

**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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**INCOMING**

**Summer 2019**

**CALENDAR**

July 04	09:00 a.m.	Assemble for the <b>Fourth of July Parade</b> , Takoma Park, Md. Form up one block east of Ethan Allen and Carroll Avenues
July 06	06:30 a.m.	Wash the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, DC
	09:30 a.m.	Chapter Meeting at Montgomery College Cultural Arts Center, 7995 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, Md.
August 03	09:30 a.m.	Chapter Meeting, at Montgomery College
August 17	01:00 p.m.	Annual Picnic/Cookout 14112 Chesterfield Road, Rockville
September 07	06:30 a.m.	Wall Wash, at the Wall
	09:30 a.m.	Chapter Meeting, at Montgomery College
September 21	12:00 p.m.	State Council Meeting, VFW Post 5118, 365 Glebe Rd., Easton, Md.
October 05	09:30 a.m.	Chapter Meeting, at Montgomery College
October 19	06:30 a.m.	Final Wall Wash of the year, at the Wall
November 2	09:00 a.m.	Chapter Meeting, at Montgomery College

## **ANNOUNCEMENT**

The **annual picnic/cookout** will be held on Saturday, August 17, starting at 1 p.m., in Moy's back yard, 14112 Chesterfield Road, Rockville (near Aspen Hill). Bring your family and a covered dish!

## **CHRON**

### **Memorial Day Activities**

The chapter entered a marching unit in the Rockville Memorial Day Parade. Bill Bennett, Jonathan Chudson, Bill Highland, and Jim Smith marched, while Frank Jackson on his motorcycle and Roland Kauffman in his vehicle trailed the marchers. Also marching were Thao Phung, Huong Le, Thanh and Dat Phung, and "Uncle" Tan Quach, as well as peripatetic Vietnam vet "Jimmy," recruited from the line of spectators. Interested observer Dave Deleva and Roland's son Mike also marched, while Mike's three children, Ashley, Jay and Kevin, rode with grandpa.

Jim Tyson once again served with the VVA Honor Guard at the Arlington National Cemetery Memorial Day ceremony.

The previous evening, chapter members Bill Gray, Art Wong, Dennis Kachovec, Wayne Miller, Moy, and Charlie Shyab were among a contingent of Vietnam veterans honored on the stage at the National Memorial Day Concert, held for the 29<sup>th</sup> year at the foot of Capitol Hill and broadcast on PBS.

### **The County Remembers**

On May 21, Montgomery County held its annual Vietnam Veterans Memorial Commemoration at Memorial Plaza in Rockville. Michael Subin, a chapter member, acted as emcee. Wayne Miller, also a chapter member, opened the ceremony with a solo of the National Anthem. Following the recognition of family members of the Montgomery County KIAs enshrined on the wall of the memorial, Ike Leggett, a chapter member, spoke to the assembled crowd. Reflecting on his 12 years as county executive, he said his two proudest moments were the creation of the county Commission on Veterans Affairs and the construction of the memorial.

After his speech, chapter president Bill Bennett and first vice president Roland Kauffman presented the wreath at the memorial. Chapter members Miller, Jane McCarthy, and Bill Gray participated in the reading of the names of the fallen.

Also present from the chapter were Richard Barney, Steve Campanella, Bill Highland, Will Jackson, Joseph Jones, Moy, Artie Shelton, Art Wong, and associate member Maureen Williams, as well as perhaps a few others. But in the words of emcee Subin, any time you do a public event, "you are going to miss somebody".

## **The Adventist Memorial**

On April 12, Washington Adventist University held a ribbon cutting ceremony to dedicate a Veterans Memorial Bench located on their campus in Takoma Park. The bench was the idea of chapter member Charlie Shyab, WAU Class of '70. He was a combat medic in the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in 1967-68. Afterwards, he taught school for 40 years in the Adventist Education System.

Over 50 students, staff, and veterans attended the event, including chapter members Charlie Shyab, Steve Campanella, Imants Celtnieks, Bill Gray, and Bill Highland.

Guest speakers included Ron Walters, Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Nadja West, Surgeon General of the U.S. Army and Commanding General, U.S. Army Medical Command. NJROTC Color Guard cadets from John F. Kennedy High School and the WAU Ovibrass Quartet musicians and WAU student Rachael Jackson performed the opening ceremony.

- Bill Gray and Bill Highland

## **Second Santa**

Primarily through the efforts of Rodney Eng, Bill Gray, and Bill Highland, the chapter has been providing support for the underserved psychiatric ward inpatients at the VAMC. The nursing staff responds with a thank you letter on April 30:

“Thanks to your continuous support, we have been able to provide clean socks, undergarments, oral care items, female items, art supplies, activity books, and even reading glasses! This list is not all-inclusive, but just a taste of what you all contribute to the healing of our Veterans. We are even able to provide a care package to our homeless Veterans that are being discharged! We love your support!”

## **Miscellaneous**

1. The semiannual wheelchair wash at the VAMC occurred on May 11. Participants included Bill Bennett, Richard Epstein, Dave Gudes, Frank Jackson, Joseph Jones, Roland Kauffman, Art Wong, and associate members Thao Phung, Huong Le, their children Thanh and Dat, and “Uncle” Tan Quach. Also assisting were two VAMC volunteers: Larissa Kehn and Tracey Ohan.
2. Bob Doubek, co-founder of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, spoke at the May 4 chapter meeting concerning the history of the conception and construction of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. He is also the author of Creating the Vietnam Veterans Memorial: The Inside Story.
3. The chapter has elected as its delegates to the national convention in Spokane, Wa., to be held in July, charter member Sandra Spatz-Wiszneauckas, who now resides in Portland, Or., and chapter president Bill Bennett.

4. The newly formed incarcerated veterans chapter at Jessup Correctional Institution, VVA Chapter 1135, published its first newsletter in April. The centerpiece of the newsletter is a discussion of its successful fundraising drive, involving the preparation and sale of over 1,600 sub sandwiches. Proceeds were donated to the Maryland Center for Veterans Education & Training, Inc. in Baltimore. MCVETS, among other distinctions, provides PTSD and substance abuse counseling, as well as employment and shelter assistance benefitting veterans within six months of release from prison.
5. On May 13, Joseph Jones, Roland Kauffman and Jim Smith attended a ceremony at the women's prison in Jessup, wherein three dogs were presented to the inmates by America's Vet Dogs to be trained as service dogs.

### **STATE OF THE VAMC**

Michael S. Heimall, director of the Washington, DC, medical center and outlying clinics in Montgomery County, addressed the meeting of the Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs on May 21. Among his remarks:

There are 20,000,000 veterans, 5,500,000 of whom receive care from the VA. The VA is far better positioned to manage care for patients, as their prescribing rates for opioids is about half of the private sector. The VA looks for other alternatives and has been practicing this method for 20 years.

With regard to the 2017 report about critical deficiencies in the DC VAMC, the VA Inspector General found no evidence that any patients were ever harmed or put at risk. The IG did find a tremendous breakdown in the administrative processes and staffing that affected finances, supply chain, sterile processing, and the ability to purchase equipment. Critical staff made sure no one was injured. Today, there are only five remaining issues to address; three are monitoring data to make sure changes continue, and two are supply chain issues.

Dartmouth College conducted a study comparing VA hospitals to the private sector. The DC VAMC is the safest hospital in the area based on mortality rates for individuals being admitted for pneumonia, heart attack, congestive heart failure, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

The DC VAMC is also looking at hospital-acquired infections. 425,000 Americans die per year due to preventable medical errors. The DC VAMC established standardized bundles of care and went six months with zero central-line infections.

Note: On June 6, the **Mission Act** went into effect. The intent is to build an integrated health care network with private sector partners. Dr. Heimall stated that an effect of the law locally will be to push more care into the Community Based Outpatient Clinics. There is presently one in Gaithersburg and another one breaking ground in 2020 or 2021 in Prince George's County. For more information on the Mission Act, google <https://missionact.va.gov/>

(With thanks to Betsy Tolbert Luecking)