



Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vvachapter1.com

OCTOBER 2007



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING

Oct. 10, 2007

Three members attended. Also attending was John Miner, president of the VVA State Council and president of Bennington's VVA Chapter 601.

The minutes of the September meeting were unanimously approved as printed in the newsletter.

Dave Mathis presented the treasurer's report showing a total of \$16,210.28 in the chapter's two accounts. The report was unanimously approved.

Service officer Richard Reed of the Vermont Office of Veterans Affairs will be in Rutland Oct. 23 to help vets with VA benefits. Any vet interested in seeing Richard can call 802-828-3379 with questions or to make an appointment. Or you can e-mail him at richard.reed@state.vt.us.

A.J. Paige, one of four VVA service officers, asked if Chapter 1 would assist in putting on a Benefits Fair Nov. 24 at the VFW, where Chapter 1 has its offices. After some discussion, we agreed to host the fair. There will be no cost to the chapter, other than for refreshments.

As discussion revealed, veterans are eligible for a variety of benefits, including compensation for service-related injuries or illness, general health care, burial assistance and more, depending on various criteria.

Here are the essentials for the Benefits Fair:

BENEFITS FAIR

Purpose: To assist any veteran (not just Vietnam era vets) with signing up for and obtaining VA benefits; to answer questions about VA programs and benefits; to offer help with filling out forms.

Time: Saturday, Nov. 24, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the VFW in Rutland, 15 Wales St. General information will be provided at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., with sit-down sessions to follow.

Staffing: As many as five service officers will be on hand to assist.

Bill Petrics, social studies chair at Otter Valley Union High School, requested a speaker for Nov. 9 in the school's observance of Veterans Day. Any Vietnam vet interested in speaking about their service can

contact chapter President Andy Megrath at 775-1745 or e-mail him at vthogman@comcast.net. The school needs someone to talk for 20-25 minutes.

VVA State Council President John Miner made a request for help for support of the VVA service officer program, which now includes four service officers. The service officers, which will participate in the Nov. 24 Benefits Fair, help vets deal with the VA in obtaining benefits. None of the service officers is paid, although they may be reimbursed for costs for postage, travel and training.

The VVA service officer program started in 1999. The Vietnam Veterans Assistance Fund of the national VVA organization supports the program at a level of \$5,000, and the state of Vermont has been matching that. Now, with four service officers, the program will have increased costs. In response, the Vietnam Veterans Assistance Fund has increased its grant to \$10,000, meaning the match in Vermont needs to increase by that much. Miner has appealed to the Vermont VVA chapters to help meet that increase of \$5,000 in the match. Several chapters have pledged money, some of which has gone to supply the four service officers with laptops and printers for their work.

“This year alone, I think A.J.'s going to top \$2 million in returns,” Miner said in citing the effectiveness of the service officer program. The figure refers to the amount of benefits paid to veterans whose claims have been handled by the service officer. “The success rate is tremendous, and I think it’ll continue.” Miner noted that while the VVA service officers operate “in the field,” the other veterans organization service officers are based in White River Junction, where the VA is located, and don’t travel around the state. The VVA service officers handle claims of non-Vietnam era vets and have handled a lot of Gulf War and Iraq war claims, Miner said.

Jack Crowther moved to donate \$1,000 to support the service officer program. Seconded by Dave Mathis. Approved unanimously.

In other business, Tony Romeo of the Rutland County Veterans Council requested money from the chapter for the purchase of a giant American flag for display at special events. Noting there are four other veterans service organizations in the city, Jack Crowther moved to donate one-fifth of the cost of the flag, up to \$200 (for a \$1,000 flag). The cost of the flag was not stated. Seconded by Mo Burden. Passed unanimously.

On Oct. 27, there will be a service at the Vietnam memorial in Vermont to commemorate the 25th anniversary. The event will take place at the Sharon rest area on Interstate 89. Coming from the south, you travel past the Sharon exit to reach the rest area. The tentative program runs from 1 p.m. to 2:40 p.m. Featured speakers include Gov. Jim Douglas, Sen. Bernie Sanders and Rep. Peter Welch. Tentatively scheduled is Gen. Richard Cody, vice chief of staff of the Army, a Montpelier native.

A book titled The Wall commemorating the 25 years of the Vietnam War memorial in Washington, D.C., will soon be available for \$10 each, with discounts for orders of more than 10. Shipping is \$2.95, with reduced rates for multiple orders. The book is put out by Boston Publishing and will include many of the famous photographs published in the publisher’s notable book series, The Vietnam Experience. Anyone wishing to order the book can contact Andy Megrath at 775-1745 or e-mail him at vthogman@comcast.net. Proceeds go to various VVA causes.

President Andy Megrath has agreed to serve as the Chapter 1 representative to the VVA State Council, which has not had a regular representative from our chapter of late. The council meets four times a year in White River Junction. Jack Crowther moved that Andy be appointed as a representative to the State

Council. Seconded by Dave Mathis. Approved unanimously.

We approved a motion to reimburse Andy \$30 per meeting for expenses. Chapter 1 is entitled to three representatives to the State Council. Anyone willing to serve with Andy should contact him to volunteer.

Submitted by Jack Crowther, Secretary

**THE NEXT CHAPTER MEETING WILL BE WEDNESDAY. NOV. 14, AT 6 P.M. AT THE
CHAPTER OFFICE AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND, VT**