



INCOMING

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
CHAPTER 535



Chapter 535 Web Page www.vva535.org

"It Feels Good to Get Involved"

Volume 24 Issue 8

In Service To America and the Gold Country

August 2014

President's Message

President's Message:

Now is the time to step up and help out at our Nevada County Fair booth. The Fair starts on Wednesday, August 6th, and runs through Sunday, August 10th. We have several spaces that need to be filled as soon as possible. Fair entrance tickets will be given to those volunteering for the booth. I can be reached at (530) 277-8856.

We do have a lot of set-up help scheduled for Tuesday, August 5th, at 9 A.M. We will meet at the Grass Valley Veterans Building at 9 A.M. to load the truck with our easy-up and supplies. Take-down will be on the following Monday at 9 A.M. We still need help with this.

There will be no VVA meeting in August, as it falls on Thursday during the Fair. We will have a General Membership meeting on September 4th.

Dick Corn, President 277-8856

Photos From The Fourth of July Parade



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Exchange Online Shopping

Open Access to All Vets Proposal

The U.S. military is looking into allowing all of the nation's veterans who served honorably to shop online at exchanges that sell discounted, name-brand goods — a perk that is currently available only to a small minority. The change is proposed by the Army & Air Force Exchange Service director as a way to show appreciation for veterans and to offset a loss of revenue as troops return from overseas, where they had few alternatives but to shop at the military retail stores. For now, the online shopping is generally limited to current service members, veterans who served for 20 years or longer and their family members. Tom Shull, the director of the exchange service, said 20 million veterans would be affected if the Defense Department allows all veterans who served honorably to use the shopping website.



Veterans who use the site typically save 25 percent or more and do not pay state sales tax. Top-selling brands include Michael Kors, Under Armour and Levi's. Levi's jeans for children are \$15 to \$20 a pair versus \$28 or more in department stores. Shull is adding more name-brand products and revamping the website, which last year broke even. He said he hopes to invite all veterans who served honorably to begin shopping online on Veterans Day in 2015. Shull said it is coincidental that he proposed his idea during the Department of Veterans Affairs scandal over long waits for patient care and falsified records covering up the delays at hospitals and clinics nationwide. He said he thought of it a year ago. And while it would benefit those who have been affected by the current challenges within the VA, Shull said, he did not suggest it for that reason.

U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, said, "It's a good idea. We should do it, but not view it as a way to make up for the VA's failings." "Many, many veterans have not served a full 20 years but have nonetheless contributed immensely to the defense of our nation," said Blumenthal, D-Connecticut. "That service ought to be recognized more fully." Both the Navy and the Marine Corps said it would be premature to comment. The Defense Department says it must weigh whether the policy change would diminish the benefit for current patrons, cost the department more, or harm other local businesses and tax collection. It historically has not supported expanding the benefits that are designed to recruit and retain service members, and has scrutinized how any changes would affect the entire benefits package. There are about 2 million people nationwide who served at least 20 years in the military, according to the Defense Department.

Shull, who is the first civilian director of the exchange, suggested letting veterans from all of the branches who served honorably use the exchange website but not the brick-and-mortar stores. He expects less revenue from the physical stores as troops return from overseas, and he worries people won't shop on U.S. bases as much in the coming years if commissaries, or grocery stores, raise prices because of budget cuts. Shull said he needs to boost profits so the exchange service can continue to pay for programs for service members and their families on Army and Air Force bases. Headquartered in Dallas, the exchange did \$8.3 billion in sales in 2013 and netted \$332 million in earnings, its data shows. It gave \$208 million of its earnings as a dividend to the Army and the Air Force for Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs, including family counseling and youth services. Online sales could grow from about \$200 million annually to \$1 billion by 2019, Shull said.

Veterans Healthcare Benefits Handbook

2014 Editions Available for Download

The Veterans Healthcare Benefits Handbook provides everything you need to know about: how to apply, veterans service centers, choosing a facility, changing a facility, second opinions, prescriptions, dental care, chiropractic care, non-VA care, travel, POW benefits, appeals, grievances, confidentiality, financial issues, means testing, hardship determinations, waivers, medication copayments, health insurance and a complete listing of VA facilities. Download at <http://militaryhandbooks.com/view-military-handbooks/2014-veterans-healthcare-handbook>

Chapter 535 Information Center

Chapter 535 Officers & Board of Directors

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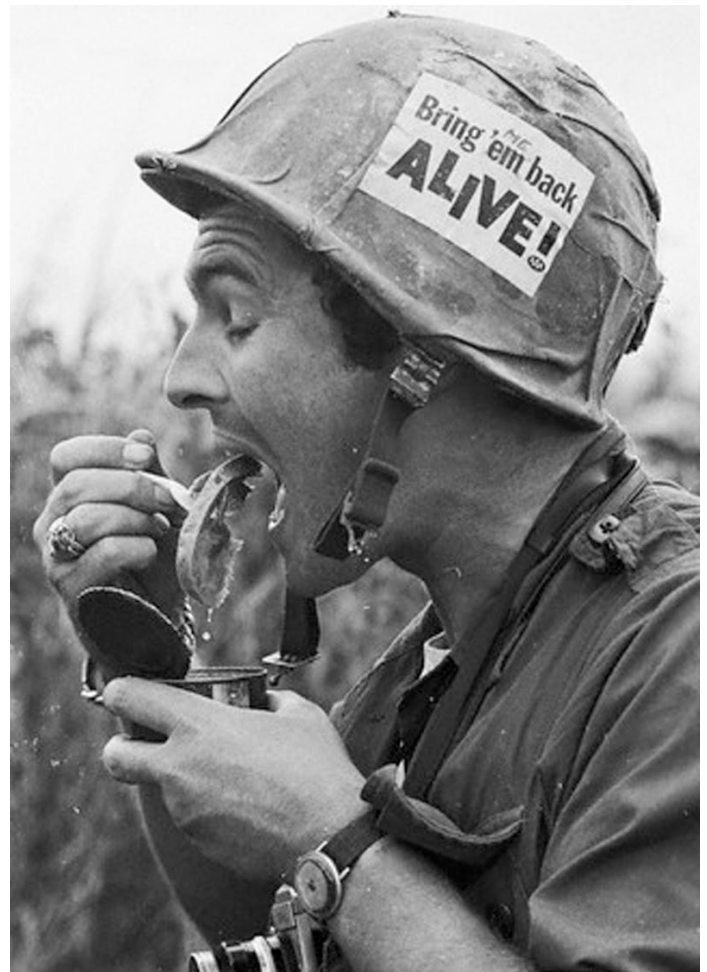
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Newsletter ...	bholman@succeed.net, 265-8387 Bill Holman
Nominations	Harold Graves
Christmas Year Round	Harold Graves
NCCVC	Margie Buhler
Web Master.....	Ralph Remick

Nevada County Veterans Affairs Rep.

Eric(530) 273-3396

August Birthdays

8	2	Jon Cavaiani MOH
8	17	Wayne Cronos
8	21	Ray Shine
8	23	Chaix, Dave
8	26	Hamer, Howard
8	31	John Van Dyk Sr.



The Vinh Son Orphanage, has a new web site

www.friendsofvso.org

Membership Facts Chapter 535

VVA	
Individual members	33
Life members	39
AVVA	
Individual members	1
Life member	2
Total	75



Upcoming Dates and Events

Aug	6-10	Chapter Fair Booth
Sept.	4	Chapter Meeting 6 pm

Veterans Directory

Congress

Senate - Veterans Affairs Committee	202-224-9126
House - Veterans Affairs Committee.....	202-225-3527

Department of Veterans Affairs

Board of Veterans Appeals	202-233-3001
Central Office	202-233-4000
Freedom of Information/Privacy Act	202-233-3616
Personnel Locator.....	202-233-4000
Public Information	202-233-3056
Veterans Health Administration	202-535-7010
VA Telephone Care Program	800-733-0502
Cemetery, Burial, & Headstone Info.....	800-697-6947

Agencies

Department of Defense	703-545-6700
DEERS Information (California).....	800-334-4162
CHAMPUS (California).....	800-741-5048
Office of Management and Budget Veterans Affairs.....	202-395-4500
Small Business Administration Office of Veterans Affairs	202-205-6773

Locator & Reunion Services

Army Worldwide Locator.....	317-542-4211
Navy Times Locator Services	703-750-8636
Service Reunions	703-998-7035
Vietnam Veterans Locator.....	319-388-9023
Veteran's Locator Service	800-449-VETS

Miscellaneous

Vietnam Women's Memorial Project	202-328-7253
Sons & Daughters In Touch CA	805-872-4035
Retired Pay - Cleveland DFAS.....	800-321-1080
Navy Lodging.....	800-NAVY INN
Army Lodging.....	800-GO ARMY

VA Private Care Access

GAO Questions Need for New Law

Veterans facing long wait times, long distances or lack of specialty care are already eligible for medical care outside Veterans Affairs, calling into question the need for a law that allows private care, the Government Accountability Office said 18 JUN. However, there's no way to determine whether veterans will receive timely care through private facilities because VA does not collect that data. "VA is authorized to obtain health care services from non-VA providers to help ensure that veterans are provided timely and accessible care," said Randall Williamson, director of health care at GAO, at a House Veterans Affairs Committee hearing. "It is not only important to ensure that veterans will obtain timely treatment from non-VA providers but also to ensure that non-VA medical care is a reliable and cost-effective means for VA to deliver services." Both the House and Senate passed bills that would allow veterans access to private care if they faced long waits, but the bills also provide some extras, such as money to hire providers and the ability to fire inefficient VA employees.

Newsletter Submissions

Please ensure that submissions for the newsletter reach us no-later-than the 15th of the month before the meeting. They may be mailed to:

VVA Chapter 535

Attn: Newsletter Editor

18455 Augustine Rd, Nevada City, CA 95959

e-mail to bholman@succeed.net or

call Bill Holman at (530) 265-8387

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of Vietnam Veterans of America National, State Council, or Chapter 535 or the newsletter editor, but those of the author of the comments.

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Has Your Address Changed?

Please let us know before the Post office quits forwarding your newsletters. If you find your not receiving your newsletters or hearing from us, please contact Bill Holman at 265-8387.



VA is unable to determine how sending veterans to private care could cut down wait times and costs because it does not collect data on wait times data or on all health services provided, Williamson said. A 2013 report found VA does not collect data to determine that information, and a 2014 report found "non-compliance" at four VA facilities because they did not provide emergency care to veterans, as required by law, even if the care was not for service-connected issues. About 20% of claims were denied inappropriately, GAO found. Veterans also do not know they are eligible for that care. GAO made numerous recommendations to fix the problems, and VA agreed to the recommendations, but they have yet to be implemented, Williamson said. Philip Matkovsky, assistant deputy under secretary for health for administrative operations at the Veterans Health Administration at VA, apologized again for the scandal Wednesday. He agreed that VA is already authorized to send veterans to private care, adding that VA is working to improve management, oversight and delivery of non-VA care. [Source: USA Today |

VA ID Card

Action Needed to Obtain New VHIC

The new Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC) provides increased security for your personal information - no personally identifiable information is contained on the magnetic stripe or barcode. It is also a salute to your military service. The emblem of your latest branch of service is displayed on your card. Several special awards will also be listed. The VHIC replaces the Veteran Identification Card (VIC) and will be issued only to Veterans who are enrolled in the VA health care system. Its purpose is for identification and check-in at VA appointments. It cannot be used as a credit card or an insurance card, and it does not authorize or pay for care at non-VA facilities.



In February 2014, VA began issuing the VHIC to newly enrolled Veterans and enrolled Veterans who were not previously issued the old VIC but requested an identification card. Beginning in May 2014, VA started automatically mailing VHICs to enrolled Veterans who were issued the VIC. Because VA will be reissuing more than 6 million cards, they ask for your patience during this time. Veterans who were issued a VIC do not need to return to their VA medical center to have a photo taken for the VHIC. Enrolled Veterans who do not have the VIC can contact their local VA medical center Enrollment Coordinator to arrange to have their picture taken for the new VHIC, or they may request a new VHIC at their next VA health care appointment. To ensure their identity, Veterans must provide either one form of primary identification or two forms of secondary identification. Please see the Acceptable Documents for Identity Proofing table below.

The VHIC will be mailed to all valid mailing addresses, including P.O. boxes. Veterans who are already enrolled should ensure the address VA has on file is correct so they can receive their VHIC in a timely manner. To update or to confirm your address with VA, call 1-877-222-VETS (8387). If the post office cannot deliver your VHIC, the card will be returned to the VA. Some additional actions you may need to take are:

What to do if you are NOT enrolled. If you are not currently enrolled with the VA for your health care, VA encourages you to apply for enrollment online at <http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll> or by calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387). You may also apply for enrollment in person at your local VA medical facility. Once your enrollment is verified, your picture will be taken at your local VA medical center so that, once production begins, a VHIC will be mailed to you. To ensure your identity, you must provide either one primary or two secondary documents. See the Acceptable Documents for Identity Proofing table below.

What to do if you do not receive your new VHIC. You should receive your VHIC within 7 to 10 days after you request a VHIC card. Although VA strives to do all they can to ensure they enroll Veterans in a timely manner, sometimes they are unable to either verify your military service or they need additional information from you. If so, VA will try to contact you to get the information they need to complete your enrollment application. If VA is unable to reach you, they encourage you to contact the local VA facility where the card was requested or contact them at 1-877-222-VETS (8387) to complete your application and find out the status of your card.

What to do with your old VIC. VA wants all enrolled Veterans to have a Veteran Health Identification Card that protects their personal information. Until Veterans receive the new, more secure VHIC, Veterans are encouraged to safeguard their old VIC, just like they would a credit card, to prevent unauthorized access to their identity information. Once the new VHIC is received, Veterans should destroy their old VIC by cutting it up or shredding it.

What to do if your VHIC is lost or stolen. If your VHIC is lost or stolen, you should contact the VA Medical Facility where your picture was taken to request a new card be re-issued, or call us at 1-877-222-VETS (8387). Identifying information will be asked to ensure proper identification of the caller.

Acceptable Documents for Identity Proofing. The old VICs and VHICs are acceptable forms of primary identification. The chart below lists the additional forms of identification which are accepted primary and secondary identification.



Tet: 1968 -- Tan Son Nhut

From an Airman in The Security Police Squadron

As a member of the 377th Security Police at Tan Son Nhut, Vietnam, during Tet 1968, I worked a bunker several towers down from the 051 Bunker at Gate 051. Tan Son Nhut gates were numbered, 051, 055, 057, etceteras. It's Tet 1968, and my combat experience was zip, and Charlie wanted to kick-ass right into my bunker.

The night of the Tet Offensive was a shocker for everyone. I couldn't believe that it was happening! This was Saigon, Paris of the Orient. From my first new-guy-day they told me we would never get hit at Tan Son Nhut. This must be somebody's idea of a sick joke, I had thought. Doesn't Charlie know he's supposed to be in the jungle, or a nice rice paddy, or somewhere else? Right? WRONG!!

The attack started as I watched from my bunker in Alpha Sector. First, rockets hit Bravo Sector. Then a Freedom Bird started lifting off the runway. As he climbed over the fence line in Echo Sector, I saw a curtain of red and green tracers rise from the ground to the Freedom Bird. Thousands of tracers told me just how many VC and NVA were kicking at our door. I heard on the radio that the fence line was penetrated, and positions in Echo and Alpha Sectors were overrun. 051 Bunker was hit hard and fighting to repel the attackers. Then my radio croaked and died and I was cutoff from the world. I didn't learn until later that 051 Bunker was overrun and Sergeants Cyr, Fisher, Hebron, and Mills were killed in valiant defense of their post.

Scared? You bet! My knees were knocking louder than a jackhammer, and my teeth were chattering so hard it's a wonder they didn't shatter. I didn't lose my cookies, but my bladder and bowels were taking on a life of their own. It didn't matter that the 377th Combat SPS was at 100% alert, the 25th Division and the 199th Infantry Brigade were taking names, and many more units were engaging the enemy.

When the first choppers arrived, my spirits soared, and I knew we then had a FIGHTING CHANCE. With each pass of a gunship I let out a cheer! Every time a gunship fired a rocket in to the enemy I shouted GET'EM! Every time a chopper took a hit and went down another took its place. Choppers and Security Police—we were in a still desperate fight for our lives, and we were in it together, to win, whatever it took.

Heavy automatic firing chattered for several minutes. All I knew was that I had a radio that didn't work, there was no one within actual shooting distance, and Snoopy was on R & R, so we would be without illumination. For me, there was only total darkness with combat raging all about with everyone on the planet trying to kill someone else.

Then I saw a shadow—no—two shadows, running from the fence line, STRAIGHT TOWARD MY BUNKER! They were running hard and fast. Only the lights on the fence line silhouetting the two figures betrayed their rapid approach. I had the two bobbing outlines glued in my weapon's sight. I was really SCARED! But they were in my sights and dead meat, and Charlie wasn't getting past my bunker. No time to think, only time to react: "HALT, WHO GOES THERE?" My God! I can't believe I actually made that stateside challenge! Blow the commie VC away—you idiot, some forgotten training sergeant screamed in my mind. Lock and load, ready on the right, ready on the left, ready on the firing line! I started to squeeze off a clip and then I heard, "DON'T SHOOT! DON'T SHOOT! IT'S US!"

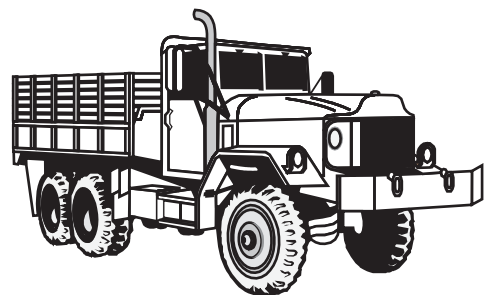
Wait a minute, who's "us"? Besides, those VC sure spoke excellent English. But it was enough to make me hesitate. I didn't fire. Before I knew what was happening, the two shadows dove into my bunker. They have no weapons and are wearing jungle fatigues. No VC in his right mind would wear this stuff. And these guys are shaking more than I am.

I can't believe this, its two Air Force dudes from the Quonset hut at the Transient Ammo Dump. I was so close to giving these two Air dudes the lick. What's wrong with them??? Can't they see I was about to do them both—that they were a half-ounce squeeze from death?

And then the anger set in—not at them—at myself. I didn't blow their butts away. I failed to do my job. If they were VC, I would have gone home early in a metal box. My hesitation had caused me to jeopardize all the positions behind me. As it was, several in my unit were KIA that night. I could have been responsible for many others if they had been Viet Cong or NVA.

Tet raged on for days. And when it was over, Uncle Ho's clock was cleaned but good! I never saw the two Air dudes again. I think that the 188th with their APC's that showed up the next day wouldn't have blinked an eye before swatting their foolish lives away.

I remember a memorial at the 051 Bunker a few days after Tet. But what stuck with me, was the military salute for Sergeants Cyr, Fisher, Hebron, and Mills: An Air Force flyby with fast-movers and an Army flyby with Gunships. Those moments of honoring our own will live with me, forever.



Nevada County Fair August 6th Thru August 10th, 2014

DUTY ROSTER - Write Name and Phone Number

We need two volunteers per shift. If you would like to sign up please call Dick Corn at 277-8856 or Harold Graves 470-8507

Time:	10:00 to 2:00	2:00 to 6:00	6:00 to 10PM
8/6 Wednesday	Dick Corn 277-8856	Bart Ruud 305-0493	Harold Graves 470-8507
	Harold Graves 470-8507	Dave Chaix 269-1431	
8/7 Thursday	Dennis Roe 277-4673	Nick & Eve 432-1232	Catherine Ione Friends of NC Military 273-5067
	_____	_____	_____
8/8 Friday	_____	Ralph Remick 559-7716	Dale Epps 368-6156
	_____	_____	_____
8/9 Saturday	Harold Graves 470-8507	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____
8/10 Sunday	Dick Corn 277-8856	Ralph Remick 559-7716	_____
	Fred Buhler	Margie Buhler	_____
Booth Set-Up / Tuesday 8/5 @ 9:00am GV Vets Bldg:			
Harold Graves	Dale Epps	Dick Corn	Dave Chaix
_____	_____	_____	_____
Booth Take-Down / Monday 8/11 9:00 am @ Fairgrounds:			
_____	_____	Dick Corn	Harold Graves
_____	_____	_____	_____

Application For Membership
VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA, INC., CHAPTER 535

P.O. Box 37, Grass Valley, CA 95945

Individual membership is open to all Vietnam-era veterans who served on active duty for other than training purposes between August 5, 1964 – May 7, 1975 and In-Country Veterans: February 28, 1961 – May 7, 1975.

Name _____ Sex _____ Date of Birth _____
Address _____ Apt. _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Home Phone () _____ Work Phone () _____ Email _____
Marital Status _____ Spouse's Name _____
Chapter No. **535** Sponsor _____ ID No. _____

- ◆ **Membership Type:** (select one) Individual – 1 year @ \$20 annual Individual – 3 years @ \$50
 Life Member **Payment Plan** \$50 down, \$25/mo Until paid in full
Select Age Group Ages 56-60 \$200 Ages 61-65 \$175
 Ages 66 and over \$150 Ages 72+ \$100

- ◆ **Payment Method:** (select one) Check Money Order Visa MasterCard

◆ **Card Number** _____ Exp. Date _____
Signature _____

In Service To America

Address Correction Requested

