



# 2nd Battalion 1st Infantry Chapter, Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA)

WEBSITE: [www.b-2-1-196lib.com](http://www.b-2-1-196lib.com)



Volume 6

“A Soldier Once And Always”

November 2016

**Commanders Corner:** From what I hear, is sounds like everyone that was able to attend the reunion in Albuquerque had a good time. Really sorry I had to miss it but, I had to make a choice between going to the annual Kokomo reunion and the Americal reunion and when they fall on the same weekend I have decided to alternate which one I am going to attend because I have been going to Kokomo with some of our guys for about 25 years now. Only missed it 2 times and the last time was to attend an Americal reunion. It was Kokomo's turn this year. I really appreciate the ability of my fellow officers who were able to get there to keep things going on an even keel and taking care of business. I was sorry to hear our attendance in Albuquerque was down compared to all of our previous years but, I know that's a long way for most of us. Speaking of a long way, next year the Americal reunion will be in Minneapolis, MN and I'll be there with bells on (not bell bottoms; I don't have any left from the old days). Anyway, I know that's a hell of a trek for most of us but, if you start making plans now, maybe we can get our attendance back up to previous reunions. As soon as I get some more definite information on the event, I'll get it on our web site. We gained more new members at the reunion; Dixie Carder and Debbie Bacon became associate members and Clarence Phinisee (A 2/1) joined as a member. Welcome to the chapter and, if you have any questions, suggestions, etc. please feel free to contact one of the officers or any other member. I should have our 2016 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter financial and membership information ready to put out on the web site about mid-October. My column is a little short this time since I wasn't able to do the big reunion but, Rich has kindly consented to do the write up to let all of you know what went on. Just an FYI, the Minneapolis reunion will coincide with our annual chapter meeting again and 2017 is an election year for Commander, Vice-commander and Secretary/Treasurer. 2018 will be the election year for our 2 at-large officer committee members. Start thinking of candidates; remember we do take self-nominations if you have the desire to step up and help out the chapter. I've just updated the web site with the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter financial and dues information. Take a look and if you have any questions, please let me or Jesse know. I hope you all have a great Thanksgiving this November and remember how lucky we are to be able to share it with friends and family.

**Chuck**

*Keep safe and may the bond of battle never be broken!*

**Middle age is having the choice of two temptations and choosing the one that will get you home earlier.**



**Cost of Living Adjustment 2017:** Military retirees, veterans receiving VA compensation, and some 70 million Americans on Social Security will see a 0.3 percent cost-of-living increase at the end of the year. Veterans benefits are not automatically tied to the Social Security increase, but Congress in July passed legislation to link them in 2017. The slight increase matches the 2016 raise, and marks the third consecutive year COLA has been less than a half percentage point.

**Veterans Day Reminder:** Remember to share a tribute to all veterans who served in this country's military on Veterans Day, Friday November 11, 2016 at 1100 hours. As we honor the over 23 million living veterans from the Greatest Generation to the Latest Generation, let us never forget this debt that is owed. No government commission or single dollar amount can adequately re-pay what has been given to all of us throughout our nation's history. When we Americans were born, we inherited two very precious gifts. One was the gift of life, and the other was the gift of freedom, both of which were paid for by someone else. I would like to encourage the young people to think about what others have done to make it possible for us to wake up every morning free." Through their blood, service and sacrifice we are free to go about our activities without fear or reprisal. Hershel Williams earned his Medal of Honor during WWII on Iwo Jima. Mr. Williams made a poignant statement encouraging younger generations to remember the service of all military personnel. He stated "When we Americans were born, we inherited two very precious gifts. One was the gift of life, and the other was the gift of freedom, both of which were paid for by someone else. I would like to encourage the young people to think about what others have done to make it possible for us to wake up every morning free." Through their blood, service and sacrifice. This day honors veterans from all wars but also gives us the distinct opportunity to: "Join the nation ... and thank a Vietnam veteran!" You can show your support simply by saying "Thank you for your service to our country" to the next veteran you meet.

**Editor's Note:** I am sure sorry for not being able to send each of you an October 2016 Newsletter. My computer broke down while attending the ADVA Reunion in Albuquerque, NM. Late September 2016 I didn't take the time to have it looked at or repaired because we were on an extended vacation visiting family and touring while out West. As you can tell, the computer has been repaired and I am back in business. Thanks for patience.

**POW/MIA Update:** : The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced the identification of remains belonging to three servicemen who had been missing in action since World War II and Korea. All will be buried with full military honors. Returned home are:

– Army Cpl. Milton T. Bullis, 19, of Detroit, will be buried Oct. 21 in Holly, Mich. Bullis was a member of Medical Company, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, fighting a delaying action south from the Châ Conghâcon River to Kunu-ri, North Korea. He was declared missing in action on Dec. 1, 1950, but it would be later learned he died in captivity in early 1951.

– Navy Fireman 3rd Class John H. Lindsley, 22, born in the Philippines and raised in Waukegan, Ill., will be buried Oct. 25, in Arlington National Cemetery. On Dec. 7, 1941, Lindsley was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which capsized after sustaining multiple torpedo hits as it was moored off Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

– Army Cpl. Melvin R. Hill was one of 2,500 U.S. and 700 Republic of Korea soldiers assembled into the 31st Regimental Combat Team on the east side of the Chosin River, when they were attacked and forced into a fighting withdrawal in late November 1950. By Dec. 6, 1950, approximately 1,500 wounded soldiers were evacuated, and the remaining had been either captured or killed. Hill was reported missing in action as a result of the battles. Interment services are pending.

**Afghan Official: Gunmen Abduct American, Australian in Kabul:** Five gunmen wearing Afghan military uniforms have abducted an American and an Australian in the Afghan capital, Kabul, a security official. The two foreigners were taken from their SUV while driving on Sunday night on a main road near the American University of Afghanistan, according to Sediq Sediqqi, spokesman for the Afghan Interior Ministry. They are believed to be employees of the university and were traveling between the university and their residence, he said. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the abduction. Sediqqi also added that initial reports show that up to five armed men stopped the foreigners' vehicle and carried out the kidnapping. The two abducted are both men, he said. He did not reveal any more details except to say that an investigation is underway. The U.S. Embassy in Kabul issued a brief statement confirming the kidnapping of an American citizen but gave no further details "due to privacy concerns." "U.S. Embassy security officials are working closely with Afghan law enforcement and security colleagues and AUAF to assist in the investigation into the kidnapping," it said, referring to the American University of Afghanistan. Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade also issued a statement confirming "the apparent kidnapping of an Australian in Kabul." No further details were released, also for privacy concerns. "We continue to advise Australians not to travel to Afghanistan because of the extremely dangerous security situation, including the serious threat of kidnapping," it said. Senior staff at the university in Kabul could not immediately be reached for comment. Kidnappings are not uncommon in Afghanistan. Three other foreigners who were kidnapped in Kabul over the past year have all been released.

**DD 214s Available Electronically:** It's official; DD-214s are NOW Online. Please pass on to other vets. The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) has provided the following website for veterans to gain access to their DD-214s online: <http://vetrecs.archives.gov/> or try <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records>. This may be particularly helpful when a veteran needs a copy of his DD-214 for employment purposes. NPRC is working to make it easier for veterans with computers and Internet access to obtain copies of documents from their military files. Military veterans and the next of kin of deceased former military members may now use a new online military personnel records system to request documents. Other individuals with a need for documents must still complete the Standard Form 180, which can be downloaded from the online web site. Because the requester will be asked to supply all information essential for NPRC to process the request, delays that normally occur when NPRC has to ask veterans for additional information will be minimized. The new web-based application was designed to provide better service on these requests by eliminating the records centers mailroom and processing time. "Sent in by Pete Vander Hagen"

**Army Military Retirees, Annuitants and Former Spouses**—The September 2016 Retiree Newsletter is ready for your review. It contains important information about logging on to your myPay account, Affordable Care Act (ACA), notifying DFAS of life changing events, and preparing your loved ones. To access the newsletter, please copy and paste the link below to your internet browser. You will find a list of topics in the newsletter with a brief description of each article. After copying and pasting the link to your internet browser, click on the link for the article you want to read, and the full text will appear. <http://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/newsevents/newsletter.html>

**First US Service Member Killed In Mosul Offensive:** The U.S. suffered its first combat death in the Mosul offensive October 20, 2016 when a service member died of wounds from the detonation of a roadside bomb. The service member, who was not identified, "died of wounds sustained in an improvised explosive device blast" in northern Iraq, according to a press release from Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve. The release did not give a location for the incident but a U.S. official, speaking on grounds of anonymity, told USA Today that the service member was involved in supporting local forces in the drive to retake the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria stronghold in northwestern Mosul. More than 100 U.S. advisers and Joint Terminal Attack Controllers to guide airstrikes have moved forward with the attacking forces in a support role, along with AH-64 Apache helicopters, according to the Defense Department. There are currently about 5,000 U.S. troops serving in Iraq, primarily to advise and assist Iraqi forces. The announcement of the death came a day after Army Maj. Gen. Gary Volesky, commander of Combined Joint Forces Land Component Command-Operation Inherent Resolve and the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), said that U.S. advisers accompanying friendly forces were operating well behind the forward line of troops.

**ISIS Support Grows:** Citing a classified document generated by the U.S. government agency charged with integrating terrorism related intelligence reports that bISIS is rapidly expanding. According to the Nation Counterterrorism Center, when the U.S. military began its anti-ISIS campaign in 2014, ISIS was operating in only seven countries. Today, the terror group is operating in 18.

**1 0,000th Syrian Reaches US in Resettlement Program:** The U.S. will reach its target of taking in 10,000 Syrian war refugees in a year-old resettlement program, said the U.S. ambassador to Jordan after meeting families headed to California and Virginia. The resettlement program has emerged as an issue in the U.S. presidential campaign, with Republican nominee Donald Trump alleging displaced Syrians pose a potential security threat. Alice Wells, the U.S. ambassador to Jordan, said Sunday that keeping Americans safe and taking in some of the world's most vulnerable people are not mutually exclusive. "Refugees are the most thoroughly screened category of travelers to the United States, and Syrian refugees are subject to even greater scrutiny," she said. Wells said the target of resettling 10,000 Syrian refugees in the U.S. in the fiscal year 2016 will be reached after several hundred Syrians depart from Jordan over 24 hours. The resettlement program focuses on the most vulnerable refugees, including those who were subjected to violence or torture or are sick. Close to 5 million Syrians have fled civil war since 2011. Most struggle to survive in tough conditions in neighboring countries, including Jordan, which hosts close to 660,000 Syrian refugees.

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**Army Deploying Heavy Brigade from 1st ID to Korea:** The U.S. Army announced Oct. 19, 2016 it will deploy a heavy brigade from the 1st Infantry Division as part of the regular rotation to the Republic of Korea. Approximately 3,500 soldiers from the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, from Fort Riley, Kansas, will deploy this fall and replace the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team to support the United States Forces-Korea's commitment to the Republic of Korea, according to an Oct. 19 Army press release. The Army also announced recently that the Fort Riley-based 1st ID will deploy 500 soldiers to Iraq this fall to assume the role of Combined Joint Forces Land Component Command-Iraq support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

**US Preps for More Training of Iraqi Troops After Mosul:** The fall of Mosul will set in motion yet another training cycle for the Iraqi Security Forces and a return to the counter-insurgency strategy that will keep U.S. troops in Iraq indefinitely, according to U.S. military officials. The battle for Mosul "will not be the last stand" in Iraq for Daesh, an Arabic acronym for the Islamic state of Iraq and Syria, a U.S. military official who spoke on grounds of anonymity said last Friday. "Clearing Mosul of Daesh will not be the end of Daesh and will not mark their military defeat," the official said. The U.S. defense establishment from Defense Secretary Ashton Carter on down has predicted with near total confidence that the fall of Mosul was inevitable, although tough fighting was expected once the ISF enters the city itself. Following its defeat in the northwestern city, "Daesh will transform into a traditional insurgent or terrorist-like organization," the official said. A similar view was expressed earlier last week by Army Maj. Gen. Gary Volesky, commander of Combined Joint Forces Land Component Command-Operation Inherent Resolve and the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

**Turkey Sends More Tanks into Syria with US Backing:** Turkey sent more tanks into Syria Oct. 21, 2016 to consolidate its hold on the border town of Jarablus, and also fired artillery at a Syrian Kurdish militia group backed by the U.S. The Turkish artillery fired on forces of the Kurdish YPG (People's Protection Units) which allegedly were seen to be moving north from the city of Manbij toward Jarablus, Turkey's state-run Andalou news agency reported. About 200 Turkish soldiers from mechanized units and 150 Special Forces soldiers were involved in the cross-border action and were now involved in clearing operations, Andalou reported. The U.S. provided close air support for the cross-border action by Turkey. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said then that the incursion had the dual purpose of driving ISIS from Jarablus and preventing the YPG from taking the town. Vice President Joe Biden, on a one-day visit to Ankara to mend frayed relations, backed Erdogan in demanding that the YPG move east of the Euphrates River in Syria. Biden said the YPG risked losing U.S. support if they failed to move to the east, but Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook said Thursday that elements of the YPG were still west of the river. "We have made it absolutely clear that the (YPG) must go back across the river," Biden said. "They cannot and will not, under any circumstances, get American support if they do not keep that commitment."

**More Arrests Made in TRICARE Rx Kickback Scheme:** Federal agents October 13, 2016 charged 10 more defendants with fraud and conspiracy in a kickback scheme involving compound drugs and TRICARE, the military health insurance program. The alleged conspiracy to market and prescribe exorbitantly priced pain and scar under false pretenses milked TRICARE out of \$102 million in just 21 months, from May 2014—February 2016. This was just one of many companies that sprang to life recently to make fortunes off of unregulated compound drugs. Defendants here include two physicians – Dr. Walter Neil Simmons, 47, of Mesa, Ariz., and Dr. William F. Elder-Quintana, 50, of El Paso, Texas, and marketers of a Dallas-based company called CMGRX. The scheme was to offer kickbacks to physicians and "grants" to hundreds of military and family members at Fort Hood, Texas, to have costly compound drugs prescribed and filled using TRICARE. While waiting for the Federal Drug Administration to decide how to regulate ingredients, TRICARE saw compound drug costs explode from \$23 million a year in 2010 to almost \$500 million a month by April 2015, fueled by unethical compound drug companies and aggressive marketing.

**Annual Reunions Report:** The 2016 ADVA Reunion was held Sept. 13 – 17, 2016 at the Crown Plaza Hotel. As you might expect the Chapter had its own Hospitality Room just off the pool side of the hotel. I first wish to thank Eileen and Jesse for setting up the accommodations and caring for those who visited the room. We did have a rather sparse attendance but this was in part because the reunion was held at the same weekend as the Vietnam Veteran reunion in Kokomo, IN. There were 12 members attending in Albuquerque, NM. The tours that were offered were very interesting and a large group of attendees went on the scheduled tours. I represented the Chapter at the Executive meeting on Saturday morning and met with the new leadership that will drive the Association for the next 2 years. I am encouraged to meet them and to hear of their plans during their tenure. The 2017 reunion location, Minneapolis, MN. was selected to be held during the last weekend of August 2017. The hotel has not been settled because of contract disputes. We were informed the contract will be settled very soon. The Association is looking a reunion close to Fort Sill, OK because the construction of Americal Monument that is being constructed on the Post. More to report as we go through the year. Our reunion was blessed by the presents of Mrs. Debbie Bacon, wife of Bill Bacon, a member of the Chapter and Company Commander of Co. A while serving in Vietnam. It was a real pleasure to meet her and to have her presents at the reunion dinner. We enrolled one new member during the reunion, Clarence Phinisee (A 2/1). The Chapter led a gathering of Vietnam Veterans who are commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Vietnam War. We handed out approximately 150 commemorative pins to everyone who served in the military during the Vietnam era 1965 – 1975. You would have been proud of the way our chapter handled the entire affair. As you might have heard we lost the spouse of Ernie Rodriguez. She had a massive stroke and never recovered. We took up a collection and sent a floral arrangement from the Chapter. Ernie has sent me a beautiful response praising us for adding a beautiful and colorful arrangement to the funeral service. We also purchased "Get Well" card for Roger Grazioplene, who is recovering from illness. The Association sent out scholarships to all who applied totaling \$ 44,000. If you have a qualifying relative that is attending an institution of higher learning, I urge you to encourage them to apply for a scholarship. Another important issue that was largely discussed is making an application for benefits from the Veterans Administration. If you think you have a case, but do not have the energy or ability to apply for the benefit, urge everyone to get in touch with Rich Heroux. He has successfully assisted several veterans with the application process. He has much to offer to assist you, so get on the phone and call on him. His phone number is on the WEB site.



**With Military Population Dwindling, Fort Hood Hangs a Vacancy Shingle:** Rents start at \$995 per month. The schools are good. And the neighborhood is safe -- after all, it's on one of the largest U.S. military installations in the world. In the mornings, residents driving along Tank Destroyer Boulevard or Hell on Wheels Avenue will see "TROOP CROSSING" signs and might come across columns of jogging soldiers. In the evenings, they'll be serenaded by taps playing from loudspeakers, plus the occasional explosion in the distance. Dealing with a low occupancy rate as the Army shrinks after the peak of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Fort Hood has, for the first time, opened up rental units on the post to people unaffiliated with the military. The shift, triggered by a provision in the Army's contract with a private company that runs the post's family housing program, has caused concern among some soldiers about whether the presence of outsiders will introduce a new security risk at Fort Hood, home to two high-profile shootings in the last decade. Brian Dosa, Fort Hood's director of public works, said the Army has received "mixed reactions" from soldiers. "We would prefer to have strictly military families living in our villages," Dosa said. "But I don't think it's a major impact ... that we now have some civilians. The numbers are pretty small." Just like their soldier-neighbors in the family housing areas, the newcomers are allowed to keep guns in their homes, Fort Hood spokesman Chris Haug said. (Single soldiers living in the barracks cannot keep guns in their residences.) Haug said the gun policy isn't a security risk because there are rigorous safeguards for the new residents, who must go through two layers of background checks -- one by the housing company and another by the Fort Hood Directorate of Emergency Services -- and register any firearms they bring on post with Fort Hood authorities. "They've had two background checks for everyone in their family over the age of 18. That's more than your neighbor has," Haug said. Thirty-four other U.S. military installations have already brought in nonmilitary residents, and there have been no major security issues, said Mack Quinney, project director for the housing company. Two families who are currently unaffiliated with the military have already moved in at Fort Hood, Quinney said. Many more have applied and been rejected, mainly for financial reasons, he said. Among the new tenants is a former service member who is a reservist, Dosa said. He expects most civilians who are interested in living on the post will have some kind of indirect military connection.



**Backup For Caregivers:** When Hal Dumas returned from deployment to Iraq, the signs of post-traumatic stress disorder were not immediately evident. As they appeared support, his wife, Kristi, felt isolated and helpless as she moved into a caregiver role. Dumas is among approximately 5.5 million caregivers for active-duty troops and veterans. Many don't label themselves as caregivers, which makes it all the more difficult to ask for support. On Sept 27, former Senator Elisabeth Dole and Tom Hank launched "Hidden Heroes", a campaign to raise awareness for caregivers sponsored by the Elizabeth Dole Foundation. The campaign, which has received two million dollars, unveiled a website that provides lists of resources and a community forum for caregivers, and a list of 54 cities that have signed on to promote its mission.

**Arnold Palmer, Golfer and Coastie:** What most know about Arnold Palmer, who is known in his sport as "The King," is his incredible legacy in golf. What most don't know in that legendary career on the links, and who he was as a man, he credited to a three-year stint in the U.S. Coast Guard at a tough time in his life

## Service to Our Country – A Veteran’s Prospective

As a nation, we recognize Veterans Day. Originally known as Armistice Day, Veterans Day is officially observed Friday November 11, 2016. We honor the more than one million American men and women who have given their lives for their country since our nation’s founding. Our debt to these heroes can never be re-paid but our gratitude and respect must last forever. For many veterans, our nation was important enough to endure long separations from their families, miss the births of their children, freeze in sub-zero temperatures, bake in wild jungles, lose limbs, and, far too often, lose their lives. Military spouses have had to endure career interruptions, frequent changes of address, and a disproportionate share of parental responsibilities. The children often had to endure changes in schools, separation from friends and, hardest of all, the uncertainty of whether or not Mom or Dad will live through their next combat tour.

You cannot fight a war without veterans and while the utopian idea of a society without war is appealing, let us not forget that wars have liberated slaves, stopped genocide and toppled terrorist. Stephen Ambrose once wrote, “America’s wars have been like rungs on a ladder by which it rose to greatness. No other country has triumphed so long, so consistently or on such a vast scale through force of arms.” It has been often said that without our veterans, Americans would be speaking some foreign language. Regardless of which view of alternative history you take, *we do know* that without our veterans America would not be America.

You can show your support by hiring a veteran in your workplace, visiting a VA hospital or donating to a veterans program. Companies should understand that it’s smart business to hire veterans, and when members of the Guard and Reserves deploy, it is America’s business to ensure that their civilian careers do not suffer. Homelessness is another issue that affects veterans disproportionately. Too often today’s tattered citizen of the street was yesterday’s toast-of-the-town in a crisp uniform with rows of shining medals. This is hardly the “thanks of a grateful nation.” We can do better. We must do better.

Fortunately, veterans don’t ask for much. Benefits are a mere drop in the bucket compared to the financial and human cost of war. But, nonetheless, we still owe them. In 1979 author Tom Wolfe wrote a book about the Mercury 7 astronauts called “The Right Stuff.” As heroic veterans they certainly earned the distinction, but, my friends, I would not limit the title to that group only. Anyone who has honorably worn a United States military uniform has ***The Right Stuff***. Remember **that** - the next time you see a homeless person on the street, a man in a wheelchair or a difficult co-worker who is experiencing PTSD. Historians have said that Dwight Eisenhower was prouder of being a soldier than he was of being the president. And while relatively few veterans ever reach the rank of general, pride in ones’ military service is a bond shared by nearly all who have served. This pride is on display on every obituary page in the country, where military service – regardless of how many decades have passed and subsequent achievements reached – is mentioned with the death notice of nearly every deceased veteran. Can any CEO or distinguished Ivy League graduate truly claim to have more responsibility than the 21-year-old squad leader walking point on patrol in Afghanistan? Yes, my friends, nothing they ever do will eclipse their military service and they ***do have the right stuff!*** Fewer than 10 percent of Americans can claim the title “veteran.” And while the great military phrase “uncommon valor was a common virtue,” has been so often repeated that it risks becoming a cliché, it is no less true.

In 1789 George Washington said, "The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their country." We must ask ourselves as a nation, are we serving veterans even half as well as they have served us?

Join with your local veteran organization activities as they conduct the Veterans Day ceremony. These take place at local cemetery or where a patriotic monument is located. For the short period the ceremony lasts demonstrate your concern for the plight of our veteran population that seek to make right a wrong or apply for compensation for an injury attributed to military service. As we honor the over 23 million living veterans from the Greatest Generation to the Latest Generation, let us never forget this debt that is owed. No government commission or single dollar amount can adequately re-pay what has been given to all of us throughout our nation’s history. When we Americans were born, we inherited two very precious gifts. One was the gift of life, and the other was the gift of freedom, both of which were paid for by someone else. I would like to encourage the young people to think about what others have done to make it possible for us to wake up every morning free.” Through their blood, service and sacrifice. Set aside a moment to honor those who are commemorating the 540th Anniversary of the Vietnam War. Vietnam veterans were never really shown the nation’s admiration or pride for having answered the call to duty as veterans had before Vietnam. They have suffered through the sarcasm, arrogance and repugnance after serving admirable doing whatever was asked of them. It is finally time to heal the wounds of this conflict once and for all. Please join me and the other veteran organizations and pay tribute to these gallant and brave warriors. You can show your support simply by saying “Thank you for your service to our country” to the next veteran you meet.

## Sussex group pursues a dream of a North Jersey Veteran Cemetery:

John Harrigan got the idea of building a cemetery for veterans in northern New Jersey when he was driving home from New York State with his wife. On their way, he saw a sign for the Orange County Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Goshen, N.Y., and decided to check it out. "We saw how beautiful it was and I decided to try to get one built up here. Why don't we have something like that here?" said Harrigan, president of the Sussex County chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America. More than three years later, Harrigan said he still jokes with his wife about that day. "Aren't you sorry I made that left-hand turn?" he said he tells her, laughing.

The case for a veterans cemetery in northern New Jersey was made more poignantly when Harrigan later received a call from 87-year-old Dolores Bush after Bush read a newspaper story about his search for land for a new cemetery. Bush's husband, Edmund, is buried at the Brig. Gen. William C. Doyle Cemetery in Burlington County, the only state-run cemetery for military veterans. A Navy veteran of World War II, he died in 2009 at age 92 after 67 years of marriage. While Bush tries to make the 200-mile round trip from her Newton home as often as possible to visit her husband's grave — she last visited him with a wreath during the Christmas holidays — she needs to depend on her children to drive her. "The trip is much too long. I'd be visiting much more if it were more local for me," said Bush, who still drives locally but is unable to make the two-hour trip to the state cemetery.

Harrigan's crusade to have a cemetery built on 66 acres in Sparta exclusively for veterans from Sussex, Warren, Passaic and Morris counties cleared its first major hurdle when the Sussex freeholders adopted a resolution to get the project under way. Tentatively, it would be named the Northern New Jersey Veterans Memorial Cemetery. The county would retain the right-of-way to an abandoned railroad bed that runs through the property for a future walking or biking trail. "To me, this will work. It's a great piece of property. There's more than enough here," said the 64-year-old Harrigan, during a short stroll along the old railroad bed on a clear, crisp winter morning. Harrigan, a combat veteran who served in Vietnam in 1967 and 1968, foresees the cemetery opening with only a couple thousand burial



plots, and gradually expanding. First-phase construction could start by the end of the year along the property's frontage on Route 94, he said. But the group's pro bono attorney took a more cautious approach. "The (freeholders') resolution is step one of about 25 steps" that need to be taken before construction can begin, said Eric Wood of Newton, estimating it would be "one or two years" before ground is broken for the new cemetery.

Using the Brig. Gen. William C. Doyle Memorial Cemetery — with 154,000 grave sites on 225 acres — as a rough guide, Harrigan estimated the Sparta site could eventually hold 40,000 graves when it is fully developed. When it opens, the veterans cemetery would be the first in the state to be operated by a nonprofit group, which is in the process of being established by Harrigan's VVA group, the Vernon-based Wallkill Valley Chapter 1002. The other veterans cemeteries in the state — in Atlantic, Cumberland, Cape May, Gloucester and Salem counties — are all operated by their respective county governments. In the meantime, Harrigan needs to raise a lot of money — he estimates \$1 million — to develop the cemetery, and he remains determined and cautiously optimistic. "They're going to need every donation they can get," said Wood. Several fundraisers are being planned. "We're getting donations little by little," said Harrigan, who with his wife donated the money they would have spent buying each other Christmas presents last year.

**This story is attached to the Newsletter to demonstrate just how one veteran can make the difference in the lives of veterans. Amazing things can happen when a group gets behind a project to help other veterans.**