



# NEWS AND VIEWS



Volume 21

Issue 12

December 2019

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## President's Message:

### Coming to the end of 2019

Last month I asked about what went wrong in the power shut off. We followed this up with not only a fire and a power outage but added in an evacuation of over 190,000 people from the area. Hopefully everyone got out safely and had no real problems returning. Along with the lessons learned from the last power outage, like how much to keep in your freezer this time of year and being ready with your generator, how did you handle the evacuation? Did you have a place to go? Did you get stuck in one of the big traffic jams? Is there anything you would like to let your supervisor know that is constructive? At my house we were without power for five days. I have a generator so I could keep things charged and a few appliances going. I only ran it a few hours a day but that was enough to keep everything useable. I know that some were not as fortunate as I am but living on the river, we are not new to power outages. In the past few years the grid has been improved enough that it was not a yearly thing. It was normally the winter storms that caused damage and power outages. Our biggest problem with the outages is the lack of communication. No cell phones and no land lines or internet. With the generator I can use one of my phones at times and listen to the radio. The local radio stations that share a space, and are owned by the same group, are very good at staying on the air and giving important information. I think they are an asset to the community. They are five or six stations that are listened to by many local residents.

I would like to thank Lou, Tony and Joe for their service at the veterans building during the evacuations. Working with the county and the Red Cross to benefit

all that needed the assistance there. I received a card from General Services also thanking them for their assistance.

This will be the last newsletter of this year. We are always looking for people to write and assist with the newsletter, as well as assisting with all our projects. At our February meeting we will have the hearing-impaired phone program. This gets free phones that are for hearing-impaired people. They have some real interesting programs. They also bring food to the meeting. Put it on your calendar to come in if there is a hard of hearing person in your house. When he was last here, he was talking about cell phones that are in the future for these phones. I am not sure how far along they are with these. Come in and ask, it is at no cost and there is food.

In October I attended the State Council meeting and held the Agent Orange meeting. In this meeting and at the last chapter meeting I updated the members on the Blue Water Navy Act (delayed by the administration), the Toxic Exposure Research Act, passed in 2016 (still delayed by the administration), the presumptives for Hypothyroidism, Parkinson Like Syndrome, (delayed by the administration and fired the Secretary of VA for trying to implement). If everyone will sign up for the VVA Web Weekly at VVA.org you can get information on these and many other important issues. If you are wondering about the veteran caregiver program, this is for post 911 veterans, it will be available for Vietnam veterans after the DoD and VA have compatible computer systems so they can access each other's information. This has been delayed for at least another year. If you are wondering, the Gulf War Veterans will be eligible two years after we begin to receive it. **Continued on page 3**

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**The Chapters new EMAIL ADDRESS IS:**

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## President's Message Continued from page 1

This is a part of the MISSION Act that is supposed to help us. Currently there are still many unanswered questions about the MISSION Act and what it involves. In a lot of circles it is seen as outsourcing and privatizing the VA. At our May meeting they should be able to answer some of your questions. The May meeting will be our annual town hall with the leadership of the VA. We are working on what and who should be at the meeting to address our questions. If there is something you would like to address let us know. We do put a lot of pressure on the VA to come and answer to us. We also invite our elected officials to come and see what kind of responses we get. This will be on May 19<sup>th</sup> starting at 6 pm and snacks will be provided along with coffee, water and soda.

I will try to get more exciting things on the agenda next year. In April we hold our annual meeting. Up for election this year are the four officer positions. If you are interested in one of these positions let us know. The nomination for officers opens at the March meeting.



**Lauralyn Castle was one of our very revered service reps for our veterans of Sonoma County**

## Veterans Day 2019

I spent Veteran's day in two locations. First was in Santa Rosa at the county administration building for our annual flag raising at 11 AM. I would like to thank Brian McKeown, Shirlee Zane and Tracy Cunha for putting this together. A press release was sent out and it was advertised on the radio but there was no mention in the newspaper. We will be working on next year's program in the near future. I think this location is going to work out for us so put it in your places to be next year.

I then traveled to Petaluma to ride in the parade. As 2019 veteran of the year I was privileged to be honored and ride in a really nice car through my hometown. At the end of the parade I came across my cousin Fred Bollinger, a world war two veteran that just turned 103 in October. I spent time talking with him about his service and our large local family.



For January Newsletter, please send articles to Chapter email:

**VVA223@gmail.com**



## Sandy Flight: Call Sign Zorro

His name is Colonel Dale Willard Brink. The loving big brother of my mother, Dorris Brink. He is survived by his beloved children Roger, "Big Galute," Brink and the lovely Miss Donna Brink..

My Uncle Dale enlisted out of high school in the honorable pursuit of service to his country in the United States Air Force. Dale served in Korean and then 3 tours in the Vietnam Conflict, flying for the 56<sup>th</sup> and then the 22<sup>nd</sup> Special Operations Squadrons.

My Uncle Dale, during his Vietnam service, flew in the 1<sup>st</sup> AirCommando Wing of Nakken Phenom, Thailand. He has over 100 night strikes over "Uncle Ho's Highway" in the infamous Ho-Chi Minh Trail in Laos and Cambodia. The Colonel was so hated by the NVA and the Pathet Lao that they put a price of \$50,000 in gold on his head. Dale's maintenance chief, due to so many bullet holes in his A1E & A1H Skyraider, started using duct tape to patch it up after his Sandy Flights.

Following is a tribute to my beloved Uncle, set in a bronze plaque presented to him from a fellow pilot call sign "Friar Tuck".

### Fighter Pilot

How fresh in recall are the Air Commandos who valiantly struck the VC with their aging "Skyraiders" in the rain and blood soaked valley call A-Shau?

And how long will be remembered the thuds "Over "Route Pack Six" and the flack filled skies over Hanoi? So here's a nickel on the grass to you, my friend, for your spirit, enthusiasm, sacrifices, and courage-but most of all to your friendship. Yours is dying breed and when you are gone, the world will be a lesser place. ~"Friar Tuck"

Submitted by Timothy O'Brien,  
Dale's proud nephew,  
1st Armored Cavalry Div.  
1972-1978 and VVAchapter 223 member



California VN Memorial Sacramento



## WHY I VOLUNTEER

Volunteering is an American pastime. Since the inception of this great nation, citizens have spent billions of hours helping within their communities, states and the nation as a whole. When you volunteer, you enhance the social wealth of your community. Helping neighbors, friends, and family brings us all closer.

I began to volunteer while serving in the Air Force. I have always been a good reader, probably due to the fact that there was no TV in our home until I was 8 years old. I volunteered in a reading program designed to enhance the skills of service men and women, helping them advance their career goals. The experience was only for a few weeks but I was sort of hooked. “PTA”, soccer, coaching, credit union board member, cub scouts, Greenpeace activist...

Now some 53 years later, I don’t know how to STOP! Our little group of usual suspects has changed during the past 10 years – some have passed on, some have moved, others stopped for health or family reasons, but we continue on. There is a genuine satisfaction when you help others.

Volunteering takes on many forms. You may be driving friends or family to appointments, picking up and watching grandkids after school, serving meals to the needy. The list of possibilities would fill volumes.

What is important to remember is not how much you volunteer, but the fact that you did. Your 1 hour is just as important as the next person’s 10 hours. Never feel that what you do is insignificant. There is a sense of inner peace when you are able to enhance someone’s quality of life, knowing that they will never be able to or need to repay you.

Volunteering has also helped me with my “PTSD” issues, I’m not immune to an occasional outburst, but they have become so rare that I don’t consider them relevant any more. My wife, Diana, also indirectly volunteers with me. She does all the stuff I should be doing around the house (actually, my honey-do list!) because I’m always off on some mission

Volunteering, give it a try. You will find something that will make your day. We come from a generation that doesn’t know how NOT to work. As always, we are Vietnam Veterans—in service to America.

**By Joe Chowela**

## Volunteers Needed

The Central Branch of the Sonoma County Library is seeking volunteers for [Veterans Connect at the Library!](#)

### The nitty gritty

[Volunteer Benefits Specialist](#): this position entails serving as point-of-contact to ensure that Veterans and Veteran families of every era know how to get connected to the state and federal benefits and services they have earned through military service. To this end, volunteers "staff" a Veteran Resource Station in the library for a minimum of one 2-hour shift per week to meet with Veterans and/or family members.

Contact email: [veteransconnect@sonomalibrary.org](mailto:veteransconnect@sonomalibrary.org) or feel free to give the branch a call: 707-308-3020.

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## Happy Holidays & Thank You

Wishing every one of you and your family all the best of the Holidays.

I want to send out a very big “Thank you” to two of my neighbors, Susan Serbia and Carolyn Palmieri. Both Susan and Carolyn have purchased fifteen gifts for the children attending the Christmas Dinner. They also have knitted 100 caps and scarves for the children living at SAY (Social Advocates for Youth) or living on the streets. We all have so much to be grateful for, enjoy yours.

Be safe,

**Gabriel Arevalo**

## **Holds OMB, Director Responsible for Withholding Benefits for Agent Orange-Afflicted Vietnam Veterans**

(Washington, D.C.)—"We hold the Office of Management and Budget and its director culpable in the deaths of those Vietnam veterans who went to their graves waiting for their government to do the right thing and grant service-connection for exposure to Agent Orange and other rainbow agents, as recommended by the VA Secretary based on findings of the Institute of Medicine." John Rowan, National President, Vietnam Veterans of America

As confirmed by documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, in March 2018, when the then-VA Secretary set out to add bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinson's-like symptoms to the list of diseases eligible for VA benefits, he was stonewalled and then soon removed from his position in the administration.

The highly redacted documents obtained through FOIA by former Army Spc. Jeff O'Malley reveal that Mulvaney, Darin Selnick, and other OMB officials objected to the VA Secretary's decision. Legible sections of the documents relay OMB's determination that the Institutes of Medicine's (now National Academy of Medicine) findings were based on "limited science," as well as concern regarding the fiscal impact of the proposed additions.

"This is an outrage," said VVA National President John Rowan. "We call on VA Secretary Robert Wilke to delay no longer and act on the IOM's findings by adding bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, Parkinson's-like symptoms, along with hypertension and stroke, to the service-connected, presumptive list for those who served in Vietnam and elsewhere in the Southeast Asia theater of operations.

It has been more than three years since the March 2016 release of *Veterans and Agent Orange Update 2014*, the tenth biennial evaluation of relevant scientific studies on Agent Orange and other herbicides used during military operations in Vietnam. The Agent Orange Act of 1991 called for a decision by the VA Secretary *no later than 60 days* after receiving the IOM's report and another 60 days after the Secretary's decision to issue proposed regulations setting forth his determination

tus of bladder cancer and hypothyroidism to the Limited/Suggestive Category of Association; it clarified that individuals with Parkinson's-like symptoms without other known etiology should be included in the presumption for Parkinson's disease; and it firmly supported earlier findings still not recognized by VA as presumptive conditions: hypertension and stroke."

Submitted by Kate

## **Caregiver Program Release**

Good afternoon,

Please see the below response from the Caregiver Program Office regarding the PCAFC Quick Eligibility Questions. As always, do not hesitate to reach out to me with your questions:

The document entitled, Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) Veteran Quick Eligibility Questions, is not an accurate representation of the eligibility requirements for PCAFC and has been removed from the Caregiver Support Program Website and internal SharePoint. We have also informed Caregiver Support Program staff nationally that this document is not approved for use and cannot be utilized. We apologize for any confusion this has caused. Caregivers and Veterans interested in learning about the Caregiver Support Program resources and the full range of services available to caregivers are encouraged to visit: <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/> or call the Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274. For information on the MISSION Act, visit: <https://missionact.va.gov/>.

**Aragorn T. Wold**

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