

Names chiseled in marble: Reflections on Memorial Day

By Valerie Maldonado

While visiting the Viet Nam Veterans Memorial at El Presidio Park preparing for this article, I was sitting on the concrete bench looking at the 616 names chiseled in marble hoping for inspiration when one of the park maintenance men walked by.

I asked him if there would be any kind of remembrance service that he knew of on Memorial Day, and in an angry tone he told me "no". Then he said he was a Viet Nam vet, and I told him about Viet Nam Veterans of America and offered to hand him a newsletter with an application in it. He shooed it away and said "I don't need that stuff, I lived it", he was very angry, and started to talk about the politics of the war, why we didn't win, etc.

Then he pointed at the wall and said "they died for no good reason" and I was so mad! I told him, "I Don't have to listen to this, I loved someone whose name is on this wall" and he said "well, I'm sorry, but he didn't have to die." By this time I was so angry that my eyes had tears, so I just stomped off to my car.

As I was getting in the car, (still muttering all of the "I should have said" to myself), the irony of our argument hit me: These people, most of them young, had actually given their lives so the maintenance man and I could stand there and argue! In fact, the inscription on the monument states: "IN HONOR AND MEMORY OF THE 616 ARIZONANS WHO GAVE THEIR TODAY FOR OUR TOMORROWS DURING THE VIET NAM WAR."

The whole experience made me think about Memorial Day: what is it exactly and why is it not the big deal today that it was when I was a kid? So I decided to do a little research; Groliers defines Memorial Day, also known as Decoration Day, as: "A day of remembrance for those who have died in the nation's service." The holiday was first widely observed on May 30, 1868, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers".

That answered a lot about the Memorial Days I spent as a kid. I was born a year after the end of World War 2. My dad was a veteran, my mom was a woman who took her high school yearbook off the shelf on every Memorial Day and showed my sisters and I pictures of schoolmates who had died in WWII. After that we'd go to the village green to parade with a group from the Legion to the cem-

etry. We'd spend the morning cleaning and weeding graves, putting little flags on plots, flowers on headstones. It was very solemn, a gesture of homage that impressed even my four and five year old mind.

I Wonder, where did that respect go? I went to my granddaughter's "After School Recreation" program and asked eleven kids what they knew about Memorial Day; seven thought it was created for the Indy 500! Three thought it was for parties and picnics and one knew the answer, scary, huh?

Now on to the positive part of this article. I went to visit my daughter in her new home in a new development recently. She lives on a street named "Moses" which intrigued me. She told me she thought it was named for a man who was killed in Viet Nam. I had to know more so she directed me to a monument situated at the corner of Connell and Bopp. There I saw six southwestern style stuccoed walls, three on each side of Connell. They are beautiful in their simplicity. Surrounded by desert landscaping and facing an unspoiled view of the back of the Tucson mountain Range, the true beauty lies in the bronze plaque placed thereby the neighborhood's developer, Kent Wonders. It reads: "These streets are dedicated to young Marines who gave their lives in the mountains and Valley called Khe Sahn, Vietnam. 2nd Battalion, 26th Marines. LCPL Bradford, Sgt. Edwin Connell, PFC Edward Heifner, PFC Clifton Moses, CPL George Pruitt, PVT John Quattlebaum, (and) PFC James Richardson. Each street in the development is named after one of these men, there is also a street called Khe Sahn, I suspect to honor all men who served in Viet Nam.

As a mother I marvel at this symbol of respect and thanks Kent has given to his comrades and I almost weep for the comfort this gesture will bring to the families of these men some thirty years plus years later. What an inspiration for all of us!

Mr. Wonders has inspired me to reach back to my childhood and return to the action of my parents. On May 26, 1997 at 10 A.M., I'll be at the intersection of Connell and Bopp to decorate the memorial placed there by Kent Wonders and at Noon I'll be at the Arizona Viet Nam Memorial at Presidio Park to do the same.

I invite any of you to participate in this informal gathering, or I urge you to do something symbolic to honor "people who gave their today's so we could have a tomorrow".

News & Announcements

According to Deane Cooper, Deborah Fahnstock should be back in town on May 16th. She'll be continuing to have treatment, however she's doing excellent and all of our best wishes and most positive love and thoughts go out to her. Love Ya, Deborah!

Pete Duerr is working with the "Run for the Wall" and we're looking forward to a report in the next Monsoon Tribune.

Please try to make the High Tea to benefit Esperanza en Escalante, transitional housing for veterans. It will be held on Saturday, May 31, 1997 from 2-4 P.M. Tickets are \$10 per person and all proceeds go to benefit this charity. If you're interested, please call Mike Brasher or Deane Cooper at 790-2612.

Speaking of Deane Cooper, she would like to hear from women veterans, particularly Viet Nam Era. If you know of a woman veteran please ask her to call Deane at 790-2612. She'd like to have a display in the museum featuring these people this year.

We had a winner at the last meeting. Member number 106 was drawn, Philip Hernandez won \$130 and the pot will restart at \$50, so be sure to be at the next meeting to have a chance at winning. Congratulations also go to Gale Skinner who won the 50/50 drawing, \$12 this time, more if you attend the next meeting and buy a few tickets!

The following officers were elected for the coming year:

Chester Rick II, president; Dennis St. Germaine, vice president; Bob Caldwell, secretary; Pete Duerr, treasurer.

The following board of directors was elected for the coming year also:

Mike Brewer, Chuck Bald-Coulter, Rita Ramey, Louis Leos, Robert Taylor, Mike Brasher, Gail Skinner, Walt Maxam, Bob Maldonado, Gerard Berume, Joe Luke, Denny Evans and Bill Fort.

President Chester Rick has appointed the following people to head committees: Membership Affairs-Walt Maxim; state Council Delegates- Dennis St. Germaine and Gale Skinner; Alternates are Billy Fort and Gerard Berume; Veteran's Affairs-Bob Taylor; public Affairs- Mike Brewer; associate Member Liaison - Patty Bald-Coulter; Armorer-Chuck Bald-Coulter; VA Volunteer Service Representative-Chuck Bald-Coulter; Nam Jam Chairman-Walt Maxam.

It was moved and passed at our last meeting that from now on every committee chairman will prepare a

written report to the Monsoon Tribune monthly.

It was also moved and passed that the Nam Jam Chairman will also be a Board of Directors member, and further, that the position of Nam Jam chairman can never fall to the President or Treasurer.

Finally, a report from three Chairmen: Walt Maxim, Product Sales; Walt Maxim, Membership Chairman; and Walt Maxim, Nam Jam Director. Product Sales-Walt has just taken this over and added new stock, including new hats and hopefully new tee shirts for Nam Jam.

Membership- We currently have 285 members, however, 95 of these members are not current on their dues. Will you please check your due date and pay these due if they are due now. We carry late dues member on the roster as a courtesy, but we urge you to pay ASAP.

Nam Jam Committee- I was appointed to this position on April 14, but I ask that everyone who is interested in helping, please let me know. Unless we are able to get more people to help in all areas of the Nam Jam, we may have to cancel. This is something we don't want to happen, but it is a possibility if we continue to depend on the same people year in and year out, it's imply too much work to not burn out. WE NEED YOUR HELP!!! Please call Walt at 744-1473 if you can give some time. It'll be greatly appreciated. From now on the Nam Jam committee will meet after each monthly board meeting.

The Region 8 and 9 Convention will meet in Sparks (near Reno) June 20-22. Those wishing to attend contact Pete Duerr or Chester Rick by May 31. Attending the Regional Convention is a prerequisite for attending the Natl convention scheduled for Aug. 5-10 in Kansas City Mo. Deadline for registration for the National Convention in Kansas City is June 9.

In a related matter, Chapter 106's executive board has authorized that our slots for the National Convention be filled by members of other Arizona Chapters in the event that enough Chapter 106 members can not go. Chapter 106 will pay for their travel and lodging and per diem to ensure that the State of Arizona has full representation. The deadlines of May 31 (Region 8-9) and June 9 (National Convention) are fast coming and are set in stone so that the finalization can be made: Contact Pete Duerr, Chester or Dennis.

Highlights of May Board meeting

Treasurer Pete Duerr reports a balance of \$ 33,470 on deposit. Three thousand eight hundred and twenty four dollars is set aside for the Scholarship fund. Our income this month was \$388 against expenses of \$816.

Chuck Bald-Coulter gave the Armor's report: We have many rifles at the Armory that are in need of firing. It was suggested that we arrange a "shoot" at one of the local ranges. Please give Chuck a call at 623-5203 if you'd like to participate.

VAV Report: Also from Chuck. People are needed to escort and visit the elderly male and female veterans at the nursing home. They are eager to have people visit and talk with them. They appreciate any time we can give them. Also, if you're looking for some kind of volunteer work to do, the VA could use your help. They're not replacing some of the people who are retiring or quitting and they need week-end "go-fers". It's very rewarding work.

Deane Cooper made a motion that we buy 20 tickets to the High Tea to benefit Esperanza en Escalante. It was seconded and passed.

The "Run For The Wall" has passed through Arizona and the cost to the State Council was \$660. Chapter 106 voted to pay \$50 to help defray costs to our State Council. Next year we will make everyone aware of the Run much sooner so they can participate if they wish.

The drawing was for \$50 this month, (starting over because it was won last month). Three member's name were called, #52 Pablo Costa, #141 John Leon and #84 Chris Flandera. None were present so the drawing will be for \$ 60 next month. The 50/50 Drawing was won AGAIN by Gale Skinner- \$13.

Gerard Berume gave a status report on the Education Committee. It seems to be coming along well. He reports that he and Bill Fort gave a presentation at Mansfield School and it was received very favorably. Pete Duerr mentioned that the information for the Education Committee has been received and will be turned over to Gerard shortly.

Walt Maxim gave a Product Sales Report: He has purchased a number of new items and is restocking. In addition to our regular stock, other new products, including Tee-shirts will be available at NAM JAM.

Membership Report: Membership stands at 281.

A Nam Jam meeting was held on the 19th, however, this will be reported on at a later date.

A final Note from Nam Jam Chairman Walt Maxam: "We need YOUR help please call me if you're willing to help ... 744-1473 ... Operators are standing by.

Finally, very Important! Betty Slaybaugh will be giving a report on Esperanza en Escalante at our next Meeting. June 23, please try to make it. Refreshments will be served.

Esperanza en Escalante is transitional housing for veterans and their families. Mike Brasher was telling us at our last meeting that the management is hoping to have 50 residents by the end of the year and if you're a member of VVA 106 you need to be proud of this, we started it!

VVA 106 started this homeless shelter for vets in 1988 with the idea that it would sometime in the future go out on its own and it has. Although we're continuing to help financially, they've received their own 501C3 tax free status and have exciting things happening. This is our way of "putting our money where our mouth is" and we hope everyone will come to hear Betty Slaybaugh, Executive Director of EEE speak of the program, its accomplishments and hopes for the future. That's June 23, 1997 after the 6:30 Board Meeting.

NONPROFIT ORG.
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 TUCSON, ARIZONA
 PERMIT NO. 2458

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Vietnam Veterans of America
 Tucson Chapter 106
 PO Box 40903
 Tucson AZ 85717-0903

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

May

26 Mon Memorial Day Tucson (Services / Functions to be announced)

June

14	Sat	Flag Day	Put out your Flag!	Show it to America.
18	Wed 6:45 pm	VVA Bingo	VA, Medical Center, Building 4	Conference Center
20 & 21		Region III & IX Conference	Sparks, Nevada - Nugget Hotel	
23	Mon., 6:30 pm	Board Meeting Tucson Chapter 106	VFW 345 E. Roger Rd.	
23	Mon., 7:30 pm	General Meeting Tucson Chapter 106	VFW 345 E. Roger Rd.	
27	Sat., 10:00 am	Arizona State Council Meeting	Prescott - APS Office	

July

4	Fri	Independence Day		
11-12		National Committees & National Board of Directors Meetings - Washington, D. C.		
16	Wed., 6:45 pm	VVA Bingo	VA Medical Center - Building 4	Conference Center
28	Mon., 6:30 pm	Board Meeting Tucson Chapter 106	VFW 345 E. Roger Rd.	
28	Mon., 7:30 pm	General Meeting Tucson Chapter 106	VFW 345 E. Roger Rd.	

August

5 - 10		VVA National Convention	Kansas City, Missouri - Hyatt Hotel	
20	Wed., 6:45 pm	VVA Bingo	VA Medical Center - Building 4	Conference Center
25	Mon., 6:30 pm	Board Meeting Tucson Chapter 106	VFW 345 E. Roger Rd.	
25	Mon., 7:30 pm	General Meeting Tucson Chapter 106	VFW 345 E. Roger Rd.	