

VETERANS HELPING VETERANS



McHENRY COUNTY CHAPTER



"The Chapter with a Heart"

April 2009

McHenry County Chapter of ViệtNow
"THE CHAPTER WITH A HEART"

MEETING: General Meetings are open to the public and are held on the **fourth (4) Tuesday of each month** at 7:30 P. M. at the McHenry VFW – 3002 W. Route 120, McHenry.

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**** BOARD OF DIRECTORS ****

PRESIDENT:	Joe Lewis	815-568-8939
VICE-PRESIDENT:	Bobby Jones	847-409-1947
SECRETARY:	Tony Bilus	815-648-2826
TREASURER:	Steve Rucki	847-458-9850
DIRECTORS:	Rick Cross	815-403-3613
	Joe Ferrenti	815-653-4114
	Mike Wisniewski	815-344-5873
	Bill Richards	815-344-9591
	Harry van Beetz	847/516-9722

ADVISORS: All Past Chapter Presidents

****COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS ****

BYLAWS:	Joe Lewis	815-568-8939
CHAPTER PROGRAM		
GRANTS:	Joe Lewis	815-568-8939
CONVENTION:	Joe Lewis	815-568-8939
"JIM TOBER BASKETS":	Rose Lewis	815-568-8939
MEMBERSHIP:	Joe Ferrenti	815-653-4114
NEWSLETTER:	Rose Lewis, Editor	815-568-8939
NOMINATION/ELECTION:	Joe Kersten	815 338-1796
POW/MIA:	Steve Rucki	847-458-9850
PTSD:	Alan Belcher	815-344-0411
CHAPTER VETERAN		
SERVICE OFFICER	Ted Biever	815-338-9292
"RAP" GROUP INFO:	Alan Belcher	815-334-0411
VAC: Delegate:	Joe Kersten	815-338-1796

VETERANS HELPING VETERANS
All Chapter Board Members and Membership

****NATIONAL OFFICERS ****

PRESIDENT:	Rich Sanders (Mary)	DIRECTORS:
VICE-PRESIDENT:	Jim Stepanek (Marcia)	John Davis (Sandy)
SECRETARY:	Darrell Gilgan (Linda)	Gary Eisenhower (Sue)
TREASURER:	Terry Buscher (Linda)	Augie (Katie)
		John Bates (Dawn)

National Office Telephone: 815-227-5100 and E-mail: nationalhq@vietnow.com

EDITORIAL POLICY: The Newsletter Staff will evaluate all articles submitted as to appropriateness and Relevancy. Newsletter items must be submitted to the editorial staff by the Chapter meeting each Month.

President's Ramblings for April 2009

YOUR Chapter President, Joe Lewis

Hasn't this change in weather been great for all of us? It feels good to get outside and be able to enjoy the fresh air sunshine. Beware my friends; this kind weather can be deceiving to us all. This is the perfect time of year to get phenomena and colds. Stay wrapped up and warm to keep those vicious germs away.

This has been a great last month for Rosie and me. Since we have been together, we have not had an Easter at our home. Since my mom passed last year, we have changed how we spend the holidays with our family and friends. This year for the first time, Rose and I had Easter at our house with our immediate family. This included James, my three children, Shawn, Maureen, and Jennifer, Tony and Sherry, and Rick Cross. It truly was great to have the grandchildren hunt for Easter Eggs in our yard for a change. Everything was just the best.

April Chapter Meeting Night

April is election time throughout ViêtNow. Please take the time to attend our chapter meeting to vote for Chapter and National Elections. We will be meeting at the Woodstock AmVets Post on Davis Road. **Meeting date - April 28, 2009** Once again, the chapter will be having pizza.



Traversing the DVA system can be a real nightmare for us all. All the red tape we have to cut through and the many things you seem to have to remember. At times, it seems completely overwhelming for all of us. We here in McHenry County ViêtNow have some great assistance to get us through these log jams. Working for the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA), is Ted Biever who does everything possibly for any veteran who enters his office. Ted's office is in the National Guard Armory in Woodstock. Then over at the McHenry County Government Center, in the Administrative building, we have Mike Iwanacki and Cheryl Kirsch. Both Mike and Cheryl are great as advocates for the veterans here in McHenry County.

In our last ViêtNow National magazine, there were articles that dealt with filing Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) disability claims. As I read each of these articles, I kept thinking of our members who have been having their own problems getting their disability claims processed much less approved. It hasn't been for the lack of filing the claim. Rather the issue might be contributed to the DVA getting everything while doing their research into your claim.

One thing that I tell anyone when I begin helping with the claim, keep your Veteran Service Officer (VSO) up to date on all correspondence you get from the DVA. If you get a letter from the DVA wanting some info, contact your VSO and let him or her know what you received and what you should do with it. Provide your VSO with a copy of the communication and any communication that you provide to the DVA.

Call your VSO if your claim is denied. Get in to see him/her to find out what your options are. You can appeal their decision, or you might be able to provide additional evidence that you overlooked the first time around. However, whatever you do talk out the options with your VSO. After all, that is why you contacted them in the first place isn't it?

Since losing my job last year, I have spent a considerable amount of time researching information for my bestest friend so that he can get the just deserve that he is owed as a veteran of the United States Military. He deserves the same medical treatment and compensation as everyone else. We will do everything possible to make sure that he gets what the USA government owes him. Nothing more! Nothing less! When I start helping a veteran to get the benefits that is owed to them, all that is asked of them is to listen to me and to the VSO that I take them to file their claim with.

New/Renew Membership

For all of us old fart members of the McHenry County Chapter of ViêtNow, I would like to inform you that one our groups founding members has rejoined the chapter after a long absence. This person is David Dahl. Dave recently rejoined the chapter and it is a pleasure to have Dave back as a member once again. Welcome back to ViêtNow Dave! You have been missed by us all.

Stand Tall and Be Proud

YOU are the Best of YOUR Generation, YOU are ViêtNow

Tony's Thoughts

By Tony Bilus 04/01/2009

Disclaimer: The opinions and ideas presented below and criticisms, actual or perceived, are those of the author and in no way reflect the views of VietNow, McHenry County VietNow Chapter, their officers, or members. The author wishes to present his observations and in no way is intent on belittling, insulting, or ridiculing any one person or person's sensibilities. Please take everything presented herein with a grain of salt.

The VietNow motto: "Veterans Helping Veterans", was the motivating factor for me to join the McHenry Chapter of VietNow. Before I was aware of the existence of this noble organization, I had no interest in participating in any military or ex-military organizations. I was fully aware of the benefits I was entitled to and earned as a veteran, when I completed my service to our country. I took full advantage of the programs made available to me and did well for myself.

When I discovered VietNow and read that motto, I realized that there are many veterans that do not know or are not aware of the benefits they have earned by signing that blank check, which includes their life if necessary, in service to their country. I thought, to myself, "I'm a veteran; I took advantage of and am aware of the veterans' benefits available to me as a veteran; why shouldn't I share my experiences and help other veterans in achieving equitable results". I decided there and then to become a part of the VietNow organization.

I know why I joined this organization, I attend the meetings and currently hold the secretaries position. I was the Chapter's delegate at several National conventions. I do not aspire to "preach to the choir", but I urge each one of you, fellow veterans, to reevaluate why you chose to join this fine organization, to renew your commitment to the motto and to participate, as best you can, in the monthly meetings, breakfasts with family and friends, fund raising functions and other veteran aligned programs. We need each and every member to be actively involved to do the most good.

Thank you, Tony B.

**McHenry County Chapter of VietNow is having a Fund-Raiser
Our Chapter needs to raise funds for our 2009 Jim Tober Christmas Baskets.
This year we will deliver baskets to 45 Veteran and Needy families.**

CHICAGO BEARS FOOTBALL (laser signed autographed) RAFFLE
Starts now and ends on 04.28.09
Winning ticket drawn at April 28th
McHenry County Chapter of VietNow Meeting
(Winner does not need to be present)
One Ticket - \$1 or Six for \$5
(Case comes with the football)



The names on the football are:

REX GROSSMAN, ROBBIE GOULD, DEVIN HESTER, MIKE BROWN, NATHAN VASHER, CHARLES TILLMAN, JASON MCKIE, DANIEAL MANNING, BRIAN URLACHER, LANCE BRIGGS, OLIN KREUTZ, ROBERTO GARZA, PARTICK MANNELLY, CHRIS WILLIAMS, JOHN TAIT, RASHIED DAVIS, GREG OLSEN, MARTY BOOKER, TOMMIE HARRIS, HUNTER HILLENMEYER, ADEWALE OGUNLEYE, and MARK ANDERSON.

McHENRY COUNTY INDEPENDENT RIDERS



ANNUAL PANCAKE BREAKFAST



&

BIKE BLESSING

When: May 3

Where: Woodstock Moose

Time: 8-11 AM

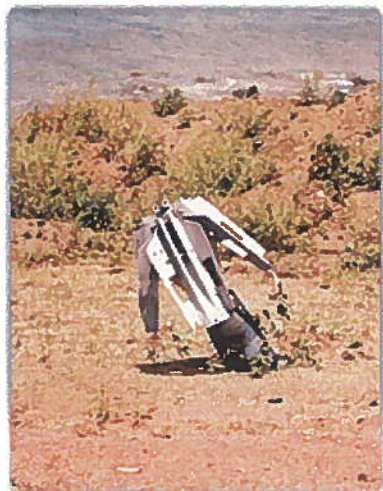
\$7 --Five and under FREE

**To benefit the
Adult & Child Rehab Center
for McHenry County**

ALL BIKES WELCOME TO BIKE BLESSING

Agent Orange Affects Soldiers' Health

by John Lindsay-Poland



Chemical bomb shell on San Jose Island, Panama.

The United States conducted military tests with Agent Orange in Panama in the late 1960s, according to a former military officials and some veterans who now suffer from Agent Orange-related diseases.

A veteran who has a medical claim before the Veterans Administration wrote to *Panamá Update* in June that he saw U.S. Special Forces drop Agent Orange onto Fort Sherman in 1969 or 1970 and "watched the jungle disappear over the next few days." An Army engineer whose duty it was to take water samples, he also found high levels of Agent Orange in the coral reefs on Pacific side of the canal. Lake Gatun, where he witnessed the spraying, spills out of the canal into the Pacific reefs. He now suffers from peripheral neuropathy, a disease common to veterans exposed to Agent Orange.

In addition, Pamela Jones, the widow of another Army veteran who served in

Panama, was awarded benefits in February by the Veterans Administration because of her husband's exposure to Agent Orange in Panama in the early 1970s. At her benefits

hearing, the government's former head of the Agent Orange litigation project, Charles Bartlett, testified that several hundred barrels of Agent Orange had been shipped to Panama in the mid-1960s for tests. He said that after the tests the barrels remained in Panama for use in controlling weeds.

At least nine witnesses have confirmed that the military sprayed heavily with Agent Orange in an area of Fort Sherman known as the "drop zone" in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The "drop zone" is located not far from a popular beach, recreation center and sporting club on the shores of Lake Gatun.

The revelation is important because it establishes that Southeast Asia was not the only place where the United States exposed soldiers, and perhaps others, to Agent Orange. Until Jones won her claim, the Veterans Administration had institutionalized Agent Orange-related benefits for those who fought in Vietnam, and excluded others from consideration for such benefits.

One of the veterans awarded benefits because of his exposure to Agent Orange was Joseph Oppedisano, who served with the Army in Panama in 1956-58. Although Oppedisano's documented exposure to Agent Orange occurred later, in Camp Drumm, New York, while in Panama he became very sick after training with chemical agents.

On January 4, 1958, the entire island of Flamenco where he was stationed was defoliated, Oppedisano told *Panamá Update*. "We had about ten million fish die. They got stuck on the rocks and made a stink," he said. He thought it was a secret military test. He and other soldiers on the island became violently ill and were hospitalized.

One of those soldiers, Israel Jewetz, testified that "the areas where we were barracked were sprayed with chemicals every day to control insect populations and prevent malaria and yellow fever outbreaks." Oppedisano developed hairy cell leukemia as a result of his exposures.

The Dallas Morning News spoke to both the veteran and Ms. Jones, and published two stories on August 20 and 24 about the issue. In the August 20 story, U.S. Southern Command spokesman Raul Duany said that if Agent Orange was sprayed, "it wouldn't pose a threat today because it should have dissipated by now."

However, the dioxin contained in most Agent Orange - the toxin that causes disease - remains in the soil for decades. The retired officer who ordered the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam as a defoliant contradicted Duany's claim. "It does not dissipate," said Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr. "If it's true that Agent Orange was tested in Panama, it is clear that the spokesman was wrong about the residual stuff."

Pesticides May Be Affecting Health

New information is also emerging about the heavy use of other kinds of pesticides in military bases in Panama besides Agent Orange, such as DDT and Chlordane, which were sprayed in residential areas of the Canal Zone, often daily, against termites. Both pesticides are banned in the United States. According to a preliminary study commissioned by Panama, "Though there is not enough data to establish a concise exposure scenario, there are plenty of indicators that demonstrate a significant human health hazard exists." The study, which took samples from Corozal and Clayton, concluded that "DDT, DDD, and DDE were all found in high quantities" on the two bases.

But the United States has not given Panama information on the application rates of these pesticides, according to a consultant for the Panamanian government. This is forcing Panama to consider health studies that can demonstrate the ill effects of the pesticides on surrounding populations.

An employee of Lockheed-Martin, which has been under contract to the Defense Department since 1996 to haul out toxic wastes from Panama, reported receiving a broad range of wastes. "We were handling cyanides, asbestos, poisons, known carcinogens, herbicides, pesticides," said Alfredo Smith, a supervisor at the Lockheed warehouse on Corozal base in Panama. "Some of this stuff had labels going back to the 1950s."

Smith told *The Dallas Morning News* that a Panamanian working under him began coughing up blood one day, after handling an unmarked barrel filled with a chemical powder. Smith himself experiences headaches, rashes, and other problems, and is suing Lockheed-Martin for lax safety procedures.

Press reports on chemicals used in the canal area have stimulated a number of memories about problems in the past. Former Canal Zone resident Don DeStaffino remembered a 10- or 12-year-old Panamanian child who died in the 1970s "in a jungle area of Howard AFB/Ft. Kobbe... The substance with which he came in contact that caused his death was in a 55 gallon barrel. I believe it was a yellow color, and a gel rather than a powder. I think the substance was claimed by the Air Force as a paint remover."

Sources: Interview with Joseph Oppedisano, 9/6/99; brief supporting Oppedisano appeal to Board of Veterans Appeals, 9/21/92; "Exposure Scenario Characterization for Human Health Risk Assessment due to Pesticide Contamination in the Canal Area," September 2, 1999; *Dallas Morning News* 8/20; 8/24; 10/11/99; *Stars and Stripes* 9/12/99; e-mails to FOR by veteran, 6/99; Don DeStaffino communication 10/12/99.

2009 Fiesta Days Schedule of Events
MUSIC FEST
July 10, 11, & 12th - Friday thru Sunday
PETERSEN PARK, 4300 Petersen Park Rd. 60050

Friday, July 10th

(4:00 pm - 11:00 pm) Admission: \$4 adults, 12 & under free.

- ◆ Food ~ Beer: 5:00 pm - 11:00 pm
- ◆ Amusements Rides: 5:00 - 11:00 pm
- ◆ Chamber Fiesta Days Mixer: 5:00 - 7:00 pm
- ◆ Re/Max Hot Air Tethered Balloon Ride: 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Performance Times:

5:39 pm: Goin' South

8:00 pm: Modern Day Romeos



Saturday, July 11th

(1:00 pm - 11:00 pm) Admission: \$8 adults, 12 & under free.

- ◆ Food ~ Beer: 1:00 - 11:00 pm
- ◆ Amusements Rides: 1:00 - 11:00 pm (*unlimited ride special 2pm-5pm*)
- ◆ Do Something Amazing.com presented by U.S. Air Force: 2:00 pm - 11:00 pm
- ◆ Fiesta Favorite Competition: 1:30 - 5:00 pm
- ◆ Canoe Challenge Races: 1:30 - 4:00 pm
- ◆ Volleyball Tournament: 2:00 pm -
- ◆ Harley Motorcycle Show: 2:00 - 5:00 pm
- ◆ Plywood Boat Challenge (McCullom Lake):
 - 1:30 pm Orientation
 - 2:00 - 4:00 pm Building Time
 - 4:30 pm Race

◆ Performance Times:

9:00 PM: Music Fest Rock N' Rev - Gin Blossoms



Sign up for a chance to win an autographed guitar signed by Gin Blossoms. Registration takes place at the Air 1 Wireless, Spring Grove Sprint Booth. Guitar donated by Washburn Guitars.

2009 Fiesta Days Schedule of Events
MUSIC FEST
July 10, 11, & 12th - Friday thru Sunday
PETERSEN PARK, 4300 Petersen Park Rd. 60050

Sunday, July 12th

(12:00 pm - 9:00 pm) Admission: \$5 adults, 12 & under free.

- ◆ 26th Annual Car Show: 8:00 am - 3:00 pm [website](#)
- ◆ Food ~ Beer: 12:00 pm - 8:00 pm
- ◆ Amusements Rides: 12:00 pm - 10:00 pm (*unlimited ride special 12pm-3pm*)
- ◆ Do Something Amazing.com presented by U.S. Air Force: 12:00 pm - 8:00 pm
- ◆ Men's Annual 3 on 3 Basket Ball Tournament: 9:00 am - 4:00 pm
at McHenry Middle School.
- ◆ Volleyball Tournament: 12:00 pm
- ◆ Fiesta Favorite Finalists Competition: 12:30 - 1:30 pm [application](#)
- ◆ Sand Sculpture Contest: 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm
- ◆ Extreme Sports Show: 1:00 - 3:00 pm *Skateboard Demo*
- ◆ Performance Times:

3:30 pm: The Moods



5:45 pm: The Ides of March featuring Jim Peterik



Work both gates again this year. The Vendor Gate and Admissions Gate

Work the gate at the times listed

Friday, July 10 from 4 pm to 11 pm

Saturday, July 11 from 1 pm to 11 pm

Sunday, July 12 from 12 pm to 9 pm.

Please call me, Rose, at 815-568-8939 (home).

IMPORTANT NEWS RELEASE

McHenry County Chapter of VietNow will hold a second Shop & Share fund-raising program on **July 13, 14 & 15, 2009 (Monday – Wednesday)** at all Jewel-Osco Stores.

By shopping at Jewel-Osco on one of those days, 5 percent of the total purchases, excluding tax, will be donated by Jewel-Osco to the organization.

McHenry County Chapter of VietNow will use the money generated by their Shop & Share to raise funds for our “2009 Jim Tober Christmas Basket Program.” This year we will deliver 45 baskets to Veteran and Needy families throughout McHenry County.

Anyone interested in helping McHenry County Chapter of VietNow by shopping at Jewel-Osco on those dates will need a “Shop & Share Identification Slip” and should contact Rose Lewis at 815-568-8939 or 815-236-1639 (cell phone) to obtain a slip before shopping.

**SHOP AND SHARE JULY 13, 14 & 15, 2009
MONDAY, TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY**



McHenry County Chapter
P.O. Box 998 McHenry, IL 60051

postage

Next Meeting
Tuesday, April 28, 2009
@ 7:30 pm

McHenry County Chapter VietNow Membership Application

DATE _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____
NAME _____ PHONE () _____
ADDRESS _____ CITY/STATE/ZIP _____
SERVICE BRANCH _____ DATES OF DUTY (1957-CURRENT) _____

_____ I am a veteran and want to be a **FULL MEMBER OF VietNow**

_____ I am not a veteran but want to be an **ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF VietNow**

Enclosed is my check for _____

**Memberships are \$15 annually renewable June 30th.
Veterans must enclose a copy of their DD214 form.
Send with check payable to: McHenry County Chapter of VietNow
PO Box 998, McHenry, IL 60051**

For a sum of ten (10) times the yearly dues , one can become a LIFE MEMBER