

The Paralyzed Veterans of America

1946-1996

Still Fighting for a Better Tomorrow

When World War II ended 50 years ago, some veterans found their homecoming presented almost as many challenges as their time in the military.

These veterans, who were paralyzed, came back to a country not prepared to deal with them or their needs. For example, many paralyzed veterans returned home to find they couldn't live in their houses or apartments. The reasons were many—including the fact that there were steps out front, and the homes themselves were not designed for someone in a wheelchair. In addition, they couldn't get around, because public transportation was not accessible to people in wheelchairs.

These veterans joined together to form the Paralyzed Veterans of America. During the years that followed, we have made a real difference in the lives of our members and many others with disabilities. To date we have spent more than \$12 million on research related to spinal-cord injury and disease, been a leader in the coalition on the Americans With Disabilities Act, lobbied to make our country accessible to people with disabilities, and been involved in a wide range of sports and recreational activities for those with disabilities.

At age 50, we show no signs of slowing down. The organization has more than 40 chapters and subchapters and about 60 offices nationwide that provide service to our members and other veterans.

At PVA we've seen great progress during the past half century. And the PVA motto is just as relevant now as it has been in the past. At age 50 we're *still* fighting for a better tomorrow.

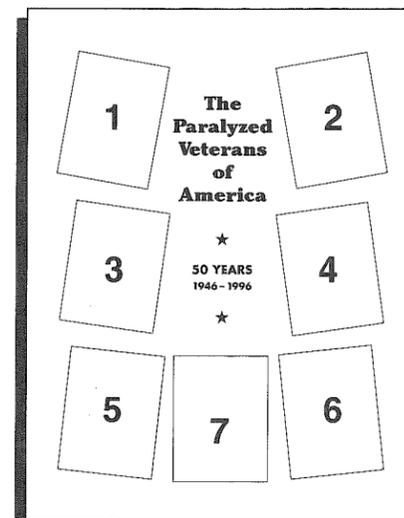
— Gordon H. Mansfield, Executive Director
Paralyzed Veterans of America

Slightly older than PVA itself is the organization's official publication: *PN/Paraplegia News* (originally *The Paraplegia News*). For the past 50 years, *PN* has faithfully chronicled the history of the group first called the Paralyzed Veterans Associations of America.

Following is the PVA story, straight from the pages of *PN*. Those who have been around from the beginning may remember some events a little differently, but this is the way their magazine reported to members the facts and opinions, the highlights and low points, and the successes and failures of their organization.

— Cliff Crase, Editor/Publisher
PN/Paraplegia News

A 50-year history of PVA through the pages of *PN/Paraplegia News*,
compiled by Susan Robbins, Assistant Editor, PVA Publications.



THE COVERS ON OUR COVER

- 1 – July 1946.** The first issue ever for *The Paraplegia News*, as it was known then.
- 2 – July 1963.** PVA President John Farkas demonstrates the “Stand Alone” device for President John F. Kennedy.
- 3 – July 1971.** The PVA 25th anniversary issue features activities in Los Angeles, the convention city.
- 4 – December 1971.** PVA President Carlos Rodriguez meets President Richard Nixon at Arlington National Cemetery ceremonies.
- 5 – July 1985.** PVA representatives participate in the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.
- 6 – October 1995.** PVA President Richard Grant and his wife, Carolyn, meet with President Bill Clinton during a state dinner.
- 7 – January 1996.** The *PN/Paraplegia News* 50th anniversary issue.

The '40's: Birth of an Organization

1946

The four pages comprising the first issue of *The Paraplegia News* were published by the SCI patients in the Bronx (N.Y.) VA Hospital in July 1946. Inaugural editors John Price and Byron Deysher (who, after three issues, was transferred and no longer served as co-editor) hoped the magazine would serve as "a medium for the exchange of ideas among SCI patients, as a challenge to doctors to continue providing good medical care, and as a form of entertainment for those others contributing to patient welfare." Supplies and equipment for the publication came from contributions made through the American Red Cross and the Dorothy Schlesinger Memorial.

Included in that first magazine was a call to organize: "Now that the first issue of *The Paraplegia News* has become an actuality, we hope the need for an organization will be recognized by all paraplegics on Ward 3D. We think our first step in forming this organization should be to organize a paraplegic association of our own in this hospital. We can affiliate with a national organization, if and when such an organization becomes a reality." The magazine's tag line (or slogan) was, "A paraplegic is an individual."

By the time issue number two hit the presses in August, Bronx SCI patients had formed their own Paraplegic Veterans Association, with Walter Suchanoff as president, John Price as vice president, Alex Mehalchyk as treasurer, Byron Deysher as secretary, and Benjamin Bienstock as public relations officer. The magazine reported that similar groups had formed at Birmingham General Hospital, Van Nuys, Calif.; East Halloran General Hospital, Staten Island, N.Y.; and Saint Albans Navy Hospital, Long Island, N.Y. Soon to follow was the Vaughan chapter, Hines, Ill.

The October issue defined the aims of the fledgling Bronx organization: "The purpose of the Paralyzed Veterans Association is to advocate and foster thorough and continuing medical research in the several fields connected with injuries and diseases of the spinal cord.... We advocate [a] complete and effective reconditioning program.... We advocate legislation permitting the hiring of an attendant by the Veterans Administration for the veteran who is so disabled that he cannot otherwise remain away from the hospital.... We hope that by publicizing our needs we will be able measurably to lessen the plight of civilian paraplegics...."

Funds were sought to carry out these aims and to move forward in forming a national organization.

1947

This was a banner year in PVA history.

In January, *PN* reported that the three New York PVA chapters—Bronx, Saint Albans, and Halloran—banded together to form a single New York chapter (which, in April of that year, incorporated as the Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association). And in February, the dream continually verbalized throughout *PN*'s pages was realized: Delegates from the seven existing chapters met in Hines VA Hospital's

Vaughan Unit on February 7, 1947, for the first convention of the group known as the Paralyzed Veterans Associations of America.

General Omar Bradley's personal representative, Colonel John N. Andreios, opened the convention with an address of welcome, conveying General Bradley's greetings and his assurance of cooperation with the organization's endeavors. Delegates worked into the night on Friday and Saturday, drawing up articles of incorporation and bylaws. On Sunday, February 9, four resolutions were framed, calling for:

- Legislation to increase the automobile allowance to paraplegic veterans
- Formation of a PVA Housing Committee
- Provision of VA housing for physical therapists
- Formation of a PVA Research Committee

Gilford Moss was elected national chairman; each chapter would appoint two representatives to the board of directors. The new organization was to be headquartered in Cook County, Ill.

The purpose of PVA, as outlined in the new articles of incorporation, was:

- To form a national association for the benefit of people with spinal-cord injury or disease (SCI/D)
- To help constituent associations in carrying on educational programs and procuring benefits for members
- To act for and on behalf of constituent associations
- To promote medical research in the several fields connected with SCI/D
- To advocate and foster complete rehabilitation programs for members and other people with SCI/D
- To publicize the organization's objectives and take the necessary action to accomplish them

The second national convention of the Paralyzed Veterans Associations of America met September 26, 1947, at McGuire VA Hospital, in Richmond. Delegates represented eight chapters: Hines, McGuire, Halloran, Kennedy (Memphis), Birmingham, Cushing (Framingham, Mass.), St. Albans, and Bronx. Representatives from Canada also attended.

At the convention, a Committee on National Legislation was established to inform members of the progress of congressional legislation affecting PVA. Anchor Hocking Glass Corporation's offer to advertise on their broadcast radio program for National Research Foundation (NRF) funds was accepted, and a third of the PVA receipts were assessed for dues (amounting to \$1 per member) for the printing of *PN*. EPVA became affiliated with national PVA but without voting privileges. Delegates agreed to urge VA hospitals to guarantee bed space for domiciliary care of patients with SCI/D, and a Board of Trustees was elected to raise funds for NRF. These funds would be allocated to the National Research Council for research in paraplegia. Finally, it was agreed that a letter to General Bradley would suggest that PVA and affiliated chapters be authorized by VA to handle the problems of veterans with SCI/D.

Gilford Moss was the sole nominee for the national chairmanship and was unanimously elected to succeed himself. Robert Moss, of Halloran, was unanimously elected vice chairman and secretary, and John Price was elected to

PVA'S PRESIDENTS



GILFORD MOSS
1947



ROBERT MOSS
1948



BERNARD SHUFELT
1948-1949



PATTERSON GRISSOM
1950



STANLEY REESE
1951



WILLIAM GREEN
1952-1953



ROBERT FROST
1954-1955



RAYMOND CONLEY
1956-1957



HARRY A. SCHWEIKERT JR.
1958



DWIGHT GUILFOIL
1959



ROBERT CLASSON
1960-1961



JOHN FARKAS
1962-1963



HAROLD STONE
1964



HAROLD W. WAGNER
1964-1965



LESLIE P. BURGHOFF
1966-1967



WAYNE L. CAPSON
1968-1969



CARLOS RODRIGUEZ
1970-1971



FRANK DeGEORGE
1972-1973



DONALD BRODERICK
1974-1975



EDWARD JASPER
1976-1977



JOSEPH ROMAGNANO
1978-1979



MICHAEL DELANEY
1980-1981



PAUL CHEREMETA
1982-1983



RICHARD HOOVER
1984-1986



JACK MICHAELS
1987-1988



DAVID PARKER
1989



VICTOR McCOY
1990-1991



RICHARD JOHNSON
1992-1993



RICHARD GRANT
1994-1995

continue as *PN* editor. Delegates voted to change the titles of "chairman" and "vice chairman" to "president" and "vice president," respectively.

1948

By 1948, PVA had 1,200 members. Early that year, National PVA completed a voluntary trust agreement for the formation of the Paralyzed Veterans Research Foundation. Before the paperwork was even completed, the new foundation received funds from the Oldsmobile Division of General Motors and from VA. These donations were allocated to the new Institute of Paraplegia Research at Yale University.

The July issue of *PN* reported that Gil Moss resigned as PVA president to accept the post of NRF executive secretary. Robert Moss took over the vacated national PVA position.

Thanks to a \$5,000 loan from EPVA, in May of 1948 the National Paraplegia Foundation (NPF) was born. This nonprofit organization, whose Board of Trustees would consist of seven PVA members and five other individuals, was set up to promote research in all aspects of SCI/D.

The third PVA national convention took place September 13–17, in Memphis. The name of the organization was officially changed to Paralyzed Veterans of America, and a national headquarters was established at 99 Park Avenue, New York. Annual dues were approved at \$3 for service-connected members and \$1 for nonservice-connected members. Votes on the Executive Board were reallocated, based on the number of members in a chapter, with a maximum of four votes per chapter.

Delegates elected Bernard E. Shufelt as president; Marcus Orr, vice president; David Reiniger, secretary; and Gustav Kramer, treasurer. Robert Moss was appointed executive secretary. Reiniger was also chosen as chairman of the Legislative Committee. Harold E. Peterson was appointed national housing chairman, and Austin Kelly was named chairman of the Sports Committee.

According to then-*PN* Editor Price, "All subjects got a thorough airing, but no time was lost with petty bickering, which marked our earlier meetings. There were differences of opinion, and some were settled by close votes, but the decision of the vote was the decision of all. Probably for the first time, we have become a national organization in the full sense of the word."

The October *PN* announced the acceptance of EPVA as a chapter of the national organization, with full voting privileges.

For PVA, a highlight of 1948 was the 80th Congress's passage of P.L. 702 (the Paraplegic Housing Bill), which entitled veterans with SCI/D to "assistance in acquiring a suitable housing unit with special fixtures or movable facilities made necessary by the nature of the person's disability."

1949

The January, February, and March issues of *PN* featured architect's renderings and blueprints for three homes designed by John S. Burrows Jr., A.I.A. Burrows, who worked closely with PVA in developing his designs, was contracted by the Veterans Administration. His plans were to

be distributed by VA as a guide to veterans eligible for benefits under P.L. 702.

In May, *PN* began to accept paid advertising. Everest & Jennings and Hamilton Buick bought the first two display ads.

By unanimous decision, the chapters voted to hold the 4th National Convention of the Paralyzed Veterans of America in New York. Opening ceremonies would take place at the Hotel New Yorker, and business sessions would be conducted at PVA national headquarters. This was the organization's first "out-of-hospital" convention.

Delegates met September 7–12. (The convention was scheduled to adjourn on the 11th, but business necessitated an additional day.) They reelected Bernard Shufelt national president, and Harry A. Schweikert Jr. was chosen vice president. David Reiniger was reelected secretary, while Robert S. Frost was named treasurer, and Robert Moss agreed to continue as executive secretary. (Before year's end Frost resigned as treasurer, and in accordance with the bylaws, the president assumed his duties.)

Convention participants placed emphasis on the needs of nonservice-connected paraplegic veterans. Congress would be asked to correct certain inequities in the law, particularly concerning quadriplegics, and individual states and cities would be asked to pass legislation that would be beneficial to paraplegic veterans in their communities.

A PVA membership survey was commissioned, "to determine the physical, mental, and material makeup of the paraplegic veterans throughout the country."

According to President Shufelt, "The delegates of the 4th National Convention...have shown by their statements as well as their votes that you PVA members feel a need for a strong national organization and for the services that a strong national organization can give you. It is an expensive proposition and will take all the support you can give it."

PVA experienced an unexpected disappointment after the convention: President Harry Truman vetoed a bill that would have provided \$1,600 toward the purchase price of an automobile for the "seriously disabled" WWI and WWII veteran. The organization had spent two years campaigning for this benefit.

The '50's: Growing Pains

1950

1950 was a year of dramatic change for PVA. The 5th National Convention took place in March of that year—six months earlier than usual—in Memphis. Just before convention, Shufelt submitted his resignation as president. Delegates elected Pat Grissom president and treasurer (at no salary); Verdell Foard, vice president; William Green, secretary; and Forest Bland, legislative director. All other elected positions were eliminated. After convention, Grissom appointed Harry Schweikert athletic director.

The primary topic of discussion was the need for and cost of maintaining a national organization. As a result, the majority of delegates voted to dissolve the national headquarters and abolish the position of executive secretary.

(Shufelt and Executive Secretary Moss waived salaries due them; neither had been paid since the last convention.)

Despite a proposal to name a new *PN* editor and move the magazine to Virginia, Moss was reappointed and given a budget of \$4,000 for the then-eight-page publication. Lucille Moss was named managing editor; neither received a salary.

In his April editorial, Moss lamented, "Only three years after the founding meeting in Chicago and barely six months after a vigorous program had been adopted at the 4th Convention in New York, it was decided that the PVA had outlived its usefulness." He went on to admit, however, "The most important reason [for this decision] was the most noble one: a strong, sincere desire on the part of the delegates and the chapters they represented to promote basic medical research in the various fields connected with paraplegia."

Schweikert noted in his 1971 *PN* article on PVA's 25th anniversary, "Apparently, everyone was so unhappy with the 1950 convention that no minutes were recorded—at least, none can be found." Despite the group's problems, in 1950 PVA realized an all-time high membership of 1,649.

The Birmingham VA Hospital closed on June 1, 1950. A total of 1,175 patients—including about 200 paras—were transferred to the former U.S. Navy Hospital at Long Beach, Calif. At the same time, President Truman appointed a three-member committee to "review certain veterans' problems, especially those of the paraplegics."

1951

Early in '51 PVA's efforts focused on urging VA not to return Halloran Hospital to the state of New York. All patients with SCI were scheduled to be moved to other hospitals by mid-February. "It was a good fight, Mom, but we lost..." observed *PN* Editor Moss.

The 6th Annual PVA Convention took place June 19–22, again in Memphis. New officers were voted by acclamation: Stan Reese, president; Ernest Gendreau, vice president and secretary; Randall Updyke, treasurer; Harry Schweikert, athletic director; and Edwin Kircher, legislative director.

In his report, outgoing-President Grissom noted, "...during the past year, the National Office acted as little more than a collection agency for dues..." He added that the only active work had been done by *PN*, but that the chapters and officials did little to support that activity.

Delegates voted down a proposal to retain the national organization in name only, eliminate dues, and assess members \$1 for an annual *PN* subscription. The predominant feeling, as reported in the July issue of the magazine, was that a "strong organization was needed and wanted."

PN's budget was reduced from \$4,000 annually to \$200 a month. The publication was given five months to become self-supporting.

A Reorganization Committee was formed during the convention and retained as a PVA standing committee.

Despite a presidential veto, H.R. 3193—a bill to increase nonservice-connected disability pension—became law. PVA fought long and hard for an increase, but according to Editor Moss, "The bill grants so little, to so few, who need so much, that one is inclined to wonder what all the commotion was about."

Another presidential veto was overturned that year as well, granting the \$1,600 allowance toward the purchase of a vehicle for WWII and Korean War quads, among others.

1952

PVA got off to a shaky start in 1952: Birmingham—the oldest and largest chapter—voted to withdraw from the national organization.

The 7th Annual Convention met June 17–19 in Richmond. There were fewer delegates, representing fewer chapters, than at any previous convention. Shades of past internal strife were present but considerably subdued.

William P. Green was elected president; Robert Frost, vice president; John J. Power Jr., secretary; and Harry Schweikert, treasurer. Ed Kircher was reappointed legislative director; Robert Moss, *PN* editor; and Schweikert, athletic director. Frost was named to the newly created position of national job placement chairman.

At the forefront of discussion was VA's domiciliary-care program. An official statement was issued, claiming the breakdown of SCI centers and the transfer of patients with SCI to domiciliary homes "can only result in a vast waste of human potential."

Delegates voted to continue *PN* as PVA's "official organ," to be published monthly. National funds of \$2,000 were put aside for this purpose.

To get the fullest possible representation and activity from chapters, delegates voted that any chapter not represented in the top four national elective offices would be allowed to name a vice president to the official slate.

Describing the organization's direction, *PN* Editor Moss assured readers, "...PVA will survive and grow because the rank and file, despite their general apathy, will demand it. There are too many problems we all face to try to solve them alone. The Paralyzed Veterans of America is the answer."

In the October issue, Moss announced his resignation as *PN* editor. In December, Robert Bather was introduced as the new editor.

1953

The January issue of *PN* announced a VA reorganization that was expected to save \$10 million. Senator Homer Ferguson (R-Mich.) called for a study of the cuts' effects on administrative, medical, hospital, and domiciliary services.

Three months later another Republican, Congressman Olin E. Teague (Tex.), introduced H.R. 4601, a bill to "strengthen existing law to prevent veterans with nonservice-connected disabilities from receiving hospital treatment at government expense in VA hospitals when they are able to pay their medical expenses in private hospitals."

At their 8th Annual Convention, PVA delegates reelected three of their top officials (William Green, president; Robert Frost, vice president; and Harry Schweikert, treasurer), voted to reduce the per capita dues paid to national by the chapters, and authorized the president traveling expenses of up to \$1,000 a year. The one new officer elected was Joseph Brennon, secretary. President Green appointed William Ellsworth legislative director (Ellsworth had recently replaced Ed Kircher); Schweikert, athletic director; Frost, national job

coordinator; Robert Bather, *PN* editor; and Brennon, hospital chairman. The latter was a new office created to "keep a census of the paraplegic patients being hospitalized, the number of VA hospital beds open and filled, and all affairs related to hospitalization."

According to the convention report in July's *PN*, "...although the debates were lively, they were orderly. No time was wasted in picayune squabbling."

In September's *PN*, President Green reported that, in testimony at congressional hearings on aid to people with physical disabilities, Bernard Shufelt (representing NPF) proposed that VA SCI centers be opened to the general public. Green stated PVA's firm disagreement with this position and urged members to convey to Congress and their chapter directors their opposition to Shufelt's statement.

1954

PVA kicked off 1954 by proposing an income-tax bill that would grant deductions of "extraordinary living and transportation expenses to taxpayers who are severely disabled."

The 9th National Convention of the Paralyzed Veterans of America convened June 21–23 in Hines, Ill. As the meetings began, temperaments matched the recordbreaking heat, but it all "ended on a note of mutual understanding," according to *PN* Editor Bather.

Robert Frost was elected president; William Green, honorary president; James McDermott, vice president; Waller Aiken, secretary; and Morris McGee, treasurer. President Frost appointed McGee legislative director; Robert Bather, *PN* editor; and Ted Anderson, associate editor.

NPF agreed that their publication, *Journal of Paraplegia*, would combine with *Paraplegia News*, and convention delegates extended an invitation to the California chapter to consider rejoining the national organization. (By a vote of 248–205, California members later declined.)

December's *PN* reported that PVA was accepted as a member of the World Veterans Federation (WVF). At that time, WVF represented 112 veterans' associations in 22 countries.

1955

The February issue of *PN* announced the return of John Price as editor, following Robert Bather's resignation. The magazine was going to readers in 23 foreign countries. In March, *PN* (which had grown to 12 pages) began accepting classified ads.

Also in March, President Eisenhower approved first-phase construction of a VA hospital at Long Beach, Calif. The new facility would include 205 beds for SCI patients.

By '55 PVA had eight chapters: Eastern, Kennedy, Lake Erie, Midwest, New England, Vaughan, Virginia, and Chattanooga Tri-State. Mountain States joined in the spring. The California chapter remained separate from the national organization.

The 10th Annual Convention met July 18–20 in New York. Robert Frost was unanimously reelected president, and Raymond Conley was likewise elected vice president. Ray Werner won the office of treasurer, and James E. Seybold

became the new PVA secretary. William Green was reelected honorary president. About 30 resolutions and proposals were approved by delegates and several changes were made to the bylaws. "Speedy" (then known as "the little man in the flying chair") was adopted as an official PVA symbol.

1956

According to the May issue of *PN*, PVA member Russell S. Jordan (Vineland, N.J.) was responsible for a House-introduced bill that would eliminate the excise tax on automobile hand controls. The new law would affect civilians as well as veterans.

In '56 PVA was voted membership in the International Society for the Welfare of Cripples (ISWC). Interested in all phases of rehabilitation, ISWC was a federation of national voluntary organizations conducting programs for the welfare of physically disabled children and adults.

Seven thousand copies of the tenth-anniversary issue of *PN*, published in July, were mailed to editors of half of the country's weekly newspapers and to all English-speaking dailies throughout the world. A news release was included, telling of the need to locate "the 100,000 paraplegics in the U.S." Another 500 copies went to foundations, asking for financial assistance to further the project.

July also found delegates attending the 11th PVA Annual Convention, in Chicago. Raymond K. Conley Jr. was unanimously elected president. Delmo Giagnoni was elected vice president; Jack S. Schnaitter, secretary; Harry Schweikert, treasurer; and Robert Frost, honorary president.

Hospitalization—veteran and nonveteran—was the main topic of conversation at the convention. In addition, delegates voted to support legislation that would provide a sliding-scale pension to nonservice-connected paraplegic veterans. A tally of membership cards revealed that the organization had 1,057 members in seven chapters (EPVA, Vaughan, New England, Virginia, Lake Erie, Mountain Home, and Mountain States).

PVA's "Statement of Policy" was refined and read at the convention. According to that statement, PVA "assisted or was instrumental in the passage of vital legislation for paraplegics: the Housing Bill, the Car Bill, the WAAC Bill, and adjustments in the Educational and Vocational Rehabilitation Bills" and remained "vitaly interested in the passage of public laws to assist the nonservice-connected paraplegics, service-connected paraplegics, and the multitudinous problems of the quadriplegics." The statement concluded, "The Paralyzed Veterans of America are individuals—paralyzed in body, but not in spirit, veterans of terrible wars, but optimistic about the future of the country and the world. They are *of America*, from all states and all walks of life: individuals, optimists, Americans."

1957

The January issue of *PN* announced that at the Annual VA Conference of Paraplegia Chiefs, held the previous October, the American Paraplegia Society (APS) was formally organized. The group was "for those doctors dedicated to and working toward the advancement of the

specialized field of paraplegia."

(For some reason not explained in the magazine, the 1957 Annual Convention, held in Boston, was reported as the 11th PVA convention, not the 12th. This new numbering system continued through the years; therefore, the 50th Annual Convention would be held in 1996.) At the 1957 meeting, Raymond K. Conley was reelected president, and Delmo Giagnoni, Jack Schnaitter, and Richard Carlson were elected vice president, secretary, and treasurer, respectively. The Mid-South chapter was added to the PVA roster, and President Conley announced that the organization's membership had reached 1,333. Delegates passed more than 30 resolutions, including one that urged the PVA president and legislative director to "[obtain] recognition as a representative organization by both the Congress and the Veterans Administration." The first of the organization's highest awards (now called Speedy Awards) went to NPF's Medical Advisory Board chairman, Dr. L. W. Freeman ("nondisabled" category), and Gilford S. Moss ("paraplegic" category).

1958

The May issue of *PN* announced that PVA membership had grown to 1,522, of which 851 were service-connected. At the organization's 12th Annual Convention, held July 21–23 in Chicago, Harry Schweikert was elected president. Delegates chose Richard Carlson for vice president; Dennis Lamb, treasurer; and Leslie Burghoff, secretary. The PVA Annual Awards (Speedys) went to Dr. A. Estin Comarr (nondisabled) and John M. Price (disabled).

California PVA, which had years ago decided to separate itself from National PVA, chose in '58 to disassociate itself from NPF as well. Delegates charged President Schweikert with taking the necessary steps to register "Speedy" as the official PVA trademark.

1959

President Schweikert announced that the site for the 13th Annual Convention would be moved from Memphis to New York, because in Memphis, African American members would be relegated to "separate but equal" accommodations. "Our principle is founded on the fact that paraplegia knows no bias," affirmed Schweikert, "so why should we permit society to infect our membership with a social disease greater than the disease or injury which has bound us forever to the wheelchair?"

At the July 20–22 meeting, delegates elected Dwight D. Guilfoil Jr. as president. Fred Christensen was chosen vice president; Paul Anzengruber, secretary; and Dennis Lamb, treasurer. The Annual Awards (now officially called Speedys) went to Dr. James B. Campbell and Dr. C. A. L. Bassett (nondisabled) and Harry Schweikert Jr. (disabled).

The August issue of *PN* reported that Senators Estes Kefauver and Albert Gore had jointly introduced S. 2290, a bill to incorporate PVA. The measure was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary. As of November 3, 1959, "Speedy" was officially the registered trademark of the Paralyzed Veterans of America. And after a year-long contest, a new tag line was chosen for *PN*: "A man is

paralyzed but never his potential." By the end of 1959, PVA's membership stood at 1,725.

The '60's: That Long and Rocky Road

1960

The April issue of *PN* announced that PVA President Dwight Guilfoil was chosen Handicapped American of the Year 1959. Vice President Richard Nixon presented the award in ceremonies held May 5, 1960. Guilfoil was the third PVA member to be so honored: Vaughan member Nils F. Josephson received the 1952 award, and Eastern PVA member Arthur S. Abramson was the 1955 winner.

The 14th Annual Convention kicked off on July 22 in Denver. Representatives from eight chapters—Eastern, Florida, Lake Erie, Mountain States, New England, Tri-State, Vaughan, and Virginia—attended. Delegates elected Robert Classon president; Harold Stone, vice president; and Earl V. Manire, secretary/treasurer (the two offices were combined at this convention). According to past-President Guilfoil's report, PVA membership at the end of the fiscal year (June 30) was "slightly less than 2,200."

More than 300 conventioners and guests attended the closing banquet, where Speedy Awards were presented to Julius Tannenbaum (nondisabled), for his work in the formation of new NPF chapters, and to John Price (disabled), for his continued work as editor of *PN*. This was Price's second Speedy.

A PVA "platform," developed at the convention, included a resolution to work with chapters in expanding membership-service programs. In addition, chapters would receive "grants-in-aid" to assist in the preparation and pursuit of members' VA claims. Patrick J. Marron was later appointed national adjudication director.

1961

PVA's 15th Annual Convention was scheduled for July 19–22 at the Americana Hotel in Miami Beach, Fla. As reported in the April issue of *PN*, "The Americana has made rates suitable. They are \$5 or \$6 per person for two in a room; any person over the prescribed two in a room will be \$3 extra. The modified American plan (breakfast and dinner) is \$5 per person additional. The hotel is ideal for the wheelchair bound."

January's *PN* announced the formation of a new PVA chapter in Texas, while May's issue introduced the new Michigan chapter. In his report to national convention delegates, President Classon stated that he and Vice President Stone had visited every PVA chapter during the previous year—including the two new ones.

The September issue of *PN* carried an accounting of activities at PVA's Annual Convention—and the sad news that John Price died on July 31, after returning home from the national meeting where he had been reappointed *PN* editor. Frank G. MacAloon was appointed to take over the helm of PVA's magazine, and subscription rates were raised to \$2.50 a year.

At the convention, delegates approved establishment of a separate National Office in New York City as soon as the organization's finances would permit the hiring of an executive secretary. (PVA had been sharing an office with the Eastern chapter.) They also reelected their previous slate of national officers. Harry Schweikert was appointed PVA's first national service director.

Toward year's end, the Central Savannah River Area (Georgia-Carolina) chapter was officially approved. And Mid-South PVA, which had temporarily left the national fold, rejoined the organization at Christmastime.

1962

A significant first for PVA was presentation of the organization's 1962 legislative program to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. "It took only about 15 minutes to read our report," said President Classon, "and then followed a 25-minute question-and-answer session. The members of this committee evinced genuine interest in the PVA and a sincere sympathy toward the purpose of our existence."

Another first was the printing in *PN* of pre-election statements from candidates for PVA National Office. Included in the platform of John Farkas (who was later elected national president) was a proposal to (1) establish the position of full-time executive director, to be appointed by the president and approved by the Executive Board, and (2) set up a permanent National Office in Washington, D.C.

July 18–20 were the dates for PVA's 16th Annual Convention, held in Milwaukee.

The 1962 Speedy Award winners were announced in *PN* before the convention: National Service Director William Green won in the disabled category, and Benjamin Lipton, director of the Joseph Bulova School of Watchmaking, in the nondisabled category.

In Milwaukee, delegates elected Farkas national president; Harold Stone, vice president; and Earl Manire, secretary-treasurer. "The jolt of the day," reported *PN* Editor MacAloon, "came when Richard Carlson of Mid-South actually stopped the action on the appointment of an executive secretary with a Washington, D.C., office." There were no dissenting votes when Carlson asked for and received a delay of appointment until a board of inquiry could meet in Washington to define the duties of the new executive.

"This was quite a neat trick," MacAloon admitted. "Carlson didn't pull it off because he held any magic sway over the convention; it was accomplished because most of the men in the room were not ready to make the decision yet. Least of all John Farkas—who had to make the appointment. Who could blame him for needing a little more time to evaluate the candidates?"

In his report, Vice President Stone told delegates PVA's membership had reached 2,467. He also formally announced the dissolution of the Lake Erie chapter. (On the plus side, a new chapter—Capital Area—was forming in Washington, D.C., and surroundings.)

The November issue of *PN* reported that Pan American World Airways, Inc., was chosen PVA Employer of the Year 1962. Also noted in that issue was the move of the PVA National Office from New York to Pittsburgh.

1963

In '63 PVA joined forces with all congressionally chartered veterans' organizations and other special-interest groups to advocate elimination of architectural barriers in new buildings and existing structures. And early in the year another chapter joined the national organization: Puerto Rico PVA. A few months later, the Bay Area (Calif.) chapter came on board.

PN's July issue announced that Editor Frank MacAloon was resigning. The National Office appointed Robert Webb as MacAloon's successor. Webb took over with the August *PN*; the lead story in that issue was the reaffiliation of California PVA with the national organization.

PVA's 17th Annual Convention took place in Miami. There, despite numerous allegations of inappropriate action (and inaction), John Farkas was reelected PVA national president. Harold Stone and Earl Manire were reelected vice president and secretary/treasurer, respectively. Delegates voted to go ahead with establishment of the office of executive secretary, and the Executive Committee (formed at this convention and composed of the national president, vice president, and immediate past president and two elected members) was given 30 days to find a qualified individual for the position.

PVA presented two Employer of the Year awards in 1963. The recipients were Ace Electronics Associates, Inc., of Somerville, Mass. (private category), and the U.S. Army Transportation Materiel Command (government category).

In the October issue of *PN*, Editor Webb reported, "Two months after the PVA convention in Miami, the rumble of battle seems to be increasing rather than decreasing. All apparently is not quiet on *any* front." And on that note ended another year in the history of the Paralyzed Veterans of America.

1964

The January issue of *PN* featured PVA President Farkas's somber reflections on the death of U.S. President John F. Kennedy. On Capitol Hill that fateful day in November 1963, Farkas was invited by members of Congress to go to Andrews Air Force Base that evening to observe the arrival of the plane carrying the late president's remains and newly sworn President Lyndon B. Johnson.

PVA contributed \$5,000 to the Spinal Cord Research Foundation (SCRF), Inc., in 1964. The funds were designated specifically for use in Dr. Ernest Bors's spinal research projects.

In *PN*'s July issue, Editor Webb noted, "In concluding my editorial report on the convention last September, I suggested that 'focusing on the skirmish can cause us to lose sight of the battle.' ...And as the 1964 convention nears, the smoke of internal skirmishes seems to hang heavier, rather than lighter." In the masthead of that issue John Farkas was still listed as PVA president, but later in the magazine Harold Stone—with no explanation to readers—authored "Acting President's Report."

The 18th Annual Convention took place in Santa Monica, California. But the fireworks began before delegates ever made it to Disneyland.

PN Editor Webb reported, "[At a] sober pre-convention meeting of the PVA board of directors...impeachment proceedings against President John Farkas were brought to

a head. John Farkas did not attend the special meeting, declaring in a telegram that the proceedings were illegal and that his presence would indicate approval."

Three general complaints were brought against Farkas: "actions that were detrimental to the image and reputation of the PVA, actions that tended to harm relations between chapters and individuals, and a failure and/or unwillingness to follow established budgetary procedures." Webb noted there was considerable feeling that impeachment proceedings were "an academic exercise, since new officers were to be elected in a few days anyway." Nevertheless, by secret ballot directors voted to uphold the impeachment action, and Harold Stone officially assumed the presidency until the elections later that week.

Proposals to eliminate the PVA Executive Committee and to limit the committee's meetings to no more than two a year both failed. But despite its rocky beginnings, the '64 convention ended on a positive note: Delegates elected Harold Wagner, president; Ed Maxwell, vice president; and—once again—Earl Manire, secretary/treasurer. New President Wagner appointed Harry Schweikert executive secretary. Speedy Awards were presented to Dr. Ernest Bors (nondisabled) and former *PN* editor Frank MacAloon (disabled), and a special award for past service went to former national president Robert Classon.

As 1964 drew to a close, PVA had grown to 17 chapters: Bay Area & Western, California, Capital Area, Eastern, Florida, Georgia-Carolina, Great Northwest, Mexico, Michigan, Mid-South, Mountain States, New England, Puerto Rico, Texas, Tri-State, Vaughan, and Virginia. And at long last the new National Office opened at 3636 16th Street NW, Washington, D.C.

1965

On January 1, two laws for which PVA had advocated long and hard were activated: P.L. 88-450, which improved nursing-home benefits for disabled veterans, and P.L. 86-211, which liberalized pensions for nonservice-connected disabled veterans.

January's *PN* reported that PVA had become an official member-organization of the Congress of Organizations of the Physically Handicapped (COPH). This move, said Editor Webb, confirmed the organization's commitment to "the concept of cooperating with other organizations that share our deep interest in the problems of the disabled."

The same issue noted that ex-President Farkas had "confiscated all files and office equipment entrusted to him by the members of the Paralyzed Veterans of America." Farkas said he was impounding those items until PVA reimbursed him for the considerable amount he claimed to have spent out-of-pocket on behalf of the organization. Needless to say, the absence of equipment and records made operations at the new National Office a little more difficult than they might have been otherwise.

A major concern of PVA in '65 was the threatened closure of 11 VA hospitals. "The question of hospitalization and medical care for all veterans is much deeper and more serious than our members realize," noted President Wagner in his April *PN* column.

Delegates convened in New York City July 19–24 for the

19th Annual Convention. Directors grappled with questions about the function and authority of the Executive Committee, sent a telegram to President Lyndon Johnson endorsing his stand in South Vietnam, and created a national award for the "handicapped athlete of the year." Senator Robert Kennedy accepted the PVA Award of Distinction on behalf of his brother, the late President John F. Kennedy, and Speedy Awards went to Professor Timothy Nugent (nondisabled) and Harold Stone (disabled). The organization's new slate of officers included Harold Wagner, president; Robert Rohrer, vice president; and Howard Bennett, secretary-treasurer. Harry Schweikert was reappointed executive secretary.

1966

PVA gained its 18th chapter early in 1966: Alabama-Mississippi. By the end of the year, chapters 19 and 20 were formed in Kentucky and Arizona, respectively.

The April issue of *PN* reported that on March 3, President Johnson signed into law the Veterans Readjustment Benefits Act of 1966, providing a permanent program of aid to veterans serving in the U.S. Armed Forces since January 31, 1955. The new legislation included benefits for educational assistance, home loans, medical care, and job counseling and placement. PVA Executive Secretary Schweikert attended the signing, where President Johnson presented him with a souvenir pen.

In 1966, *PN* and PVA celebrated their twentieth anniversaries. A brief history of both, written by Schweikert, appeared in July's *PN*.

The 20th Anniversary Convention took place in Detroit. Noted *PN* Editor Webb, "...the 1966 PVA Convention seemed to this writer to be a singularly peaceful and productive one. If it is a harbinger of things to come, it will please some of the relatively noncombative souls who would rather pitch in than fight."

Notable achievements at the '66 convention included establishment of the position of architectural barriers coordinator, encouragement of the formation of women's auxiliaries, and endorsement of the conduct of the war in Vietnam. New officers elected were Leslie Burghoff, president; Leonard Chrysler, vice president; Howard Bennett, secretary-treasurer; and Wayne Capson, Sanford Weinzimer, and Robert Rohrer, Executive Committee. Schweikert, who asked to step down from the position of executive secretary, agreed to serve in the position until a replacement could be found. (Later in the year, Howard Bennett was appointed PVA executive secretary. Ernest Sawyer then was appointed by President Burghoff to fill Bennett's vacated secretary/treasurer spot.) Speedy awards went to Dr. Donald Munroe (nondisabled) and John Krenzel (disabled).

In October, PVA members Dwight Guilfoil, Robert Classon, Harold Wagner, Howard Bennett, and Leslie Burghoff, along with representatives of other veterans' organizations, VA officials, and legislators, met at The White House with President and Mrs. Johnson. The President called for "patience and persistence" with the Vietnam war and said he was "looking to the veterans and their leadership to take on the responsibility of the present age."

1967

At the 21st Annual Convention, held in Houston, Tex., PVA awarded an unprecedented four Speedys. Recipients were nurses Judith Krenzler and Lois Rohrer, Dr. R. Carl Bunts, and PVA member James Smittkamp.

Also unprecedented at the convention was the format for committee meetings. The usual number of committees were combined into four large "omnibus" committees, each covering several issues. This allowed every delegation to be represented at all committee decisions. According to *PN* Editor Webb, "it also seemed generally to expedite the deliberations." Webb called the new procedure "an administrative breakthrough."

Delegates voted to continue the national service, sports, and architectural-barriers programs and to change the title of PVA's chief administrative appointee from executive secretary to executive director.

Burghoff, Chrysler, and Sawyer retained the offices of president, vice president, and secretary-treasurer, respectively. Wayne Capson was reelected to the Executive Committee, where he was joined by Ed Maxwell and Jim Schwiem. New England PVA received the first John M. Price Outstanding Chapter of the Year Award.

By convention time, the organization boasted 4,674 members and—with the addition of Cleveland PVA—21 chapters.

In August, PVA President Burghoff was invited by President Johnson to witness the signing of the Cold War GI Bill Amendments of 1967. The new law provided a number of benefits specifically requested by PVA, including an increase in service-connected disability compensation for veterans serving after August 4, 1964, and pension for nonservice-connected disabled Vietnam veterans.

On October 2, President Burghoff, Executive Director Bennett, and Capital Area PVA member Arthur Haines presented to a House subcommittee the organization's case for a long-sought-after goal: a federal charter. (The first charter bill was introduced to the 80th Congress, in 1948.) On October 17, the House passed the bill—H.R. 11131—and sent it to the Senate. Once again, however, when Congress recessed for the year, the legislation had died in committee, due to lack of action.

The Zia chapter joined the fold on December 1, becoming PVA's 22nd chapter.

1968

PVA membership passed the 5,000 mark in '68. Tampa Bay was recognized as the 23rd PVA chapter, and later in the year, Delaware became number 24.

Directors met in San Francisco for PVA's 22nd Annual Convention. According to *PN* Editor Webb, "1968 certainly will earn its niche as the Year of the Great Cuts—budget, that is." In five days of hectic (and sometimes heated) general and committee sessions, directors managed to lop off \$55,782 from the Executive Committee's recommended 1968-69 operating budget. Programs affected by the cuts included architectural barriers, the Executive Committee, and sports. (*PN* had to drop the use of a second color and return to its strictly black-and-white format.)

Selected to serve as national officers were Wayne Capson, president; Carlos Rodriguez, vice president; and Howard Bennett (who announced his retirement from the executive director position), secretary-treasurer. Burton Little and Ernest Sawyer were elected to the Executive Committee. President Capson appointed Peter Lassen executive director.

The 1968 Speedys went to Lloyd Pantages (nondisabled) and Ted Anderson (disabled; posthumously). California PVA received the John M. Price Outstanding Chapter of the Year Award.

1969

At a dinner held February 26—the day PVA presented its annual testimony before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee—Special Speedy Awards were presented to Oliver E. Meadows and Edwin B. Patterson for their work on the committee.

Delegates convened July 14 in Miami, Fla., for PVA's 23rd Annual Convention. Moving with unprecedented speed, attendees reelected Capson, Rodriguez, and Bennett to the top three offices and chose Les Burghoff, Glenn Mayer, and Gerald Daniell for Executive Committee membership. Howard Bennett and Dr. Paul C. Bucy received Speedy Awards in the disabled and nondisabled categories, respectively.

Directors gave the National Office the go-ahead to establish a Speedy Speed Letter, which would allow dissemination of information within 24 hours to PVA chapters. The *PN* editor received permission to expand the monthly magazine to 24 pages, once advertising in the current 20-page issues surpassed 25%.

Once again, a bill to incorporate PVA was introduced in Congress. On December 6, it passed the House and was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The '70's: Recognition at Last

1970

In the April issue of *PN*, Executive Director Lassen announced, "After a couple of decades of trying, at least one dream of the Paralyzed Veterans of America has finally been realized...." Then followed a letter from VA Administrator Donald E. Johnson, informing PVA that VA's Spinal Cord Injury Program had been established as a separate service.

Then on May 22, *Life* magazine released a story (with photos) on the care of SCI patients at the Bronx VA Hospital. The story brought charges of neglect, denial of those charges, further charges of neglect, and further denials.

At the 24th Annual Convention, held in Chicago, delegates voted to support the contentions of the *Life* article. On that same day, VA Administrator Johnson had appeared on television's *Today* show and refuted the magazine's report. By that afternoon *Today* had contacted Eastern PVA Executive Director Donald Broderick with an invitation to appear on the program two days later. The invitation was accepted, and Broderick assured viewers that conditions at the Bronx VA Hospital were indeed as depicted in *Life*. When

PVA convention proceedings were interrupted to call for an ovation for Broderick, in recognition of his exemplary TV appearance, Broderick noted that the week's events had "caused PVA to turn a corner as an organization, working together." He went on to say, "There's a great American tradition in standing up for what you believe is right. We may not be able to stand up, but d--- it, we can sit awful tall!"

Needless to say, the remainder of the convention, although productive, was anticlimactic. National officers, elected by acclamation, were Carlos Rodriguez, president; Ronald Royal, vice president; and Howard Bennett, secretary-treasurer. Gerald Daniell and Captain Jack Barleon were elected to the two open seats on the National Executive Committee. The new president appointed Michael Burns as executive director; William Green, service director; Cliff Crase, sports coordinator; and Bob Webb, *PN* editor. The Speedy Awards went to Leslie Burghoff (disabled) and Dr. Frank H. Krusen (nondisabled). For the third consecutive year, California PVA received the John M. Price Most Outstanding Chapter Award.

The PVA Chapter Roster at the beginning of the new decade was 24 strong: Alabama-Mississippi, Arizona, Bay Area and Western, Buckeye, California, Capital Area, Delaware, Eastern, Florida, Georgia-Carolina, Kentucky, Mexico, Michigan, Mid-South, Mountain States, New England, North Central, Puerto Rico, Tampa Bay, Texas, Tri-State, Vaughan, Virginia, and Zia.

1971

Keeping a promise made at the 1970 PVA Convention, VA Chief Medical Director M. J. Musser established a consumer group of veterans to "act in an advisory capacity in determining the best method of care for patients with SCI." Representing PVA on the committee were Carlos Rodriguez, Howard Bennett, Captain Jack Barleon, Wayne Capson, and Donald Broderick.

Since its formation, NPF held its annual meetings concurrently with the PVA National Conventions. In '71 the foundation held its first independent convention, in Chicago.

A month later, PVAers gathered in Los Angeles for their Silver Anniversary Convention. The July issue of *PN* carried a 25-year history of the organization, written by Harry Schweikert. In his editorial, *PN* Editor Webb commented that he was impressed by PVA's unique commitment to broad goals and concerns from the outset. "Although the organization's early leaders certainly were concerned with the particular needs and problems of their own veteran members," he commented, "they also addressed themselves and their energies to the problems facing all of the spinal-cord injured, veteran and nonveteran alike."

In L.A., conventioners established a standing Development Committee to direct and oversee fund-raising activities, a three-member committee to analyze and oversee the investment of contingency funds, and a standing Research and Development Committee to screen, evaluate, and offer recommendations on all requests for PVA research funds. Delegates also voted to move the National Service Program from New England to Washington, D.C., where it would be directed by a paid

member of the PVA National Office staff. (Alan S. Langer was hired later in the year to fill the position of national service director.) Elected to National Office were Carlos Rodriguez, president; James Smith, vice president; and Howard Bennett, secretary-treasurer. Captain Jack Barleon, Gerald Daniell, and Buddy Rogers were named to the three available Executive Committee seats. Three Speedy Awards were presented. They went to Dr. Erich G. Krueger (nondisabled) and M. C. Montgomery and Robert Moss (disabled).

The most significant action of the year was taken by the U.S. Congress, which at last approved a federal charter for PVA. Said Executive Director Michael Burns, "Twenty-five years of dedicated service has now been recognized.... Congress considers us grown up now, and we must act it.... All the talk of what we would do if we had recognition can now be put aside. We have it. Now we must prove that we were worthy of their trust and respect."

The President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped (PCEH) expressed their respect for PVA by honoring the organization for "25 years of service to the rehabilitation and employment of one of the most seriously disabled groups in the world, the nation's paraplegics and quadriplegics." PCEH Chairman Harold Russell presented the citation at the convention's closing banquet.

Great Plains and Palmetto State were added to the chapter roster in '71.

1972

In April, PVA presented a special Speedy Award to Senator Alan Cranston. The legislator was honored for his efforts on behalf of hospitalized veterans.

Miami Beach, Fla., hosted the "Silver Plus 1" (26th Annual) PVA Convention. Delegates voted to expand the National Executive Committee to eight members and to create a PVA-NPF Ad Hoc Committee to aid communication and understanding between the two organizations. They also established a new position—architectural barriers coordinator—to be appointed by the national president. The roster of new officers included Frank DeGeorge, president; John Rine, vice president; and Howard Bennett, secretary-treasurer. Four members were elected to the Executive Committee: Gerald Daniell, James Seybold, George Gentry, and William Green. Peter Lassen was appointed to the new architectural barriers coordinator position, and Harry Schweikert continued as acting executive director—the job he took on when Michael Burns resigned earlier in the year, for personal reasons. Speedy Awards went to Ed Maxwell (disabled; posthumously) and Dr. William F. Windle (nondisabled).

Before year's end, Bennett resigned from his long-held secretary-treasurer office to become administrative assistant to the director of VA's SCI Service. Gerald Daniell filled the vacant PVA position, and James Maye was appointed the organization's new executive director. Gerald Doyle would fill the National Executive Committee spot vacated by Daniell.

The first National PVA Service Seminar took place in '72. Service officers gathered in Washington, D.C., for instruction by National Service Director Alan Langer.

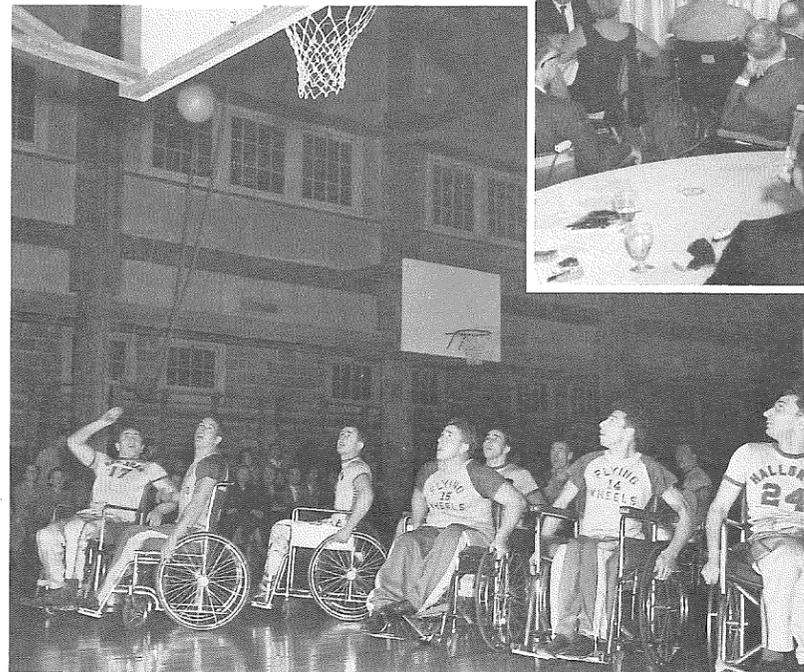


In February 1947, they came to Hines VAH in wheelchairs, on gurneys, propped up in hospital beds, on crutches and canes, and afoot to band together and form PVA to save their very own lives.

PVA Convention at the Albany Hotel, Denver, July 1960. Seated at table, from far left: PN Editor John Price, NPF President Morris Magee (second), Harry Schweikert Jr. (fifth), EPVA President and National President-elect Robert Classon (sixth), Secretary/Treasurer Earl Manire (eighth), VPVA Delegate John Krenzle (ninth), National President Dwight Guilfoil (twelfth). Near right side, from front: New England delegate Leslie Burghoff (fourth from left), National Vice President-elect Harold Stone (fifth).



PVA Convention Banquet at Whittier Hotel, Detroit, July 1966. At speaker's left, President Les Burghoff and his wife, Lois.

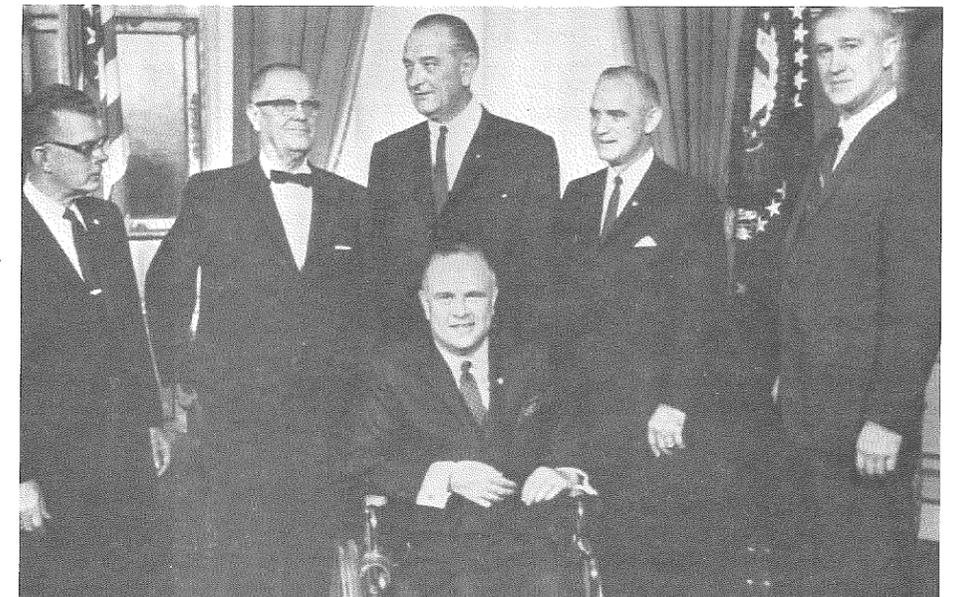


The Birmingham Beach Flying Wheels started their famous touring of the country in 1948. The Wheels battled with the Halloran Hospital WWII Vets in "paraplegia ball" in February 1950.



PVA National Office staff in front of the National Office at East-West Towers (photo above), Bethesda, Md. (1982), and in front of the PVA building at 18th and H Streets (photo at left), Washington, D.C. (1995). The staff from 14 years ago included, front row, from left: Don Sherman, Gordon Mansfield, Frank DeGeorge, R. Jack Powell, Victor McCoy, Ed Hebert, Dennis Smurr, and Mark Champeau. Second row, from left: Rick Boatwright, Angie Richman, Marcie Sipe, Irma Fraser, Susan Jackson, Donna Becraft, Barbara Zupnik, Jim Mayer, Lynn Phillips, Mary Fields, Peggy Gallagher, Arlene Fischler, Erika Fernandez, Lynn Powell, Jody Jackson, Valerie Armstrong, Jeanne Anne McVey, Linda Zoche, Rebecca Scruggs, and Kate Reynolds. Back row, from left: Fred Mullen, Loretta Jones, Sandy Knight, Linda Percival, Earl Kelly, Doug Vollmer, Steve Anderson, Vince Hlinovsky, Tom Stripling, Dottie Pennington, and Donna Taylor.

PVA President Leslie Burghoff met with U.S. President Lyndon Johnson and national commanders of other veterans' groups at a White House function (1966).





President Joseph Romagnano addresses the Joint Congressional Committee on Veterans Affairs in 1979. Flanking him are PVA Legislative Director Jerry Jones (left) and Vice President Michael Delaney (right). In photo below, President Richard Johnson does the same in 1994 accompanied by PVA Deputy Executive Director John Bollinger and Legislative Director Russ Mank to his right.

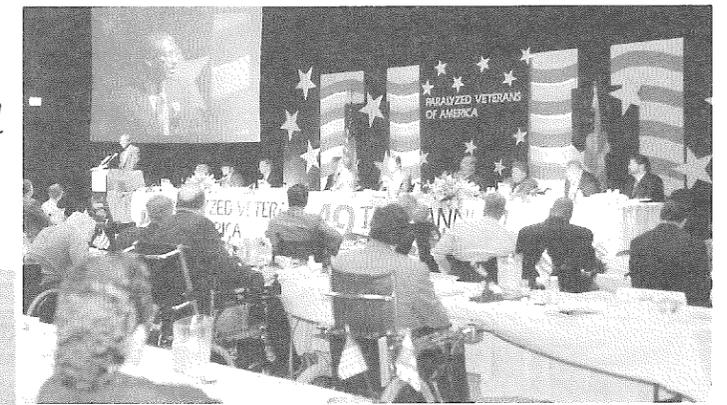


Past President Pat Grissom (1950) swears in PVA's newly elected Corporate Board of Management at the 31st Convention, in Dearborn, Michigan, July 1977. (From left) Treasurer Hugh Pendleton; Secretary Frank Rigo; Vice Presidents Jim Peters, Mike Delaney, R. Jack Powell; Senior Vice President Joseph Romagnano; and President Ed Jasper.

Capital Area PVA President Arthur Haines (left) and PVA Executive Director Howard Bennett met with Senator Everett Dirksen on Capitol Hill in 1967.



Parade of athletes at the 15th National Wheelchair Games in Atlanta (1995).



PVA delegates to the 49th Convention, in Fort Worth, Tex., listen to guest speaker VA Secretary Jesse Brown (1995).



President Clinton delivers the Veterans Day address at Arlington National Cemetery, November 11, 1995. PVA President Richard Grant is seated to the President's left.



PVA's highly respected Veterans Benefits Department held a Continuing Education Program for its national service officers in New Orleans in 1994. Members of the PVA Executive Committee are seated in front of VBD's well-educated officers.

1973

As a federally chartered veterans' organization, PVA was invited to attend inauguration ceremonies for the U.S.'s 37th President, Richard Nixon. One of Nixon's first presidential acts was to submit a FY 1974 budget reflecting severe cuts in veterans' programs. And PVA's battle to preserve the rights of those who gave their all in service to their country continued.

In its 27th year, PVA gained its 27th chapter: North-west. The Kentucky chapter changed its name to Kentucky-Indiana.

PVA formed a new fund-raising corporation in '73. PVA/EPVA, Inc., headquartered in Wilton, N.H., would be a direct-mail merchandising organization. All profits would support PVA programs such as research, architectural barriers, and service.

San Francisco hosted PVA's 27th Annual Convention. Frank DeGeorge was reelected president. Also reelected were John Rine, vice president, and Gerald Daniell, secretary. The five vacant seats on the Executive Committee were filled by Carlos Rodriguez, Pat Grissom, William Green, Philip Harper, and James Jachim. Speedy Awards were presented to Dr. Marc Musser (nondisabled) and Wayne Capson (disabled). Eastern PVA took home the John M. Price Most Outstanding Chapter Award.

Upon Alan Langer's resignation to accept a job with VA, National Vice President John Rine stepped up to become PVA's national service director. Thomas Deniston was appointed to Rine's vacated position.

Before year's end, the National Office headquarters had moved. The new address: 7315 Wisconsin Avenue, Washington, D.C.

1974

PVA's battle for better VA healthcare and benefits programs continued in '74. In his May *PN* column, Executive Director James Maye noted, "It has been [PVA's] most unpleasant duty to demand the resignation of [VA Administrator Donald Johnson].... The chasm between Mr. Johnson and PVA is one that seemingly cannot be bridged.... Mr. Johnson seems determined to reduce, restrict, and render ineffectual the VA Hospital system."

The 28th PVA Convention took place in Puerto Rico—the first time the annual meeting had been held outside the continental United States. *PN* Editor Webb reported that business sessions were lively and not devoid of heated discussion. Regarding talks about budget allocations, Webb thought one delegate's remarks worth quoting: "Research is great, but while we are looking for a cure for paraplegia, I'd like to be able to go to the bathroom." Resolutions passed by delegates included establishment of a PVA technology and research foundation to screen and award funds for research programs, and the first *PN*-published tribute to the spouses and significant others whose care and support contribute so much to the success of PVA. Elected officers included Donald Broderick, president; Thomas Deniston, vice president; and Gerald Daniell, secretary-treasurer. Carlos Rodriguez, Ed Jasper, Pat Grissom, and James Jachim were chosen for the vacant Executive Committee spots. Speedy Awards went to Essie Morgan (nondisabled) and

Harold Willson (disabled).

In the November issue of *PN*, PVA President Broderick reported that VA had announced Richard L. Roudebush as their new administrator. Preliminary indications were that Roudebush would be far more sympathetic than his predecessor was to the needs of America's paralyzed veterans.

By year's end, a new chapter was added to the roster: Kansas/Missouri/Oklahoma (KMO).

1975

PVA's visibility and credibility as a veterans' service organization were at an all-time high. Executive Director Maye noted in his April *PN* column, "Over the past few years, PVA has made great strides toward becoming a mature and influential veterans' group.... Because of the increased recognition for the accomplishments of PVA, the agencies with which we deal are motivated to maintain good relations with our organization."

Hot, hot, hot Phoenix hosted the 29th Annual Convention, held July 21–26. The greatest growth in the organization's history took place during 1974–75. All chapters had been incorporated in their respective states; 26 chapters, with a total voting strength of 112, were represented in Phoenix. Among decisions reached by delegates were:

- Establishment of a Technology and Research Foundation (TRF; funded with \$250,000)
- Reorganization and expansion of the National Office (eliminating the position of deputy director and adding a full-time legislative director, architectural barriers director, comptroller, and research director; revamping the National Service Program and including paid service officers under national jurisdiction at the chapter level; and opening a second National Service Office, in Washington, D.C.)
- Approval of the long-overdue (since 1946!) indexing of *Paraplegia News*

• Approval of sponsorship funding for a National Wheelchair Bowling Tournament and a National Wheelchair Basketball Tournament and an allocation for sports grants

The previous year's top three officers were reelected: Don Broderick, president, Tom Deniston, vice president; and Gerald Daniell, secretary-treasurer. Vacant National Executive Committee seats were filled by Ed Jasper, Hugh Pendleton, Carlos Rodriguez, Frank DeGeorge, and Pat Marron. Dr. Larry Ross was appointed executive director, replacing James Maye, who had earlier announced his retirement from the position.

Two more awards were added to the annual-banquet ceremonies. KMO was Most Improved Chapter, and North Central won the President's Achievement Award. Florida and Eastern tied for Most Outstanding Chapter, and the 1975 Speedy Awards were presented to Bob Rynearson (nondisabled) and Joseph Mandella (disabled; posthumously).

1976

The first directors for the new TRF were appointed early in '76. They were Captain Jack Barleon, Allan Reich, John Lancaster, Michael Burns, Dr. Morris McGee, and Dr. George Hohmann. The PVA president (Don Broderick) would

serve as foundation president.

According to the latest tally, PVA now had more than 10,000 members. "Obviously, this new high in membership indicates the hard work, dedication, and professionalism of the chapters," said Executive Director Larry Ross in his April *PN* column.

Moving from the desert to the mountains, delegates for PVA's 30th Annual Convention met in Denver. In the Mile High City, two new chapters were welcomed into the organization: Gateway and Oregon. With attrition through the years, that brought the total of PVA chapters to 29.

The most important and far-reaching resolution enacted by directors was the call for complete restructuring of the national organization, to keep in step with the rapidly increasing growth, scope, and complexity of PVA's programs. The initial step was disbanding of the National Executive Committee as an advisory group and the scheduling of three Board of Directors (BOD) meetings in 1976–77. Further details of the structural reorganization were relegated to the January 1977 interim BOD meeting in Washington, D.C.

Other convention action included reaffirmation of PVA's vigorous support of research (through TRF), upgrading of the National Service Program, strong support for wheelchair sports, and a major commitment (with \$100,000 in funding) to the architectural barriers and accessible mass transit battle.

Every elected office had at least two candidates. Victorious in the end were Ed Jasper, president; Joe Romagnano, vice president; and Hugh Pendleton, secretary-treasurer. Larry Ross had resigned as executive director, and James Maye came back to fill the position. The annual Speedy Awards went to Odell W. Vaughan (disabled) and Dr. Harold M. Truebger (nondisabled). California was the Most Improved Chapter, and Michigan received the Presidential Award. For the first time, Best Newsletter Awards were presented. Bay Area & Western won for chapters with 200 or more members and Delaware for chapters with fewer than 200 members.

1977

At their April BOD meeting, delegates discussed and adopted a new organizational plan for PVA. It was decided that the organization's ongoing business would be conducted by a Corporate Board of Management, composed of seven members: president, senior vice president, three vice presidents at large, secretary, and treasurer. The full BOD would continue to meet three times a year to review the actions of the corporate board. Current Vice President Romagnano was bumped up to senior vice, and John Madsen, Jack Powell, and James Peters were appointed to fill the three VP spots. Hugh Pendleton relinquished the secretary portion of his position, which was filled by Frank Rigo.

In May, PVA President Jasper represented the organization at the first-ever White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals. President Jimmy Carter addressed an audience of 3,000 (about 75% of whom were people with disabilities), promising, "We are going to enforce the regulations that tear down the barriers of architecture, and we are going to enforce the regulations that tear down the barriers of transportation.... The time for discrimination against the handicapped in the United States is over."

The new administrative organization resulted in a streamlined 31st PVA Annual Convention, held in Dearborn, Mich. According to *PN* Editor Webb, "...all of the official PVA business was comfortably handled in the mornings, with the afternoons devoted to a series of informative, worthwhile workshops." At the first business session, Central Florida was welcomed as PVA's newest chapter. Later, all of the incumbents except Vice President Madsen (who was replaced by Mike Delaney) were formally elected to the new Corporate Board of Management.

Awards abounded at the annual banquet: Gerald Jones accepted the American Wheelchair Bowling Award, and the John M. Price Awards went to Zia (Most Improved Chapter) and Delaware (Most Outstanding Chapter). A special Speedy emblem presentation was made to Frank Chimera, who designed and produced the first official PVA seal. Eastern PVA received the President's Award, and Speedys went to Dr. Ahmed Z. El Ghatit (nondisabled) and Frank DeGeorge (disabled).

In his October *PN* column, President Jasper reported on August's International Disabled Expo/Conference/Trade Show, held in Chicago and sponsored by PVA. Noted Jasper, "For a first-time trade show for the disabled...the attraction of 130 exhibitors and over 10,000 attendance is, in my opinion, a successful venture."

1978

In his February *PN* column, President Jasper noted that, because "we couldn't remodel the old offices any more," the organization's national headquarters had moved once again. The new address: 4330 East West Highway, Suite 300, Washington, D.C. And early in '78 Jim Maye resigned as executive director to take a job at the VA Central Office. Jasper appointed Larry Roffee to the vacated position.

A total of 30 chapters were listed in PVA's February 1978 roster: Alabama-Mississippi, Arizona, Bay Area & Western, Buckeye, California, Capital Area, Central Florida, Delaware, Eastern, Florida, Gateway, Georgia-Carolina, Great Plains, Kentucky-Indiana, Kansas-Missouri-Oklahoma, Mexico, Michigan, Mid-South, Mountain States, New England, North Central, Oregon, Palmetto, Puerto Rico, Tampa Bay, Texas, Tri-State, Vaughan, Virginia, and Zia. By year's end, numbers 31 and 32 were added: Northwest and Sooner.

The May issue of *PN* announced that PVA would offer a nationwide job-placement service for people with severe disabilities. The program would be designed to assist people who were "unemployed, underemployed, or employed and seeking a more meaningful career opportunity."

On April 8, PVA suffered a great loss. *PN* Editor Bob Webb passed away. Webb's wife, Audrey, kept things going—not an issue was skipped—until Cliff Crase was appointed editor shortly after convention. His first issue as editor/publisher was December 1978.

At the 32nd Annual Convention, held in Kansas City, Mo., Joe Romagnano was elected PVA's 21st president. Mike Delaney was the new senior vice president, and Paul Cheremeta joined Ed Jasper and Jim Peters as the third vice president. Frank Rigo was reelected secretary, and Jack Sanders took the helm as treasurer. A resolution was passed

to establish the Bob Webb Excellence in a Newsletter Award, to be presented each year at convention to the editor of the best chapter newsletter.

At the closing banquet, the John M. Price Awards went to Great Plains (Most Improved Chapter) and Vaughan (Most Outstanding Chapter), and recipients of the Speedy Awards were Jonas Salk (nondisabled) and Carlos Rodriguez (disabled). A new honor, the Awareness Award, went to the late Totie Fields.

(According to *PN* Editor Crase, the KMO chapter was dissolved shortly after hosting the 1978 convention.)

1979

In April, directors officially accepted PVA's 33rd chapter: Bayou.

The July *PN* masthead named Philip Harper Jr. as PVA's acting executive director. In the August masthead, Jim Peters was listed in that spot. (Both magazines were published before the convention.)

Houston, Tex., hosted the 33rd Annual Convention, held July 30–August 3. Elected to the corporate board were Joe Romagnano, president; Mike Delaney, senior vice president; Jim Peters, Paul Cheremeta, and Don Sherman, vice presidents; Frank Rigo, secretary, and Jack Sanders, treasurer. President Romagnano named R. Jack Powell executive director and formalized the appointment of Cliff Crase as *PN* editor. Other appointees were Jack Barleon, chairman of the Investment Committee, and Les Burghoff, chairman of the Development Committee.

Only one Speedy was awarded this year. It went to Bunny Sexton (nondisabled). The first Bob Webb Excellence in a Newsletter Award was presented to Ernie Chavez, editor of *Zia's Roadrunner*. Bay Area & Western was chosen Most Outstanding Chapter, while the Most Improved Chapter Award went to Texas PVA. Eastern PVA received the President's Award.

The '80's: Progress, Achievement, and Vision

1980

Executive Director Powell began the new decade with a warning to *PN* readers: "During the last several years more permanent damage has been done to veterans' programs than in all of their accumulated history, and the handwriting is on the wall for the future. Unless the veterans themselves take the time to take action, veteran programs may soon be a thing of the past. Truthfully, if this comes to pass, we will have no one to blame but ourselves and our complacency."

And PVA began the new decade by moving again—into larger offices. They didn't move far, though; the new address was 5350 East West Highway, Suite 900, Washington, D.C. Since 1973, the national headquarters had expanded from 1,000 square feet to about 10,000 square feet of office space.

The May *PN* announced that PVA had given \$260,000 as a five-year grant to fund a term professorship in spinal-cord injury medicine at Stanford University School of Medicine, in California. The money would be used to "support the

teaching, research, and clinical activities of the chair holder." By this time, PVA had donated more than \$1 million to SCI research and was actively supporting legislation that would increase funding of the SCI program at the National Institutes of Health.

Albuquerque was the site of the 34th Annual Convention, held July 21–25. Elected officers included Mike Delaney, president; Paul Cheremeta, senior vice president; James Peters, Ralph Markward, and Gene Murphy, vice presidents; Joseph Romagnano, immediate past president (with the same status as a vice president, per an interim BOD-meeting decision); Frank Rigo, secretary; and Ed Jasper, treasurer. Speedy Awards went to Dr. Benjamin A. Moeller (nondisabled) and James P. Hill (disabled), and O. S. "Shorty" Bramlett received the Disability Awareness Award. Eastern was the Most Outstanding Chapter, while Puerto Rico accepted the award for Most Improved Chapter. The President's Cup was presented to Bay Area and Western PVA. In business session, delegates voted to implement two National Membership Development Awards, to be presented annually to the chapter membership officer documenting the highest percentage membership increase for the preceding fiscal year.

In November, the Wisconsin chapter was added to the organization's roster.

1981

The United Nations designated 1981 the Year of the Disabled. By early '81, plans were underway for PVA—by now a widely recognized advocacy group for veterans with spinal-cord injury or disease—to buy its own building in Washington, D.C. Although the mailing address was D.C., the current national headquarters was really located in Bethesda, Md., about 15 miles from the action on Capitol Hill.

The May *PN* described a three-city media blitz organized by PVA to inform the public of its goals and of the issues facing the country's paralyzed veterans. A delegation from PVA met with print and broadcast journalists in Seattle, Portland (Ore.), and San Francisco. This was just the beginning of an aggressive effort by the organization to bring its objectives to the public eye.

At the April BOD meeting, directors initiated a Chapter Sports Award. The Palmetto chapter's charter was revoked, and Southwest PVA was recognized as a probationary chapter.

PVA's 35th Annual Convention met July 19–24 in Denver. There directors voted to accept Cal-Diego as a probationary chapter and to appoint a PVA representative to the board of the National Spinal Cord Injury Foundation (formerly the National Paraplegia Foundation). It was also decided that PVA would purchase *Sports 'n Spokes* magazine. Officers elected in Denver included Michael Delaney, president, Paul Cheremeta, senior vice president; Ralph Markward, James Peters, and George Jackson, vice presidents; Frank Rigo, secretary; and Ed Jasper, treasurer.

A record number of awards was presented at the closing banquet: Speedys went to Dr. George Hohmann (disabled) and Dr. Inder Perkash (nondisabled). Victor Peary, editor of Capital Area's newsletter, won the Bob Webb Excellence in a Newsletter Award, and the Membership Development Award

was presented to Frank Harper (Sooner chapter). Dwain Taylor (Mid-South) accepted the Volunteer Program Award, and the Chapter Sports Award went to Puerto Rico. Great Plains was chosen to receive the President's Award, while Michigan was the Most Improved Chapter and EPVA the Most Outstanding Chapter. Oklahoma Governor George Nigh received the Disability Awareness Award.

In his October column, President Delaney wrote, "On Monday afternoon, August 17, another page in PVA's proud history was written. A small groundbreaking ceremony was held at the corner of 18th and H Streets in Washington, D.C. to commemorate the start of construction of the first PVA Memorial Building." The new edifice would house the administrative offices of the now-11,000-member organization.

1982

The February *PN* announced the death of Harry Schweikert Jr., "Mr. PVA." At their semiannual BOD meeting, directors voted to rename the Disability Awareness Award the Harry A. Schweikert Jr. Disability Awareness Award. The Voluntary Service Award was also renamed; it was now the Dwain Taylor Award for Voluntary Service, in honor of the recently deceased Mid-South chapter president and director.

Conventioneers went to Oklahoma City for PVA's 36th Annual Convention, held August 23–28. Officers remained the same, except Paul Cheremeta moved up from senior vice president to president, Michael Delaney was now immediate past president, and Jack Sanders was the new senior VP. Delegates voted to declare Cal-Diego a full-fledged chapter, to establish a national training conference for chapter presidents, and to terminate the Regional Advocacy Program.

Among the many awards presented at the convention were: Speedys, Dr. Alain B. Rossier (disabled) and Dr. Ibrahim Eltorai (nondisabled); Harry A. Schweikert Jr. Disability Awareness Award, cartoonist Berke Breathed; Bob Webb Excellence in a Newsletter Award, Jerome McInnes (Michigan chapter editor); Membership Development Award, Howard Gardner (Georgia-Carolina); Chapter Sports Award, EPVA; John M. Price Most Improved Chapter Award, Zia; President's Cup, Michigan PVA.

1983

Although completed in November 1982, the official opening of PVA's new national headquarters, located at 801 Eighteenth Street, NW, Washington, D.C., took place February 9, 1983. More than 700 attended a reception, including VA officials and congressional representatives and staff. PVA would occupy four floors in the new building.

PVA's 37th Annual Convention met August 2–6 in Portland, Ore. A highlight at this year's meeting was the Paralyzed Veteran Stamp Dedication Ceremony at convention headquarters. The event commemorated issuance of a 20¢ stamp recognizing "those who served in the armed forces with distinction and now pursue active and productive lives: the Paralyzed Veterans of America." President Reagan's congratulatory phone call from The White House was broadcast to attendees via speakerphone.

The elections brought two new faces to the corporate

board. Joining incumbents Paul Cheremeta (president), Ed Jasper (treasurer), Frank Rigo (secretary), George Jackson (bumped up to senior vice president), and James Peters (vice president) were new VPs Richard Hoover and Tom Duncan.

The '83 Speedy Awards were presented to Captain Jack Barleon (disabled) and Miriam Frances King (nondisabled). Denver cyclist Nancy Bertram was honored with the Harry A. Schweikert Jr. Disability Awareness Award, and Cal-Diego Editor Jim Smith received the Bob Webb Excellence in a Newsletter Award. Cal-Diego also took home the awards for Membership Development and Most Improved Chapter. Puerto Rico was chosen Most Outstanding Chapter, and Eastern PVA won the President's Cup. The National Chapter Sports Award went to North Central, and George Snyder (Florida PVA) got the Dwain Taylor Award for Voluntary Service.

The December issue of *PN* was devoted to SCI research. In his column, President Cheremeta wrote, "[PVA] has since its inception been concerned with research into a cure for spinal-cord injury and with better care and treatment of the devastating effects of the condition." It was not until 1975—the year TRF was formed—that the organization had the financial resources to begin funding research efforts. By the end of '83, PVA had given \$2.5 million for basic, applied, and technological research projects.

1984

An item in the April *PN's* Chapter Briefs announced that Mexico PVA would be dissolved. The chapter had served veterans in the Guadalajara area for 20 years.

Beginning this year, the Dwain Taylor Voluntary Service Award was presented at PVA's midwinter meeting. There were two recipients in '84: Jim Smith (Cal-Diego) and Bob Waugh (Sooner). At the same meeting, directors voted to change the name of the Technology and Research Foundation (TRF) to the PVA Spinal Cord Research Foundation (SCRF).

"Radar" officially joined the fight against SCI in 1984. Actor Gary Burghoff, who played Radar O'Reilly on the hit television series *M*A*S*H*, announced that a percentage of that year's profits from the sale of his Radar teddy bears would be donated to PVA. Burghoff was a cousin of longtime PVA member Les Burghoff.

Documents signed on May 31, 1984, completed the purchase of the entire PVA headquarters building in Washington. The organization previously owned a third of the ten-story structure.

The 38th PVA Annual Convention was held in New Orleans. There Dick Hoover was elected president; he would go on to serve an unprecedented three terms. Paul Cheremeta moved on to immediate past president, George Jackson continued as senior VP, and incumbent vice presidents Jim Peters and Tom Duncan were joined by Jack Michaels. Frank Rigo and Ed Jasper retained their positions as secretary and treasurer, respectively.

At the closing banquet, Speedys were presented to Audrey Young (nondisabled) and James Seybold (disabled; posthumously). Cal-Diego took the honors as Most Outstanding Chapter, and Oregon was the Most Improved Chapter. The Bob Webb Excellence in a Newsletter Award

went to John Kilby, editor of Virginia's newsletter. EPVA took home the President's Cup, and Central Florida won the Membership Development Award. Gary Burghoff had accepted the Harry A. Schweikert Jr. Disability Awareness Award at an earlier ceremony in Connecticut.

Convention resolutions approved by directors included adoption of a PVA flag, which would "accurately reflect the history, purpose, and image of the organization, while conveying a feeling of American patriotism." *PN* Editor Crase wrote in his October column that the flag's 16 stars represented the organization's 16 charter members.

In November, PVA representatives participated in the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Controversy surrounding U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia remained high, but as President Hoover (who attended the ceremonies) noted, "I believe on that gray and solemn evening...acceptance occurred, and that we as one people can finally say to those [who served in Vietnam,] living and dead, 'Well done, well fought, and welcome home.'"

1985

At PVA's Midwinter Meeting, Cal-Diego President Jim Smith was presented the Dwain Taylor Voluntary Service Award—for the second year in a row. Among resolutions adopted at this interim meeting was the implementation of Chapter Activities Reports, to be submitted twice a year to the national board of directors by each chapter director.

At a ceremony co-hosted by PVA and the Vietnam Veterans Institute (VVI), Senator Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) received the first Award for Life Service to Veterans. Byrd's advocacy for programs and benefits for veterans had been of particular significance to PVA members, according to President Hoover, who noted, "Of greatest importance...has been Senator Byrd's active and vigorous support of a viable VA healthcare system that is capable of meeting the many needs of America's veterans."

Seattle hosted the 39th Annual Convention. Delegates reelected President Hoover by acclamation. Before the elections, George Jackson announced his decision not to run again, and Jack Michaels was voted in as senior vice president (also by acclamation). Harry Hargrave and Jim Smith were chosen as vice presidents, along with incumbent VP Jim Peters. Frank Rigo and Ed Jasper were chosen to continue as secretary and treasurer, respectively. No Speedy Awards were presented in '85, but the Disability Awareness Award went to Carolyn White Hodgins. Zia PVA Editor Ralph Markward won the Excellence in a Newsletter Award, and North Central took home the President's Cup, the Most Improved Chapter Award, and the Membership Development Award. EPVA was selected Most Outstanding Chapter, and Cal-Diego was awarded the Chapter Sports Award. At this convention, delegates implemented the Chapter Executive Director Program, allowing chapters, at their discretion, to hire a part-time or full-time executive director. A feasibility study for a PVA women's auxiliary was approved, as was designation of a moment of silence during each convention's opening ceremonies to recognize members who have passed away during the previous year.

1986

At their 1985 convention, PVA directors voted to absorb and then dissolve the Professorship of Spinal Cord Injury Medicine Chair, Inc. In 1986, that grant-awarding program in the area of spinal-cord education was renamed the PVA SCI Education and Training Foundation (ETF).

On February 15, 1986, PVA lost a vital force in its formation and growth. Robert Moss, who remained active in the organization to the end, died in New York.

The expansion of PVA and its programs necessitated some administrative restructuring, which took shape in 1986. As noted by President Hoover, "...we started with a service program reporting to the national executive director. We now have service, development, research, public communication, advocacy, legislation, medical affairs, administration, etc., reporting to the PVA executive director." The new plan, which called for addition of a middle-management level in the national-staff structure, was adopted by directors at the midwinter board of directors meeting and would be implemented during the next two years.

In April, Senator Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) became the recipient of the second Life Service to Veterans Award. Cranston was honored for his years of authoring legislation for veterans and supporting their causes.

The July issue of *PN* contained a brief history of PVA, as outlined in the pages of the magazine over the past 40 years. There was also an announcement that *An Oral History of the Paralyzed Veterans of America* was available for \$5 from PVA's National Research Department.

In a decision that knocked the wind—but not the fire—out of PVA, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that, under current law, airlines were not subject to federal antidiscrimination statutes. Noted *PN* Editor Crase in his column, "At a time when technology allows people with disabilities to truly become part of America's mainstream, it is incredible that the disabled would be singled out for discriminatory second-class treatment." As soon as the decision in *DOT v. PVA* was announced, members and staff began knocking on congressional doors, and legislation was introduced that would prohibit airlines from discriminating against travelers with disabilities.

PVA's 40th Annual Convention met in Memphis. The elections were the smoothest in recent history: All incumbents ran unopposed and were reelected by acclamation. Directors voted to change the Speedy Award categories from "disabled" and "nondisabled" to "PVA member" and "non-PVA member," and the first recipients under the new classifications were Stefan Florescu (member) and Justin Dart Jr. (nonmember). Senator Robert Dole was presented the Disability Awareness Award, and Tri-State Editor Rebecca Downs won the Bob Webb Excellence in a Newsletter Award. The President's Cup went to Vaughan PVA, Tri-State was the Most Improved Chapter, Eastern was the Most Outstanding Chapter, and Georgia-Carolina won the Membership Development Award.

On October 2, 1986, the above-mentioned door-knocking paid off, as President Ronald Reagan signed the Air Carriers Access Act of 1986. The new law stated that *all* Americans would be treated equally when using commercial air carriers,

effectively overruling the earlier Supreme Court decision.

In late 1986, the Paraplegia Society of America (PSA) acquired the Access to the Skies (ATTS) Program, a private-sector initiative formerly operated by Rehabilitation International, USA. ATTS, which promotes cooperation and resource sharing among airline carriers, airframe manufacturers, the federal government, and consumers with disabilities, would be administered for PSA by PVA.

1987

President Hoover, ever mindful of the need for PVA's administrative structure to evolve to fit the needs of the organization, described in his February *PN* column proposed changes in the duties of elected national officers. These changes would result in more active involvement by the Executive Committee in PVA's leadership.

At their midwinter meeting in Washington, D.C., directors voted to pursue with the Yale University School of Medicine development of a neurological disease and regeneration center. They also decided to appoint a committee to discuss and recommend ideas for a spouses' education seminar. Darrell Jepson won the Dwain Taylor Voluntary Service Award—and was approved as a new vice president, to replace the recently deceased Harry Hargrave.

In '87, PVA joined with AMVETS (American Veterans of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam), DAV (Disabled American Veterans), and VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) to formulate and present to Congress the first "Independent Budget." The group annually would continue to provide a detailed budget designed to meet veterans' needs through programs administered by VA.

In April, Congressman John Paul Hammerschmidt (R-Ark.) received the 4th Annual Award for Life Service to Veterans. He was chosen for the honor because of his nonpartisan view of veterans' issues and his willingness to steadfastly support those issues.

"Historical firsts were the rule rather than the exception during PVA's 41st conclave," noted *PN* Editor Crase in reporting on the annual convention, held in Denver. Directors voted to create a fourth vice-president position and to implement an annual Donor Recognition Award. They also agreed to establish an Architecture and Barrier Free Design Program at the National Office and to provide \$1.5 million (including a \$250,000 contribution from EPVA) over the next five years to the Yale/PVA Center for Neuroscience and Regeneration Research. And the first-ever Spouses' Seminars debuted in Denver, allowing spouses and significant others to benefit from the experiences and expertise of guest speakers, whose topics had a general focus on the family.

Adding a somber note to proceedings was the news that Immediate Past President Paul Cheremeta had passed away at home in Ohio.

When it was all over, the new officers were Jack Michaels, president; Richard Hoover, immediate past president; Darrell Jepson, senior vice president; James Peters, Michael Gureckas, Dave Parker, and Perry Tillman III, vice presidents; Frank Rigo, secretary; and Ed Jasper, treasurer.

The 1987 Speedys were presented to Harry Walters (nonmember) and Conrad Standinger (member;

posthumously). Mountain States was chosen Most Improved Chapter, and once again, Eastern was named Most Outstanding Chapter. The President's Cup went to Cal-Diego, and Mid-South Editor Roland Badon took home the Excellence in a Newsletter Award. Bayou collected the Membership Development Award.

In September, PVA hosted a ten-member delegation from the People's Republic of China. Studying accessibility in the United States, the Chinese group was part of an exchange visit arranged through PVA's Government Relations Department and Rehabilitation International, USA.

1988

At their midwinter meeting in Washington, D.C., directors voted to implement a mandatory training seminar for newly elected chapter presidents. They also approved a name change for the Tampa Bay chapter, which became Florida Gulf Coast PVA.

Despite a presidential veto, the Civil Rights Restoration of 1987 finally became law. The new legislation, which PVA's advocacy and legislation staff—and its membership—had been actively supporting since 1984, restored protections against discrimination on the basis of handicap.

The 1988 recipient of the Award for Life Service to Veterans was Senator Robert Dole (R-Kan.). He was honored for his long and well-established leadership record on issues that affect people with disabilities, including disabled veterans.

"PVA's 42nd Annual Meeting will go down in the annals of history as the year directors charted the course of the organization, during a historic Strategic Planning Session," remarked *PN* Editor Crase in his convention report. PVA's key objectives were identified as:

- Advocating and monitoring the delivery of high-quality and appropriate healthcare benefits and services
- Assisting in identifying and securing veterans' benefits for veterans with SCI/D and others as appropriate
- Promoting medical research to cure spinal-cord dysfunction and other related problems
- Educating society about the attitudinal, physical, and legal barriers that confront people with disabilities and influencing the removal of those barriers
- Providing information about and opportunities for health-promoting recreation, employment, sports, services, and camaraderie for veterans with SCI/D and others as appropriate
- Providing for cooperation with and seeking the support of other groups and individuals who share PVA's objectives

Delegates met August 22–27 in Chicago, where most of the Executive Committee incumbents were reelected, although every office except president was challenged. Only two vice presidents (Gureckas and Tillman) were replaced, by Carl Goldsmith and Richard Johnson. An Annual Chapter Volunteer Service Award was implemented, and it was decided that two Bob Webb Awards for Excellence in a Newsletter would be presented annually. One would recognize newsletters produced by paid professionals and the other, newsletters produced by nonprofessional volunteers. And the first new chapter in five years was admitted: Iowa PVA.

Among the awards presented were: John M. Price Most

Improved Chapter Award, Gateway; John M. Price Most Outstanding Chapter Award, Great Plains; Membership Award, Gateway; Sports Award, Buckeye; Speedy Award (member), Norton H. Brown (posthumously); Speedy Award (nonmember), Dr. Jack S. Burks; Bob Webb Excellence in a Newsletter Award, Eastern; Donor Recognition Award, Melissa Wolff; and President's Cup, Buckeye.

1989

The Sooner chapter's name officially changed to Mid-America PVA, according to a resolution passed at PVA's 1989 midwinter meeting. At the same time, directors established procedures for assuring that all members of the national board of directors meet PVA membership requirements.

Just a few days later, Edward J. Derwinski was confirmed as the first secretary of veterans affairs. PVA had strongly advocated elevation of the Department of Veterans Affairs to Cabinet-level status, and President Michaels attended the swearing-in ceremony at The White House.

PVA representatives again trekked to The White House when Barbara Bush hosted a reception in honor of Sweden's Queen Sylvia. The Swedish monarch funded publication of *Go for It!: A Book on Sports and Recreation for Persons With Disabilities*, and was in the U.S. to formally make a gift of the book (to which PVA contributed editorially and photographically) to this country.

Senator Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.) was the sixth recipient of the Award for Life Service to Veterans. He was recognized for more than 30 years of active advocacy for veterans' rights.

The 43rd PVA Convention was held in Portland, Ore. After welcoming Lone Star PVA to full chapter status, directors elected Dave Parker national president and moved Richard Johnson up to senior VP. Larry Callaghan and Chad Crowley filled the two vacant vice-president spots. Jack Michaels was now immediate past president, and Frank Rigo retained his office as secretary, but Ed Jasper decided not to seek reelection as treasurer. Jerry Dugan was chosen to take over that position.

Arizona took home Most Improved Chapter honors, while Florida was Most Outstanding Chapter and won the Sports Award. The Membership Award went to Kentucky-Indiana and the Speedy Awards to Tony Ruf (member; posthumously) and Congressman John Paul Hammerschmidt (nonmember). For the first time there were two Bob Webb Excellence in a Newsletter Awards. Michigan PVA won in the "professional" category and Texas in the "nonprofessional" category. The President's Cup was presented to Delaware PVA and the Chapter Volunteer Service Award to North Central. Richard Shanley was given the Donor Recognition Award.

On Veterans Day, PVA announced plans to establish a permanent photo exhibit to honor all veterans.

The '90's: Still Fighting for a Better Tomorrow

1990

PVA entered the '90's with 33 chapters: Arizona, Bay Area & Western, Bayou, Buckeye, Cal-Diego, California, Central

Florida, Delaware, Eastern, Florida, Florida Gulf Coast, Gateway, Georgia-Carolina, Great Plains, Iowa, Kentucky-Indiana, Lone Star, Michigan, Mid-America, Mid-South, Mountain States, New England, North Central, Northwest, Oregon, Puerto Rico, Southwest, Texas, Tri-State, Vaughan, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Zia. There were also 57 PVA service offices located throughout the U.S. and 1 in Puerto Rico.

In May, two delegations of 12 high-ranking Soviet government officials met with staff at PVA national headquarters. Both groups were interested in PVA's role as a veterans' service organization, involvement in civil-rights and disability issues, achievements in architecture and barrier-free design, and equipment and wheelchair standards. Also in May, Congressman Don Edwards (D-Calif.) became the seventh recipient of the Award for Life Service to Veterans.

Believing that healthcare would be a primary issue in the upcoming presidential campaign, PVA announced in the June *PN* a project that would result in publication of a policy document on U.S. healthcare. "Strategy 2000" would address current options for the nation's healthcare generally and "in the context of projected future changes, recommend the most feasible future role for the VA system within the larger network."

On July 26, 1990, PVA representatives witnessed the historic signing of the American With Disabilities Act (ADA) by President George Bush. Passage of the long-awaited legislation would not end PVA's involvement in the issues it was intended to resolve; implementation and enforcement would require many more years of attention and activity.

The Central Florida chapter (with assistance from Florida PVA) served as host for PVA's 44th Annual Convention, held in Orlando. The elections resulted in few changes. Victor McCoy was elected president, and Richard Grant took over Chad Crowley's vice presidential post. The other incumbents were all reelected. (Dave Parker became immediate past president.) Most Improved and Most Outstanding Chapter Awards were presented to Georgia-Carolina and Bayou, respectively. Winners of this year's Speedys were Dennis Smurr (member, posthumously) and Michael Eisner (nonmember). PVA Donors of the Year were David and Rita Budin. Florida Editor Frank Chimera won the Bob Webb Excellence in a Newsletter Award for the nonprofessional category, while Terry Moakley of Eastern won in the professional equivalent. Oregon took home the Sports Award, and the Chapter Volunteer Service Award went to Iowa.

1991

In D.C. at their midwinter meeting, PVA directors voted two official chapter name changes: The Virginia chapter was now Virginia-Mid-Atlantic PVA, and the Delaware chapter became Delaware-Maryland PVA. Delegates also approved action to begin renovations on the national headquarters building.

The BOD moved to New Orleans for their 45th Annual Convention. Among the many awards presented throughout the week were: John M. Price Most Improved Chapter, Mid-America; John M. Price Most Outstanding Chapter, Arizona; Sports Award, Buckeye; Membership Award, Southwest; Chapter Volunteer Service Award, Iowa; VAVS Volunteer

Award, Mildred F. Cummings; President's Cup, Zia; Speedy Award (member), Chad Crowley (posthumously); Speedy Award (nonmember), Al Youakim; Patriot Award (formerly the Donor Recognition Award), Earl Wiseman; and Harry A. Schweikert Jr. Disability Awareness Award, Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa). The Bob Webb Excellence in a Newsletter Awards went, for the second consecutive year, to Eastern (professional) and Florida (nonprofessional) chapter editors. Delegates voted to change the newsletter award categories to "most improved" and "most outstanding." The entire Executive Committee was reelected, without change, and President McCoy appointed Fred Cowell executive director. (Richard Hoover had been acting executive director since shortly after the 1990 convention, when Jack Powell resigned from the position.)

In September, President McCoy headed a commission that visited Russia, to offer help with the problems facing that country's government and its citizens with disabilities. And in December, a PVA contingent joined President Bush, VA officials, other veterans' service organization officials, and congressional representatives in Hawaii to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

1992

In March, directors congregated in Washington, D.C., for their midwinter meeting. There they voted to change the name of the Chapter Sports Award to Chapter Sports and Recreation Award.

In his June *PN* column, President McCoy announced the release of "Strategy 2000: The VA Responsibility in Tomorrow's National Health Care System," which he predicted would "cause quite a stir with health and government officials and experts."

At their 46th Annual Convention, in San Diego, directors approved implementation of the PVA/Paradigm Design Group Business Plan, allowing PVA to take a leadership role in providing technical design assistance to private businesses and government agencies. Delegates also voted to establish a Health Policy Department and accepted West Virginia PVA as the organization's 34th chapter. The Georgia-Carolina name was officially changed to Southeastern PVA. Once again, a resolution was passed regarding the Bob Webb Award for Excellence in a Newsletter. There would only be one award presented at each convention, and it would go to the most improved newsletter. And another annual award was established: the Corporate Patriot Award.

The '86 elections were a whole different story from the previous year. Richard Johnson beat out Victor McCoy, who was running for a third term as president. McCoy moved to immediate past president, and Richard Grant won the senior VP position. Larry Callaghan and James Peters were able to hold on to their vice presidencies, despite a full slate of contenders. The two vacant VP spots were filled by Kenneth Huber and Homer Townsend. Jerry Dugan and Frank Rigo were reelected treasurer and secretary, respectively.

Among awards presented at the annual banquet were: Disability Awareness Award, Telephone Pioneers of America; Excellence in a Newsletter Awards, Wisconsin (most improved) and Eastern (most outstanding); Speedys, Dick

Sloviaczek (member) and Ken McRight (nonmember); Sports and Recreation Award, Central Florida; Membership Award, Kentucky-Indiana; Most Improved Chapter, Wisconsin; Most Outstanding Chapter, Vaughan; VAVS Volunteer Award, Jon Schneider (Iowa); Patriot Award, Jack Sanders (posthumously); and President's Cup, Great Plains.

1993

At the organization's midwinter meeting in Washington, D.C., directors established an Association of Chapter Executive Directors and granted a charter to Minnesota PVA. They also declared that the terms for corporate officers (president, senior vice president, four vice presidents, secretary, and treasurer) would run from October 1 to September 30 and that no more than two members from any one chapter could be elected to corporate office during the same term. After years of discussion, smoking was banned from the meeting room during business sessions. Randy Pleva (West Virginia) took home the Dwain Taylor Award for Voluntary Service.

Early in the year, Fred Cowell stepped down as PVA's executive director. John Bollinger served as acting executive director for a month, then Gordon Mansfield took over that role. By mid-year, Mansfield was executive director.

In April, President Johnson and Mansfield were among leaders of the country's major veterans' service organizations who met with First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton to present their views about VA's role in national healthcare reform. "I was impressed with Mrs. Clinton's clear understanding of VA medical-care delivery and was reassured by her commitment to the continuation of VA's delivery system," Mansfield remarked.

PVA's 47th Annual Meeting and Convention took place in Minneapolis. "This year's elections...were reasonably passive," reported *PN* Editor Crase. Although there was some friendly competition, all incumbents retained their respective offices. Among the numerous awards presented were: John M. Price Most Outstanding Chapter, Great Plains; Most Improved Chapter and National Sports and Recreation Award, Oregon; President's Cup, Delaware-Maryland; Corporate Patriot Award, UPS; Patriot Award, Sylvia Barnwell; Harry A. Schweikert Jr. Disability Awareness Award, Doug Parker; Chapter Volunteer Service Award, North Central; Membership Award, Minnesota; Bob Webb Excellence in a Newsletter Award, Rebecca Hurt (Kentucky-Indiana).

On September 29, in Washington, D.C., PVA hosted the first National Conference on Economic Consequences of Disabilities. "As our nation moves toward healthcare reform, the question of the cost to reform the national healthcare system will continue to be a major issue," said President Johnson. "We in the disabled community *must* be well-armed with the economic facts if we want to intelligently represent ourselves in this debate."

1994

The March issue of *PN* featured an article on PVA's recently published "Strategy 2000-Phase II." This study of healthcare reform would look at VA's role, analyze potential congressional legislation, and recommend a reshaping of VA's healthcare-delivery system.

Breaking with tradition, the organization's midwinter meeting took place in a locale other than Washington, D.C. Directors met in Orlando, Fla., to conduct business, then moved on to D.C. for the Advocacy and Legislation Seminar, visits to Capitol Hill, and the annual testimony before the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs. In a Florida business session, directors approved a name change for the Bayou chapter, which would now be called Bayou Gulf States PVA. Gregg Schwartz (North Central) received the Dwain Taylor Voluntary Service Award.

In late July, PVA joined an unprecedented partnership with nine other national veterans' service organizations to urge Congress not to abandon reformation of the VA healthcare system in the process of reforming the nation's healthcare system. The veterans' groups launched their effort with a press conference and a Washington, D.C., advertising campaign.

A total of 390 attendees—the largest number ever—registered for PVA's 48th Annual Convention, held August 23–27 in Boston. Vice President Jim Peters was unable to attend, and missed his first convention in 24 years. Business went on as usual, however. Directors voted down a resolution to extend the term for national officers to two years and tabled a proposal to make PSA a membership organization. The 1994–95 slate of officers included Richard Grant, president; Ken Huber, senior vice president; Jim Peters, Homer Townsend, Joe Fox, and Phil Pepper, vice presidents; Jerry Dugan, treasurer; and Frank Rigo, secretary. Richard Johnson became immediate past president.

Jim Smith accepted the Speedy Award (member), North Central got the Chapter Volunteer Service Award, and the Harry A. Schweikert Jr. Disability Awareness Award went to Anthony Principi. Joan Bull won the Patriot Award and Marion Merrell Dow, the Corporate Patriot Award. The President's Cup went to Florida, and Bob Werden (Zia) was presented the Bob Webb Excellence in a Newsletter Award. West Virginia received the Membership Award, and New England got the Sports Award. Florida was the Most Improved Chapter, and Gateway was the Most Outstanding Chapter.

1995

After meeting in Washington, D.C., in February for the annual testimony before the Joint Committees on Veterans' Affairs, PVA directors traveled to Universal City, Calif., in March for their midwinter meeting. There President Grant accepted, on behalf of PVA, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society's Organization of the Year Award. PVA was honored for cosponsoring and supporting the 1994 national teleconference on MS, "Taking Control: Options to Maximize Your Health." In business session, directors approved Tri-State chapter's name change to Keystone PVA. Gregg Schwartz again won the Dwain Taylor Voluntary Service Award.

With the July 1995 issue, *PN* began its fiftieth year of publication. Averaging 96 pages an issue, the magazine had 18,863 subscribers in 65 countries. PVA members still received *PN* as part of their membership, while other subscribers paid \$21 a year for 12 information-packed issues.

On July 27 (42 years after the 1953 cease-fire) the national Korean War Veterans Memorial was dedicated in Washington, D.C. Former PVA president Carlos Rodriguez

served on the Korean War Veterans Memorial Advisory Committee and was among PVA representatives attending the ceremonies. At the request of President Clinton, PVA President Grant and his wife, Carolyn, were invited to a state dinner honoring Korean President and Mrs. Kim that evening at The White House.

Fort Worth hosted PVA's 49th Annual Convention. This year, directors agreed to adopt a plan to continue development of PSA as a member/subscriber organization. They also approved establishment of the PVA Membership Development Program. All incumbents except Phil Pepper retained their elected offices; Bill Lawson was chosen as new vice president. Speedy Awards were presented to Don Broderick (member) and Dr. Donald Custis (nonmember). North Central won the Chapter Volunteer Service Award, while the Chapter Membership Award went to Minnesota. EPVA received the President's Cup, and Bill and Linda Lawson (Mid-America) took home the Bob Webb Award for Excellence in a Newsletter. The Patriot Award was presented to Fritz Krauth, and Florida State Senator Howard C. Forman accepted the Harry A. Schweikert Jr. Disability Awareness Award.

In his December 1995 column, President Grant reflected on PVA's 50 years of existence:

"PVA has grown to be a respected veterans' service organization. We are an acknowledged leader in the private sector of spinal-cord-injury research, accessibility law, and design. We possess a much admired professional national staff in Washington, D.C., a first-rate veterans benefits network nationwide, and business-minded chapters throughout the United States. In summary, PVA is a professionally operated organization whose business is service to veterans and people with disabilities.

"As we look to the 50th Anniversary year, let us give thanks to our founding fathers, and as a tribute to them, let us pledge to remain committed to the same mission they devoted themselves to when they gathered together and formed the nucleus of what we are today."

1996

The Paralyzed Veterans of America begins its 51st year with 59 service offices located across this country and in Puerto Rico. More than 100 national service officers assist the organization's 15,000 members, who belong to 34 chapters and 9 subchapters.

Now PVA looks forward to its 50th Annual Convention, scheduled for July 21–27 in Chicago—where the organization officially formed. And so continues the fight for a better tomorrow.

NOTE: It would take thousands more words and hundreds of pictures to adequately portray the 50-year history of the Paralyzed Veterans of America. Time and space did not permit. For those who are interested in a more detailed accounting of the organization, as seen through the eyes of its official publication, complete archives of *PN/Paraplegia News* reside in the national headquarters (801 18th Street, NW, Washington, D.C.), in the Eastern PVA chapter office (75-20 Astoria Boulevard, Jackson Heights, N.Y.), and in the PVA Publications office (2111 East Highland Avenue, Suite 180, Phoenix, Ariz.).



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