



Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

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AUGUST 2008



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING

August 13, 2008

Six members attended, as well as Ed Wiehe from North Clarendon, who is in the process of joining.

The secretary's report was accepted as printed in the newsletter.

Treasurer Dave Mathis reported a total of \$15,571.70 in the chapter's accounts. The report was unanimously accepted.

President Andy Megrath reported the chapter has 138 regular members and three associate members, including 82 life members.

Ted Stachulski of Williamstown, a veterans advocate focused on traumatic brain injury, spoke to us, as he did a year ago, about his efforts to increase awareness of TBI, which he described as "one of the signature wounds in the war in Iraq and Afghanistan." A former Marine and veteran of the first Iraq War, Stachulski himself suffered traumatic brain injury, though not during military service. His own experiences in coping with the effects of TBI have led him to become active in this field. He also serves as a veterans outreach specialist for the Brain Injury Association of Vermont and serves on the Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board for Vermont. His work involves providing education, information, referral and training services related to traumatic brain injury.

Ted came seeking scholarship help for veterans to attend Vermont's 20th Annual Brain Injury Conference Oct. 29 in Burlington. He was at the meeting on his "own time" and "own dime" as a volunteer for the conference planning committee." Last year veterans from Rutland, Colchester, Middlebury, Enosburg Falls, Winooski, Northfield, Jericho, Hancock, Randolph, Johnson, Barre, Bennington, and Williston attended, and he was able to use all 10 scholarships provided by Chapter 1.

Stachulski said the Veterans Administration office in White River Junction will not provide numbers of TBI patients. In 2006, however, he knows that 10 veterans went through the assessment, diagnosis and treatment phase and then on to the "long and laborious compensation phase."

"I can tell you that number is going to skyrocket for 2007 and 2008," he said. Traumatic injury support groups are the central part of his work. Stachulski said a recurring theme is that veterans are "not screened, or improperly screened, misdiagnosed and falling through every single crack that could possibly happen."

Following Ted's presentation, Dave Mathis moved to support Stachulski and the Brain Injury Conference

by providing \$350 for 10 scholarships for veterans to attend. The veteran must pay the additional \$15 for the \$50 admission cost. Seconded by Mo Burden. Passed unanimously.

Ted left three of the looseleaf notebooks that constitute a resource manual on the subject of traumatic brain injury, and these are available at the chapter office.

Andy Megrath reported on assistance provided to a terminally ill cancer patient who came to the chapter's attention through Sharon Russell of the Rutland City Mission. After getting approval from three other officers, Andy and Dave Mathis issue a check for \$200 to purchase a bus ticket for the veteran to return home to California. The veteran was unable to fly because of his condition. He is now undergoing chemotherapy in California and sent the chapter a letter expressing his gratitude.

Andy also reported on an apparently improper use of VVA mailing lists in New England. A veteran from Methuen, Mass., evidently got hold of the VVA roster and used it to solicit donations in support of a boys' shelter for troubled teens. Andy has reported the infraction to the VVA National organization and the Massachusetts VVA State Council and has notified the individual directly of his improper use of the mailing list. Though his efforts appear sincere, the veteran's use of the mailing list was improper. Andy spent considerable time pursuing the matter to see that the practice was stopped.

Andy reported that he has secured the promise of a copy of a Vermont directory listing veterans of the Vietnam War. This should be a help in continuing to verify and add names to the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Andy passed on the announcement of the Eleventh Annual Northern New England Military Retiree Activity Day Aug. 23 at the Army Aviation Center of the Vermont National Guard at South Burlington. The activity day will provide legal assistance, health care information, survivor benefits, recreational facilities, and information on the Veterans Administration, veterans cemeteries, veterans homes and more. For more information, contact Capt. Paul G. Blacketer at 802-893-7186 or Lt. Col. Lloyd Goodrow at 802-338-3324.

Ron Granger, a former Marine and an active golfer, inquired about the possibility of a golfing fund-raiser to benefit the chapter. Andy Megrath invited him to propose something that could be put out to members to see if there was interest.

After a brief discussion, we decided to not have a meeting in September but to meet in October on our regular day.

Submitted by Jack Crowther, Secretary

**THE NEXT CHAPTER MEETING WILL BE WEDNESDAY, OCT. 8, AT 6 P.M.
AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND, VT.**