

Rolling Thunder ® Times

October 2003

National Chapter 1 New Jersey

Volume 8 Issue 10

Rolling Thunder ® National Security update

Rich Trignano is in charge of all Rolling Thunder National Chapter Security. Any issue relating to Security should be directed to Rich.

Jay Fairlamb is the National Chapter Security Coordinator. Rich will consult with Jay if he feels it is necessary.

Memory of "Boots"

The In Memory of Bob "Boots" Berg patches have arrived! The patches are \$8.00 each. They will be available at the October monthly meeting. Please see Fran at the meeting to purchase your.

Upcoming New Jersey Events

October

16th "PTSD ward visit" Lyons VA Hospital 7PM 908-369-5439
19th Rolling Thunder ® National meeting Manville VFW

November

7th & 8th National Convention, HYATT REGENCY HOTEL,
Crystal City, VA
16th Rolling Thunder ® National meeting Manville VFW
20th Nursing home visit Lyons VA Hospital 7PM

December

???? Lyon's VA Holiday celebration
21st Rolling Thunder ® National meeting Manville VFW

**See page 10 of this newsletter for additional
Rolling Thunder ® Runs & Events**

C.O.R.E. Donations Always Needed

Don't forget about the C.O.R.E. Food Pantry Donations. Please bring the items to every monthly meeting. Your support HELPS!

Along with non-perishable food they can also use new or used clothing. Cash also works! Just \$1.00 from each member at each meeting would really help, can you spare it?

Please call Louise Daniels if you have questions about what to bring.

inside...

**Message from the President,
Artie "Dictator" Muller**

In Memory of:

Meeting minutes: No minutes since there was no meeting

**POW Bio's: Donald Gilbert Cook
Recent VA News Releases**

"When one American is not worth the effort to be found, we as Americans have lost"

ROLLING THUNDER®, INC.

Meetings are held on:

3rd Sunday of every month at 1 PM

MEETING LOCATION: VFW South St. Manville NJ
(unless otherwise indicated in the events section)

Board meetings are held at 12:30 PM on the same day as the membership meeting.

**ARTICLES IN THIS NEWSLETTER ARE NOT
NECESSARILY THE VIEWS OR OPINIONS OF
ROLLING THUNDER®, INC.**

To offer information to the newsletter it must be submitted by the 25th of the month to get in the next months newsletter.

Newsletter Publication

“Wings” Larry Spencer 570-879-8891

“Jinx” Lynne Jenks 570-879-8891

Larry Spencer

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Rolling Thunder®, Inc. Mission Statement:

The major function of Rolling Thunder ®, Inc. is to publicize the POW/MIA issue: To educate the public that many American Prisoners of War were left behind after all previous wars, and to help correct the past and to protect future veterans from being left behind should they become Prisoners Of War-Missing In Action. We are also committed to helping American veterans from all wars.

Rolling Thunder ®, Inc. is a non-profit organization and everyone donates his or her time because they believe in the POW-MIA issue that we are working on. All meetings must be orderly and every member must be heard. Everyone is as important as the next. Everyone has different views and we must all work together in an orderly manner.

Every Chapter must have an agenda to run a meeting. Everyone must get their turn to talk about any issue that concerns Rolling Thunder ®, Inc. and its members.

The Constitution and By-Laws of Rolling Thunder, ® Inc. will not be changed or altered by any Chapter and everyone must abide by this constitution. Chapters may have addendum By-Laws for their Chapter only.

President	Artie Muller	908-369-5439
Vice President	Gary Scheffmeyer	908-735-4861
Assistant Vice President	Jay Fairlamb	973-838-8519
Secretary	Anne Nicholson	908-537-7137
Treasurer	Lynne Jenks	570-879-8891
Chairman of the Board		
“Rattle Snake”	Mike Cobb	908-238-1819
Board of Directors		
“Sweet Grandma”	Louise Daniels	302-659-3199
“Rev. Jim”	James Petties	908-231-1434
“Chopper”	Ed Schmidt	973-827-1324
	Lucy Walsh	908-735-8756
“Jarhead	Bob Horne	732-985-0905
“Tiny Bear”	Ron Colangelo	732-968-5658
Alt. Board Members		
“RC”	Elaine Muller	908-369-5439
	Richard Cox	732-878-2114
Chapter attorney	Bob Kuchinsky	908-782-4911
National Service Officer:	Michael DePaulo	508-583-4500 X 1764
Head of Security & Sergeant-at-Arms		
	Rich Trignano	973-697-2290
Security Coordinator		
“Jay”	Jay Fairlamb	973-838-8519
Federal Legislative & Government Affairs		
	Ted Shpak	703-966-9244
Government Relations POW/MIA		
	Hugh Tyndall	973-616-7320
email: FLTRI_98@yahoo.com	www.house.gov and www.senate.gov Washington DC: (202) 224-3121	
Quartermaster		
“RC”	Richard Cox	732-878-2114
“Doc”	Wayne Gadberry	732-821-6348
	Mike Batty	732-557-5161
Membership Committee, Junior Membership, Roster		
“Buns”	Fran Schmidt	973-827-1324
“Chopper”	Ed Schmidt	973-827-1324
Membership FAX number		973-827-1324
Email ID choppernbuns@juno.com		
Korean War Affairs		
	Don Morgan	908-359-7258

Media & Public Relations

Molly Morton 732-339-1320

Sylvia Tagert 732-329-3213

Autumn Ringled 908-227-2976

Run Coordinator

Ron Kmetz 732-888-6013

“Tiny Bear” Ron Colangelo 732-968-5658

tinybear32@yahoo.com

Sunshine Committee

“Tomato”Katie Barna 610-381-4361

Cell/Pager/voice mail 908-797-4140

email: katebarna@yahoo.com

“Arizona” Randy

Chapter Reports, Schedules & Relations

Larry Spencer 570-879-8891

Chapters activity report

“RC” Richard Cox 732-878-2114

Education Committee

Ray Kappel 908-996-0907

Beverly Hall Kappel 908-996-0907

Community Action Assistance Fund

“Sweet Grandma” Louise Daniels 302-659-3199

Gulf War Affairs

“Tiny Bear” Ron Colangelo 732-968-5658

Mike Woods 407-348-6404

Junior Members Committee

Mary Jacobus 908-904-0373

Fran Tomasik 973-764-5238

Rita O’Connor 732-566-3795

Gold Star Mothers Committee

“Huey” Hugh Bremner 908-537-7137

Lyon’s Nursing Home Visits

Lucy Walsh 908-735-8756

wallu@blast.net

Joe Pannachio 973 292-1389

Cell: (973) 219-4088

FLTRI_98@yahoo.com

Color Guard

Ira Drucks 937-994-2963

Don Jupa 732-281-1633

Dear Brothers & Sisters:

I hope this letter finds everyone well and I hope you are enjoying the fall weather. This year seems like it just started and it is almost over. I would like to welcome Chapter 1 Massachusetts, President Spirit Wind and all the new members to Rolling Thunder[®], Inc. Best of luck to your Chapter and we thank all of you for your support. We now have 78 Chartered Chapters in 26 states.

Thanks to Chapter II New Jersey for doing a great job on the Ride For Freedom VIII Run this year. The weather was great for a change and the turnout was excellent. Everyone seemed to be in a really good mood and no one complained about where they rode in the event. Thanks to all the New Jersey Chapters that helped Chapter II and to the VNVMC and Nam Knights for the help they gave. The New Jersey State Troopers and local Police Departments blocked everything off very good for 26 miles of our route. It sure is nice to see everyone work together when we have an event.

Our Christmas Party for the Lyons PTSD ward this year will be December 10th. Don't forget the date, write it down. Our National Convention is at the Hyatt Hotel, Crystal City, Virginia. We will arrive on Thursday, November 6th. Friday morning we will go to Congress and the Senate and then return to the hotel for lunch and conduct classes in the afternoon. Saturday we will have our Convention all day and a dinner in the evening at the hotel. I look forward to seeing everyone and hope everyone has a safe trip there and back.

In the latter part of October I have a meeting scheduled with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Anthony J. Principi. We will talk about problems in the system and other Veterans issues. If any Veteran has any problems they would like addressed please send me a typed, short, to the point letter about the problem; include your name, address and Social Security number. I don't need a long story, I just need the facts.

Remember your Chapter is only as good as the effort you put into it. Our organization is structured much different than others. We do what we do to correct the past if we can and to protect future Veterans so they are never left behind to die in a Prisoner of War Camp and to help all Veterans from all past wars and peace time. We still have no POW/MIAs in Gulf War II (Operation Iraqi Freedom) or the War against Terrorism. We have much legislation that was passed through Congress and the Senate on the POW/MIA issue.

Have a safe month and remember our POW/MIAs from all past wars and think about our troops serving on the battlefields for our Freedom and the Freedom of others. God Bless the United States of America!!

Sincerely,

SGT. Artie "Dictator" Muller



IN MEMORY OF

James Vincent Sacca, 59, Nam Vet, U.S.A., Pittstown
Frederick B. Sommers, 57, Nam Vet, U.S.N, North Plainfield
Larry E. Worth, Jr. 62, Nam Vet, U.S.A.F., Somerville
Earnest R. Niebergall, 58, Nam Vet, U.S.A., Raritan

World War II Remains Recovered and Identified
??????????????

Korean Remains Recovered and Identified
Pfc. Ronald Lilledahl, U.S.M.C., K.I.A. November 28, 1950

Vietnam Remains Recovered and Identified - All were U.S. Navy

CMDR. Delbert Olson, ND
LT. J.G. Denis Anderson, KS
LT. J.G. Arthur Buck, OH
LT. J.G. Philip Stevens, MI
Petty Officer 2nd Class Richard Mancini, NY
Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Roberts, MS
Petty Officer 2nd Class Donald N. Thoresen, MI
Petty Officer 2nd Class Kenneth Widon, MI
Petty Officer 3rd Class Gale Siow, CA

Susan Malone member of Rolling Thunder® Chapter III New Jersey passed away in September 2003. Susan passed away unexpectedly. May she ride in the Heavens above.

Karen Gerhart member of Rolling Thunder® Chapter II New Jersey passed away in September 2003. Karen had been sick for some time. May she ride in the Heavens above.

Brian McCloskey member of Rolling Thunder® Chapter 1 New York was killed in a bike accident in August 2003. May he ride free in the Heavens above.

Robert Morgan, son of Don and Lois Morgan National Members passed away in September 2003. Robert will be missed by all who knew him. May he ride free in the Heavens above.

Our respect to all family and friends. May our Brothers and Sisters be at Peace with the Lord. May those who served Honorably Rest in Peace in the soil they fought for Freedom for all. Those who remain Prisoners of War / Missing in Action, body not recoverable, "We Will Never Forget You."

WHEN ONE AMERICAN IS NOT WORTH THE EFFORT
TO BE FOUND, WE AS AMERICANS HAVE LOST.

Meeting Minutes Briefs September 2003 meeting

There are no minutes since there was no September meeting.

NEW DELHI, July 18 (AFP) - The Indian government has released two Chinese soldiers 41 years after they were captured during a bloody border war between the Asian giants, a senior diplomat told AFP Friday.

The Asian diplomat said Yung Chialung, 61, and Sui Lang, 65, were handed over to Chinese officials July 8 at a state-owned psychiatric institution in the eastern city of Ranchi where they were incarcerated eight years after the 1962 war. Yung and Sui are believed to be the last prisoners held by either country following the border war. 'The pair are already back in their homes in Sichuan province in southern China,' the New Delhi-based diplomat said on condition of anonymity. 'Both India and China had agreed that the handover of the two will remain a secret,' the official said.

Yung and Sui, low-ranking soldiers of the the Chinese People's Liberation Army, were taken prisoner in India's North Eastern Frontier Area after a battle that gave the Indian army a bloody nose.

The POWs were first sent to the maximum-security prison of Tihar in New Delhi and then shunted to another prison and finally were lodged at the fortified facility in Ranchi in 1970.

The diplomatic source said the final agreement to release the two reclusive POWs was reached during Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's six-day historic visit to China last month.

An Indian government source confirmed their handover.

'They were handed over to Chinese diplomats who travelled to Ranchi on July 6 and two days later they flew back to China,' a highly-placed Indian government source said in New Delhi.

'Now there is not a single Chinese POW in India and as far as we can tell there are no Indian POWs in China,' the official added.

The diplomat said the release of the two POWs, who spent 41 years in seclusion due to a language barrier, was taken up seriously only two years ago by the present Chinese ambassador to India, Hua Junduo.

'When Hua came to India two years ago and presented his credentials he came to know about the plight of the two prisoners. He was dismayed and worried and decided to take up the issue with the Indian government,' the diplomat said.

'The ambassador deputed diplomats to work on this human issue and then Mr. Vajpayee's talks in China seem to have acted as the final measure which led to their freedom,' the diplomat said. Yung and Sui gave their only known interview three years ago to an AFP correspondent, communicating in sign language inside Ranchi's Central Institute of Psychiatry (CIP).

The prisoners spoke of their loneliness at being stuck in a ward full of mentally challenged people in the 10-minute interview which was abruptly cut short by CIP security guards. During their incarceration, the pair communicated only with doctors but maintained a distance with others and declined to talk to military intelligence agents who tried questioning them through interpreters, CIP sources said.

'No one is certain if there were any special charges against them because everything is so remotely distant now,' the Indian source said.

China and India appear to have sorted out their differences over Chinese-ruled Tibet and the Indian state of Sikkim during Vajpayee's trip and are now approaching talks on persistent border disputes. India accuses China of occupying 38,000 square kilometres (14,670 square miles) of territory in Kashmir while Beijing lays claim to 90,000 square kilometres (34,750 square miles) -- virtually all -- of Arunachal Pradesh, the scene of the war.

Sincerely,
Jay Veith
Phone: 610-859-0650
Fax: 267-200-0959
jay.veith@thomson.com

DONALD GILBERT COOK

Name: Donald Gilbert Cook
Rank/Branch: O3/US Marine Corps
Unit: COMMCO, 3rd Marine Division
Date of Birth: 09 August 1934 (Brooklyn NY)
Home City of Record: Essex Junction VT (also listed in some places as New York NY and Burlington VT)
Date of Loss: 31 December 1964
Country of Loss: South Vietnam
Loss Coordinates: 104517N 1073622E (YS850900)
Status (in 1973): Prisoner of War
Category: 1
Acft/Vehicle/Ground: Ground
Refno: 0050
Other Personnel In Incident: (none missing)
REMARKS: ON PRG DIC LIST 671208
Source: Compiled from one or more of the following: raw data from U.S. Government agency sources, correspondence with POW/MIA families, published sources, interviews. Updated by the P.O.W. NETWORK in 2001.

SYNOPSIS: Donald Cook was an advisor to the 4th Battalion, Vietnamese Marine Corps operating in the Delta when they engaged the enemy on New Year's Eve, 1964. Cook was wounded in the leg during the battle and subsequently captured by the Viet Cong. Cook was then 30 years old.

During his years of captivity in camps north of Saigon, Cook set an example difficult to emulate by his fellow POWs. He jeopardized his own health and well-being by sharing his already meager supply of food and scarce medicines with other prisoners who were more ill than he. According to one released POW, Cook was so hard-nosed that he "would have stopped shitting if he had thought Charlie was using it for fertilizer." Cook became nearly legendary in his refusal to betray the Military Code of Conduct.

Air Force Colonel Norman Gaddis, upon his return from captivity, described the impossible task of adhering to the Code of Conduct. Gaddis said that he did not know anyone who had refused to cooperate with their captives after having been tortured to do so, and those who had refused were "not with us today." Cook refused to cooperate with his captors in any way. On one occasion, a pistol was put to his head as a threat to cooperate. Cook calmly recited the nomenclature of the parts of the pistol. He would give them nothing.

According to the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) list provided to the U.S. in Paris in 1973, Donald Cook died of malaria in South Vietnam on December 8, 1967 while being moved from one camp to another. The Vietnamese provided this information to the U.S. in 1973, but have not yet "discovered" the location of his remains. For his extraordinary actions during his captivity, Donald Cook was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, and has been promoted to the rank of Colonel. Alive or dead, Donald Cook is still a prisoner of war.

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Medal of Honor

COOK, DONALD GILBERT

Rank and organization: Colonel, United States Marine Corps. Prisoner of War by the Viet Cong in the Republic of Vietnam

Place and date: Vietnam, 31 December, 1964 to 8 December, 1967 Entered service at: Brooklyn, New York

Born: 9 August 1934, Brooklyn, New York

Citation: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while interned as a Prisoner of War by the Viet Cong in the Republic of Vietnam during the period 31 December 1964 to 8 December 1967. Despite the fact that by so doing he would bring about harsher treatment for himself, Colonel (then Captain) Cook established himself as the senior prisoner, even though in actuality he was not. Repeatedly assuming more than his share of harsh treatment, Colonel Cook willingly and unselfishly put the interests of his comrades before that of his own well-being and, eventually, his life. Giving more needy men his medicine and drug allowance while constantly nursing them, he risked infection from contagious diseases while in a rapidly deteriorating state of health. This unselfish and exemplary conduct, coupled with his refusal to stray even the slightest from the Code of Conduct, earned him the deepest respect from not only his fellow prisoners, but his captors as well. Rather than negotiate for his own release or better treatment, he steadfastly frustrated attempts by the Viet Cong to break his indomitable spirit, and passed this same resolve on to the men whose well-being he so closely associated himself. Knowing his refusals would prevent his release prior to the end of the war, and also knowing his chances for prolonged survival would be small in the event of continued refusal, he chose nevertheless to adhere to a Code of Conduct far above that which could be expected. His personal valor and exceptional spirit of loyalty in the face of almost certain death reflected the highest credit upon Colonel Cook, the Marine Corps. and the United States Naval Service.

Defense POW/MIA Weekly Update
February 26, 1999

NAVY COMMISSIONS SHIP TO HONOR POW

Aegis Guided Missile Destroyer Donald Cook (DDG 75) was commissioned in December in Philadelphia.

Gen. Henry H. Shelton, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, was the ceremony's principal speaker. Lorette Cook, widow of the ship's namesake, is the ship's sponsor. In the time-honored Navy tradition, Mrs. Cook gave the order to "man our ship and bring her to life!"

The ship honors Col. Donald G. Cook, US Marine Corps (1934-1967), who was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for gallantry as a prisoner of war. While assigned to the Communications Company, Headquarters Battalion, 3rd

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(Continued from page 7)

Marine Division in Saigon, Republic of Vietnam, in Dec. 1964, Cook volunteered to conduct a search and recovery mission for a downed American helicopter. Ambushed on arrival at the site, he was wounded in the leg and captured.

Despite enduring deprivation, exposure, malnutrition and disease, Cook committed himself to providing inspiration for his fellow prisoners to endure and survive during his incarceration in a prison camp near the Cambodian border. Resisting all attempts to break his will, he never veered from the Code of Conduct. He shared food, led daily exercises, provided first aid for injured prisoners and distributed what meager quantities of medicine were available, often surrendering his own rations and medicine to aid fellow prisoners whose conditions were more serious than his own. Reports indicate Cook died in captivity after he succumbed to malaria on Dec. 8, 1967.

Donald Cook is the 25th of 51 Arleigh Burke class destroyers currently authorized by Congress. The destroyer carries Tomahawk cruise missiles, as well as Standard missiles to intercept hostile aircraft and missiles at extended ranges. Donald Cook is also equipped with the Phalanx Close-In Weapons System and Harpoon anti-ship cruise missiles, which are fired from stand-alone launchers.

Donald Cook is crewed by 25 officers and 350 enlisted personnel. The ship was built at Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine, is 505 feet in length, has a waterline beam of 66 feet and displaces approximately 8,580 tons when fully loaded. Four gas-turbine engines power the ship to speeds in excess of 30 knots.



A Rolling Thunder member from Ohio shows his support for POW Donald Cook. Any idea who this person is? A hint, he attended the very 1st Rolling Thunder meeting in Flemington NJ January 1996. Give up? The answer is below.

Bob O'Leary

September 2003 REPORT ON PAST ROLLING THUNDER® INC. CHAPTER EVENTS

- Chapter 2 Indiana July picnic at the VA Hospital was a success! Sixty-five volunteers served 198 patients. All had a good time.
- Chapter 3 Indiana September 13th POW / MIA National Recognition Day ceremony at the Veteran's National Shrine on O'Day Road.
- Chapter 1 Iowa May 17th Iowa Thunder Memorial Ride to honor all veterans to begin in Des Moines.
- Chapter 1 Kentucky September 13th Poker Run and Pig Roast at Johnson's home (Beverly Johnson is a Board Member)
- Chapter 2 Kentucky August 17th Toys for Kids ... 6th Annual Motorcycle Show, Poker Run and Car Show in Lexington, KY.
- Chapter 3 Michigan September 6th First Annual Michigan Chapter 3 Rolling Thunder® Memorial Run for deceased members.
- Chapter 4 Michigan September 20th Fifth Annual Michigan Remembers POW / MIA personnel from all wars. Staging locations throughout the state and/or in Lansing, the state capital.
- Chapter 1 New Hampshire July The 8th Annual Rolling Thunder® Cross Border Run was held. Visiting our French Quebec and Mohawk Brothers north of the border for their sacrifice made during the Vietnam War. Also present were Maine, National and Chapter 2 New Jersey members.
- Chapter 1 New Jersey (National) August 24th Annual Barbeque Picnic at Lyon's VA Hospital was a huge success!! Growing every year...over 500 people were served.
- Chapter 2 New Jersey September 21st Great weather brought out many bikes, etc., for another successful "Ride for Freedom" VIII.
- Chapter 3 New Jersey August 17th "Poker Run"
- Chapter 2 North Carolina September 27th Salisbury VA Hospital cookout.
- Chapter 1 Ohio August The Brecksville Vet Center picnics were well received and a good time was had by all.
- Chapter 2 Ohio August 24th Fifth Annual "Thunder Run"...all proceeds to benefit veteran issues.
- Chapter 4 Ohio July 27th Fourth Annual "Rolling Thunder® Freedom Run" was a success. The Korean War veterans were very appreciative of the procession past their Memorial in Austintown that day.
- Chapter 5 Ohio September 6th Third Annual Rolling Thunder® Memorial Run was held.
- Ohio - All Chapters September 28th State meeting - not a general meeting
- Chapter 1 Pennsylvania September 5th -7th Philadelphia Stand Down (2003) at Lighthowe Field. A good time was shared by all helping others down but not out. Thanks to Sandy and Joe for heading it up and all members that participated.
- Chapter 2 Pennsylvania September 14th Wilkes Barre VA Hospital Run
- Chapter 3 Pennsylvania July 20th Salute to Veterans Ride.
September 21st Run to Wilkes Barre VA Hospital.
- Chapter 4 Pennsylvania September 20th Freedom Run from Monroeville to Point State Park for VVI's
- Pennsylvania - All Chapters July 12th State Meeting and Ride to Altoona.
- Chapter 2 Virginia September 14th Hampton Roads Freedom Run V.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Richard Cox

Chapter Newsletter Reports

Rolling Thunder® Inc., National Chapter 1 New Jersey

ROLLING THUNDER® INC. Event Schedule 2003

- September 5,6&7 Philadelphia Stand Down 2003, Lighthouse Field, Philadelphia, PA
September 14 **Chapter 3 VIRGINIA** "RICHMOND VA HOSPITAL PICNIC" 703-494-6705
September 14 **Chapter 2 PA** "WILKES BARRE VA HOSPITAL RUN" 610-262-6565
September 18 **National Chapter**
"Nursing home visit " Lyons VA Hospital 7PM 908-369-5439
September 19 National POW/MIA Recognition Day
September 21 **Chapter 2 NJ** "RIDE FOR FREEDOM VIII" 732-657-0583
- October 16 **National Chapter**
"PTSD ward visit" Lyons VA Hospital 7PM 908-369-5439
- November 7 & 8 National Convention, HYATT REGENCY HOTEL, Crystal City, VA**
908-369-5439
- November 20 **National Chapter**
"Nursing home visit " Lyons VA Hospital 7PM 908-369-5439

Event Schedule 2004

- June 27, 2004 Chapter 3 VA Richmond VA hospital picnic
July 18th **Chapter 3 PA** "SALUTE TO VETERANS RIDE" 570-842-7564
September 18, 2004 POW/MIA Awareness Run in National D-Day Memorial in Bedford Virginia (Tri-State includes Virginia, West Virginia and North Carolina)

Per the Rolling Thunder ® Constitution:

Coordination of Rolling Thunder® Events

No chapter will have an event or run on the same weekend as another Rolling Thunder® Inc. Chapter within a radius of 300 miles. The 300- mile regulation may be re-evaluated by National, upon request of a chapter and a "Special Circumstances" explanation must accompany the request. When a chapter is notified by National to change the date of their event or run they must do so immediately.

Please submit your plans for 2004 runs as soon as possible. This should help eliminate the need to "Change the date of your event".

**To submit an event for this page please contact:
Larry Spencer Chapter Reports Officer
Rolling Thunder® Inc. National Chapter 1 NJ**

**National Alliance of Families
For The Return of America's Missing Servicemen
World War II - Korea - Cold War - Vietnam - Gulf War**

Dolores Alfond - 425-881-1499

Lynn O'Shea --- 718-846-4350

Web Site <http://www.nationalalliance.org>

email -- lynn@nationalalliance.org

Please log on to www.nationalalliance.org to see the latest Bits-n-Pieces and other important POW information.

Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Arlen Specter held an emergency hearing on September 24, 2003, to hear testimony regarding the House majority leadership plan to discontinue granting service connection for all disabilities except those that directly result from the performance of job-related tasks of a service-members military occupation. All the veterans service organizations testifying strongly and uniformly opposed such change in benefit eligibility.

Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Anthony Principi testified that VA estimates approximately two-thirds of all current service-connected disabled veterans would not be eligible for service connection if this proposed new standard were applied to them. The plan by the House majority leadership would make the new restrictions on service connection apply to all new claims for service connection and all claims for increased compensation, including all claims for increased compensation by veterans currently service connected. The House majority leadership proposed this plan as a way to drastically reduce spending on compensation and other benefits provided to veterans on account of service-connected disabilities to use the savings to pay for legislation authorizing concurrent receipt of military retired pay and disability compensation. All the veterans organizations testified in full support of concurrent receipt but condemned this plan to pay for it by denying any increase in disability benefits to the majority of todays veterans and by denying all benefits for service connection to the majority of tomorrows veterans.

Unfortunately, we have seen correspondence from some in military associations who vocally support trading away the rights of two-thirds of tomorrows veterans in exchange for concurrent receipt. Such divisive self-serving moves endanger the unity of the military and veterans communities and threaten to reduce our combined lobbying strength. In addition, those who support the sacrifice of benefits of two-thirds of tomorrows veterans for concurrent receipt for todays military retirees do not seem to understand that two-thirds of todays military retirees who do not already receive the maximum compensation available under law would also be adversely affected in that they could not get increased disability evaluations if less than 100% and, even if already 100%, could not get compensation in addition to the 100% rating under special statutory awards for such things as service-connected anatomical loss or loss of use of extremities, blindness, housebound status, and need of aid and attendance, etc. These disabled military retirees would also be denied such ancillary VA benefits as the automobile allowance, specially adapted housing, and nursing home care, etc., unless they could prove that their service-connected disabilities were caused by the direct performance of military duties. In addition, two-thirds of our sons and daughters who will be tomorrows military retirees will also be denied all these service-connected benefits. The DAV supports ending the unjust prohibition against concurrent receipt for all disabled military longevity retirees, but we adamantly oppose trading away the benefits of two-thirds of our disabled veterans and military retirees for concurrent receipt. The DAV works to build better lives for all disabled veterans and their families.

Please click here: http://www.dav.org/voters/statement_surratt_092303.html to read DAVs September 23, 2003, testimony before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. We urge you to continue your grassroots efforts to defeat this proposal to greatly limit service connection and to get legislation authorizing concurrent receipt of military retired pay and disability compensation.

**Newly appointed
Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs NYC
Director of Veterans Affairs
Ms. Clarice Joynes**

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg has appointed Ms. Clarice Joynes to be the Director of Veterans Affairs NYC (MOVA - Mayors Office of Veterans Affairs).

Ms. Joynes is a former USMC veteran from NYC, and has been instrumental in MOVA since 1988 from her post as Office Manager, to Deputy Director MOVA for the last 5 years.

All of us here at the United War Veterans of NYC, and many other veterans chapters rallied our vote of approval to Mayor Bloomberg to make this selection - each day witnessing her care, expertise and professionalism in dealing with veterans issues.

Clarice is warmly welcomed to post as the Director of Veterans Affairs, Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs NYC. You have our full support in your future endeavors of and from your new post, and extend to you every courtesy.

Our beloved Mike Handy can rest well knowing MOVA is in very competent hands.

Patrick Gualtieri
Executive Director
United War Veterans Council NYC, Inc.

Ps: Clarice Joynes
Director of Veterans Affairs NYC
cjoynes@cityhall.nyc.gov

+++++

Dr. Leo Mackay Steps Down as VA Deputy Secretary

WASHINGTON (September 15, 2003) - Dr. Leo S. Mackay Jr. announced his resignation today as the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), effective September 30.

"Dr. Mackay brought to VA the discipline of the business world and the compassion of a man who cares deeply for America's veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi. "His legacy is a more-focused VA better able to meet the needs of veterans."

Mackay was confirmed by the Senate on May 24, 2001, for VA's second-highest post. He oversaw the day-to-day operations of the department, which has a budget of nearly \$60 billion and 224,000 employees.

"VA continues to be recognized inside and outside government as a leader in integrated health care, research, patient safety and environmental stewardship," Mackay said.

Among his accomplishments are the establishment of a Joint Executive Committee with the Department of Defense to coordinate senior-level policies, strengthening of a "national shrine commitment" to improve VA-run national cemeteries, and improvements in the department's procurement, finance and computer-based operations.

"It is with a degree of sadness but an immense pride in the accomplishments of the Department of Veterans

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Affairs that I announce my resignation," Mackay added. "It has been my sublime honor to serve President Bush, Secretary Principi - a veteran's veteran - my fellow veterans and America's citizens."

Mackay has accepted a position with ACS, Inc., of Dallas. The firm provides business process and information technology outsourcing services. He will assume a senior executive position in its health care solutions business in Atlanta.

A graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and the Navy's "Top Gun" training program, Mackay was a vice president of Bell Helicopter Textron before coming to VA.

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VA Launches New Minority Research Training Efforts

WASHINGTON (Sept. 15, 2003) - In a move to strengthen the contributions of minority researchers to biomedical and clinical research, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced several new efforts to increase scientific career opportunities for under-represented minorities.

"By opening up more opportunities in VA research to minority health care professionals, we're ensuring that veterans will continue to be served by the best this country has to offer," said Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. Leo S. Mackay Jr.

With an overall goal of enhancing research opportunities for minorities and increasing funding for minority-serving institutions, the initiative calls for three new mentoring programs:

- * Supporting institutional collaborations between VA and minority-serving institutions, involving students and faculty from these institutions partnered with VA mentors.
- * Providing applied training in research on VA-funded projects to participants ranging from high school students and college undergraduates, to graduates and pre-doctoral students.
- * Offering a supportive career path for mentored research within VA for people who have completed their clinical fellowships or doctoral training within the last two years. The program provides a full salary to awardees for three years.

Mackay noted that VA's new mentor programs are modeled after successful programs offered by the National Institutes of Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The mentoring programs will partner VA medical centers with historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and other institutions with sizeable concentrations of Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, native Hawaiians and Alaska natives.

Projected to cost about \$6 million annually, the program is scheduled to begin in April 2004.

"We believe VA research programs can be enhanced nationally by engaging the leadership of minority-serving institutions, foundations, professional societies and the VA research community," Mackay said.

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Veterans Showcase Talent at National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

WASHINGTON (Sept. 16, 2003) - Veterans from across the country will be in Oklahoma City, Oct. 6-12, for the 2003 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. The festival is the culmination of a year-long fine arts competition open to all veterans receiving care at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities.

"The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival demonstrates that healing goes well beyond a person's physical recovery. Creative arts therapy plays an important role in the rehabilitation of the mind as well as the spirit," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi.

"VA is proud to give veterans the opportunity to develop their artistic talents, while improving their overall health and well-being," Principi said. "Helping them live rich, fulfilling and meaningful lives after trauma or disease is what this Festival is all about."

At the 2003 Festival, more than 120 talented veterans, first-place winners selected from nearly 3,000 competitors nationwide, will be in Oklahoma City for a week of workshops and rehearsals. The week will culminate on Sunday, Oct. 12, with a stage show and art exhibit at the Rose State College Performing Arts Center in Midwest City, Okla.

Beginning at 2 p.m., the music, drama and dance performers will showcase their talent at the stage show, accompanied by a professional orchestra. Artists will exhibit their work in the lobby of the Rose State College Performing Arts Center after the stage show.

The festival is co-sponsored by VA, the American Legion Auxiliary and Help Hospitalized Veterans. This year it is hosted by the Oklahoma City VA Medical Center.

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Micronesian Soldier Wounded in Iraq Becomes U.S. Citizen

WASHINGTON (Sept. 17, 2003) - Veterans Affairs Secretary Anthony J. Principi took part in a special ceremony today making Army Specialist Hilario Bermanis of the 82nd Airborne Division a U.S. citizen.

"This young soldier serves as a true example of sacrifice to a nation that today he can call his own," Principi said. "He gave of himself so that others could have a better tomorrow. The Department of Veterans Affairs will be there for Specialist Bermanis and thousands of other brave men and women returning home from harm's way."

Bermanis lost both legs and his left hand during an attack on June 10 in Baghdad while he and a fellow soldier, who was killed instantly, were guarding a weapons turn-in point. He was awarded the Bronze Star for his conduct in action and a Purple Heart for his injuries.

A citizen of the Federated States of Micronesia, Bermanis enlisted in the Army three years ago. Today, his parents and five-year-old brother witnessed the oath ceremony at Walter Reed Army Medical Center along with Secretary Principi; Secretary Tom Ridge of the Department of Homeland Defense; and Peter M. Christian, speaker of the Micronesian Congress. Maj. Gen. Kevin C. Kiley, Walter Reed commander, also attended.

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On July 3, 2002, President Bush issued Executive Order 13269 providing naturalization for aliens and non-citizen nationals serving on active duty in the U.S. armed forces during Operation Enduring Freedom, from September 11, 2001, to a date not yet determined.

September 17 was designated Citizenship Day in 1952 by President Harry Truman. The anniversary was established to focus on the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizens, both native-born and naturalized.

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VA Seeks Former POWs For Possible Benefits

WASHINGTON (Sept. 19, 2003) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is asking former prisoners of war not currently using VA benefits to contact VA to find out if they may be eligible for disability compensation and other services.

More than 23,000 former prisoners of war (POWs) already receive compensation from VA. This year, the department mailed information about benefits to another 4,700 known ex-POWs not on its rolls. However, VA estimates there could be as many as 11,000 more POWs for whom it does not have an address.

Today, on National POW-MIA Recognition Day, VA is asking former POWs not receiving benefits who did not receive a VA letter recently to call the department at 1-800-827-1000.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi said VA has expanded policies to cover increasing numbers of former POWs as new illnesses have been found related to captivity. The administration currently is pressing to get even more compensation and medical care benefits for former POWs.

"These veterans sacrificed for their country in time of war, and it's the nation's turn to serve them, to help them determine if they are entitled to compensation, health care or other services," Principi said.

Nine out of ten former POWs are veterans of World War II, and their service predates the use of Social Security numbers as a military "service number." That, coupled with the decades that have elapsed since their service, makes it difficult for VA to track down those who have not opened a file with VA in recent years.

"On this POW-MIA Recognition Day, VA is asking veterans and all Americans who know of a former POW to help spread the word that benefits and services may be just a phone call away," Principi said.

The most recent expansion of VA benefits for former POWs was a July regulation that added cirrhosis of the liver to the list of diseases to which entitlement to disability compensation is presumed in former POWs.

Similar policies making it easier for former POWs to obtain compensation have been enacted for POWs detained for 30 days or more who develop specific illnesses.

Former POWs have a special eligibility for enrollment in VA medical care and are exempt from making copayments for inpatient and outpatient medical care. They have the same copay rules as other veterans for medications and for extended care. Free dental treatment for any dental condition is available to former POWs held for more than 90 days.

More information about VA services for former POWs is available at <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Benefits/POW/>.

Fundraising Complete for Vietnam Veterans Plaque

Championed by Gallegly

Memorial Expected To Be Installed by Year's End

WASHINGTON, D.C.-Fundraising has been completed for the construction of a plaque to honor Vietnam veterans who died after war but are ineligible to be on the Vietnam War Memorial. The plaque is expected to be installed near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial by the end of the year.

The Vietnam Veterans plaque was created under legislation introduced and championed by Congressman Elton Gallegly (R-Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties, CA). Gallegly's bill mandated that the plaque be designed, created and installed with private funds. Last week, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund pledged \$50,000 to complete the fundraising. Previously, Harley-Davidson committed \$50,000 to the project and \$30,000 has been raised through private donations.

"Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of men and women served with great honor for America and had their lives cut short because of it. I am thankful that soon the families of those veterans will have a place in our nation's capital where their loved one's sacrifice is honored and recognized for future generations," Gallegly said.

Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell (R-Colorado) guided Gallegly's bill through the Senate. Both chambers passed the bill without dissent. President Clinton signed Gallegly's bill on June 15, 2000.

Although the Department of Defense adds some names to the Vietnam War Memorial each year, it does not recognize many conditions as being service-related, such as Agent Orange exposure and post traumatic stress syndrome. The plaque created by Gallegly's bill would honor all whose deaths are not otherwise recognized by the monument.

The design, inscription and siting of the plaque was approved by the National Capital Memorial Commission, the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission. The memorial plaque will consist of a 2- by 3-foot gray granite plaque, to be set flush into an extension of the existing plaza where the Three Servicemen statue stands, with views toward the Wall and the Vietnam Women's Memorial. The inscription will read:

IN MEMORY OF THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED IN THE VIETNAM WAR AND LATER DIED AS A RESULT OF THEIR SERVICE WE HONOR AND REMEMBER THEIR SACRIFICE.

Vietnam Veterans of Ventura County Inc. is among the groups who endorsed the concept of the plaque. Other groups include: the Vietnam Veterans of America; Veterans of Foreign Wars; AMVETS; Vietnam Women's Memorial Inc.; Rolling Thunder; The Korean War Veterans Association; the National Congress of American Indians; the National Conference of Viet Nam Veteran Ministers; The Vietnam War In Memory Memorial Inc.; the Society of the 173D Airborne Brigade; the Agent Orange Widows Awareness Coalition; American Gold Star Mothers; and Veterans of the Vietnam War Inc.

In addition, the House Resources Committee, of which Gallegly is a senior member, on Wednesday, will consider the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitor Center Act, which would authorize the design and construction of a visitor center for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

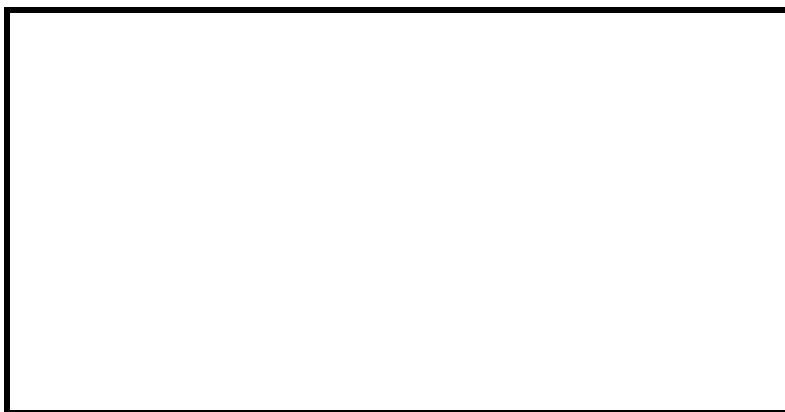
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POW/MIA "WE WILL NEVER FORGET"

"When one American is not worth the effort to be found, we as Americans have lost"