INCOMING

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

CHAPTER 535

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Volume 31 Issue 1 January 2021

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
CHAPTER 535
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
January 2021

After nearly ten months of uncertainty surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, a reality that has impacted all of us, and some more than others, we're facing a brighter future. Vaccines are on the horizon for all of us, and I hope your personal choice will be to line up for inoculation when it is your turn to get in the queue. I will take the needle stick, though not without some trepidation because we are somewhat in uncharted territory. But I am willing to take the risk for the simple reason that I do not want my obituary to read that I died of the effects of Covid-19 when the virus could be largely preventable.

My goal for 2021 is to face each day with optimism and with a smile. There is much to be grateful for, and smiling is an antidepressant. I will also work a daily walk into my routines, and I will take a serious look at enhancing my health through diet. I'll double down on eating blueberries, broccoli and almonds. In simple terms I will live in the present and look to the future, and I hope each of you will join me with the same aspirations

Sometime during the year, let us hope we can again meet in person. Life on Zoom has not been a lot of fun, though some of us have developed new IT skills that without the Covid-19 lockdowns we might never have known. That's a "plus" and more pluses abound.

Good wishes to all for the best of health, happiness and accomplishment in 2021.

Bart Ruud

Watch for an Announcement for a January 7, 2021 ZOOM meeting.

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 January 7, 2021

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

Director Dan Davis has volunteered to assume the late Tom Woollard's role as our Speaker's Bureau liaison. Thank you, Dan. Please do pass along any ideas you may have for future guest speakers.

Table of Contents

Upcoming Events

NCCVC Meeting – Jan. 7, 2021 ??
General Meeting – Jan. 7, 2021 online via Zoom
Director's Meeting – Jan. 7, 2020
CSC Meeting – Visalia Feb. 4 - 7, 2021
General & Director's Meetings – Feb. 4, 2021

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Committee Chairs

Finance ……Ralph Remick & Dave Johnson
Parade and Honor Guard ……. Dick Corn
Membership Affairs ……Ric Sheridan
Newsletter ……..… Interim editor Bart Ruud
Victorian Christmas ……. Cancelled for 2020
Nominations …… Ralph Remick
Veterans Assistance ……..……. Bart Ruud
NCCVC ……..... Open
Speakers Bureau …….. Dan Davis
Web Master ……... Ralph Remick
Quartermaster ……..... Dick Corn
Facebook Master ……..… Mike Laborico
Nevada County Fair …… Cancelled for 2020
CA State Council Rep. …… Open

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
Mon. – Fri., 8:00 – 12:00 and 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Matters of interest as outlined at Zoom Meeting of Dec. 3, 2020

The County of Nevada reportedly relocated its Covid-19 testing from the Veterans Memorial Hall on or about Dec. 11th. No date is currently known for when the public or Veteran organizations will be permitted to utilize the building.

Jose Gonzales has initiated a movement to purchase memorial bricks for all deceased VvA-535 not currently represented on the Memorial Wall at Memorial Park. This is a work in process.

Our VVA-535 project, initiated by Keith Grueneberg, for installation of a plaque recognizing Vietnam War veterans at the Hwy. 49 bridge over the S. Yuba River remains as a work in progress. Assemblywoman Megan Dahle, 1st State Assembly District, is assisting. It appears this project will move beyond our hands.

Naval 1st Fleet Being Resurrected to Cover Indo-Pacific Region

Stars & Stripes | Seth Robson | December 4, 2020

The Navy is resurrecting the 1st Fleet, a spokesman for the Navy secretary confirmed 3 DEC, days after the service's top civilian leader called for a U.S. counterweight to rapidly growing Chinese military might in the Indo-Pacific region. The "administrative requirements" to recommission the 1st Fleet "are in the final stages of coordination," Capt. Jereal Dorsey, a spokesman for Navy Secretary Kenneth Braithwaite, said in an email to Stars and Stripes. Braithwaite is working with Acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller, Congress, Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday, Marine Corps Commandant Gen David Berger and other stakeholders on ensuring the Navy maintains its maritime dominance in an era of great power competition, Dorsey said.

The Navy secretary signaled U.S. intentions during a speech 17 NOV at the Naval Submarine League's annual symposium. "We want to stand up a new numbered fleet," Braithwaite said at the time. "And we want to put that numbered fleet in the crossroads between the Indian and the Pacific oceans, and we're really going to have an [INDOPACOM] footprint." The mission Braithwaite described now belongs to the 7th Fleet, based at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, the only U.S. fleet in the Indo-Pacific. It includes the Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group, which is supported at times by ships from the San Diego-based 3rd Fleet.

Seventh Fleet is the Navy's largest deployed fleet with 50-70 ships and submarines, 150 aircraft and approximately 20,000 sailors. Its almost 48 million-square-mile operations area stretches from the International Date Line in the central Pacific to the India/Pakistan border and from the Kuril Islands in the north to the Antarctic in the south. The Navy can't rely on 7th Fleet alone to cover that area, Braithwaite said. Its ships deploy frequently for missions such as freedom-of-navigation patrols in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea, where Beijing has built military bases on artificial islands in disputed waters.

Meanwhile, China's navy has been growing rapidly. In September, it sent both of its aircraft carriers to sea as construction on a third continued. "We have to look to our other allies and partners like Singapore, like India, and actually put a numbered fleet where it would be extremely relevant if, God forbid, we were to ever to get in any kind of a dust-up," Braithwaite said at the symposium. A new fleet could provide a much more formidable deterrent, he said. "So we're going to create the 1st Fleet, and we're going to put it, if not Singapore right out of the chocks, we're going to look to make it more expeditionary-oriented and move it across the Pacific until it is where our allies and partners see that it could best assist them as well as to assist us," he said. The 1st Fleet previously existed from just after World War II to the early 1970s.

"The obvious location for the fleet's home port is Cockburn Sound in Perth alongside the Australian naval base HMAS Stirling, Ross Babbage, a former Australian assistant defense secretary, said in an email Friday. "It is in an excellent swing location, offers ready access to the [Southeast] Asian straits and provides vast land-based strategic depth," he said. Western Australia is a top-rated port call for U.S. sailors and their families would consider the area a perfect resort environment, Babbage added. "The Australian Government has already announced a substantial upgrade of many naval base and support facilities in the area," he said. "This will include early installation of a new, very advanced underwater range and sub-surface surveillance system."

Singapore is another natural homeport for the fleet since it already hosts U.S. aircraft carrier port calls, said Paul Buchanan, an American security analyst based in Auckland, New Zealand, in an email 4 DEC. Its disadvantages are a narrow, congested maritime space and laying within striking range of Chinese missiles. Another potential home for the fleet, Darwin, in northern Australia has immediate access to the Pacific without the congestion problems and is largely out of reach of land-based Chinese missiles, Buchanan said. "The port at Darwin would need to be dredged and expanded but otherwise would be a natural home port that also includes the already deployed 2,500 man Marine Rotational Force and its 3 (ground, air, logistics) combat elements working on a six month in, six month out rotation," he said. Basing the fleet there would be a boon to the Darwin economy and welcomed by its people, whereas Singapore would find it trickier to justify the huge U.S. presence that basing the fleet there would entail, Buchanan said.

Lombrum Naval Base and airfield on the Papua New Guinean island of Manus is already being expanded under the joint Australian-U.S. redevelopment plan. However, the base is far east of the Indian Ocean and would need a lot of new infrastructure to support a fleet, he said. China is developing naval facilities in places such as Pakistan and Djibouti, so it makes sense for its regional rivals to join forces and strengthen their collective defenses, Buchanan said. "A 1st Fleet home port, especially on the Eastern Rim of the Indian Ocean, could serve as a cornerstone for that effort," he said.

China's Military Expansion Will Test the Biden Administration

Washington Post | Josh Rogin (Opinion) | December 3, 2020

The tectonic plates of the military balance in Asia are shifting underneath our feet. It's

happening slowly and inexorably, but over time the magnitude of the change is becoming vividly apparent. As the United States prepares to change its leadership, China's military advancement and expansion are now a problem too glaring to ignore. Adm. Philip Davidson, who is nearing the end of his tour as the head of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, has been warning about the changing military balance in Asia throughout his tenure. But his warnings have often fallen on deaf ears in a Washington mired in partisanship and dysfunction. The Trump administration talked a big game about meeting the challenge of China's military encroachment, but Davidson's calls for substantially more investment to restore the regional balance that has deterred Beijing for decades have gone largely unanswered.

China's military has moved well past a strategy of simply defending its territory and is now modernizing with the objective of being able to operate and even fight far from its shores, Davidson told me in an interview conducted last month for the 2020 Halifax International Security Forum. Under President Xi Jinping, Davidson said, China has built advanced weapons systems, platforms and rocket forces that have altered the strategic environment in ways the United States has not sufficiently responded to. "We are seeing great advances in their modernization efforts," he said. "China will test more missiles, conventional and nuclear associated missiles this year than every other nation added together on the planet. So that gives you an idea of the scale of how these things are changing."

Davidson confirmed, for the first time from the U.S. government side, that China's People's Liberation Army has successfully tested an anti-ship ballistic missile against a moving ship. This was done as part of the PLA's massive joint military exercises, which have been ongoing since the summer. These are often called "aircraft carrier killer" missiles, because they could threaten the United States' most significant naval assets from long distances. "It's an indication that they continue to advance their capability. We've known for years they've been in pursuit of a capability that could attack moving targets," Davidson said. I asked him whether they are designed to target U.S. aircraft carriers. "Trust me, they are targeting everything," he replied.

Chinese missile and rocket forces now represent "a great asymmetry" in the region, Davidson said, that presents a threat along the first island chain, which stretches from the Koreas down through Japan to Southeast Asia and Taiwan. He has advocated integrated air and missile defense in the region and on Guam, which is strategic but vulnerable. Davidson's watch has almost ended. The Wall Street Journal reported this week that President Trump plans to nominate Pacific Fleet commander Adm. John Aquilino to succeed him. But before that change will likely take place, a new president will take office in Washington, one who is promising to review the U.S. strategic approach to Asia early on. What Joe Biden's officials will find is that the PLA of 2021 is quite different from the PLA they last dealt with in 2016.

"Recent advances in equipment, organization, and logistics have significantly improved the PLA's ability to project power and deploy expeditionary forces far from China's shores," the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission wrote in its latest annual report, released this week. "A concurrent evolution in military strategy requires the force to become capable of operating anywhere around the globe and of contesting the U.S. military if called upon to do so." Additionally, the commission warned, the PLA's long-term strategy to catch up with U.S. military might include advancing cyber space and information warfare capabilities, often using the ostensibly civilian information systems that Chinese companies have built around the world. It is what Beijing calls "military-civil fusion."

This means the incoming administration must develop a strategy for contesting China's

military expansion in the civilian space as well. The Trump administration has begun some of this work. The Justice Department is cracking down on Chinese scientists in the United States who hide their PLA affiliations. Trump has banned U.S. investment in 89 Chinese companies linked to the PLA. The Trump team's response to China's military expansion has at times been inconsistent, unilateral and undiplomatic. These are things the incoming Biden administration can improve upon. But Biden officials would be wise to admit that the Trump team got the basic theory of the case correct, namely that the PLA's expansion must be countered everywhere it shows itself, including in U.S. colleges and capital markets.

The Biden administration will find countering China's military strategy, especially in Asia, to be a complex, costly and risky endeavor. But it has no choice but to embark on it, because the status quo is giving out. A good first step would be for Biden to nominate a defense secretary who understands the nature and urgency of the threat.

USS Bonhomme Richard

Will Not Return to Sea - Restoration Deemed too Expensive

Stars & Stripes | Caitlin M. Kenney | November 30, 2020

The USS Bonhomme Richard will not return to sea after the Navy determined that the damage it sustained from a fire in July was too extensive and restoration deemed too expensive, the service announced Monday. "We did not come to this decision lightly," Navy Secretary Kenneth Braithwaite said in a prepared statement. "Following an extensive material assessment in which various courses of action were considered and evaluated, we came to the conclusion that it is not fiscally responsible to restore her."

The 22-year-old Bonhomme Richard, a Wasp-class amphibious assault ship, was undergoing maintenance at Naval Base San Diego when the fire started 12 JUL. The fire burned through 11 of its 14 decks, destroying the ship's forward mast, and damaging its superstructure before it was extinguished 16 JUL. About 40 sailors and 23 civilians were treated for minor injuries, such as heat exhaustion and smoke inhalation. How the fire started is still unknown, however Navy officials at the time believed it began in the cargo hold where supplies for the maintenance work being conducted on the ship were stored at the time. "This fire probably couldn't have been in a worse point on the ship in terms of its source that allowed it to spread up elevator shafts as an example, up exhaust stacks as an example, to take that fire up into the superstructure and then forward," Adm. Mike Gilday, the chief of naval operations, said about the fire a day after it was put out.

In an email to senior naval leaders soon after Gilday's visit to the ship, he wrote that sections of the flight deck were warped and bulging and firefighters told him that they had faced 1,200-degree heat, zero visibility and multiple explosions on the ship. Wind from the bay and the explosions allowed the fire to spread and become more intense, he said. Gilday praised the work of sailors in his letter, some of whom went aboard the ship eight times to fight the fire. "They had experienced the intense, inferno-like heat, the dark smoke that obscured view of teammates by their side, and the explosions — the latter had to be like a mine field … unknown when and where, and how severe, those blasts might be. Some had been knocked down by these blasts — some, more than once — but they got up, refocused and reattacked." All investigations into the fire are still ongoing, according to the Navy's statement 30 NOV.

The Navy's assessment of the damage concluded it would cost more than $3 billion to restore the ship and five to seven years for construction to be completed. The service also considered rebuilding the ship for other purposes but again determined the $1 billion cost, which could build a new hospital ship or command and control ship, was too much. "Although it saddens me that it is not cost effective to bring her back, I know this ship's legacy will continue to live on

through the brave men and women who fought so hard to save her, as well as the sailors and Marines who served aboard her during her 22-year history," Braithwaite said.

When the ship will be dismantled has not been decided, according to the Navy. However before that, the service plans to remove systems and components from the Bonhomme Richard to be used by other ships. The cost of decommissioning the ship will be about $30 million and will take up to a year, according to Rear Adm. Eric Ver Hage in a report by The San Diego Union-Tribune. Ver Hage is the commander of Navy Regional Maintenance Center.

USMC Infantry Training Not Long Enough — Or Good Enough — For Future Fight

Marine Corps Times | Philip Athey | December 2, 2020

Today, Marines entering the infantry field spend nine weeks at the School of Infantry, learning the basics of their trade before hitting the fleet. But in a future Marine Corps, where small units will be distributed over wide distances and junior Marines will be making more decisions, the nine weeks may not be enough initial training, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger said 2 DEC. "Infantry training will be longer," Berger said during a hearing in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee about the readiness of the Navy and Marine Corps. "The product of infantry training on the enlisted side will be at a higher level than what we are producing right now," Berger added.

Berger envisions the future of the Marine Corps as smaller, lighter and more mobile, a force capable of deploying in new formations in the littorals of any future battlefield. The Corps, deployed in small widely dispersed expeditionary advanced bases, will form a skirmish line, acting as the "eyes and ears" of the joint force, while still capable of providing a deadly punch or denying enemy ships from moving freely. Much like how current Marine captains commanding companies are asked to make decisions that previously were made by lieutenant colonels commanding battalions, the future distributed force will see platoons, squads and possibly even fire teams making decisions formerly reserved for company-level leadership, Berger said at the hearing.

The current infantry training model, where a Marine spends nine weeks at the School of Infantry then is sent to the fleet to have their training completed by platoon sergeants, will simply not create units capable of making those high-level decisions, Berger said. "We need to get to that higher level because they are going to be more distributed, we are going to rely on them to make higher level decisions," Berger said. Marine Corps Training and Education Command has not yet responded to questions asking for more details about what the Marine Corps is considering and when those plans may be put into action.

Military Base Names Congress' Detailed Plan to Get Rid of Confederate Ones

Military.com | Hope Hodge Seck | December 4, 2020

The hotly debated issue of renaming 10 Army installations honoring Confederate generals was a key sticking point in the 2021 defense policy bill -- and may still earn the bill a veto from President Donald Trump. But the full text of the National Defense Authorization Act conference report, released 3 DEC, includes a requirement that the bases be renamed within the next three years -- and that all "names,

symbols, displays, monuments, and paraphernalia that honor or commemorate the Confederate States of America" also be stricken. It also provides detailed plans for a commission that would execute this plan and work with local communities to determine fitting new names for the bases.

In a 2 DEC press conference, White House spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany reiterated Trump's opposition to renaming military bases, which he first expressed months ago. "Our history as the Greatest Nation in the World will not be tampered with," Trump tweeted 10 JUN. "Respect our Military! In a 3 DEC evening briefing with reporters, committee officials declined to discuss what might happen "This is the bill that's going to pass the house," a senior Democratic staffer for the House Armed Services Committee said "Then the president will do what the president will do and the leadership will decide ... should the president do anything other than sign the bill into law."

The bill now sent to the president will create an eight-member commission to develop the base renaming plan, with four members appointed by the defense secretary; and one each appointed by the chair and ranking member of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees. The commission will be formed within 45 days of the NDAA's enactment, and hold its first meeting within 60 days, the bill states. By Oct. 11, 2021, the commission must deliver to Congress a written report that includes a list of all military property that needs to be removed or renamed; a cost estimate for carrying out the changes; and the decided-upon criteria for coming up with new names, where applicable.

The plan, the bill emphasizes, must also include "procedures and criteria for collecting and incorporating local sensitivities associated with naming or renaming of assets of the Department of Defense." The commission will have a budget of $2 million to carry out its renaming task, the bill states; that money will be taken from the Army's fiscal 2021 Operations and Maintenance budget. While the purge of confederate names includes everything from bases to ships, planes and streets, there's one defined exception: grave markers are exempted from the new legislation. "Congress expects the commission to further define what constitutes a grave marker," the bill states.

In a statement released this week, Maryland Rep. Anthony Brown, the vice chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, celebrated the passage of the renaming provision. "National security isn't simply defined by the planes and ships we buy -- but in the values we set for our military and ourselves," Brown, a Democrat and a prominent proponent of the renaming effort, said. "We cannot ask today's young servicewomen and men to defend our nation, while housing and training them and their families on bases honoring those who betrayed our country in order to enslave others."

In an October interview with Military.com, military historian Richard Kohn, professor emeritus of History in Peace, War and Defense at UNC-Chapel Hill, advocated for the formation of a committee, similar to that detailed in the NDAA conference report, to oversee a base renaming effort. "[Such a] group must be diverse, must include people of all races and religions and backgrounds with some attachment or some knowledge to the service," Kohn said. "It ought to operate in a most transparent way, it ought to have hearings, it ought to hear from the local areas about to hear from the people serving today. This would be a large and difficult business, that if you don't do it, at least, to a major degree in the way I'm describing, you're just gonna stir up more anger and division. And we've got enough anger and division in this country."

Great Emu War
Emu Victory Over Australian Military
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emu_War | December 9, 2020

Following World War I, large numbers of discharged veterans who served in the war were given land by the Australian government to take up farming within Western Australia, often in agriculturally marginal areas. With the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, these farmers were encouraged to increase their wheat crops, with the government promising—and failing to deliver—assistance in the form of subsidies. In spite of the recommendations and the promised subsidies, wheat prices continued to fall, and by October 1932 matters were becoming intense, with the farmers preparing to harvest the season's crop while simultaneously threatening to refuse to deliver the wheat.

The difficulties facing farmers were increased by the arrival of as many as 20,000 emus. Emus regularly migrate after their breeding season, heading to the coast from the inland regions. With the cleared land and additional water supplies being made available for livestock by the Western Australian farmers, the emus found that the cultivated lands were good habitat, and they began to foray into farm territory—in particular the marginal farming land around Chandler and Walgoolan. The emus consumed and spoiled the crops, as well as leaving large gaps in fences where rabbits could enter and cause further problems.

Farmers relayed their concerns about the birds ravaging their crops, and a deputation of ex-soldiers were sent to meet with the Minister of Defense, Sir George Pearce. Having served in World War I, the soldier-settlers were well aware of the effectiveness of machine guns, and they requested their deployment. The minister readily agreed, although with conditions attached: the guns were to be used by military personnel, troop transport was to be financed by the Western Australian government, and the farmers would provide food, accommodation, and payment for the ammunition. Pearce also supported the deployment on the grounds that the birds would make good target practice, while it has also been argued that some in the government may have viewed the operation as a way of being seen to be helping the Western Australian farmers, to stave off the secession movement that was brewing.

First Attempt

On 2 NOV the men travelled to Campion, where some 50 emus were sighted. As the birds were out of range of the guns, the local settlers attempted to herd the emus into an ambush, but the birds split into small groups and ran so that they were difficult to target. Nevertheless, while the first fusillade from the machine guns was ineffective due to the range, a second round of gunfire was able to kill "a number" of birds. Later the same day a small flock was encountered, and "perhaps a dozen" birds were killed. The next significant event was on 4 NOV. Meredith had established an ambush near a local dam, and more than 1,000 emus were spotted heading towards their position. This time the gunners waited until the birds were in close proximity before opening fire. The gun jammed after only twelve birds were killed and the remainder scattered before any more could be shot. No more birds were sighted that day.

In the days that followed, Meredith chose to move further south, where the birds were "reported to be fairly tame", but there was only limited success in spite of his efforts. By the fourth day of the campaign, army observers

noted that "each pack seems to have its own leader now—a big black-plumed bird which stands fully six feet high and keeps watch while his mates carry out their work of destruction and warns them of our approach". At one stage Meredith even went so far as to mount one of the guns on a truck, a move that proved to be ineffective, as the truck was unable to gain on the birds, and the ride was so rough that the gunner was unable to fire any shots. By 8 NOV, six days after the first engagement, 2,500 rounds of ammunition had been fire. The number of birds killed is uncertain: one account estimates that it was 50 birds, but other accounts range from 200 to 500, the latter figure being provided by the settlers. Meredith's official report noted that his men had suffered no casualties.

Summarizing the culls, ornithologist Dominic Serventy commented: The machine-gunners' dreams of point-blank fire into serried masses of Emus were soon dissipated. The Emu command had evidently ordered guerrilla tactics, and its unwieldy army soon split up into innumerable small units that made use of the military equipment uneconomic. A crestfallen field force therefore withdrew from the combat area after about a month. On 8 NOV, members in the Australian House of Representatives discussed the operation. Following the negative coverage of the events in the local media, that included claims that "only a few" emus had died, Pearce withdrew the military personnel and the guns on 8 NOV.

After the withdrawal of the First Attempt, Major Meredith compared the emus to Zulus and commented on the striking maneuverability of the emus, even while badly wounded. If we had a military division with the bullet-carrying capacity of these birds it would face any army in the world ... They can face machine guns with the invulnerability of tanks. They are like Zulus whom even dum-dum bullets could not stop.

Second Attempt

After the withdrawal of the military, the emu attacks on crops continued. Farmers again asked for support, citing the hot weather and drought that brought emus invading farms in the thousands. James Mitchell, the Premier of Western Australia lent his strong support to renewal of the military assistance. At the same time, a report from the Base Commander was issued that indicated 300 emus had been killed in the initial operation. Acting on the requests and the Base Commander's report, by 12 NOV the Minister of Defense approved a resumption of military efforts. He defended the decision in the Senate, explaining why the soldiers were necessary to combat the serious agricultural threat of the large emu population. Although the military had agreed to lend the guns to the Western Australian government on the expectation that they would provide the necessary people, Meredith was once again placed in the field due to an apparent lack of experienced machine gunners in the state.

Taking to the field on 13 NOV 1932, the military found a degree of success over the first two days, with approximately 40 emus killed. The third day, 15 NOV, proved to be far less successful, but by 2 DEC the soldiers were killing approximately 100 emus per week. Meredith was recalled on 10 DEC, and in his report he claimed 986 kills with 9,860 rounds, at a rate of exactly 10 rounds per confirmed kill. In addition, Meredith claimed 2,500 wounded birds had died as a result of the injuries that they had sustained. In assessing the success of the cull, an article in the Coolgardie Miner on 23 August 1935 reported that although the use of machine guns had been "criticized in many quarters, the method proved effective and saved what remained of the wheat".

Aftermath

Despite the problems encountered with the cull, the farmers of the region once again requested military assistance in 1934, 1943, and 1948, only to be turned down by the government. Instead, the bounty system that

had been instigated in 1923 was continued, and this proved to be effective: 57,034 bounties were claimed over a six-month period in 1934. By December 1932, word of the Emu War had spread, reaching the United Kingdom. Some conservationists there protested the cull as "extermination of the rare emu". Dominic Serventy and Hubert Whittell, the eminent Australian ornithologists, described the "war" as "an attempt at the mass destruction of the birds".

Throughout 1930 and onward, exclusion barrier fencing became a popular means of keeping emus out of agricultural areas (in addition to other vermin, such as dingoes and rabbits). In November 1950, Hugh Leslie raised the issues of emus in federal parliament and urged Army Minister Josiah Francis to release a quantity of .303 ammunition from the army for the use of farmers. The minister approved the release of 500,000 rounds of ammunition. In recent years, references to the Emu War have been a popular Internet meme. In 2020, it inspired a video game entitled Emu War.

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.

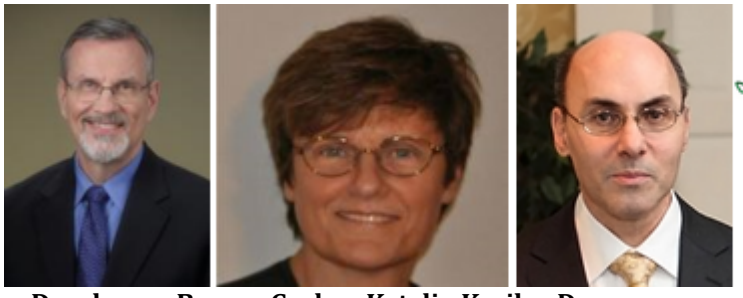
So far we have heard from Ruud, Epps, Chaix, Hamer, Chuck Holmes, current Marine LCpl. Jesse Hernandez, Kent Hawley, and Mike Laborico. (Thank you!)

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.

Coronavirus Vaccines
Gamble Pays Off | How They Made It to the Finish Line
Stars & Strips | Carolyn Y. Johnson | December 6, 2020



Developers Barney Grahm, Katalin Kariko, Drew Weissman & the Coronavirus Spike Protein

On a Sunday afternoon in early November 2020, scientist Barney Graham got a call at his

home office in Rockville, Md., where he has sequestered himself for most of the last 10 months, working relentlessly to develop a vaccine to vanquish a killer virus. It was Graham's boss at the National Institutes of Health, with an early head's-up on news the world would learn the next morning: A coronavirus vaccine from Pfizer and the German biotech firm BioNTech that used a new genetic technology and a specially designed spike protein from Graham and collaborators had proved stunningly effective.

The significance of the news was clear right away to Graham: There could be not one, but two vaccines by year's end. If the Pfizer vaccine worked well, odds were good for a vaccine from biotechnology firm Moderna, since they both relied on the spike protein that Graham's lab helped design and a technology never before harnessed in an approved vaccine. For months, people had asked Graham about the pressure he must have been feeling on the leading edge of an all-hands effort to invent the tools that could end the pandemic. He was too busy to give it much thought — his summer "vacation" had meant scaling back to 40- to 50-hour workweeks. But the news released a gush of emotion that stunned even him. "I just let it all go," Graham said. "I was sobbing, I guess, is the term." His son and grandchildren, ages 13 and 5, burst into his office, fearing something had gone terribly wrong.

The world's hopes have weighed heavily on the quest to develop coronavirus vaccines, with an especially intense focus on two front-runners: one from Moderna, the other from Pfizer and BioNTech. Both were a speedy, but risky — even controversial — bet, based on a promising but still-experimental medical technology. Why, some scientists debated in the spring and summer, would the United States gamble on a type of vaccine that had never been deployed beyond clinical trials, when the stakes were so high? If, as expected in the next few weeks, regulators give those vaccines the green light, the technology and the precision approach to vaccine design could turn out to be the pandemic's silver linings: scientific breakthroughs that could begin to change the trajectory of the virus this winter and also pave the way for highly effective vaccines and treatments for other diseases.

Vaccine development typically takes years, even decades. The progress of the last 11 months shifts the paradigm for what's possible, creating a new model for vaccine development and a toolset for a world that will have to fight more never-before-seen viruses in years to come. But the pandemic wasn't a sudden eureka moment — it was a catalyst that helped ignite lines of research that had been moving forward for years, far outside the spotlight of a global crisis. The Vaccine Research Center, where Graham is deputy director, was the brainchild of Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. It was created in 1997 to bring together scientists and physicians from different disciplines to defeat diseases, with a heavy focus on HIV.

Long before the pandemic, Graham worked with colleagues there and in academia to create a particularly accurate 3-D version of the spiky proteins that protrude from the surface of coronaviruses — an innovation that was rejected for publication by scientific journals five times because reviewers questioned its relevance. His laboratory partnered with one of the companies, Moderna, working to develop a fast and flexible vaccine technology, in the hope that science would be ready to respond when a pandemic appeared. "People hear about [vaccine progress] and think someone just thought about it that night. The amount of work — it's really a beautiful story of fundamental basic research," Fauci said. "It was chancy, in the sense that (the vaccine technology) was new. We were aware there would be pushback. The proof in the pudding is a spectacular success."

Starts and stops

The leading coronavirus vaccine candidates in the United States began their development not in January when a mysterious pneumonia emerged in Wuhan, China, but decades ago — with starts and stops along the way. Since 1961, scientists had known about messenger RNA, the transient genetic material that makes life possible, taking the instructions inscribed in DNA and delivering those to the protein-making parts of the cell. Messenger RNA is a powerful, if fickle, component of life's building blocks — a workhorse of the cell that is also truly just a messenger, unstable and prone to degrade.

Some scientists believed from the start that it would be possible to repurpose this basic cellular function for medicine. In 1990, a Hungarian-born scientist at the University of Pennsylvania, Katalin Kariko, brashly predicted to a surgeon colleague that his work would soon be obsolete, replaced by the power of messenger RNA therapies. That same year, a team at the University of Wisconsin startled the scientific world with a paper that showed it was possible to inject a snippet of messenger RNA into mice and turn their muscle cells into factories, creating proteins on demand. "That was something that was amazing," said Melissa Moore, an RNA scientist who joined Moderna as chief scientific officer four years ago.

If custom-designed RNA snippets could be used to turn cells into bespoke protein factories, messenger RNA could become a powerful medical tool. It could encode fragments of virus to teach the immune system to defend against pathogens. It could also create whole proteins that are missing or damaged in people with devastating genetic diseases, such as cystic fibrosis. But there were all kinds of practical problems to be solved first. Despite the excitement, scientists had trouble getting RNA into cells because it is so fragile. And when they succeeded, they would soon discover RNA caused an inflammatory reaction.

A friendly competition over a photocopier in the late 1990s led to a major breakthrough. Kariko, working in the University of Pennsylvania's neurosurgery department, was trying to turn RNA into a therapy for strokes. In line, she bragged to Drew Weissman, a physician-scientist who worked in a different building but used the same copier to print out scientific articles, about the molecule she had become obsessed with. Weissman had done a fellowship in Fauci's laboratory at NIH, studying the immune cells involved in vaccine responses. He asked Kariko if she could make some RNA for an HIV vaccine idea he was pursuing. She did, and he found the RNA stimulated an inflammatory response — bad news for Kariko's efforts to turn it into a stroke therapy.

Weissman noted that mice injected with messenger RNA would suffer every side effect, from feeling lousy and losing their appetites to dying. The two began puzzling out a way to overcome the problems. But it was far from a hot area of science. Kariko bitterly recalled how she struggled for grants, making less money than many lab technicians. "We went to biotech companies, pharmaceutical companies to try and get funding, and they weren't interested," Weissman said. "They said RNA was too fragile and they didn't want to work with it." In 2005, the pair discovered a way to modify RNA, chemically tweaking one of the letters of its code, so it didn't trigger an inflammatory response. Deborah Fuller, a scientist who works on RNA and DNA vaccines at the University of Washington, said that work deserves a Nobel Prize.

Kariko and Weissman set up a company to turn their discovery into medicine, but eventually, Kariko moved to BioNTech, a German firm working on developing RNA therapies — even though it meant leaving her husband in Philadelphia for 10 months of the year. "I told my husband when I decided to go to Germany, 'I just want to live long enough that I can help the RNA go to the patient,' "

Kariko said. " 'I want to see ... at least one person would be helped with this treatment.' "

In parallel, scientists had been developing ways to encapsulate and transport large and unwieldy molecules beginning in the 1960s. The technology matured over the decades, with hopes it could be used to deliver entirely new types of drugs into cells, but messenger RNA posed a bigger challenge than other targets. "It's tougher — it's a much bigger molecule, it's much more unstable," said Robert Langer, a bioengineer at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a co-founder of Moderna. Ugur Sahin, chief executive of BioNTech, said it was thrilling when he and colleagues in 2016 developed a nanoparticle to deliver messenger RNA to a special cell type that could take the code and turn it into a protein on its surface to provoke the immune system. This, they theorized, was key to using a tiny amount of material — each dose of mRNA vaccine his company developed against coronavirus relies on an amount that's about a fifth the weight of a penny to stimulate a powerful immune response.

Unlike fields that were sparked by a single powerful insight, Sahin said that the recent success of messenger RNA vaccines is a story of countless improvements that turned an alluring biological idea into a beneficial technology. "This is a field which benefited from hundreds of inventions," said Sahin, who noted that when he started BioNTech in 2008, he cautioned investors that the technology would not yield a product for at least a decade. He kept his word: Until the coronavirus sped things along, BioNTech projected the launch of its first commercial project in 2023.

Messenger RNA has never been used in an approved medical product, an oft-repeated fact that has added to its mystique. There isn't yet a long safety track record, but the platform has been in human tests for years, including in tens of thousands of people in the coronavirus vaccine trials. Even before the coronavirus emerged, the technology had reached a tipping point where it seemed a matter of time before it would begin to have an impact on medicine. "It's new to you," Fuller said. "But for basic researchers, it's been long enough. ... Even before Covid, everyone was talking: RNA, RNA, RNA."

Messenger RNA

All vaccines are based on the same underlying idea: training the immune system to block a virus. Old-fashioned vaccines do this work by injecting dead or weakened viruses. Newer vaccines use distinctive bits of the virus, such as proteins on their surface, to teach the lesson. The latest genetic techniques, like messenger RNA, don't take as long to develop because those virus bits don't have to be generated in a lab. Instead, the vaccine delivers a genetic code that instructs cells to build those characteristic proteins themselves.

To do that, scientists have to choose which telltale part of the virus to show the immune system. Long before the pandemic, Graham's research had revealed that some virus proteins change shape after they break into a person's cells. A vaccine based on the wrong shape could effectively train the immune system to be an ineffective sheriff, never stopping vandals or burglars before they wreak their havoc. Graham had used this insight to design a better vaccine against respiratory syncytial virus; it made Science magazine's short list of 2013's most important scientific breakthroughs.

Coronaviruses seemed like an important next target. Severe acute respiratory syndrome had emerged in 2003. Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) broke out in 2012. It seemed clear to Graham and Jason McLellan, a structural biologist now at the University of Texas at Austin, that new coronaviruses were jumping into people on a 10-year-clock and it might be time to brace for the next one. When a postdoctoral fellow in Graham's laboratory traveled to Saudi Arabia for the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, and returned home with a

respiratory infection, Graham and colleagues worried that it might be MERS. To their relief, it was not MERS, but HKU1 — a coronavirus that causes common cold symptoms.

That infection opened Graham's eyes to an opportunity. HKU1 was merely a nuisance, as opposed to a deadly pneumonia; that meant it would be easier to work with in the lab, since researchers wouldn't have to don layers of protective gear and work in a pressurized laboratory. If they could figure out how to stabilize the spike proteins for HKU1, they could use those insights to do the same for other coronaviruses. Their studies showed that the spike protein folded like origami, from a thumb tack-like shape before fusing with cells, to a rodlike shape afterward. They wanted the immune system to learn to recognize the thumb tack spike, so McLellan tasked a scientist in his laboratory with identifying genetic mutations that could anchor the protein into the right configuration. It was a painstaking process for Nianshuang Wang, who now works at a biotechnology company, Regeneron Pharmaceuticals. After trying hundreds of genetic mutations, he found two that worked. Five journals rejected the finding, questioning its significance, before it was published in 2017.

"People generally at that time said, 'Coronavirus is not a big concern,' " Wang said. "They didn't get the idea that this can be a great technology in the disease, to prevent another coronavirus pandemic." Last winter, when Graham heard rumblings of a new coronavirus in China, he brought the team back together. Once its genome was shared online by Chinese scientists, the laboratories in Texas and Maryland designed a vaccine, utilizing the stabilizing mutations and the knowledge they had gained from years of basic research — a weekend project thanks to the dividends of all that past work. But the stabilized spike was just one piece of a vaccine — Graham needed a technology that could deliver it into the body — and had already been working with Moderna, using its messenger RNA technology to create a vaccine against a different bat virus, Nipah, as a dress rehearsal for a real pandemic. Moderna and NIH set the Nipah project aside and decided to go forward with a coronavirus vaccine.

On 13 JAN 2020, Moderna's Moore came into work and found her team already busy translating the stabilized spike protein into their platform. The company could start making the vaccine almost right away because of its experience manufacturing experimental cancer vaccines, which involves taking tumor samples and developing personalized vaccines in 45 days. At BioNTech, Sahin said that even in the early design phases of its vaccine candidates, he incorporated the slight genetic changes designed in Graham's lab that would make the spike look more like the real thing. At least two other companies would incorporate that same spike.

Pharmaceutical industry fairy tale

If all goes well with regulators, the coronavirus vaccines have the makings of a pharmaceutical industry fairy tale. The world faced an unparalleled threat, and companies leaped into the fight. Pfizer plowed $2 billion into the effort. Massive infusions of government cash helped remove the financial risks for Moderna. But the world will also owe their existence to many scientists outside those companies, in government and academia who pursued ideas they thought were important even when the world doubted them. Some of those scientists will receive remuneration, since their inventions are licensed and integrated into the products that could save the world.

As executives become billionaires, many scientists think it is fair to earn money from their inventions that can help them do more important work. But McLellan's laboratory at the University of Texas is proud to have licensed an even more potent version of their spike protein, royalty-free, to be incorporated into a vaccine for low and middle income

countries. Weissman, a basic researcher who has been nervously tracking the progress of the RNA vaccines on which so much depend, was overjoyed by the first success. "They're using the technology that (Kariko) and I developed," he said. "We feel like it's our vaccine, and we are incredibly excited — at how well it's going, and how it's going to be used to get rid of this pandemic."

On 9 NOV, McLellan told his group via a WhatsApp thread that the first vaccine was 90% effective. "Full spike with 2P," McLellan wrote, referencing the fact that the Pfizer and BioNTech vaccine used a spike protein that contained the mutations they'd discovered. "Barney just called to congratulate us." Graham is matter of fact, rather than exuberant, and quickly changes the subject to the immense amount of work that remains to be done. Historic scientific news must now be transformed into a tool that is mass produced, distributed and used widely around the world to blunt the sickness and suffering of this winter - and to lift the pall this pandemic has cast over virtually every aspect of daily life.

Graham recalled that his 5-year-old granddaughter recently heard the family talking about "getting back to normal" if a vaccine is successful. "She looked up and said, 'What is normal life, what do you mean by that?' ", Graham said. "Half of her memorable life has been like this."

Craft Show a Possibility

Dan Davis has volunteered to co-chair a Craft Show that Would serve as a fundraiser for VVA-535. Dan has years of experience with this kind of activity and is willing to share his knowledge with us. All we need is relief from the Covid and the wisdom to organize such an event. Dan suggests the possibility of the weekend before Mother's Day, or Father's Day, or July 4th. It is foreseeable to organize an event that would run about six hours with funds being realized from 12x12 footprints rented to 30 or more vendors. Early discussion among the membership has been indicative of a positive view of this kind of activity.

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Revised: January 2019

DECEMBER 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3 VVA-535 ~~Holiday Potluck~~	4	5
6	7 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day	8	9	10 Hanukkah Begins (Sundown)	11	12
13 National Guard Birthday	14	15	16	17	18	19 Wreaths Across America
20	21 First Day of Winter	22	23	24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas Day	26 Kwanzaa begins
27	28	29	30	31 New Year's Eve		

JANUARY 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 New Year's Day	2
3	4	5	6	7 VVA-535	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18 Martin Luther King Jr. Day	19	20	21 Battle of Khe Sanh begins (1968)	22	23
24	25	26	27 Paris Peace Accords signed (1973)	28	29	30
31						

February 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 Groundhog Day	3	4 VVA-535 Board & General Meeting	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 Valentine's Day	15 Presidents' Day	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24 Ash Wednesday	25	26	27
28	29					