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Viet Vet Monsoon Tribune

Volume IV

Issue VIII

VVA CHAPTER 106

November 1988



CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

Lots of things have happened in the chapter since the last NAM JAM. In December we spent our time with family and friends during the holidays but we did manage to have a get together at Fiesta Lanes for a bowling party. We again sponsored a Little League team and we sponsored a Pop Warner football team.

We had our first annual awards banquet in January. Several members of the chapter and people from the community were given recognition for their contributions to the chapter. It was a super event and we hope to have it every year.

Product sales was busy this year. We set up booths at Davis-Monthan for A & A days, the Pima County Fair, swap meets, and at Raven Raceway. The folks at Raven have been fantastic with us and are responsible for helping us increase our treasury. Our collective hats are off to them.

Throughout the school year we again made presentations at the high schools in Tucson. Hundreds of high school students were presented with information about the Vietnam war that they were unable to get from the two paragraphs about it in their history books.

The newly formed color guard has been quite busy this last year. We started out with two Memorial Day parades. The first was on May 29th at Catalina. We had a good turn out and we received a ribbon for participating in the parade. We rounded out the day by having a picnic at Catalina State Park. On the following day most of

the color guard made it to the parade at Tucson Estates. They were so impressed with us that they asked us to lead the parade! We were then asked to post the colors for their ceremony. The folks at Tucson Estates were really nice to us. On July 4th we had a parade at Reid park. A dozen hearty souls braved the heat. On August 12th, the color guard posted the colors for the first-day issue of the new wheelchair stamp at the VA hospital.

The chapter has been participating throughout the year in the Wednesday night rap sessions at the VA hospital. We have donated a coffee pot and are providing coffee and donuts for the rap sessions. Everyone is welcome to come out and participate.

The chapter has also formed a Family Support committee. There have been several meetings. There has also been one pot-luck dinner with more scheduled in the future. This committee's main function is to provide support to family members of Vietnam Veterans who are still having difficulties coping.

There were many more things that we wanted to do this year. Unfortunately, there is just so much that a few people can do. The chapter sorely needs more members to participate in chapter activities. We also need more new members. If we can accomplish as much as we did with a core of less than thirty active people, just think of what we can do with twice that many. Be a good citizen. Participate!

ANNOUNCEMENTS #####
 # ATTENTION MEMBERS: WE NEED A FEW GOOD MEN & WOMEN TO BE A PROUD MEMBER OF V.V.A. 106 #
 # COLOR GUARD. THE CHAPTER WILL SUBSIDIZE THE COST OF THE UNIFORMS. IF INTERESTED CALL #
 # ED GILDNER AT 722-4365. #
 # #
 # HOMELESS VET PROJECT: NOV.26th 1988 11:00 AM - 5:00 PM REID PARK BANDSTAND. #
 # ADMISSION: CHILDREN - ONE CAN OF FOOD, ADULTS - \$3.00, COUPLE - \$5.00 #
 # MUSIC & ENTERTAINMENT. BENEFITS TO PHOENIX & TUCSON HOMELESS VETS. #
 # #
 # MUCH THANKS TO MR. WAYNE HAWKINS FOR HIS DONATION TO V.V.A. 106 EVERY MONTH. #
 # #
 # VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR "NAM JAM" THE DAY OF THE EVENT (12 NOV. 1988), WE NEED YOUR HELP. #
 # CALL DAVE CROTEAU AT 792-9109 OR JOHN SHIRLEY AT 884-7544. WE NEED YOUR HELP. #
 # #
 # NAM JAM POSTERS: ANYONE WANTING POSTERS FOR CIRCULATION MAY PICK THEM UP AT THE #
 # ANTIQUÉ PRINT'N PARLOR 601 E. 6th, TUCSON, AZ. #
 # #
 # PLEASE CALL 791-4700 AND EXPRESS SUPPORT FOR THE CITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION (NAM JAM) #
 # TO WAIVE CITY FEES FOR V.V.A. 106's USE OF REID PARK FOR NAM JAM. #
 # #
 # ON VETERANS DAY, NOV. 11th, 1988 AT DAVIS-MONTHAN A.F.B., V.V.A. 106 WILL PRESENT A #
 # POW/MIA FLAG & A U.S. FLAG TO THE 836th COMBAT ARMS. THERE WILL ALSO BE A DEDICATION #
 # OF THE POW/MIA DISPLAY AT DAVIS-MONTHAN A.F.B. TIME: 12:00 NOON, FOR INFORMATION #
 # CALL ELEANOR REITZ AT 326-2631. #
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"V.A. CABINET SEAT IS LAW"

Saying America's debt to military men and women doesn't end "the day the uniform comes off," President Reagan signed legislation yesterday giving veterans a Cabinet level voice for the first time.

"I'm saying to all our veterans what I say to new Cabinet members: 'Welcome aboard'" said Reagan, the self-proclaimed enemy of an expanding federal government, who once suggested abolishing the departments of Education and Energy. The new department will be the 14th Cabinet post in the federal government.

Sitting under a sparkling autumnal sun in front of a columned building of the National War College at Fort McNair, the president signed into law the bill creating the Department of Veterans Affairs, effective March 1989.

Spokesmen for veterans organizations applauded the elevation of veterans issues in the councils of government, but noted that the legislation offers no increases in compensation or improvements in health care. Supporters of the legislation had argued that the Veterans Administration already has the fifth-largest budget among federal agencies and merits being put on par with other Cabinet departments.

There are some 27 million veterans and 49 million dependents or survivors, although only about 2.5 million to 3 million of them rely on VA services on a regular basis. The agency has a \$30 billion budget, and it will disburse \$14 billion in income maintenance and \$626 million for education and rehabilitation assistance this year.

Merrill Hartson
The Associated Press

 # EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to the upcoming holidays there will be no December 1988 issue of #
 # the Viet Vet Monsoon Tribune. #
 # #
 # Dan Driscoll #
 #####

"LETTER TO THE EDITOR"

To: Membership of V.V.A. 106,

My following comments are directed towards the "members" who pay their \$20 dues each year and are never (or hardly ever) seen at meetings or activities.

Sometime ago I was looking for some people who had lived through some of the same horrors I had. I was first introduced to V.V.A. 106 a little over 6 years ago. I found out that it would cost me \$20 to join. I wasn't working, but I found a "one-time" job and paid half of what I got for the job to join. Every year after that I always found a way to pay for my membership. OK, \$20 isn't that much, but for me I wanted to see what my money was doing.

I've always been outspoken, so I became an active member in this chapter. As a board member, I always spoke out for Veterans rights. I also worked in product sales. It made me proud to know I was able to bring in some money for the chapter. It was a fight to keep myself going at times, but I felt in my small way I was helping others.

Now, for just over a year, I haven't paid my dues. I still come out and help the active members, with one activity after another. I've attended many meetings: watching, listening and YES"speaking out".

I find it hard to set aside what I feel about Vietnam. After many years one must learn to live with it. I may, then I meet a Vet on the street with his hand out, and asking only for someone to care.....

Come on "MEMBERS", Remember.....

Shawn A. Swartzmiller

Mr. Barry W. Arcala, Legislative Coordinator
Vietnam Veterans of America
941 North Evelyn Avenue
Tucson, Arizona 85710

Re: Letter of August 13th

Dear Mr. Arcala:

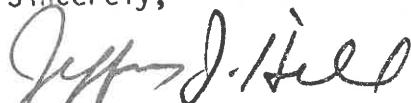
I received your response to my letter, and am still confused that you think the issues you address are state issues. Your letter mentioned VA hospitals specifically, Vet centers and non-profit foundation grants, either all federal programs or as in grants and donations, unconstitutional. The other requests on homeless, etc. would require massive new programs, of which we have no money as you may have read.

As a legislator, I have no influence with area employers, as those contacts are made from the executive branches of government. A letter of endorsement I would be happy to provide if you so desire. As a former employment agent, we stressed veterans for employment with some success, I might add.

Candidate nights are generally unsuccessful due to the strange lines drawn for the districts which means few voters from specific districts and therefore low attendance from candidates. However, Karen Simmons at Republican Headquarters at 2235 E. Broadway, telephone 628-9566, is the contact person for assistance.

I trust this helps and I wish you good luck in your endeavors.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey J. Hill
STATE SENATOR

"VOLUNTEER ATTORNEY HELPS TUCSON VIETNAM VET"

During three tours of duty in Vietnam, Hugo Benavente earned 14 service decorations, including six for valor in combat.

But the 40-year old Tucsonan will be the first to admit that probably the toughest battle he ever waged was in the legal arena back home.

Armed with a bundle of doctors' reports saying he was unable to hold a job due to post-traumatic stress syndrome and other war-related problems, Benavente struggled for three years to have his disability benefits boosted to the 100-percent level.

However, when he tried on several occasions to hire an attorney to argue on his behalf before a Veterans Administration rating board, he was repeatedly stymied.

"All of them told me I had an excellent case, but they couldn't take it," he recalled, shaking his head.

The reason: an outdated law prohibits lawyers from charging veterans more than \$10 to represent them in front of the VA, ostensibly to prevent fee gouging.

Then in April 1987, Benavente was introduced to Terry Jackson, a fellow Vietnam vet now working for the law firm of Bilby & Shoenhair.

With the firm's blessing, Jackson, 39, agreed to take Benavente's case at no fee. "I definitely think I'm more sympathetic to a veteran's problems," Jackson explained. "When a veteran says, 'I have post-traumatic stress syndrome' or some such problem, I hear that. I know what he means, and I understand it's serious. It's a private ax to grind, I guess."

Over the following year, Jackson invested between 45 and 50 hours—at what would normally be a rate of \$100 per hour—attending hearings and preparing legal briefs in support of Benavente's uphill fight. Recently, though, the effort succeeded when Benavente was finally classified as 100-percent disabled, raising his monthly benefits from \$863 to \$1,593, and netting him about \$18,000 in retroactive payments. The hard-earned victory, Benavente said, has enabled him and his wife, Susan, to "start catching up" on the avalanche of debts under which they have been buried since 1985.

It also led to Jackson's being honored in September by the Pima County Bar Association as its "Volunteer Lawyer of the Month." Sitting in his United Bank Tower office last week, Jackson acknowledged appreciation for the award, but said the real payoff was knowing he had helped Benavente. "The guy has paid a lot of dues," he noted. "It's 17 years post-injury, and he's just now getting recognition that he was totalled out in the service of his country."

Benavente conceded that he would never have prevailed on his own. "Terry was like an angel sent from heaven," he said. "It was like having a teammate—I no longer felt like I was fighting my case alone. It's kind of ironic that it had to be a Vietnam veteran who helped me. But to tell you the truth, I really don't believe anybody else would have gone to the lengths that Terry did to accomplish what he did."

Jackson noted, "There comes a time in any system the size of the VA...where people make arbitrary and capricious judgments that impact severely on someone's life, and when that happens, you need to get a lawyer to go after them and go after them hard."

Chip Warren
The Arizona Daily Star

THE OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS OF V.V.A. 106, WISH A VERY "MERRY CHRISTMAS" AND #
"HAPPY NEW YEAR" TO ALL MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES #
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WIDEST 3/8 IN THE WEST!

DAVID L. MANES
President

12500 S. Houghton Rd.
Tucson, Arizona 85747
(602) 629-0707

#####ANNOUNCEMENTS#####
 # THE VETERANS FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP WILL BE MEETING ON THE 5th & 19th NOV. 1988 AT #
 # 11:00 A.M. LOCATION: 2414 W. ALTERO DR. (IN CLUBHOUSE) TUCSON, AZ. FOR MORE INFO-#
 # RMATION CALL DIANE AT 297-9559. #
 # #
 # THE VETERANS FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP WILL BE MEETING ON THE 3rd & 17th DEC. 1988 AT #
 # 11:00 A.M. LOCATION: 4910 E. LEE, TUCSON, AZ. FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL ELEANOR AT#
 # 326-2631 AFTER 6:00 P.M. #
 # #
 # A HOLIDAY PARTY IS BEING PLANNED FOR V.V.A. 106 BY THE VETERANS FAMILY SUPPORT #
 # GROUP. DATE: 30 DEC.1988 TIME: 6:00 P.M. - 12:00 MIDNIGHT, MORE INFORMATION TO #
 # FOLLOW. #
 # #
 # WELCOME....WELCOME....WELCOME TO OUR TWO NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS: DIANE CERONE AND #
 # LYNN THOMPSON #
 #####

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA Tucson Chapter 106
 P.O. Box 40903 Tucson, Arizona 85717 (602) 790-7602
GOVERNING BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- | | |
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| John Shirley | 884-7544 |

CALENDAR***CALENDAR***CALENDAR***CALENDAR***CALENDAR***CALENDAR***CALENDAR
 NOV. 10th - BOARD MEETING: Thursday at D.A.V. 18, 4656 E. 1st St. at
 7:30 P.M.
 NOV. 27th - GENERAL MEETING: Canceled "Thanksgiving Day"
 DEC. 8th - BOARD MEETING: Thursday at D.A.V. 18, 4656 E. 1st St. at
 7:30 P.M.
 DEC. 22nd - GENERAL MEETING: Canceled "Christmas Holidays"
 JAN. 12th - BOARD MEETING: Thursday at D.A.V. 18, 4656 E. 1st St. at
 7:30 P.M.
 JAN. 26th - GENERAL MEETING: Thursday at D.A.V. 18, 4656 E. 1st St. at
 7:30 P.M.
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