



310 Dispatch

Together We Make A Difference



July/Aug 2026

Lest We Forget

Charles F. Boss
David D. Mc Kenzie
William M. Brown
David S. Palmer
Douglas P. Atkins
Philp G. Spencer
Thomas L. Cleland
Kendal L. Benney Jr.
James W. Davis

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988

Suicide
&
Crisis
Hotline

National Chapter of the Year 1997, 2007, 2025 - National Newsletter of the Year 2007, 2009, 2011, 2015 and Email Newsletter of the Year 2017



From The President's Desk Allen Knecht

It has been just over three short months that I have been elected President and I have been very impressed with the whole organization since I am a fairly new member. I have received much needed and greatly appreciated assistance from the Staff. I look forward to continuance of this team effort.

I have been attending many of the various breakfast gatherings not only to become familiar with names but also to enjoy the commaderie. Unfortunately I have issues with my hearing and do not always understand all the various conversations. I do have an upcoming appointment with the VA to hopefully upgrade my hearing aides.

In the July meeting it was voted to change the bylaws to make it easier to change the time of our meetings in order to make it unnecessary to drive in the dark. I find this necessary because my night vision has significantly deteriorated. In our August meeting we need to establish a new meeting time.

I am looking forward to the annual 'Pig Roast' and am personally getting the word out by placing an add in my condo association's monthly newsletter and emailing my friends. Please spread the word to assure a highly successful 'Pig Roast'.

I thank you for your patience while I learn the job and welcome any suggestions.

July/August 2026 Chaplain's Corner Gordon Moore

Holy Smokes!! Okay, so the smoke from the Canadian wildfires isn't holy, and, neither is the smoke in hell, which is exactly the reason we need salvation. The air is clean in Heaven and God Himself will provide all the light we need as well as the Tree of Life bearing different fruit in all the seasons and the River of Life flowing from it both of which will allow us to enjoy eternal life in our new bodies made to be like Christ's glorious body. To quote a line from a song, "Who could ask for anything more?!"

With all the calamity in the world and the hopeless feeling that many are sharing just trying to get by and staying alive (Bee Gees), it provides a greater motivation for those of us who have faith to share the good news that is available to people. As Jesus commanded His followers to imitate the things that they saw and heard Him do. We are alive in Christ and have the Spirit to give us discernment in sharing. As Jesus said, "Go into a house, offer them God's peace (Peace be upon you) and if they do not accept it, simply leave, brush the



dust of your feet and move on. Eventually we will find people who want God's peace and rejoice with them in their acceptance of it.

In the meantime, we need to live like we actually have His peace and not be moaners delivering a message of discontent like many in the world today. We have so much to be thankful for that we can be sharing as a positive message to offset the gloom and doom that many are espousing. I recently spent time with a believer and was taken back with all the negativity that surrounded him. I thought to myself that it was counterproductive to be negative and share the good news. It just didn't fit the narrative.

That allowed me to examine my conversations and see if I also fell into that trap, obviously not from Heaven, of being negative and not living a life that was consistent with the good news of hope. Self-examination can come as a result of various conversations as those conversations afford us the luxury of looking into our own mirror and seeing what is out of place. This examination leads to a healthier life style and lifts not only our own spirit and also those we come in contact with.

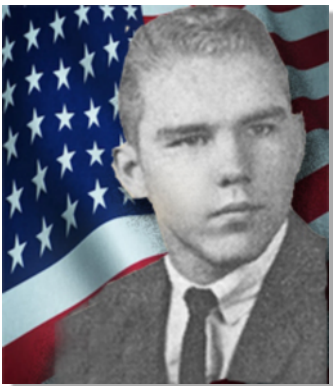
The challenge for us is to be more positive because of the hope that is within us.

Blessings to all as you enjoy this summer and life of Christ that is within us.

A Memorial Related Story

John Kinzinger

During the developing of our Vietnam Veterans Memorial, our committee had the opportunity to get to know some very special people. The Gold Star parents, who were so happy with us and our efforts to honor their sons. It brought us into their homes and lives. Our contacts with them; kept us energized to keep working toward our goal.



The parents of [David McKenzie](#) (Dale and Grace) stayed along side us from the beginning of our two-year project to the dedication. They even helped unveil the Memorial at the Dedication in 1991. Dale was in a wheelchair at that time. Grace was the wonderful, quiet small woman who, when she got fired up, look out!

Mr. McKenzie was captured shortly after he arrived at the front with his unit during the Battle of the Bulge. He was a prisoner of the Germans at the time of the birth of David. Mrs. McKenzie did not know the fate of her husband for many months, and she with their baby son. That had to have been very hard for her, and something no one else could understand..

After the war, Mr. McKenzie worked as a salesman for a company. You can imagine he was most patriotic. When David was drafted, one cannot imagine the great concern his parents must have had. When they got word of his being killed, we cannot understand the great pain that must have caused.

Shortly after our Memorial dedication, Mr. McKenzie died. Grace was devastated, again. They did have a daughter who was close to her. Jane and I would visit Grace on occasion. On one visit she took us down in her finished basement. She had created a beautiful memorial area for her husband and son, side-by-side. There were all their Army medals, citations and letters, along with many photos.

After their son's body was cremated, they had his ashes buried in the memorial garden at St. Francis Catholic church in Ann Arbor.

I visited Mr. McKenzie at the Ann Arbor VA when he was a patient there. He was a patriot. It was easy to understand that. He was a strong-willed gentleman. An example of who he was and felt is explained in a story he shared with me. The word must have come down from on high to his church that they were going to take the U.S. Flag out of the sanctuary and not be allowed in there. As he explained it, he immediately went to the priest and voiced his strong concern against removing it. He let them know what it meant to so many who served, and their families, the real patriots.

After getting nowhere with the priest, Mr. McKenzie took his own personal action. He began attending church in his wheelchair with a Flag strapped to it. I do not know how long he did that, but after getting to know him some, it was not a one Sunday event.

His WWII service, and being a POW, then having his son killed in Vietnam, our Flag had to have meant more than all of us could know.

~ Memorial Dedication - November 10, 1991 ~



L-R Mrs. Lois Brown, Mr. Chester Brown, Richard Kinzinger (escort w/wheelchair, Mr. Dayle McKenize, and Escort Hank Koski

The underline text are links to their son's page on our website.



These boots and helmet belonged to Chapter and Memorial Committee member Tom Fifefield. He wore them while a Huey door gunner/crew chief in Vietnam. They were on display for the Memorial dedication and soon after disappeared.

Photo 11/10/1991



Who Cares About the Future of Vietnam Veterans of America?

Jon Luker

The future of VVA depends on whether we still believe the promise: “Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another.” If we do, then we have a responsibility to prepare the next generation to carry forward the mission and values that have defined our organization.

Mission 75 is a plan to ensure VVA's long-term survival by opening membership to veterans who served after 1975 and developing them as the organization's future leaders. The proposal requires a change to VVA's constitutional membership requirements at the 2027 convention. It does not require an act of Congress, a change to our national charter, or a change to the VVA name.

Current members and veterans who served during the Vietnam War era would see no change in their lifetime membership dues, which would remain \$50. Veterans whose service occurred entirely after 1975 would likely pay annual dues, with lifetime membership options available. Final rates have not yet been established.

Some members ask why post-1975 veterans would want to join an organization called Vietnam Veterans of America. The answer is simple: we do not need all eligible veterans to join. We only need those who appreciate the legacy of veterans who came before them and who want to ensure that future generations receive the same support and advocacy.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 11 million Americans have served in the military since 1975. VVA currently has about 93,000 members. Recruiting only a small fraction of eligible post-1975 veterans would provide the membership base needed to sustain the organization for decades to come.

Interest already exists. Many of VVA's employees are post-1975 veterans, and they report consistent inquiries from individuals who want to join but are currently ineligible under existing membership requirements.

VVA's influence extends well beyond its membership size. The White House, Congress, and the Department of Veterans Affairs recognize VVA as a respected advocate for veterans and military personnel. Our credibility comes from decades of supporting policies that benefit all veterans, including work on issues such as the GI Bill, Gulf War illness, toxic exposure legislation, and expanded presumptive conditions.

As Mission 75 is considered, it is important that members understand both the proposal and its implications. The 2026 National Leadership Conference will provide an opportunity for members to learn more, ask questions, and discuss the future of the organization.

Ultimately, the decision belongs to the membership. But if we are committed to keeping faith with future generations of veterans, we must seriously consider how VVA will continue its mission beyond our own lifetimes.

As the saying goes: decisions are made by those who show up.

Editor's note: I'm going to include articles like the above and those on pages 5 and 6. My thought is to present our newsletter as more than 'just' chapter activities. Info and links to our KIA's will still be included but at times may only be linked back to our website in the Lest We Forget panel on page 1.



Khe Sanh

Robert Stone

From The Series "The Vietnam Experience – Images of War"

Who won what at Khe Sanh remains obscure. Both sides claim it as a victory. It was a remote battlefield, either strategically vital or nowhere at all. Its value depended on the strategic perspective, the personal interest, or the public relations position of the evaluator.

Were the Marines sent there to hold the "western anchor" of South Vietnam's defenses and close the Ho Chi Minh Trail? Or were they there as bait to draw the Communists into a conventional battle in which their army might be destroyed by superior fire and air power? Or were the NVA divisions themselves the bait, there to lure American forces into an unoccupied corner of the country while the Tet¹ offensive struck at the centers of population? Were the NVA forces repulsed in their determined attempt to inflict a major defeat on the United States? Or was their effort a feint to distract MACV's attention from plans for the more strategically important assaults?

For the strategist in Saigon, Honolulu, and Washington, Khe Sanh became a state of mind. Lyndon Johnson, master of persuasion and hyperbole, dreaded the reaction of the press and the Congress to a setback there. Above all he dreaded the reaction of the public whose love and admiration he required.

Dreamful analogies suggested themselves. The words Battle of Điện Biên Phủ² were uttered. The public read those words and heard them on television. Battle of Điện Biên Phủ, horrible words, dust on the tongue, mud, defeat, capitulation. Incomprehensible words, the name of a place to buy opium and of a foreign army's destruction, became a symbol of that land war in Asia America had been cautioned against since MacArthur's day. Its shadow fell across time and distance to dishearten the countries war leaders.

Sleepless and haggard, Johnson paced the White House situation room. A sand reproduction of Khe Sanh had been built for his benefit. He read and tried to interpret every incoming dispatch. He was squandering the last of his optimism, energy, and determination. As the siege wore on and the reports of Tet offensive kept coming, Johnson's writer struggled for the right words of explanation. Seen from Washington and even Saigon, the situation was complex.

For the 6000 marines and 300 Arvin Rangers inside the Khe Sanh perimeter the situation was elemental. Ranged against them were up to four divisions of North Vietnam's regular army equipped with heavy guns and even tanks. For seventy-seven days, between the end of January and early April 1968, the men at Khe Sanh endured a sustained attack that ceased to be an event with the cause, beginning, and foreseeable end but became a condition of life to which only alternative was death.

They never got a glimpse of the big picture. There was only small pictures, moments of fire, pain, and sudden death. Only those who were there can really know what it was like.

One who was there was a great war of photographer David Duncan, who shared the Marines ordeal and who took pictures. Combat troops often ask journalist why the writers were in the line. Duncan who answered most eloquently in words he wrote after covering the war in Korea and used again in Khe Sanh to explain his business.

I want it to show what the war does to a man Duncan wrote. I want to show that the comrade-



ship that binds men together when they are fighting on a common pearl. I wanted to show the way men live, and die, when they know death is among them, and yet they still find the strength to crawl forward armed only with a bayonets stop the advantage of the men who have never seen, with whom they have no immediate quarrel, men who will kill them on site if given the first chance. I wanted to show the agony, the suffering, the terrible confusion, the heroism which is every day currency among the men who actually pull the triggers of the rifles aimed at other men known as the enemy. I wanted to tell the story of a war, as war has always been for men. Only their weapons the terrain and causes have changed. Nearly 500 marines died defending Khe Sanh and perhaps 10,000 north Vietnamese soldiers assaulting the place were killed or wounded. But the war, in its perversity, had a way of denying the most valiant the fruits of their valor. Once the fighting was over, the dead of both sides and the wounded removed to where they might be healed, Khe Sanh had no attraction for either side. General Westmoreland ordered the basin dismantled.

¹*The Tet offensive article will be in the Sept/Oct issue.*

²*The Battle of Điện Biên Phủ was a defeat of the French Union forces by the Viet Minh forces in the First Indochina War. It took place between 13 March and 7 May 1954.*

VA Healthcare Struggle and Legislation

Sandie Wilson

I am not an expert in how the government rates service-connected disability or how it is paid. My knowledge comes from my personal experience and what I have learned from my close veteran friends. I do know there are some active military people who have a health problem during active service and are determined to not be capable of returning to work. They may be given a medical retirement. I am not sure what basis is used to determine the amount of the payment. My friend who was an E4 was severely injured as a result during Tet. He spent years in military hospital and VA services before his discharge. He is no longer with us, but I believe he said he received a percentage of what he was paid on active duty. Not enough to live on but something. Many years later, he applied through the VA for other service-related health problems and was finally granted 100%, including unemployability. I do not know if he also collected medical retirement.

My chapter member was doing his job in the engine room of his ship off the coast of Vietnam. He reports he had his head by the vent to lessen the heat when he was drenched with liquid. His immediate comment was. "What is going on? There are no weeds in here".

Following his Navy active duty, he went home and did all things expected. He achieved a job and a family. Things were good. In the 1970s he became ill and sought healthcare. He was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer. In the healthcare professions, we would consider this the kiss of death.

His civilian doctors used his employer-related health insurance to treat him with lengthy and massive doses of chemotherapy. His health insurance no longer existed with the loss of his job. The medical bills then exhausted all the family savings. His daughters were school age and 8 months old. His wife had to become his caretaker instead of an employed electrical engineer.

He applied for service-connected disability through the country veterans department and Social Security. VA agreed to provide health care based on lack of income. Finally, the VA benefits. "No service connection because his ship was not in Vietnam and his cancer was cured." He was granted



\$660 per month in Social Security disability. Maybe the cancer was cured, but the massive doses of chemotherapy damaged numerous body systems.

Becoming associated with VVA, he was introduced to VA's most knowledgeable service benefits person about Agent Orange and probably the most aggressive. Nineteen years later, he was granted 100% disability. Credit had to be given to the fact that his wife located the book about the facts of his ship's deployment. Inside the cover was printed the route taken during the cruise and a picture of the toxins being dropped on the ship from an Air Force plane. It also helped that some of his health problems, which emerged post-chemotherapy, became classified as presumptive.

The VA provided him with outstanding care after the 100% award. But they also billed her non-government family health insurance for some services he received including \$180,000 for treatment in the VA hospital ER the day he died.

His daughters are now highly educated adults with families. They are still paying on major student loans and are on the birth defects register. Both have multiple health problems. Doctors report many of their problems are related to toxic exposure.

After many years of lobbying efforts, in 2016 the president signed into law the requirement research toxic health effects for children of veterans. Step one of that law was completed. The assigned government health science agency completed its review of available research done and determined more research was needed. For the past 10 years, we have been waiting for step 2 in the law.

We have been told that there are about 60 items in this great veterans legislation to address veterans' problems, including millions of dollars for veteran research and Ft McClellan toxic problems. But the late amendment from the congressional veterans committee requires PAY/GO within veteran provisions to be utilized to not increase the budget for veterans.

It is reported the Veterans Administration will take from tinnitus and sleep apnea to provide money to approve the pending legislation in the bill so veterans with a medical retirement can receive both medical retirement and disability income. Many of our members are currently wearing hearing aids to help the tinnitus problem. My doctor said his most frequent order is written for CPAP machine and supplies. This is a new precedent, but supposedly will result in massive savings during the next 10 years.

Does that mean as veterans, we again will see veteran problems kicked down the road again without alleviating the problems? Kiss goodbye the research dollars. Kiss goodbye knowledge and action for those veterans exposed during service at Ft McClennan. Kiss goodbye all the issues for which we have sought relief on with our lobbying efforts for many years.

Will Congress fund the **Starr ACT** using **PAY/GO**? Will the remainder of the issues included with this Veteran Bill that requires any money be removed from consideration? Congress postponed the vote. **Now is the time to contact your congressional office.** Politicians have said Veterans do not vote. We do not campaign, but we can lobby and vote. If you vote in person, please dress as a veteran.



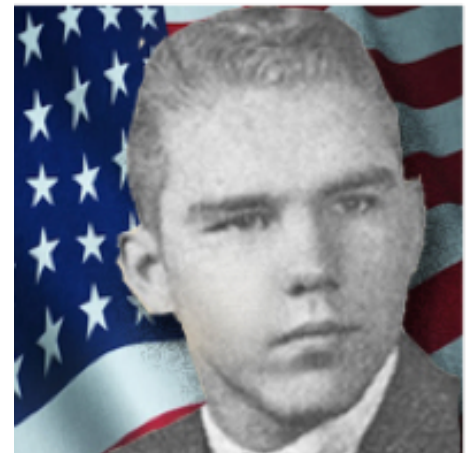
I created a short video of the history of our Memorial last year that is on Youtube. If you haven't seen it click [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGqDDfY72hM). For those with a printed newsletter, type this><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGqDDfY72hM> in your browser.

Honor And Remember



Airman Second Class Charles Frederick Boss was born on July 16, 1947 to Mr. and Mrs. John M. Boss of Ann Arbor, Michigan. Charles graduated from Ann Arbor High School in 1965. Charles was killed during a rocket attack on July 15, 1967 along with seven others. Charles Boss is survived by his parents, a brother and two sisters. He lived 19 years, 11 months and 29 days. Charles is resting in Forest Hills Cemetery in Ann Arbor, Michigan. His name is located on the Vietnam Memorial located at the Ypsilanti Township Hall under Ann Arbor. His name is also listed on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC on Panel 23E Line 073.

Lance Corporal David Dayle Mc Kenzie was born on February 13, 1945 in Detroit, Michigan to Mr. and Mrs. David D. Mc Kenzie of Ann Arbor, Michigan. David enlisted in the Marine Corps after graduating from High School. David was killed early in his tour on July 12, 1965. David Dayle Mc Kenzie is survived by his parents and four sisters. He lived 20 years, 4 months and 29 days. He is resting in Michigan Memorial Park in Flat Rock, Michigan. David's name is listed on the Vietnam Memorial in Ypsilanti Township under Ann Arbor. His name also appears on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC on Panel 02E Line 035.



Honor And Remember



Lieutenant William Lennington Brown was born on October 5, 1935 in Ypsilanti, Michigan to Mr. Robert S. and Mrs. Patricia Lennington Brown. William graduated from Roosevelt High School in Ypsilanti, Michigan. In June, 1955, he received a Congressional Appointment to the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. He was acting as a Naval Advisor to the Marine Corps in Chu Lai, South Vietnam when the island of Ky Hoa was attacked by a large force of Viet Cong. Bill Brown was killed as a result of multiple fragmentation wounds on July 9, 1965 along with four other Americans. Lieutenant William Lennington Brown is survived by his parents, two brothers and a sister. He lived for 29 years, 9 months and 4 days. He is resting at the Brookside Cemetery in Tecumseh, Michigan. Bill's name is

listed on the Vietnam Memorial in Ypsilanti Township under Ypsilanti. His name also appears on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC on Panel 02E Line 033.

Private First Class Douglas Paul Atkins was born on September 14, 1950 in Ann Arbor to Mr. and Mrs. Variell L. Atkins. Douglas is a 1968 graduate of Ann Arbor Senior High School in Ann Arbor. Private First Class Douglas Paul Atkins was killed by a booby-trap explosion on July 27, 1970, just 23 days into his tour in Vietnam. He was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, Purple Heart, Doug is survived by his parents, family and friends. He lived 19 years, 10 months and 13 days. Douglas Paul Atkins is listed on the Vietnam Memorial in Ypsilanti Township under Ann Arbor. His name also appears on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC on Panel 08W Line 058.



Specialist 4 Philip Glenn Spencer was born on March 3, 1946 in Ypsilanti, Michigan to Mr. Glenn F. and Mrs. Jessie K. Spencer. Philip is a 1964 graduate of Willow Run High School in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Specialist 4 Spencer enlisted in the Army on October 25, 1967 taking his Basic Training at Fort Knox, Kentucky with further training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. He died of a very rare blood disease called Agranulocytosis at the 108th General Hospital at Kishine Air Force Base in Japan on July 10, 1968. Philip Glenn Spencer is survived by his parents and his wife. He lived 22 years, 4 months and 7 days. He is resting in Highland Cemetery in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Philip's name is listed on the Vietnam Memorial in Ypsilanti Township under Ypsilanti. His name also appears on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC on Panel 52W Line 011.

Honor And Remember



Hospital-Man David Scott Palmer was born on October 6, 1945 to Mr. and Mrs. David E. Palmer of Ypsilanti, Michigan. David is a 1963 graduate of Roosevelt High School in Ypsilanti, Michigan where he received honors in math. Hospital man Palmer began his tour of duty in Quang Nam Province with Headquarters and Service Company, 1st Battalion, III Marine Amphibious Forces. David was killed on July 5, 1967 due to an explosive device. David Scott Palmer is survived by his parents, a sister and a brother. He lived 21 years 8 months and 29 days. David's name is listed on the Vietnam Memorial in Ypsilanti Township under Ypsilanti. His name also appears on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC on Panel 23E Line 014.

Thomas Leonard Cleland was born on November 5, 1941 to Mr. Leslie and Mrs. Coryell Cleland. Thomas began his tour of duty in Quang Ngai Province, South Vietnam on May 7, 1966 serving as an Antenna Installer Specialist with Headquarters, Headquarters Company, First Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. He was killed on July 11, 1967 after serving "In-country" for one year, two months and four days. Specialist 4 Thomas Leonard Cleland was survived by his parents, his wife Sharon, two brothers (Dale and Terry) and a sister (Andrea Coron). He lived 25 years, 8 months and 6 days. He is resting in St. Joseph's Cemetery in Whittaker, Michigan. Thomas' name is listed on the Vietnam Memorial in Ypsilanti Township under Ypsilanti. His name also appears on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC on Panel 23E Line 049.



Lance Corporal Kendal Lee Benney, Jr. was born on February 22, 1948 to Mr. and Mrs. Kendal L. Benney of Ypsilanti. Kendal was killed on August 20, 1967 while standing watch when he suffered multiple fragmentation wounds from a bomb. Lance Corporal Kendal Lee Benney, Jr. is survived by his mother, father, step-mother, two sisters and one brother who was serving in South Vietnam when Kendal was killed. Kendal lived 19 years, 5 months and 28 days. He is resting in the Altona Cemetery in Altona, Michigan. Kendal's name is listed on the Vietnam Memorial in Ypsilanti Township under Ypsilanti. His name also appears on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC on Panel 25E Line 018.

Private First Class James William Davis was born on March 24, 1947 in Erie, Pennsylvania to Mr. and Mrs. William A. and Gretchen Raub Davis. Private First Class Davis began his tour of duty in An Hoa, Quang Nam Province, South Vietnam on July 7, 1969. James was killed on August 13, 1969 as a result of small arms fire just one month and six days into his tour of duty "In-Country". James William Davis is survived by his wife, an 11 month old son, his parents, and two brothers. He lived 22 years, 4 months and 10 days. He is resting in Washtenong Memorial Park in Ann Arbor, Michigan. James' name is listed on the Vietnam Memorial in Ypsilanti Township under Ypsilanti. His name also appears on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC on Panel 19W Line 029.





Dispatch Patrons

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George Perrault ~ Oct. 2035

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All other donations may be made payable to VVA 310 at the same mailing address by indicating 'Donation' on the memo line.

VVA 310 award-winning newsletter reaches approximately 500 people each month with 100 mailed USPS, 50 hits off the website (www.vva310.org), and 350 emailed. With good stewardship and networking, the cost to print the *Dispatch* approximates \$1,250 per year.

Who We Are

We Are 220 Strong, And Growing

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Chaplain: Rev. Gordon Moore
Sergeant-at-Arms: Eric Downie
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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 Will One Generation Of Veterans Abandon Another!"

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Please Forward. Thank You