



*Together We
Make A Difference*



*Charles S. Kettles
Michigan Chapter 310*



VVA 310 Dispatch July 2018

The months of June and July have brought celebrations, involvement with community, and service to Veterans. Work with the Memorial grounds continue. Good job, All!

President's Message: What an Awesome Country!

by Jon Luker

By the time you read this, 4th



of July celebrations will be complete, many people will have returned to work or whatever their daily routine is, and the

party favors will have been put away for another year.

But, it seems to me that now might be the perfect time to reflect on just how marvelous and how revolutionary our country was, back in 1776. There was nothing quite like it back then, and there is no country as free as the United States is today. So, let's look at the revolution and see what your impression of America is today.

During the birth of America, it was common to test beliefs about statements of fact in a trial by combat. The American Revolutionary War was just such a trial. Do you remember the question of fact at issue? It was: what is the source of legal power? No small question. Up 'till that time, virtually every government claimed it was the sovereign power of the land based upon some grant of authority that came from outside the people. For example, some say the right is inherited, in the way a son of a king becomes a king. Some say the right comes from God when the leader is anointed by church. Some say

the right comes from conquest. But Americans said those are all wrong. Americans observed that when people are born, they already have everything they need to exercise of authority. They can decide, they can desire, they can have faith, they can take steps toward getting what they want, they can head in any direction they choose and so forth. Of course, that ability improves with age, but as they stated in the Preamble of the Declaration of Independence:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

That was revolutionary enough. Americans were the first people and remain the only people on earth that attribute their physical and legal power to their live birth. But then the question comes, if all the people have all of the legal power and all of the physical power, how can the government be sovereign? America's answer: It cannot not. Again, quoting from the Declaration:

"That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

So, the stage was set. Do rights come from birth or do they come from government? America won. Freedom Won.

From this one novel revolution flowed many changes which have not yet been adopted fully by any other nation. For exam-

ple, most governments relied on some nongovernmental entity to solve civil disputes. Whether you got justice when your neighbor accidentally killed your milk cow depended on things like how much justice you could afford, whether the King or local sheriff liked you and so forth. The United States was the first nation to recognize the need for there to be a uniform and fair means of resolving disputes between citizens, between local governments and between states, so that peace could be maintained without the need for "trials by combat." Therefore, we created within government a civil court system that was required to hear any case brought to it by any citizen.

A third revolution was that for a trial to be considered a "fair" trial, and thus provide the process which is due any citizen, the facts would have to be presented in an open court. Military tribunals and other closed courts were used by King George and others to conduct fake trials designed to give governmental "approval" to a previously determined outcome. Such trials are not American because they cannot be trusted. Instead, the entire world was invited to see the evidence for themselves and to decide for themselves whether justice was done. If you can't review the evidence, you can't trust the evidence nor the people who made the decision. Along the same line, another change was the way juries were developed. Under the old way, jurors were people who paid for the opportunity to make a case

come out the way they wanted, or people who were selected for the jury because they already knew how the government wanted the case to come out, etc. In America, open trials would be decided by friends and neighbors and other peers



who had no vested interest in the outcome of the case.

I could go on. I just might, at some point. But for now, all I can say is that no matter what anybody else thinks about the United States, it is the only country in the world that believes that human rights are birth rights, and that it is the government, not the citizen, that has to find legal authority before doing a proposed action. That revolution led to all of the others. That is why people from all over the world associate the Flag of the United States of America with freedom. Evil doers who want to rule through brute force do not burn the flag of Canada, Great Britain, Mexico, etc. They burn the flag of the only truly free nation in the world, because ours is the flag that has great meaning all over the world.

That's why you still see me flying the flag of the American Revolution, both on vest and on my heart.

De Oppresso Liber,
Jon Luker, President

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From the Editor's Desk
I would like to express my

gratitude for all the writers and contributors to the Dispatch Newsletter. You are the reason are newsletter is successful. Also, a big Thank You for our Anonymous Donors. We are currently looking for donors for August. Please contact any of the Officers.

-- Paulo-Juarez Pereira, Dispatch Editor

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KIA Anniversary July Philip Glenn Spencer (3/3/1946 - 7/10/1968) was born in Ypsilanti, Michigan to Mr. Glenn F. and Mrs. Jessie K. Spencer. A 1964 graduate of Willow Run



High School in Ypsilanti, Philip was on the wrestling team, student council, Varsity Club and attended Wolverine Boys' State in 1963. In college,

Philip majored in mechanical engineering. Philip enlisted in the Army on October 25, 1967, taking his Basic Training at Fort Knox, Kentucky, with further training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. His tour of duty in Vietnam started at Quang Tin Province, South Vietnam, on April 21, 1968. He served as a Field Artillery Surveyor with the XXIV Corps. Specialist 4 Spencer died of the blood disease agranulocytosis at the 108th General Hospital at Kishine Air Force Base in Japan on July 10, 1968, at the age of 22. Phillip is survived by his parents and his wife. He is resting in Highland Cemetery

in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Philip's name is listed on the Vietnam Memorial in Ypsilanti Township under Ypsilanti, and his name appears on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC on Panel 52W Line 011. Philip's friend Michael Kelly left a message to Philip saying, "I will always miss you."

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William Lennington Brown

(10/05/1938 - 07-09-1965) was born in Ypsilanti, Michigan to Mr. Robert S. and Mrs. Patricia Lennington Brown.



A graduate of Roosevelt High School in Ypsilanti, he received a Congressional Appointment to the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and graduated from the Naval Academy on June 3, 1959. According to Captain John A. Standish, USN (Ret), "Bill was a very conscientious, fun loving young officer, a great mentor and coach, and a good friend. He picked up the nickname 'Squirrel.'" Lieutenant Brown served with the Naval Advisory Group, MACV as a Naval Advisor to the Marine Corps in Chu Lai. Bill Brown was killed as a result of multiple fragmentation wounds on July 9, 1965. William was 29 years old. He is resting at the Brookside Cemetery in Tecumseh, Michigan. His classmate Greg Nolan stated that "Bill is remembered in Memorial Hall

at the U.S. Naval Academy with other 1959 Classmates while serving our Country.” Bill’s name is listed on the Vietnam Memorial in Ypsilanti Township under Ypsilanti, and his name appears on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC on Panel 02E Line 033.

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David Scott Palmer

(10/06/1965 - 07/05/1967)
was born to Mr. and Mrs. David E. Palmer of Ypsilanti, Michigan. A 1963 graduate of Roosevelt



High School in Ypsilanti, Michigan, David received honors in math and was the co-captain of the swimming team. While attending the Uni-

versity of Michigan, David enlisted in the Navy in December of 1965. Hospitalman Palmer began his tour of duty in Quang Nam Province in South Vietnam, with the III Marine Amphibious Forces. Hospitalman Palmer was killed on July 5, 1967 due to an explosive device. He was 21 years old. David is survived by his parents, a sister, and a brother. David’s name is listed on the Vietnam Memorial in Ypsilanti Township under Ypsilanti. His name appears on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC on Panel 23E Line 014.

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Thomas Leonard Cleland

(11/05/1941 - 07/11/1967)
was born to Mr. Leslie and Mrs. Coryell Cleland and is remembered by his sister Andrea as

being very tall and thin, “like a very tall tree. He was very kind



and protective of those he loved.” Thomas was well liked. He played baseball in high school and loved fishing and swimming. He

enjoyed helping his father in the family garden and later got a job milking cows at dawn. He would then take the school bus to go to class. A close friend of his, Ken Fulton, was killed in Vietnam a couple months after Tom was killed. They are both are listed on the Washtenaw County Vietnam Memorial. After graduating from high school, Tom joined the Army and later married a former class mate, Sharon Hubbard. Following Basic training, Tom was sent to Korea. His brother Dale enlisted, was also sent to Korea, and they had a special reunion there, with a happy time. At the end of his term of service, Tom reenlisted for four more years, with a choice to either go to Korea as General Westmoreland’s drive or go to Vietnam. He chose Vietnam.

Thomas began his tour of duty in Quang Ngai Province, South Vietnam on May 7, 1966, serving as an Antenna Installer Specialist with the 101st Airborne Division. Specialist 4 Thomas Leonard Cleland was killed on July 11, 1967. He was 25 years old. He was returning to his unit and was killed by someone of his unit for repeatedly failing

to give the password for admission back into the unit area. Tom’s sister Andrea has stated that she does not blame the individual who did the killing. The family’s pain was compounded by a prank telephone call saying that Tom was not dead, which turned out to be false. Thomas is remembered with laughter, tears, and a lot of pride for a very gentle man. He was survived by his parents, his wife (Sharon), two brothers (Dale and Terry) and a sister (Andrea Coron). Specialist 4 Thomas Leonard Cleland is resting in St. Joseph’s Cemetery in Whittaker, Michigan. His name is listed on the Vietnam Memorial in Ypsilanti Township under Ypsilanti and appears on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC on Panel 23E Line 049.

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July 2018 Chaplain’s Corner

by Rev. Gordon Moore

Liberty is what American’s often think of in July, especially with Independence Day falling on the Fourth, so this year I thought I would look a little around the world at what people consider to be Liberty, for we are, after all, a tossed salad of nations. Liberty is always dangerous, but it is the safest thing we have— Harry Fosdick
Liberty, when it begins to rake root, is a plant of rapid growth—George Washington
If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear— George Orwell

The true character of liberty is

independence, maintained by force—Voltaire
The liberty of an individual is no gift of civilization. It was great-



est before there was any civilization—Sigmund Freud
Liberty will not descend to a people; a people must raise themselves to liberty; it is a blessing that must be earned before it can be enjoyed—Charles Colson
Better to die fighting for freedom than be a prisoner all the days of your life—Bob Marley
Those that deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves—Abraham Lincoln
Disobedience is the true foundation of liberty. The obedient must be slaves—Henry David Thoreau
Freedom is not something that anybody can be given. Freedom is something that people take, and people are as free as they want to be—James Baldwin
People have only as much liberty as they have the intelligence to want and the courage to take—Emma Goldman
Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom, must, like men, undergo the fatigues of supporting it—Thomas Paine
I hope we once again have reminded people that man is not

free unless government is limited. There's a clear cause and effect here that is as neat and predictable as a law of physics: As government expands, liberty contracts—Ronald Reagan
Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom—2 Chronicles 3:17
Let us meditate upon and expand our views on Liberty.
A blessed and safe Fourth of July,
Gordon

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Additional Memorial Parking & New Benches

by Al (Fredo) Merritt

Thanks to the efforts of Memorial Grounds Chair Al 'Fredo' Merritt and President Jon Luker we have new parking available as well as a sidewalk from the new parking spaces leading to the existing Memorial sidewalk. We can park four or five vehicles in the new spaces. Along with the new parking spots we have a permanent in-the-ground flag pole holders parallel to the south sidewalk. If you were at the Memorial Day service, you could have seen the flag pole holders in use. The flower bed as well as around the three flag poles have a concrete edging which will make it easier for mowing crews to avoid chewing up the ladies' flowers. Key Players in the parking lot project are:
Brenda Stumbo and the Ypsilanti Township Board
Doan Construction conceived the idea and volunteered time and materials to build it

OHM Consulting did the drawings, testing, and found additional team members
Diversified Excavating donated several day's work preparing the land for Doan's work and saved the day by filling in the hole



with gravel so we could use it until the asphalt was laid. Cadillac Asphalt donated the time and materials for the final paving, and Huron Landscape and Maintenance will, for a small fee, finish the cleanup, final grading, seeding and mulching. The additional visitor parking spaces is a wonderful addition allowing the casual visitor a shorter walk to our Memorial. This area will be reserved for handicap parking on Memorial Day.
Don Miller built five benches, one for each branch of service, that are now in place on the Memorial grounds. There will be a service emblem added to each at a later date. These too are a great addition to the Memorial grounds. Thank you, go Navy, Mr. Miller.

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Ramblings

*by Marvin Rivers,
Vietnam Veteran*

I like chocolate. In our small town of Dexter, Michigan, we

had the Schnebelt Bakery. They made the best chocolate-covered frycakes (Google for more info). Among some of my earliest memories were several first times: the first time I heard the U of M fight song, the first time I heard the Marine Corps Hymn,



Photo: Public Dominion

and the first time I saw the Marine Insignia Eagle, Globe, and Anchor (EGA). I come from a pretty patriotic family going back to the Civil War. My father was in the Navy; my oldest brother, in the Army; and my next oldest brother, in the Air Force. With the Vietnam War raging, my path was clear that I would join the Marines. So, off I went. . . .

Boot camp was hard, as it should be. The very first day we got the hint that, "We weren't in Kansas anymore, Toto." Out of 117 of us who flew into San Diego, they took 75 of us and made



an all-Michigan platoon. "So much slime from one state," commented Staff Sergeant Trout, our Drill Instructor. His goal each day was to push you to your breaking point to increase your tolerance. Their motto was, "The more you sweat in peace, the less you bleed in war."

It took us two days to do written tests, and we received our scores for our General Classification Test (GCT), not to be confused with an IQ score. It has to do with how much you knew about lots of different things. The average Marine's score is about 118; I scored 169. I was tasked with the job of raising the Platoon's overall average by teaching my fellow recruits in our Platoon. We were in competition with three other platoons. We did well and went on to win the X-1 and X-2 intelligence tests. I was proud to be a part of that accomplishment.

Another test was the Commandant of the Marine Corps Physical Readiness Test (CMC Test.). One event in that test was the Fireman's Carry, where you pick up another guy and carry him 30 to 40 yards to safety. I never wanted to be paired up with "Tiny," an offensive line in high school. I liked being paired up with "Mouse," built for ping-pong.

Then there was the swimming test. I don't swim. They made non-swimmers wait until the end and then had us dive into the deep end of this Olympic-sized ocean. Of course, I plummeted to the bottom of the pool. I was surprisingly calm, as

I was sure this was where life would end. I looked up and saw the life guards diving in with a jet stream of bubbles flowing after, like some Esther Williams water ballet. I pushed off from the pool floor and was gathered in by a lifeguard. For the next 2 weeks, in the small end of the pool, our instructor, in a valiant attempt, tried to teach us to conquer water. They gave us a kickboard, which looked eerily like a grave headstone, and had us kick to the other side of the pool. Problem: I went backwards. The Drill Instructor yelled that I was to be going to the other side. So I squiggled myself around with my death stone and kicked going backwards to the other side. The Marine Corps is very goal-oriented, and apparently how you get there is secondary.

After boot camp, I went to Infantry training; then, to Basic Specialty Schools, where I graduated #1 in our company. I then went on to Defense Language School in Monterey for a 90-day crash course in Vietnamese: "Chao Ong. Hom nay Ong co man yoi con?—a traditional greeting. We were taught by Vietnamese women, and the language is very melodic when spoken correctly. The confusing part is that one word can have five meanings, depending on how it is spoken. May 22nd, 1968, on my birthday, I left sunny and hot California for sunny and hot Vietnam. So, off I went. . . . A plane full of young, cocky Marines landed in Da Nang. It was 114 degrees in the shade. The airport was being shelled

by the enemy. As we got out, carrying our sea bags (duffle bags to the Army), there were guys directing us to run to a nearby building, which we did, save one: One guy was strolling along, dragging his bag and saying, "I'm from Detroit; I'm used to this."

I was assigned to the 2nd battalion, 26th Marine Regiment, in I Corps, the upper-most region in South Vietnam. We were very mobile and spent from two weeks to eight weeks on missions, sleeping under the stars and eating C-rations. C-rats are a meal in a box, and 12 meals came in a case. I would split a case with another soldier, so my six meals were to last three days. But resupply was inconsistent, and many times the meals had to last for four days. In two of the meals there was a small can, and when I opened it, . . . there it was: . . . CHOCOLATE! I would trade my coffee and cigarettes for chocolate. There is some kind of psychosis at work that some people are indifferent to chocolate. Hmmm. . . .

I started out with the 106 Recoilless Rifles for about two months; then I carried radio for a grunt company for about three months. After that, I was invited to join the S-2 Scouts because of my language ability. There were 12 of us scouts for a regiment of 1200 soldiers. S-2 is "Intelligence," and we were the information-gatherers for our S-2 officer. We would handle prisoners, walk point (lead a company), and sometimes be a tunnel rat when needed. We were also the liaison for dog

handlers and snipers. We had many successful missions. Once we found a tunnel system that had three stories of underground rooms. Another time, we found a Viet Cong (VC) training area with an open-air classroom and a hidden cave with 96 VC weapons. The local people were, for the most part, friendly to Americans. Being able to communicate in their language helped. Most of the villages were comprised of the very old and the very young. Those in their teens, twenties, and thirties had fled to the big cities to avoid being inducted to fight for the Viet Cong. The women chewed beetle nut, a narcotic, to keep their minds off of their hunger while working the rice fields all day. The drug



eventually rotted their teeth down to little stubs. I was surprised how fast the children could adopt English and how well they learned the underground market scheme. In the middle of nowhere, the children would come out of the jungles and offer a warm can of Coca Cola for a dollar. The same can cost 10 cents in the States. At night, when it was safe, we would listen to Hanoi Hanna. Even though she spewed propaganda, she played the most

recent rock 'n' roll songs from the States.

On my final mission, I stepped on an Improvised Explosive Device (IED). Searing pain! Thanks to my Corpsman (a Marine field medic), a very efficient helicopter crew, and many doctors and nurses, I was able to keep my foot. After two weeks in the hospital, I refused pain meds. I was aware that I would have pain and discomfort for the rest of my life, and I did not want drugs to be my crutch. I decided to shake hands with pain. So, off I went. . . .

Back home, I am a mechanic, working on my feet all week long. I don't really think of Vietnam every day; however, there are things that can carry me back in an instant, like certain smells, or music of that time. I am a member of the Vietnam Veterans of America Charles S. Kettles Chapter 310 in Ann Arbor, Mich. Here I have many great friends, and the comradery is supportive and therapeutic. Our motto is, "Never again will one generation of Veterans desert another." And all in our Chapter work to help other veterans in need. I am also a member of the Washtenaw County Honor Guard, of Detachment 414 of the Marine Corps League, and of VFW Post 423.

I have a loving and supportive wife; a 46-year-old son, who is my partner in business; a 15-year-old granddaughter in Dexter schools; and twin 12-year-old daughters in Chelsea schools, who are at this writing making double chocolate brownies. Did I mention I like

chocolate? So, off I go. . . .

Semper Fidelis

Marvin Rivers

Graduated Dexter High School
1966

2nd Battalion, 26th Marines

OOHRAH!

Jocosity — by Ken Rogge

A pigment of your imagination
is a dream in color.

To be well-red, read while sun-
bathing.

Among egotists, it's all about an
I for an I.

A 4.0 in college sometimes come
in blood alcohol content.

My world is small, but everyone
knows me here.

MINUTES — VVA310, July 2018

Vietnam Veterans of America
Charles S. Kettles Chapter 310 –
General Membership Meeting –
14 June 2018 –

by Paulo-Juarez Pereira, Secre-
tary

Call to Order by President Jon
Luker at 1900 hours.

Pledge of Allegiance and mo-
ment of silence for POW/MIA's,
their families, and those who
are serving in hazardous places
around the world.

Roll Call: A quorum was estab-
lished. Welcome Home, Every-
one!

Guests: Steve Cox, Army, Viet-
nam, was introduced. Also, Bob
Gould, from Veterans Radio,
introduced Julie Barron, who
informed members about the
benefits of cannabis.

Motion by Bob Field and sec-
onded by Marv Rivers to ap-
prove the May meeting minutes

that were emailed to members
and inserted on VVA310's web-
site. Approved.

President's Report: Pres. Jon
Luker invited Officers and Board
members for an informal plan-
ning meeting to be conducted
at Holiday's Restaurant on June
27, 2018 at 1530 hours.

Treasurer's Report: Pres. Jon
Luker gave the treasurer's
report. Chapter has received
over \$1,000 in membership
rebates. The amount of \$1050
was donated to the Kettles book.
The amount of \$481.00 was the
profit from the Annual Recogni-
tion Dinner. Another CD may be
purchased. Treasurer will work
with the Merchandise Commit-
tee to calculate ongoing value of
inventory.

Motion by Bob Field and sec-
onded by Marv Rivers to ap-
prove the Treasurer's Report.
Approved.

AVVA Report: Given by Kathy
Driscoll. Please see the attached
full report on AVVA activities.

Food Pantry: No activity report-
ed.

Merchandise Report: Larry St.
Antoine reported a successful
participation in Milan, with
\$584 in revenues, with an in-
vitation for next year. Profit at
the VA was \$733. Planning on a
streamlined ordering process to
cut costs.

Washtenaw County Council

of Veterans Report: Pres. Jon
Luker reported that the next
meeting will be on June 18th,
1830 hours, American Legion
Post 268. He invited members
to take part in the Agent Orange
Riders Club, which does not
require riding. Membership:

\$25. Convention will be in Palm
Spring in July. Discussion about
VVA future continues. Jon Luker
will pass any questions to lead-
ership, such as recognizing that
the Vietnam War was started in
November 1955.

Memorial Maintenance Report:
Al (Fredo) Merritt reported on
the successful work on the Me-
morial parking lot.

Website Report: No report.

Membership Report: Pres. Jon
Luker reported that the number
of member is now 212 and that
Anonymous Donors continue to
support new members, so that
they can become life members.

Newsletter: Paulo Pereira
thanked contributors to the Dis-
patch Newsletter.

VAAHS Report: No report.

Old Business: No old business.

New Business: Motion by Sand-
ie Wilson, seconded by Larry
St. Antoine, to allocate \$25
per month to be charged to the
Merchandise account, for gas
expenses in hauling the mer-
chandise trailer. Approved.

Good of the Chapter: Col Kettles
will be the Grand Marshall for
the 4th of July parade. -- A Wall
will be coming to Howell, meet
at Cabella's at 1000 hours on
June 21st. – A documentary by
Sons and Daughters in Touch,
entitled "They Were Our Fa-
thers," was being produced for
Father's Day. – Laura Bowen:
suicide continues to be a major
concern for veterans.

Next Chapter Breakfast: will be
Friday, July 13th, 0900 hours, at
Brewed Awakenings Café, 7025
E. Michigan Ave., Saline, MI
48176.

Closing prayer was given by Dell

Mayes. President Jon Luker led the group in a salute to the flag to close the meeting at 2100 hours.

Respectfully Submitted,
Paulo-Juarez Pereira
Secretary
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Current Event

By Ann Dempsey-Pereira

July 2018

10 Jul: VVA 310 Merchandise Sales, VAMC, 3rd Floor, Liberty Bldg, 0800- 1400 hrs.

12 Jul: AVVA Meeting, VVA 310 Board Meeting, 1800 hrs, VFW Post 423

12 Jul: VVA 310 General Membership Meeting, 1900 hrs, VFW Post 423

13 Jul: VVA Chapter Breakfast, 09:00, Brewed Awakenings, 7025 E Michigan Ave, Saline

16 Jul: WCCV Meeting, 19:30, VFW Post 423

04 Aug: Coast Guard Birthday (1941)

Every Saturday at 0930: Walk/run with Team Red White & Blue, Southeast parking lot, Gallop Park, Ann Arbor, MI. Visit veteransradio.net and make a contribution to help keep this vital program on the air.

AVVA Newsletter July 2018

By Kathy Driscoll

If you are on Facebook, you can join the AVVA Michigan closed group. Just send a Friend Request to Marilyn Lash and she will accept you as a member of the AVVA Michigan closed group. This is how our AVVA Michigan State Association communicates between the bi-monthly meetings.

AVVA Members were busy volunteering and supporting AVVA and VVA projects in May. Members supported VVA 310 Merchandise Sales at VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System. Members marched or rode in the Saline Memorial Day Parade. Members attended Washtenaw County Vietnam Memorial Day Ceremony.

Kathy attended the WCCV meeting.

Next VVA 310 VA Merchandising sales is Tuesday, July 10th, VVA 310 needs our help! Please consider volunteering one or two hours assisting VVA 310 merchandise team!

Keep up to date with our chapter: All AVVA and VVA 310 events are posted on our chapter's webpage, www.vva310.org in the VVA News Flash section on the right column. on the homepage.

AVVA Michigan State Association News

Next meeting is Sunday, August 26th in Howell, MI. I will have more information at our July 12th meeting. Please let me know if you are available to attend.

New AVVA Michigan Association Officers for 2018 – 2020

President: Kathy

Driscoll Chapter 310

Vice President: Penny

Meinhardt Chapter 1083

Secretary: Bobbie

Heindenrich Chapter 1083

Treasurer: Cecilia

Essenmacher At Large Delegate

AVVA Michigan Association

Challenge Coins \$10 donation.

Please contact Kathy Driscoll at 734-355-4897 or dkathyr16@gmail.com

[gmail.com](mailto:dkathyr16@gmail.com). This fundraiser will benefit AVVA Michigan Association. We sold 35 challenge coins at our May meeting. Thank you for supporting this AVVA Michigan Association Fundraiser. I have 20 challenge coins left.

Fundraising Report

Fisher House Michigan: We need fundraising ideas for Fisher House Michigan. We would like to raise another \$2,000 for Fisher House Michigan. One idea is to have an Afternoon Tea. Please bring your fundraising ideas to our July meeting. The next matching funds event for Fisher House is September 11th to November 11th. We would like to reach our goal to donate \$10,000.

Creative Memories Fundraising Event benefitting Fisher House Michigan TBD

AVVA 310 Chapter Special Projects & Operating Funds

We need Fundraising ideas for our Chapter operating and special projects / donations.

Girls' State: Savan and Devon attended Girls State. Their report will be in the August Newsletter.

Save the Date!

4 July Ypsilanti 4th of July Parade lineup at 09:30 Cross St.

4 July Veterans Picnic Washtenaw County Vietnam Memorial, Ypsilanti, MI

Next meeting is Thursday, July 12th.

Kathy Driscoll

Chapter Representative, AVVA Chapter 310

AVVA Michigan State Association Vice President

dkathyr16@gmail.com

734-355-4897

Freedom is Not Free

by Phillip Phan

Part One

I want to share a story about my father, Khiem Quang Pham. He was a 1st Lieutenant in the South Vietnamese Air Force and was a pilot for the C-130a Hercules. On April 3, 1975, he did the unthinkable. He believed with all his heart that the end was near, and it was time to leave South Vietnam. With a lot of prayer, my father stole

he could fly with his best friend in another squadron. It helped that the co-pilot was looking forward to going on a date with his lady friend instead of going on a resupply mission. So, that problem was solved. But there was the problem of fuel. During war time, there was a ration on fuel. Planes were to be filled only with enough gas to get to their destination, and at their destination, they would be refueled only with enough gas to get back. It so happened that on that day, the crewman in charge of filling my father's

was solved.

My dad unplugged the transponders and radio communication to avoid detection and told his crew that headquarters changed their mission to fly south to pick up certain people instead. They flew at treetop levels to avoid radar detection and made their way to Long Thanh Air Base, a U.S. Air base abandoned the prior year. When they landed, they unloaded the supplies, and my dad informed the crew that he was commandeering the plane. Only one of the seven crew members got off the plane. He was a seasoned veteran and thought my father was defecting. The others were stunned and stayed on board, even leaving their own families behind. About 50 people boarded the side door of the plane while the supplies were being pushed out the back of the cargo bay. During the chaos, a two-year-old child was trampled on while there was a mad rush into the plane. It was reported that the mother dropped her infant on the tarmac of the air strip while she cared for her pale and lifeless daughter.

Meanwhile, the work of unloading the cargo, picking up passengers, and restarting the plane took about seven minutes. As the plane was heading toward the runway, the military police came by in a jeep and pointed an M-16 and grenade launcher at the cockpit, ordering the pilot to stop the plane.

With a lot of gall, my father told his friend he didn't think the police would shoot, and he kept on



a C-130 cargo plane from the VNAF and flew my family and 50 others out of Saigon, in order to seek freedom that would have been taken away from my family. Please allow me to elaborate.

During that day, he somehow talked a co-pilot out of his mission and into taking his place so

plane "forgot" about the fuel ration and took an extended smoke break, giving the plane a full tank of gas. When my father saw the tank was full of gas, the crewman apologized to my father and asked not to be reported to his superiors. My father sternly told him not to do it again. So, now the gas problem

going. Sure enough, the police let up, and the plane took off. The plane headed toward the sea, flying low to avoid radar detection. Fog filled the cabin, and no one could see one other.



The Hunt

Upon hearing of an escaped C-130, two F-5 fighter jets took off to intercept the runaway plane. In fact, the South Vietnamese government notified that the stolen plane had been successfully shot down, to prevent others from getting the same idea. But my father continued on.

The plane made its way to Singapore, the only place the Navigator knew how to get to without a map, and which was also far enough from the war zone. Upon landing in Singapore, my family and the other escapees were put in jail. Singapore notified the South Vietnamese government of the unscheduled arrival. Troops from the South Vietnamese government were being deployed to Singapore to bring these people back and to try my father and his friend as war criminals.

As the days went on, no one showed up from South Vietnam. It was then announced that on April 30, 1975 Saigon had fallen to the Communist regime. Eventually, U.S. personnel received all 50+ crew and

passengers as refugees, to live in the land of the free, the United States of America.

Luck or Blessing?

Was it luck that my family made it here to the United States? Perhaps so. But with all the things that had to go right, I believe there was Divine Intervention. More importantly, the hero of this story was not just my father: It was also the United States Armed Forces. Let me explain. My dad received his flight and military training in the United States at Keesler Air Force Base, Biloxi, Mississippi. It was the U.S. troops who fought alongside the South Vietnamese military to give our family that window of opportunity. It was the abandoned U.S. Air strip that was used as a launch pad to pick up my family and others. It was a U.S. made military cargo plane, the C-130, that was used in the escape. It was the U.S. Air Force that escorted us from Singapore to the United States, to Camp Pendleton, outside San Diego. Finally, it was the blood spilled, as we honor their sacrifices today.

About 10 years after the escape, my father was working as a commercial pilot, and one day another pilot asked if my dad had come to the United States by boat. He nonchalantly told him that he had simply stolen a plane to get out of Vietnam. That pilot inquired about the story, and my dad told him this unbelievable tale.

As it turned out, that pilot told my father he knew where that plane was. My dad later found out that the plane was being

used by the Air National Guard out of Selfridge Air base, outside of Detroit. After 10 years, my dad was reunited with his plane.

Shortly thereafter, the plane was retired, and the curator at the



Smithsonian Air & Space Museum acquired it, where it is being stored to this very day, awaiting to be put out on display.

Thirty years later, we had a family reunion and celebrated the flight to freedom. My wife met my family and heard different family members describe the event in vivid detail. One of my aunts told us a side of the story that I had never heard before. She told us what happened to that two-year-old baby, who had been left behind by his mother. She saw that everyone had boarded the plane, but the baby was still on the runway. She managed to rush back out the door, grabbed the baby, and ran after the plane as it was taxiing for take off. That baby who was almost left behind is today standing here before you.

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[Editor's Note: This story is to be continued. It shows the bonds of affection among Americans and Vietnamese, a commercial and cultural partnership. Hearts and minds merge slowly, but their bonds last.]

NEVER AGAIN SHALL A VETERAN COMING HOME FROM BATTLE BE MADE TO FEEL ALONE AND UNAPPRECIATED!

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