



McHENRY COUNTY CHAPTER



"The Chapter with a Heart"

AUGUST 2010

August 2010 McHenry County Chapter of ViệtNow's Newsletter

2010 – 2011 MCHENRY COUNTY CHAPTERS

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“VETERANS HELPING VETERANS” - This is more than our national motto; this is the ViệtNow way of life.

“THE CHAPTER WITH A HEART” is our chapter’s unique motto. We adopted this to reflect the positive of image that is ViệtNow and not the negative another chapter had adopted.

Our Chapter’s Beginning - In the early 1980’s there was a group of Vietnam Veterans attending “Rap” group meetings in the McHenry County Health Department building. As time went on, some of the vet’s in the group began to feel better about their experiences in Vietnam but did not want to leave the group. They had come to trust and cherish the bonds that they had developed within the group. Yet most of the veterans did not want to be a part of the traditional veteran organizations.

Someone had heard of a new group that had formed in Rockford Illinois that called itself ViệtNow. A couple of the vets went to one of their meetings and liked what they saw. They brought back information on ViệtNow to the group and explained their motto of “Veterans Helping Veterans.” Most everyone liked the idea of starting a chapter here in McHenry County.

It took a lot of work to get the McHenry County Chapter going. In November of 1983, the State of Illinois issued the “McHenry County Chapter of ViệtNow” their State Charter as an Illinois Not-For-Profit Organization. This gave the McHenry County Chapter of ViệtNow the distinction of being the **first** ViệtNow expansion chapter.

In our Chapter’s beginning, we would break into small groups and continue the “Rap” group setting. This was what had brought us together to become YOUR Chapter. This remained an important part of the meets for many years to come.

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EDITORIAL POLICY: The Newsletter Staff will evaluate all articles submitted as to appropriateness and relevancy to the goals of ViệtNow. Newsletter items must be submitted to the editorial staff by the Chapter meeting each month.

President's Ramblings

Joe (Boxer) Lewis, Your Chapter President

In this month's newsletter we have included information on how to obtain copies of your military records, including your medical records and your 201 file, from the federal government. Some of this information may be redundant from previous newsletters, but this is information that is always handy to have.

This month's newsletter contains information we received from our Chapter Treasurer, Steve Rucki. If you are working on, or intend to, file a claim with the DVA for service-connected disability, this information will definitely come in handy. Getting these documents will help you with names and locations of an incident. This will be handy for witnesses, locations, and an exact date of the incident.

If you are considering on filing a claim, first submit a request for your 201 file. Once you file a claim with the VA, it is hard to get your 201 file from them. I filed the proper form to get my 201 file and my medical records for my own use. Actually, I have filed this paperwork at least five times in the last seven years. To date, I have not had any success in getting them. The same old story, they lost my request and need another one will have to be filed. Over the last 38-years, I have probably tried to get a copy of my records a minimum of a dozen times. This is one reason you need to get this information before you file your claim. Once you file your claim with the VA, it takes a long time to get your files from them.

Welcome and Thank You to all of our New and Renewed Members – Lee Lexow has become a Life Member of ViệtNow. Welcome aboard as a Life Member Mustang! Dues renewals have been excellent for the chapter once again this year. Rose is reporting to you that we have achieved a 100% renewal this year. We also have a new member from the great state of Louisiana.

The PTSD Help Network - ptsdhelp.net

Post-Deployment Mental Health Issues - Military Veterans and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

(Note from the Prez: all photographs in this section are DoD Photographs.)
For the first time since Vietnam, more than a million Americans have served in overseas combat zones. Studies reveal that one in three of the men and women who return from Iraq and Afghanistan will suffer emotional problems. This site is devoted to helping them and their families recognize and adjust to the lingering trauma of their war experiences.

Many of today's veterans, especially those engaged in Afghanistan and Iraq, are on an emotional path already walked by those of us who served in Vietnam. Both generations of veterans share the fact of having served in a controversial war. Both wars engaged a largely unidentifiable and unseen enemy. Both wars shared the intense violence of close-quarter combat among small units. And finally, in both wars young volunteer soldiers shouldered the burden of combat duty disproportionately.

The lessons learned by my generation of veterans during our difficult years of readjustment can be used to help those of you who have most recently stood in harm's way. One generation of veterans should never neglect the opportunity to help their fellow veterans who served before or after them. This site acts on that opportunity.

In addition to providing free basic information to veterans, this site is intended to serve as a clearinghouse for practical ideas to help them and their families. War forever changes those who survive. Perhaps Edwin Starr's angry 1969 pop song "War" described it best: "War [has] shattered many a young man's dreams. Made him disabled, bitter, and mean."

"Why?" "Why me?" "Why not me?" and, "Was it worth it?" are just some of the questions war survivors ask themselves. In their war experiences, and in these questions asked by all survivors of trauma, germinate the seeds of PTSD.

"The stuff that haunts a guy is the stuff he wasn't ordered to do." — Clint Eastwood as Walt Kowalski in *Gran Torino*, 2008



Fact and Fiction

People exposed to a life-threatening traumatic event, such as combat, genocide, rape, assault, or a serious accident will have physical and emotional reactions to their experience. For some, the effects of the event, and their reactions to it, will be short-lived. For others, the trauma will continue to disturb them and influence their actions and feelings for years.

The long-term emotional response to a traumatic event is called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This anxiety-related disorder was officially identified after the Vietnam War. Although not fully understood or recognized until after Vietnam, the emotional effects of war have been with us throughout the ages. Many classic stories of war and its effect on warriors are a part of our culture and literature.

During the Civil War, what is now recognized as PTSD was commonly called “melancholy.” In World War I, the condition was referred to as “shell shock.” Then, World War II and Korea gave us the terminology “combat fatigue.” However, it was not until after Vietnam that the long-term effects of combat trauma were fully understood and began to be effectively treated.

For most of us, even though we may not have known it then and may continue to deny it now, serving in combat was a turning point in our lives. In ways most of our civilian brethren can never understand, we experienced losses during our military service that can endure a lifetime.

Our losses during combat ranged from the intangible loss of innocence and years of our life devoted to military service, to the very real and devastating loss of friends. Never again will the world seem as safe and secure for us as it had before our time in combat. At a very young age, we learned that bad things do happen to good people and that we can do very bad things as well.

"I am part of all that I have met." — Tennyson, Ulysses

Strong Emotions

The notion, which you may hear from people who are out-of-date, is that those who suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are weak and flawed. That notion is nonsense.

Scientific research has begun to reveal the physical genesis of the short- and long-term emotional responses to trauma. It is now well understood by the psychiatric community that being repeatedly traumatized creates strong emotions that can ultimately lead to symptoms of PTSD.

Life-threatening situations cause a physical response in humans. Our survival instinct will involuntarily cause us to experience an overwhelming need to defend ourselves or run. This survival mechanism is referred to as the fight-or-flight response. An inherent part of this response is an unconscious learning process to help recognize as dangerous similar situations that might be encountered in the future.

Confronted with trauma, the brain records every detail about the event — sights, smells, sounds, body sensations, even our thoughts and the strong emotions we experience at the time. Veterans often describe a heightened sense of awareness or of being alive during their combat experiences. These feelings are indelibly etched into our unconscious memories, and our bodies are conditioned to respond in a certain way to similar events in the future.



Triggered by something that consciously or unconsciously reminds us of a traumatic event, our bodies instinctively prepare to either fight or flee the situation. To have this response is a very stressful physical and strong emotional experience. What's more, it's a response that others around you may not understand: each of you hears the loud backfire of a car; with a startle for you, the veteran, respond to it as if it is a gunshot; your friend hears it as just a noise from a car and unlike you he can smoothly forget about it.

Fear for one's life is perhaps the most fundamental emotion. Research has begun to explain just how important fear is in shaping our emotions. The oldest part of our brain, the amygdala (ah-MIG-da-la), is a primitive emotional computer. Almost unchanged since humans began to walk upright, the amygdala is predisposed to detect and respond to predators and other kinds of dangers that threaten our survival or territory. It governs both our physical and emotional response to innate and learned fears. More important, it has the power to override rational thought.

Sights, smells, sounds, and other sensory information present at the time of trauma are often forever unconsciously remembered by the amygdala as danger signals. That is why sights, smells, or sounds similar to those of combat can trigger a physical and emotional response in the PTSD sufferer years after the trauma experienced in combat. This unconscious response can overwhelm the conscious mind that is telling you there is no real danger. For the mildly afflicted, the response might be an intrusive memory of the initial trauma. For others, the response may range from ducking for cover to becoming enraged or overly aggressive.

"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." — Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1933



Do I Have PTSD?

Only a skilled and competent medical doctor specializing in psychiatry can definitively tell you if you suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Nevertheless, if since returning from a combat deployment and sometimes many years after returning you can answer yes to any of the following questions, you have some symptoms of PTSD:

- Do you have prolonged memories of combat?
- Do you dream about the country in which you saw combat?
- Do you have nightmares or flashbacks?
- Do you suffer from bouts of insomnia?
- Do you ever seem to shut out the world?
- Do you often feel drained of emotions or just numb?
- Do you avoid things that remind you of combat experience?
- Do you find that anniversary dates of certain events in your combat experience make you feel uncomfortable?
- Do you find it hard to make and keep friends?
- Have you had multiple marriages?
- Is your current marriage strained?
- Have you abused alcohol or drugs to help you feel better?
- Do you have no plans for the future or could you not care less about the future?
- Are you irritable and prone to unexplained outbursts of anger?
- Are you jumpy or over-reactive to things that fail to startle others?



Most people experience one or more of these symptoms in the normal course of life. However, the more of these symptoms you have on a recurring basis, the more likely it is that you have PTSD.

Preparing combatants psychologically for war is antithetical to helping them recover from its psychological trauma. To expect otherwise places an unreasonable expectation on our military. The military has made an extensive effort to help its personnel adjust to the stress of combat. However, in the environment of a professional army many active duty personnel view psychiatric treatment as an admission of weakness or failure.

Left untreated, PTSD only becomes more ingrained and less responsive to treatment. Failed relationships, career and employment problems, substance abuse, depression, suicide, homicide and other acts of violence can be the end result of untreated PTSD. Seek a diagnosis and get help at your first reasonable opportunity.

"The night is dark, and I am far from home." — John Henry Newman

PTSDhelp.net

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Navy Ships Agent Orange Exposure List - Week of August 09, 2010 – (Compliments of Military.com)

The Department of Veterans Affairs Compensation and Pension Service has issued two lists of naval vessels it has verified conducted operations on the inland "brown water" rivers and delta areas of Vietnam. The lists also identify certain vessel types that operated primarily on the inland waterways. If a veteran's service aboard one of these ships can be confirmed through military records during the timeframes specified, then exposure to herbicide agents (e.g., Agent Orange) can be presumed. The lists include all vessels of Inshore Fire Support Division 93; all vessels with the designation LST, LCVP, PCF ("Swift Boats"), and PBR during their entire Vietnam tour; all Coast Guard WPBs and WHECs during their Vietnam tours. Several other vessels and timeframes of operations are included in these lists. See **January 2010 ship listing (PDF)** and **June 2010 Updated Ship List (DOC)**.

If you served on any of these mentioned ships and you have had a claim denied, you should reapply citing the VA list as the source for your reapplication. National Association of Uniformed Services has been told the VA is already working on a third list that will have more ships listed. If you have a claim and evidence the ship you served on was in Vietnamese waters and/or actually tied up to a dock there, make sure you include that with your claim.

Submitted by Steve Rucki



postage

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

Next Meeting
Tuesday, August 24, 2010
@ 7:30 pm

McHenry County Chapter ViệtNow Membership Application

DATE _____ **DATE OF BIRTH** _____

NAME _____ **PHONE ()** _____

ADDRESS _____ **CITY/STATE/ZIP** _____

SEVICE BRANCH _____ **DATES OF DUTY (1957-CURRENT)** _____

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

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

Enclosed is my check for _____

Annual Membership dues is: \$15 annually renewable June 30th.
New Veterans must enclose a copy of their DD214 form, which will be returned to you.

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

Send check payable to: McHenry County Chapter of ViệtNow, PO Box 998, McHenry, IL 60051