

# North Carolina Vietnam Veterans, Inc. The Veteran's Voice

April/May, 2010



**NCVVI Website:**

[www.ncvvi.com](http://www.ncvvi.com)

**Bridge Back  
Foundation Website:**

[www.bridgebackfoundation.org](http://www.bridgebackfoundation.org)

**President:**

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**Secretary/ Newsletter:**

**Bill Dixon**

**919-434-7345**

**Directors:**

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**42 or 41:** On April 30, 2010 the remains of Donald Monroe Shue of Kannapolis, North Carolina were returned to Charlotte. An honor guard of 2,000 bikes composed of, The Patriot Riders, Rolling Thunder and other groups led a procession to Concord where a special service was held. His remains were later carried to Kannapolis for a memorial service held on June 1, 2011. Donald was listed as missing on November 3, 1969 while on a secret mission in Laos. He was listed as KIA January 15, 1969.

Bill Dixon and Bob Matthews were fortunate to be able to represent NCVVI and attend the service and to participate in the flag line at the cemetery. It was a very moving experience. His name was officially retired from the list at the May 7<sup>th</sup> NCVVI Ceremony. At the April 2 NCVVI ceremony Ralph Reno's name was retired. Reno's remains have been identified but have not been returned home due to JPAC not finding next of kin at this time. So with both names retired the count from North Carolina still missing in action in South East Asia is 41. Welcome Home Donald Monroe Shue!

**Education report:** The education Czar Bob Matthews just got out of the hospital around May 6<sup>th</sup>. He had his gall bladder removed and he is doing well. Our own Marine photographer Del, was also a resident of the Cary hospital the first of May. Hope all is well with Del.

The Bridge Back will be having a course at Wake Tech and at NCSU in the fall. If you are interested in participating or taking the course please contact Bob. Work is currently underway for the Bridge Back to be a presenter at the National Social Studies program in DC scheduled for December. The Bio supplied by the members has been submitted to the LOV teachers, but if you would like to speak, Bob says call the teachers.

Bob had sent a donation letter to coach "K" at Duke. Coach's office called expressing how impressed they were with the activities of NCVVI and the Bridge Back Foundation. Two basketballs autographed and two copies of his new book have been sent by coach "K". These are to be used as fund raisers for the orphanage. Bob has also sent letters to both Josh Hamilton and Nate McMillan, and has talked with both on the phone. Both have expressed appreciation about what NCVVI and the BB are doing. How they show this appreciation is yet to be seen. Linda Craft of Linda Craft Re/Max donated \$150 to the orphanage fund. Author, John Siegfried called Bob and has pledged all profits of his new book (about the POW bracelets) to the Bridge Back. All you need to do is be proud and ask.

Bob and David Samuels had a very productive meeting with the NCSU Chancellor about making the LOV curriculum a permanent part of the NCSU course of study. More as things develop. Bill Shute of Apex and former POW spoke at Athens high school with Bob Matthews just before school was out for the year. Shute dose not do many interviews.

Eric Canto of Kinston working with Bob and the social studies department for Lenoir County had a Teachers Academy set up for Kinston but due to budget restraints it had to be canceled.

The Bridge Back has ordered wrist bands as designed by Monica Cash to sell as a fund raiser. Hopefully they will be available by the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Everyone will want at least one and to give some to friends. The Bridge Back also has golf shirts for sell, need one?

The Bridge Back will have an information table at the North Carolina American Legion Convention being held June 9-12 at the North Raleigh Hilton. The BBF will also have a table at the North Carolina Veterans of Foreign Wars Convention June 17-19 also at the North Raleigh Hilton. Stop by, fill a slot or just visit.

**Guest Speaker:** At the March meeting, NCVVI had a very interesting guest speaker. Attorney Dan Hardway spoke about his time working in DC investigating the investigation of the Kennedy assassination. His remarks were to say the least enlightening and informative. He also agreed to come back for further talks.

**NCVVI's Orphanage project:** NCVVI made a commitment to the children and nuns of the orphanage in Vietnam to build them a safe playground. This is not an exclusive Bridge Back project or the project of a couple of members, all members voted to support this very worthwhile project. This is a project for the entire membership to take ownership and pride in. What better way to let the general public know who NCVVI is? Don't think NCVVI gets enough coverage, then get out there in the real world, talk about what you and your organization are doing. Orphanage, education, monthly POW/MIA ceremony, scholarships, veteran support, veteran family support, Fisher House, USO, community and all the other things. Be your own Public Information Officer for your organization and yourself. You will be surprised how much people want to hear about and from you and your NCVVI activities.

**Scholarships:** NCVVI awarded 6 scholarships to students at the 4 June POW/MIA ceremony. There were a lot of great essays submitted. There is normally 4 awarded but because of the quality of the submissions and a tie, the membership voted to extend scholarships to 6.

**NCVVI Shirts:** With the demand for the "Last Firefight" shirts, a second order has been placed. If you did not get yours yet. There are more coming soon!

**Heather Hills Casino Night:** The Heather Hills Casino night fund raiser for Heather Hills will be on 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2011. All hands are desperately needed. They are counting on NCVVI and have been good friends to the organization over the years.

**July 4<sup>th</sup>:** This year's 4<sup>th</sup> of July activities at the Capitol grounds will be very much different this year. NCVVI has been asked to do the POW/MIA ceremony on the Capitol steps rather than at the memorial. There will be no uniform or weapon displays. As much membership support you can give is needed.

Bob Matthews was the Chef for the March meeting and Monica Cash is the volunteer Chef for June.

**Services honor 'last soldier' to leave Saigon:**The late Retired Army Major General Homer D. Smith

SAN ANTONIO -- A Texas man, who was key to saving thousands of lives in Vietnam, has died. Retired Army Major General Homer D. Smith, originally from Breckenridge, Texas, passed away in San Antonio on March 6. He was 89.

Smith, who was often referred to as the 'last soldier' to leave Saigon, participated in WW II, the Korean War, and served two tours of duty during the Vietnam War. It was during his second tour that Smith was in charge of planning and execution of "Operation Frequent Wind" and "Operation Baby-Lift". "Frequent Wind" facilitated the evacuation of 7,500 South Vietnamese, as well as U.S. Embassy personnel and military, from Saigon as the North Vietnamese entered in 1975. "Baby Lift" was responsible for the evacuation of ethnically-mixed Vietnamese orphan's prior to the fall of Saigon. Smith told the story of those final days in the Discovery channel productions. "Fall of Saigon" and "Operation Baby-Lift".

During the course of his military career, Smith received the Distinguished Service Medal with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters, the Legion of Merit and the Air Medal, among other honors.

### ***Bob Dylan performs in Vietnam***

Bob Dylan, famous for his antiwar songs during the Vietnam War, will perform in the Communist country for the first time in April, his promoter said Tuesday. Dylan will appear at an 8,250-seat stadium in Ho Chi Minh City on April 10, said Rod Quinton, general manager of Saigon Sound System. Dylan is popular in Vietnam because of his antiwar songs. His 1960s songs "Blowing' in the Wind" and "The Times They Are a-Changin'" were inspirations for the American civil rights and antiwar movements. General admission tickets are priced at 900,000 dong (\$43), slightly higher than Vietnam's monthly minimum wage.

**Scam aimed at vets, the message below, looking very official, is from a one-man scam operation in southern California.** Roger Simpson is one of the aliases of Phil Coleman, who has been running various kinds of scams on vets for a few years now. The last thing any vet should do is give this guy information of any sort. **Del.** *How to Become a Contact Person for your Military Unit, Vessel, School or Base. Locating those you, a friend or a relative served with to assist in reunions, obtaining history or witness support in a VA claim is often easier having them find you than searching for them. Use the website below to establish yourself as one of many contact person's for your or a relative's former military service locations. "Contact Person" registration forms are listed midway in the Index:<http://www.amervets.com/registry.htm>. (All registrations are listed in the Military and Veteran Personnel Database: <http://www.amervets.com/library>)Full list of Other Services*

**View All 20,412 Memorials for the Vietnam War Site** From 1955 to 1975, more than 3 million Americans fought in the Vietnam War. Nearly 60,000 American combatants were killed, and more than 150,000 wounded. While we tend to associate Vietnam with the draft, two-thirds of those who served in the conflict did so voluntarily. This memorial site was created to honor and remember all who served in Vietnam. The Vietnam War Memorial Site includes obituaries and Guest Books from the **Legacy.com** network of newspaper and funeral home affiliates.

**A fresh look at an old war...James Zumwalt's interview about his new book:** Members of the Zumwalt family have been proud members of the U.S. military since the Revolution. It was that tradition that led James Zumwalt to join his father and brother in the Navy, before transferring to the Marines. During his 26 years in uniform, the now-retired lieutenant colonel saw service in three conflicts -- Vietnam, Panama and the first Persian Gulf War. It was Vietnam, however, that ultimately launched him on an unexpected journey long after the U.S. abandoned that country. His trek was sparked by the loss of his brother, Elmo, who had fought there. Originally angry at the Vietnamese for the death of his older sibling, Zumwalt's new book, *Bare Feet, Iron Will: Stories from the Other Side of Vietnam's Battlefields*, traces his change of heart as he

returned to Southeast Asia. In this email exchange with **Battleland**, he speaks of what he has learned about yesterday's wars...and today's. Why write this book? It was written in an effort to help readers understand an aspect of the Vietnam War about which I believe we, as Americans, have lost sight. Regardless of the suffering, hardship and tragedy we experienced during that conflict, it was mirrored on the other side of the battlefield as well. There has been virtually nothing written about the war from our enemy's perspective. I felt an obligation, based on the transition I underwent from anger towards that enemy to gaining an appreciation as to the level of suffering and hardship he endured, to give a voice to his battlefield stories. Besides duration, how was Vietnam different than Panama or the first Gulf War, which you also fought in?

Both in Panama and the first Gulf War, US military objectives were clear cut and quickly achievable. Therefore, our exit strategy was never in doubt. Additionally because of this, both engagements were met with popular public support. James Zumwalt How much of the internal push for this book came from your family's sacrifices in Vietnam? My family has had a tradition of military service going back to the American Revolution. A Zumwalt served in every war in which our country fought during the 20th century. Therefore, it was not surprising that every male member of my immediate family volunteered to serve in the Vietnam conflict. We all returned safely from that war—or so we thought. My brother, Elmo, had served as a swift boat commander operating in Vietnam's narrow waterways. Thirteen years after returning home, Elmo was diagnosed with cancers caused by the chemical defoliant Agent Orange to which he had been exposed in Vietnam. The bitter irony for our family was that Agent Orange was sprayed along those waterways upon the orders of my father, Vice Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., who commanded all US naval forces in Vietnam.

I have discovered when tragedy strikes; it gives rise to an opportunity for those suffering its consequences to convert their personal loss into constructive positive energy or to allow it to transfer into all-consuming negative energy. For my father, it was the former path he took, throwing himself into the Agent Orange issue, working hard to convince the US government to recognize a correlation between exposure to the herbicide and various cancers, managing to win benefits for Vietnam veterans. I, on the other hand, allowed my grief to transfer into negative energy, manifesting itself into anger toward the enemy we had fought there. In 1994, my father was traveling to Vietnam to meet with its president to discuss the possibility of conducting a joint governmental study on Agent Orange. He asked if I would like to join him. While I was initially reluctant to do so, he suggested such a trip might prove therapeutic. As usual, he was right.

The anger over my brother's loss quickly faded after having a one-on-one meeting with a Vietnamese general by the name of Nguyen Huy Phan. He began our meeting by extending his condolences for the loss of my brother. As we began to discuss the war and its impact, I noticed he became teary-eyed. He later shared with me that he had lost a brother during the war and had spent 17 years looking for his remains. When the general shared this with me, it was if a light went on inside my head causing me to query, "Was the loss of a loved one any less significant just because it occurred on the other side of the battlefield?" The answer was obvious. The loss of a brother had been just as devastating for the general as it had been for me. Yet the anger I had been harboring against my enemy, the general failed to harbor against his. Unknowingly, General Phan, in sharing the story about his personal loss with me, caused me to re-think how I viewed the Vietnamese. I decided to return to Vietnam again (and did so more than 50 times) to interview as many of their veterans as possible to gain a better appreciation for how they fought the war and the suffering they endured in doing so. It did not take long for me to understand the principle of universal suffering experienced by all combatants on war's battlefields. Additionally, it gave me a comprehensive understanding of how patience and ingenuity served them well in fighting a super power. Little did I realize when the Vietnam conflict claimed my brother in 1988 that it would eventually send me on a journey that would not only enable me to heal my personal wounds from the war but set me on a path to humanize an enemy I had long been unwilling to embrace.

Do you ever to the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington? Why or why not? If so, what do you do there? I have been to The Wall on numerous occasions. My father and I visited the Memorial not long after my brother's death. Just prior to his own death in January 2000, my father became involved with the "In Memory Memorial, Inc."— an organization dedicated to recognizing the unrecognized heroes of the Vietnam War. The group sought to have a memorial added to The Wall in remembrance of those who made the ultimate sacrifice but failed to qualify to have their names placed on the Memorial — i.e., those Vietnam veterans who died of war related causes after the war had ended. These included veterans succumbing to Agent Orange-related cancers and to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder-related suicides. My father was unable to complete this mission before his life was cut short by an environmental cancer, like those caused by Agent Orange, typically targeting those in uniform — mesothelioma. As a result, I replaced him in the organization, testifying before both the House and Senate as to why the law needed to be modified in order to allow Vietnam War victims who died after the conflict to be honored as well. Congress agreed such recognition was warranted, in April 2000 authorizing placement of a plaque near The Wall to be added. That "In Memory Plaque", dedicated on November 10, 2004, bore a simple two-sentence inscription: "In memory of the men and women who served in the Vietnam War and later died as a result of their service. We honor and remember their sacrifice." The In Memory Plaque: Every April, an annual ceremony is held at The Wall to remember those Vietnam veterans who have died since the war of the aforementioned causes and, unfortunately, to recognize a new class of inductees who have achieved "In Memory" recognition, having fallen victim to the war's impact during the intervening year. This addition to The Wall provides many of us who have lost loved ones, now commemorated by the Plaque, a place to go to be able to honor and always remember them. What are the lessons of the Vietnam War for the U.S. military, and the country as a whole? Have we learned those lessons?

The main lesson of the Vietnam War is one, as we fight a new enemy in a new century; we still have failed to fully understand. It is a lesson taught to us more than 2500 years ago by a brilliant Chinese strategist by the name of Sun Tzu. He wrote a book, still in publication today, entitled "The Art of War." It espouses several principles of leadership a military commander should master before engaging an enemy on the battlefield. One cautions a commander never to engage an enemy on the battlefield unless he knows that enemy first. So often in the wars we have fought, we have failed to grasp the importance of this principle. Had we mastered it even after the Vietnam War, we would have recognized a key reason why the Vietnamese prevailed during the conflict. We would have recognized in fighting a generation plus of Vietnamese who had fought and defeated the French, the Japanese, the Americans, the Chinese and the Cambodians, we perhaps were fighting Vietnam's "greatest generation."

Where are we applying them, in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya? We have failed to learn Sun Tzu's lesson. But another lesson Vietnam should have taught us is the danger of undertaking military action without a clear-cut exit strategy. Putting aside the reality that every military action will have unique aspects that will impact on any pre-planned exit strategy; the focus should — at a minimum — involve identifying an achievable exit strategy at the outset. Unbelievably, after experiencing the problems we have encountered along these lines in wars such as Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq, we choose to inject ourselves into the unrest in Libya — again with no clear exit strategy explained at the outset. A clearer exit strategy existed prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, but quickly went awry once we disbanded the army and police forces, thus creating a vacuum that was quickly filled by instability and Islamic extremism. We managed to disrupt Iraqi nationalism—a card necessary to have in hand to play in order to achieve stability—to pave the way for an Islamic extremism fostering violence and instability.

In Afghanistan — a country devoid of nationalism motivated by tribal interests — it is virtually impossible to design, either before or after taking military action — a sustainable, coherent exit strategy because tribal motivations will always control, oftentimes bending with the wind. The nationalism card is

extremely difficult to play in Afghanistan because this tribal mentality has existed for generations — and will continue to do so for generations to come. Not even the iron fist of Genghis Khan could prove successful in maintaining stability in such a country. Undoubtedly, a 21st century Sun Tzu would have made some different decisions on whether and how to introduce forces onto each of these battlefields.

Are the Viet Cong any different from the Taliban? The enemy we fought in Vietnam is much different than the enemy we fight today in Iraq and Afghanistan. In interviewing hundreds of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese veterans for my book, I learned their motivations in fighting us on the battlefield were not too much different than ours in fighting them. Just like us, they were motivated to survive the war, to return to loved ones and to live life to its fullest. The enemy we fight today could not be more different. They are motivated, not to survive on the battlefield, but to die on it — as they believe such a death becomes a springboard for their entry to the afterlife and the heavenly rewards they will receive there. Sun Tzu's principle to know our enemy's mindset mandates we fully appreciate the Islamic extremist mindset and understand of what it — within the confines of its belief structure — is fully capable. It mandates we understand such an extremist mindset, also embraced by Iran's leaders, justified Tehran's use of children, during its 1980-1988 war with Iraq, to clear minefields. Prior to sacrificing their lives, these children were presented with plastic keys to wear around their necks, informed the key would open the gates to paradise where they would then be rewarded. Sun Tzu would caution us, if Iranian leaders are capable of sacrificing the lives of their own children in this way, to think about what such an Islamic extremist mindset — whether Taliban or Iranian — has in store for us. Another difference between the enemy we fought in Vietnam and the enemy we fight today is that, in failing to prevail in Vietnam, we never worried about the enemy following us home. Such is not the case today. Should we lose these wars, the enemy will — and already has started to—follow us home.

Was the Vietnam War a mistake? Why or why not? The Vietnamese believe the Vietnam War was a mistake of history — i.e., that never again will the Vietnamese have to fight a war with the U.S. For us, Vietnam was the wrong place to fight a war in Southeast Asia. A series of unfortunate events put both countries on a collision course. Before President Roosevelt died in 1945, he had let it be known he did not favor the French retaining Vietnam as a colony and supported self-determination by the Vietnamese. History played out differently as we went on to support the French after World War II in their struggle to maintain control of Vietnam, continuing that support up through the 1954 French defeat at Dien Bien Phu. Within a few years, the U.S. began sending advisors to South Vietnam. Fate would lead us from there to a full scale confrontation as mistake after mistake eventually put the U.S. and Vietnam on different sides of the battlefield. Even America's first casualty in Vietnam was a mistake. He was an Army officer by the name of A. Peter Dewey. A member of the Office of Strategic Services — the forerunner of today's CIA — Dewey arrived in Vietnam two days after Japan surrendered on September 2, 1945. His assignment was to help search for MIAs and to assist the English general who had just arrived in Saigon in maintaining order in the southern half of Vietnam. As he observed the English general treat the Vietnamese as a conquered people rather than an ally who had helped defeat the Japanese, Dewey voiced his displeasure to Washington. He quickly fell out of favor with the English general, who managed to get Dewey recalled to Washington. Just before Dewey left for Saigon airport to head home, he filed his last report on Vietnam. In a hauntingly ominous observation, he wrote: "Cochinchina (South Vietnam) is burning; the French and British are finished here, and we ought to clear out of Southeast Asia." Although Dewey's final report was received in Washington, he never made it home. He was ambushed on the way to the airport by Viet Minh (precursor to the Viet Cong) soldiers who mistook him for a French officer. Dewey not only became the first American post-World War II casualty of Vietnam, but also the first MIA there as well as his body was never recovered.

## **Agent Orange and the Fort McClellan connection:** by Rebecca H. Fass

Many Veterans of the Vietnam War are now applying for benefits for presumption of service connected diseases related to their service being exposed to agent orange. This is due to the VA announcing on 3/9/2010 an aggressive initiative to solicit private sector input on a proposed fast track for Veterans claims for illnesses due to agent orange. At the time they expected 200,000 claims and an average of 90 days to process the claim. Presently there are complaints that it is taking longer. This is due to more claims being submitted than they had envisioned and their staff limitations. Veterans applying who in the past were refused acceptance into the VA system if they get into the registry can now receive health care at the VA. They are also eligible for \$123 to \$2,673 dollars per month disability which is non-taxable.

You can apply online at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov). Where there is also information of the diseases that are presumed service related. This list is growing as veterans are aging. Many people do not realize that PCB is a principal component of agent orange. Or that Monsanto was the company manufacturing PCB and helping the Military make agent orange. It is due to this relationship that Anniston, Alabama is the site of one of the worst cases of chemical poisoning. They had Monsanto dumping tons of PCBs into the town and Fort McClellan nearby where the Army had their only stateside factory producing live agents of agent orange.

Fort McClellan was the army training fort for the WAC basic training. The population on the fort was 10,000 and many lived in Anniston where they were doubly exposed with PCBs. The Army Engineers stored their canisters of agent orange near the barracks of the WAC in basic training.

There is a saying in applying for benefits that there is a 1 boot rule. Which means if you stepped even 1 foot into Viet Nam or Thailand you have agent orange poisoning. However, this rule does not seem to apply to the WAC's who lived there and their boots stepped all over the Fort in the footsteps of the engineers in the factory. As well as the smoke that we breathed from their factory.

The Chemical Defense Training Facility at McClellan was the only facility in the country where live chemical agents were used in training. All military personnel who work with chemical weapons were required to train in the sealed chamber at this location, where they face live agents in full protective gear. Over 28,000 personnel have been through the facility. McClellan had other facilities and training programs for the disposal and detection of nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons. The post was also a major military police training center. The Fort covers 45,680 acres, much of which is training range that is still in use, administered by the National Guard, and as a support facility for operations at Anniston Army Depot, a major chemical weapons storage site nearby.

Ken Babbs' **"Who Shot the Water Buffalo?"** It's a first novel from a Vietnam War veteran appearing in 2011. It's also a serious novel — well, sort of — and it's set in 1961-62.

Babbs' time frame. I cannot think of another novel in that vast Vietnam War literary canon that takes place in the 1961-62 period — the very early stages of U.S. involvement in the war when a relative handful of American military "advisers" supported our South Vietnamese ally against the communist Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army. The overwhelming majority of Vietnam War novels are set in the bubbling cauldron of the war's intense years, 1966-69.

"Who Shot the Water Buffalo?" gives every indication of being semi-autobiographical. Babbs took Navy ROTC at Stanford, then went into the Marines. He landed in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot, evidently in 1961-62. His narrator, Maj. Tom Huckelbee, and his helicopter-flying buddy, Maj. Mike Cochran, are wise-cracking, trouble-making young Marines getting in and out of (mostly) innocent trouble in the war zone. They butt heads — no surprise — with by-the-book higher ups, not to mention our less-than-motivated South Vietnamese allies and the ever-present enemy. This novel is less "Platoon" than "M\*A\*S\*H"-like in its episodic plot line and cast of wacky officer characters. And there is a whiff of "Catch-22" in that the young pilots are forever matching wits with the military bureaucracy, with the stark reality of war lurking in the background. Babbs has cooked up an often funny, often light-hearted romp with enough moments of war hell that we are reminded that the Vietnam War (even in 1962) was, as the late '60s poster proclaimed, not healthy for children and other living things.

## **Time running out on US soldiers missing in Vietnam**

HANOI - WITH increasingly few of their families left alive and acidic soil eating into their buried remains, time is running out to find the last Americans listed as missing in action from the Vietnam War. But for the head of a relatives' group, giving up is not an option. 'We need to act now,' said Ann Mills-Griffiths, executive director of the National League of POW/MIA Families, whose brother has been missing since September 1966 when his navy aircraft disappeared over North Vietnam.

Almost four decades after the end of US combat involvement in the South-east Asian nation, few parents of about 1,700 missing soldiers and airmen are still alive and siblings are often in their 60s. Witnesses are also ageing, their fading physical and mental abilities limiting their ability to assist in investigations. Mrs. Mills-Griffiths, 69, was in Hanoi for talks that ended at the weekend with Vietnamese officials about a 'renewed effort' to open up archival records which could provide vital clues as to what happened in some of the cases.

She was optimistic that the records would be made available, with 'very good commitment' from the Vietnamese during the talks. 'But we're running out of time,' warned Mrs. Mills-Griffiths, who has made about 30 trips to Vietnam as head of the families' group. The US and Vietnam have cooperated on investigations into missing American servicemen since 1985 - 'the bridge', she says, which led to a normalization of diplomatic relations 10 years later. – AFP Copyright © 2010 Singapore Press Holdings

**Ischemic Heart Disease:** The VA now recognizes ischemic heart disease as an Agent Orange-related illness. What does this mean? If you have previously submitted a compensation request for an Agent Orange illness, but did not include ischemic heart disease, you can now make a claim (assuming you have been diagnosed with this disease). This also includes previous claims that were denied because this disease was not listed as a presumptive condition of Agent Orange. If you are now receiving care from the VA and they are treating you for ischemic heart disease, they may be contacting you soon under the *Nehmer v. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs* decision. The Vietnam Veterans of America has produced a handy guide on Vietnam Veterans and ischemic heart disease. it is available on-line and is a useful, informative guide to veterans

**Concussions Now Qualify for Purple Heart:** The Army has announced a clarification in its guidelines for receiving a Purple Heart, with an emphasis on battlefield concussions being eligible for the medal. Official Army guidelines have long considered combat-sustained concussions a valid injury worthy of the Purple Heart, but in practice, it has been left to doctors or battlefield commanders to decide whether a blow to the head during combat warranted the medal. With recent studies on brain trauma, however, the rules have been revised to state what constitutes a concussion, with symptoms including momentary loss of consciousness or memory, dizziness, headache, nausea or light sensitivity. Medical treatment, also required for the medal, is defined by the rules to include merely rest and Tylenol. If you are a Soldier who suffered a concussion and feel you may not have been appropriately recognized for a Purple Heart, the Army urges you to re-apply through your chain of command. Veterans can call 888-276-9472 or 888-276-9472



## WALTER JOSEPH MARM JR. (1941- )



Second Lieutenant, Platoon Leader, 2nd Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion 7th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) Vietnam War: Ia Drang Valley, Republic of Vietnam, 14 November 1965. Should have been portrayed in the film: *We Were Soldiers (2002)*

### Medal of Honor Citation

Rank and organization: First Lieutenant (then 2d Lt.), U.S. Army, Company A, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). place and date: Vicinity of Ia Drang Valley, Republic of Vietnam, 14 November 1965. Entered service at: Pittsburgh, pa. Born: 20 November 1941, Washington, pa. G.O. No.: 7, 15 February 1967. Citation: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty. As a platoon leader in the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), 1st Lt. Marm demonstrated indomitable courage during a combat operation. His company was moving through the valley to relieve a friendly unit surrounded by an enemy force of estimated regimental size. 1st Lt. Marm led his platoon through withering fire until they were finally forced to take cover. Realizing that his platoon could not hold very long, and seeing four enemy soldiers moving into his position, he moved quickly under heavy fire and annihilated all 4. Then, seeing that his platoon was receiving intense fire from a concealed machinegun, he deliberately exposed himself to draw its fire. Thus locating its position, he attempted to destroy it with an antitank weapon. Although he inflicted casualties, the weapon did not silence the enemy fire. Quickly, disregarding the intense fire directed on him and his platoon, he charged 30 meters across open ground, and hurled grenades into the enemy position, killing some of the 8 insurgents manning it. Although severely wounded, when his grenades were expended, armed with only a rifle, he continued the momentum of his assault on the position and killed the remainder of the enemy. 1st Lt. Marm's selfless actions reduced the fire on his platoon, broke the enemy assault, and rallied his unit to continue toward the accomplishment of this mission. 1st Lt. Marm's gallantry on the battlefield and his extraordinary intrepidity at the risk of his life are in the highest traditions of the U.S. Army and reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of his country.

Joe Marm's Medal of Honor-earning actions have been described by eyewitnesses as "just like in a John Wayne movie". Early on in the battle, as the first wave of 1-7th Cav troops spread out from LZ X-Ray in search of the main body of North Vietnamese troops, one platoon from Company B, whose leader had earlier vowed to earn the Medal of Honor, pushed out faster than the others in pursuit of an enemy recon patrol they had spotted, and then were quickly cut off and surrounded by an at least battalion-sized force. The platoon leader, platoon sergeant and over half the men were killed or wounded within the first five minutes of fighting, and command of the survivors fell upon one of the squad leaders, Sergeant Ernie Savage. As fighting broke out all around LZ X-Ray with at least 3 North Vietnamese regiments attempting to overrun the LZ, much of Moore's attention and energy on the first day and a half of fighting was focused on directing the remainder of Company B and the adjacent companies in attempting to break through the few hundred yards to rescue the surrounded platoon. The closest they got on the first day was when Marm's 2nd Platoon of Company A got within 100 yards of Savage's position but was pinned down by a North Vietnamese machine gun position behind one of the many termite hills in and around LZ X-Ray, which provided natural defilade positions for both sides. Marm and his platoon began crawling toward the machine gun nest while

he tried unsuccessfully to knock it out with a light antitank weapon (a small shoulder-fired rocket); impatient and wanting to get the job done, Marm ran across 30 yards of open ground directly at the termite hill, threw grenades into the machine gun nest on the other side, then charged over the top, firing his M-16 rifle, killing a dozen North Vietnamese but getting shot in the face in the process; his injury was quite similar to, but more severe than, that sustained in the Medal of Honor-earning actions of another officer a century earlier who also served in the 7th Cavalry, [Thomas Ward Custer](#).

Joe Marm eventually recovered from his wounds and had risen to the rank of Colonel by the time the book was published. Jack Geoghegan was killed in action while his platoon was defending a section of the LZ perimeter from a North Vietnamese attack the next morning; one of his men, PFC Willie Godboldt, had been badly wounded and was calling for help, and rather than allowing another platoon member to risk his life, Geoghegan left his foxhole and went to Godboldt's aid himself, and was fatally shot doing so. (Godboldt died of his wounds shortly afterward.) As a result of Wallace's turning Geoghegan into a composite character, Marm's Medal of Honor action and Geoghegan's and Godboldt's deaths were combined in the film into a single incident, with Geoghegan attacking the termite hill machine gun nest with Godboldt's assistance and then Godboldt getting hit while they withdraw back toward the perimeter, with Geoghegan getting killed going back for him. Joe Marm, now resides in Durham, NC, was left out of the movie, "We Were Soldiers" even as a MOH recipient.

### **Vietnamese Dissident Jailed**

Mr. Vu was arrested in November and charged with anti-state propaganda for posting articles on the Web and giving interviews critical of the state, according to authorities. Cu Huy Ha Vu is escorted by policemen after his trial at a court in Hanoi April 4, 2011. Vu, a legal scholar who sued Vietnam's prime minister and called for an end to one-party rule, was sentenced on Monday to seven years in prison.

A Vietnamese dissident and legal scholar from a prominent family has been sentenced to seven years in jail for allegedly attempting to subvert the Vietnamese government. Cu Huy Ha Vu is charged with calling for the dissolution of Vietnam's ruling Communist Party, advocating a multi-party system, and characterizing the Vietnam War as a civil war. According to news agency reports, Mr. Vu told the court, "I did not commit the crime of spreading propaganda against the state. This criminal case was invented against me. This case is completely illegal."

Mr. Vu, who has a doctoral degree in legal theory from the Sorbonne, was arrested in November and charged with anti-state propaganda for posting articles on the Web and giving interviews critical of the state, according to authorities. In calling for a multiparty system, Mr. Vu said, the Vietnamese Communist Party serves only "the illegal benefits of a small group." He also criticized the jailing of "hundreds of thousands" of former South Vietnamese soldiers and officials after the Communists won the Vietnam War in 1975.

In 2009, Mr. Vu sued Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung for approving a controversial Chinese-run bauxite mining operation in the Central Highlands. He sued the prime minister again last year for signing a decree that prohibited class-action complaints. As a widely respected attorney, Mr. Vu has represented the interests of a wide base of individuals, including workers, bloggers, Catholic parishioners and land rights activists. Vigils at Catholic churches were inspired by Mr. Vu's support last year for Catholics embroiled in a land dispute with Vietnamese authorities.

The United States is deeply concerned by the conviction and sentencing of Cu Huy Ha Vu. The United States is also troubled by the apparent lack of due process in the conduct of the trial, and the continued detention of several individuals who were peacefully seeking to observe the proceedings. Mr. Vu's conviction runs counter to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and raises serious questions about Vietnam's commitment to the rule of law and reform. No individual should be imprisoned for exercising the right to free speech. The United States urges the government of Vietnam to immediately release Cu Huy Ha Vu and all other prisoners of conscience. Activists say the party increased its repression of dissidents and pro-democracy activists ahead of a five-year party Congress in January. In Hanoi this week, a high-profile

Vietnamese legal activist, Cu Huy Ha Vu, was sentenced to seven years in jail on charges of trying to subvert the government. Dylan's Ho Chi Minh City concert follows the 10th anniversary of the April 1 death of anti-war Vietnamese folksinger Trinh Cong Son; a contemporary of Dylan's who was known internationally as the "Bob Dylan of Vietnam."

**Vietnam 'MIA remains' to return to US HANOI** — Remains believed to be from American servicemen missing in action after aircraft crashes in the Vietnam War will be returned to the United States, officials said Friday. The move follows excavations conducted jointly by investigators from the US Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and their Vietnamese counterparts. Following a ceremony on Saturday four groups of remains will be flown from Danang, in central Vietnam, to Hawaii for further identification, said Ron Ward of the JPAC.

Some were uncovered during a mission in the Central Highlands province of Kon Tum at a site believed to be associated with the 1966 crash of a large transport aircraft, Ward said. Other suspected remains came from an area in Quang Tri province, along the former demilitarised zone, where a US Marines CH-46 transport helicopter went down in 1967, he added.

A resident in Lang Son province, bordering China, also handed over other remains believed linked to the loss of an F-4 fighter-bomber. Excavation in Tay Ninh province adjacent to Cambodia led to what Ward said are probably remains of another soldier listed as missing in action (MIA).

The working relationship between the US and Vietnamese sides is "at such a level now that really allows us to expand and move forward on our operations here," said Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Keane, commander of JPAC's Hanoi detachment. The US and Vietnam began cooperating on investigations into missing American servicemen in 1985, helping to pave the way for a normalization of diplomatic relations 10 years later.

On Thursday investigators marked the 10th anniversary of a helicopter crash which killed seven American military men and nine Vietnamese on a joint mission to search for US MIAs. Senior officials from both nations, along with relatives of the dead, attended the ceremony at a commemorative monument near the crash site in the north-central province of Quang Binh, Ward said.

Since the end of US combat involvement in 1973, the remains of 668 Americans listed as missing during the war have been repatriated from Vietnam and identified but 1,303 are still unaccounted for, the US says. Hanoi says about 300,000 North Vietnamese soldiers are also still listed as missing from the war.

## **Brother still haunted 40 years after pilot's crash during Vietnam War**

BY DONNA VICKROY Sun-Times Media/dvickroy@suntimes.

Lt. Col. Jeff Lemon, who was shot down in Vietnam 40 years ago today, may still be held captive, his brother says. For Kevin Lemon, hope is cruel. If it comes through for the former Flossmoor resident, what he hopes for will be accompanied by unimaginable horrors. If it doesn't, it means a loved one has died. For the younger brother of a tough Air Force pilot who was declared missing in action during the Vietnam War, the battle for peace of mind still wages. "When you think about what could have transpired, what could have happened to him if he did survive all these years, well, you hope he didn't," Lemon said.

But then, "A part of you hopes he did." Today marks the 40th anniversary of the night Lt. Col. Jeffrey Lemon's F-4 Phantom was shot down over Laos. Barb (Lemon) Sujewicz believes that their mom, Mary Carol Lemon, went to her grave holding out hope that the oldest of her five children was alive. Over the years, the reports that have come in regarding Jeff Lemon have run the gamut. In some, he was killed in the crash. In others, he was shot while parachuting. In the most recent, he is still alive, being held prisoner in a jungle cave in northeastern Laos.

Jeff Lemon graduated from Infant Jesus of Prague grammar school in Flossmoor and the former Mendel Catholic High School in Chicago. He attended Villanova University in Philadelphia, graduating with a degree in civil engineering in 1965. There he met his future wife, Jane. Kevin Lemon said his brother was working as an engineer when he first saw a formation of F-4s fly overhead. "He decided right then that he wanted to be a pilot," Kevin said. Jeff joined the Air Force. He was sent to Vietnam in 1970. On April 25,

1971, he and 1st Lt. Walter Sigafos III departed DaNang Airbase as the lead aircraft in a flight of two. The crew of the other aircraft reported that Lemon's plane had crashed and burned.

After a two-day search, the men were declared MIA. Because Jeff Lemon's remains were not found, questions linger. From 1975 to 1990, refugees fled Southeast Asia, bringing with them reports of Americans held prisoner or unaccounted for. The U.S. government reportedly refutes those that do not offer proof. Searchers have been to Lemon's alleged crash sites three times but have yet to turn up any evidence.

Kevin Lemon received an alleged eyewitness report last year that stated an American named Jeffrey Lemon was one of three captives being held at a camp in Laos. The report was generated in 2006. But the U.S. government puts little credibility in it, he said. POW Jeff Lemon was described as being somewhat of a discipline problem. He was defiant and deemed untrustworthy and thus had to be held at a maximum-security status. "That totally describes my brother," Kevin Lemon said.

### **Madame Nhu, Vietnam War Lightning Rod, Dies By JOSEPH R. GREGORY**

Madame Nhu, who as the glamorous official hostess in South Vietnam's presidential palace became a politically powerful and often harshly outspoken figure during the Vietnam War, died on Sunday in Rome, where she had been living. She was believed to be 87. Her death was confirmed by her sister, Lechi Oggeri. Born in 1924 — the date is uncertain, though some sources say April 15 — she spent the last four decades in Rome and southern France. Her parents named her Tran Le Xuan, or "Beautiful Spring." As the official hostess to the unmarried president of South Vietnam, her brother-in-law, she was formally known as Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu. But to the American journalists, diplomats and soldiers caught up in the intrigues of Saigon in the early 1960s, she was "the Dragon Lady," a symbol of everything that was wrong with the American effort to save her country from Communism.

In those years, before the United States deepened its military involvement in the war, Madame Nhu thrived in the eye of her country's gathering storm as the wife of Ngo Dinh Nhu, the younger brother and chief political adviser to Ngo Dinh Diem, the president of South Vietnam from 1955 until 1963. While her husband controlled the secret police and Special Forces, Madame Nhu acted as a forceful counterweight to the diffident president, badgering Diem's aides, allies and critics with unwelcome advice, public threats and subtle manipulations. Then, after both men were murdered in a military coup mounted with the tacit support of the United States, she slipped into obscurity.

In her years in the spotlight, when she was in her 30s, she was beautiful, well coiffed and petite. She made the form-fitting ao dai her signature outfit, modifying the national dress with a deep neckline. Whether giving a speech, receiving diplomats or reviewing members of her paramilitary force of 25,000 women, she drew photographers like a magnet. But it was her impolitic penchant for saying exactly what she thought that drew world attention. In the pivotal year of 1963, as the war with the North worsened, discontent among the South's Buddhist majority over official corruption and failed land reform efforts fueled protests that culminated in the public self-immolations of several Buddhist monks. Shocking images of the fiery suicides raised the pressure on Diem, as did Madame Nhu's well-publicized reaction. She referred to the suicides as "barbecues" and told reporters, "Let them burn and we shall clap our hands."

In 1955, Diem became president of the newly independent South Vietnam, his authority menaced by private armies, gangsters and disloyal officers like General Hinh. Madame Nhu publicly urged Diem to act. This only embarrassed him, and he exiled her to a convent in Hong Kong. Then he reconsidered, took her advice, smashed his opponents and forced Hinh into exile. Madame Nhu returned, complaining that life in the convent had been "just like the Middle Ages." But then, so was the lot of most Vietnamese women. After winning a seat in the National Assembly in 1956, Madame Nhu pushed through measures that increased women's rights. She also orchestrated government moves to ban contraceptives and abortion, outlaw adultery, forbid divorce and close opium dens and brothels. "Society," she declared, "cannot sacrifice morality and legality for a few wild couples."

Meanwhile, she kept a tight emotional hold on the president. According to a C.I.A. report, Diem came to think of his sister-in-law like a spouse. She "relieves his tension, argues with him, needles him, and, like a Vietnamese wife, is dominant in the household," the report said. It also said that their relationship was definitely not sexual. When Diem, who was notoriously prudish, once questioned the modesty of Madame

Nhu's low-cut dress, she was said to have snapped back: "It's not your neck that sticks out, it's mine. So shut up."

In fact, both their lives were on the line. In 1962, renegade Vietnamese Air Force pilots bombed and strafed the presidential palace. Diem was not hurt. Madame Nhu fell through a bomb hole in her bedroom to the basement two floors below, suffering cuts and bruises. Vietnamese officers were judged by their loyalty to Diem and Nhu, who kept their best troops close to Saigon, to the exasperation of the Americans. As Communist strength grew, the South's internal stresses mounted. Diem sought compromise with dissidents, but he was undercut by the Nhus. In August 1963, thousands of Buddhists were arrested and interned. In Washington, Madame Nhu's father declared that Diem's government had done more damage than even the Communists and resigned as ambassador; her mother, South Vietnam's observer at the United Nations, also quit. "We do not wish to know her," they said.

That fall, Madame Nhu went on an American speaking tour, criticizing Diem's critics as soft on communism. She was in Los Angeles on Nov. 1 when news flashed that Diem and her husband had been shot to death in a coup. "The deaths were murders," she told reporters, "either with the official or unofficial blessing of the American government." Refused permission to return to Vietnam, she and her children moved to Rome to be near her brother-in-law, Archbishop Ngo Dinh Thuc. In July 1966, in a vehemently anti-American interview with a French journalist, she expressed sympathy for the Vietnamese Communists and declared that America preaches "the liberty of the jungle."

### **Parents take DNA tests to find children lost in war**

People have samples taken for DNA tests Monday with hopes that they will help find their children that were evacuated under a US operation, dubbed Operation Babylift Vietnamese people whose children were evacuated on flights by the US in April 1975 when the Vietnam War was coming to an end had samples taken for DNA tests on Monday with hopes to find their kids. Luyen Quoc Hai, director general of Hanoi-based Bionet Vietnam Biotechnology Joint-stock Company, said the non-profit Operation Reunite will send all the samples of lost children from the US to Vietnam for DNA comparison. Once there are matches, they will conduct more tests for confirmation, according to Hai.

The Operation Reunite was founded in 2003 by Trista Goldberg, who was also brought out of Vietnam under the US-initiated Operation Babylift and found her birth parents in 2002. The organization works to build a bank of DNA data of Vietnamese families looking for their lost children and "babylift" babies so they can re-unite.

**ARLINGTON, Virginia — A legendary Hmong general who led a CIA-backed "secret army" in the Vietnam war was honored at Arlington National Cemetery on Friday**, three months after US authorities refused his burial there. In a move hailed by his family, the US Army sent an honor guard and wreath-bearer for the ceremony for General Vang Pao and other veterans at Arlington, the traditional resting place of US veterans.

"It is good that the US government, and the US Army sent an honor guard to participate in this ceremony," his 59-year-old son Chong Vang told AFP after the 90-minute ceremony at the Lao Veterans of America monument in the cemetery.

The 81-year-old general died on January 6 in California, and was buried near Los Angeles on February 9 after efforts failed to persuade US authorities to allow his burial at Arlington. US intelligence agents tapped Vang Pao when they sought a force in Laos to fight off North Vietnamese communists, who along with the United States had turned the neighboring country into a battleground. Vang Pao became legendary for his organizational skills from his mountain post, guiding everything from US air strikes to medical supplies and managing a motley army of Hmong, lowland Lao and Thai mercenaries. North Vietnam triumphed in 1975 by seizing Saigon, and communists afterward took over Laos. Vang Pao was sentenced to death in absentia and became the leader for some 250,000 Hmong who moved to the United States. But Vang Pao remained a

controversial figure. In 2007, he was arrested in California on charges of plotting to overthrow a foreign government, although prosecutors dropped their charges in 2009.

Speaking after Friday's ceremony, Vang Pao's son said he still believed his father should be buried in Arlington, rather than in California where he died in January. "He's almost like the US army, but he's not a US citizen, so that's why... they didn't allow my father to be buried in Arlington.... For myself I think he deserves to be buried in Arlington," he added.

Colonel Wangyee Vang of the Lao Veterans of America Institute (LVAI) was to pay tribute to Vang Pao at the ceremony. "During the Vietnam conflict, we fought side-by-side the United States in Southeast Asia against the advancement of the communists' expansion," he was due to say, according to the text of his address.

"From the period of 1961 to 1975, we lost over 35,000 young brave men and women. And on January 6, 2011, we also lost our leader." He added that, 36 years after the end of the war, "those veterans and their families who we left behind, in the jungle of the Kingdom of Laos, still struggle for freedom in that part of the world." They are being chased and killed by the current government of Laos because of they were allies with the United States during the war. The United States must not forget the loyalty of their allies," he added.

**ALERT: A FREE APPLICATION DOWNLOAD FOR SMART PHONES CAN SCAN AND READ VA MEDICAL CARDS AND HOSPITAL BRACELETS. THIS INFORMATION HAS YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY INFORMATION. THE VA IS AWARE OF THIS POTENTIAL, DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION OF VETERANS.**



In honor of Rev. Charles Long, NCVVI has made a donation to the Building Fund of the Central Highlands Dega. We have lost another "Hero"



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***Reminder: NCVVI holds a remembrance service on the Capital grounds, Raleigh, NC, the first Saturday of each month (12:00 noon) and the monthly business meeting on the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) Tuesday of each month in Cary, NC. (6:00 PM)***

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