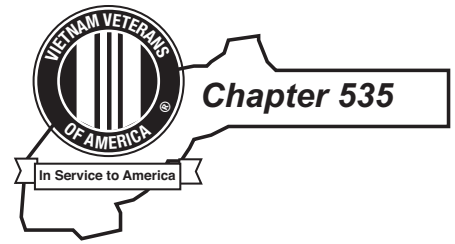




INCOMING

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
CHAPTER 535



Chapter 535 Web Page www.vva535.org

"It Feels Good to Get Involved"

Volume 24 Issue 12

In Service To America and the Gold Country

December 2014

President's Message

Our participation in Victorian Christmas is coming up very soon. Please contact Harold Graves to volunteer for some booth duty in Nevada City. The events are on the 7th, 10th, 14th, 17th and 21st. The 10th and 17th are evening events and the others are on Sunday afternoons. This is one of our biggest fund raisers for the year. Please volunteer for this Chapter event. We have a lot of fun, too!

The Chapter Christmas Dinner is December 4th at 6:00 P.M. The Chapter will provide turkey and ham, as usual. Please bring a dish to share. We typically get about 50 or so for dinner.

I would like to thank all of the Officers, Directors and Chairs for stepping up to serve for the past year and, of course, our Newsletter Editor, Bill Holman, for another year of excellent work. Volunteering is the only way the Chapter works. Please volunteer to participate in our Chapter activities.

Everyone, have a happy and safe holiday season. Be safe and well! Happy New Year!

Dick Corn, President 277-8856



Christmas in Vietnam



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Exchange Online Shopping Update **Shopping for Vets Inches Forward**

The tide may be turning in the effort to allow all honorably discharged veterans to shop at the online store operated by the Army and Air Force Exchange Service. "It appears there are no insurmountable hurdles," said a source familiar with a meeting held 8 OCT between Russell Beland, deputy assistant secretary of the Navy for military manpower and personnel, and officials with the Navy Exchange Service Command, Marine Corps Exchange and AAFES.

In May, AAFES officials submitted a formal proposal to defense officials to allow all honorably discharged veterans to shop online at its exchange store only. The proposal does not extend to brick-and-mortar stores. But concerns subsequently were raised in some quarters within the Defense Department that expanding the online access would lead to "benefit creep" — access for veterans to brick-and-mortar exchange stores and even to other quality-of-life benefits, sources said in August. In the wake of the "very productive meeting" 8 OCT officials from all three exchange services asked defense officials to delay the next meeting of the DoD Executive Resale Board for a couple of weeks to give them time to work on remaining issues, the source said. That meeting was previously scheduled for early November. Information was not immediately available from defense officials confirming whether the meeting has been delayed.

About 90 percent of honorably discharged veterans left the service before qualifying for retirement, and thus don't qualify for exchange shopping privileges. "Why not give them a modest benefit to honor their service?" said AAFES director Tom Shull, in a previous interview with Military Times. He noted that among this group are many veterans who have deployed four, five or more times to war in the post-9/11 era. The profits that could be generated by this increased customer base would help the active-duty and retired community in several ways, Shull said, to improve the brick-and-mortar stores and also provide more funding to morale, welfare and recreation programs on military bases. AAFES officials contend the decision could be made with a policy change. DoD's examination of the idea will include a legal review to determine whether that is the case, or whether a change in law would be needed.

AAFES officials are also in ongoing discussions with the Veterans Affairs Department's Veterans Canteen Service about sharing revenue if the proposal is accepted. AAFES officials have unofficially relaunched the shopmyexchange.com website, providing more predictability for customers that items will be available; easier navigation; fewer clicks to checkout; and same-day shipping for many items. The

Navy Exchange also has officially relaunched its shopping website, myNavyExchange.com, but it's not known whether NEXCOM also will seek to expand shopping privileges for veterans on its site.

America's Most Beloved Vets



Jimmy Stewart



Joe Foss



John Basilone



John F. Kennedy

- The Academy Award-winning actor Jimmy Stewart flew 20 combat missions in Europe, going from private to colonel in four years.
- America's second "ace of aces" Joe Foss served as South Dakota's governor, president of the National Rifle Association and the first commissioner of the American Football League.
- Gunnery sergeant John Basilone received the Medal of Honor for fending off the enemy at Guadalcanal, and turned down a commission to rejoin the Marines at Iwo Jima, where he was killed.
- John F. Kennedy, our 35th president, commanded two patrol torpedo boats in the early campaigns of the Pacific.

Nevada County veterans office gets \$25K for programs

The purpose of the CalVet Prop 63 funding is to improve the mental health and well being of veterans in Nevada County by increasing outreach and referrals to mental health services.

More than 10,000 veterans reside in Nevada County, of whom 13 percent are Gulf War veterans, 38 percent are Vietnam era veterans, 16 percent are Korean War veterans, and 14 percent are World War II veterans.

The County Veterans Services Office (VSO) received \$25,000 from CalVet in fiscal year 2013-14 and was awarded another \$25,000 for fiscal year 2014-15.

Continued on Page 5

Chapter 535 Information Center

Chapter 535 Officers & Board of Directors

Officers-Phone

President
 Dick Corn 277-8856
Vice-President
 Pete Burelle 274-3787
Secretary
 Dave Johnson 885-1230
Treasurer
 Ralph Remick 559-7716
Past President
 Fred Buhler

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 Dan Davis 272-4110
 Dave Chaix 269-1431
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 Kent Hawley 432-3551
 Bart Ruud 823-1368
 Dale Epps 368-6156
 Harold Graves 470-8507
CA State Council Delegates
 Pete Burelle

Chapter 535 Committees Chairs

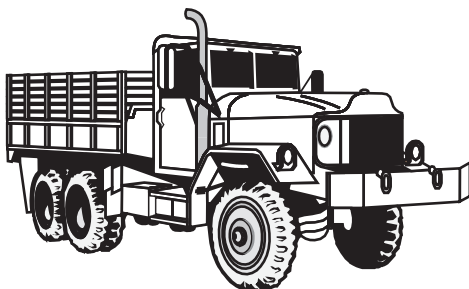
FinanceRalph Remick & Dave Johnson
 Parade and Honor GuardPete Burelle
 Membership Affairs Ric Sheridan
 Newsletter ... bholman@succeed.net, 265-8387 Bill Holman
 Nominations Harold Graves
 Christmas Year Round Harold Graves
 NCCVCPete Burelle
 Web Master Ralph Remick

Nevada County Veterans Affairs Rep.

Victor Ferrera(530) 273-3396

December Birthdays

112 21 Cilurso, Al
 12 27 Hess, Gary



Chapter Christmas Dinner

Our chapter Christmas dinner is Thursday December 4th at 6 pm. For more information contact Dick Corn at 277-8856



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

Dec. 4 Chapter Christmas Dinner 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 Fires Troubled Phoenix Hospital Director

By BRIAN SKOLOFF and MATTHEW DALY, Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Nearly seven months after the Department of Veterans Affairs became embroiled in a nationwide scandal, the agency fired the head of its troubled Phoenix hospital amid allegations of misconduct and cover-ups. Sharon Helman's ouster Monday comes as the department continues its crackdown on wrongdoing, including long wait times for veterans seeking medical care and falsified records covering up the delays.

Helman, director of the Phoenix VA Health Care System, was placed on administrative leave with two other high-ranking officials in May amid an investigation into allegations that 40 veterans died while awaiting treatment. Helman had led the Phoenix facility, which treats more than 80,000 veterans a year, since February 2012.

Veterans and lawmakers hailed Helman's termination as another step forward in the process of fixing long-standing problems at the VA, but they warned there is still a lot of work to be done.

"There are still many more VA scandal figures who also

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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must be purged from the department's payroll in order for veterans and families to receive the closure they deserve," Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., chair of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, said in a statement.

Veterans in Phoenix had a similar reaction.

"It's just a slow process," said James Lawson, a 66-year-old Army veteran. "I appreciate the VA, and they're correcting things now, but there's still a lot that has to be corrected." The Phoenix hospital was at the center of the wait-time scandal, which led to the ouster of former VA Secretary Eric Shinseki and a new, \$16 billion law overhauling the labyrinthine veterans' health care system.

VA Secretary Robert McDonald said Helman's dismissal underscores the agency's commitment to hold leaders accountable.

An investigation by the VA's office of inspector general found that workers at the Phoenix VA hospital falsified waiting lists, resulting in chronic delays for veterans seeking care. At least 40 patients died while awaiting appointments, the report said, but officials could not "conclusively assert" that the delays caused the deaths.

"Lack of oversight and misconduct by VA leaders runs counter to our mission of serving veterans, and VA will not tolerate it," McDonald said.

Continued on Page 6

Brass Plaque Hhonorng Vietnam Veteran Thomas W. Crawford

Monday November 3, 2014, at 9:00 A.M. some members of Chapter 535 participated in the ceremony of replacing brass plaque honoring Vietnam Veteran Thomas W. Crawford at the new Dorsey Drive Bridge. there was be a brief ceremony with flags and rifles. Some Blue Star Mothers were also present as well.



County Vets Continued from Page 2

The VSO will continue to partner with Welcome Home Vets, Inc. to accomplish the following objectives: 1) identifying more veterans that may need support in Nevada County, 2) increasing and sustaining collaboration among non-profits and government agencies serving veterans, 3) continuing a peer support model, and 4) expanding all services to Eastern Nevada County. The goal of outreach activities is to ensure veterans are educated about the various VA mental health services available to them, including services dealing with Military-Related Psychological Trauma (MRPT). MRPT diagnoses may include Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), or issues related to Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

In addition to continuing the successful implementation of the outreach and referral projects from Year One, the following activities will be implemented in Year Two to expand services to Eastern Nevada County:

- Launch a Veterans Resource Center within the Sierra College — Truckee Campus. Develop relationships with veterans attending Sierra College in Truckee and be available on campus twice monthly to provide referrals and support.
- Identify and/or develop educational and networking events for veterans on campus with collaborative partners. Develop a Memorandum of Understanding between the Sierra College — Truckee campus and DSS/VSO.
- Establish a volunteer program to include the student veterans and/or students in the work-study program.
- Establish a Veterans Resource Center within Nevada County Health and Human Services and One-Stop office in Truckee.
- Develop relationships with veterans in Truckee and be on site twice monthly to provide referrals and support and refer veterans to events at the Sierra College Truckee Campus.
- Represent veterans at the monthly Tahoe Truckee Community Collaborative, a collaborative 40+ non-profits and public agencies in the Truckee Tahoe region.
- Develop relationships with social workers, nurses and chaplains at Tahoe Forest Health System to identify who may be in need of mental health and/or additional veteran's services and establish a referral system to connect these veterans to the Nevada County Veterans Outreach and Resource Program and its partners.

— Participate in ride-alongs with meal delivery and nurse outreach programs for homebound seniors in Eastern Nevada County to reach out to older veterans in very rural areas and establish a referral system to connect these veterans to the Nevada County Veterans Outreach and Resource Program and its partners.

— Identify and reach out to media outlets to publicize programs and increase awareness of available programs by veterans who are not identified in the above cohorts.

— Publish at least two articles a year in Eastern Nevada County newspapers and/or newsletters.

A Mess Hall Christmas!

35th SPS (Air Police), Phan Rang, Vietnam - 1967

Phan Rang AB:

Believe it or not, it was a very cold night on the outskirts of Phan Rang Air Base that Christmas night in 1967. Most of us had been scurrying earlier, prior to Guardmount, to find a jacket or a extra shirt—actually, anything to keep warm. I mean, 68°F was COLD, and we weren't used to it.



We were all hoping for an uneventful Christmas, since we had been told that a Christmas cease fire had been established. Later, we found out that the only people it had been established with was ourselves. At midday we were all woken up from our fitful sleep (we worked nights) to be told that the new chow hall would be serving real food! WOW, wonder and excitement were in our eyes as we hurriedly jumped into our boots and ran over to the new, gleaming building which had yet to serve an ounce of food. Rumors ran amok about turkey dinners, pumpkin pie, and best of all—milk!

Into the chow hall we rushed; trays and silverware were grabbed; new trays were set down in hushed silence onto new shiny chrome rails (just like the real world!); and up to the smiling cooks we moved.

Suddenly, just as I got to the cook's station, near the front of the line, a loud SSS@!#% rang out. The cooks were handing everyone a box of C rations—just like we had every

day, every night, day-in and day-out! I was instantly tight-jawed ... then at sudden peace as a smiling cook handed me a box of C's (rations, not candy) and wished everyone a Merry Christmas. I realized that it was only rumors that had promised hot meals from mom (everything we were homesick for), and not the cooks that had worked hard and still could sincerely wish us Season's Greetings.

That night at China-3, a listening post (LP) at the northern end of the base, some Aussie Canberra bombers were taking off when I noticed some green tracers floating upwards towards the planes. HEY, I thought, didn't those commie jerks hear about the cease-fire! I called in to HQ and was told to contact the local ROC (Republic of Korea) fire base and give them artillery readings. After several minutes of hopeless pidgin talk with an operator who didn't understand english, I finally was talking with a English-speaking ROC Lieutenant. We didn't have any sector maps of the area, so the conversation went something like: "Up 2 clicks ... Now left 1 click—Whoops—back right a half a click." Anyhow, the tracers stopped, the artillery stopped, the flares died out, and it was dead calm. To myself, I started singing Silent Night, and we didn't have any more trouble the rest of my shift. It even seemed to warm up a few degrees.

About midnight, I called in and wished everyone at HQ a Merry Christmas and the dispatcher put us all on the air as echoes of "MERRY CHRISTMAS" came in from all corners of the base.

VA Fires Continued from Page 4

Helman is the fifth senior executive nationwide fired or forced to resign in recent weeks in response to the wait-time scandal. It didn't come soon enough for some. "The fact that this is such a high-profile wrongdoer in the VA, and it takes so long to fire her, shows why our vets are so frustrated by the bureaucracy within the VA," said Alex Nicholson, legislative director for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America.

Helman referred questions to a Washington law firm, which did not return a telephone message Monday evening from The Associated Press.

She has worked at the VA since 1990 and was placed on leave shortly after a former longtime Phoenix clinic director leveled the allegations of deaths, delays in care and secret waiting lists.

Dr. Samuel Foote brought the allegations to light and says supervisors ignored his complaints for months before he retired in December. Foote called Helman's dismissal "a good first step," but said the VA still needs to show it is serious about changing its culture.

VVA Chapter 535 Victorian Christmas Booth Schedule
To Sign-up Contact Harold Graves haroldgraves@sbcglobal.net (470-8507)

Sun 12/7	Cider Startup	Booth
	* <u>Pete Burelle, Bart Rudd</u>	* <u>Ralph Remick, Bart Rud</u>
	* <u>Harold Graves</u>	* <u>Chris Piccolo, Chuck Holmes</u>
	* <u>Dave Chaix</u>	* <u>Dave Chaix</u>
	* <u>Dick Corn</u>	* <u>Harold Graves</u>
Wed 12/10	Cider Startup	Booth
	* <u>Pete Burelle</u>	* <u>Harold Graves, Chris Piccolo</u>
	* <u>Dick Corn</u>	* <u>Armando Garza</u>
	* <u>Dale Epps</u>	* <u>Chuck Holmes</u>
	<u>Harold Graves</u>	*
Sun 12/14	Cider Startup	Booth
	* <u>Pete Burelle</u>	* <u>Harold Graves</u>
	* <u>Dick Corn</u>	* <u>Jose Gonzales</u>
	* <u>Dale Epps</u>	* <u>Tom Eberlien</u>
	<u>Harold Graves</u>	* <u>Need 2 More</u>
Wed 12/17	Cider Startup	Booth
	* <u>Pete Burelle</u>	* <u>Harold Graves</u>
	* <u>Dick Corn</u>	* <u>Chuck Holmes</u>
	* <u>Dale Epps</u>	*
	<u>Harold Graves</u>	*
Sun 12/21	Cider Startup	Booth
	* <u>Pete Burelle</u>	* <u>Harold Graves</u>
	* <u>Dick Corn</u>	* <u>Jose Gonzales</u>
	* <u>Dale Epps</u>	* <u>Ralph Remick</u>
	<u>Harold Graves</u>	* <u>Chuck Holmes</u>

* _____ = A need for someone to sign Up and Volunteer

Volunteers to Help Pete with Cider for Wednesday nights at 2:30pm sharp at the GV Vets Hall Kitchen

Volunteers to Help Pete with Cider for Sunday at 11.00am sharp at the GV Vets Hall Kitchen

Booth workers for Wednesday nights in Nevada City at 4:30 pm sharp to help with the booth set up. The Shift is from 4:30 pm to 9:00 pm.

Booth workers for Sunday in Nevada City at 12:30 pm sharp to help with the booth set up. The Shift is from 1:30 pm to 6:00 pm.

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:** Individual – 1 year @ \$20 annual Individual – 3 years @ \$50
(select one) 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:** Check Money Order Visa MasterCard
(select one)

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

In Service To America

Address Correction Requested

