



Vietnam Veterans of America Charles S. Kettles Chapter 310 National Chapter Of The Year 1999, 2007 & 2025



Sept/Oct Lest We Forget

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**988
Suicide
&
Crisis
Hotline**

Last month our Chapter lost a charter member and who was the first president of 310, Tim Armentrout. Many of you probably knew him and as is the custom of this Chapter he will be honored with a memorial brick on Memorial Day.

I am writing this report on 9/11, 2026, the 25th anniversary of that most horrific day. Let us never forget the sacrifices made on that Day.



This year was my second Pig Roast which I have attended. I would like to sincerely thank and congratulate all who participated in making this a successful event. Your hard work paid off!

There was unfortunately a decline in tickets sold. I am already thinking about how to increase sales for next year. I am noting individuals to send invites to and organizations to send the flyer to. You might also want to consider taking note through-out the year of individual for targeting invites and flyers to for next summer

Lastly I would like to address the change made to the monthly Chapter meetings. The changes being from 6:00pm for board meeting and 7:00 pm for Chapter to 12:00pm and 1:00 pm (aka 1200 hrs and 1300 hrs) respectively. Some of you might consider this not only an inconvenience but an hardship. These changes need to be considered as necessary SAFETY changes. Seniors driving at night and especially in foul weather can be dangerous. As time marches on we are not getting any younger even though we live in the Ann Arbor area where UM has recently made a break-through in time travel. Unfortunately so far it is of little help, since you can only go back in-time for "1 Second. "

See you-all at the breakfast groups.

Recognizing Christ

Rev. Gordon Moore

Luke 24 recounts the experiences of two disciples on the road to Emmaus when a “stranger” appeared and walked with them. The stranger asked them questions to bring out what was in their hearts and thoughts and redirected their answers in such a way as to help them recognize who He was. It wasn’t until they spent time “breaking bread” (just like the bread of life had been broken for them) that their understanding (their spiritual blindness was made to see again) was enlightened. As they recounted their encounter with the risen Christ to the other disciples their experience drew a deeper meaning as they said, “Did not our hearts burn within us as He walked with us on the way!”

That story has often caused me to wonder if I have missed encounters with Christ as I walked life’s journey. Certainly, there have been times when I recognized Him through conversations with others that set my heart on fire. But, how many times have I totally missed His presence because I was so focused on other things that the joy of communion with Christ was missed.

Life has a way of deflecting the most meaningful relationships to something far more common and less fulfilling.

So, that is our challenge: To be more attentive to the voice of Christ as we journey this wonderful incredible life God has given us. Here to more heartburns in a good spiritual sense.

What Happened To Our Giddy-Up?

John Kinzinger

If you served during the Vietnam War, or are married to one who did, the following probably fits you.

For me, 60 years ago today (September 11), I was on leave before going to Vietnam. Our Lord’s plan was for me to come home and be blessed with the life He laid for me. I arrived back home about three months before the Tet of 1968, good timing. Thanks be to God. Today I reflect best when I sit at our Vietnam Veterans Memorial remembering their sacrifices.

Life is precious, and as we age it becomes even more precious. It has an end here on earth. Our hope may be for a life everlasting with our Lord. I am reminded, like you, each time someone we know is called by our Lord. Tim Armentrout, our first official Chapter president, received his call last month. He was president when we were presented our National Charter in May 1987. We were an official Chapter! Tim’s passing got me thinking and typing this.

I was persuaded by Gary Estermeier, over a few bowling nights, to go check out the

group trying to start up a VVA Chapter in Saline, led by Hal Dotson. In August 1986, I and others attended our first meeting of Veterans trying to start a Chapter. Like everyone else, I was cautiously checking out the group of younger Veterans like me. We were a ragtag group of Veterans from all branches looking for a place to belong. We told each other, "Welcome Home," and that felt good to hear, finally. Only a few of us Charter members are still with us. A study a couple years ago stated that only about 1/3 of us who served then are still alive.

When I visit our Vietnam Veterans Memorial, I sit and be with those who did not make it home to live a long life like us. Their lives here on earth were stopped by the war. I think about each of them, as I wrote about them in my book.

Those of us still here have much less giddy-up in our step. Many of us use some assist to move around. We are not the movers and shakers we were those many years ago. Our pride of our service remains. Many of us get together weekly for coffee and breakfast. And, yes, our health issues are the major topic of conversation. That is sprinkled with some politics.

Many in our group have grandchildren. Their youth once ours brings back fond memories. Being a grandma or grandpa gives you special pride as you watch them play.

No matter where I am in the aging speed bumps of my life journey, I thank our Lord for each day for all I am Blessed. Sometimes, I need to remember those on our Memorial, whose life was snuffed out some 60 or so years ago.

Tim, thank you for your leadership that got us all together, pulling us together to get us chartered. Since then, we have become the National VVA Chapter of the Year, three times! We still have it in us to make a difference. Congratulations, even as our giddy-up is giddy-gone.

" A New Day To Remember "

Brian Graef

Any Vietnam Veteran can remember the day they returned to "the World" as we called it. And every event is different. Most of us came back to a turbulent time in our nation's history. There was no ticker-tape parade down the streets of New York. I came back at ten to two in the morning at Travis Airforce base near Oakland California. We I went to the Oakland airport hours later to board a plane to go home there wasn't anyone cheering for me and to say welcome home. Heck even a lady at the airport spit at me and called me a baby killer.

Well all that changed on May 13th which I call "A New Day to Remember." I was driving north on US-23 when I saw an electric billboard sign with a message about an Honor Flight. I quickly pulled the car over and wrote down the website to find an application to submit for a chance to fly to Washington DC "Free" to visit the

monuments. I never thought I would get a call. After 3 years passed and then in February of 2023, I got the call. I was excited to have the chance to go. The flight was out of Kalamazoo airport but there was a meet and greet and dinner the Friday before. They emptied a hanger at the airport for the dinner. There were several hundred for dinner. 89 Veterans were on the plane the next day to DC. 74 were Vietnam Veterans, 2 World War II Veterans and several Korean Veterans. When the plane departed from the Kalamazoo airport, the fire department gave us a water gun salute - a fire truck on each side of the plane shooting water over the fuselage and the same salute upon our arrival in DC.

The first visit was to Arlington for the changing of the guards then on to the new Air Force monument. Later we went to the Vietnam Wall which has always been very hard for me. We (with the help of my son Kevin), relocated "John Pizzuti's" name on the Wall. He was a grade school friend of mine.



It was a long day visiting about 6 monuments and then the flight back to Kalamazoo. On the plane, there was a special event that took place, "mail call." The event host passed out large envelopes which contained several letters. Somehow I knew what might be in that envelope so I didn't open it until the next day. I read several letters from family members and some I didn't know. I cried when I read them from my immediate family members.

The most exciting part of the trip was when we returned. When we departed from the plane and loaded on busses, we were escorted by "the patriots of freedom" about 40 motorcycles, police and fire trucks to an air museum close by the airport. Upon departing the buses, there were about 100 or so people outside the museum cheering for us. The best part was entering the museum where there were a few thousand people cheering, clapping and wishing us a "A WELCOME HOME." Needless to say my PTSD was working overtime.

My advise, go to: <http://www.talonsouthhonorflight.org>. Submit an application and I promise it will be "A New Day to Remember."

Leadership Conference, Jacksonville Florida

Jon Luker

The conference was interesting and informative. Much of the discussion focused on the various ways VVA could move forward, since discontinuing operations has largely been ruled out. There were also briefings on several issues facing the National Board of Directors. In addition, attendees participated in several breakout sessions designed to help elected officers perform their duties more effectively.

Other sessions provided opportunities to ask questions about national programs, including veterans services, legislative affairs, finance, and related topics. There was also discussion about the possibility of relocating the national headquarters to a less expensive location.

Finally, Tom Burke participated in a question-and-answer session that gave members an opportunity to raise concerns and seek clarification about Mission 75.

My overall impression, based on both the questions and the general mood of the attendees, was that most people are looking for a path that allows VVA to continue, despite concerns raised by some smaller groups. For example, some questioned whether efforts to attract post-1975 veterans would be successful. My view is that we have a much better chance of succeeding if we try than if we simply give up. If we can achieve the kind of success AVVA has had in attracting and retaining younger veteran members, I believe VVA can remain viable for many years to come.

Others wondered how VVA's future might affect AVVA. Ultimately, that is a matter for AVVA to decide. AVVA is a perpetual corporation with its own mission, leadership, membership, and resources. Some members expressed a desire to reunite AVVA and VVA as they existed before such an arrangement became illegal. However, since that legal restriction remains in place, that is not a realistic option.

Overall, while there are still details to be worked out and some provisions that many of us may not fully support, there appears to be a broad consensus in favor of moving forward with opening membership to veterans who served after the official end of the Vietnam War.

I came away from Jacksonville with hope and a desire to do the work needed to keep our promise to following generations and their families.

Coloring The Darkness

Author Unknow Combat Veteran

Veterans exist under every administration. They struggle under every administration. And they deserve consistent support regardless of which party is in power.

Housing. Mental health care, disability support, and access to treatment.

Help with reintegration. Someone actually listening when they say they are not okay. Those are not partisan needs. They are human needs.

We can argue about policy all day, but veterans should never become props in someone else's political fight.

If we really mean "thank you for your service," then the support has to show up after the uniform comes off too.

-From a combat veteran. CTD (Coloring The Darkness)

We Answered The Call II

At our September meeting, and via email to our members, I discussed adding your stories to our award winning newsletter under the category, We Answered The Call II. This is in reference to the book We Answered The Call. That book only included those veterans who participated in the Veterans in the Classroom program at various High Schools. This attempt is to showcase the rest of our member's who wish to write their Readers Digest version of their military experiences for our newsletter. And with permission, included on our website. Below is Bobski's story.

Robert (Ski) Kwiecinski

It must have been fate that I was born the same year as the Air Force was born, 1947. I was born and raised in South Bend, Indiana. My family was very poor. We never owned a home or had a car. My dad served in the Army from 1926-1929. He was a cook at the famous Army Boxing School in Scholfield Barracks Hawaii. Growing up I always enjoyed playing with WWII airplane models and always knew that someday I wanted to be around airplanes and electronics. My dad said that the best thing for me to do was to go into the Service to get away from our very poor home and to get an education and travel in the Service. So, I enlisted in the US Air Force on June 25, 1965. I almost went into the Navy as they came out to our house to recruit me. I told the Air Force recruiter that I definitely wanted electronics. I took the ASVAB tests and aced the electronics test with a perfect score of 95. I was only 17 so my parents had to sign my enlistment papers.

I went off to Basic Training in Lackland AFB, Texas during the hottest summer months. The summer there was miserable, hot and humid. I didn't smoke, but guess what my duty was in Basic? I was the "butt can man." I had to clean out and polish the coffee can butt cans every day! Because Vietnam was building up rapidly, we had a record number of recruits in Basic. When I received my orders in Basic for my tech school I thought they made a big mistake. It said "Fire Control Systems" Lowry AFB. I thought, "Oh crap; they're sending me to a firefighter's school?" I immediately asked around and found out that the Air Force was sending me to the "cream of the crop" of radar schools for 33 weeks on the F106 Fighter Interceptor aircraft. When I got to Lowry AFB in Denver, it was beautiful there. I became the class leader and did extremely well. I ate up the electronics training; it was top notch. I'll never forget the 10-14 guys (4 guys flunked out) in my class at Lowry; I still keep in touch with 4 or 5 of them.

1967 was quite an eventful year at Selfridge. The Base was celebrating its 50th anniversary, as one of the oldest Bases in the US. I volunteered and was selected for the Base Honor Guard. It was extracurricular and during the big celebration we greeted over 50 generals. Later that summer the Detroit riots happened. I was one of many young airmen chosen to beef up the base security. I wasn't very good with rifles,

safety off, which is a no-no! When the riots really got bad, they flew in 5000 Army troops. I'll never forget the sight; C130's landing every 5 minutes dropping off troops from the 101st. Airborne. It was "tent city" on the south side of Selfridge. Selfridge was a staging area where they bused the troops in to downtown Detroit.

During the 60s Vietnam was really heating up, but so was the Cold War in Korea. The North Koreans captured the USS Pueblo on January 23, 1968. I'll never forget that day as I was attending Macomb County Community College part time. The Base Security came out to the College and got us to get back to Selfridge immediately. The IFF codes were compromised and we had to change the codes in every aircraft immediately. We went on 24 hour "hot alert" for quite a long time afterwards, like the next 2 years. On April 15, 1969 the North Koreans shot down one of our EC121s. The F106 was an all-weather interceptor, air to air only. The F106's had just received In Flight Refueling modifications, so they started rotating F106's to Korea for 6 months.

Our Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, was combined into the 95th FIS. We practiced for 6 weeks down at Tyndall AFB Florida doing air to air comb at tactics. It was a lot of long hours down there. One funny thing happened while I was there; we had to qualify on the M16 rifle. I never had earned the Expert badge before. While at the firing range qualifying, we went to count the bullet holes in our targets. We only fired 60 rounds, but as I counted mine, I counted over 70 holes! The guy next to me obviously was shooting at my target too. They awarded me the Expert Ribbon anyway!

Our maintenance people left Selfridge, on May 14, 1969, on C141's for Korea via Elmendorf AFB, Alaska and then on to Osan Air Base Korea. Our 18 F106 aircraft flew over in groups of 6. Our maintenance people flew over in C141's and arrived at Osan at 3 AM. I remember how happy the guys from the 71st FIS on the ground at Osan greeting us and were so happy to see us as we were relieving them. Osan was a very busy Base, with quite a few Army and ROK soldiers. Chico Village was right outside the Base entrance. We did frequent the village to get a lot of handmade stuff, like a 3-piece suit for \$29. It reminded me of watching MASH. The main road in Chico Village was still dirt, most of the stores had dirt floors and there were WWII vintage jeeps everywhere. There was a nightly curfew because the infiltration by the North Koreans was rampant around the area. They still had "Benjo ditches" everywhere to pee in.

The primary reason we were there was to guard the skies of South Korea from the North Koreans and the Russians. We were on 24/7 Alert. We averaged scrambling 2-3 times every day. Most often it would be Russian bombers and reconnaissance aircraft (Bears, Bisons and Badgers). They would test us to see our reaction times. One time a Russian Bear was 300 miles inland over South Korea before it was detected. We would just go up to intercept their aircraft and escort them back out towards Russia (Vladivostok). I saw lots of interesting close-up photos showing their flight crews waving at our F106s. At the time we weren't allowed to keep any copies of the classified photos.

One interesting story we heard was the main maintenance hangar where we did major maintenance in was the site where during the Korean War there were 50 American maintenance people hung. Another creepy experience was one night while we were listening to our favorite North Korean radio station from our barracks (because they played some good American songs), we heard them broadcast some of our names! There was a cholera outbreak and in order to go off Base you had to show your shot record. I couldn't believe some guys actually would have to get another cholera shot at the main gate because they had forgotten their shot record!

I'll never forget the day before we were to return home, we had a huge squadron party and the Russians must have known it because we had to scramble 8 times during the party! We found out that we would be reassigned to Wurtsmith AFB, Oscoda, Michigan. We would leave our F106's in Korea and swap our aircraft with the unit replacing us.

I did get a "Dear John" letter while I was in Korea. Things happen for a reason; right after I returned back to the States, I met my wonderful wife-to-be Sharon. I was sent on an immediate TDY to Phelps Collins Airport, Alpena after Korea. The week I was there I met Sharon, the day after Thanksgiving, 1969. We were married in 1970. I really thought that I would be getting orders for AK130 Gunships because it was our AFSC (322X) that maintained the fire control system on it. Several of my buddies did get orders. We decided to leave the Air Force after 7 ½ years. I took a job immediately with Hughes Aircraft Company at Otis ANGB, Massachusetts as a Tech Rep on the F106 MA-1 system. I only stayed with them for 18 months before I took on a full-time position with the Michigan Air National Guard at Selfridge.

In 1987 I decided to return to the Air National Guard to finish out my military retirement of 20 years total military service. My last 3 years in the Air Guard was a nice change of pace, working in the Base Career and

Education Office as a career advisor. I really enjoyed helping young people out. I finally fully retired from the MIANG in 1993.

By the way, our son Matt has pursued a career in the Navy, where he has been ironically working in the Fire Control Systems on submarines, similar to my Air Force career! He is pursuing a 30-year career in the Navy. In 2026 he is the Command Master Chief of Helicopter Squadron 14 at North Island Naval Air Base, CA.

Aim High! Ski

Click [Bobski](#) to read Bob's full story on our website.

PIG ROAST 2026

Stan Harrison - Pig Roast Chair

Thanks to lots of help from our friends, our annual Pig Roast added \$7,468.54 to our treasury.

Once again, the Saline American Legion post 322 provided the host site and allowed us to take advantage of their commercial kitchen under the direction of their Commander, Eric Engelmeier. Wisenreder Farms again furnished the corn on the cob. DAR Daughters ran the food line assisted by the local scout troop.

Members of the Saline American Legion, Sons of the American Legion, our own AVVA and VVA plus a few relatives and friends, were all over the place doing the necessary tasks to make the event a success.

We thank them all.



Allen Knecht, Tim Driscoll, Berry Bourne & Bob Bull

More pig roast pictures on next page



L-R Gary Estermyer MSC Secretary, Tim Driscoll, John Riling III National VP & MSC President
MSC - Vietnam Michigan State Council



Saline American Legion Commander
Eric Engelmeier



Preparing The Cole Slaw



DAR Ladies

Image credit Dave and Meni Draper. To view more click on [Pig Roast Pictures](https://www.flickr.com/photos/vva310/albums/72177720335425964/).
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We Thank You For Your Support!

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Who We Are

We Are 227 Strong, And Growing

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Please Direct Any Questions About Membership or Our Website To:
membership@vva310.org. Thank You!

- VVA's Founding Principle -

*"Never Again Shall A Vet Return Home From Battle To Be Made To Feel
Alone And Unappreciated"*