

# **INCOMING**

The newsletter of

**VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA  
Montgomery County Chapter 641  
PO Box 1748  
Silver Spring, Md. 20915**

[www.vvachapter641.org](http://www.vvachapter641.org)

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Spring 2024

## **CALENDAR**

- April 6      09:30 a.m. Board of Directors Meeting at the Montgomery College Cultural Arts Center,  
7995 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, Md.  
Membership Meeting to follow immediately afterwards
- May 4        09:30 a.m. Membership Meeting at the College Arts Center
- June 1       09:30 a.m. Membership Meeting at the College Arts Center

## **CHRON**

### **The Housewarming Gift**

Determined to reciprocate for the excessive generosity of associate members Thao Phung and Huong Le to the chapter, the membership voted at its February meeting to purchase a riding power lawn mower for their family to enable them to landscape their new digs in Burtonsville.

Lead instigator Art Wong went to a nearby hardware store, Zimmerman's, and negotiated the sale price, to keep it below what was budgeted. The operating plan was then to surprise them with the delivery from the store on February 16. However, the deliveryman was early, and Thao was unexpectedly home at that time. He protested the delivery, stating that he had never ordered it. The deliveryman looked at the shipping instructions, looked at Thao and advised that it had been ordered by Mr. Wong. About this time, Art showed up to set the record straight.

During the afternoon, Art was joined by chapter members Bill Bennett, Imants Celtnieks, Rodney Eng, Bill Gray, Dave Gudes (with spouse Helen Kish) and Jim Smith. Huong Le arrived late enough to be surprised. At the end of the afternoon, Thao and Huong re-reciprocated by offering the remaining visitors salmon, crab cakes, and eggs hatched from their backyard menagerie of approximately 15 chickens.

### **A Celebration of Character & Courage**

was the title assigned to a service at the Washington National Cathedral and a follow-up reception at the Washington Hilton. Bill Bennett, associate members Thao Phung, Huong Le, and their sons participated in the service and were joined by Imants Celtnieks at the reception. The event was designed to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War.

The service featured readings from scripture by several military chaplains, military-themed poems set to music and hymns (including the fourth verse of the Star-Spangled Banner), a video address from Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, and remarks by Air Force BG (ret) Bernie Skoch of the sponsoring AFA [i.e., Air & Space Forces Association] Foundation, MIA daughter and KIA niece Colleen Shine, and Army Gen. (ret) Dennis Reimer, former Army Chief of Staff and a two-tour Vietnam veteran.

The reception featured numerous tables maintained by sponsoring organizations and the VA. The many sponsors included organizations devoted to support of wounded soldiers and their families, plus Gold Star and MIA families. Authors, mainly writers on their experiences as POWs, also manned tables. And the food was quite good. And, of course, Thao and Huong provided transportation. Thanks!

### **Santa Came to the Vet Center**

The Vet Center hosted a pot luck luncheon for veterans, family & friends on 15 December at the Rosensteel Knights of Columbus Council #2169, in Silver Spring. It was attended by about 65 people. The Quilts of Valor Foundation, and local group Capital Quilts Cares in Gaithersburg, led by the three Sues - Sue Moats, Susan Carr, and Sue Wilchins - awarded two quilts to Vietnam veterans. Other ladies who were there & helping with the awards were: Ann Birnie, Pamela Cornblatt, Linda Henson, Roz Johnson & Viveca Kenehan. All are volunteers & make the beautiful works-of-art quilts for Service Members & Veterans who have been "Touched By War". As of 30 November, 369,697 Quilts of Valor have been presented throughout the world.

Those in attendance brought all manner of great food to be enjoyed by all. Included in the buffet were several types of chicken, ham, roast beef, several types of salads, mac & cheese, baked beans, & deviled eggs. Deserts to choose from included apple pie, cheese cake, cookies, eclairs, pecan pie & pumpkin pie. Bottled water, coffee, tea & soda were available to wash everything down.

Marine corpsman "Doc" Jim Renza gave a presentation on the benefits of using a walking stick as one exercises. He spoke of being recognized as he walks around Kensington. He said by using his walking stick his posture has improved because it helps him stand taller. Someone donated several dozen walking sticks to be taken by those in attendance to help them get into the habit of walking to improve their health. Vet Center t-shirts were available, as well as other collectibles acquired by Wayne Stinchcomb at functions he attends.

Safeway gift cards were personally handed out by Tim Stocker, Grand Knight of Rosensteel Knights of Columbus Council #2169. The event was put together by Wayne Stinchcomb, Army veteran, Vet Center Outreach Coordinator, as well as by Wayne Miller, USMC, Vet Center Director, & VVA Chapter 641 member.

--Bill Gray

### **Starring...**

Chapter member Noel Koch writes about his daughter, Jen Easterly, who is USMA '90 and a Rhodes Scholar. Now a retired lieutenant colonel, seconded to the Department of Homeland Security as the Director of the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency, the George C. Marshall International Center has selected her to receive its third annual Marshall Award in Ethical Leadership. The award will be presented at the Center's annual gala on April 12 at the Army Navy Country Club in Arlington.

The award is presented to a recipient who embodies the principles of selfless service, unwavering integrity, and visionary leadership exemplified by General Marshall, who was a Nobel Peace Laureate, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense. Col. Greg Gadson (U.S. Army, Ret.) received the inaugural Ethical Leadership award in 2022, and former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates received the award in 2023.

"Throughout her career of distinguished service to our nation, Director Easterly has been a model of ethical leadership in action", said Marshall Center Chairman Thomas Greenspon. "Her commitment to selfless service, unwavering integrity, and especially visionary leadership is making a powerful positive impact on the security of our country. We are proud to confer our third annual George C. Marshall Award in Ethical Leadership to an individual who has lived up to the lofty standard of General Marshall".

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

1. On November 8, 2023, The Greater Olney News published a story about chapter member Wayne Miller, also Chair of the Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs, and about the fellow Marine who saved his life in 1969 in Vietnam.

2. Chapter member Don Stanton lectured at American Legion Post 46, in Washington, DC, on the Vietnam War from 1972 to 1975, on January 22. Among the many revelations in his presentation, he addressed one of the most controversial topics. It has been an article of faith among observers on the left that presidential candidate Richard Nixon surreptitiously torpedoed peace negotiations by employing Anna Chennault as a cutout to persuade President Thieu of South Vietnam to hold firm against the outcome, thereby enabling his 1968 election victory. Conservatives have pushed back, contending that Thieu did not need any coaching from Chennault or Nixon to recognize that a successful conclusion of the negotiations would be a disaster for his government. Don's take: The negotiations, conducted in secret in Paris in 1968 between Averill Harriman, for the Johnson Administration, and representatives from North Vietnam, were discovered by Henry Kissinger, then advising Nixon. Kissinger notified Nixon, who, in turn, alerted Thieu to the negotiations, of which the latter was unaware – nature then took its course.

### **PACT ACT – A Quick Update**

Two presumptive Agent conditions are added: monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS) and high blood pressure (hypertension).

Five new presumptive locations for exposure: Any U.S. or Royal Thai base in Thailand, Laos (12-1-65 through 9-30-69), Guam, and American Samoa or in the adjacent territorial waters, Johnson Atoll, or on a ship calling there – starting 1-1-72.

## **Half Mast**

We mourn the death of Ben Hawley who succumbed to cancer on January 14. Among other distinctions, he served as secretary of the chapter for a year.

We mourn the death of Michaeline Wong, wife of Art Wong, who departed us on January 23.

Condolences to chapter first vice president Roland Kauffman, on the death of his brother, Clifford, who departed us on January 20.

Breaking: Rick Weidman was admitted to the hospital in early March in connection with a stroke.