



# INCOMING

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA  
**CHAPTER 535**



Chapter 535 Web Page [www.vva535.org](http://www.vva535.org)

*"It Feels Good to Get Involved"*

Volume 25 Issue 1

*In Service To America and the Gold Country*

January 2015

## **President's Message**

### **Happy New Year To All Members Of Vietnam Veterans Chapter 535!**

Thanks to all of you who stepped up to help Harold Graves and our Victorian Christmas event. See Harold's comments herein.

Our January meeting will be on the 8th instead of New Years Day. We will be getting ready for new officers of the chapter for the year. Harold Graves is the Nominations Chair, so let him know if you are interested in a leadership position.

We talked briefly about having an outside speaker tell us something we should, or would like to know. We can talk about it and maybe get some names for future meetings. I would also like to discuss what group(s) you think we should give donations to, how much and why. Let's review our current recipients as well. I am always open to any new ideas you may have. See you on Thursday 1/8/15 at 6PM.

**Dick Corn, President 277-8856**  
Short Timer President



## **Victorian Christmas Summery**

*by Harold Graves*

We had a very merry Christmas this year. The Victorian Christmas event is over and the money is in the bank. I had the help of Pete Burelle, Dick Corn, Dale Epps and Chuck Holmes for the set-up in the kitchen. I also got help from Jose Gonzales, Dave Shay, Bart Rudd and Chris LoPickalo. At the booth I had Dave Chaix, Bart Rudd, Chuck Homes, Al and his son the new Marine.

The rest of the work on the two Wednesdays and the last two Sundays was done by Armando, Jose, Ralph, Chuck, Tom, Al, Chris and A new member named Mike.

We sold everything we had except for 3 Brownies that somehow disappeared. At times we were very busy, so the time went by quickly. It rained on us only once at the end of the first Wednesday. Otherwise we were able to get it done between the storms.

This was the most profitable of the 10 years I've been on the rooster. I want to thank all those that worked so hard to make it a success.

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## Vet Service Dogs

### VA Moving to Alter Access Policy

Two years after Congress ordered the Veterans Affairs Department to increase access for service dogs to its facilities, the department is moving to alter its policies. In a proposed change to regulations, VA plans to let service dogs into its facilities and medical centers as long as they are under the control of their handlers and the animal is trained to perform a task for a person with a disability, including physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disabilities. Current policy holds that VA facilities are required to let in only Seeing Eye dogs; facilities managers have discretion to open their buildings to other dogs. The proposed change is more liberal than a law passed in 2012, which required VA to let in Seeing Eye dogs, mobility dogs and other guide dogs that have been trained and accredited by an organization that evaluates guide dogs and service dogs.



If implemented, the new policy, published in the 21 NOV Federal Register, would expand access for all types of service dogs, similar to the access provisions spelled out in the Americans With Disabilities Act for private businesses. Under that law, businesses, state and local governments, non-profits and other entities that serve the public must grant access to all service dogs. Establishments are not allowed to ask for any documentation that the animal is a service dog; they can only ask if the animal is needed for a disability and what task the animal has been trained to perform. VA is soliciting comment on the proposed regulations until Jan. 20 on the Federal Register website.

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## E Waste Event

NCCVC E-Waste Saturday, January 3, 2015  
Grass Valley Veterans Memorial Building, 255 S. Auburn St.

## America's Most Beloved Vets



Mickey Rooney    Omar Bradley    Robert Leckie    Rocky Marciano

- The box-office star Mickey Rooney enlisted in 1944, and received the Bronze Star for entertaining U.S. troops in combat zones.
- From Normandy through the end of the war, Omar Bradley commanded all U.S. ground forces invading Germany from the west, and later headed the Veterans Administration.
- Robert Leckie's time as a Marine influenced his career as a reporter and historian, and his war memoirs formed the basis for the 2010 HBO series "The Pacific."
- The world heavyweight champion Rocky Marciano ferried supplies across the English Channel to Normandy.



# 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

### Directors

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Dan Davis .....272-4110

Dave Chaix .....269-1431

Bill Holman bholman@succeed.net .....265-8387

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

Finance.....Ralph Remick & Dave Johnson

Parade and Honor Guard ..... Pete Burelle

Membership Affairs.....Ric Sheridan

Newsletter..... bholman@succeed.net, 265-8387 Bill Holman

Nominations.....Harold Graves

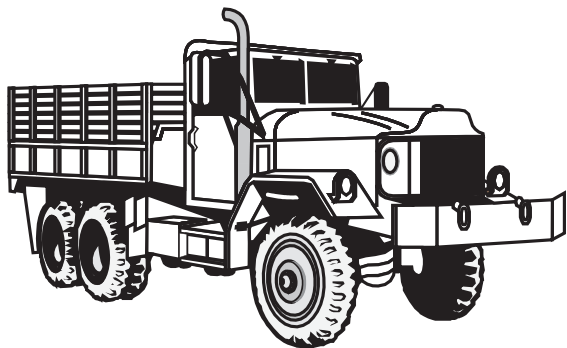
Christmas Year Round.....Harold Graves

NCCVC..... Pete Burelle

Web Master ..... Ralph Remick

#### Nevada County Veterans Affairs Rep.

Victor Ferrera.....(530) 273-3396



# The All Veteran's Honor Guard

The All Veteran's Honor Guard is looking for volunteers for funerals and special events. You do not need to be a member of the American Legion to be a volunteer. It is a nice thing to do to thank a veteran for his/her service to our country. The people at the funeral really appreciate the honor guard participation. They will let you come to observe the ceremony if you are interested. They will train you to do the drill. Contact Dick Corn for more details at 277-8856.



The Vinh Son Orphanage, has a new web site

[www.friendsofvs.org](http://www.friendsofvs.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

January 8 General 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

## 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](mailto: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 you are not receiving your newsletter's or hearing from us, please contact Bill Holman at 265-8387.

## Not All Women Wore Love Beads in the Sixties

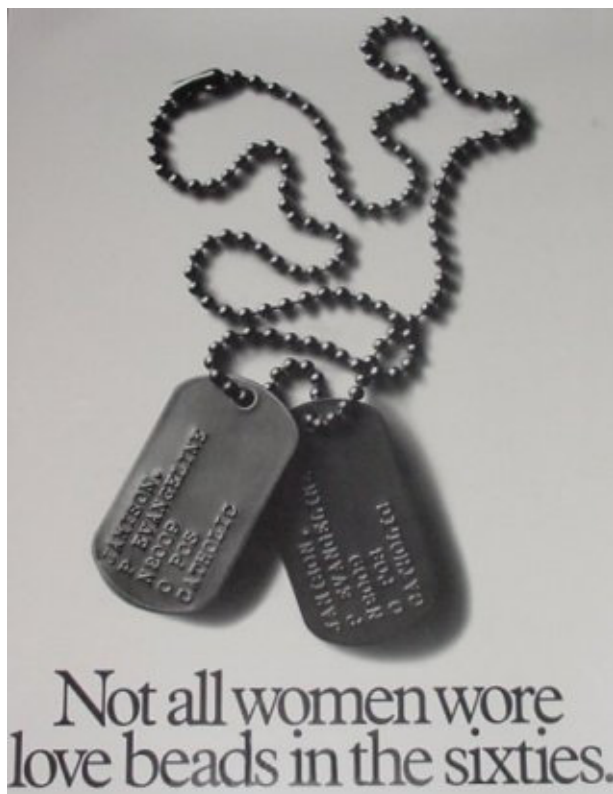
... significant numbers of women served admirably in all branches of service as professional nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists, air traffic controllers, aerial reconnaissance photographers, intelligence and language specialists, legal officers, and in security and administrative positions.

Civilian women also served in Vietnam in the Red Cross, USO, the Central Intelligence Agency and the U.S. Agency for International Development, as well as in other government agencies.

Other women worked there as journalists, flight attendants, and in various church and humanitarian organizations.

Where are these women today? Could they possibly be your wife, your nurse, co-worker, your supervisor, your physician or your next door neighbor? Could you find them if you looked?

These women have camouflaged themselves, an easy task in our society. All they have to do is keep quiet.



## **VA Health Care Stories**

### **Navy Cross Recipient Shot Down**

Vietnam War veteran Steve Lowery has the scars, the medals and his Marine Corps medical records to prove he was wounded when his 12-man reconnaissance team was attacked on March 5, 1969. “We were nearly wiped out and overcome,” said the Las Vegas resident, recounting the firefight in the darkness atop Hill 1308 that left three of his buddies dead and seven wounded including him. One who was killed, Pfc. Robert H. Jenkins Jr., was awarded the Medal of Honor for saving Fred Ostrom’s life by shielding him from an exploding grenade. Others received Silver and Bronze Stars for their bravery. Lowery, the team leader was awarded the Navy Cross, the nation’s second highest valor award. That makes him among the most highly decorated veterans from Las Vegas, but he doesn’t expect to be treated any differently than other veterans who have served their country honorably.



Steve Lowery, recipient of the Naval Cross and two Purple Hearts, was denied benefits by the Veterans Administration who said his shrapnel and gunshot wounds were not service related. “I wear this on behalf of the other 11 who were with me,” he said last week about the Navy Cross, which has a citation that reads: “For extraordinary heroism ... Corporal Lowery was seriously wounded in both legs by the intense enemy fire. “Steadfastly remaining in his hazardous position, he boldly delivered accurate return fire and hurled grenades at the advancing enemy ... killing several of the enemy and causing the others to retreat.” Yet in the eyes of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the bullet from an AK-47 that ripped through his thighs and shrapnel from a “Chi-Com” — Chinese Communist — grenade that pierced his right knee were not related to his military service. Nor was the neck injury he suffered near the end of his career when a moving van rear-ended his car when he was stopped at a light while on active duty in Hawaii. That’s what the letter says from the VA Benefits Regional Office in Reno that rejected his claim for service-connected compensation. “We determined that the following condition is not related to your military service,” reads the Aug. 1, 2011, letter from “A. Bittler,” veterans service

center manager. “Gunshot wound to left thigh; neck condition; shrapnel, right knee; gunshot wound, right thigh.” Lowery said he wonders how VA officials can sign a letter that defies the obvious facts, but they did nothing to find out why. “It’s absolutely stunning that you have a health record that has complete documentation that this person was injured during his third year of 27 years of service (and) it was verified and corroborated every time they looked at me for the following 24 years, and on the date I get out. “And then he makes a statement like, ‘Your shrapnel wounds and gunshot wounds are not service connected.’ It was like that would have been something out of Mad magazine or a ‘Saturday Night Live’ skit,” Lowery said. “I know plenty of people who have received good fine service from them as they ought to. But that ought to happen in every case. And those where it doesn’t happen, we ought to pursue it and take action against administrators and individuals who through either negligence or neglect have abused their authority and haven’t carried out their duties.”

So on 4 DEC, after more than two years of agonizing and writing rant letters he never mailed, Lowery asked U.S. Sen. Dean Heller (R-NV) a member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, to help him unravel the mystery about his case. On 5 DEC, Heller’s spokesman, Neal Patel, acknowledged the process has begun. Also on that day, a spokesman for the VA Reno benefits office said its staff intends to review Lowery’s case. The spokesman, Nathaniel Miller, said a preliminary look at Lowery’s file indicates Bittler, the veterans service center manager, concluded Lowery’s wounds weren’t service connected merely because Lowery was in Las Vegas when an appointment had been arranged for April 5, 2011, for a VA physical in Honolulu where Lowery also has a residence. VA officials in Hawaii had mistakenly assumed he was already there and scheduled a physical for him. Instead, he was still in Las Vegas. So, when they called about the appointment, he requested they cancel it so he wouldn’t be a “no-show” and only schedule it after he arrived.

“They agreed,” Lowery said. “I arrived and called the hospital for the appointment only to discover the VA in Reno had already closed the case.” Miller said: “I’m not saying it’s his fault. I’m not saying it’s our fault. We want to help him certainly.”

Regardless of who is to blame, Lowery said he feels the VA has played a shell game with his case after he filed his claim in 1994, the year after he retired as a major. That time, his war wounds were deemed not related to his military service because the VA had requested his medical file from Department of Defense archives but never received it. Without the file, there was no evidence of his wounds and thus no reason to schedule a physical examination, he was told. “They explained to me they had reached their decision with no health record in front of them. I asked how that happened, and he (the claims processor) said, ‘Well, when we sent off a request to the archive to produce your medical records,’ the only thing they had was

my preinduction physical and one visit to the Nellis Air Force Base hospital after I retired,” Lowery said. He noted that VA officials made no further effort to resolve the two-decade gap in his medical file.

Fortunately, Lowery had copied the 2-inch-thick file that includes a narrative from a U.S. Naval Hospital in Yokosuka, Japan, from March 15, 1969. “This 22 year old CPL/USMC was admitted to this hospital on 15 March with a history of having sustained a gunshot wound across the posterior aspect of both thighs on the 5th of March,” the narrative states. Concerned that he might have complications later in life from those wounds and his 1989 neck injury, Lowery provided the VA Reno benefits office with his copy of his medical records to reopen the claim in 2010. Again it was rejected as not related to his military service because he was in Las Vegas when his physical exam was scheduled for Hawaii. “It’s just a shame that officials at the top in authority have done (things) where they’ve kept double logs and falsified waiting times and tinkered with people’s cases to avoid providing service,” he said, referring to the scandal at VA facilities in Phoenix. “I’ve heard many cases of fine service on the part of the VA doctors and nurses, counselors, people who work tirelessly and do lots of things to help (veterans). But of course it’s only the outrageous failures that make headlines. My hat is off to everybody in the VA, from the clerks and logisticians and the people who keep their supplies. They do a terrific, wonderful job.”

Patel’s confirmation that Heller’s office would assist Lowery coincided with release of a 5 DEC letter that the senator sent to VA Secretary Robert McDonald, calling for him to “expeditiously” appoint a new director for the VA Reno office because it “has remained one of the worst ... in the nation and currently has the highest percentage of backlogged claims.” VA Reno Director Ed Russell has been on administrative leave since July after Heller called for his resignation in the wake of an inspector general’s report that concluded problems have persisted due to poor management. Lowery said he has “mixed feelings” about the VA’s claims process but is willing to give it another chance. “Besides being somebody who served and was injured in service, I’m still a taxpayer. I need people who are running the government, my government, to carry out their duties. I don’t want them to open the bank vaults and say, ‘Here’s a check,’ for everybody who applies.”

## **Volunteers Drive local Veterans to their VA Healthcare Appointments**

Nevada County’s veterans have a long way to go for a doctor’s appointment. Driving to Reno, or Sacramento is challenging — especially for older veterans. But at least they’re not alone. Every week, the county sends a van to Reno, driven by volunteers. “You get to listen to some real good stories and some pretty old cranky guys,” said Bill Boling, a volunteer driver. “It’s really neat talking to them.”

The program is in need of more drivers, according to VSO representative Eric Gamblin. “We’re always looking for volunteers, especially for our program where we drive vets to our local appointments,” he said. Gamblin works at the Nevada County’s VSO office in Grass Valley. Gamblin also helps coordinate scheduling for two trips to Reno each week, on Tuesday and Wednesday. “We have a van that’s provided by the VA and they’re in control of it,” Gamblin said. “It stays here in Grass Valley, and it can take a maximum of 5 passengers. Most of them will come here, and meet the driver, park their vehicles behind our building and get in. We have a list of veterans that are scheduled to ride that day and he checks them off and away they go.

“It’s great, because there’s a lot of veterans that are elderly and they can’t drive,” Gamblin said. “This is a good asset for them.”

All the drivers are volunteers, and Gamblin says that right now, all the volunteers are veterans. “For our volunteers that offer time and service to drive our veterans, it’s greatly appreciated,” he said. “We don’t pay them — they do it out of the kindness of their hearts.”

Gamblin said that volunteers typically undergo a background check, physical exams, drug testing, driver training and test drives before getting certified by the VA. It’s a lot of hoops to jump through for a volunteer opportunity — but those who are already involved say it’s worth it.

To find out more about volunteering as a driver, or getting a ride to a VA health-care facility, contact Gamblin at 530-273-3396.



**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

