Remembering Our Brother, Wally

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Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.
Chapter 20
February 2008
Issue 109

Together Then...Together Now
Again, as always, it’s been a busy month with the Holidays and all. I want to start with a couple thank yous.

First, as all of you know, we put together boxes for our troops that are serving in harm’s way - 83 boxes! These were filled with all sorts of good stuff the troops will enjoy and included letters from Craig Hill School in Greece. From the Sunday we packed the boxes, the Friday night we put the labels on them, to the Saturday at the Post Office, our members stepped up and made the project easy and enjoyable. We even got to have a great breakfast after the mailing and to all of you, THANKS FOR THE GREAT JOB! I would like to do this again in maybe the spring or summer but as always we need people to step up and help plan it.

This past month was also busy for the finance and executive committees putting together our budget for 2008. It was a lot of work and I thank all that helped. As always, Mr. Joe (R.A.) Peck lent his guidance as a finance expert in getting the budget together and balanced, when at the end he added $27.00 to his budget for white chalk. The good news is that we are doing well with income and we are able this year to fund some things we were not able to do in the last couple of years. We still need to be careful of our spending, but things are looking up.

Lastly, please remember that our annual elections are coming up and I would encourage you to consider running for an office. We need new blood with new ideas. For your enjoyment, you may come to a board meeting (held the first Monday of each month – dates are listed in the BTL) and see what the job consists of, or just ask a current board member. Also it’s that time of year to put your nomination in for the annual awards. Please nominate someone that you think may be deserving.

Till next month - “Together Then Together Now”

Ken Moore
Vietnam 66-67
US Army Cavalry
IT’S NOT UNTIL you step into someone’s shoes that you really appreciate the work they’ve done. Though I have worked with Bruce McDaniel for the last year or so, it is now very clear to me how labor intensive it is to put an issue of the BTL together. So, at the first opportunity that presents itself, please tell Bruce just how much you appreciate all of his hard work. I follow in his footsteps with some trepidation – no pressure, under his editorship this newsletter has become a nationally acclaimed, award-winning publication! You can help maintain this high standard by keeping me informed about events and other goings-on. You can tell me stories (fit for publication, of course!) and relate memories of your service. You can send me photos (past or present) and provide the background for these pictures. If you have a story, but are not confident about writing it, contact me. I’ll write it for you. This is Chapter 20’s newsletter and it needs as many voices as possible. I look forward to being your Editor. – Kathy Gleason

I AM A RELATIVELY new member of your Chapter. I just read the article about your recent trip to Washington DC to celebrate the 25th anniversary of “The Wall” and found it most interesting. I was not on your trip, but had visited The Wall for the first time last May while visiting friends who live in the area. I must say I was quite impressed with the size of it. All those names! And each name belonged to a fellow veteran like myself, but one who didn’t make it back home. It really puts things in perspective. One can’t help wonder what the world would have been like for so many families had they not made the supreme sacrifice. I took several photos, including some of the flowers, letters, and other mementos left behind by unknown people. It all seemed so sad.

We also visited memorials dedicated to those who fought in other wars, and were especially moved by the somber, but highly respected atmosphere of Arlington Cemetery. We visited the grave of my friend’s uncle who gave his life in WWII. As I watched the placing of wreaths at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, I had a great feeling of pride that in some small way I had contributed to the defense of my country and our way of life. This is in spite of the lack of appreciation or a welcome home that I never received when I returned from the war. Thank God for people like you to keep the public reminded of the sacrifices we all made.

Wishing all of you a Happy, Healthy New Year.

David M. Kolchuk

Cards of Thanks

ABSENT FROM THE Body, Present with the Lord. Our Love goes to all who helped us during our recent loss. If it was prayers, cars, flowers, food, money, your time, or just being there for us.

Thank you for being there at the services & showing my Wally true honor & love.

Words can’t express how much we appreciate your love. Vietnam Veterans – Chapter 20 – for their love and support to Wally and family, Kendall Fire Department and Auxiliary for their love and friendship, Scott and Larry – Christopher Mitchell Funeral Home, Interlakes Oncology – Dr. Solky and staff at Park Ridge, Dr. James Gaden and staff – Kendall, Dr. Chris Brondon and staff – Spencerport, U of R Radiation Oncology – Park Ridge, VA Hospital Batavia Outpatient Center – doctor and staff, LBCC – Brockport – fourth floor (coworkers), Pastor Jim and JoAnn Grobe, Ray Sands Glass (Dave and Mary and coworkers), Veteran Groups – you were present for military honors for Wally. The many special people in Wally’s and my life that were there for us during this long journey. Words can’t express how much we love you and pray God bless each and every one of you.

Family of Wally Gekoski

“Semper Fi – Oohrah”

TO ALL OUR FAMILY of Chapter 20,

Wally & I can’t express how much we felt blessed for all your love & kindness when you sang to Wally & was visiting him. I know he would give you all that special handshake & a hug. Thank you for being there at the services & showing my Wally true honor & love. Words can’t express how much I feel blessed to have such a wonderful, loving family, belonging to Chapter 20 – I will try to carry to the good fight, & still dedicate my time to my Chapter 20 family, as Wally did. We love each & every one of you. God Bless You All – Oohrah!

Bonnie
Nominating Committee
Chuck Macaluso, Chair

The Annual Meeting & Elections will be held April 10, 2008 at 6:00 PM - Ira Jacobson Post Home. Positions for nominations include:
- Four Executive (4) - President, 1st Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer
- Three Board (3)
- Two State Council (2)

The “new” Nominating Committee will also be elected by the membership that evening. A “to date” slate of candidates will be finalized by February 15th and published in the March issue.
- In order to vote in the Annual Election, voters must be a member for at least 30 days.
- Only paid members with a DD214 on file by 28 February of previous fiscal year are eligible to vote. (For example - 28 February 2007 to vote April 2007).
- A quorum is defined as 10% of VVA 20 membership as of 28 February of the previous fiscal year. Voting for candidates will take place between 6:30 PM till 7:30 PM, after which no new ballots will be taken and votes will be tabulated.
- According to the National VVA Constitution, “Additional persons may be nominated by any member at the Annual Meeting.” These candidates will fall under the category of Floor Nominations.
- Floor nominated candidates can only receive votes from members present at Annual Meeting. (A “Special Note” stating such will be placed March and April BTL issues.)

Each candidate will address the membership at the March meeting stating their reasons for seeking an elected position.

Any member interested in running for any of the above mentioned positions, please contact one of the following Nominating Committee members:
- Chuck Macaluso 225-8288;
- Bob DeMitry 659-2850; Tom Puff 235-3556; Dan Corona 406-6108;
- Pat Pudetti 753-6040

Chapter 20 AVVA Associate Liaison Election

This election will coincide with the date of the VVA Chapter 20 election. If you wish to submit your name for the ballot, please contact Sue Oleksyn, soleksyn@yahoo.com, or 663-5255.

Marching Unit
Ray Melens, Commander

Members of the Honor Guard have been busy the last couple of months with details. On Jan. 2nd they were once again asked to present the Colors at the Monroe County Legislature meeting for the annual swearing in of the newly elected and re-elected legislatures. Chapter 20 member and District 1 legislator, Dick Yolevich led all those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Sadly in December, the Honor Guard was in attendance at Wally Gekoski’s funeral service. Once again, the members of the Honor Guard did a great job in making sure Wally received his proper military honors and they did them with great dignity. Due to the time of year of Wally’s passing, he could not be buried. I have been informed that his burial is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, April 5th. I am hoping to have as many MU/HG members in attendance as possible. I will provide more details as the date draws closer and as I get them. It would be great if we could get enough MU/HG members together to provide him a 21-gun salute, Color Guard, pall bearers and flag folders. I will discuss all this in more detail at the upcoming HG meetings. I have written a tribute to Wally that will be published elsewhere in this issue of the BTL.

We are drawing near another election. This year I understand that there are three board member seats up and the four executive positions are up as well. At this time I ask that any MU/HG member interested in running for any of these positions to please get a hold of Chuck Macaluso and let him know of your intention to run. It seems that year after year the membership never really has any choices in who to choose from. It always seems that people are running unopposed. That’s not fair to our membership. I feel that we need to give more of a choice in candidates, so please consider running for an open position this year.

Parade invitations will be starting to come in pretty soon now so I guess it’s time we all started thinking about getting ready for another parade season. The annual Marching Unit meeting will be held in April as usual. The date will be announced in next month’s report. If you should need to make any adjustments to your uniform, now would be a good time to do it. For some strange and unexplainable reason, my uniform seems to shrink just a little bit every winter while it hangs in the closest. I just can’t figure it out! I’m sure though that we are all looking forward to another great parade season this year.

As in years past, members of the Marching Unit, friends and followers will get together to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day on Sat. March 15th. We have always gotten together at
Gunny’s on N. Greece Rd. starting at 11:30 AM. We have a few drinks, get some lunch, and enjoy each other’s company for 2-3 hours. We use to march every year in the St. Patrick’s Day parade downtown and now instead of marching we do this and stay warm and have a good time enjoying each other’s company. This will be the first year since we started doing this that Wally won’t be with us. I’m hoping to get a great turnout so we can all lift our glasses high and toast our friend, Wally O’Gekoski. So plan to try to attend. Even if it’s just for the toast which we will plan to hold at 12 noon.

The MU/HG members will be meeting at 7 PM upstairs at Ira before the regular membership meeting. If there are any new members interested in joining either unit or both, plan to attend and we can get you started with the information you will need.

Until next month………AT EASE!!!!!!

POW/MIA
Gail Bologna-Melens, Chairperson

To start out our new year of 2008, there have been three servicemen identified and returned to their families for burial with full military honors.

The first man is Gunnery Sgt. Richard W. Fischer, US Marine Corps, Madison, Wisconsin. He was buried on November 19, 2007, in Madison. On January 8, 1968, Fischer was assigned to M Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division, on an ambush patrol south of Da Nang in Quang Nam Province, Vietnam. Fischer became separated from his unit and subsequent attempts by his team members to locate him were met with enemy fire. In 1992 and 1993, JPAC interviewed several Vietnamese citizens who reported that Fischer was killed by the Viet Cong and his remains were buried in a nearby cultivated field. In 1994 the site was excavated and human remains and other evidence including uniform buttons were recovered.

Two other servicemen were identified and returned to their families for burial with full military honors. They are Maj. Robert F. Woods, of Salt Lake City, Utah, and Capt. Johnnie C. Cornelius, of Maricopa County, Arizona, both from the U.S. Air Force.

On June 26, 1968, Woods and Cornelius were flying a visual reconnaissance mission over Quang Binh Province, Vietnam, when their 0-2A Skymaster aircraft crashed in a remote mountainous area. The crew of another aircraft in the flight saw no parachutes and reported hearing no emergency beeper signals. Immediate search efforts were unsuccessful. Between 1988 and 1993 the incident was investigated and the crash site was surveyed. Vietnamese citizens turned over human remains and the pilots’ identification tags.

Between 1994 and 1997 joint teams re-surveyed the site additional wreckage and life-support material was found. Between 2000 and 2004 joint teams excavated the site four times and recovered additional human remains, personal effects and life support materials. In 2006 two former North Vietnamese soldiers who recalled the crash were interviewed. The soldiers said that Woods and Cornelius were buried near the crash site. In 2007 another team excavated the burial site and additional human remains were recovered.

At the end of the Vietnam War there were 2,583 servicemen and women unaccounted for. To date there are 1,763.

During the war years
1965 – 1974 • 2 were identified

Post War Years
1974 – 1975 • 28 were identified
US/SRV Normalization of Negotiations
1975 – 1978 • 47 were identified

US/SRV Talks Break Down
1979 – 1980 • 1 was identified

1st Regan Administration
1981 – 1984 • 23 were identified

2nd Regan Administration
1985 – 1988 • 162 were identified

George H. W. Bush
1989 – 1992 • 121 were identified

1st Clinton Administration
1993 – 1996 • 258 were identified

2nd Clinton Administration
1997 – 2001 • 94 were identified

George W. Bush
2001 – 2006 • 84 were identified

There are many tributes being written for Wally in this issue of the BTL but I would like to thank those who came out to sing Christmas Carols for Wally on a cold, wet and icy night. We sang 5 carols and, of course, the Marine Corps Hymn was sung and later whistled. That was the last time Wally opened his eyes. I wish to thank my son and his wife for coming out and accompanying us on the guitar (it really helped cover up our lack of vocal ability). I know that Bonnie and Wally’s family appreciated it. RIP Wally.

You and all our POW’s will be REMEMBERED.

Veterans Incarcerated Committee
Ron Trovato

Many thanks to the Probation Officers Association for their annual clothing drive to benefit our thrift store. After stockpiling donations at the Probation Department, POA President James Carr and myself, in a Chinese fire drill-type operation, dropped all the clothing donations to the thrift store in two trips.

A special thank you is in order to Pat Pudetti for going to the Auburn Correctional Facility on 12/7 to participate in the culmination of Chapter #205’s Annual Christmas Drive. Chapter #205 remains strong, particularly in their commitment to
this worthy cause. I especially want to thank the Crochet Squad, whose work ethic is unwavering. Pat brought back two huge bags of hats and scarves for the needy kids at Rochester's School #33 on Webster Avenue and School #9 on N. Clinton Avenue. I also want to thank Cory Batten, Crochet Squad Chairman, for the Letter of Appreciation he sent to Pat and I for our support of Chapter #205. All the hard work put in all year long by the guys at Chapter #205, especially the Crochet Squad, is really worth it. My heart goes out to the kids at those two schools and it is a great feeling to make their Christmas a little bit warmer and merrier. It is really gratifying to go into those schools and see how thankful the staff is to receive those gifts.

Thanks also to Craig McLaren and all the guys at good ol' Chapter #190, Atmore, Alabama, for the Christmas card signed by all the members there. Keep up the good work, guys, and all you do for incarcerated vets everywhere.

Hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and here's wishing you all a Happy and Healthy 2008!

Chaplain's Corner

This is an open letter to the guys in the Chapter. On this Valentine’s Day, let’s remember the ladies. They stand beside us and give us their respect, strength and love. We need to acknowledge their contributions.

Bonnie was Wally’s Angel of Strength through his long battle with cancer. She has shown faithful courage and did Wally proud. Our ladies, some compromised themselves with devastating health issues, still support our many causes in whatever ways they are able. Their seemingly endless energy helps complete our projects. They come to our events, activities and parades, whether for the first time or the hundredth time, to offer helping hands, gentle spirits and to cheer us on. We owe so much to these gals, not only on Valentine’s Day, but every day.

So, ladies, on behalf of all my brothers, you have our respect, love and gratitude for your endless support.

Peace and Love – The Rev

Agent Orange/Health Affairs
Sue Oleksyn

This is an exciting and critical year for us all. Many outstanding events are happening and being planned to support our active duty military and veterans. Every time we all stand together for the common good, great things happen. Join in every chance that you get to be a part of the solution. This is a critical step in supporting those veterans who are not able to participate due to their service-connected issues.

This is a Presidential election year. Make sure that you are well informed as to the qualifications and goals of each candidate, and VOTE. ALL VETERANS VOTE!! It is critical that we all stand together with all veterans to strongly voice our demand to see that our public servants do all that they can for veterans—meet their needs, provide their support and services, and grant service connected benefits quickly when they are substantiated. Too often, our noble GI’s and veterans fall through the cracks when so much time elapses in terms of benefits and services. That is unacceptable. Use your voice—vote and communicate with your public servants and join us as we stand together for all veterans.

You now have the right to hire an attorney relative to attaining VA service-connected benefits, if needed. If you have health issues, make sure to contact Pat Pudetti and the fine people at the Monroe County Veterans’ Service Agency, serviceofficer@yahoo.com, or 753-6040. They can help you access your military records and take the appropriate steps needed to attain benefits. Make sure that you get all medical records from your physicians and specialists so you are prepared. The physician’s word is what counts in this process. Going into the process well armed with all necessary documents will streamline your process.

The loss most recently of our Wally Gekoski is deeply felt by all of us who love him and Bonnie. As a true Marine, he gave his all to beat cancer. As a true Marine, he also showed us what courage is all the way—his way. May he rest in peace. Semper fi, Wally.

Remember that VVA Chapter 20 is as good and as strong as we all make it. Join in and be a part of an amazing journey with noble, outstanding American citizens—our veterans. Here’s to an outstanding 2008!! May God bless our active duty military, our veterans, their families and may God bless America. Peace.
VETERANS SERVICE AWARD

The Veterans Service Award is given to the member or members who have demonstrated outstanding dedication in improving the condition of Vietnam Veterans and/or the community, and have been active in Chapter 20. Any member is eligible for this award.

I feel ___________________________ should be considered for the Veterans Service Award because of his/her involvement in:

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

The Community Service Award is given to the group or organization that has demonstrated a strong sense of community service and favorably recognizes and relates to Vietnam Veterans issues.

I feel ___________________________ should be considered for the Veterans Service Award because:

Nominations are due by Friday, March 28, 2008 so that the Awards Committee can make final decisions in time for the Annual Dinner. Nomination forms are to be dropped off at the Chapter office or mailed to VVA Chapter 20, P.O.Box 12580, Rochester, New York 14612, to arrive no later than Friday, March 28, 2008.
KIDS CONTRIBUTE

We would be remiss if we didn’t issue a special comment about the actions of a small group in December. These are the children that reached out to this Chapter and added a very special flavor to our Support the Troops project by helping to honor the new generation of soldiers now protecting our freedom on the front lines in the Middle East.

Devon Schening, of Albion, visited the Memorial in Highland Park in the Fall and spoke proudly of the Marine legacy in his family. His mother and uncle served in the eighties and now his sister and cousin are stationed in Iraq. He, through his mother, called the number on the back of the coin given to him at the Memorial and added the names of his sister and cousin to our mailing list for boxes sent to the troops. In addition, he offered another name, that of the husband of one of his teachers who he corresponds with regularly.

Ryan DiMarco, of Irondequoit, wrapped some of his green army men in an envelope and sent them, with a letter, to be included in a box. These were carefully placed in the box going to L. Cpl. Miranda Schening, sister of Devon. Ryan respectfully offered his condolences to the troops for comrades who lost their lives. His other thoughts included, “If you have to chors I feel sorry for you,” including his address in hopes they would write to him.

Katie Holzmacher, with her mom Barbara, brought 150 boxes of Girl Scout cookies to be packed in these same boxes and worked diligently with the group of volunteers to include the cookies and chap stick in each box.

What a touching tribute they offer to this new generation of soldiers, but also for each of you. It is for these children, and their friends and schoolmates, that each of you fought – for our children, and their children and all generations to follow.
Vietnam Veterans of America
THrift STORE, CHAPTER 20, LLC
1199 East Main Street, Rochester, NY 14609
Hours: Monday - Friday 8:30am - 5:00pm
Saturday 9:00am - 5:00pm
Car Donations 8:30am - 5:00pm
Truck Pick-up: 9am - 4:30pm
(weather permitting)
~ Delivery Available ~
Truck Pick-up #482-8016
Thrift Store #482-8036
All donations go to the Thrift Store at the address above.

BETSY LOMBARDO
Veterans Advocate

DEBRA SLOANE
Retail Office Assistant
A project of the Veterans Outreach Center, Inc.
455 South Avenue • Rochester, NY 14620
Tel: 585-546-FLAG • Fax: 585-546-5978

C.M.
Gifts and Militaria
Est: 1987

Charles Rabidoux
USMC 1957-61
497 Stone Road
Rochester, NY 14616
(585) 865-7370

DAVID J. KAUFFMAN POST #41
JEWISH WAR VETERANS
THE OLDEST ACTIVE VETERANS ORGANIZATION
SUPPORTS THE VIETNAM VETS
LARRY SCHULMAN, QUARTERMASTER, 271-6967

NEW YORK STATE SENATE

SENATOR
JOSEPH E. ROBACH

2380 WEST RIDGE ROAD
ROCHESTER, NY 14626
(585) 225-3650
ROOM 902
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ALBANY, NY 12247
(518) 455-2909 • FAX (518) 426-6938
E-MAIL: ROBACH@SENATE.STATE.NY.US

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419 Embury Rd. Rochester, NY 14625 • Richard Burgey
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Flagpoles and Accessories • Flags: USA & International
Installation & Repair • Custom Banners / Flags
Veteran owned and operated full service flag company.
Serving the area for 20 years.

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Thrift Store #482-8036
All donations go to the Thrift Store at the address above.

Medals, Badges, Patches, Ribbons, Caps
Clothing, Boots, Gear, Buckles, Flags,
Award Cases, Military Rings and Watches

Veteran owned and operated full service flag company.
Serving the area for 20 years.

~ Delivery Available ~
Truck Pick-up #482-8016
Thrift Store #482-8036
All donations go to the Thrift Store at the address above.

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Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 20
AWARD NOMINATION FORM

ROGER ROBACH AWARD
The Roger Robach Award is given to an individual who has spent a minimum of ten years working for the betterment of all veterans in New York State.

I feel ____________________________ should be considered for the Veterans Service Award because of his/her involvement in:

DON AND RORI MURRELL HUMANITARIAN AWARD
The Don and Rori Murrell Humanitarian Award is given to an individual who has accomplished an extraordinary effort on behalf of active duty military personnel and/or veterans and their families. All individuals are to be considered for this reward regardless of Chapter or veteran affiliation.

I feel ____________________________ should be considered for the Don and Rori Murrel Humanitarian Award because of his/her involvement in:

Nominations are due by Friday, March 28, 2008 so that the Awards Committee can make final decisions in time for the Annual Dinner. Nomination forms are to be dropped off at the Chapter office or mailed to VVA Chapter 20, P.O.Box 12580, Rochester, New York 14612, to arrive no later than Friday, March 28, 2008.
These new members have joined us over the last few months. Give them a hearty Welcome Home!

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On Dec. 15th VVA Chapter 20 lost one of its most dedicated members. Wally Gekoski succumbed to his long battle with lung cancer after a 3 year long courageous fight. Let me tell you that Wally didn’t give up without putting up a stubborn fight. He met his enemy head on and they went at it like only Wally could go at it. Wally was a proud Marine veteran and he fought bravely in his war against cancer.

I first met Wally in Washington, DC in Sept. of 2000, I believe it was. I was there with members of the Honor Guard to conduct our annual services at the Wall and at Arlington National Cemetery. Wally’s neighbor had convinced him and his wife Bonnie to go along with them and witness firsthand what we did in DC. I was introduced to Wally the first night in DC and I was told that he too was a Marine. Needless to say Wally and I just hit it right off. Little did I know at that moment, that we were about to become good friends.

Well Wally was so impressed with the ceremonies that we conducted, that he couldn’t wait to ask me about joining the Chapter. I talked to him that evening while in DC and as soon as we got home he was joining the Chapter.

One thing I quickly learned about Wally was that he didn’t do anything half ass. He immediately joined the Marching Unit and the Honor Guard. He also went after his long time and best friend, Skip Snell, to join the Chapter. Well after Wally got on him, he too soon joined the Chapter, Marching Unit and the Honor Guard.

That wasn’t enough for Wally though. Whenever volunteers were needed for whatever reason, there was Wally. Whether it was to participate in a Honor Guard detail, or to help out any other committee with whatever was needed, Wally was there.

Wally’s true dedication though lay within the Marching Unit and Honor Guard...Without hesitation he would always be one of the first to volunteer for a ceremony or funeral detail. I knew I could always count on Wally.

Wally’s true dedication though lay within the Marching Unit and Honor Guard. After joining, he quickly made friends with all the members of both groups. Without hesitation he would always be one of the first to volunteer for a ceremony or funeral detail. I knew I could always count on Wally.

When we had decided to bring back the Marching Unit dinner dance in 2004, to take place in January 2005, Wally was one of the first to volunteer and get on the planning committee. As we all remember it, it was a great evening of fun and most of all, camaraderie. With Wally’s help and dedication we were able to make it a success. Again in the following year we held the dinner dance and, of course, there was Wally right in the thick of things. This time there was a major difference. Wally had been diagnosed earlier in the year with lung cancer. Wally had told me and made it very clear that this was only going to be a minor setback. He was going to fight this illness like any Marine would, he told me.

Well fight he did. He never let the cancer get the better of him. Even after being diagnosed with lung cancer, he still came to every parade. When it started to get to be too much for him to march, he would ride in the van right behind the Unit. Then later on he got an electric wheel chair. After he got that, there was just no holding Wally down. It got so that during parades while we were marching down
the street, it became quite common to hear the Marching Unit Commander yell to Wally, “WALLY YOU’RE OUT OF STEP”. He used to love hearing that. He later told me he loved to hear it because it reassured him that he was still an important part of the Unit.

He would still travel to Washington DC for POW/MIA Day ceremonies. Even after he was pretty much confined to the wheelchair, he would still say to me, “I can play Taps at Arlington.” He always wanted to be involved in some way. That was just the way Wally was. He always knew and believed in what we as Veterans were undertaking. He knew our goals and reasons and for this reason, I believe, that is why he was always so active and involved with the Chapter.

He also spent a couple of years as a member of the Board of Directors, until his illness made it difficult to attend meetings. He was forced to resign in the spring of 2007 for health reasons. It was a considerable loss to the BOD of Chapter 20.

The best thing I can say about Wally is that he was my friend and anybody that really knows me, knows how much I truly value my friends and their friendship.

Four days before Wally’s passing, I got a phone call from Bonnie saying that Wally was not doing well at all and that Wally was asking for me. Gail and I quickly drove out to Wally’s and visited with him till past midnight. When it was finally time to leave, I went over to him and once again shook his hand while saying good night to leave, I went over to him and once again shook his hand while saying good night and told him what a good friend he is. He looked up at me from his hospital bed and with labored breath said, “I was a good friend.” I looked over at my wife with tears in my eyes and replied back to him that he “always will be a good friend.”

Wally has reported to his final Duty Station and our Supreme Commander for duty, and I’m sure that duty involves guarding the streets of heaven as a proud U.S. Marine.

SEMPER FI WALLY, SEMPER FI MY FRIEND! – Ray Melens

W hen great friends pass away it sometimes brings to light that we take too much for granted. Wally was, to many of us, a great friend, dedicated member of Chapter 20 and a proud member of the US Marine Corp who served his country proudly in Vietnam. I spent a few hours with Wally a couple days before he passed and it was truly one of the most emotional experiences of my life. To see this brave person lying there, knowing the end was near, with the support of his family close at hand - it brought tears to my eyes that night thinking of him. I wish I had spent more time with Wally over the years to tell him how much his brothers loved him and cherished his friendship. During the time Wally lay in rest in Holley with all the Chapter family there, it made me understand how important we are to each other, and that we in Chapter 20 are truly a family. Let’s not waste any of our time here on earth without telling each other how we cherish their friendship. Life is short and we need to enjoy it. God Bless you, Wally. We love and miss you, brother.

- Ken Moore

LuAnn and I only knew Wally and Bonnie for a short time but for that short time that he has given us a life time of memories and for this we are very thankful. – Joe Peck

H usband, father, grandfather, friend, firefighter, Vietnam veteran, Marine...His courage and the way that he chose to live can serve as a beacon to all of us who love him and Bonnie to be strong. We both said that you can’t control what is thrown at you, but you DO control how you respond to it. Wally responded with noble courage and still went on to help others and live his life with honor—a true Marine. Wally, you now are at peace with the Lord—no more pain, no more suffering. May God hold you in His loving arms and grant you eternal peace. For one last time, Semper Fi, my brother and friend. We love you and Bonnie and will always remember what you taught us, not by words but by your noble example. – Sue Oleksyn

A s the POW-MIA Chairperson for Chapter 20 I had input as to who would carry the POW-MIA flag when we were in Washington, DC, doing our annual ceremony at THE WALL. In the year 2001 we decided to add to our presentation a little bit of drama in the form of leaving behind the POW-MIA flag. That year I picked Wally. He was so proud to carry that flag. When the Honor Guard, myself and wreath carriers and wives marched away from the apex of THE WALL there was Wally standing alone and vulnerable. He turned and marched after us catching up to us at the end of THE WALL. This symbolized how our POW’s were left behind and trying to come home to us. Wally did this for a few more years until he was wheelchair bound. Wally, I never thought that you would be the one leaving us behind. It was and will always be a special memory. Thanks Wally for showing us the way. Semper Fi - Gail Bologna-Melens

Hear this: News & Notes

Chili/Crockpot Contest
Thursday, March 13 at the General Membership Meeting during Meet the Candidates Night. Registration is at 5:30 pm (no entry fee). Tasting begins at 6:15 pm. You be the judge! Tasting will be from 6:15-7:15 pm. Sample and vote for your favorite!

Annual Dinner
Saturday, April 19 at the Barnard Exempt Hall in Greece.

BETWEEN THE LINES
Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 20
Membership Application

Return this application, along with a copy of your DD214, to:
Vietnam Veterans of America, P.O. Box 12580, Rochester, NY 14612

Name: ___________________________________  Date of Birth: ____________________  Sex: M / F
Address: __________________________________  Home Phone: (_____) _______________________
City: _____________________________________  Work Phone: (_____) ________________________
Zip: _______________ Country: ______________  E-mail Address: ______________________ W / H
Chapter # ________ (if known) _______________  Sponsor: __________________________________

I am not a Vietnam veteran, but I want to help Vietnam veterans and their families.
Please accept my donation: ___________________  □ AVVA Membership
____$10 ______$20 ______$50 _______Other ($_______)


Term: _____ 1 year ($20) _____3 years ($50) _____ Life Membership: $250 (ages 49 and under)
$225 (ages 50-55) $200 (ages 56-60) $175 (ages 61-65) $150 (ages 66 and over)

Payment Option: _______ Check _______ Money Order

VVA is a non-profit veterans service organization.
Programs and services are funded by member dues and public donations.

Between the Lines is published monthly by Chapter 20, Vietnam Veterans of America. The views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of Chapter 20, or the Vietnam Veterans of America, its officers, board of directors, or the general membership. No subscription fee is charged for this publication, and inclusion on the mailing list is available on request. Between the Lines can also be seen on the Chapter 20 website, www.vva20.org.

We welcome letters to the editor, poetry, original articles, and suggestions. Submissions can be sent to: Between the Lines, P.O. Box 12580, Rochester, New York 14612 or e-mailed as a word document to: bruceimcdaniel@earthlink.net. If you want your manuscript returned, include a self-addressed envelope with postage. We reserve the right not to use materials we think are not appropriate for the publication, and to edit for space and clarity. We’d also like to have a phone number as well as your name in case there are any questions.

The deadline for submissions intended for a particular month’s issue is the 5th of the preceding month. If the 5th falls on a weekend or holiday, the deadline is the first business day following the 5th.

Between the Lines runs paid advertisements to help offset the cost of publication and as a convenience to our readers. Chapter 20 does not endorse any advertiser or guarantee satisfaction with goods or services provided.
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2nd Vice President: Bruce VanApeldoorn .... 252-514-5597 (c)
Secretary: Chuck Macaluso ........... 225-8288 (h)
Treasurer: Ray Melens ............... 392-2079 (h)

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Pat Pudetti .......................................................... 734-0946
Joe Peck .......................................................... 734-0946
VVA New York State Council: www.nyvietnamvets.org
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bdivico@vva20.org • 482-7396

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Between The Lines .... Kathy Gleason 978-1331
Chaplain .................................................. Tom Gleason 978-1995
Comm. Service/Pub. Affairs .... Dick McDermott 398-2628
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Finance .................................................. Joe Peck 734-9046
Historian ...................................... Dave Hooker 544-8815
Incarcerated Veterans .................. Ron Trovato 544-8470
Marching Unit ........ Ray Melens 392-2079
Membership, Chapter Gear .... Ralph Pascale 755-2560
POW/MIA ........ Gail Bologna-Melens 392-2079
Scholarship .................................. Alice Popen 247-1024
Social Events .................. Dick Oleksyn 663-5255
Speakers Bureau ........ Geno Lenyk 423-0206
Vets Affairs/Benefits ........ Pat Pudetti 482-2387
Veterans Walk ........ Chuck Macaluso 225-8288
Volunteer Coordinator ........ Kathy Gleason 978-1331

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Veterans Widows International Network
members@aol.com/vetwindows
NYS Department Health: www.health.state.ny.us/nyvets
Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Highland Park:
www.vietnammemorial.org
Operation Welcome Home:
www.operationwelcomehome.org
VVA New York State Council: www.nyvietnamvets.org
Region 2 Director: www.region2vva.com

VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS AND INFORMATION
Greater Rochester Vietnam Veterans Memorial... 385-753-7275
(enter 9; enter 2 to leave a message)
Ira Jacobson American Legion Post #474 .... 663-7030
VA Clinic - 465 Westfall Road ... 463-2600
Veterans Outreach Center ............... 546-1081
Vet Center ............................................. 232-5040
Veterans Administration ................ 800-827-1000
NYS Council ......................................... 888-678-VETS
Monroe County Veterans Service Agency .... 753-6040
e-mail: serviceofficer@yahoo.com
Vets Benefits Hotline ..................... 800-827-1000
“Veterans Bill of Rights” ............... 800-342-3358
VA Medical Center in Batavia ......... 585-297-1000
VA Hospital in Buffalo ................. 716-834-9200

VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS AND INFORMATION, CONT’D.
VA Medical Center in Canandaigua .... 394-2000
VA Medical Center in Bath ............. 607-664-4000
V.V. of America in Washington ...... 800-VVA-1316
V.V. Memorial Fund “The Wall” .... 202-393-0090
Nat.’l Lge. of Fam. MIA/POW Updates ... 202-223-6846
Richards House ....................... 506-9060
The Resource Center .................. 546-4250
Stars & Stripes ......................... 546-3524
Persian Gulf Vets, Inc. .............. 385-4097
Operation Welcome Home .............. 234-4694

MISCELLANEOUS
VVA 20 Thrift Store, LLC Mgmt., Beth Affeldt ...... 482-8036
Donation Pick-up, Cindy Rowley ............... 482-8016
VVA Vehicle Donations, Cindy Rowley .... 224-8848
VVA Chapter 20 ........... bdivicovva20.org • 482-7396

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Pat Pudetti .................. patrickusmc1@yahoo.com
Bruce VanApeldoorn ....... bvanapeldoorrn@rochester.rr.com
### February 2008

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If you would like your Birthday or Anniversary included on the BTL calendar, please call the office at 482-7396 or E-mail info@vva20.org