



October 2017

Volume 01

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Mailing Address

***PO Box 860151
St. Augustine
Florida 32086***

Meeting Info

***4th Tuesday of
Month
1130-1400
Jaybird's
Restaurant
2600 N US 1
St. Augustine, FL
32084***



***Vietnam Veterans of America
Leo C. Chase Chapter 1084
St. Johns County, Florida***

"Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another."

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

August and September have been very busy, and we have a big schedule ahead of us as we press on through October.

We co-hosted the preview program for The Vietnam War documentary on 16 September at the Corazon Cinema & Café (see page 7).

We supported the Homeless Standdown at the Elks Lodge on Saturday, 30 September – a very memorable event, indeed.

On 09 October ten members attended the VVA Chapter 1059 TAPS Memorial dedication in Green Cove Springs (see page 7).

John McGinty, Bob Dinkins and I attended the 13/14 October VVA Florida State Council meeting in Kissimmee, and it makes me proud to be a part of such an organization. The Disaster Relief rendered by VVA for Harvey, Irma, and Maria is an awesome feat. John McGinty, as the 1st VP for the Florida State Council, has been named as the Disaster Relief Officer for the State Council.

Still ahead for the near future:

- 03 November POW/MIA Memorial Dedication, Cecil Field (see page 8)
- 04 November VETS4VETS, Veterans Memorial Arena, Jacksonville (see page 9).
- 11 November Veterans Day Parade (see page 10).

Our membership is growing steadily – we had 65 members in February this year, with a steady climb to 69 by the end of June, and sitting at **74** as of this printing, with two new applications in process. In the same time, we went from zero AVVA members, to three today.

HURRICANE Irma and Maria RELIEF

Looking for a legitimate place to donate money to help our Brothers and Sisters in Florida, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands? See the article on page 3 concerning the VVA Florida State Council.

VVA GOALS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA**OUR GOALS**

The goals of the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) are to promote and support the full range of issues important to Vietnam veterans, to create a new identity for this generation of veterans, and to change public perception of Vietnam veterans. VVA strives to achieve the following:

- Aggressively advocate on issues important to veterans
- Seek full access to quality health care for veterans
- Identify the full range of disabling injuries and illnesses incurred during military service
- Hold government agencies accountable for following laws mandating veterans' health care
- Create a positive public perception of Vietnam veterans
- Seek the fullest possible accounting of America's POWs and MIAs
- Support the next generation of America's war veterans
- Serve our communities

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLE

"Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another."

VVA knows what returning veterans face. We have been through it before and we know that, despite all the rhetoric, returning veterans will face major problems. VVA will be here for as long as it takes to make sure that those who serve our country receive the care and respect they have earned.

I keep a copy of this page on my desk as reminder of why we exist, why we assist, and why we persist in what we do. The homecoming of many Vietnam veterans was a national disgrace, and the founders of VVA recognized that, and took steps to make sure that future generations of active duty military and veterans would never have to endure such treatment ever again in America. I refer to it with every request for assistance, with every decision I must make regarding our Chapter, and with every proposal I make to our membership.

HURRICANE HARVEY, IRMA, AND MARIA RELIEF

THE VVA FLORIDA STATE COUNCIL'S CALL FOR DONATIONS

VVA Chapter 1084 has responded to the Florida State Council's calls for donations to assist the victims of Harvey, Irma, and Maria by donating \$250 to each cause. If you wish to make donations to assist our brothers and sisters in those areas send your checks made out to "VVA Florida State Council" and send to:

Ray Breault, Treasurer
VVA Florida State Council
PO Box 330274
Atlantic Beach, FL 32233-0274

If you wish it to go to a specific area, write the Hurricane name on the Note line of your check. 100% of your donation will go into a "restricted account," meaning it can only be used for providing relief to these causes, now or in future occurrences.

VVA CHAPTER 1084 CONTACT INFORMATION

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WHITE HOUSE VA HOTLINE

The VA announced that starting October 15, the **White House VA Hotline—855-948-2311** will be operational 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The pilot phase demonstrated that veterans calling the hotline respond best when their calls are answered by fellow veterans and others with first-hand experience on their issues. As a result, the VA is targeting highly qualified veterans to staff the hotline going forward, instead of contracting the service to a third-party vendor, and has hired additional VA personnel to complete the planned move to a 24-hour operation.

TALES OF COURAGE AND HEROISM

(Article by John Leslie, excerpted from his book *In My Father's Footsteps: A Story of Father and Son Naval Aviators*).

In January 1970 the North Vietnamese were mounting an offensive to take Da Nang, in South Vietnam, from the US Forces. On 31 January the Helicopter crew piloted by LT COL Walt Ledbetter, Commanding Officer of HMM-263, an assault helicopter squadron, dropped three Marine platoons into the area to repel the enemy. The Marines immediately took heavy fire, and the helo crew began evacuating the wounded. On one return trip to the battlefield, they found a small group of Marines, members of the 3rd Platoon, Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Division, stranded in the middle of a mine field, pinned down by enemy gunfire.

Private First Class (PFC) Raymond M "Mike" Clausen was the crew chief on that mission to rescue those stranded marines. He guided the pilot to a landing in a patch of tall grass cleared by one of several mine explosions. Twenty marines were nearby, eleven of them wounded, one already dead, and the other eight in place, fearful of setting off additional mines if they moved. LT COL Ledbetter landed his CH-46 helicopter three times, each time over craters made by exploded mines, to get as close to the wounded as possible. He dropped the back ramp and ordered the crew to stay onboard. Clausen disobeyed – six times. *"I told him, 'No, sir, I'm going off the plane,' "* Clausen recalled in an interview with The Dallas Morning News in January 2004.

He leaped from the helicopter, ignored the presence of hidden mines, picked up a wounded marine and carried him back to the craft. Several other marines followed his path to the helicopter, knowing it would be clear of the mines.

Private Clausen then directed the helicopter to another spot and resumed his rescue efforts. His citation said that despite the threat of further mine explosions, he made six trips out of the helicopter. On one of those trips, a mine detonated while he was carrying a wounded marine, killing another member of the stranded platoon and wounding three other men.

1st LT Bruce Cruickshank was the last of the wounded Marines carried aboard the helo by Clausen. Cruickshank was an A-4 Skyhawk pilot assigned on temporary duty as a forward air controller (FAC) to call in airstrikes in support of this infantry operation by the Marine ground troops. His radio operator that day was Lance Corporal Ed West, a new arrival with 45 days "in country" on his first, and only, combat mission of the war. Cruickshank and West each lost both legs to mine explosions.

Only when Clausen was certain that all marines were safely aboard did he signal the pilot to lift the helicopter. All in all, Clausen carried eleven wounded and one dead Marine to the helo. For his actions that day, PFC Clausen was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor by President Richard Nixon in the White House on 15 June 1971. PFC Clausen died in Dallas, Texas on 30 May 2004 at the age of 56 years.

Other members of this rescue mission also received personal awards for valor. The pilot, LT Col Ledbetter was awarded the Navy Cross, his co-pilot 1st LT Paul Parker was awarded a Silver Star, the port-side gunner CPL Steven Marinkovic and the starboard-side gunner SGT Major Morton Landy each received the Distinguished Flying Cross for their actions that day, making them one of the most decorated combat flight crews in military aviation history.

SGT Major Landry was a 20-year veteran by this time, and had volunteered to go on this mission as a gunner. As probably the most senior enlisted Marine in the squadron, he would have been intimately familiar with each enlisted man in the outfit. In an interview in 2007, SGT Major Landry said of the twice demoted Crew Chief PFC Clausen that he was *“his biggest disciplinary problem”* and that he *“had no use for him as a Marine. He was a good man at heart but liked to beat his own drum. He had good abilities as a Marine, but he liked to disobey orders.”* Landry went on to say *“What he did that day brought out the Marine Corps in him. He earned the medal that day, there’s no question in my mind. But, Clausen disobeyed the Commanding Officer’s orders (who specifically ordered his crew to stay in the helicopter). We landed and dropped the door and he was out there, back and forth, six times.”*

It’s a good thing for Bruce Cruikshank and the other ten Marines of the Third Platoon, Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Division that were pinned down in that mine field, saved because Clausen did disobey the CO’s orders. The CO later said of Clausen’s disobedience *“Mike saw what was going on. He did what he thought he had to do.”*

After a ceremony dedicating the Medal of Honor CH-46 at the Carolinas Aviation Museum, Bruce Cruikshank commented to a nearby attendee *“If not for Mike Clausen and these other guys, I would have been another name on the Wall in Washington. I’ve had to live my life without my legs, but my life’s been a whole lot better than the guys who didn’t make it back.”*

Clausen was on his second tour of duty in Vietnam, and was released from active duty shortly after being transferred back to the United States in August 1970. He has been credited with flying over 1960 combat missions in Vietnam.

The last Marine rescued that day, 1st Lt Bruce Cruikshank, was a college classmate of mine at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, Aeronautical Engineering Class of 1967. Following graduation, I went off to NAS Pensacola for Navy flight training, while Bruce went off to USMC Officer training, then received his flight training via the USAF. It took Bruce two years to fully recover from his injuries, and he was back flying in no time after that. I reconnected with Bruce in 2015 at his hangar at the Livingston, CA airport, where he builds his own airplanes (currently working on number four) and regularly flies them with “flight prostheses” that he designed and fabricated himself (a unique, separate, design for each aircraft). The marine who saved Bruce and ten other marines that fateful day in Viet Nam serves as an inspiration to all, and so does Bruce. Bruce flies and supports Young Eagles flights, acts as the local chapter’s Secretary, and still holds the mystery and beauty of flight in his heart and mind. The 70-year-old Bruce Cruikshank in 2015 was as energetic and as enthusiastic about life and flying as was the 21-year-old Aero Engineering graduate I had last seen in 1967.

Do you have a story to tell? About yourself, or about a fellow Veteran? Submit your stories to me and I will feed them into our Newsletter as space allows, at least one story per Newsletter.

THREE STEPS TO ASSIST VETERAN "TRANSITION" TO THE COMMUNITY

This is an excerpt of an article written by the Army Times about Bob McDonald, who served as Veterans Affairs secretary from 2014 through January 2017. He said connecting with others and not limiting yourself will help service members transition from the military to civilian life.

1. Connect, connect, connect.

"Don't try to do everything yourself," McDonald said. "Connect with people who have already done it, and connect with people who may be interested in hiring you."

It's so much easier today to connect with others than it was when McDonald got out of the Army in 1979-80, he said.

"I wrote letters to about 130 different companies ... and waited to hear back from them, then interviewed with about 30 companies," he said.

During that process, he said, it was interesting how every one of the companies wanted to put him in a box they created for him, "West Point grad, engineer student, military veteran," he said. "Let's put him in manufacturing."

He said companies thought running a manufacturing line was a lot like running a platoon. "Or let's put him in sales because military people have confidence. They're assertive. They'd be great in sales," he said. But McDonald said he didn't want to do any of that.

"As a service member getting out, don't allow yourself to be stereotyped," he said. "One way to do that is connect with other people."

2. Translate experience into civilian language.

McDonald said companies aren't lacking people or assets — it's leadership they need. "What we need to do as veterans is to tell companies **about the leadership** experiences we have," he said. "And how those leadership experiences have led to better outcomes with the people we serve."

3. Don't undervalue education.

Going to school is harder to do the older you get, he said. "You might have a family that might inhibit that," or a job or location that inhibits it, he added.

"Think about using the GI Bill as a transition point," McDonald said. "Once you figure out what you want to do, then get the education you can get to make yourself even more successful in that new role. "McDonald said he finds that a lot of service members undervalue the role of education, "which arguably to me is one of the most transformative experiences in life."

[editor's note: Transitioning from a war zone to every day civilian community life is one of the most challenging processes our returning veterans face. A critical step in this process is to disengage, in as much as possible, from the war, at least enough to allow engagement with the community, with society. Obviously, former Secretary McDonald had disengaged adequately from his military experiences to fully engage in his transition. So many others have difficulty with this, and we are here to help. Remember, "Leave No Veteran Behind!"]

THE VIETNAM WAR – A DOCUMENTARY BY KEN BURNS

On 16 September we co-hosted a preview showing to *The Vietnam War*, along with the Veterans Council, St. Johns County and the Jacksonville based PBS affiliate (WJCT Public Broadcasting). The program included opening remarks by Bill Dudley, the Chairman of the Veterans Council, and William Boylan, President and CEO of WJCT, and an inspiring Keynote address by State Representative Paul Renner. Following the showing of the film, VVA-1084 members participated in a panel discussion on



John Leslie

their Vietnam experiences. John Leslie moderated the panel, with fellow members Joan Whitfield, Joe Tillman, Blair Craig, Paul Heagy, and Ken Weaver. One non-member, Terry Allen, also sat on the panel. An audience of approximately 90 guests watched the 63-minute preview of the 18-hour documentary, understandably with a wide range of emotions and memories. As the advertisements say, ***“THERE IS NO SINGLE TRUTH IN WAR.”***



Joan Whitfield



Joe Tillman



Blair Craig



Paul Heagy



Terry Allen



Ken Weaver

TAPS MEMORIAL, GREEN COVE SPRINGS



It was a lovely day to share with fellow Veterans at the TAPS Memorial Dedication in Green Cove Springs on Monday, 09 October. Our VVA brothers and sisters in Chapter 1059, Clay County, were main players in this well-planned and excellently executed ceremony under the leadership of Gary and Mary Anne Newman. Gary (shown in photo, addressing the crowd) was the Chair of the committee of county officials and other veteran organizations, taking nearly 2 ½ years of planning, research, and fund-

raising to reach this milestone. VVA 1084 was pleased to be present with 10 members mingled among the 200 (+) audience. The monument is located adjacent to the Old County Courthouse at 915 Walnut Street, Green Cove Springs. BRAVO ZULU to Clay County and to VVA Chapter 1059!

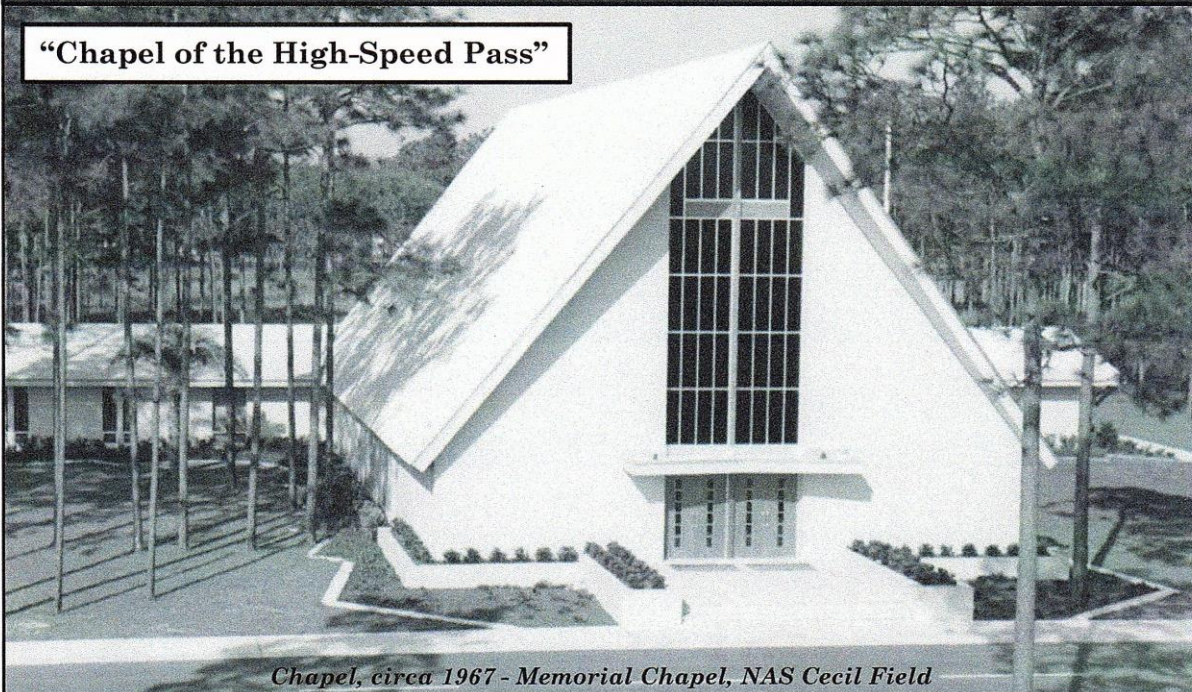
CECIL FIELD POW/MIA MEMORIAL CHAPEL DEDICATION CEREMONY



Cecil Field
POW★MIA
MEMORIAL

CHAPEL DEDICATION CEREMONY
AND OPEN HOUSE

"Chapel of the High-Speed Pass"



Chapel, circa 1967 - Memorial Chapel, NAS Cecil Field

November 3, 2017 at 11:00 am

6112 New World Avenue

Jacksonville, FL 32221

Please RSVP for lunch to Kathy Cayton, kcayton0712@gmail.com by Nov. 1st

With gratitude to Mission BBQ:
"Thank you for Proudly Serving Those Who Serve."



VETS4VETS QUARTERLY GATHERING



V4V
Veterans for Veterans
Quarterly Gathering of Veterans



Nov. 4th, 1100-1300 hrs – Veterans Memorial Arena

The Grand Parade

Veterans Day - St. Augustine



"Honoring Service and Sacrifice"



Saturday November 11th -10:45 AM.
Reviewing Stand - Castillo de San Marcos
Castillo Drive/San Marco Ave

Military Officers Association of America- Ancient City Chapter
Veterans Council of St. Johns County

