



NEWS AND VIEWS

VVA # 223

THE REDWOOD EMPIRE CHAPTER

Volume 15, Issue 12
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VETERANS MEMORIAL AT CITY HALL

Veterans Day Flag Raising

By Charles Earthman

Raising the colors at Santa Rosa's City Hall Veterans Memorial on Veterans Day has become a local tradition. Either a veterans group or an active-duty unit color guard has raised the colors at the eleventh hour on the eleventh day of the eleventh month for the past 17 years. Veterans groups, community leaders, and the general public have gathered for this event that displays the true essence of Veterans Day.

This year's event was attended by less people than in the past, perhaps because Veterans Day came on a Monday this year. Many working people and school kids had a three-day weekend which allowed a chance for whole families to get away. Also, The Press Democrat did not publish any notice of the event.

Those who did attend helped to continue this flag-raising tradition and were part of a solemn ceremony to honor those veterans who have answered the call to protect our liberty from the First World War to the present. VVA Chapter 223's Color Guard, led by Dave Philips (a former drill sergeant), raised the colors at the proper time and Chapter President Ken Holybee served as emcee for the event.

This year Chapter 223 sent a letter inviting every city and county official to this event. We felt it was important to let our elected community leaders know that this event was taking place and to invite their support and participation. We will continue to do this and we hope the response will grow at future events.

Santa Rosa Mayor Scott Bartley, former Vice Mayor and City Council member Erin Carlstrom, and City Council member Julie Combs were on hand and said a few words. Like many Americans, each speaker has had family members who have served in past military conflicts. This is truly a day for all citizens. Also on hand was Sonoma County Supervisor Efren Carrillo. County Supervisor Shirlee Zane, an ardent supporter of veterans and the daughter of a decorated military aviator, was not there this year because of another commitment, but she has been a supporter of this event in past years. We missed her.

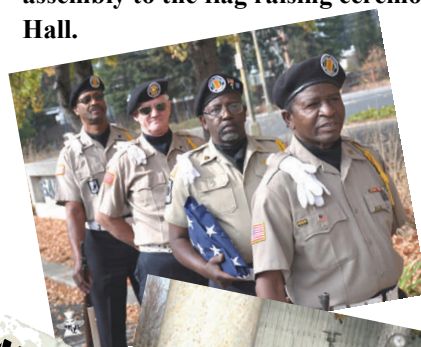
The Veterans Day Flag Raising at City Hall has been and will continue to be an important ceremony for the Sonoma County Veteran Community and, whether it is attended by 20 or 200 people, it will continue to be a tradition in our community for years to come.



Charles Earthman



Santa Rosa Mayor Scott Bartley welcomes the assembly to the flag raising ceremony at City Hall.





**VIETNAM VETERANS of AMERICA
REDWOOD EMPIRE CHAPTER 223
SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA**

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President's Letter

By Ken Holybee

It seems like a long time ago that VVA used grass roots activism to educate our representatives. That time is here again with the introduction of Senate Bill 1602.

Latest Title: A bill to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs a national center for the diagnosis, treatment, and research of health conditions of the descendants of veterans exposed to toxic substances during service in the Armed Forces, to provide certain services to those descendants, to establish an advisory board on exposure to toxic substances, and for other purposes.

Sponsor: Senator Blumenthal, Richard [CT] (introduced 10/29/2013) Cosponsors (None)

Latest Major Action: 10/29/2013 Referred to Senate committee. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

This is a bill that we have been working on for the last four years in the national Agent Orange Committee. We are now at the point that we need everyone to contact their Senators and request that they cosponsor and support this bill. This is for our children and future generations of the children of all veterans. Every generation of veterans has been exposed to toxins created to "assist" us during combat. We know the effects caused by exposure to toxins while serving and we have seen the problems this has caused to veterans through the years.

On a lighter note, the film "Bravo" was a huge success at the Chapter showing. We had over 120 people in attendance. At the board meeting we were asked about another showing of this film and we discussed showing other films. We would like to show a film a month and are hoping to get some good documentaries. Some that we are looking at showing are "the Secret Agent", a 1983 film on Agent Orange and how the government and the chemical companies say it will not harm us. A new film just came out on Veterans Day called "Gold Star Children," an excellent film about children that lost a parent to combat action.



Ken Holybee

NOTICE

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To make a contribution to the News and Views, submit a story, or a photograph, please call or email: Brooke McKusick @ 537-9003, or mcq6@vbbn.com. To make a complaint about the newsletter, please call: Ken Holybee @ 887-8891, or holybee@comcast.net

VVA Chapter 223 invites you to place an ad in the News and Views, please call:

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2013 VVA 223 XMAS PARTY

By Charles Earthman

Well it's here again, the Chapter 223 Christmas Party, that fun-filled event that marks the end of another year. This is a celebration of all the good things that happen to us throughout the year. A time to give thanks and say goodbye to another year. The years seem to go by faster as we grow older; all the more reason to celebrate while we can.

On December 6, 2013, things get started early in the morning when Richard Jones and a crew of volunteers opens the kitchen and begins preparing a feast of traditional fare that will delight all. Kate O'Hare Palmer, Jil McGivney, and other volunteers will be setting up the main ballroom at the Veterans Memorial Building. Your help is always needed and welcome. Many things that need to be done such as trimming the tree, which is always fun (how can it not be?) and decorating the ballroom--making it all Christmas-like in preparation for Santa and wide-eyed children full of awe.

Decorating gets started around noon. Kate leads the decorating crew, which you can be a part of: just drop by. This year the party will be in the main ballroom again and there will be a lot to do, both setting up and taking down.

The turkeys and Christmas dinner are purchased with the help of generous donations from Chapter members and the community. Donations for the raffle and silent auction also come from Chapter members and the community and are coordinated by Jerry Shimmel who does a great job for this popular every year. Jil McGivney will be in charge of gathering gifts for the children; she did a great job last year with her North Pole Connections.

There is always a lot to do and lots of fun to have at this event. The Christmas Party is the Chapter's annual get together and a nice addition to your holiday season. We hope to see you there.

ANNUAL PETALUMA VETERANS DAY PARADE A North Bay Tradition for 23 Years By Charles Earthman

High school marching bands, mounted color guards, and motor vehicles of all kind--on the ground and in the air--pleased onlookers of all ages at the 2013 Petaluma Veterans Day Parade. The parade route wound its way through Historic Downtown Petaluma to finish back where it started at Walnut Park. It is the largest Veterans Day Parade north of the Golden Gate and this year thousands lined the parade route to cheer the participants in this year's event.

This year's Grand Marshalls were four World War II Veterans born in Petaluma; Erv Giacomini, Owen Fredricks, Bruno Lombardi and Robert Harriott. Veterans from many other armed conflicts representing all branches of the military were in the parade. This event showcases the patriotism of Northern Californians and the support we give to active duty men and women and the many veterans that live here who have proudly served.

The parade featured a choreographed drill team of electric wheelchair and scooter-riding veterans called "The Hill's Angels" from the Veterans Home of Yountville and flyovers by a restored Huey Helicopter (a slick with door gunners) and vintage WWII aircraft.



Vietnam veterans were well represented by a myriad of groups including Chapter 223. Vietnam vets, who are mostly senior citizens, rode in vehicles and on floats but some of these old geezers were still able to proudly march and carry the banners of their various veterans' service organizations. Chapter 223 had a rather large contingent of these guys carrying the Chapter banner. They were followed by the Chapter's POW/MIA exhibit displayed on a trailer. A lot of 223 Chapter members participated in the parade.

The day's events culminated with a ceremony at the gazebo in Walnut Park. The weather was very cooperative and it was a very nice day for Northern California veterans, their families, and friends.

See more pictures of the parade on page 6...

VA sends Alan Dalton To the back of the line!

By Mike Hart

When you ask Alan Dalton how he's feeling these days you get the feeling he's doing well, but then you know what he's been through.

'Hero' today is an overworked name for someone who joined or got drafted and went to overseas duty in some form or another. A 'grunt' could lose an arm and a leg and receive a Purple Heart or other commendation for his dismemberment. A clerk in a support unit could catch a minute piece of a mortar or rocket in the buttocks and he will get the Purple Heart.

In the eyes of the public they are both Purple Heart soldiers, thus, many of today's 'heroes' are born. Alan Dalton, a fellow member of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 223, shows us how his courage, determination, strength and patience has carried him through a ten year fight for compensation from his debilitating experience with Agent Orange.



Mike Hart



A-4 Skyhawk



Alan Dalton

Dalton was kind of a wonder boy in the service, rising from airman recruit at NTC, San Diego to lieutenant and pilot in VX-4 at Pt. Mugu, Ca. His circuitous journey through military aviation landed him at Yankee Station, South China Sea, off of Vietnam's North Coast. Just before this duty he had served at a refilling base for Agent Orange in Vietnam, the deadly poison that has affected so many soldiers and their offspring. 'It was all over the place and we had it all over us, said 'AB'. When we flew it was all over us in the air and on the ground... the whole place was denuded.'

Because of this chemical poison Dalton has now had both legs and a thumb amputated and is continuing dialysis for his kidney replacement; all due to diabetes caused from his direct contact with Agent Orange. As if this isn't enough to endure, Dalton has been having a very difficult time dealing with compensation from the VA.

‘The VA rules say to get compensation for Vietnam duty you must have boots on the ground,’ explained the alert and friendly ex-aviator. ‘Since I was flying off a carrier ‘over’ Vietnam they first wouldn’t give me credit for my 1300 hours as an air crewman (combat) and 2500 hours as an A-4 Skyhawk and F-4 Phantom II pilot.’

He has been through many VA hearing (cancelled), appeals, meetings (cancelled) etc... to try to help to overcome the VA in this series of injustices. He has even had the likes of Congress people involved in nudging the VA, e.g. Diane Feinstein and Mike Thompson of Northern California. Dalton has another hearing coming up when the VA will supposedly have new data concerning his combat status at the time and relate it to his medical history. But there seems to be another snafu coming.

Now the VA tells Dalton he must go to the end of the line in the hearing process, which seems unjustified since he has already been engaged in this debacle for over 10 years. “It’s been a series of oversights by the VA. For all that time my self and my family should have been compensated for my care,” he said.

No matter what the outcome of this abomination of justice the members of VVA 223 welcome the presence of our 'hero' in our midst. He can be found volunteering at the Tuesday morning 'Vet Connect' outreach at the Santa Rosa Veteran's Building or at VVA food distribution events.



VVA California State Council Meeting - October 26-27, 2013



by Kate O'Hare-Palmer
VVA Chapter 223 State Council Representative
VVA CSC
National Women Veteran Committee Chair



It was a lively meeting this weekend and much information was exchanged. Wayne Reynolds, the VVA National Treasurer, visited with us this weekend. He was pleased to meet Yosemite Sam on his drive through Yosemite National Park! His message was simple, many of us are getting up there in years (hey) had we need to remember why we are in the VVA. We are a corporation, and we have been active in securing veterans rights and benefits for all veterans. We need to be proud of that and continue to work together for the best interests of each other.

Sons and Daughters in Touch spoke with us about a new DVD that has come out about GOLD STAR CHILDREN. We had a viewing of it on Saturday night, and there was not a dry eye in the room. These children and adults (from our era) are reaching out to the 9/11 children and the newer gold star children from our current wars. There are about 20,000 gold star children from the Vietnam era. The film will have three showings in Washington, D.C. over Veterans Day. It will be on line through the Pentagon Channel and the military website. A resolution was passed for CSC VVA to support and endorse this film. One of our members stated that the Marine Memorial Club in SF has a gold star family event every February and reminded us of the California Gold Star License Plate.

The combined federal campaign is underway and Dick Southern could still use help with volunteers at federal agencies throughout the state.

Our Secretary, Tom Hohmann, reminded all the chapters to check out the website. We have all the chapter information there and many newsletters are posted there. The message board is there for us to use and exchange information.

We are also reminded of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War programs that need to be developed throughout the community. There are guidelines on the website and each chapter is encouraged to participate.

The 25th Anniversary for the Dedication California Vietnam Memorial is getting close. November 22 & 23, 2013 in Sacramento. Ken Holybee and Pete Conaty have been working hard. A No Host Social is scheduled for November 22nd from 5:30-7:30pm at the Holiday Inn Capitol Plaza. There will be ceremonies starting at 9:00am on the 23rd and ending with a Memorial Banquet at the Sheraton Grand Hotel at 7pm.

For more information : [HTTPS://www.facebook.com/events/357901990982757/?ref=22](https://www.facebook.com/events/357901990982757/?ref=22).

Veteran ID Cards are now available at some of the Veterans Service offices. These would help with recognition at stores for their discounts and for those folks that don't have any other form of ID. Don't get too excited... there are only 5 VSO's in the state that have the machines to make them! Keep asking.

AVVA had a presentation on The Heart of the Horse Therapy Ranch in Clovis Ca. !! This offers a "hands on" experience with horses to those who have special needs whether it be physical, mental, and emotional or social. They work with veterans as well as all age groups. Their motto is "a place where the hearts and lives can be changed." This ranch is a

non-profit organization and is solely dependent on donations. They are gratefully partnering with Break the Barriers; Valley Children's Hospital, VA Hospital of Central California, VVA, Over Comers Ministry of People's Church/ Easter Seals, and others. Eight lessons cost about \$150 to provide. AVVA donated \$250. A Field trip to the ranch is planned for the spring State Council Meeting so that some of us can experience the program. For more information: heartofthehorsetherapy@gmail.com. 559 297 7100.

The second resolution of the meeting came out of the Women Veteran/PTSD committee. VVA CSC now supports the use of the slogan "Stop Military Sexual Trauma in our U.S. Troops." On Monday, October 28, 2013, The Committee on Veterans Affairs held an oversight hearing with the Legislative Women's Caucus (Bonnie Lowenthal, Ch) on MST: How MST impacts California and What Supportive Programs are in Place for Survivors. You can go to: assemblyca.gov/audiotv to listen to past hearings that have taken place for the California Legislature.

I am off to Washington, D.C., in a few days to participate in the 20th Anniversary of The Vietnam Women's Memorial. It will be a time to get together with some old friends and former tent mates! I'm sending kind thoughts to all.

There was so much more information shared that I can't write it all here. I would hope that you would take Tom Hohmann's advice and look at our VVA CSC website.



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25th ANNIVERSARY OF THE CALIFORNIA VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

By Charles Earthman



There were 58,287 Americans killed in the Vietnam War. 5,822 were listed as residents of California, almost 10% of those killed in Vietnam. Although we are a large state with a large population, 1 in 10 is a lot to sacrifice.

But pay we did. From every corner of the Golden State Californians answered the call to duty in the 1960's--some kicking and screaming--but still taking that oath and serving their country. Those were turbulent times and Vietnam was an unpopular war, but we served and many of us paid. Some paid the ultimate price.

So it was that hundreds of people gathered in Capitol Park for the 25th anniversary of the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Originally dedicated in 1988, the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial has stood as a testament to the 5,822 men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice at the request of our Nation. (Cont'd on page 11)





THE GRAPEVINE

Talk Around Redwood Empire Chapter

By Charles Earthman

This is the last Grapevine of 2013; we won't be back until February 2014. *News and Views* will not be publishing in January; Brooke has to tend to his palm groves in Tahiti.

2013 was a pretty good year for our Chapter. We made some improvements to the office, which is still a work in progress. We gained national recognition for *News and Views*. Several members have taken prominent rolls in VVA on the state and national levels. We continue to serve the community well through the food giveaway and our contributions to Vet Connect. Chapter 223 members also contributed to many charities and civic events throughout 2013.

The Christmas party will be held on December 6 this year. Preparations get started early; if you can lend a hand, drop by. If you can't drop by to help set up, please come and enjoy the feast and yuletide festivities. It's our end-of-year-celebration and the last 223 event of 2013.

A busy 2014 awaits the Chapter and the Sonoma County Veteran Community. The California State Council has elections in the summer and the Chapter will be sending delegates to Fresno this summer to participate in that event. We will not be electing officers and board members for the Chapter this year since we went to two-year terms for those positions. We will be electing delegates for the CSC convention, so think about who you want to send or if you would like to be one of those representing Chapter 223.

We continue to move slowly into the 21st century with more updates to our communications.

(Cont'd above right...)

New IT equipment and an upgrade to the website are planned, so look for those things next year.

Finally, I want to wish all our members, their families, and the entire veteran community a safe and happy holiday season. I hope to see you at our next general meeting on January 21.

If you would like to contribute anything to the Grapevine, contact Charles Earthman at 707.778.6598 or 707.318.2837.



Santa Rosa Parking Meters

Special License Plates

By Mike Hart

A disabled student at Santa Rosa Junior College recently challenged the school's parking policy concerning state-issued 'Special License Plates' and he won.

Not only did the Board of Trustees of SRJC revamp its policy, but the Santa Rosa City Council also drew up a new ordinance making parking meters free to those who display these special plates, including Purple Heart designation. The kicker in this vehicle code is that you can only park at the meter for the time and duration of the hourly restriction, i.e., 2hr, 6hr, etc...

Speaking to a downtown Santa Rosa meter reader, he verified that this section of the vehicle code is now law and the city workers are now aware of the new policy. Thanks to Larry Williams of our Chapter VVA 223 and our local Purple Heart contingent who carried the ball to the City Council.

Just another example of VVA helping other vets because 'no longer will we allow another generation of soldiers be left behind.'



MIKE
HART

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SCOUTING IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

by Kate O'Hare-Palmer

VVA Chapter 223

CSCVVA Women Veterans Chair

VVA Women Veterans Chair

Scout advisor Keith Blackey, VP of VVA Chapter 464, San Carlos, talked to VVA CSC about his work with building scouting in Iraq and Afghanistan. He restarted the Iraq scouts in 2004.

There are 211 countries with scouting. There are more Muslim scouts than Christian. There were eight scouts in Iraq in 2004. With the help of many westerners as scout leaders, this program grew to include 100,000 boys and girls.

47% of the scout leaders are women. The top scout leader is a 19 year old woman. The young people are the hope for the future. The skills in leadership and training will be useful for these kids as they mature and take on places of responsibility in their community. Many of the Iraq kids that started 9 years ago are now joining the police force and military of the Iraq.

The problem that the scout leaders encountered was the drop in scout groups after the US Military started leaving Iraq. Therefore, the scout program in Afghanistan now has Afghans only as the scout leaders, and the military stationed there can support for merit badge training. This program is to help divert the Taliban pull and training of young adults.

There have been 10,000 afghan deaths this year. A typical Taliban attack is to approach a gate where ten civilians along with the gate keepers and the suicide Taliban will be killed. British and American forces do not negotiate for ransom, so those captured are killed.

Keith wears his scouting uniform while in Afghanistan with the patches and the American Flag clearly marked. He is less likely to be targeted as a hostage for ransom on the one hand, but, on the other, his life is in danger from just a direct shot. For more information contact: Keith Blackey, Scout Advisor. Marastoon-e-Kabul. Red Crescent Society Compound. Kabul, Afghanistan.

Mobile: 93(0)780 13 31 49

Email: keith@blackey.net

STUFFING FOR THE TROOPS

DECEMBER 4th @ 5 PM

HELP PACK BOXES to SEND to the 4-ID

By Mike Hart

Mary St. Clair is at it again, or should we say still!

This grateful mother of an Iraqi veteran started sending 'care' packages to him back in 2004 and, when he rotated out, continued to send the welcome warm clothes, watch caps and accessory items to his unit. Her generosity has never wavered.

The 4th Infantry Division from Ft. Carson, Colorado is the sole recipient of this, Mary's quest to make the troops more comfortable. She has been giving like this for over ten years now. Her work is renowned amongst the troops at Ft. Carson so much she is one of a few outsiders invited to the 4th Division Annual Ball.

Over two hundred boxes are to be sent to serve more than 1000 of the troops, who are located in remote outposts in the mid-east, where there are no PX's or other outlets. One package serves four males and one female trooper.

The VVA-223 and members of the local chapter of the Purple Heart have contributed to her effort historically and that remains the same this year as Mary is gearing up for the Christmas onslaught of giving. 'It is not only the military organizations helping this effort but many other service organizations,' beamed Mary. 'We get help from people like schools (letters), Rotary, Kiwanis and a multitude of others.'

The official day for stuffing the boxes is Dec 4, a Wednesday, and the shipment is due to leave Healdsburg on the 5th. Mary says it takes about 10 days for the troops to get the packages at their posts.

The worksite for this event is at the gymnasium of St. John's School in Healdsburg, 217 Fitch Ave., near the police station. Volunteers are welcome to help 8a.m. to 5p.m. Wed. 4th.

SONOMA COUNTY VET CONNECT



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These services are, also, available at the Veterans Memorial Buildings in **Guerneville** on the 2nd Thursday, **Sonoma** on the 3rd Thursday, and **Petaluma** on the 4th Thursday of every month. Please note the time schedule for these resource and service meetings is: Noon to 3 pm

ALL VETERANS ARE WELCOME, NO CHARGE SERVICE

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P.S. If you are having trouble viewing the pictures, your computer may not have enough memory or speed to handle the task.



THERE IS NO CHAPTER 223 GENERAL MEETING IN DECEMBER

SONOMA COUNTY VET CONNECT -

Every Tuesday morning, 9:00 am to noon @ the VETS building. Vets helping vets solve problems. Coffee and donuts served. See page 7.

VETERANS DROP-IN GROUP - Every Tuesday @ high noon in the North Room of the VETS building. All veterans are welcome.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING - Second Tuesday of the month, 1:00 pm @ the VETS building. Look for the guys looking for the room...

NAMI - First Thursday, 9:30 am @ 1300 North Dutton Avenue.

FOOD-GIVE-AWAY PROGRAM - Fourth Tuesday of the month. **December 24th...** Volunteers will please check in with **John McGivney** @ 570-9201 for time and station.

REDWOOD GOSPEL MISSION - HOMELESS OUTREACH PROGRAM - Every Monday evening @ 5:30 pm. **101 6th Street, Santa Rosa.**

POKER SCHEDULE - Cards in the air at 6:00 pm. Check-in and pizza 5:00 to 5:55 pm... Usually the first Saturday of the month... **December 7th**, and January 4th, 2014...

Social Security Announces 1.5 Percent Benefit Increase for 2014



Monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for nearly 63 million Americans will increase 1.5 percent in 2014, the Social Security Administration announced today.

The 1.5 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will begin with benefits that more than 57 million Social Security beneficiaries receive in January 2014. Increased payments to more than 8 million SSI beneficiaries will begin on December 31, 2013.

Some other changes that take effect in January of each year are based on the increase in average wages. Based on that increase, the maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) will increase to \$117,000 from \$113,700. Of the estimated 165 million workers who will pay Social Security taxes in 2014, about 10 million will pay higher taxes as a result of the increase in the taxable maximum.



(Cont'd from page 7)

25th ANNIVERSARY OF THE CALIFORNIA VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

A solemn ceremony in honor of Prisoners of War and those still Missing in Action took place that morning before the main ceremony. It was a moving event with colors presented by the Scottish American Military Society complete with pipes and it reminded us not to forget those still listed as missing in action or held captive in enemy hands.

The main ceremony's emcee was Pete Conaty, who is well known by veterans throughout the state. Pete is a Vietnam combat veteran with the Purple Heart. Keynote speakers included Sister Linda McClenahan, Chairwoman of the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial Committee; Stan Atkinson, longtime friend of B.T. Collins and supporter of the memorial; and Peter J. Gravett, CalVet Secretary. Secretary Gravett said, "I am honored to see so many people here today with us to honor and remember, not only the men and women who lost their lives in Vietnam during that very unpopular war, but also those who came back and became parents, artists, community leaders or most importantly, our neighbors and loved ones."

The ceremony culminated with the laying of wreaths by several veteran service organizations and the unveiling of PFC Ralph Henry Johnson's newly engraved name. PFC Johnson won the Medal of Honor when he gave his life for his fellow Marines. He was number 5,823.



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Many of the Vietnam Women Veterans who attended the national convention in Jacksonville, Florida, are picture here. The Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation estimates that approximately 11,000 military women were stationed in Vietnam during the conflict. Nearly all of them were volunteers, and 90 percent served as military nurses, though women also worked as physicians, air traffic controllers, intelligence officers, clerks and other positions in the U.S. Women's Army Corps, U.S. Navy, Air Force and Marines and the Army Medical Specialist Corps.