



In Service to America

# THE OUTPOST

Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 787, Tampa Fl.



**NATIONAL CHAPTER OF THE YEAR 2001, FLORIDA STATE COUNCIL, CHAPTER OF THE YEAR 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, CHAPTER STATE NEWSLETTER OF THE YEAR 2007, FOR INFORMATION CALL BOB SILMSER (813) 220-7246 OR (813) 685-3483. WEB SITE: WWW.VVA787.COM**



Submitted By: Jim LaGarde

## Chapter 787 awards local JROTC

### **Chapter Officers**

President: Jim LaGarde  
 Vice President: Carl Harris  
 Secretary: Bob Silmsers  
 Treasurer: Bob Silmsers

### **Board of Directors:**

Tom Hall  
 Kevin Ruhl  
 Steve Williams  
 Jon Mueller

### **State Council Delegate:**

Kevin Ruhl

**Newsletter** Editor: Jon Mueller, E-mail: ParaSF68@aol.com

### **Meetings**

Chapter Meetings are held the 4th Thursday of each month.

Time: 7:00 PM

Location: Veterans Memorial Park & Museum 3602 Hwy. 301 N. Tampa Fl. 33619. See Map on last page. **Mail-ing address: P.O. Box 89247, Tampa Fl. 33689-0404.**



Each year, Chapter 787 recognizes the achievements of local Junior ROTC members who have excelled in their schools. To receive our award, the cadet must excel in academics, and physical training. Shown above is chapter board member **Tom Hall** who is awarding two Newsom High School cadets.

## Chapter 787 helps a Active Duty Veteran & his Family



Pictured at left is active duty Airman **Ben Light** (L) and chapter 787 Scy/Tres, **Bob Silmsers**, a USAF Vet himself. Ben and his family have been living in a 3 bedroom apartment along with his brother and his family. A total of 11 adults and children live in very cramped quarters. Along with this they have had car problems and Ben will be deploying to Central America soon. Chapter 787 donated \$400 to assist them in taking care of their car problems and getting back on their feet.

## **Chapter 787 helps Marine League at the Field of Honor**

On Saturday April 12th, Chapter members assisted members of the local Marine League in honoring those men and women who have died in the service of their county, in Iraq and Afghanistan during the last 90 days.



Pictured (top) Chapter 787 member & Hillsborough County Veterans Council President **Dave Braun** (left) gives the opening address, (bottom left, each flag represents one American KIA since 9/11. Pictured at right, Gold Star Mothers and wives. Chapter Scy/Tres. & Veterans Council 3rd VP, **Bob Silmsler** asked that our members help out on this event.

## **Chapter 787's Annual Car Show**

Mark your calendars for **Saturday May 31st at the Hillsborough Veterans Park & Museum**. This is always a big event for the chapter with lots of fun and camaraderie, not to mentioned some great looking older cars.

Tom Hall needs some volunteers to hand out our car show flyers at the following dates and location. He is also requesting volunteers to help set up the booth space at the event. **Contact Tom at (813) 655-7129.**



**May 3 3-8 Dade City Car Show**

**May 17 4-9 Plant City Car Show**



## **Car Show Business Sponsors needed.**

The business's would sponsor the event trophies. Price range is \$400 to \$500. These are very good quality trophies and the presentation to the winners is a popular part of the show with lots of people so the business name gets a great deal of exposure. Any local business owner would be proud to be part of this event. Contact Tom Hall at (813) 655-7129

## **Volunteers Needed to help Set Up**

**This show will be one of our Chapters Biggest Events in years so don't miss it.**

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### **Quote**

Submitted By: Jon Mueller

“The mothers and fathers of America will give you their sons and daughters.....with the confidence in you that you will not needlessly waste their lives. And you dare not. That's the burden the mantle of leadership places upon you. You could be the person who gives the orders that will bring about the deaths of thousands and thousands of young men and women. It is an awesome responsibility. You cannot fail. You dare not fail.....”

General H. Norman Schwarzkopf

US Army

## **Army life never got old for Doraville landscaper**

By APRIL HUNT, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution Published on: 04/01/08

The sun has just cleared the northern Alabama mountains, but nothing shines more brightly than Army Spc. Tom Owens' smile as he joshes with the fellow soldiers he calls his grandkids.

"C'mon, show that big-man move," the 6-foot-3-inch Owens taunts a reluctant Spc. Jericar Martinez, as the smaller man tries to put him in a headlock.

Spc. Tom Owens has no trouble keeping up with recruits half his age. After training he heads for duty in Iraq or Afghanistan. "He can't. He's got to worry about your osteoporosis," teases Spc. Brandon Crabtree.

Staff Sgt. Michael Cookson, the highest-ranking man waiting with the others to return their training gear, joins the mocking — "Yeah, Owens, it's all fun and games 'til you break a hip," — then turns serious to explain to a visitor.

"I tell him, 'You're 55 years old. You've got nothing to prove,'" Cookson says.

Owens, a Doraville landscaper who has become one of the oldest recruits in the history of the Army, sees it differently.

Last December, the decorated Vietnam veteran who spent 14 years in the Army and Army National Guard re-enlisted — 15 years after he ostensibly left military service for good. He recently completed training to be an ammo specialist and expects to be sent to either Iraq or Afghanistan.

Owens may be the only member of his company who wears bifocals. His long johns, issued by the Army during his stint in Vietnam, are probably older than anyone in his unit.

But Owens re-upped, he says, because he has been a soldier since his days serving in the demilitarized zone in Vietnam.

"I learned values in the Army, how to conduct myself and stand up for what's right," Owens said. "I could be home, getting fat and drinking a beer, or I could step up and show these soldiers today how much I appreciate what they're doing."

Owens' love of being a soldier has never waned. It started after a high school guidance counselor said he wouldn't be fit for college. Owens, a Chamblee native, had suffered a head injury when he was 12 and was in a coma for months. The counselor said he would never catch up.

In 1969, when he was in 10th grade, Owens took his GED and enlisted. He was 17.

He spent a year as an infantryman in Vietnam, enduring daily rocket and sniper attacks. Of about 100 men in his unit, 29 didn't survive. For his service in Vietnam, Owens was awarded two Bronze Stars.

The Army released him in 1972, a year early as part of a reduction in force. Owens returned to DeKalb County and went to college after all, earning a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Georgia State in 1975. He thought he wanted to be a cop, then held a handful of jobs before realizing he missed being a soldier.

He joined the Army National Guard in 1981, working as a unit administrator until he went back to active duty in 1987. In 1992, he was discharged as a sergeant as part of another reduction in force.

**Continued on next page.....**

"I didn't want to go. It was involuntary," Owens said.

Owens returned to DeKalb, setting up his own landscaping business in Doraville and continuing a strict fitness routine. For more than 15 years, he has run for 90 minutes virtually every morning, lifted weights for an hour, then headed to a nearby McDonald's for coffee.

And, he wants to be as close as possible to "regular soldiers." He tried to re-up after Sept. 11, but was told he was too old.

But the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have strained the Army's ranks, so officials raised the enlistment age. The limit has been just under 42 since 2006.

Re-enlisting soldiers get credit for time served. The Army takes a recruit's age and subtracts the previous service. At 55, with 14 years' prior service, Owens just makes the threshold at 41.

The Army has hit its annual recruiting goal of 80,000 since raising the age limit, though records show few new soldiers are in the older age range. In the fiscal year that ended in November, only 378 recruits were 40 or older.

"Older recruits were needlessly being denied an opportunity," said Douglas Smith, spokesman for the Army Recruiting Command at Fort Knox. "If you're fit to be a soldier, there is nothing age-related that affects your ability."

When Owens found out the Army had increased the age limit, he immediately went to a recruiter. He spent the next year shedding 20 pounds, down to his current 230 pounds, and began slowly selling off his business. He took a pay cut and demotion to specialist to rejoin the Army. He gets a \$15,000 signing bonus as a returning soldier and can re-earn his sergeant's stripes over his six-year stint.

He reported to Redstone Arsenal near Huntsville, Ala., in January. The requirement for his age included doing 29 sit-ups and 24 pushups and running two miles in 19 minutes and 30 seconds. Owens did 55 sit ups and 50 pushups — exceeding the minimums for younger soldiers — and ran the course in 16 minutes and 55 seconds — just 19 seconds over the younger soldiers' minimums.

"You'll see 18, 19-year-olds who can't do that," said Sgt. Samuel Sykes, a soldier from Conyers who briefly stepped in as Owens' platoon leader. "We call him Old Head, but his attitude is straight-up,"

Never married and without kids, Owens has made the Army his family. He stays in touch with the 75-year-old sergeant major who commanded his unit in Vietnam. The sergeant major drove 12 hours straight from Florida to see Owens graduate.

A dozen Vietnam veterans from Atlanta also drove out for the ceremony. Owens was proud to represent the older soldiers, he said, and thrilled to again be in uniform.

"They say, either be a leader, a follower or get out of the way. Well, I'm a follower. I will follow and do my duty," Owens said.

Back in line, the younger soldiers continue teasing Owens.

"It's not your Granddaddy's Army. You better learn technology," says Staff Sgt. Cookson, 31.

"Forget cell phones. Did they even have Kevlar when you were first in," asks the 23-year-old Crabtree.

Owens loves to play along. He tells them, "I was in the Army when Moses was a corporal."

Even as he says it, Owens can't stop beaming.



# Medal of Honor Winners of the War in Vietnam

## The Bravest of the Brave



OLSON, KENNETH L.



Rank and organization: Specialist Fourth Class, U.S. Army, Company A, 5th Battalion, 12th Infantry, 199th Infantry Brigade (Separate) (Light). Place and date: Republic of Vietnam, 13 May 1968. Entered service at: Minneapolis, Minn. Born: 26 May 1945, Willmar, Minn. Citation: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Sp4c. Olson distinguished himself at the cost of his life while serving as a team leader with Company A. Sp4c. Olson was participating in a mission to reinforce a reconnaissance platoon which was heavily engaged with a well-entrenched Viet Cong force. When his platoon moved into the area of contact and had overrun the first line of enemy bunkers, Sp4c. Olson and a fellow soldier moved forward of the platoon to investigate another suspected line of bunkers. As the 2 men advanced they were pinned down by intense automatic weapons fire from an enemy position 10 meters to their front. With complete disregard for his safety, Sp4c. Olson exposed himself and hurled a hand grenade into the Viet Cong position. Failing to silence the hostile fire, he again exposed himself to the intense fire in preparation to assault the enemy position. As he prepared to hurl the grenade, he was wounded, causing him to drop the activated device within his own position. Realizing that it would explode immediately, Sp4c. Olson threw himself upon the grenade and pulled it in to his body to take the full force of the explosion. By this unselfish action Sp4c. Olson sacrificed his own life to save the lives of his fellow comrades-in-arms. His extraordinary heroism inspired his fellow soldiers to renew their efforts and totally defeat the enemy force. Sp4c. Olson's profound courage and intrepidity were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army.



## **Chapter 787 Fund Raiser, at Publix**

**Thanks to all our volunteers who make our projects work!**



Pictured, top row, L-R, Chapter 787 VP **Carl Harris** and **Harold (Kit) Carson**, **Luther Lassiter** and **Gerard Abbett**.  
Second row, **Art Jorgenson** and Chapter State Council Rep, **Kevin Ruhl**, then Chapter 787 President **Jim (Rambo) LaGarde**, **Carl Harris** and **Kit Carson**.

Bottom row, Chapter 787 Scy/Tres and all around getting stuff done guy, **Bob Silmsr**, **Gerard Abbett**, and **Bob** with **Kevin** again. All these fine men are chapter 787 members who sacrifice their time to help other veterans in need.

**Calendar of Events**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Time</b>
<b><u>May 2008</u></b>		
2nd & 3rd Friday & Saturday	Chapter Fund Raiser, Publix, Bell Shoals & Bloomingdale Rd.	
8th Thursday	Board of Directors Meeting, Jon's House	6:30 PM
19th Monday	Hillsborough County Veterans Council Meeting, Veterans Park & Museum	6:00 PM
21st Monday	Veterans Park & Museum, War Memorial Committee Meeting	6:00 PM
22nd Thursday	Chapter Meeting, Hillsborough County Veterans Park & Museum	7:00 PM
25th Sunday	Hillsborough County Memorial Day Event, Vet Park, Guest Speakers, Food and Drinks	10:00 AM
<b>31st Saturday</b>	<b>V.V.A. Chapter 787's Annual Car Show, Veterans Memorial Park &amp; Museum</b>	<b>9:00 AM to 3:00 PM</b>
<b><u>June 2008</u></b>		
12th Thursday	Board of Directors Meeting, Jon's House	6:30 PM
13th & 14th Friday & Saturday	Chapter Fund Raiser, Publix at Providence & Bloomingdale, Winthrop Center	
23rd Monday	Hillsborough County Veterans Council Meeting, Veterans Park & Museum	6:00 PM
26th Thursday	Chapter Meeting, Hillsborough Veterans Park & Museum	7:00 PM
<b><u>Check out our EVENTS page on the chapter web site. Go to <a href="http://www.vva787.com">www.vva787.com</a>, click EVENTS then</u></b>		

**Remains of 7 soldiers thought found in Vietnam**

The Associated Press Posted : Tuesday Apr 15, 2008 6:53:46 EDT

HANOI, Vietnam — Officials said remains believed to be those of seven American servicemen killed during the Vietnam War have been sent back to the U.S. from central Vietnam.

Ron Ward of the U.S. MIA office in Vietnam said the remains were loaded onto a U.S. military aircraft at Da Nang airport Monday and flown to a laboratory in Hawaii for identification.

The remains were recovered over the last two months from sites in Vietnam.

Nearly 1,800 U.S. troops are still unaccounted for throughout Southeast Asia from the Vietnam War, which ended in 1975. Of those, 1,353 are believed to be in Vietnam.

An estimated 58,000 Americans and 3 million Vietnamese were killed in the war.

**Financial Status of Chapter 787 as of April 2008**

Total.....\$9,536.89 (Moving Wall Fund..\$4,692.80, General checking \$3032.76.... Holiday Meals Fund \$1,811.33)

Total.....\$1,949.37 ( Household Goods.....\$7.53 Convention Fund.....\$1,941.84)

**All Accounts Total: \$11,486.26**

**Thanks to our Treasurer Bob Silmser**

# Melbourne Fla. Vets put on quite a Show!

Chapter 787 members, **Jim (Rambo) LaGarde**, **Tom Hall**, **Steve Williams** and Jon Mueller made a road trip on Saturday, April 26th, to Melbourne Florida to see how the folks on the east coast handled their moving Wall display. They had many vendors, live music and a huge crowd, with perfect weather.



Pictured top left (L-R), Chapter board member, state council Treasurer, and state council newsletter editor, **Tom Hall**, chapter board member **Steve Williams** and chapter 787 President **Jim LaGarde**. Pictured top right **Jim LaGarde** speaks to local visitors about Vietnam. Pictured second row, L-R, **Jim (Rambo) LaGarde** and **Steve Williams** refresh old memories on the UH-1 Iroquois. Next State council President **Jerry Klein** is sandwiched between two big veterans.

Pictured at bottom left. Ex-Donut Dolly, gives chapter member **Steve Williams** a big hug.

## Presidential Memorial Certificates

Presidential Memorial Certificates recognizing all honorably discharged deceased veterans. The family of a deceased veteran is authorized up to 20 certificates. The Presidential Memorial Certificate is a parchment certificate with a calligraphic inscription expressing the nation's grateful recognition of a veteran's service. The veteran's name is inscribed and the certificate bears the signature of the President.

Certificates are issued in the name of honorably discharged, deceased veterans. Eligible recipients include next of kin, other relatives and friends. The award of a certificate to one eligible recipient does not preclude certificates to other eligible recipients. The veteran may have died at any time in the past. The local VA regional office generally originates the application for a Presidential Memorial Certificate if a veteran's death is brought to official attention. The next of kin may request a certificate when a service member dies on active duty, or if the veteran was not receiving a VA benefit.

Requests should be accompanied by a copy of a document such as a discharge to establish honorable service. VA regional offices can assist in applying for certificates. If you would like to request a Presidential Memorial Certificate, or if you requested one more than eight (8) weeks ago and have not received it yet, VA asks that you either:

1. **Fax** your request and all supporting documents, copy of discharge (DD-214 or equivalent) and death certificate, to **(202) 565-8054, or 800-455-7143**
2. **Mail** your request and all supporting documents using either the U.S. Postal Service or a commercial mail service, such as one of the overnight or express mail delivery services, to:

### **Presidential Memorial Certificates (41A1C)**

#### **Department of Veterans Affairs**

5109 Russell Road

Quantico, VA 22134-3903

Note: If you have any questions about a certificate you have received, a request you have already sent in, or about the program in general, you may call (202) 565-4964.

## Post office renamed for Vietnam fatality

The Associated Press Posted : Tuesday Apr 29, 2008 16:50:59 EDT

FERDINAND, Ind. — The post office in this southern Indiana town has been renamed for Staff Sgt. David L. Nord, the town's only combat fatality of the Vietnam War.

Nord, a 1967 graduate of St. Ferdinand High School, was killed in a grenade attack near Bing Long on June 23, 1969. It happened shortly after he had returned to combat from a leave home to be married.

Indiana Democratic U.S. Rep. Baron Hill, who introduced the renaming legislation last year, attended Monday's ceremony with about 600 residents of the small town in Dubois County, about 40 miles northeast of Evansville. Four of the soldiers Nord served with also attended the ceremony. Nord's 39-year-old son, David L. Nord III, who never met his father, also spoke at the ceremony.

## Chapter 787 Fund Raisers

It's that time of year again, and Chapter 787 needs volunteers to man or women, the fund raiser tables we set up at the local Publix stores. Please contact **Jim (Rambo) LaGarde** at H-(813) 689-6921 or C-(813) 758-4547 to help out.

## Membership Application

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 28th 1961 and May 7, 1975, or in any duty location between August 5, 1964 and May 7, 1975.

### Vietnam Veterans of America

Send to: VVA Chapter 787, P.O. Box 89247, Tampa Fl. 33689-0404



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Male: \_\_\_\_\_ Female: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. # \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work or Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter #787 Sponsor \_\_\_\_\_

### Membership Type:

Individual: 1 year \_\_\_\_\_ \$20 3 years \_\_\_\_\_ \$50. Associate: 1 year \_\_\_\_\_ \$20 3 years \_\_\_\_\_ \$50

Life Member Options: \_\_\_\_\_ Life Member Ages 49 and Under: \$250, \_\_\_\_\_ Life Member Ages 50-55: \$225, \_\_\_\_\_ Life

Member Ages 56-60: \$200, \_\_\_\_\_ Life Member Ages 61-65: \$175, \_\_\_\_\_ Life Member Ages 66 +: \$150

\_\_\_\_\_ I am already a V.V.A. member and want to become a life member. My V.V.A. Member number is \_\_\_\_\_.

Optional Time Payment plan: \$50 down, and \$25 per month until paid in full.

Payment Method: Check \_\_\_\_\_

Money Order \_\_\_\_\_ Visa \_\_\_\_\_ MasterCard \_\_\_\_\_ If using a credit card: Card

Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

This newsletter is not the official publication of the Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 787, Tampa Bay Florida. All opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of Chapter 787, the VVA State Council, the VVA National or the Chapter members.

You can receive a copy of the OUTPOST each month at no cost. Contact Jon Mueller via e-mail at ParaSF68@aol.com and provide your e-mail address. You will need to have an Adobe Acrobat Reader on your PC to open the newsletter. You can also receive it by US mail. The cost is \$12 per year. Make your check payable to V.V.A. Chapter 787 and mail it to P.O. Box 89247, Tampa Fl. 33689-0404. Make sure you identify the payment for the OUTPOST.

## THE OUTPOST

**Help Your Chapter Grow**  
**Bring a New Member to the Next Chapter Meeting.**  
**Come and Join Us. Give us your Ideas.**

Chapter meetings are held at the Veterans Memorial Park & Museum, 3602 Hwy. 301 N. Tampa Fl. 33619.

### **Contact E-mail Addresses:**

**President** Jim LaGarde:

cLaGarde@tampabay.rr.com

**VP** Carl Harris: c-e-harris@tampabay.rr.com

**Secretary & Treasurer** Bob Silmser:

Rafkirk64@tampabay.rr.com

**State Council Delegate** Kevin Ruhl:

MSgtMCRet@aol.com

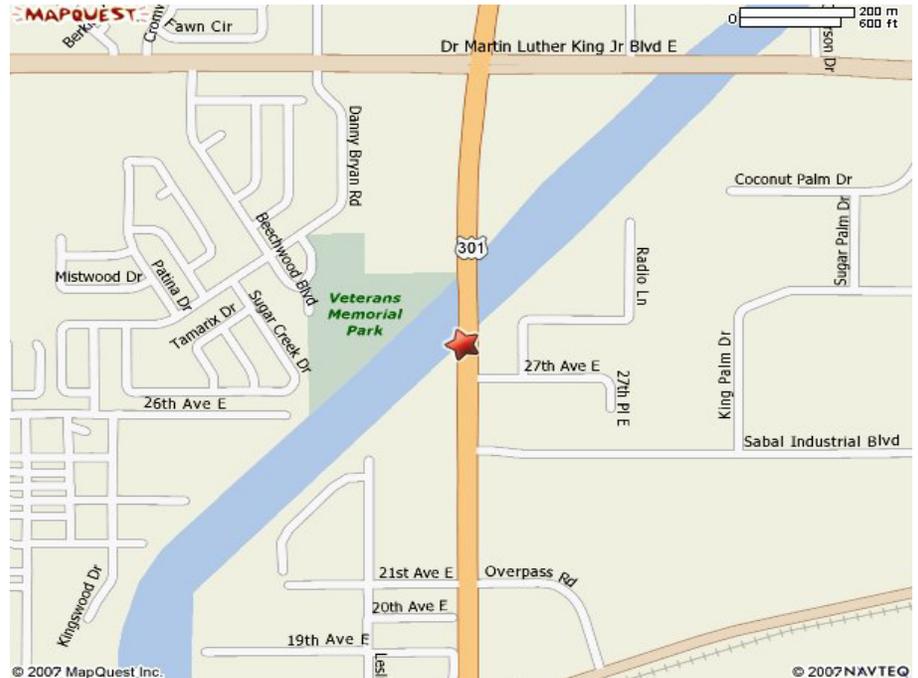
### **Board of Directors**

**Steve Williams:** WilliamsPStv@aol.com

**Kevin Ruhl:** MSgtMCRet@aol.com

**Tom Hall:** MarineDI@aol.com

**Jon Mueller:** ParaSF68@aol.com



## **Important Web Sites**

Vietnam Veterans of American, Chapter 787, Tampa Bay Florida.....	<a href="http://www.vva787.com">http://www.vva787.com</a>
Vietnam War Statistics.....	<a href="http://my.eiis.net/cmart/vietwarstats.html">http://my.eiis.net/cmart/vietwarstats.html</a>
Vietnam, Yesterday & Today.....	<a href="http://servercc.oakton.edu/~wittman/chronol.htm">http://servercc.oakton.edu/~wittman/chronol.htm</a>
Vietnam Veterans Legacy Foundation.....	<a href="http://www.vvlf.org">www.vvlf.org</a>
National League of Families of American POW's/MIA's.....	<a href="http://www.pow-miafamilies.org">www.pow-miafamilies.org</a>
V.V.A. National Office on the World Wide Web.....	<a href="http://www.vva.org">www.vva.org</a>
U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs.....	<a href="http://www.va.gov">www.va.gov</a>
OPM Veterans Hiring Preference.....	<a href="http://www.opm.gov/veterans">www.opm.gov/veterans</a>
Uniformed Services Family Health Plan (USFHP).....	<a href="http://www.usfhp.com">www.usfhp.com</a>
U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.....	<a href="http://www.vetapp.uscourts.gov">www.vetapp.uscourts.gov</a>
Children of Vietnam Vets.....	<a href="http://www.geocities.com/pentagon/9125">www.geocities.com/pentagon/9125</a>
The Center for Women Veterans.....	<a href="http://www.va.gov/womenvet">www.va.gov/womenvet</a>
Vietnam Women Memorial Foundation, Inc (formerly "Project").....	<a href="http://www.vietnamwomensmemorial.org">www.vietnamwomensmemorial.org</a>
The Moving Wall—Vietnam Combat Veterans LTD.....	<a href="http://www.themovingwall.org">www.themovingwall.org</a>
The Virtual Wall.....	<a href="http://www.virtualwall.org">www.virtualwall.org</a>
Get a Copy of your DD-214 on-line.....	<a href="http://www.archives.gov/veterans/evetrecs/index.html">http://www.archives.gov/veterans/evetrecs/index.html</a>
Florida State Council web site.....	<a href="http://www.vvafsc.org">www.vvafsc.org</a>