

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 2012

HELPING INCARCERATED VETERANS

LeRoi Mason, an army veteran, who served a 35 year prison sentence, will speak on his prevention program, “Returning Citizen”, for newly released veteran prisoners in Virginia at the February 16th membership meeting. These military veterans exercise poor judgment after their honorable military service. He is an exceptional example of how an individual can take advantage of incarceration to better himself and society. He earned two Associate, one Bachelor of Arts, and one Masters Degrees while in prison. He was the VVA Incarcerated Chapter 682 president and now serves as the Chairman of the Virginia State Council Incarcerated Veterans Committee. Come early to enjoy a great dinner with your fellow veterans, and guests are always welcome.

A NIGHT OF REUNIONS

Len Ignatowski’s presentation of his Tour of Duty with the 169th Engineering Battalion (Construction Support) resulted in several unexpected reunions at the January 19th membership meeting. The 169th EB was one of many engineering units and civilian contractors engaged to rebuild approximately 3,138 km of existing Vietnamese roads and bridges by December 31, 1971. The presentation documented his Tour of Duty in rebuilding QL-20 in 1971 and his July 2011 return visit. The road program of a two lane and all-weather road is equivalent to building a road from Washington D.C. to Las Vegas, Nevada except construction was in a hostile tropical environment and a combat area. The 169th successfully completed its assigned road construction of QL-20 and was given additional kilometers to build. The last part compared what the road was like during the war and as of July 2011. In preparing the presentation, Len discovered that he might have driven past an army ¾ ton truck that appeared in his 1971 photographs of



Len Ignatowski (c) shares memories with Col. Matt Miller, (Ret.), (l) who was Len’s first C.O. during their Tour of Duty. Byron Sheldon enjoys the conversation.

his quarry site. Len stated, “The Vietnam that we knew does not exist today”. He watched a Yankee/Red Sox baseball game on ESPN on his first night in-country. It is a new and vibrant country at peace.” Traffic congestion along the road at times is worse than Fairfax County due to the affordable motorcycle that replaced the ox cart and three wheel Lambretta. The road is in good condition with a toll booth, traffic lights, street lights, and urbanization of the once rural setting. The presentation ended on a story where an elderly Vietnamese woman directed Len to a unit base camp. When asked where the American army engineer unit that built the road was located, a big smile quickly appeared on her face as she pointed up the road and gave directions.

The 169th EB alumnus reunion included Col. Mary Walsh, Col. Don Hazen, Col. Fritz Ernst, Col. Bill Harvey, Col. Roger Knight, Col. Matt Miller, Doug Harry, and Gerry Cepaitis. Many had not seen each other for several years. Jerry Cepaitis last saw Marty Walsh when he left Vietnam in 1970. Ben Buckley, member, had not seen Don Hazen since their student days at the War College.

The meeting featured another celebration in that Len and Diane Ignatowski shared their 38th wedding celebration by distributing home-made brownies in honor of their anniversary. No wonder Len married Diane!

KEEP A CANDLE BURNING – 5 YEARS

February 2012 marks the 5th Anniversary of “Keep A Candle Burning”, our campaign of displaying a lit electric candle in one window of your home. The lit candle is to remind everyone that as we sleep in peace and freedom, our brave military is standing in harm’s way protecting us.

Bill Dumsick, chapter director, has a candle in each window of his home, while a Vienna store has candles in each window. Len Ignatowski originated the idea after a conversation with a group of young men at the beginning of the Afghanistan War. They thought that the military worked a 40 hour week. Len quickly educated that our military are on a duty 24/7 duty schedule.

New chapter members and newsletter readers are asked to light a candle in your home window. The candles are to be extinguished when the last troop comes home from Afghanistan.



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 \$200 for 1st Place, \$100 for Second Place, and \$50 for Third Place.

The contest is open to all 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 3, 2012, and the awards will be presented at the May 2012 membership meeting. This is the last reminder for submitting entries.

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.

VETERAN OUTREACH



Bruce Waxman presents our \$1000 homeless veteran grant to Bev Boothe, Founder of Final salute.



Bruce Waxman (L) and Barbie Worrell prepare personal gift bags for woman veterans at the standdown. Photo by Len Ignatowski

WOMEN HOMELESS VETERAN HOME

A \$1,000 grant to stock the kitchen pantry was given to the newly opened Final Salute home in Fairfax County. The home accommodates five women veterans and some children. The Final Salute is the sponsoring organization. \$50 "Jump Start" gift cards were presented to the first two occupants to facilitate their transition. Bruce Waxman made the grant presentations at the house dedication on December 3rd. Jas Boothe, founder and president of Final Salute, an eleven year army veteran, accepted the grant.

2012 WINTERHAVEN STANDDOWN

Bill and Leslie Lynch, Tom and Barbie Worrell, Len and Diane Ignatowski, and Bruce Waxman staffed the Women's Veteran Clothing Station for the Winterhaven Standdown at the D.C. V.A. Medical Center on January 21st. The clothing station provided women clothing from winter coats to shoes to woman veterans and spouses of men veterans in need or homeless. The women were extremely grateful for the excellent selection. One veteran who just started school said that now she didn't have to wear the same pair of blue jeans to class everyday. General Eric Shinseki, VA Director, visited the stand-down. This year's standdown participation marked our fifth year. The event provided a one-stop program for needy veterans to receive health care services, benefit counseling, haircuts, manicures, clothing, and a hot lunch. Special thanks to Leslie, Barbie, and Diane for providing a "woman's touch" in finding the right size and color for the veterans as well as much happiness to them.

The V.A. staff deserves our special salute since many were working as volunteers on their day off. We are fortunate to have this highly dedicated and professional staff. Special thanks to Chapter 641 of Silver Spring and Sharon Hodge of the VVA National office for staffing the men's clothing station.

A HAPPIER ARMY FAMILY HOLIDAY

A \$500 chapter grant and the great effort of Chuck and Glenda Harris of the chapter fulfilled the Santa list for a local army family. The sergeant has a debilitating combat medical condition. The shopping list included gift cards, toys, food and children's clothing. Each gift was wrapped. Our participation was part of the "Santa Operation", a holiday program to assist local military families in need. Special thanks to Chuck and Glenda for giving the chapter the opportunity to help this army family.

CHAPTER ELECTIONS

The chapter bi-annual elections will be held at the April membership meeting. If you have a strong desire to serve your fellow veterans, active duty military, and our community, offer to serve as an officer or director. If you are not sure, try a directorship as most past and current officers have done. Contact Len Funk (703-368-5888) if you have any questions or want to be a candidate for an officer or directorship. Elections will be held at the April 19th membership meeting.

CHAPTER 227 DOG TAGS

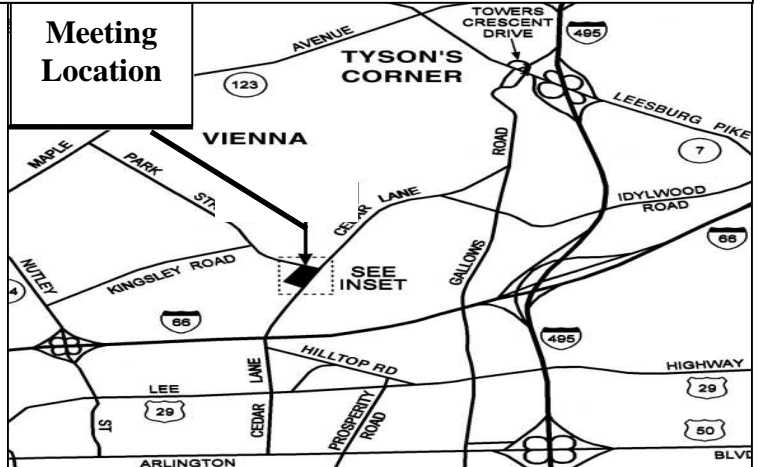
February 2012



OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF CHAPTER 227

- President:** Byron Sheldon – 703-850-3498
- Vice President:** Bruce Waxman – 703-323-0269
- Secretary:** Ron Ball
- Treasurer:** Chuck Harris
- Sergeant at Arms:** Jonathan Olson
- Board of Directors:** Paul Stancliff, Len Funk, Len Ignatowski, Bill Dumsick, Charlie Klein, Joe Celesnik, and Tom Stryer.
- AVVA Representative:** Diane Ignatowski 703-255-0353
- Newsletter Editor:** Len Ignatowski 703-255-0353
- School Speaker's Panel:** Tom Stryer 703-323-9032
- 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 2012

- 13: Decorated Veteran Funeral: Col. Eugene A. Wahl, WWII, Korean, and Vietnam decorated air force veteran funeral, Arlington National Cemetery. Daughter requests fellow veteran support since most of his immediate family is deceased. Meet at the Administration Building @ 10:30 AM
- 16: Membership Meeting 7:30 AM: Speaker: LeRoi Mason, "How to help military veterans from returning to prison"
- 22: Lyons PTSD Class Visit: Meet at the flag pole @ 11:00 AM. POC: Ben Buckley 703-978-9179

March 2012

- 01: Board Meeting: American Legion Post 180, 330 Center Street, North, Vienna, Va, 7:30 PM
- 10: State Council Meeting, Lynchburg, Va.
- 15: Membership Meeting 7:30 AM: 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War Commemorative Program
- 25: "Welcome Home Remembrance": Chapter sponsored movie showing, "21 and a Wakeup". Free admission for Vietnam veterans and AVVA members. General public admission: \$3.00.

April 2012:

- 04: Lyons PTSD Class Visit: Meet at the flag pole @ 11:00 AM. POC: Ben Buckley 703-978-9179
- 05: Board Meeting: American Legion Post 180, 330 Center Street, North, Vienna, Va, 7:30 PM
- 19: Membership Meeting 7:30 AM **CHAPTER ELECTIONS:** Speaker: Ed LaClare. "Memories of a WW II Pilot. Mv Dad!"

VETERAN'S HOTLINE 1-800-273-8255

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

VVA CAR DONATION PROGRAM

1-800-Help Vets

"WELCOME HOME" REMEMBRANCE

At 7:00 PM, Sunday, March 25, the chapter will show the movie *21 and a Wakeup*. According to the producer/director, Vietnam veteran Chris McIntyre, "It is the first American film about the Vietnam War allowed to shoot on location in Vietnam since the end of the war. The two hour drama, while fiction, is based on a number of true events and real people, surrounding the final days of the 24th Evacuation Hospital near Saigon, the last major Army hospital in the South to close as the war drew to an end." Chris will speak about the movie before the screening. We will show it at the University Mall Theatre, 10659 Braddock Road, Fairfax, VA 22032 (intersection of Braddock and Route 123). [\(703\) 273-7111](tel:7032737111). See the trailer at: <http://vimeo.com/18198900>. Veterans and AVVA members admission is free, all others \$3.00.

The event is a great opportunity to meet your fellow chapter members and to introduce your family and Vietnam veteran friends to the chapter.

FUNERAL REQUEST

FEBRUARY 13th

The family of Col. Eugene A. Wahl, a decorated WWII, Korean, and Vietnam air force veteran, requests our attendance at his Arlington National Cemetery funeral on February 13th. Meet at the Administration Building at 10:30 AM. The request is being made since the 91 year old veteran has very few living immediate family and friends.

FEBRUARY 16th MEMBERSHIP MEETING

“Helping Newly Released Incarcerated Veterans from Returning to Prison”

THE SHOW IS ON!

To celebrate “Welcome Home, Vietnam Veterans Day”, the chapter is hosting a showing of “21 and a Wake Up” movie to Vietnam veterans, AVVA member, and the general public on March 25th. Admission is free for Vietnam veterans and AVVA members.

See newsletter for details.

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

Address Service Requested



OUR MISSION

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