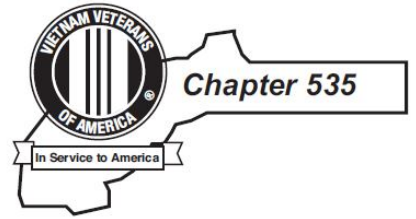




INCOMING

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

CHAPTER 535



Website: www.vva535.org

Volume 30 Issue 4

April 2020

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA CHAPTER 535 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE April 2020

I hope all of you are well and managing your shelter-in-place criteria to meet your needs. I don't know about the rest of you but I was suffering from news media overload. I have learned to watch the news for about a half an hour in the morning, mostly for the weather, and about fifteen minutes in the evening. This seems to be more helpful in managing the stress and anxiety that comes with this emergency. We are in a very unusual situation with this virus. As you all know we are all in the "at risk" category so it is imperative we take care of ourselves. We are all survivors that is why we are here today. I believe this is a national security issue. To have a virus potentially cripple our military, first responders, hospitals, and economy and not drop a bomb on us is something we must prevent in the future. Bio-terrorism is something our government must pay close attention to and be able to counter act when identified.

We have a pending issue regarding the raffle drawing for the rifle. I will be contacting Dale Epps in a few days and assemble a small meeting to witness the drawing. Most everything else is on hold for the time being until we get the all clear signal.

Ralph Remick has suggested the use of ZOOM, online, to conduct meetings until this situation rectifies itself. I am going to look into this to see if it is a viable way to conduct our business.

It has been a busy presidency this year. One year ago you all elected me to this office. I hope I have served effectively for our organization. I could not have succeeded without the help of my "wing man" Bart Ruud. He has been extremely helpful. It has been a pleasure to serve with Enrique, Ralph, and Dave along with the Board of Directors. I am not sure how long our confinement will be in effect. I will continue to conduct business until we can hold an election.

Thank all of you. Please be safe and take care of yourselves.

President Keith

VVA Chapter 535 Mission Statement

To foster camaraderie among members and assist those with disabling mental and physical injuries, to promote the welfare of our brethren affected by the war, and to engender public understanding of the sacrifice, patriotism and bravery of those who served, those who gave all, and those left behind.

Attention

If you do not drive and need a ride to a meeting or any VVA-535 function, please contact Bart Ruud or any local VVA -535 member and we will do our best to arrange transportation for you.

Guest Speaker for April 2, 2020

Bart Ruud will share an overview of his 1971-72 deployment as a 17B40 NCOIC in I-Corps, Vietnam. Note: *ON HOLD*.

Tom Woollard works hard to coordinate and arrange for guest speakers. Lend a hand and pass along any ideas you may have for future guest speakers.

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Upcoming Events - *Mostly cancelled*

NCCVC Meeting – April 2, 2020
General Meeting – April 2, 2020
Director's Meeting – April 2, 2020
VVA-535 Elections – April 2, 2020
April 6, 2020 – Drawing for air rifle

CSC Meeting – Visalia – April 24-26, 2020
May 7 - Installation of Officers & Directors
CSC Convention – Visalia, CA - June 12, 13, 2020
CSC Meeting – Visalia - July 31 – Aug. 2, 2020
Nevada County All Veterans Stand Down –
October 16-17, 2020
CSC Meeting – Visalia Oct. 23-25, 2020

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Dick Corn 277-8856
Dale Epps 368-6156
Ray James 478-1126
Dave Johnson 887-8297
Dave Middleton 205-9375
Bart Ruud 823-1368
Ric Sheridan 274-1413
Mike Underwood 925-759-2924
Tom Woollard 432-1212

Committee Chairs

FinanceRalph Remick & Dave Johnson
Parade and Honor Guard Dick Corn
Membership AffairsRic Sheridan
Newsletter Interim editor Bart Ruud
Victorian Christmas Underwood & Ruud
Nominations Ralph Remick
Veterans Assistance Keith Grueneberg
NCCVC Dick Corn
Speakers Bureau Tom Woollard
Web Master Ralph Remick
Quartermaster Dick Corn
Facebook Master Mike Laborico
Nevada County Fair Dave Middleton
CA State Council Rep. Mike Underwood

Nevada County Veterans Service Officer

VSO Officer -David West II (530) 265-1446 office
(530) 913-5046 cell
988 McCourtney Road, Grass Valley 95949
ncvso@co.nevada.ca.us
Thursday, 9:00 to 12:00 and 1:00 – 4:00 is a
“Walk-In” day.

Placer County Veterans Service Officer

Derrick Oliveira ... 916-780-3290.
1000 Sunset Blvd, Suite 115, Rocklin, CA
Monday – Friday, 8:00 – 12:00 and 1:00 – 5:00
p.m.

Matters of interest as outlined at Board Meeting of March 5, 2020

The Board discussed the Traveling Wall project and came to no conclusions, other than to table some questions and defer those questions to the General Membership: Could the project be combined with the Nevada County Stand Down, October 16, 17, 2020? Would the VVA-535 insurance cover the project? Would NCCVC be permitted to provide 24-hour security as means to offset costs?

Installation of a plaque recognizing Vietnam War veterans at the Hwy. 49 bridge over the Yuba River remains as a work in progress. State Parks administrators need to weigh in.



A slate of Directors and Officers for 2020-21 was shared by Nominations Chair Ralph Remick. Nominations remain open through April 2, 2020 up to the point they will be closed for elections on April 2, 2020. *Elections may be delayed.*

VVA-535 Leadership Election Planning

Our ***Nominations Committee Chair***, Ralph Remick, notes that our annual election of Officers and Directors is scheduled for April 2, 2020. Nominations will remain open until closed just prior to the election.

Currently nominated are:

Officers:

President – open
Vice-President – Enrique Vasquez
Secretary – Dave Middleton
Treasurer – Ralph Remick

Board of Directors:

David Chaix
Dick Corn – Sergeant at Arms
Mike Underwood
Ray James
Ric Sheridan - Membership
Tom Woollard – Speakers Bureau
Mel Williams
Dan Davis

Coronavirus Vaccine

US Military Working to Develop

Source: The Hill & DOD News | Ellen Mitchell & David Vergun | March 2 & 5, 2020

The Pentagon is pitching in on work to develop a vaccine for the deadly coronavirus, the military’s top uniformed official said on 2 MAR. “Our military research labs are working feverishly around the horn here to try to come up with a vaccine. So we’ll see how that develops over the next couple of months,” Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Mark Milley told reporters at the

Pentagon. Milley also said that U. S. Government military laboratories are “working very consistently, not only on that vaccine but all kinds of things” and that the labs are “working in direct support with health and human services.” Defense Secretary Mark Esper, who also spoke to reporters, said one of the labs was at Fort Detrick, an Army Medical Command installation in Frederick, Md.

Brig. Gen. Michael J. Talley, commander of Army Medical Research and Development Command and Fort Detrick in Maryland said Army researchers are taking a "whole of government" approach with other agencies, including the National Institutes of Health; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; industry; and academia in the U.S. and abroad to detect, prevent and treat COVID-19. The work being done by Army researchers is a collaborative effort with those partners to ensure there's no duplication, added Dr. Nelson Michael, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. Regarding potential vaccines, robust testing will be underway soon, he said.

The first phase of testing has already started: testing potential vaccines in mice to see what their response is and making sure it's safe, Dr. Kayvon Modjarrad, director of Emerging Infectious Diseases at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research said. The next phase would be testing in larger animals that are more similar to humans, including monkeys, he said. Modjarrad said he didn't want to speculate when human testing would begin. There's a good possibility that the outbreak could slow down over the warmer months and then start again later in the year when it gets colder — if it follows the pattern of some past

coronaviruses, he said. It's likely that clinical trials will take some time, he said. It could be a year to 18 months before a vaccine is proved safe. Michael said a risk/benefit analysis would be done to ensure the benefits far outweigh risks.

For now, the best thing people can do is wash their hands frequently, even if they don't touch anything, he said, adding that hugging and kissing also should be avoided. Also, be sure to stay home if sick, Michael added. Currently, the risk to Americans is low, he said. America has the best emergency medical treatment and intensive care in the world so the American public should be reassured.

As coronavirus continues to spread across the globe, the Defense Department has raced to limit the illness in the ranks. In the past week the department has canceled a joint military exercise with South Korea, restricted access to public areas at Army installations in Italy and ordered all ships that have visited countries in the Pacific region to remain at sea for 14 days. In addition, U. S. Central Command has ordered all military personnel in Saudi Arabia to stop nonessential travel in the region. CNN first reported that the U. S. Military also canceled a joint military exercise with Israel. A U. S. servicemember in South Korea as well and their spouse also tested positive for the illness. The precautions come as the virus has been recorded in at least 12 states as of 2 MAR, with two deaths in Washington state. In just one week as of 9 MAR those figures climbed to 21 fatalities, with 554 confirmed cases across 34 states and the District of Columbia. More than 3,800 deaths have been reported worldwide, along with more than 110,000 infections.

Milley stressed that the virus's overall impact on the military has been "very, very minimal." "That's not to say its zero, but it's very, very minimal," he said. "That's not surprising because we have a young demographic, healthy demographic, lots of immunizations, so on and so forth." He added that in addition to the canceled joint exercise with South Korea, defense officials are "taking a look at some other exercises to see if they need to be modified or changed" due to the threat of the illness. "Here in the United States we are making all due preparations to protect our bases, camps and stations and also to act in support of Health and Human Services." In South Korea, where there have been more than 4,300 coronavirus cases recorded which jumped to 7300 with 50 deaths in one week. The Pentagon has sent additional medical personnel, equipment and test kits. US military has halted moves to new assignments for troops in South Korea which currently has 28,500 troops stationed there.

Milley also said the Pentagon is planning for all outcomes in relation to the virus. "The United States military looks at a wide variety of scenarios . . . pandemic is the worst case," Milley said. President Trump, meanwhile, said on 2 MAR that he will be urging pharmaceutical executives to accelerate their efforts to develop a vaccine for the coronavirus. The executives were set to attend a meeting with members of the White House coronavirus task force later that day.

**Coronavirus Vaccine
WHO Decided Threat Warranted
Human over Animal Testing**

Source: The Senior Citizens League (TSCL)
Weekly Update | March 13, 2020

There was a report this week that pharmaceutical manufacturers and government scientists are working as quickly as possible to develop a vaccine to combat the rapidly spreading coronavirus. However, some scientists and medical experts are concerned that rushing a vaccine could end up worsening the infection in some patients rather than preventing it. Normally, researchers would take months to test for the possibility of vaccine enhancement in animals. Given the urgency to stem the spread of the new coronavirus, some drug makers are moving straight into small-scale human tests, without waiting for the completion of such animal tests.

Studies have suggested, however, that coronavirus vaccines carry the risk of what is known as vaccine enhancement, where instead of protecting against infection, the vaccine can actually make the disease worse when a vaccinated person is infected with the virus. The mechanism that causes that risk is not fully understood and is one of the stumbling blocks that has prevented the successful development of a coronavirus vaccine. But according to one report, at a specially convened World Health Organization (WHO) meeting in mid-February designed to co-ordinate a global response to the new coronavirus, scientists representing government-funded research organizations and drug makers around the world agreed that the threat was so great that vaccine developers should move quickly into human trials before animal testing is completed.

**Military Coronavirus Treatment
Investigational Drug to be Given to U.S.
Troops**

Military Times | Patricia Kime | March 10, 2020

U. S. Army Medical Research and Development Command has signed an arrangement with Gilead Sciences to provide the company's investigational coronavirus drug to U.S. troops confirmed to have the COVID-19 virus. Gilead's medication, **remdesivir**, was approved for clinical research in February by the Food and Drug Administration. The medication, which initially was developed by the Foster City, California-based company to treat Ebola, has had some demonstrated success targeting coronaviruses, including Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, or MERS, and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, SARS. The medicine, given intravenously, is currently being tested for safety and effectiveness in two separate clinical trials in China and one by the National Institute of Allergy and Infection Diseases.

In the U.S. study, the first volunteer was an evacuee from the Diamond Princess cruise ship hospitalized with the illness at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha. Under the agreement between Gilead and U. S. Army Medical Materiel Development Activity, **remdesivir** will be provided to the Defense Department at no cost. "Together with our government and industry partners, we are progressing at almost revolutionary rates to deliver effective treatment and prevention products that will protect the citizens of the world and preserve the readiness and lethality of our service members," Army Brig. Gen. Michael Talley, commanding general of USAMRDC and Fort Detrick, Maryland, said in a statement 10 MAR.

Gilead Science Chief Medical Officer Dr. Merdad Parsey said last month the speed of **remdesivir's** development "reflects the pressing need for treatment options and the shared commitment" of industry, government and health services "to respond to this public health threat with the highest urgency." Other companies besides Gilead are developing treatments for the virus, but none are in clinical trials. The COVID-19 coronavirus has infected

nearly 650 people in the United States and killed 25, while worldwide, the number of cases has passed 100,000, including 3,281 deaths as of this writing. Private companies and federal researchers also are working to develop a vaccine against the coronavirus. Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and U. S. Army Medical Research and Development Command personnel are conducting animal studies for a vaccine they began developing in January shortly after the outbreak began in Wuhan, China.

Officials expect a vaccine could be ready by next winter, should COVID-19 become a seasonal illness similar to the influenza virus. "We are trying a variety of medications and testing them in different scenarios so we hope that we will have some medical countermeasures available sooner" than a vaccine, Air Force Brig. Gen. Paul A. Friedrichs told reporters during a press conference 10 MAR at the Pentagon. The Department of Defense has at least 10 cases of COVID-19: an active-duty service member and spouse who are quarantined in their off-base home near Joint Base Lewis McChord, Washington; a Marine assigned to Quantico Marine Corps Base in Virginia; an active-duty soldier in South Korea, a sailor in Italy, four additional family members and a contractor assigned to the Navy Bureau of Medicine in Falls Church, Virginia.

VA Appointments Sick? "Stay Home and Phone" a Safe Convenient Option

Source: VAntage Point | March 6, 2020

Got a fever, cold, cough or flu-like symptoms? Are you worried that you have a viral illness? The last thing you want to do is get out of the house to see the doctor, exposing yourself (and others) to more potential bugs and viruses. VA can make it easier and safer to get back to health with virtual care through My HealtheVet and the VA Video Connect app on your smartphone, tablet or computer. What is virtual care? Virtual care means you can contact your VA provider

(and health care team) through secure messaging or receive treatment by telephone or video. Last year, Veterans had over 20 million virtual engagements with VA. Any Veteran who qualifies to receive VA care and lives in the U. S. is eligible to use virtual care.

Virtual care is personalized and can connect you with your providers more effectively than ever. Ask your health care team if virtual care can help meet some of your health care needs. Options include in-home health monitoring with tailored technologies, connection to specialists, or even remote scans and data. Virtual care is safe and effective. Imagine the benefits to you and to your fellow Veterans if you don't have the hassle of going to the hospital or clinic with a cold, flu or other viral illness. You can stay at home and avoid battling for a parking spot and spending time in a waiting room. Most importantly, you won't put other Veterans at risk of a highly contagious illness. Staying home can be easier for you AND safer for the community by helping contain the spread of infectious diseases.

You probably already know My HealtheVet is a great way to manage your care – with online Rx Refills, VA Appointments, and your labs and tests, radiology reports, and images. With secure messaging and video appointments, reaching your providers while at home can be easy, too. While not for use in emergencies, a secure and private session begins with a simple request with a Secure Message for a video appointment. Sign in and request one next time you need to see your doctor or other providers. Your health care team can also set up an in-person appointment if needed. However, if you're feeling seriously ill, or your symptoms may require immediate care, please come in! For more information, visit:

- VA Video Connect) at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect> (allows you to test your equipment compatibility

- [Reach Your VA Care Team Over Live Video \(YouTube\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HZPs-BFBtw&feature=youtu.be)
- [VA Telehealth Services @](https://telehealth.va.gov/type/home)
- [Influenza \(Flu\) @](https://www.publichealth.va.gov/flu)

If you do visit a VA hospital, clinic, community living center or other health care facility, you'll be met at the entrance by a staff member. They will greet you and ask you some screening questions. Depending on your answers, a VA health care professional will assist you on the next steps of your visit. If you're a Veteran coming in for an appointment, plan to leave home earlier than usual to allow time for the screening. VA is doing all they can to make sure everyone in every VA facility—patients, families, visitors, staff and anyone else—stays as safe as possible during this situation For the latest VA updates on coronavirus and common-sense tips on preventing the spread of disease, visit <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus>. For more information about coronavirus, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

Auschwitz Extermination Factory Crematoriums

Source: <https://remember.org/fact-fin-ausc.html> |
January 24, 2020

The extermination plant with the most advanced design anywhere in the world consisted of two large crematoria/gas chambers and two smaller ones. Crematoria Four and Five were built on the surface of the ground. Crematoria Two and Three had subterranean gas chambers and reception areas. They were about 102 meters long by 51 meters across. The basement consisted of two main rooms – the undressing area, which also served as a mortuary, and a gas chamber. Victims climbed down the steps into the basement. Those who could not walk were pushed down a concrete slide. The

gas chamber, about 225 square meters, looked like a large communal bathroom with shower heads:

The Zyklon B gas crystals were inserted through openings into the hollow pillars made of sheet metal. They were perforated at regular intervals and inside them a spiral ran from top to bottom in order to ensure as even a distribution of the granular crystals as possible. Mounted on the ceiling was a large number of dummy showers made of metal. The largest room in the factory, the changing chambers, accommodated 1,000 people. Notices throughout the room contributed to a “cunning . . . and clumsy deception” – telling victims they were in disinfection rooms, urging cleanliness, reminding them to remember their clothing hook number.

The extermination plant contained a hair-drying loft run by fifteen Orthodox Jews. Spread over the floor was women’s hair of every color: Washing lines were strung across the room. Pegged on these lines like wet washing were further batches of hair which had first been washed in a solution of ammonium chloride. When the hair was nearly dry, it was spread on the warm floor to finish off. Finally it was combed out by prisoners and put into paper bags. The SS set up a gold-melting room in the plant. There two dental technicians soaked the teeth for hours in acid to remove bone and flesh, and used a blowtorch to melt the gold into molds. They produced as much as 5 to 10 kilos a day.

As in Treblinka, the stoking gangs sorted out the bodies into combustibility categories: strong men, women, children, and Musselmans. The SS staff had performed earlier experiments to find ways to economize on fuel – with the help of Topf and Sons, civilian experts. In the course of these experiments corpses were selected according to different criteria and cremated. Thus the corpses of two musclemen were cremated together with those of two children or the bodies of two well-nourished men together with that of an emaciated woman, each load consisting of three, or sometimes, four bodies. Members of these groups were especially interested in the amount of coke required to burn corpses of any particular category, and in the time it took to cremate them. During these macabre experiments different kinds of coke were used and the results carefully recorded.

Afterwards, all corpses were divided into the above-mentioned categories, the criterion being the amount of coke required to reduce them to ashes. Thus it was decreed that the most economical and

fuel-saving procedure would be to burn the bodies of a well-nourished man and an emaciated woman, or vice versa, together with that of a child, because, as the experiments had established, in this combination, once they had caught fire, the dead would continue to burn without any further coke being required.

As early as June 13, 1943, all was not well with the new installation. The Central SS Construction Management of Auschwitz sent a letter to a German equipment firm urging the completion of carpentry work in the new crematoria. The chief requested the delivery without delay of the doors for the crematoria, “which [are] urgently needed for the execution of the special measures; otherwise, the progress of the construction will be jeopardized.” In addition, he demanded the completion of the windows for the reception building. If the carpentry work could not be done, building operations would have to be suspended for the winter. Eventually the ovens seemed to fall apart. Crematorium Four failed completely after a short time and Crematoria Five had to be shut down repeatedly.

The plans for the crematoria have been preserved by an architect who stole them from the Birkenau plant. The one-story buildings looked like large bakeries with steep roofs and dormer windows. The underground gas chambers rose 51 centimeters above the ground to form a grassy terrace. No one would know at first glance what they were. Crematoria Two and Three were close to the camp and visible. Pine trees and birches hid crematoria Four and Five. Around the crematoria lay large piles of wood for burning the corpses in the nearby pits. All chambers had doors with thick observation windows. In 1942 and 1943 alone those chambers used 27 tons of Cyclone B. The gas chambers and the crematoria of Auschwitz were called “special installations,” “bath houses,” and “corpse cellars.”

Each day the trains rolled into the camp through the passageway constructed in the far gate, down one of three tracks to the selection platform. As they fell out of the trains, the victims were sent one way or another, with tearful parting scenes. The procession moved to the crematoria yard where the SS told the Jews they were going to take disinfection baths. An orchestra of attractive women played gay tunes from operas and light marches. Then to the dressing room or reception center with numbered clothing pegs driven into the walls. The SS ordered the victims to undress and to remember their numbers. Sometimes they gave

them towels. Then the SS drove the victims through the corridor to the heated gas chamber.

The heating was provided not for the comfort of the prisoners but to create a better setting for the evaporation of gas. The gas squads packed the 2,000 victims into the room. From the ceiling hung imitation shower heads. The doors were closed, the air was pumped out, and the gas poured in. Cyclone B, or hydrogen cyanide, is a very poisonous gas that causes death by internal suffocation. In sufficient concentrations, it causes death almost immediately. But the SS did not bother to calculate the proper quantities, so death took anywhere from three to twenty minutes. While the victims were dying, the SS watched through the portholes.

When they opened the doors, they found the victims in half-sitting positions in a towerlike pile. Most were pink, others were covered with green spots. Some had foam on their lips, while others bleeding from the nose. Many had their eyes open. The majority were packed near the doors. The squads in special clothing moved in with hooks to pull the bodies off of each other. The SS physicians and scientists monitored the selection and the gassing, watching the procedure through the special airtight door. The doors could not be opened until the doctor gave the sign that all victims were dead. The doctors assumed their monitoring of the killings on a rotating basis.

Two German firms, Tesch/Stabenow and Degesch, produced Cyclone B gas after they acquired the patent from Farben. Tesch supplied two tons a month, and Degesch three quarters of a ton. The firms that produced the gas already had extensive experience in fumigation. "In short, this industry used very powerful gases to exterminate rodents and insects in enclosed spaces; that it should now have become involved in an operation to kill off Jews by the hundreds of thousands is not mere accident." After the war the directors of the firms insisted that they had sold their products for fumigation purposes and did not know they were being used on humans. But the prosecutors found letters from Tesch not only offering to supply the gas crystals but also advising how to use the ventilating and heating equipment. Hoess testified that the Tesch directors could not help but know of the use for their product because they sold him enough to annihilate two million people. Two Tesch partners were sentenced to death in 1946 and hanged. The director of Degesch received five years in prison.

The scientifically planned crematoria should have been able to handle the total project, but they could not. The whole complex had forty-six retorts, each with the capacity for three to five persons. The burning in a retort lasted about half an hour. It took an hour a day to clean them out. Thus it was theoretically possible to cremate about 12,000 corpses in twenty-four hours or 4,380,000 a year. But the well-constructed crematoria fell far behind at a number of camps, and especially at Auschwitz in 1944. In August the total cremation reached a peak one day of 24,000, but still a bottleneck occurred. Camp authorities needed an economic and fast method of corpse disposal, so they again dug six huge pits beside Crematorium Five and reopened old pits in the wood.

Thus, late in 1944, pit burning became the chief method of corpse disposal. The pits had indentations at one end from which human fat drained off. To keep the pits burning, the stokers poured oil, alcohol, and large quantities of boiling human fat over the bodies: The sizzling fat was scooped out with buckets on a long curved rod and poured all over the pit causing flames to leap up amid much crackling and hissing. . . . The air reeked of oil, fat, benzole and burnt flesh.

Battle of Lima 85

Secret U. S. Base Overrun by Elite Vietnamese Commandos

Source: The National Interest | Sebastien Roblin | August 5, 2018

Fifty years ago on March 12, 1968, a top-secret U.S. base on a mountain top in Laos was overrun by an elite force of Vietnamese commandos. Only six of the eighteen CIA and Air Force personnel manning the remote outpost escaped with their lives in an incident that would remain veiled in secrecy for three decades. This was because the U.S. military was legally prohibited from operating in Laos. The southeast Asian nation had been wracked by a civil war pitting right-wing royalists against Pathet Lao communists—the latter backed by North Vietnam, which used Laotian territory to clandestinely funnel troops into South Vietnam via the Ho Chi Minh trail. However, in 1962

Washington, Hanoi and Laotian factions all signed a peace treaty in which the foreign powers agreed to withdraw their forces from the country.

However, North Vietnam only withdrew a minority of its forces, and the United States continued transferring extensive military aid to the royalist and instead began a secret but large-scale aerial bombing campaign in the kingdom known as Operation Barrel Roll. Though warplanes based in Vietnam and Thailand flew missions into Laos, CIA-run mercenary contractors and 'airlines' such as Air America flew transport and observation aircraft from Laotian bases. CIA personnel also recruited local Hmong, an ethnic minority present in several southeast Asian states, to fight a guerilla war against the Pathet Lao. It was with this purpose in mind that CIA personnel first established a base atop the steep cliff of Phou Pha Thi mountain, a sacred place in the Hmong's animist faith which happened to be strategically located near the border with North Vietnam.

This base was one of many 'Lima Sites' in Laos intended to facilitate aerial supply of U. S. -allied forces. The main facility was at the peak of the 5,600-foot high mountain surrounded by steep cliffs; you can see the base's layout in the photo above. A path wound downslope to a short 700-meter long airstrip at the base of the mountain was used for resupply and staff rotations, delivered in covert weekly flights by CH-3 helicopters of the 20th U. S. Air Force helicopter squadron.

In the summer of 1966, the U. S. Air Force decided to adapt the base with a new purpose—to serve as radar- navigation system, or TACAN, by installing a power generator and first a transponder. In the era predating GPS, TACAN sites helped warplanes find their targets, especially, while flying under low visibility conditions or at night. (The first radio navigation system, known as Knickebein, was developed by Nazi Germany, to enable more precise night bombing of England.) In 1967, this

was further upgraded to a TSQ-81 antenna and remote bombing system that allowed the base to remotely control U.S. bombers. Hanoi was only 135 miles northeast of Lima 85, so the clandestine base was able to direct very precise coordinates for U.S. aircraft bombarding the North Vietnamese capital. Because those strikes could involve anything from F-105 fighter bombers to dozens of huge B-52 bombers, this made the base a deadly force multiplier. In just six months, Lima 85 directed between 25 and 55 percent of the air strikes pounding North Vietnamese and Laotian targets.

Because Laotian Prince Souvanna refused to accept U.S. military personnel in Laos, U.S. Air Force personnel deployed to Lima 85 had to sign papers temporarily discharging them from the U.S. military before deploying to Lima, a farcical process known as 'sheep dipping.' These technicians were supposed to go unarmed, though they did eventually end up acquiring a handful of small arms. Instead, the base's security was supposed to be assured by a battalion each of Hmong militia—advised by CIA agents—and Thai Border Patrol policemen deployed around the base of the mountain.

However, Lima 85 may have been concealed from the U.S. public, but it's presence and purpose were not a secret to the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese Army (NVA). Scouts probed the base's defenses in December 1967, and on January 12, 1968 a flight of four An-2 biplane transports attacked Lima 85 using underwing 57mm rockets, and 120mm mortar shells dropped out the side doors, killing four Hmong. An Air America UH-1 helicopter was scrambled to intercept the slow transports and shot down one of the transports using AK-47 fired out the side—one of very few helicopter-on-airplane kills on record. Another An-2 crashed, either due to ground fire or a failed evasive maneuver. The base was subsequently hit by a mortar barrage on 30 JAN, then on 18 FEB Hmong militia ambushed and killed a team of NVA artillery observers near the mountain and

recovered plans for a coordinated bombardment of the facility.

American military leaders knew the isolated base was surrounded by stronger enemy forces and likely to come under attack, but the base's TACAN support was considered so valuable that Amb. William Sullivan resisted evacuating the site. Unable to deploy significant defenses, the base's technicians instead began dispatching hundreds of airstrikes against nearby communist forces to secure their position. Elite North Vietnamese commandos from the 41st Special Forces battalion had already scaled the seemingly impassible cliffs on Phou Pha Thi's northside without being detected on 22 JAN and reconnoitered the most feasible infiltration routes. Early that March, a thirty-three man platoon under the command of Lt. Truong Muoc assembled near the mountain, where they were reinforced by a nine- man sapper squad. The commandos were equipped with AK-47s, SKS carbines, explosives, hand grenades and three rocket-propelled grenade launchers.

At 6PM on 11 MAR an artillery bombardment gave cover for Truong's pathfinders to clear out mines and secure the infiltration paths to Lima 85. A few hours later, regular troops of the 766th Regiment of the NVA and a Pathet Lao battalions launched an attack that pinned down the Hmong troops in the valley around the mountain. Finally around 9 PM, Truong's men began scaling up the cliff, the operators splitting into five "cells" to launch a multiprong attack. Cells One and two would concentrate on the command post, cells three and four would seize the TACAN equipment and airstrip respectively, and the fifth cell would remain in reserve. The base personnel reported the artillery bombardment, but Ambassador Sullivan decided not to order an evacuation unless the attack proved to be overwhelming. Only by 8 AM the following morning did he dispatch helicopters and air support to cover the personnel's escape.

This was far too late. The Truong's infiltrators were in position by 3 AM that morning and knocked out Hmong guard posts and the base's TSQ-81 radar and power generator using rocket propelled grenades. When base commander Maj. Clarence Barton and several Air Force technicians rushed out to assess the situation, they were gunned down by the commandos. By 4 AM, the first three cells had captured all of their objectives. Some were captured and then flung over the cliff on Truong's orders. Only cell 4 was forced to disengage from its objective, unable to dislodge a superior Hmong force of two infantry platoons and a mortar squad deployed around the airstrip.

Surviving U.S. personnel had fled to a ledge on the side of the cliff, where they were trapped as grenades and small arms fire rained down upon them. Firing back with their assault rifles, they attempted to call down an airstrike nearly on top of their position. Finally at dawn, Air America helicopters covered by A-1 Skyraider attack planes swooped down upon the mountain. Hmong troops, led by two CIA agents and supported by Skyraiders, engaged in a fierce firefight as they attempted to dislodge the NVA commandos from the TACAN site. Though North Vietnamese platoon held its ground, the fracas provided a distraction for five surviving Air Force technicians and two CIA agents to be extracted.

Chief Master Sergeant Richard Etchberger, one of the airmen trapped on the cliff, refused to board a rescue chopper until he had loaded three of his injured comrades on the Huey's rescue sling. As he was being lifted away, the Pennsylvanian was mortally wounded by a parting burst of assault rifle fire. Communist forces would retain control of Phou Pha Thai Mountain and later repel a Hmong offensive to seize it back. Muoc's assault on Lima 85 had significantly weakened the U.S. air campaign over North Vietnam and Laos. According to Vietnamese accounts, he lost only one commando and killed at least forty-two Thai and Hmong troops as well as a dozen U.S.

airmen. However, Truong would return home to a court martial rather than a hero's welcome; his superiors were outraged that he had destroyed the valuable TACAN equipment and killed the technicians instead of capturing them.

Vinh Son Orphanage website:

<https://www.friendsofvso.org>

Writing Your Story for INCOMING

(Ongoing repeat solicitation)

Ideas for your story:

- Think about what you appreciated about the Vietnam experience. There is surely a means to segue into that with very little reflection on the negative aspects of war.
- What did you appreciate about the Vietnamese people during your deployment?
- Can you steer away from the bad stuff and reflect on the best experience you had in the Nam?
- Surely you had a close buddy and you supported each other. Maybe there is a story in that.
- What really got you through the day-to-day anxieties and fears? There might be a positive recollection in that regard.
- How did your experience instill in you a sense of patriotism that you possibly express every day of your life.

So far we have heard from Ruud, Epps, Chaix, Hamer, Chuck Holmes, current Marine LCpl. Jesse Hernandez, Kent Hawley, and Mike Laborico. (Thank you!)

No writer needs to dwell on the negatives of war. Each of us who was there lived the negatives, and all of us are better people for having served, especially when we look at how we matured as a result of our

experiences. Each of us has derived a sense of being and an energy that is different from what it might have been had we not been sent across the pond.

Do share with us, in your own words, something of that chapter of your life. And, thank you for your service.

Forward your story to Bart Ruud at bruud45@gmail.com or hand deliver to Bart.

Car Insurance Age Impact

Source: Money Talks News | Chris Kissell | March 5, 2020

Adult drivers generally see their car insurance rates drift lower for decades — until they hit their 60s. At that point, rates climb — and continue to do so for the rest of your life, according to the 2020 The State of Auto Insurance report from The Zebra. Rates are highest when you are young. In fact, drivers who are 16 years old and have their own policies pay a jaw-dropping \$6,600 a year for car insurance, on average. That is more than three times the average for all drivers between the ages of 23 and 85. Things get better for drivers in their remaining teen years, but not by much. The Zebra found that people pay per year on average in their:

- • Teens: \$5,023
- • 20s: \$1,989
- • 30s: \$1,532
- • 40s: \$1,474
- • 50s: \$1,365
- • 60s: \$1,384
- • 70s: \$1,611
- • 80s: \$1,880

It's no secret why rates are higher at the beginning and end of your driving years: That's when accidents are most likely to

occur. As Insurance.com has pointed out about senior drivers: *“Senior drivers as a group are more accident-prone than their middle-aged counterparts. The reasons for this include age-related changes in hearing or vision, slower reflexes, health conditions and medications.* In addition, regardless of accident severity, older drivers suffer graver injuries and more fatalities than younger people. This makes seniors more expensive to treat following an injury. These factors can increase insurers’ claim costs, and those costs are passed on.” Regardless of your age, you can almost always get a better deal on car insurance if you look around and comparison shop.

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VVA-535 Fundraiser 0.177 Caliber Air Rifle

This is a photo showing a display of the air rifle to be offered by VVA-535 for members only. Tickets, at **\$10 each**, will be available at the December VVA-535 meeting/potluck. A total of one hundred tickets will be available.

The drawing for this air rifle will be conducted on **April 6, 2020**.



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

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

Membership is open to U.S. armed forces veterans who served on active duty (for other than training purposes) in the Republic of Vietnam between February 28, 1961, and May 7, 1975, or in **any duty location** between August 5, 1964 and May 7, 1975.

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: (_____) _____ Cell Phone: (_____) _____

Email Address: _____ Gender: _____

(Optional) Chapter Number: _____ Sponsor: _____

_____ I am already a VVA member and I want to become a Life Member. My VVA Number is _____.

Membership: Individual Life Membership: \$50. (Effective Oct. 20, 2018)

ATTENTION New members: You must submit a copy of your DD-214 form along with this application and dues payment.

Payment Method: ___ Check ___ Money Order ___ Credit Card (Visa, MasterCard, AMEX, Discover)

Credit Card Number _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Return your completed application, payment and a copy of your DD-214 to:

Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc., Chapter 535
P.O. Box 37
Grass Valley, CA 95945

Revised: January 2019

March

2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 CSC Meeting	2 Operation "Rolling Thunder: began 1965	3 "Star Spangled Banner" made U.S, National Anthem, 1931 CA Primary Elections 2020	4	5 VVA -535 Nominations of Officers & Directors	6	7
8 Daylight Saving Time begins	9	10	11	12 Girl Scouts of America founded 1912	13	14
15 American Legion's birthday 1919	16	17 St. Patrick's Day	18	19 1 st Day of Spring Start of Operation Iraqi Freedom 2003	20	21
22	23	24	25 Medal of Honor Day	26 Anniversary of The Wall Groundbreaking	27	28
29 National Vietnam War Veterans Day	30	31				

Pizza @						
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April

2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 April Fools' Day	2 VVA-535 Election of Officers & Directors <i>On Hold</i>	3	4
5 Palm Sunday Gold Star Spouses Day	6 Drawing for Air Rifle	7	8 Passover	9	10 Good Friday	11 Persian Gulf War Official Cease Fire 1991
12 Easter	13	14	15 Tax Day	16	17	18
19	20 Patriot's Day	21	22 Earth Day	23	24 CSC Meeting - Visalia	25 CSC Meeting-Visalia
26 CSC Meeting Visalia Pizza@ Trail Blazer - Alta Sierra. 11:30 a.m.	27	28	29	30		

May

2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7 VVA-535 Board & General Meeting	8	9
10 Mother's Day	11	12	13 NVAR Departs	14	15 Peace Officers Memorial Day	16 Armed Forces Day
17	18	19	20	21	22 Maritime Day	23
24	25 Memorial Day (observed)	26	27	28	29	30
31						