. Coast Guard Retired
1st Vice President-Communications Officer
Webmaster-Dunk Master

Secretary's Report:

I hope everyone had a wonderful New Year! I will continue working to help bring positive change to our organization. As we look forward to all the events and ongoing projects that many of us have been working on to help our fellow veterans. I have been trying to gather signatures for the petition to acquire the Hualapai Medical Center for our medical care; However after further research by Mr. Farrell of the Jerry Ambrose Veterans Council, the following email was received.

“Mr. Farrell,

Thank you for your inquiry. In accordance with Federal Acquisition Regulations and the Competition in Contracting Act of 1984, I am unable to inform you of the number and the type name of the firms/individuals that have expressed interest in the upcoming procurement until the contract has been awarded. However, I can tell you that I believe we have capable parties interested; that in my experience will be able to provide a clinic space that meets the requirements sought for a US Department of Veterans Affairs Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Kingman, AZ.”

This means that the petitions will not be needed or submitted.

If you would like to volunteer to help with any projects or would like to hold an elected position in our chapter, we welcome members to run for any of the offices or positions within our organization. We need veterans and their families to get involved. If you feel the higher offices are too much to handle right now, perhaps you might try accepting a position on our Board of directors. If you need help; let us know. If you can help; please let us know! If we work together, the New Year could be very promising.

Chief Werth, Secretary

V.V.A. General Interest: #1

Barefoot Walker Reaches His Goal for Veterans: By Judy Lacey, AZ Independent Asst. Editor, Jan.2, 2012.

A veteran's barefoot walk across America was worth it. Ron Zalesky has found a Congressperson who agrees with his vision for veterans. In February of this year, you may have read my story about a Vietnam-era veteran who was walking across the U.S—barefooted. I met Ron Zalesky one day while I was driving to Oatman. He was walking along the deserted road wearing a sandwich board that said “18 veterans commit suicide every day.” I turned around and stopped to talk to him, learning that he was walking across America to raise awareness of the need to provide counseling to all veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Zalesky called me recently with the good news: Congress is finally listening to him. A bill will be introduced in the near future to implement mandatory PTSD counseling.

Zalesky has his own problems as a result of his service. He served during the Vietnam War 1970-72. He was called up to go to Vietnam, but his orders were changed. Years later he ran into one of the men in his platoon, who was limping. When he asked what happened, his buddy told him when they got to Vietnam the platoon was ambushed and every man was shot; two were killed.

After years of having no direction in his life, Zalesky finally realized that the only thing that would put his life in order was to do something to help our current soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), anger, depression, and the inability to adjust back into civilian life. He would need a plan. He developed a three-point plan, and in 2006 he formed a non-profit called “The Long Walk Home.” He decided he must convince Congress to provide three things for veterans: (1) grief counseling as part of boot camp; (2) civilian re-entry group counseling prior to discharge; and (3) a 12-step support group programs for discharged vets.

“We have to make counseling mandatory for veterans before they are discharged,” Zaleski said in a previous interview. “As it is now, few veterans are willing to ask for help because of the stigma of having had counseling. They are turned down for federal jobs—and other jobs as well—when employers learn they had counseling. They're afraid they'll have loose cannon on their hands.”

“We have to make counseling mandatory, so that the stigma is removed,” Zaleski said. “If ALL veterans have to have counseling, then it can't be held against them.”

Barefoot Walker: Cont.

On his walk across America last year, he stopped to talk to every organization that would listen to him: we must do more to help our veterans returning from war. And he asked people to sign his petition to the Department of Veteran Affairs, asking them to implement his three-point plan.

Zalesky began his walk June 1, 2010 in Concord, Massachusetts, and reached Santa Monica, California on March 19, 2011. From there he planned to drive to each state capitol on his way back east, planning to arrive at the U.S. capitol in November. But he had to cut his trip short when he ran out of funds. At the same time his mother took ill and he had to return to Florida to care for her. Thereafter he flew out to speaking engagements to continue spreading the word on his three-point plan.

V.V.A. General Interest: #2 (Courtesy of Gene Crego)

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE UNIFIED ARIZONA VETERANS MEETING HELD ON JANUARY 7, 2012

OPERATION HELPING HAND—Mesa's Berge Ford (US 60 and Mesa Drive) in cooperation with **STAND UP and STAND PROUD.ORG** founder, Dr. Tom Steinhagen (Vietnam Veteran, American Legion, Legion Riders, DAV, and the Arizona Patriot Guard) along with Valerie, his wife and co-founder are sponsoring an event on January 26-29 focused on Helping Homeless Veterans. The proceeds will benefit **Arizona Stand Down 2012** (February 3-5, Arizona Veterans Memorial Coliseum). Everyone in the room was deeply moved by Tom's passion and dedication which in this instance inspired him to fast and live on site, for 80 hours in a derelict car as many of our homeless veterans do daily. Test drive any vehicle at Berge Ford during that period and the dealership will donate \$5 to our cause. You may also donate your slightly used men and women's blue jeans, cash, or become a sponsor. We join Tom in asking that you come out in robust numbers, rain or shine to support this most worthy activity. Please tell at least five and ideally ten of your relatives and friends about this event. Let's do our part to overwhelm Berge Ford and show that our community really cares about our homeless Veterans.

Keep in mind that the **STANDUPANDSTANDPROUD.ORG** schedules and sponsors fundraising activities for Valley Veterans throughout the year. This coming Saturday, January 14 kicks off the year with a popular Bike and "Cage" breakfast gathering at the Mesa Marketplace Swap Meet (US 60 and Signal Butte), followed by a 2 hour ride through the Sonoran Desert and on to Superstition Springs Harley Davidson. A complete BBQ lunch will be served by the Mining Camp Restraint; the program will include a Veterans Salute, Flag Presentation and much more. Tickets are \$20.00 per bike or "cage". Again, this fundraiser benefits Arizona Stand Down 2012. For more information on these events please contact: TOM & VALERIE STEINHAGEN [email:info@standupandstandproud.org](mailto:info@standupandstandproud.org); 480.832.2466.

POW/MIA: AMERICANS IDENTIFIED: There are now still **1,678** Americans listed by the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) as missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War. On November 15, DPMO added one name to the list of accounted-for US personnel: **First Lieutenant Robert E. Bennett, III, USAF**, from New Jersey. 1LT Bennett was listed as KIA/BNR in South Vietnam on December 13, 1967. His remains were recovered April 13, 2010 and identified November 15, 2011. **The number of Americans returned and identified since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 is now 905**; another 63 US personnel, recovered post-incident and identified before the end of the war, bring the total to 968. Of the 1,678 unreturned American veterans from the Vietnam War, our POW/MIAs, **90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Laos and Cambodia under Vietnam's wartime control:** Vietnam-1,287 (VN-472, VS-815); Laos-326; Cambodia-58; Peoples Republic of China territorial waters-7; over 450 were over-water losses.

PRESIDENT'S HOLIDAY MESSAGE: An electronic Holiday Message from President Obama was received yesterday, a thoughtful note commending those who serve and, very importantly to all of us still seeking answers, a specific commitment to achieving the accounting for our missing loved ones. In part, the message stated: "As a grateful Nation, we also remember the sacrifices of those who have not returned from the battlefield, and we will not rest until we have accounted for the missing members of our Armed Forces." We appreciate the President's renewed commitment, especially in this time of policy and budgetary uncertainty in the Defense Department "accounting community," and are confident the DOD bureaucracy will carefully review and consider the President's words.

HOUSE RESOLUTION INTRODUCED: Congressman Walter Jones, R-NC, recently introduced H. Res. 485, calling for several important steps by the Secretary of Defense and, most importantly, signaling the need for additional funding to ensure that priority on the accounting mission is sustained and expanded. Though very unlikely to be voted on before Congress reconvenes next year, it is very important that additional House Members sign on to co-sponsor and register their support. PLEASE CONTACT YOUR ELECTED HOUSE MEMBER; ask him or her to contact Congressman Jones' Military/Legislative Assistant, Ray Celeste, 202-2226-5241 or Raymond.Celeste@mail.house.gov.

ACCOUNTING COOPERATION: JPAC is continuing a newly tested recovery process in Vietnam, with Vietnamese Recovery Teams (VRTs) handling all logistic requirements and advance preparation, before being joined by a smaller number of US personnel. This new recovery construct is viewed as a way to expand the pace and scope of field operations, called for by Vietnam since the League Delegation's visit in March 2009. Initial reports indicated the process is working well; therefore, it has been continued. Field operations are completed for 2011. Due to the lack of a helicopter contract for transporting teams to remote locations, the Lao Government has been asked to permit ground transportation of joint teams to selected sites, with a deadline of December 31, 2011 to enable the January JFA (Joint Field Activities) to proceed. The League has also intervened with the Lao Government, appealing for a favorable decision.

A small US team successfully conducted recovery operations in Laos in November but, in early December, JPAC Commander MG Stephen Tom, USAR, conveyed the message to the Lao Government that cost factors and other conditions imposed made extending the helicopter contract illogical. In fact, most Lao Aviation helicopters do not meet safety requirements for transporting US military personnel and, unfortunately, the Lao Government did not extend the existing contract with the privately owned Lao West Coast helicopter company.

It will take time to sort out the situation and try to reach agreement; however, in the interim, the League is hoping (as is JPAC) that the Lao Government will respond positively by December 31, 2011 so that more time is not lost. Small-scale field operations were also conducted in South Korea and the PRC in November. A fairly large team conducted operations in Vietnam, also in November.

The teams conducted investigations, Last Known Alive (LKA) investigations, a VRT and four recoveries, with two Recovery Teams (RTs) extending for two weeks until December 15 when they redeployed to Hawaii.

JERRY AMBROSE VETERANS COUNCIL: (Courtesy of Gene Crego) **Through a generous contribution from Home Depot, Operation Homefront is now able to offer significantly more assistance to Wounded Warriors in need of home repairs, modifications, or appliances. For a service member to qualify for these services, they must meet the following criteria:**

- The service member or veteran must own the home in question.
- The service member or veteran must have sustained a wound, illness, or injury while deployed to an overseas combat area or to an overseas area in support of combat operations. If a veteran, they must meet the criteria above and be within two years of discharge or retirement and have a pending claim for VA disability benefits.
- Must not have the financial means to support the repairs themselves.
- **The above criteria, is not all inclusive but provides the major eligibility areas. Additional eligibility will be applied during the application.**
- If you know of a Wounded Warrior who may benefit from these services, please refer them to Operation Homefront and suggest they submit an application for assistance. Applications can be submitted online at www.operationhomefront.net.
- **If you have any further questions regarding Operation Homefront or the Home Depot Wounded Warrior Fund, please contact the National office at: 1-800-722-6098.**

V.A. NEWS

VA Claims Backlog Update 57: The only way to achieve VA Secretary Eric Shinseki's goal for 2015 -- that every disability compensation claim gets processed within 125 days and with 98 percent accuracy -- is to shift to a paperless claims system. And that transformation has begun. That was the testimony 24 JAN by VA's top claim processing official before the House veteran affairs' subcommittee on disability assistance.

VA Claims Backlog Update 57: Cont. Tom Murphy, director of compensation service for the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), an agency for the Department of Veterans Affairs, acknowledged the claims backlog has grown in recent years. Compensation and benefit claims pending at VA, as of 23 JAN, totaled 852,127 and 65 percent of them – 557,460 – had been filed by veterans more than 125 days ago, which means they are in "backlog" status. Over the last year VA processed almost a million claims but more than 1.3 million new claims were filed, some seeking compensation for the first time but most seeking an upgrade to current disability ratings. The number of veterans filing claims annually has more than doubled since 2000. The surge is tied to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and also to court decisions and to VA policy changes that made hundreds of thousands of Vietnam War veterans eligible for compensation for diseases linked to possible wartime exposure to herbicides, including Agent Orange. Murphy didn't challenge subcommittee complaints that the backlog is rising. But he did challenge a lawmaker who suggested VA plans to move to electronic claim processing will only deepen the backlog, at least for a while. Given projected claims growth, Murphy asked, "How do we take care of those veterans in less than 125 days, which the secretary has stated is our goal, and do it with the resources we have currently on board...The only way we're going to be able to do that is...to get out of the paper world and into the digital world." VA will introduce "very shortly" an electronic Claim for Disability. It will be available through VONAPP Direct Connect (VDC), VA's online e-benefits site. The VDC site currently allows veterans only to request changes online to listed dependents on their benefits profile. To understand what's coming, Murphy said, veterans should think "along the line of your TurboTax interview process," but rather than filing income tax returns electronically, they will be prompted to file compensation claims. The process for an average claim will take 30 to 45 minutes. "At the same time the veteran has the opportunity to submit any private evidence they want considered in the case," Murphy said. "And just that little bit I just described to you [will take] months out of our process"

VA Women Vet Programs Update 15: The Department of Veterans Affairs has published a regulation officially amending VA's medical benefits package to include up to seven days of medical care for newborns delivered by women Veterans who are receiving VA maternity care benefits. —The regulation change makes formal the commitment VA made to women Veterans,|| said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Erik K. Shinseki. —This falls in line with the broad range of services VA is proud to offer women Veterans who have served this nation.|| Newborn care includes routine post-delivery care and all other medically necessary services that are in accord with generally accepted standards of medical practice. The effective date of the rule is Dec. 19, 2011, but the regulation applies retroactively to newborn care provided to eligible women Veterans on or after May 5, 2011. VA has women Veterans program managers at every VA medical center to help women Veterans learn more about the health care benefits they have earned with their service. For more information about VA healthcare for women Veterans, visit <http://www.womenshealth.va.gov>. [Source: VA News Release 28 Jan 2012 ++]

Stolen Valor Update 54: The 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled 27 JAN that a federal law making it illegal to lie about being a war hero is constitutional and making false statements is not always protected free speech. The ruling by a three-judge panel of the Denver-based court reverses a district judge's decision that the Stolen Valor Act violates the First Amendment. Courts in California, Georgia and Missouri have considered similar cases, and the 9th U.S. Circuit Court in San Francisco struck down the law on the basis of free speech. The U.S. Supreme Court said in October it would take up the issue of whether the Stolen Valor Act is constitutional. The Colorado case involves Rick Strandlof, who was arrested after claiming he was wounded in Iraq as a Marine and had received military medals. His lawyers have acknowledged the claims were false. —As the Supreme Court has 7 (observed, time and again), false statements of fact do not enjoy constitutional protection, except to the extent necessary to protect more valuable speech,|| Judges Timothy M. Tymkovich and Bobby R. Baldock said in the ruling. —Under this principle, the Stolen Valor Act does not impinge on or chill protected speech, and therefore does not offend the First Amendment.||

Judge Jerome A. Holmes, who dissented, said, —I am troubled by the majority's conclusion that false statements of fact — even those that are knowingly made, with an intent to deceive — are categorically outside the protective walls of the First Amendment.

Stolen Valor Update 54 Cont.: Congress passed the Stolen Valor Act in 2006 with overwhelming support. It has been used only a few dozen times. In arguments before the 10th Circuit last year, Justice Department lawyer Joe Palmer said the law is constitutional because the government has a compelling need to punish impostors to protect the integrity of military medals. Carlson argued that the fact a statement might be offensive doesn't mean it isn't protected by the First Amendment.

Strandlof founded a veterans group in Colorado Springs and said he had received the Purple Heart and Silver Star. His claims were questioned, and the military said it had no record that he ever served. He was charged in 2009 with violating the law, but a federal judge dismissed the case, saying the U.S. government had not shown any compelling reason to restrict that particular type of speech. Strandlof's attorney, John T. Carlson, said that he had expected the 10th Circuit to hold off on its decision until the U.S. Supreme Court weighed in. He said he planned to either appeal to the full 10th Circuit or petition the U.S. Supreme Court, but he noted that the case already in front of the high court will decide matters. We're going to have, in a couple of months, the definitive decision, Carlson said. The California case, which U.S. Supreme Court decided to review, centers on the government's prosecution of Xavier Alvarez of Pomona, Calif. Alvarez, a member of the local water district board, said at a public meeting in 2007 that he was a retired Marine who received the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military decoration. He had never served in the military. [Source: The Associated Press Ivan Moreno article 27 Jan 2011 ++]

Editor's Notes:

If there are any suggestions or comments regarding the Chapter Newsletter; please feel free to contact me directly at; editor@vva975.org. Barbara Werth, Editor.

Chapter Newsletters will be sent monthly via Email. Newsletters will also be available at the meetings and in the "Comm's Quarters" on the website.

Please note that Dave has set up all the Chapter Officers with an official Email Address. The new Email addresses are in the **Contacts List. Our Policy; concerning Email address are: Email addresses will only be given to officers of the chapter and others** with need to know, to be used for chapter business only, and will be kept confidential. All Emails will be sent "Bcc". This keeps your address from being seen by others on the list. If you request the Email address of a member, **YOUR Email address will be provided to that person and they will contact you if they choose to communicate with you via Email.** Any and all submissions are greatly appreciated and will be used as space permits. **Deadline for the next Newsletter will be; March 3rd 2012.**

My Email address is: editor@vva975.org

Website: www.vva975.org Please check out our website for upcoming events, and the current Newsletter.

MEETING SCHEDULE:

Lake Havasu Meeting: General Meeting will be at 6:00 PM on February 23rd 2012.

At the Lake Havasu Knights of Columbus Hall, 186 London Bridge Rd.

Bullhead Meeting: General Meeting will be at 6:00 PM March 22nd 2012

At the Sunridge Village Retirement Complex, 839 Landon Drive, Bullhead City

Kingman Meeting: General Meeting will be at 6:00 PM on April 26th 2012

At: The Kingman VFW Post, 10386-3036, John L Ave.

Contacts:

Title:	Name:	Email:	Phone:
President:	Ralph McKie	975.president@vva975.org	H: (928) 753-4009 Cell 928) 279-5772
1 st . VP:	Dave Stafford	1stvp@vva975.org	Cell 928)716-6626
2 nd VP:	Forrest Blackstock	2ndvp@vva975.org	H: (928) 681-4709
Secretary:	Walter Werth	975.secretary@vva975.org	H: (928) 692-1969
Treasurer:	Charles Smith	975.treasurer@vva975.org	H: (928) 279-3158
Chaplain:	Tom Hanlon	chaplain@vva975.org	H: (928) 758-3942
AVVA Rep:	Deb McKie	avvarep@vva975.org	H: (928) 753-4009
Communications:	Dave Stafford (temp)	webmaster@vva975.org	Cell 928)716-6626
Webmaster:	Dave Stafford	webmaster@vva975.org	Cell 928)716-6626
VSO Office:	Wed – Sat	10am-12pm and 1pm -3pm	OFF: (928) 377-1101
Newsletter Editor:	Barbara Werth	editor@vva975.org	H: (928) 692-1969

