

Monsoon Tribune

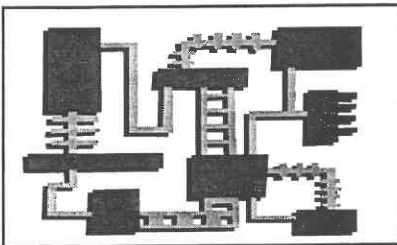
Newsletter for Vietnam Veterans of America

Jan / Feb 1998

Volume XV Issue No. 1

INSIDE

Our Vet in a Maze



Ever feel like you got lost in the system? Be sure to read the latest installment of Our Veteran as he winds his way through the VA Medical maze.

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Mark Your Calendars

Get your Day Planners out and mark the days of the January and February meetings.

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Vietnam Veterans
of America (VVA)
Chapter 106
Tucson, Arizona



Vietnam Memorial Visits New Mexico

By Valery Maldonado

As the wife of a Vietnam Veteran, I have long resented the apathy my husband and other veterans received upon their return from overseas duty. Some veterans have considered this apathy to be similar to the dislikes and insults many Vietnam Vets were subjected to at the time. For those who had such encounters, a recent trip to New Mexico proved to me times have changed for the better.

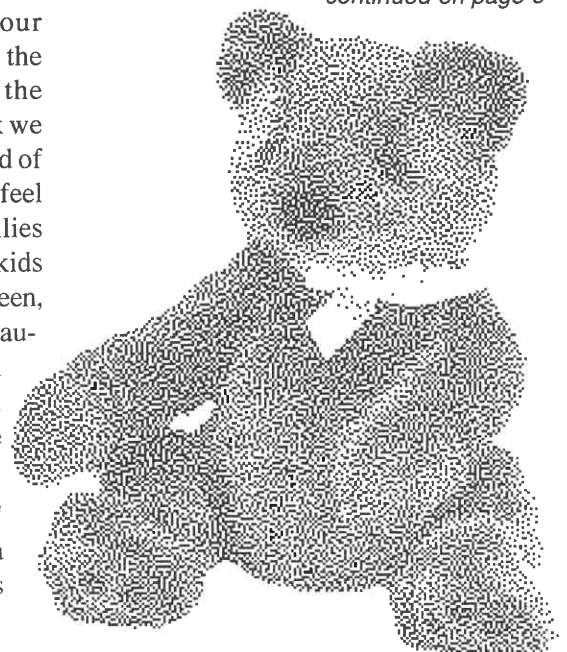
When my husband, Bob, and I heard the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Moving Wall was going to be in Silver City, New Mexico we made plans to attend. Silver City is just a couple cups of coffee travel time from our home in Tucson. Upon our arrival, we saw signs referring to the Moving Wall scattered about the town. When we arrived at the park we felt we were involved in some kind of weird time warp. The town has the feel of being lost in the sixties. Families were out taking a Sunday walk, kids were milling about at the Dairy Queen, the Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant was busy with the after church crowd. The friendly small town atmosphere embraced us! Then we saw the Wall.

The Wall is constructed of .100" thick aluminum panels, with a allodined and electro-painted gloss

black surface which gives a mirror like finish. It is then mounted on angular aluminum frames. My husband and I have been to the Wall in Washington, D.C. and although the Moving Wall lacks the beauty of the polished granite of the "real" one, it doesn't lack the impact to your heart. I felt the smaller version was more welcoming, more intimate. Others must have felt the same.

During my first walk I saw even more signs of Welcome to the Wall from Silver City citizens and visitors. An abundance of "Thank You" cards hand made by First Graders, tootsie rolls from a mom to her son and a 1967 101st Airborne Yearbook. Also sighted was a small ragged Teddy Bear with an old note on it—"Gibby's first Teddy Bear. 12/25/46. Love, Mommy and Daddy."

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Editor Notes

WELCOME TO THE NEW MONSOON TRIBUNE. Let me introduce myself. My name is Joe Kelley and I was recently appointed as the Committee Chair for the Monsoon Tribune. The main thrust of this volunteer position is to keep you informed of the happenings of Vietnam Veteran Association Chapter 106, Tucson.

If you have been reading the Tribune for a while you will have hopefully noticed a new layout and design. We are striving to bring you valuable information in a modern and easy to read format. I say *we* because the other half of the Tribune staff is Valery Maldonado. You will see her name in most of the by-lines while I do the layout and graphics.

Let me offer an apology at this point. If your schedule of receiving the Tribune has been disrupted lately, blame it on me. While not making excuses, the reason has been the retooling of the layout and design. I want to bring you a quality product and sometimes this takes a lot of time to get it right. Look for more improvements in the months ahead.

Another area of change is the frequency of publication. I believe a semimonthly format will work best for this newsletter. The reason for this is threefold. The first is that it will allow the development of more articles containing information you can hopefully use in your life. If not that, then at least better entertaining articles. The second reason is that more time would be available to design better graphics to illustrate these articles. Finally, the last reason is cost.

My goal is to bring you a first class product, more pages per issue while maintaining or reducing costs. By reducing the frequency of publication from twelve issues per year to six issues, all these goals are more obtainable. Your input on this is requested and appreciated. If you have internet access, you can email me at joekelley@worldnet.att.net.

Thanks.

Angel in Green

By Gerard Berume

Copyright Pending

I had that dream again, where I was coming up to the tent,
I could hear you, you touched my hand so gently, ever so softly.

You were there, it wasn't a dream.

I saw you, I could hear your voice, Where are you?

You were there.

Through the blood and the sweat, nothing could stop you.

You were there, standing tall.

My pain was your pain, My tears were ours,

You were there, you gave us your heart, you poured out your soul.

You picked up the pieces so I could go home.

Sister. Soldier, Angel in Green;

You gave us your best.

You gave us your all, you sister/answered my call.

No matter the time, day or night,

You were there, to make it right.

You were there. You heard my scream!

I hope it's not too late to say, **thank you my nurse;**

For your outstanding care, for the love and tenderness
that brings me here.

Thank you, Angel in Green.

You are my mother, my sister, my favorite girl, my wife, my
friend to the end.

You were my nurse, My Florence Nightingale.

Thanks to all you sisters who answered the call;

You are my angels in a world gone mad.

You are my HEROES.

LEST WE FORGET.

The Monsoon Tribune is a publication of Chapter 106, Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA). Please direct all article submissions, chapter correspondence or inquiries to: Vietnam Veterans of America, Tucson Chapter 106, P.O. Box 40903, Tucson, AZ 85717-0903. Telephone 520-571-5766, Fax 520-887-0128. This publication is edited by Valery Maldonado and Joe Kelley. Please direct e-mail submissions or inquiries to joekelley@worldnet.att.net

Our Veteran

Medical Maze

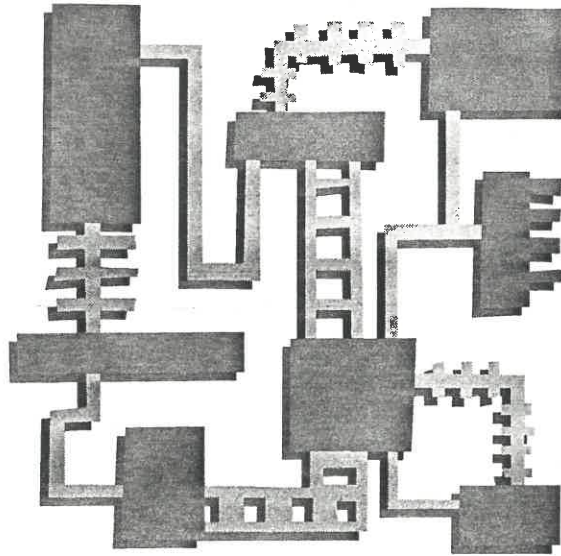
Our Veteran is an ongoing series of articles regarding the personal experiences of a Vietnam Vet working his way through the VA medical system in Tucson, Arizona.

By Valery Maldonado

Our Veteran recently received a confirmation letter stating "We are still processing your application for compensation. We apologize for the delay. You will be notified upon completion of processing." With this, our vet knew he may be in for a long haul. Imagine his surprise when after a week he received notification by phone to make three appointments within the week.

As you remember our veteran is putting in a claim for his PTSD, another for his "shotup" knee, bad back as a result of being a radioman during his first tour, and a claim for epileptic seizures from scar tissue from a concussion and intermittent hiccups. That's three appointments. The first was with a Psychiatrist for the PTSD. Although arriving 15 minutes early for a 7:00 pm appointment, he didn't get in until after 8:30 pm.. The doctor was kind enough, however, to come out during the wait to explain that she was running late.

After finally getting in for the appointment, the doctor immediately began the PTSD questioning. After several questions it became apparent that the Vet's "stressor" letter had not been read. This was upsetting to our veteran because the letter took so long to write, not to mention the emotion spent in writing it. Remember that the stressor letter is a complete statement about your time in Vietnam as you



possibly can give. The Doctor said she had never heard the term "Stressor Letter". She then looked through the file and saw the seven page letter. She said "This letter is seven pages long! Sometimes people write a paragraph or two, but never seven pages". Our guy was just doing what he had been told, but apparently, the shorter the statement, the better.

The Doctor then asked him to condense his letter. He did and in doing so mentioned that he had quit drinking because it seemed to aggravate his anger. She asked him in detail about his drinking, especially if he had ever experienced "blackouts". When he said he had, his wife interrupted him saying she was not aware of any "blackouts". Well, it turns out he had experienced "passing out" from drinking too much. His wife made it clear he didn't suffer from excessive drinking in the past, but that he just decided not to drink because it caused anger. From then on, the interview went smoothly.

While the Doctor was kind and sensitive, she indicated that her responsibility was to simply put her findings down on a report for the Ratings Board. Two days later our Vet went back to the VA, again in the evening, for an appointment for his hiccups, knees,

scars from shrapnel and bad back. This appointment started on time. The Doctor brought the wife and Veteran in and went through another half hour of tests. The Doctor also decided he needed some X-rays of our man's knees and some blood tests. This Doctor went to the trouble of ushering our Veteran over to the room for the blood test and asked someone to expedite it. He was very kind and patient in

explaining everything.

Now our guy has one more appointment. Finally, our Veteran received a letter from the VA regarding his medical records and statements from witnesses. After a planning session, it was decided that our man will contact as many fellow veterans from his unit as he can find from his first tour and ask them for statements. He is having his private medical records picked up and is taking them personally to the VA. He is also getting statements from his co-workers, some going back 27 years, to validate his uncontrollable hiccups.

Finally, his wife is writing a letter stating the way his PTSD, etc., has affected their family life. These things will all be presented to his Service officer who will send them in with the proper paperwork. After these statements are received, as well as the statements from the Doctors, the Serviceman will be rated. It has taken 14 weeks to get to this point. We hope it won't be long before we are able to tell you about his rating. ♦

If you have any questions concerning your eligibility for VA health care benefits, contact your local VA Hospital and ask for a benefits handbook. You can also get information from the VA Internet Web site at www.va.gov.

Esperanza Update

Much needed golf cart arrives free of charge

Now that we are in the season when we become more conscious of giving thanks for the good things that have been received during the year, it seems especially appropriate that we give thanks for receiving an item that appeared in our "Wish List" last month.

A golf cart has been donated by residents of Tucson Estates on the far west side of town. Terry and Ralph Mask donated the cart, refurbishing was done by Ralph D. Walker and on December 3rd, the cart was delivered

free of charge by Jim Jones. Ralph and Jim are also residents to Tucson Estates. The initial ad for the need of a golf cart was printed in *The Messenger*, a local newspaper. It takes a lot of work and effort by all of us involved with the growth of EEE, but the word may be spreading about what we are trying to accomplish. Many thanks to the donors of the cart.

Thanksgiving Dinner is served

The fragrance of roasting turkeys and other goodies was in the air at EEE on Thanksgiving morning. Shortly after 1:00 PM, the residents and members of the Community Committee sat down to a turkey dinner with all the trimmings, pumpkin pie and whipped cream included. If anyone went away hungry, it was their fault. Many thanks to the students of Anne Hanson at Erickson Elementary School. These wonderful fifth graders made lovely table decorations to brighten up our tables. ♦

Traveling Wall Visits New Mexico

continued from page 1

My husband Robert and I sat for several hours on the bench facing the wall. We noticed a Mexican-American family starting to gather at about 10 AM. Relatives kept coming until about Noon. They all went and touched one name on the wall individually, joined hands and prayed. Finally they each left a little something for their relative. It was beautiful.

The theme of the day seemed to be "Welcome Home". As Robert was sitting on the bench watching (wearing his Nam Jam shirt) a woman about seventy years old came to him and asked "Are you a Vietnam Vet?" He said "Yes". She replied "Well, thank you and welcome home."

I had the honor of talking to the driver of this particular Moving Wall. His name is Gary Ryther. A former Marine with Bravo 1/9 at Khe Sahn, Gary does the driving as a way to honor his fellow Vietnam Veterans. He travels from April thru November as the caretaker of the Wall (there are three others). As a volunteer, Gary does not receive any pay for his efforts. His room and board

are supplied by the hosting organization, but all other expenses are entirely his. When I asked him the name of the company who owns the wall, he looked at me like I was crazy. "You own the wall", he said. "It belongs to the public". As I watched him I noticed he was the most popular person at the park that day. Everyone had a question about the wall and he had all the answers. I learned that if you took entire wall and bent it to make the two ends touch, you would have a continuing circle of time.

The artifacts are collected, boxed and marked at each location then taken back to San Jose, CA. They are stored in the warehouse of the Memorial Fund. When the Moving Wall has fulfilled the needs for which it was created, a permanent site will be developed, landscaped as in Washington and a museum will be built at that site. All the artifacts that have been collected will be displayed in glass cases below each state flag of the states where the Wall visited. ♦

WALL FACTS

- Each Moving Wall has a three year waiting list.
- It is booked up to the year 2000.
- 58,290 people are listed.
- About 1,300 are POW / MIA's.
- There are 8 women listed: Seven Army nurses and one Air Force nurse.
- There are 16 military Chaplains- Two of whom are Medal of Honor recipients.

Around the Chapter

State Council Meeting Highlights January

J A N U A R Y

21 Wed 6:45 pm	VVA Bingo	VA Medical Center, Bldg 4 - Conference Center
26 Mon 6:30 pm	VVA Chapter 106 Board Meeting	VFW 345 E. Roger Road
	VVA Chapter 106 General Meeting	VFW 345 E. Roger Road
31 Sat 10:00 am	Arizona State Council Meeting	545 South 5th Ave. Tucson, AZ

F E B R U A R Y

18 Wed 6:45 pm	VVA Bingo	VA Medical Center, Bldg 4 - Conference Center
23 Mon 6:30 pm	VVA Chapter 106 Board Meeting	VFW 345 E. Roger Road
	VVA Chapter 106 General Meeting	VFW 345 E. Roger Road
28 Sat 8:00 am	Region IX Meeting & Profile of Courage	Albuquerque, NM

Minutes of November General Meeting

The minutes of the October meeting were read and approved...Details of the Christmas party of VVA Chapter 106 were discussed...Peter Duerr provided to members present a Nam Jam 1996 vs. 1997 Expense Report handout. Although the report was provided for informational purposes, details were discussed...The Treasurer's Report for November was also presented. The report was accepted, subject to audit, seconded and passed...Walt Maxam of the Membership Committee reported that VVA Chapter 106 currently (11/26/97) has 256 members on the roster...Peter Duerr presented the 1998

Chapter Budget. This was accepted, with funds movement proposed. It was seconded and passed. A discussion followed of how the Chapter Scholarship Committee will need to present guidelines for scholarship selections. For details, please see Gerard Berume...A proposal was made to combine the 1998 November and December chapter meetings into one meeting, to be held on the second Monday in December. A motion for Chapter 106 to adopt a specific family from E & E for Christmas was made, seconded and passed. Meeting was adjourned.♦

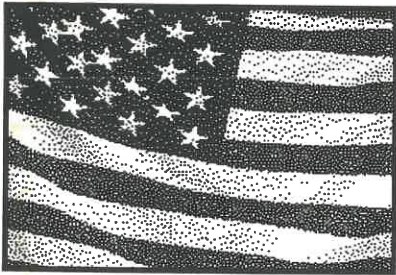


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