

THE JOURNEY

Vietnam Veterans of America Inc. Chapter 227
The Dean K. Phillips Memorial Chapter

"Serving Veterans and the Community in Northern Virginia"



"Never Again Shall One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another"

March 2012

50th ANNIVERSARY WAR COMMEMORATION

The March 15th membership meeting features Richard Williams of the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration Commission, who will discuss the commission's efforts to support federal, state, and local governments and private organizations in commemoration of the Vietnam War to accomplish its five missions:

1. To thank and honor veterans of the Vietnam War, including personnel who were held as prisoners of war (POW), or listed as missing in action (MIA), for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States and to thank and honor the families of these veterans.
2. To highlight the service of the Armed Forces during the Vietnam War and the contributions of Federal agencies and governmental and non-governmental organizations that served with or is in support of, the Armed Forces.
3. To pay tribute to the contributions made on the home front by the people of the United States during the Vietnam War.
4. To highlight the advances in technology, science, and medicine related to military research conducted during the Vietnam War.
5. To recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by the allies of the United States during the Vietnam War.

Come early with your spouse and bring a friend to enjoy a great dinner and meet fellow members.

"WELCOME HOME" REMEMBRANCE

At 7:00 PM, Sunday, March 25, the chapter will show the movie *21 and a Wakeup*. According to the producer/director, Vietnam veteran Chris McIntyre, "It is the first American film about the Vietnam War allowed to shoot on location in Vietnam since the end of the war. The two hour drama, while fiction based, on a number of true events and real people, surrounding the final days of the 24th Evacuation Hospital near Saigon, the last major Army hospital in the South to close as the war drew to an end." Chris will speak about the movie before the screening. We will show it at the University Mall Theatre, 10659 Braddock Road, Fairfax, VA 22032 (intersection of Braddock and Route 123). (703) 273-7111. See the trailer at: <http://vimeo.com/18198900>. Veteran and AVVA member admission is free; all others \$3.00.

The event is a great opportunity to meet fellow chapter members and to introduce family and Vietnam veteran friends to the chapter.

CHAPTER ELECTIONS

The chapter's biannual election of new officers and directors shall be at the April 19th membership meeting. As of March 1st, the candidates are the following:

President: Byron Sheldon **Vice President:** Bruce Waxman **Secretary:** Ron Ball **Treasurer:** Chuck Harris
Directors: Bill Dumsick, Len Ignatowski, Charlie Klein, Paul Stancliff, Joe Celesnik, and Tom Stryer
AVVA Representative: Diane Ignatowski

Member involvement is critical to our successful growth. If you want to serve your fellow veterans and our community again, this is the way to go. The minimal time commitment is the monthly board meeting, and most of your duties can be performed at home. If interested, offer to serve as a director and see how you like it. Call Len Funk, Nominating Chairperson, at 703-820-8118 to toss your hat in the ring.

KOREAN VIETNAM VETERANS

On December 18, 2011, Bruce Waxman and his wife, Sara, and Byron Sheldon represented the chapter at the Annual Korean Vietnam Veterans Association (KVVA) Night. The event recognizes the community and veteran accomplishments of its members. Bruce acknowledged our brotherhood bond in a common cause, and our desire to build our relationship and to schedule an informational meeting between VVA National staff and the KVVA leadership. The chapter AVVA roster has several Korean military service veterans. Everyone enjoyed the great camaraderie among veterans and the great food.



Byron Sheldon (R) presents a VVA hat and a veteran lapel pin to LeRoi Mason, after sharing his inspiring story on social redemption and helping incarcerated veterans at the February meeting. Photo by Len Ignatowski

ONE STEP AT A TIME

After serving nine years in the army, LeRoi Mason committed a crime that resulted in an 80 year Virginia prison sentence. Upon arriving at the prison, he decided to bury the human frailty that got him in prison and use his military discipline to resurrect his life. Like all prisoners, he became a jailhouse lawyer to overturn his conviction. He became very proficient in filing successful appeals for other inmates, but failed in his own attempts. He learned that one should not be one's own lawyer. After several appeal rejections, including three U.S. Supreme Court filings, he searched for other avenues to better himself. After earning a welder certification, he decided to pursue higher education. Overcoming administrative indifference, he earned three Associate Degrees in Liberal Arts, Business Administration and IT and a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. Not satisfied, he got approval to enroll and earned a Master's Degree in Psychological and Religious Counseling. These milestones were accomplished through video lectures and a monthly professor visit to the prison. "Education became my shield against

failure and my motivation for staying the course." Religion became a guiding principle too. His academic accomplishments and work with fellow inmates, including serving as president of VVA Incarcerated Chapter 682 resulted in being paroled after serving 37 years in prison. Chapter 682 members counsel new veteran inmates and raised funds for assorted charities. He attributes his success to a series of small steps and that there was always someone with a helping hand. He gave special credit to the college professors who conducted their monthly prison visits. As a 72 year old free man, he has embarked on a new career as a happy grandfather and as a professional counselor for KRA, a community based support corporation. He works in the "Returning Citizen" program that assisted newly released inmates in finding employment and adjusting to their new lives. He frequently is the guest speaker at community and prison services to share his success story. One of his new life pleasures is that he no longer has to shop looking through the prison's canteen peep hole to make his selections. He proudly displayed his governor issue pass that gives him unlimited access to all Virginia prisons to help veteran inmates. He credits Governor Bob McDonnell's efforts to help incarcerated military veterans restart their lives. LeRoi is now the Incarcerated Veteran Committee Chairperson for the Virginia State Council. His word of advice is that you can't save all inmates, but you can work with all of them and strongly encourage all members to help their incarcerated brothers. Based on his inspiring presentation and new career, the future holds great things for this veteran who refused to be broken by one life mistake.

VETERAN OUTREACH

- **LYONS VAMC COMBAT PTSD CLASS VISIT:** The chapter successfully hosted three more visits by the Lyons VAMC Combat PTSD classes on November 30th, January 11th, and February 22nd. The program includes an inspiring welcome to the veteran family by Ben Buckley and presenting our veteran/American flags lapel pin to each veteran. After the group conducts their memorial service, they disperse to see the other memorials or talk to a chapter member. Special thanks to Ben Buckley, Team Leader, and Bill Shugarts, who has photographed every visit. Bruce Waxman and Ron Ball were in attendance, and Tom Worrell, made his first appearance. More member participation is needed. Call Ben Buckley at 703-978-9179 to offer your service. The next visit is April 4th. You won't regret it.
- **VA FORCUS GROUP:** On January 26th, Bill Dumsick participated in a special focus group session for the design and distribution of a VA pamphlet that introduced veterans to the wide range of special research projects and services and to comment on the revised R&D logo. Invitations to participate in similar programs are often received with a short response time, which is a reason for you to join the Minuteman Alert list. Send your email address to grunt69@gmail.com.
- **MINUTEMAN ALERT WORKS:** A recent Minuteman Alert resulted in the addition of Cindy Dwyer being added to our veteran support network. She operates a personal clothing drive for needy veterans and military families whose spouses are receiving medical treatment. John Miska, chapter member and Minuteman, made the connection possible. Our Minuteman Alert includes local VSO posts, church groups, and non-profit organizations. Thanks John.
- **SUITS FOR VETS:** On January 15th, Chuck Harris, Chairman of the Suits for Vets program, reports that 65 business suits were given to the new Ft. Belvoir hospital. 70 more suits and coats are being processed for delivery. Dry cleaning the suits is requested to avoid this expense, which was \$425 for 2011. The Northern Virginia Senior Softball League continues its support with a \$505 donation. A new Mitre Corp. team member is the Quantico MCB office with a past donation of 100 suits. Clothing deemed of unacceptable quality is given to the VVA Household Goods store in Merrifield. The program provides \$500 Jos A. Bank gift cards for pending hospital patients to be discharged. They provide business attire for their new civilian career, while \$25 Target gift cards are distributed to family members for emergency personal item purchases in addition to the used clothing service.

CHAPTER 227 DOG TAGS

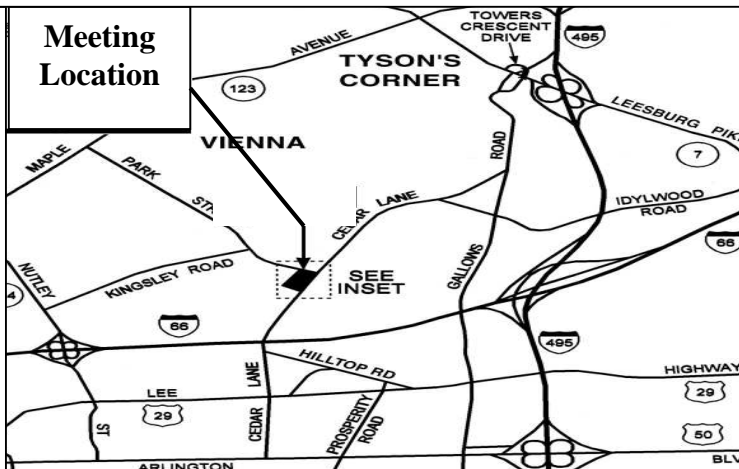
March 2012



OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF CHAPTER 227

- President:** Byron Sheldon – 703-850-3498
- Vice President:** Bruce Waxman – 703-323-0269
- Secretary:** Ron Ball
- Treasurer:** Chuck Harris
- Sergeant at Arms:** Jonathan Olson
- Board of Directors:** Paul Stancliff, Len Funk, Len Ignatowski, Bill Dumsick, Charlie Klein, Joe Celesnik, and Tom Stryer.
- AVVA Representative:** Diane Ignatowski 703-255-0353
- Newsletter Editor:** Len Ignatowski 703-255-0353
- School Speaker’s Panel:** Tom Stryer 703-323-9032
- Meeting Guest Speaker:** Len Funk 703-820-8118
- DMZ To Delta@Dance:** Len Ignatowski
- Suits for Veterans:** Chuck Harris 703-729-5665
- Lyons PTSD Visit:** Ben Buckley 703-978-9179

Meeting Location



CHAPTER INFORMATION: 703-968-0686

CHAPTER WEB SITE: www.vva227.org

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Neighbor’s Restaurant, 262D Cedar Lane
 Vienna, Virginia (Park St. & Cedar Lane)
 Pre-Meeting Dinner (Optional): 6:45 PM
 Meeting Time: 7:30 PM Phone: 703-698-8010

CHAPTER OPERATIONS PLAN

March 2012

- 10: State Council Meeting, Lynchburg, Va.
- 15: Membership Meeting 7:30 PM: 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War Commemorative Program
- 25: **21 and a Wake-Up**” movie presentation. See newsletter article for details.
- 30: Welcome Home, Vietnam Veterans Day

April 2012:

- 04: Lyons PTSD Class Visit: Meet at the flag pole @ 11:00 AM. POC: Ben Buckley 703-978-9179
- 05: Board Meeting 7:30 PM: American Legion Post 180, 330 Center Street, North, Vienna, Va.
- 19: Membership Meeting 7:30 PM: Speaker: Ed LaClare, “Memories of a WW II Pilot, My Dad” & Elections

May 2012:

- 03: Board Meeting 7:30 PM: American Legion Post 180, 330 Center Street, North, Vienna, Va.
- 16: Lyons PTSD Class Visit: Meet at the flag pole @ 11:00 AM. POC: Ben Buckley 703-978-9179
- 17: Membership Meeting 7:30 PM: “Vince Kaspar Awards for Excellence” in the Arts presentation
- 27: Viva Vienna information booth: Joe and Sharon Celesnik are the program managers.
- 27: Family Barbecue: Host: Diane Ignatowski, details to be announced.
- 28: Memorial Day Wreath Laying at The Wall and Family Breakfast: Details to be announced.

VETERAN’S HOTLINE 1-800-273-8255

**24 HOURS/ 7 DAYS A WEEK
DON’T HESITATE! CALL NOW**

VVA CAR DONATION PROGRAM

1-800-Help Vets

HOUSEHOLD GOODS DONATION – “It Works for Us!”

The VVA Household Goods program provided over \$4100 of income in 2010. You can help in three ways.

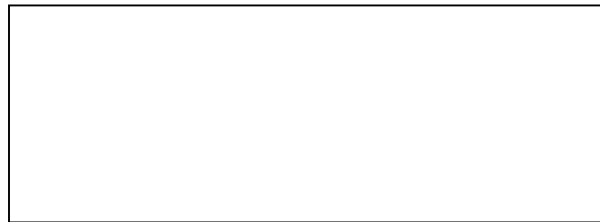
- Donate household goods and clothing by calling 1-800-459-8387 to schedule a pick-up, or drop off the items at the Unique Thrift Store on 2956 Gallows Road (the old Levitz Store) and buy something.
- Shop at the store which offers an excellent source for home furniture and decorations for children’s new apartments or your second home. Clothing and other items are like new. One member’s teenage son enjoys shopping for clothes and bedroom decorations at the store which has great prices. The store hours are Mon. – Sat.: 10 AM to 8 PM, and Sun.: 11 AM to 6 PM.
- Drop-off sheds, similar to the ones that are at shopping centers, are available. If you can provide a location, call Len Ignatowski at 703-255-0353. Every donation helps!

***50th ANNIVERSARY
WAR COMMEMORATION
MEMBERSHIP MEETING
March 15, 2012***

***“21 and a Wake Up”
Chapter sponsored movie in honor of
“Welcome Home, Vietnam Veterans Day”
March 25, 2012***

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA ® INC.
CHAPTER 227
DEAN K. PHILLIPS MEMORIAL CHAPTER
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Address Service Requested



OUR MISSION

**To “Serve Veterans, Their Families,
Our Community and Our Country”**