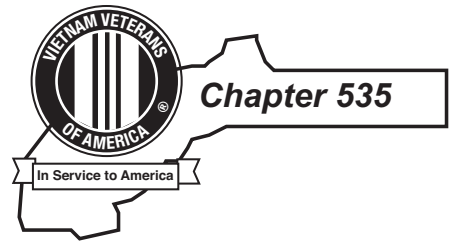




# INCOMING

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 76

*In Service To America and the Gold Country*

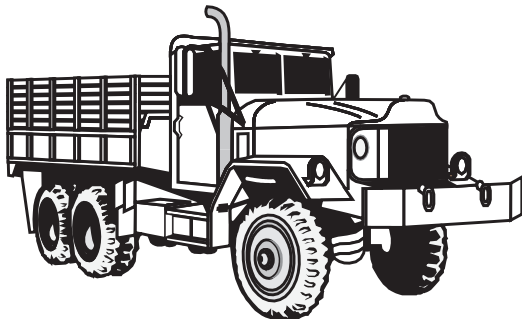
July 2015

## President's Message

Greetings to all. I hope you are enjoying the start of summer. It may get scary with the fire conditions we have. Please stay safe.

The 4<sup>th</sup> of July is coming up soon and I hope you will join us for the parade. It is in Grass Valley this year and we will meet at the vets building parking lot at 9:45 a.m. sharp to decorate the deuce and a half with our banner, bunting and flags. Space on the truck is first come first serve I am still trying to get in touch with Jose Gonzales for The Tiger Cage. It has never been in a Grass Valley Parade before. We have an actor lined up to play our P.O.W. again, depending on finding Jose. The rest of the month will be dark as I'm sure many will be on vacation. There is no board meeting this month as I will be going back east for a few weeks. I would like to have a summer B B Q planned on the coming Chapter meeting and would all board members meet at vets building by 5:15 P.M. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July before our regular chapter meeting. I hope to see a good turnout at the meeting and the parade.

Pete Burelle, President 274-3787



## The All Veterans Honor Guard

The "All Veterans Honor Guard" is looking for new recruits. It is sponsored by The American Legion Post 130, Grass Valley. You do not have to be a member of the American Legion to participate. It is a great way to thank deceased fellow veterans for their service to our country. The families really like and appreciate our tribute to their relative.

Training is provided. It is very easy to learn. We shoot a 3 round volley and there are (hopefully) 7 riflemen and 3 others for folding the flag and playing Taps. This is a nice bunch of guys of all ages and military backgrounds. We have a bus to take us to the events. We have a list of volunteers who are notified of an upcoming "Mission" and those who are available respond to the call. If you have other things to do that day, you don't respond. I have been doing this for about 10 years and it is a good feeling to support those grieving families. Contact me if you have any questions, or you can contact Ray Warner at the American Legion office at 530-272-2160.

Dick Corn  
530-277-8856

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## **VA Moving to Extend Benefits to Some Air Force Reservists**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Reversing a long-held position, the Department of Veterans Affairs now says Air Force reservists who became ill after being exposed to Agent Orange residue while working on planes after the Vietnam War should be eligible for disability benefits.

The VA said it has been working to finalize a rule that could cover more than 2,000 military personnel who flew or worked on Fairchild C-123 aircraft in the U.S. from 1972 to 1982. Many of the Vietnam-era planes, used by the reservists for medical and cargo transport, had sprayed millions of gallons of herbicide during the 1955-1975 military conflict in Southeast Asia.

If the White House Office of Management and Budget approves the change, it would be the first time the VA had established a special category of Agent Orange exposure for military personnel without “boots on the ground” or inland waterways service in Vietnam. That could open the VA to renewed claims by thousands of other veterans who say they were exposed to Agent Orange in less direct circumstances, such as on the open sea.

The announcement is expected as early as this coming week.

An Institute of Medicine report in January concluded that many C-123 reservists had been exposed to chemical residues on the aircraft’s interior surfaces and suffered higher risks of health problems as a result. The institute is part of the National Academy of Sciences, a private organization chartered by Congress to advise the government on scientific matters.

Using that report, the department “determined that potentially exposed veterans would be eligible for Agent Orange-related benefits,” the VA said in a statement. It also is reviewing whether certain active-duty troops may have been exposed. “Our goal is to ensure all affected C-123 crewmembers receive disability benefits and medical care.” Before requesting the report, the VA had generally denied claims submitted since 2011 by C-123 reservists, saying it was unlikely they could have been exposed to Agent Orange from the residue.

About 653,000 Vietnam-era veterans have received Agent Orange-related disability benefits since 2002, when the VA officially began tracking the cases.

The proposed rule would expand coverage under the 1991 Agent Orange Act to reservists who were stationed at Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base in Columbus, Ohio, Pittsburgh Air National Guard Base and Westover Air

Reserve Base in Chicopee, Massachusetts.

Many were pilots, mechanics or medical personnel and simply followed orders when it came to working on C-123s, according to the C-123 Veterans Association. It was formed four years ago by retired Air Force Maj. Wesley T. Carter after he and other reservists noticed a pattern in the various ailments they suffered.

The reservists under the rule would be entitled to VA disability benefits if they developed health problems such as prostate cancer, diabetes and leukemia that were determined by the VA to be connected to Agent Orange.

“There wasn’t that much talk of Agent Orange,” said retired Tech. Sgt. Ed Kienle, 73, of Wilmington, Ohio, who worked on C-123 aircraft as a pilot and mechanic from 1972 to 1980. He said reservists generally knew the planes had once sprayed Agent Orange, but he didn’t think twice about it when he was asked to clear away parts coated with residue.

After retiring from the military in 1997, Kienle said he developed skin cancer and respiratory problems and is being treated for indications of prostate cancer. He has joined with other reservists in the “Buckeye Wing” stationed at Rickenbacker in pushing for C-123 benefits.

In April, VA Secretary Bob McDonald expressed dismay in an email to department officials that multiple delays have “stretched our already thin credibility.” At the time, officials were looking to Congress for legislation to provide benefits for the C-123 reservists.

But veterans groups and lawmakers including Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, said the VA had legal authority to bypass Congress and act on its own. Brown and two other senators said this past week they would block a Senate vote on President Barack Obama’s nominee for VA’s top health post until the department made clear whether or when a new rule would take effect.

The upcoming rule would not include roughly 200,000 “Blue Water” veterans who say they were exposed to Agent Orange while serving aboard deep-water naval vessels off Vietnam’s coast, according to two VA officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

“If they do cover the C-123 guys and not us, we would feel very slighted,” said John Paul Rossie, executive director of the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Association, pledging a renewed push for benefits.

Veterans’ organizations and several members of Congress have been calling for expanded VA benefits in a broader range of environmental toxic exposure cases, including those involving Gulf War neurotoxins and burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan.

# Chapter 535 Information Center

## Chapter 535 Officers & Board of Directors

### Officers-Phone

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Al Hernandez .....	265-6765
<b>Secretary</b>	
Dave Johnson .....	885-1230
<b>Treasurer</b>	
Ralph Remick .....	887-8297
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Kent Haley.....	432-3551
Bart Ruud.....	823-1368
Dale Epps .....	368-6156
Harold Graves.....	470-8507
Dick Corn.....	272-5922

## 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 .....	Ken Farmer
Web Master.....	Ralph Remick

### Nevada County Veterans Affairs Rep.

Victor Ferrera .....	(530) 273-3396
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### Membership Facts Chapter 535

<b>VVA</b>	
Individual members	31
Life members	39
<b>AVVA</b>	
Individual members	1
Life member	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>



The Vinh Son Orphanage, has a new web site

[www.friendsofvso.org](http://www.friendsofvso.org)

## Tet: 1968 -- Tan Son Nhut Combat A.P. Post 4

*From Vietnam Vet War Stories*

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

*Continued on Page 4*

### Upcoming Dates and Events

July	2	General Chapter Meeting 6 pm
July	4	Parade in Grass Valley



## 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 .....202-565-8124  
Freedom of Information/Privacy Act .....202-233-3616  
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

## Conceal Carry Weapons Class

Dennis Fruzza, American Legion

If anyone is interested in attending the CCW course that we hold monthly in the Remembrance Room at the Grass Valley Veterans building, please contact Gary Weber at 274-7664 or <<http://weberfirearms@gmail.com/>>weberfirearms@gmail.com. Gary will then send notification emails for the next course and all of the material to the interested parties. We are charging 1/2 price for Veterans and their spouses, which at this time is \$50.00 all others \$90.00. Everyone pays the \$10.00 range fees.

Recommendation is to download the CCW Application from the mynevadacounty web site, print it out, or obtain one from the NCSO, follow their instructions. Then take the application to the NCSO on the second floor of the Rood Bldg. Once the course is taken and the qualifying is completed, then add the certificate to the application and wait for them to call.

Three firearms can be put onto the CCW permit, qualifying with all of them, shooting 50 total rounds between the firearms.

## 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 your not receiving your newsletter's or hearing from us, please contact Bill Holman at

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*Ter: 1968 from Page 3*

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!"

## **VA Disability Ratings**

### **When You Are Allowed to Work**

Veterans are often confused about Department of Veterans Affairs 100 percent disability ratings and whether or not they can work if rated at 100 percent. There are four types of 100 percent disability ratings.

**Combined.** When a veteran's service-connected disabilities combine to 100 percent, he can work full-time.

**TDIU or IU.** This stands for Total Disability/Individual Unemployability. It is a specific type of claim made by a veteran, requesting he be paid at the 100 percent rate even though his disabilities do not combine

to 100. This request is made because the veteran is unable to maintain "gainful employment" because his service-connected disabilities prevent him from doing so. The basic eligibility to file for IU is that the veteran has one disability rated at 60 percent or one at 40 percent and enough other disabilities that result in a combined rating of 70 percent or more. The one disability at 40 percent criteria can be a combined rating of related disabilities. Meeting the basic criteria is not a guarantee that the veteran will be awarded 100 percent under IU. The medical evidence must show that the veteran is unable to work in both a physical and sedentary setting. A veteran not meeting the percentage criteria may still be awarded IU if the disabilities present a unique barrier to gainful employment. If a veteran is granted 100 percent under IU he is prohibited from working full-time, because in filing the claim for IU the veteran is stating he is unable to work because of his service-connected disabilities. Receiving IU is not a bar to all employment. The veteran can work in part-time "marginal" employment and earn up to a certain amount annually.

**Temporary 100 percent rating.** If a veteran is hospitalized 21 days or longer or had surgery for a service-connected disability that requires at least a 30-day convalescence period, the VA will pay at the 100 percent rate for the duration of the hospital stay or the convalescence period. For example, if a veteran has a total knee replacement for a service-connected knee disability, the VA will pay 100 percent compensation for 13 months, the standard recovery period for a replacement of a major joint. The duration of 100% temporary disability for any other type of surgery will depend on what the doctor reports as the recovery period.

**Permanent and total.** A 100 percent "permanent and total" rating is when the VA acknowledges that the service-connected conditions have no likelihood of improvement and the veteran will remain at 100 percent permanently with no future examinations. The P&T rating provides additional benefits, such as Chapter 35 education benefits for dependents, among others. Veterans sometimes make the

mistake of requesting a P&T rating simply because they want education benefits for their dependents. Veterans need to keep in mind that when P&T is requested, all of their service-connected disabilities will be re-evaluated. If improvement is noted during the subsequent examinations, a reduction from 100 percent can be proposed.

Because many veterans are service-connected for conditions that VA says have a "likelihood of improvement," most ratings are not considered permanent and are subject to future review. The only time veterans can't work a full-time, gainfully-employed job is if they were awarded 100 percent disability through a claim for IU. Also, a 100 percent rating under either IU or combined ratings may or may not be rated as permanent and total. A temporary 100 percent rating is just that: temporary due to being hospitalized or recovering from surgery on a service-connected condition. It is always best for a veteran to work with an accredited veterans service officer who can explain the complex workings of the VA benefit system.

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*Tet-1968 from Page 4*

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.

# **Immediate Release Vietnam Veterans of America**

Press Release  
June 18, 2015

**VVA Applauds VA Secretary McDonald's Decision to Allow for Benefits for Air Force Personnel Exposed to Agent Orange-contaminated C-123 Aircraft**

(Washington, D.C.)--“Vietnam Veterans of America applauds VA Secretary Bob McDonald for doing the right thing for C-123 crew members who were exposed to Agent Orange,” said John Rowan, VVA National President. The VA's regulation governing individuals presumed to have been exposed to certain herbicides has been broadened, extending eligibility to Air Force Reserve personnel exposed to Agent Orange through contact with contaminated C-123 aircraft. These aircraft had been used in Vietnam as part of Operation Ranch Hand. Secretary McDonald has stayed within his statutory authority, yet provided justice for these Americans who have suffered toxic wounds.

As of today, Air Force Reserve flight, medical, and ground maintenance crewmembers who served on the contaminated C-123s are now presumed to have been exposed to herbicides during their service, making them eligible for any of the 14 medical conditions that have been determined by VA to be related to exposure to Agent Orange. They may register for medical care immediately.

Secretary McDonald made his decision to expand benefits based on supporting evidence outlined in the Institute of Medicine's 2015 report by the National Academy of Sciences, Post-Vietnam Dioxin Exposure in Agent Orange-Contaminated C-123 Aircraft. This decision will impact the 1,500 to 2,100 Air Force Reserve personnel who served as flight, medical, and ground maintenance crew members on C-123 aircraft previously used to spray Agent Orange in Vietnam.

Under this new rule, VA will presume that for affected Air Force Reserve crew members, their Agent Orange-related condition had its onset during their Reserve training. This change ensures these reservists are eligible for VA disability compensation, as well as medical care, and their surviving dependents are eligible for dependency and indemnity compensation and burial benefits.

VA encourages reservists who were assigned to flight, ground, or medical crew duties, during the period 1969 to 1986, at the following locations, and developed an Agent Orange-related disability, to file a disability compensation claim:

Lockbourne/Rickenbacker Air Force Base in Ohio (906th and 907th Tactical Air Groups or 355th and 356th Tactical Airlift Squadron); Westover Air Force Base in Massachusetts (731st Tactical Air Squadron and 74th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron); or Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, International Airport (758th Airlift Squadron)


VA also has identified several active-duty locations where Operation Ranch Hand C-123 aircraft may have been used following their service in Vietnam. Active-duty personnel who served in a regular USAF unit location where a contaminated C-123 was assigned, and who had regular and repeated contact with the aircraft through flight, ground, or medical duties during the period 1969 to 1986, and who develop an Agent Orange-related disability, are also encouraged to apply for benefits.

Individuals with specific benefit questions related to herbicide exposure on C-123s may call VA's special C-123 Hotline at 1-800-749-8387 or e-mail [VSCC123.VAVBASPL@va.gov](mailto:VSCC123.VAVBASPL@va.gov).

For more information on applying for these benefits, including the affected units, Air Force Specialty Codes and dates of service for affected crew members, and a listing of Agent Orange-related conditions, visit [www.benefits.va.gov/COMPENSATION/claims-postservice-agent\\_orange.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/COMPENSATION/claims-postservice-agent_orange.asp)

# July - 2015



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				General Membership Meeting 6 pm		 Craig Johnson
			Bill Holman Richard Stahlman Ken Farmer			Robert W. Patte Jr.
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
		Dan Smith				
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
				Margie Buhler		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
		Wayne Simonson			Armondo Garza	
26	27	28	29	30	31	

**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

