

# The WARRIOR

## VVA San Jacinto Chapter 343 Newsletter

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January 31, 2014

**ARMY**

**NAVY**

**MARINES**

**AIR FORCE**

**COAST GUARD**

**2013-2014 BOARD OF DIRECTORS:** **PRESIDENT:** Wolf Biedenfeld - **VICE PRESIDENT:** Stephen Brady - **SECRETARY:** Bill Meeks, Jr.

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## Chapter Annual Meeting 1st Notice



Well it's almost that time again, the "**Chapter Elections**" are just around the corner, everyone should be ready to mark your ballots and elect our chapter leadership for the next year. The membership of VVA Chapter # 343 will hold their "**Annual Meeting**" at Bo's Place at 7:30 PM on **April 11, 2014** and pizza/soft drinks will be provided at the meeting. If you are interested in running for one of these positions of leadership for the chapter or you wish to be a VVA Convention delegate, please contact Chan Sharpe (713) 723-0231 or Bill Meeks, Jr. (281) 353-6420 for further

information. **Chapter Election Committee**



### VVA Texas State Council Meeting - April 4 - 6, 2014

**Shilo Inn Suites Hotel - 3701 South W.S. Young Drive**

**Killeen, Texas 76542 - Phone (254) 699-0999 - [www.shiloinns.com](http://www.shiloinns.com)**

**Host VVA Fort Hood Area Chapter 1000**

### "In Memory of DeWitt Clinton Slussler, Jr. - 09/01/1943 - 12/19/2013"

My friend DeWitt served our country in the Army in Vietnam, 2nd Battalion; 9th Infantry Div.; 60th Infantry; Echo Company; Recon Platoon; Mekong Delta; Nov. 1967 - May 1968. He was a Combat Infantryman during the Tet Offensive. *Pat Barnes*



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## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Issues of Concern to Vietnam Veterans:



1. Vietnam Veterans still are a large percentage of Homeless Veterans and it appears that the VA and the other Federal Agencies have hit a "break point". We have New Homeless about as fast as Housing and other Programs take the Veterans off the Street. The New Veterans also Appear to have a problem becoming Civilians and are becoming part of the Homeless Population.

2. Camp Lejeune Veterans –the USMC wants You to identify yourself if you were at Camp Lejeune 1957 ->1987. Contact your Local VA Medical Center to Register for Health Care ( if you have not already done so – free care for the identified conditions).

Also, you may be asked about your Vietnam experience. This may be by Family Members (what did you do in the war?) or by a School or other local group. Do not Panic – and do Not start " There I was." It is an opportunity to give information on an experience that gets 1 Paragraph in the Current History Books. We were there and it changed our lives. PTSD is real and Hanoi Jane really did some stupid things that damaged American Military Personnel. The protests were real and they were not good time parties by a bunch of Students and Party Animals.

You should talk about why you were in the military – Draftee or Volunteer. You should talk about how "tight you were with members of your unit. You should talk about examples of heroism and fear in situations that were totally scary. You should talk about what you learned as a result of serving in the military.

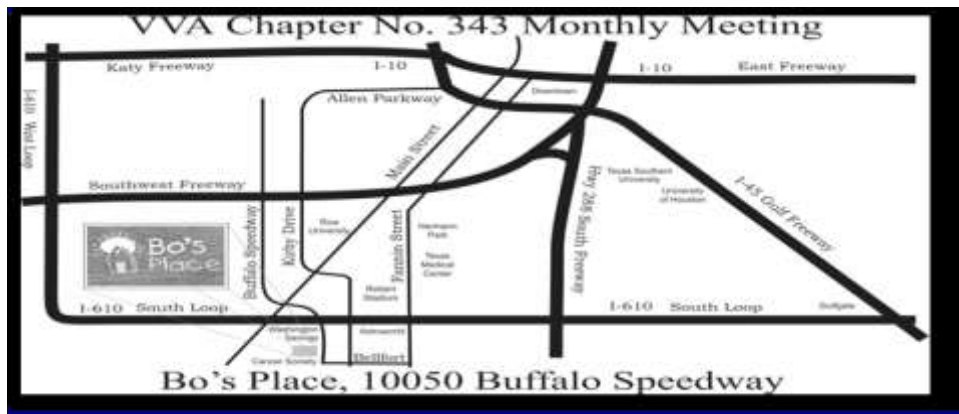
Questions you will get: **Did you kill someone?** Best Answer: I got shot at and returned fire. **Did you get injured?** Be truthful. **Did you see someone Die?** Be truthful even if it hurts. **Do you recommend going into the Military?** Just give the pro's and con's.

Thank the person who invited you. If it is a family member, tell them you were glad to speak about the experience (even if you are not glad to speak about it). It is good to pass on what you learned.

Remember – Speak up. Otherwise you will miss out on the opportunity to help your Comrades. **"Never again will one generation of Veterans abandon another one"**. If the Vietnam War and the Veterans who served are forgotten you will have abandoned your own generation. *Wolf*

**SPECIAL NOTICE: If you are a veteran in emotional crisis and need help RIGHT NOW, call this toll-free number 1-800-273-8255, available 24/7, and tell them you are a veteran. All calls are confidential.**

Get Involved Today...By Attending the VVA Chapter No. 343's February 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting on Friday  
Night 7:30 PM at Bo's Place.....



## Vice President's Hangar



2014 will be a year of opportunities for each of us in the many facets of our lives. Whether it be our family, spiritual, professional, and fraternal lives, one thing is for certain, we must be able to work with others for the common good. As such, as veterans, we too must do our best to promote and accomplish the mission of the VVA as we interact with diverse individuals and organizations. I know that this is very important and something I continually work at getting better at. To help me stay balanced, I reflect back to a sermon a chaplain gave when I was in either Danang or NKP to keep me on course and in line with the 'bigger picture.' Recently it was published in the American Legion Magazine reminding me, once again, that by working together, there is strength, unity and success our lives. I would hope that we all can take a quiet moment and reflect of the importance of this tale.

**Tale of the Four Chaplains** - On Feb. 3, 1943, the Army transport ship *Dorchester* was torpedoed by a German U-boat while crossing the icy North Atlantic in a convoy. Of the 902 soldiers, merchant seamen and civilian workers aboard, only 230 were rescued. The fact that even that many survived is in part because of the level heads and steady hands of Lts. George Fox, Alexander Goode, Clark Poling and John Washington.

As *Dorchester* slid beneath the waves, the four Army chaplains calmed frightened men and led as many as they could to safety. When they ran out of life jackets, they gave away their own. Those swimming in the water and floating in rafts never forgot their last glimpse of the chaplains: all four - Methodist minister, Jewish rabbi, Reformed Church in America reverend and Roman Catholic priest - were linked arm in arm, praying and singing hymns as they went down with the ship.

In a way, they have achieved immortality. For a nation at war, the chaplains' triumph in the face of tragedy became an enduring example of faith, courage, selflessness and sacrificial love. In 1988, Congress designated Feb. 3 "Four Chaplains Day." I hope that we all can take the message from the "Tale of the Four Chaplains", continue to work together positively and make tomorrow better for our country, fellow veterans and their families, than it is today.

In your service, **Stephen Brady**



## Editor's Little Known Facts about the Vietnam War...

One notable ARVN unit, the 3d Armored Cavalry Squadron, fought a pitched battle with the Liberation Front's H-15 Local Force Battalion in or near Pleiku. The **3d Armored Cavalry Squadron** (Vietnamese: *Thiết Đoàn 3 Thiết giáp*) was part of ARVN II Corps that oversaw the twelve provinces of the central highlands; corps headquarters being in the mountain town of [Pleiku](#). The 3d Armored Cav was organized on January 1, 1954. In 1971, the Presidential Unit Citation of the United States was awarded to the 3d Armored Cavalry Squadron and attached **U.S. Advisor/Liaison Personnel (MACV)** for extraordinary heroism in action against an armed enemy during the period January 1, 1968 to September 30, 1968 in Pleiku and Binh Dinh Provinces. That made the 3d Armored Cavalry Squadron one of only a few non-U.S. military units to receive the highest U.S. military honor awarded at the unit level.

All told, the U.S. Air Force flew 5.25 million sorties over South Vietnam, North Vietnam, northern and southern Laos, and Cambodia, losing 2,251 aircraft: 1,737 to hostile action, and 514 to operational causes. 110 of the losses were helicopters and the rest fixed-wing. A ratio of roughly 0.4 losses per 1,000 sorties compared favorably with a 2.0 rate in Korea and the 9.7 figure during World War II.

Twenty-one aircraft carriers conducted 86 war cruises and operated 9,178 total days on the line in the Gulf of Tonkin. 530 aircraft were lost in combat and 329 more to operational causes. Resulting in the deaths of 377 naval aviators, with 64 airmen reported missing and 179 taken prisoner-of-war.

There were 2,709,918 Americans who served in uniform in Vietnam and there have been 9,492,958 Americans who falsely claimed to have served in-country.

The common belief is that the fighting in Vietnam was not as intense as World War II. The average infantryman in the South Pacific during World War II saw about 40 days of combat in four years. The average infantryman in Vietnam saw about 240 days of combat in one year thanks to the mobility of the helicopter.

## More than 1,800 vets' records intentionally destroyed or misfiled by 2 clerks

By Robert Patrick

Published: January 30, 2014

ST. LOUIS -- More than 1,800 personnel records for U.S. veterans were destroyed or misfiled by two student employees of the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis County, federal criminal court documents show.

One of the student employees, Lonnie Halkmon, 28, was sentenced Thursday to two years of probation and ordered to perform 40 hours of community service. The other, Stanley Engram, 21, is scheduled to be sentenced Feb. 7. Both pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of destruction of government records and faced probation to six months in

prison under federal sentencing guidelines. Engram's guilty plea says that 241 military records were found in the woods near the center on July 3, 2012, with 300 names and Social Security numbers visible on the documents. The records were traced to Engram, who admitted disposing of the records found in the woods, "abandoning" files in the center and throwing them away at home. In all, he admitted destroying or purposely misfiling more than 1,000 records. Halkmon's plea says that after an "incident," the center conducted an audit of all records assigned to employees in 2011 and 2012.

From Dec. 7, 2011 to March 28, 2012, over 1,200 files were assigned to Halkmon, and 850 were reported missing. The audit covered 41 employees and Halkmon had the highest error rate. While most employees had an error rate of 3 percent, four other employees had disproportionate error rates, according to a state appellate court ruling. It's not clear the total number of files that are missing and many may never be located due to the huge volume of records at the center. Halkmon had worked at the center since 2005 and resigned rather than being terminated. The other four employees were offered the same deal. Some employees seeking to earn an incentive bonus were intentionally misfiling, or "stashing," records to finish more quickly, state court files show. Although Halkmon denied stashing files and said he'd lacked proper training, a tribunal handling Halkmon's appeal of the rejection of his unemployment benefits said his claims were not credible.

In court Thursday, Halkmon's public defender Lucille Liggett said that he was "sincerely remorseful" for his actions, and stressed that none of Halkmon's records were destroyed or removed from the center. Halkmon did not make a statement, and Liggett declined to comment on the case after Thursday's hearing. U.S. Magistrate Judge Nanette Baker said that while she didn't know why Halkmon had misfiled the records, she said she hoped he "understood the seriousness" of the situation and the potential impact on veterans' lives. Engram's lawyer and federal officials could not be immediately reached for comment Thursday.

The National Personnel Records Center, long housed in a building in Overland, Mo., moved to a new building on Dunn Road, just east of Highway 367, in 2011. The \$115 million center houses 100 million individual files dating from the 1800s in 4.2 million cardboard cartons. About 57 million of the files are for military personnel. In 1973, a fire destroyed or damaged the files of about 22 million Army veterans from 1912 to 1959 and Air Force veterans from 1947 to 1963.

## Stars & Stripes Drive-In Theatre in Lubbock, Texas



**Located in Northwest Lubbock on Clovis Hwy. (U.S. 84) between Frankford & Quaker Ave.**

**Open WED - SUN at 7pm. \*Arrive early for the full experience.**

**Admission only \$7 per person - Kids 5 and under are FREE-**

**Open FRI - SUN year-round! (Rain or Shine) \*WEDNESDAY is \$5 ticket night through the fall.**



No need to stop and grab food on your way to the Drive-In, hop into the 50's Cafe and Dine while you enjoy a movie. For those not coming to see a movie but craving some delicious food, we've got you covered; you don't need a ticket to just dine with us, so swing by the 50's Cafe at dinner time.





We are open year-round. During the summertime and school holidays, we are open every night. In the fall and winter, we are open 3-5 days a week. Use your car radio or portable stereo to tune to one of our 3 drive-in radio stations to get the movie sound. Be sure to tune into the designated station upon arrival for entertainment, announcements, and giveaways! Each car is allowed a 12 ft x 20 ft parking space. Please place lawn chairs in front of your vehicle so you do not take up more than one space.

We try to only enforce this rule on busy nights when it is necessary to accommodate other patrons. If you need more space to spread out, we would encourage you to visit the drive-in during the weekdays.

## Interim Charges for the Texas House Committee on Defense and Veterans Affairs

Please distribute to our membership for their information. **John A Miterko** Veterans Advocate

Speaker of the Texas House Straus just released his interim charges to the House committees. I have included the charges for the Committee on Defense and Veterans Affairs below. There a several of joint charges with committees we do not normally see.

### House Committee on Defense and Veterans' Affairs

1. Review the effectiveness and responsibilities of the Texas Military Preparedness Commission (TMPC). Examine the resources available to the TMPC to ensure the council has the organizational structure in place to protect base installations in Texas during future Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) rounds. Monitor the actions of the newly created BRAC task force, SB 1200 (83R), and review methodologies to enhance relationships between military installations and state and local government to positively impact decisions of BRAC, or similar proposals from the U.S. Department of Defense that could result in a reduced military presence in Texas. Seek opportunities to enhance or expand current military missions in Texas and identify, when possible, new missions that would complement or support existing ones.
2. Study methods to assure returning veterans have access to necessary transition assistance and access to job training, education, and sustainable employment, including monitoring federal actions and coordinating state and private programs. Specifically, explore options for alternative certification programs that give returning military service men and women credit for skills learned and time served while on active duty. Track related legislation passed during the 83rd Legislature.
3. Examine the recommendations contained in the report by the Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services (TCCVS), study whether these recommendations have been implemented, and examine new methods to help homeless Veterans using state, regional, and local resources. (Joint charge with the House Committee on Urban Affairs)
4. Study the implementation of SB 462 (83R). Examine which counties currently have veterans courts, as well as veterans courts in other states, and determine how those programs are working and whether these courts provide additional services or resources for veterans. Make appropriate recommendations. (Joint charge with the House Committee on County Affairs)

5. Evaluate current resources at higher education institutions, state agencies, and community-based organizations that provide support for military veteran students. Review the current process for assessing and placing these students in appropriate course work so that they are successful. Determine if new funding sources are needed at community colleges to educate or train military veterans who might need Developmental Education or Adult Basic Education (ABE). Recommend strategies for effectively supporting military veteran students in their academic and workforce goals.

6. Monitor the implementation of HB 2392 (83R), Peer-to-Peer Mental Health Program, administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, particularly the interface with local mental health authorities and veterans' groups, with a focus on issues related to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

7. Study the implementation of all legislation from the 83rd Regular Session that seeks to develop a model to require state agencies regulating occupational licenses which require an apprenticeship to credit veterans' relevant military experience toward the apprenticeship requirements. (Joint charge with the House Committee on Licensing and Administrative Procedures)

8. Conduct legislative oversight and monitoring of the agencies and programs under the committee's jurisdiction and the implementation of relevant legislation passed by the 83rd Legislature. In conducting this oversight, the committee should:

a. consider any reforms to state agencies to make them more responsive to Texas taxpayers and citizens;

b. identify issues regarding the agency or its governance that may be appropriate to investigate, improve, remedy, or eliminate;

c. determine whether an agency is operating in a transparent and efficient manner; and

d. identify opportunities to streamline programs and services while maintaining the mission of the agency and its programs.

## Government Affairs Report

As previously reported, I will be unable to attend our Veterans meeting this week. The following is my report, send as an addendum to the 13-page report that details veteran related bills being considered in the 113th US Congress. Please share with your membership.

There are 6,712 bills and resolutions containing 3,128 amendments currently before the United States Congress. Of those, on average **only about 5% will become law**. They must be enacted before the end of the 2013-2015 session (the "113th Congress"). To date only 65 laws have been passed by both chambers and sent to the President for signature. As of 31 DEC, of the 3808 House and 1894 Senate bills introduced in the 113th Congress, the ones listed below as an attachment are of interest to the non-active duty veteran community. A good indication on the likelihood of a bill of being forwarded to the House or Senate for passage and subsequently being signed into law by the President is the number of cosponsors who have signed onto the bill. An alternate way for it to become law is if it is added as an addendum to another bill such as the annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and survives the conference committee assigned to iron out the difference between the House and Senate bills.

The reality of politics is that bills are introduced by individual US Representatives and Senators in response to requests from their constituents or lobbying groups, or in response to the hot issue of the day such as Cost Of Living Adjustments (COLA) for veterans and military retirees. The elected official appears to be responsive to his or her constituency, but precious little follow up or active solicitation of other elected officials as co-sponsors occurs. Unfortunately veteran related bills end up in a sub-committee where it will be studied for months or years, with no chance of any specific bill ever being brought to the House or Senate floor for debate and vote.

Veteran Service Organizations focus on a handful of veteran related bills, and seek to educate lawmakers on the features, advantages, and benefits of this selective highly focused and prioritized legislation, and to influence the lawmakers into an active role in promoting the legislation. On a positive note, individual veterans can help this lobbying, education, and influencing process by calling or emailing their Representative and two US Senators, identifying themselves as a constituent, and asking for support for one or more specific bills. An active, involved grassroots veterans community can accomplish much, evidence what has been accomplished at the State level over the past eight plus years and four Texas Legislative Sessions. If you want legislation passed that positively impacts the veteran community, your personal, individual involvement is critical and essential. Get educated on the issues, become involved in the political process.

Respectfully: **John A Miterko**  
 Veterans Advocate

(Return to: Vietnam Veterans of America San Jacinto Chapter No. 343, P.O. Box 310306, Houston, Texas 77231)

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Sex** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date of Birth** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_ **State** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip** \_\_\_\_\_ **Chapter No. 343**

**Home Phone** ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ **Work Phone** ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

**Type:** \_\_\_ Individual member – 1 year @ \$20 \_\_\_ Individual member – 3 years @ \$50

Life member: \_\_\_ \$200 (ages 56-60) \_\_\_ \$175 (ages 61-65) \_\_\_ \$150 (ages 66-71) \_\_\_ \$100 (ages 72+)

\_\_\_ Optional Life member time payment plan - \$50 down, \$25/month

\_\_\_ Incarcerated Veterans (IVI) \$0: TDCJ # \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_ Incarcerated Veteran Associate (IVA) \$7: TDCJ # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Associate member – 1 year @ \$20

**Payment Method:** \_\_\_ Check \_\_\_ Money Order \_\_\_ Credit Card (Visa, Master Card, American Express, Discover)

**Credit Card Number** \_\_\_\_\_ **Exp. Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Eligibility:** 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. **New members and new life members must submit a copy of their DD-214 along with this application and dues payment.**



**The End!**