



JAN/FEB 2017  
VOL 3 NO 1



## “Welcome Home” **NEWSLETTER**

### “Member Feature”

John A. Vargas - VVA 1106 Member

John was born in San Juan Puerto Rico, USA and was raised in NYC. After his military service he earned a Degree in Marketing.

He was “Drafted” into the US Army and assigned to the 4th Infantry Division at Ft. Lewis Washington. While serving in Vietnam, he voluntarily transferred to the 25th Division ¾ Air Cavalry “Centaur.” John was a Door Gunner on a Huey gunship that was consistently engaged in daily and nightly combat raids.

On the 19th of May 1967, while on a mission in the Hobo Woods, South Vietnam, John was seriously injured sustaining bullet wounds to his right shoulder. In spite of his wounds, he continued to engage the enemy with M60 tracers while marking their position with smoke. Subsequently, he saved the other three-crew members while assisting to kill at least 17 VC. For his bravery and dedication to duty, along with the Purple Heart, John was awarded The Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal for Valor. He is one of a few in the Army to have received the DFC, which is usually awarded to an Air Force pilot.

While in Colorado he joined the executive staff, eventually retiring from a Technical College as Director of Placement. Always being Community minded; John was a volunteer with the Colorado Police Department for 10 years working with the Senior Victims Assistant Team and as Tour Director.

Currently he is a member of the Highlands Ranch American Legion, the Vietnam Veterans of America in Centennial, and the Danny Dietz, Purple Heart Chapter in Arvada and remains a member of the VFW in the Springs. He is the founder and author of “*Sharing the Foxhole.*”

### Notes from the President

Lee White

Founding members of Chapter 1106.



Photo collage: Jack Hunter

Have you heard of the HONOR BELL GUARD that has been tolling their 1000 pound at our Fort Logan National Cemetery? VVA Chapter 1106 has been supporting this organization, but they need additional volunteers to honor those veterans interred at Fort Logan. There is no better way to sound a tribute than by tolling an honor bell.

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Throughout history, bells have tolled to focus a community's attention. An honor bell rings in remembrance, its dignity complementing the tradition of military funeral rites, its beauty offering a note of solemn reverence.

Contact information: website – [info@honorbell.org](mailto:info@honorbell.org) or call: 720-282-9182.

Fort Logan National Cemetery officially became a National Cemetery in 1950, consisting of 214 acres; presently 201.5 acres are developed. Statistical Date as of October 31, 2016

Interments 4,282 (YTD)

Total Burials 128,370

Graves Occupied 95,565

Casket Sites Used 65,675

Cremation Sites Used 26,970 (In Ground)

Columbaria Burials 2,920

(Source: Ft. Logan –Fact Sheet)

As we come to a close of 2016, As President, VVA Chapter 1106, I want to wish all veterans, associates, and friends, a VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!!

### **Upcoming Events**

- Saturday, January, 7, 2017 - Chapter 1106 Monthly Meeting
- Wednesday thru Saturday, January 11-14, 2017 - Nat'l BOD and Conference of State Council Presidents Meeting, Silver Spring, MD.
- Saturday, February 4, 2017 - Chapter 1106 Monthly Meeting
- Tuesday, February 28, 2017 - VVA End of Fiscal Year

### **Military Trivia**

What is a **Ground Pounder**? See answer at the end of the Newsletter

### **November Guest Speaker**



**Beth Forbes** from the Denver Home Builders Foundation

The Home Builders Foundation provides accessibility solutions and home modifications for individuals with disabilities and financial need through the collaborated efforts of the home building industry.

Projects are considered based on an accessibility need, funds and resources available at the time of the request, the location of the home, and the financial need of the applicant.

Once we have received your complete application, a representative of the Home Builders Foundation will contact you to arrange for a visit of your home and determine your specific needs. After this visit, the application will be submitted for review to the HBF Gifting Committee. Often times, a follow up site visit is needed to determine a budget, timeline and specific scope of work. If the committee approves

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the modifications, then it will be submitted to the HBF Board of Directors for final approval.

### **December Guest Speaker**

Shane and Brandy Schafer spoke of her dad. He had been directly sprayed with Agent Orange and he has now passed away. They wanted to do something for veterans and donated a power chair to our chapter. She is also a member of Children of Vietnam Veterans Health Alliance. This is a non-profit that tracks the health issues of the descendants of Vietnam Veterans. She informed us of the work that this organization is doing to bring the health problems of descendants before the VA and Congress to make people aware of the issue.

### **Membership!**

VVA Membership (as of 12-3-16): 56

AVVA: 18

TOTAL: 74

Welcome new VVA members: Warren Harrison

Welcome "At-Large" transfer member: "Frenchy" Weiner

Welcome new AVVA member: Kyrsten Nelson

### **Board of Directors/Officers**

Lee White - President

Bob Easter - Vice-President

Paul Seppo - Treasurer

Hazel Simeon - Secretary

Board Members – Milt Omoto, Patti Ehline,

Patrick Surrena, Dave Lyons

Joe Plant – Chaplain

### **Working Committees**

(Folks are needed to fill some spots!)

Agent Orange/PTSD -

Education - Bob Easter, Bill Pine, Tom Werzyn

Fundraising/Grants - Milt Omoto

Membership - Lee White

Membership Outreach – Dave Lyons

Newsletter Editor - Bob Rotruck

Marketing/Media/Events - Pat Surrena

POW/MIA – Mike Messenger

Scholarship Program - Hazel Simeon, Bob Easter, Paul Seppo, Bill Pine, Tom Wyrzyn, Bob Rotruck

Veteran Emergency Assistance Committee - Joe Plant, Bob Rotruck, Dave Lyons

Webmaster – Robert Senatore

Women Veterans - Patti Ehline

### **Denver 2016 Veterans Day Run**



Milt and Chris Omoto

Several Chapter 1106 members participated in and finished this year's Denver Veterans Day Run on Sunday, November 13th. There were 459 participants in the 5K and 185 runners in the 10K runs. In addition, there were 23 finishers for the 10K rucksack event. Proceeds go to help Denver veterans through the Colorado Veterans Project a 501(c)3 foundation.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Chapter Christmas Luncheon – December 17th**



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Second Annual Christmas Luncheon was held at the Golden Corral on Saturday, December 17, 2016. Despite the sub-zero temperature, and snow, everyone had a great time.



### ***Wreaths Across America***

VVA Chapter 1106 member Hazel Simeon participated in the annual "Wreaths Across America" laying of wreaths, at Fort Logan National Cemetery, on December 17, 2016.





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### ***A little history most people will never know!***

Interesting Veterans Statistics off the Vietnam Memorial Wall. There are 58,267 names now listed on that polished black wall, including those added in 2010. The names are arranged in the order in which they were taken from us by date and within each date the names are alphabetized. It is hard to believe it is 57 years since the first casualty.

The first known casualty was Richard B. Fitzgibbon, of North Weymouth, Mass. Listed by the U. S. Department of Defense as having been killed on June 8, 1956. His name is listed on the Wall with that of his son, Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Richard B. Fitzgibbon III, who was killed on Sept. 7, 1965. There are three sets of fathers and sons on the Wall.

39,996 on the Wall were just 22 or younger. 8,283 were just 19 years old. The largest age group, 33,103 were 18 years old. 12 soldiers on the Wall were 17 years old. 5 soldiers on the Wall were 16 years old. One soldier, PFC Dan Bullock was 15 years old.

997 soldiers were killed on their first day in Vietnam. 1,448 soldiers were killed on their last day in Vietnam.

31 sets of brothers are on the Wall. Thirty one sets of parents lost two of their sons. 54 soldiers attended Thomas Edison High School in Philadelphia. I wonder why so many from one school. 8 Women are on the Wall, Nursing the wounded. 244 soldiers were awarded the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War; 153 of them are on the Wall.

Beallsville, Ohio with a population of 475 lost 6 of her sons. West Virginia had the highest casualty rate per capita in the nation. There are 711 West Virginians on the Wall. The most casualty deaths for a single day was on January 31, 1968 ~ 245 deaths. The most casualty deaths for a single month was May 1968 - 2,415 casualties were incurred.

For most Americans who read this they will only see the numbers that the Vietnam War created. To those of us who survived the war, and to the families of those who did not, we see the faces, we feel the pain that these numbers created. We are, until we too pass away, haunted with these numbers, because they were our brothers, sisters, friends, fathers, husbands, wives, sons and daughters. There are no noble wars, just noble warriors.

### ***These Are Heroes Too***





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***Great story....and a great example of leadership.***



**General "Mad Dog" Mattis – USMC**

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In 2006 Dr. Albert C. Pierce told General Krulak, the former Commandant of the Marine Corps, now the chair of the Naval Academy Board of Visitors that they were having General Mattis give a lecture at the Naval Academy, he said, "Let me tell you a Jim Mattis story."

General Krulak said, when he was Commandant of the Marine Corps, every year, starting about a week before Christmas, he and his wife would bake hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of Christmas cookies. They would package them in small bundles. Then on Christmas day, he would load his vehicle. At about 4 a.m., General Krulak would drive himself to every Marine guard post in the Washington-Annapolis-Baltimore area and deliver a small package of Christmas cookies to whatever Marines were pulling guard duty that day. He said that one year, he had gone down to Quantico as one of his stops to deliver Christmas cookies to the Marines on guard duty. He went to the command center and gave a package to the lance corporal who was on duty.

He asked, "Who's the officer of the day?" The lance corporal said, "Sir, its Brigadier General Mattis." And General Krulak said, "No, no, no. I know who General Mattis is, I mean, who's the officer of the day today, Christmas day?" The lance corporal, feeling a little anxious, said, "Sir, it is Brigadier General Mattis."

General Krulak said that, about that time, he spotted in the back room a cot or a daybed. He said, "No, Lance Corporal! Who slept in that bed last night?" The lance corporal said, "Sir, it was Brigadier General Mattis." About that time, General Krulak said that General Mattis came in, wearing a duty uniform with a sword, and General Krulak said, "Jim, what are you doing here on Christmas day? Why do you have duty?" General Mattis told him that the young officer who was scheduled to have duty on Christmas day had a family, and General Mattis decided it was better for the young officer to spend Christmas Day with his family, and so he chose to have duty on Christmas Day.

General Krulak said, "That's the kind of officer that Jim Mattis is."

The story above was told by Dr. Albert C. Pierce, the Director of the Center for the Study of Professional Military Ethics at The United States Naval Academy. He was introducing General James Mattis who gave a lecture on Ethical Challenges in Contemporary Conflict in the spring of 2006. This was taken from the transcript of that lecture.

### State News



L to R: Lee White, Dennis Dickey, Dr. Wayne Reynolds, Treasurer, VVA National HQ)

Saturday, December 10, 2017, at our quarterly Colorado State Council Meeting, and luncheon we presented Dennis Dickey, Owner/Partner, Union, An American Bistro, a plaque, thanking him for supporting the Colorado State Council.

### **Book/Articles Published by Members**

#### **The Battle ...**

**Author: Tom Werzyn**

After that engagement by the river,  
that fight of fire and smoke,  
jacketed lead and screams, with  
choppers in and out;  
of blood, of un-survived meeting;  
good guys, bad guys- multi-green,  
and black, vestments of war.  
Steel hats and straw hats,  
pieces of men  
left on the ground-  
to be assembled and catalogued-  
sifted for information as to where  
to be sent, and what to be saved.

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There were bodies, in disarray-  
theirs and ours, floating  
with the faulty current of a stream  
limping flat to a quiet sea.  
Collected, sorted, tagged  
and bagged for a final trip  
back home-  
theirs and ours.

Black bags, sealed; man-long, shiny boxes,  
metal-stacked  
with white tags; identity and delivery  
of friend and foe,  
to each side of this war.  
We had dog-tags, they had papers- sometimes ...

we flew out, long ways to the east;  
they carted back in,  
to the interior of this land-  
some to the north, some to the south;  
lands we were each fighting about  
and for ...

After Dover, and after Oakland, and after Hickam-  
neatly pressed  
sergeants delivered that telegraphed claim ticket  
to mothers in kitchens- who changed  
into black dresses, veils and gloves-  
to receive a cargo most precious  
and most empty ...  
to fathers who worked, and came home  
early, in answer to frantic calls- tears  
shed; shared ...

Those lands were policed up, piled up-  
left to grow over, put away for later;  
remarkable foliage coming on blood-soaked soil.  
AAR's filed and catalogued, drawers  
upon drawers of words; endless  
records never referenced  
until they're not needed, ever.

I watched  
these things, in the eyes of the men  
I knew; words never spoken to anyone ...

no stories.  
Just the images in the bottle-framed mirrors  
behind the darkened bars  
where we sat beside our own ghosts,  
and looked into the only abyss  
available to us;  
a thousand yards to the front  
and only one behind us.

Back to the wall-  
eye on the door-  
behind the light-  
shadows covering-  
watching, with all senses-  
ready.

It was only we, who saw the others  
looking back at us ...  
only we, who wouldn't flinch  
at the faces- but could be under and gone  
with the first remembered ratchet  
of that selector lever-  
or the pop of a seating magazine.  
The drop of a safety.  
Twang of a trip-wire ...

We fear the night, which is not our own;  
the world's quiet turning  
is empty, but for the memories rising  
to stand with us,  
as we watch and wait  
for this all to be finally over ...  
yet knowing full well  
it won't ever be done; in our lifetime .....

### ***From the Editor!***

I wrote the following December 7, 2016. We have  
and continue to have so many veteran suicides I  
just had to write this. I wish I could do something  
more to help these poor souls suffering with  
PTSD/TBI.



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### The Boot

I sit here with a pistol in my hand,  
I stare at it but can't read its brand.  
It doesn't really matter anymore,  
I just need to settle the score.  
In the field Jack and I were best friends,  
We did our duty with no bends.  
Our platoon would take our orders,  
We were thousands of miles from our home borders.  
We'd head out in the dawn's early light,  
Praying we would see tonight.  
Looking for hidden bombs was no game,  
We did the best we could with no shame.  
That morning our dog Sammy gave the look,  
It was right out of the training textbook.  
Something wasn't right Sammy's face said,  
In an instant Jack and Sammy were both dead.  
I lay there on my back with my head spinning.  
I hoped this was a dream we were winning.  
I rolled to my right and felt the sharp pain,  
My face was on fire and felt like needles of rain.  
I looked for Jack and Sammy and saw Jack's boot,  
But the remains of Jack's body was not on his foot.  
I wanted to get up and help my brother and dog,  
But they both looked worse than a butchered hog.  
I've been out of rehab and home for weeks,  
But I try to close my only eye I get repeats.  
I just can't take the loss of my friends any longer,  
It is time I join where we will all be stronger.  
In my mind I see Sammy and Jack's boot alone,  
And I want to take it to him and give Sammy a bone.  
The pain will go away if I just pull the trigger,  
Each day I live the boot just gets bigger.  
War is hell and leaves so many in mental distress,  
I came home and don't feel at all blessed.  
Maybe I should wait until tomorrow,  
Hopefully I won't see the boot and have so much  
sorrow.  
Lord help me live through this day I pray,  
With Your strength I can take just one more day.

AMEN!

ROTRUCK - '16



Sorta tells it all!!!!

### SIX TINY STORIES WITH GREATMESSAGES

1 Once all the villagers decided to pray for rain. On the day of prayer all the people gathered, but only one boy came with an umbrella.

\*\*That's FAITH\*\*

2 When you throw a baby in the air, she laughs because she knows you will catch her.

\*\*That's TRUST\*\*

3 Every night we go to bed, without any assurance of being alive the next morning but still we set the alarms to wake us up.

\*\* That's HOPE\*\*

4 We plan big things for tomorrow in spite of zero knowledge of the future.

\*That's CONFIDENCE\*\*

5 We see the world suffering, but still we get married and have children.

\*\*That's LOVE\*\*

6 On an old man's shirt was written a sentence 'I am not 90 years old.... I am sweet16 with 74 years' experience.'

\*\*That's ATTITUDE\*\*

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Photo by Laura Gaul: 11-11-16

Inscription on the SE side of the Douglas County Veterans Monument We will NEVER FORGET!

### ***Light Side***

No jokes this newsletter! Well, maybe just one!!!



Those Coasties worry me just a little!!!!

### ***Trivia Answer***

**Ground Pounder** - A term used to describe a military member in the armed forces whose primary job is being an infantry member.



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 <p>Monthly Membership Meetings VISITORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME! 3rd Saturday of each month at 10:00a.m. Our meetings are held at: VFW Post 2461 1350 S Broadway, Denver, CO 80210</p>	 <p><b>APPLEWOOD</b> PLUMBING HEATING &amp; ELECTRIC SINCE 1973</p> <p>Applewood Plumbing Heating &amp; Electric <b>Main Billing Office:</b> 5000 W 29th Ave. Denver, CO 80212 <b>Phone:</b> 303-232-6611 <b>Fax:</b> 303-477-4310 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:custservice@applewoodfixit.com">custservice@applewoodfixit.com</a></p>	
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