



Vietnam Veterans In Canada

General Meeting (2007-08)

Agenda 521

12 April 2007

British Columbia Regiment (DCO), Vancouver, B.C.

KANDAHAR—They were distinct individuals in life: The wag, the prankster, the quiet fellow, the stern but gruffly affectionate sergeant, the reservist who pined for and earned equal status, the veteran and the kid. Members of Hotel Company carry the flag-draped casket of one of their fallen comrades to an aircraft in Kandahar, Afghanistan, on April 10 for the final trip home to Canada.



Moment of Silence

United States and Canadian Military Casualty Reports Received since 28 March 2007

Sgt. Curtis J. Forshey, 22, of Hollidaysburg, Pa., died Mar. 27 in Homburg, Germany, of a non-combat related illness. Forshey was assigned to the 129th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 101st Sustainment Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, Fort Campbell, Ky.

Spc. Sean K. McDonald, 21, of Rosemount, Minn., died Mar 25 in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. McDonald was assigned to the 9th Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Wiesbaden, Germany.

Staff Sgt. Marcus A. Golczynski, 30, of Lewisburg, Tenn., died March 27 from wounds received while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar province, Iraq. Golczynski was assigned to Marine Forces Reserve's 3rd Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment, 4th Marine Division, Nashville, Tenn.

Master Sgt. Sean M. Thomas, 33, of Harrisburg, Pa., died March 27 in Baghdad, Iraq, when his unit came in contact with enemy forces using indirect fire during combat operations. Thomas was assigned to the 28th Division Support Command, Harrisburg, Pa.

Sgt. Edmund W. McDonald, 25, of Casco, Maine. McDonald died March 29 in North Kabul, Afghanistan, of injuries suffered during a non-combat related vehicle accident on March 28 in North Kabul. His death is under investigation.

Spc. Agustin Gutierrez, 19, of San Jacinto, Calif. Gutierrez died March 29 in North Kabul, Afghanistan, of injuries suffered during a non-combat related vehicle accident on March 28 in North Kabul. His death is under investigation.

Staff Sgt. Jason R. Arnette, 24, of Amelia, Va. Arnette died from wounds suffered Mar. 31 in Baghdad, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, N.Y.

Spc. Wilfred Flores Jr., 20, of Lawton, Okla. Flores died from wounds suffered Mar. 31 in Baghdad, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, N.Y.

Sgt. Joe Polo, 24, of Opalocka, Fla., died Mar. 29 in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when his unit was attacked by enemy forces using an improvised explosive device and small arms fire. Polo was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colo.

1st Lt. Neale M. Shank, 25, of Fort Wayne, Ind., died Mar. 31 in Baghdad, Iraq, from a non-combat related incident. His death is under investigation. Shank was assigned to the 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, N.Y.

Staff Sgt. Bradley D. King, 28, of Marion, Ind., died April 2 in Al Amiriyah, Iraq, of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle during combat operations. King was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 152nd Infantry Regiment, 76th Infantry Brigade, Marion, Ind.

Staff Sgt. David A. Mejias, 26, of San Juan, Puerto Rico. Mejias died April 1 in Baghdad, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle during combat operations. He was assigned to the 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, N.Y.

Staff Sgt. Eric R. Vick, 25, of Spring Hope, N.C. Vick died April 1 in Baghdad, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle during combat operations. He was assigned to the 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, N.Y.

Sgt. Robert M. McDowell, 30, of Deer Park, Texas. McDowell died April 1 in Baghdad, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle during combat operations. He was assigned to the 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, N.Y.

Spc. William G. Bowling, 24, of Beattyville, Ky. Bowling died April 1 in Baghdad, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle during combat operations. He was assigned to the 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, N.Y.

Spc. Brian E. Ritzberg, 24, of New York, Ny. died April 2 in Balad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his unit during combat operations in Kirkuk, Iraq. Ritzberg was assigned to the 977th Military Police Company, 97th Military Police Battalion, 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley, Kansas.

Pfc. Miguel A. Marcial III, 19, of Secaucus, N.J., died April 1 in Al Anbar province, Iraq. His death is currently under investigation. Marcial was assigned to 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Lance Cpl. Daniel R. Olsen, 20, of Eagan, Minn., died April 2 while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar province, Iraq. Olsen was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Twentynine Palms, Calif.

Spc. Curtis R. Spivey, 25, of Chula Vista, Calif., died April 2 in San Diego of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle during combat operations on Sep. 16, 2006, in Baghdad, Iraq. Spivey was assigned to the 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

Pfc. Gabriel J. Figueroa, 20, of Baldwin Park, Calif., died April 3 in Baghdad, Iraq, when his unit came in contact with enemy forces using small arms fire. Figueroa was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

Staff Sgt. Shane R. Becker, 35, of Helena, Mont., died April 3 in Baghdad, Iraq, when his unit came in contact with enemy forces using small arms fire. Becker was assigned to the 1st Squadron, 40th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Fort Richardson, Alaska.

Pfc. James J. Coon, 22, of Walnut Creek, Calif., died April 4 in Balad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when in improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. Coon was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

Pfc. Walter Freeman Jr., 20, of Lancaster, Calif. Freeman died April 4 in Baghdad, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle during combat operations. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colo.

Pfc. Derek A. Gibson, 20, Eustis, Fla. Gibson died April 4 in Baghdad, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle during combat operations. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colo.

1st Lt. Phillip I. Neel, 27, of Maryland, died April 8 in Balad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when his unit came in contact with enemy forces using grenades. His death is under investigation. Neel was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

Pfc. Conor G. Masterson, 21, of Inver Grove Heights, Minn., died April 7 in Eastern Afghanistan of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. Masterson was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, Hohenfels, Germany.

Chief Petty Officer Gregory J. Billiter, 36, of Villa Hills, Ky. Billiter died April 6 from enemy action while conducting combat operations near Kirkuk, Iraq. He was assigned to Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit Eleven, Whidbey Island, Wash.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Curtis R. Hall, 24, of Burley, Ind. Hall died April 6 from enemy action while conducting combat operations near Kirkuk, Iraq. He was assigned to Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit Eleven, Whidbey Island, Wash.

Petty Officer 1st Class Joseph A. McSween, 26, of Valdosta, Ga. McSween died April 6 from enemy action while conducting combat operations near Kirkuk, Iraq. He was assigned to Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit Eleven, Whidbey Island, Wash.

Capt. Anthony Palermo, 26, of Brockton, Mass. Palermo died April 6 in Baghdad, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle during combat operations. He was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Schweinfurt, Germany.

Spc. Ryan S. Dallam, 24, of Norman, Okla. Dallam died April 6 in Baghdad, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle during combat operations. He was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Schweinfurt, Germany.

Pvt. Damian Lopez Rodriguez, Tucson, Ariz. Rodriguez died April 6 in Baghdad, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle during combat operations. He was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Schweinfurt, Germany.

Sgt. Adam P. Kennedy, 25, of Norfolk, Mass., died April 8 in Diwaniyah, Iraq, of wounds suffered with his unit came in contact with enemy forces using indirect fire. Kennedy was assigned to the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Fort Richardson, Alaska.

Sgt. Todd A. Singleton, 24, of Muskegon, Mich., died April 8 in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when his unit came in contact with enemy forces using an improvised explosive device and small arms fire. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

Staff Sgt. Jerry C. Burge, 39, of Carriere, Miss. Burge died from wounds suffered Apr. 4 in Taji, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

Cpl. Joseph H. Cantrell IV, 23, of Ashland, Ky. Cantrell died from wounds suffered Apr. 4 in Taji, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

Cmdr. Philip A. Murphy-Sweet, 42, of Caldwell, Idaho, died April 7, as a result of enemy action in the vicinity of Baghdad. He was operationally assigned to Joint Contracting Command, Multi-National Force - Iraq and was deployed from his permanently assigned command of Naval Inventory Control Point, Mechanicsburg, Pa.

Staff Sgt. Harrison Brown, 31, of Prichard, Ala. Brown died April 8 in Baghdad, Iraq, when his unit came in contact with enemy forces using an improvised explosive device and small arms fire. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Benning, Ga.

Pfc. David N. Simmons, 20, of Kokomo, Ind. Simmons died April 8 in Baghdad, Iraq, when his unit came in contact with enemy forces using an improvised explosive device and small arms fire. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Benning, Ga.

Capt. Jonathan D. Grassbaugh, 25, of East Hampstead, N.H. Grassbaugh died Apr. 7 in Zaganiyah, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his unit. He was assigned to the 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C.

Spc. Ebe F. Emolo, 33, of Greensboro, N.C. Emolo died Apr. 7 in Zaganiyah, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his unit. He was assigned to the 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C.

Spc. Levi K. Hoover, 23, of Midland, Mich. Hoover died Apr. 7 in Zaganiyah, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his unit. He was assigned to the 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C.

Pfc. Rodney L. McCandless, 21, of Camden, Ark. McCandless died Apr. 7 in Zaganiyah, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his unit. He was assigned to the 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C.

Staff Sgt. Jesse L. Williams, 25, of Santa Rosa, Calif., died April 8 in Balad, Iraq, of wounds suffered from small arms fire while conducting combat operations in Baqubah, Iraq. Williams was assigned to the 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division (Stryker Brigade Combat Team), Fort Lewis, Wash.

Spc. Clifford A. Spohn III, 21, of Albuquerque, N.M., died Apr. 9 in Karmah, Iraq, of wounds suffered when the enemy attacked his location with indirect fire. Spohn was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Fort Richardson, Alaska.

Sgt. Donald Lucas, 31, of Burton, New Brunswick. Lucas was killed 08 April when an apparent improvised explosive device detonated, striking his LAV-III armoured vehicle as they guarded a convoy about 75 kilometres west of Kandahar. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment, Gagetown, New Brunswick.

Cpl. Aaron E. Williams, 23, of Lincoln, New Brunswick. Williams was killed 08 April when an apparent improvised explosive device detonated, striking his LAV-III armoured vehicle as they guarded a convoy about 75 kilometres west of Kandahar. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment, Gagetown, New Brunswick.

Pte. Kevin Vincent Kennedy, 20, of Saint Lawrence, Newfoundland. Kennedy was killed 08 April when an apparent improvised explosive device detonated, striking his LAV-III armoured vehicle as they guarded a convoy about 75 kilometres west of Kandahar. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment, Gagetown, New Brunswick.

Pte. David Robert Greenslade, 20, of Saint John, New Brunswick. Greenslade was killed 08 April when an apparent improvised explosive device detonated, striking his LAV-III armoured vehicle as they guarded a convoy about 75 kilometres west of Kandahar. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment, Gagetown, New Brunswick.

Cpl. Christopher Paul Stannix, 24, of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Stannix was killed 08 April when an apparent improvised explosive device detonated, striking his LAV-III armoured vehicle as they guarded a convoy about 75 kilometres west of Kandahar. He was assigned to the Princess Louise Fusiliers, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Cpl. Brent Poland, 37, of Sarnia, Ontario. Poland was killed 08 April when an apparent improvised explosive device detonated, striking his LAV-III armoured vehicle as they guarded a convoy about 75 kilometres west of Kandahar. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment, Gagetown, New Brunswick.

Casualty Count is now 3709

since 10 November 2001

Announcements and Acknowledgements

Sid Tencarre had a heart attack. He is recovering in Edmonton.

President's Remarks

(D. Sinclair, AUS)

Don is TDY to Vimy Ridge, France at this time.

1st Vice President's Remarks

(G. Flowers, USMC)

Gerry is TDY to Hawaii at this time.

He sends the following remarks by email on 10 April:

Get this, I went up to have a coffee the other morning in Lanai City (really just a village) and walked onto the veranda, and there were four or five vets there and the Congresswoman from Honolulu, just starting a meeting. They invited me to sit in and I did. They are isolated and had a bunch of problems. I told them all about the VVIC after giving them advice that helped our group in the early years...gave her the VVIC card, Moore's Marauders card and am now in contact with a few vets here.....229 total on the island. About eight percent of the total population of locals...Lanai....is getting a va clinic for 229-ish veterans...how about them potatoes... gaf

2nd Vice President's Remarks

(T. O'Malley)

Chief of Staff's Remarks

(S. O'Grady, AUS)

Master At Arms Remarks

(K. Payne, USN)

General Collection

Minutes of the previous meeting

Finance Officer's Report

1. Final 2006 Annual Financial Report (overdue)

Intelligence Officer's Report

1. Continued expansion of S2 collection capabilities.
2. Southern Cross V update
3. Opening of "Expat stations"
4. Web expansion.

Service Officer's Report

1. P. Knauth, AUS
2. C. Ricard, AUS

Inspector General's Report

Quartermaster's Report

Legislative matters:

H.R.0089: A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to extend eligibility for combat-related special compensation (CRSC) paid to certain uniformed services retirees who are retired under chapter 61 of such title with fewer than 20 years of creditable service. Sponsor: Rep Bilirakis, Gus M. [FL-9] (introduced 1/4/07). Cosponsors (9). To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to <http://capwiz.com/moaa/issues/bills/?bill=9240191>.

H.R.0243: A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for the payment of Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) to members of the Armed Forces retired for disability with less than 20 years of active military service who were awarded the Purple Heart. Sponsor: Rep Weller, Jerry [IL-11] (introduced 1/5/07). Cosponsors (None).

H.R.0303: A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit certain additional retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) and to eliminate the phase-in period under current law with respect to such concurrent receipt. Sponsor: Rep Bilirakis, Gus M. [FL-9] (introduced 1/5/07). Cosponsors (17). To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to <http://capwiz.com/moaa/issues/bills/?bill=9240026>

H.R.0333: A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability rated less than 50% to receive concurrent payment of both retired pay and veterans' disability compensation, to eliminate the phase-in period for concurrent receipt, to extend eligibility for concurrent receipt and combat-related special compensation to chapter 61 disability retirees with less than 20 years of service, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Marshall, Jim [GA-8] (introduced 1/9/07). Cosponsors (7). To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to <http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9226426&type=ML>

H.R.0402: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for annual cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) to be made automatically by law each year in the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans. Sponsor: Rep Knollenberg, Joe [MI-9] (introduced 1/11/07). Cosponsors (11)

S.0067: A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit former members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability rated as total to travel on military aircraft in the same manner and to the same extent as retired members of the Armed Forces are entitled to travel on such aircraft. Sponsor: Sen. Inouye, Daniel K. [HI] (introduced 1/4/07). Cosponsors (2).

S.0439: A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit certain retired members of the uniformed services who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation. Sponsor: Sen. Reid, Harry [NV] (introduced 1/31/07). Cosponsors (12).

Administrative Items:

1. Receipt of Dd214 of Demerchant, Stanley James, of Prince George, B.C.
2. Replacement of burial flag to Legion Post 75.

Old Business:

1. VA Clinic in Bellingham, letter of support.

New Business:

1. Service Officer Training (American Legion)

American Legion Post Commander & VVIC 2nd VP Tom O'Malley made an inquiry regarding Service Officer training on behalf of the Legion Post and the VVIC in general and K. Lang in Particular regarding formal training. Here is the information he has received:

There is a class scheduled for 2nd District on May 26th 2007 at Post 43 in Sedro Woolley. Level 1 will be taught in the morning beginning at 8:30 am followed by Level 2 at 1:00 pm.

We have developed a multi-level training curriculum which Mary Davis, Training Program Facilitator for The American Legion, is providing to all members of TAL, ALA and SAL who have either been elected to the Service Officer position or have an interest in veterans advocacy.

Please contact Second District Service Officer Art Mitchell at (360) 629-6824 to reserve a seat.

Kathy D. Nylan

Department Service Officer

*The American Legion
Department of Washington
(206)220-6223
(206)220-6104 FAX*

2. Raising the VVIC profile campaign?
 1. Ad on VAWATCHDOG.ORG?
3. Soldiers who operate unmanned aerial vehicles now are eligible for award of the Aviation Badge, Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal reports the current edition of the Army times.

New Business from the floor:

The next General Meeting is 26 April 2007 at 1930 hours at the British Columbia Regiment.



Vietnam Veterans In Canada

Minutes 519

**General Meeting held on 15 March 2007
British Columbia Regiment, Vancouver, B.C.**

VVIC President Don Sinclair chaired the meeting.

7 People on the sign-in sheet and including Family Member S. Carmack and Associate Member and Barkeep Dave Holwill.

Moment of Silence and the names of 89 U.S. Military casualties plus one Canadian casualty read out.

Attachments and Handouts:

- 1: Agenda #519, compiled by VVIC S-2.
- 2: Attachment; North Carolina Hospital often gave poor care, report said- by Mike Drummond, Peter Smolowitz and Michael Gordon.
- 3: Attachment; Not Compassionate, Not Conservative by Ethan Fishman.

VVIC President Don Sinclair's Remarks- Recently, sadly two family members of Don's family have passed away. Don is very busy these days filling out and preparing his retirement papers... Paperwork still ongoing for Vietnam Veteran Phil Knauth who lives in Hong Kong.....On April 7th 8th and 9th Don will be attending in France the 90th Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Don did have family members involved in that historic battle. An inventory of all VVIC memorabilia for sale will take place at the conclusion of this meeting and the duties of selling and looking after it will be turned over to VVIC member Ron Mella.

VVIC 1st VP Gerry Flower's Remarks- Issued a verbal report of his recent 6 day trip to the middle east visiting a friend who works in Dubai.

VVIC Chief of Staff's Remarks- Brief comment on Mt. Vernon vs Bellingham for the proposed new Veterans clinic. Questions which town will be the most convenient for the most number of Veterans.

Master at Arms Ken Payne's Remarks- Suggests that either Bellingham or Burlington is best suited for the new clinic over Mt. Vernon. Ken passed around an article from the 187'nd Airborne Magazine concerning the Hamburger Hill Chapter. VVIC longtime member George Robinson was a Veteran of Hamburger Hill. George, we believe is now living with relatives in Alberta. Noted that at this time Ken is still experiencing internet problems on his computer.

VVIC Intelligence Officer's (S-2) Report - Service officer Ron Hewitt in Bellingham will be sending to VVIC various files on Vietnam Veterans living in Canada.

Old Business- VVIC President Don Sinclair requests input from all VVIC members concerning the possible new clinic in Bellingham. This input plus a letter by the VVIC directors will be sent to the U.S. Government. It was noted that Jim Pace of the Bellingham Vet's center is leading the effort to have the new clinic located in Bellingham.

New Business- a recommendation is tabled to put on file the information on each members burial request. All of us VVIC members at some time in the distant future will be "kicking the bucket" and each of us will probably desire different arrangements for our internments. Some members might want VVIC or Military involvement, others might not. It is best we learn of each member's desires now to save confusion later on. This is an important issue, Perhaps not the most pleasant to bring up at any time but it has to be addressed. Members will be asked to submit their requests and can let VVIC know these requests if they so wish. Our immediate families of course should be made aware of any wishes we have. As we have all read or heard on the news broadcast these days great concern is being shown on the conditions of some of the Military hospitals and recovery buildings in the USA, in particular the Army's Walter Reed Medical facilities back east. It should be noted that VVIC 1st VP Gerry Flowers was the person to bring this matter to the attention of Washington State Senator Patty Murray. Senator Murray is perhaps the best Veteran's advocate on the West coast of the United States.

On our Sick List at this time we have Tom O'Malley, who we understand has been making great progress toward recovery and just might be at our next VVIC and American Legion Meetings. We do hope to see you there Tom. We understand that Larry Reid will be undergoing eye cataract surgery soon. All the best with that Larry. Please do have a speedy recovery. Last but not least, our Vietnam Veteran brother in Australia Brett Bullions is facing a serious health challenge. Brett, every VVIC member here in Canada is pulling for you to get through this successfully and we know you will. You are in our thoughts and prayers. Please get better soon.

Our next VVIC General meeting will be held on the 29th of March, 2007 at the BCR in Vancouver. This meeting will be preceded by our American Legion Post 75 get together which will start at 19:30 sharp. See ya'll there.

Meeting adjourned 2053

Steve O'Grady,
Chief of Staff





Vietnam Veterans In Canada

Minutes 520

**General Meeting held on 29 March 2007
British Columbia Regiment, Vancouver, B.C.**

VVIC President Don Sinclair chaired the meeting.

9 People on the sign-in sheet and includes Family Member S. Carmack and Ass't Barkeep Miss Alina Baugh-Allen.

Moment of Silence and the names of 93 U.S. Military Casualties read out.

Attachments and Handouts:

- 1: Agenda #520, compiled by VVIC S-2.
- 2: Attachment; Minutes of the American Legion Post #75 meeting which was held on 1 March 2007.
- 3: Attachment; An Army stretched thin.-Joe Galloway, source WWW.military.com.
- 4: Attachment; Congress investigates Walter Reed's VIP ward.- by John Hendren of ABC News.
- 5: Attachment; If you are broken you are worthless.- by Steve Duin of The Oregonian.
- 6: Attachment; Terrorized by "War on Terror".- by Zbigniew Brzezinski former National Security Advisor to U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

Announcements and Acknowledgements:

The "Moving Wall" will be in Deming Wash., from May 2nd through to the 6th. A request for any American Legion Post #75 member or for that matter a VVIC member to partake in a special Canadian flag raising ceremony on May the 5th. Anyone wishing to attend this event please get in touch with or drop a note to Tom O'Malley.

VVIC President's Remarks (D.Sinclair AUS)

Don leaves on Tuesday April the 3rd to participate in the ceremonies commemorating the 90th Anniversary of the WW1 Battle of Vimy Ridge. The Vimy memorial which was completed in 1937 has been upgraded and spruced up after 70 years of neglect, will be center of the event. Visitors, will include Canada's PM, Great Britain's Queen Elizabeth the 2nd along with many other dignitaries who will be in attendance at the ceremonies in France. Noted that in the 1st WW Canada had a total of 60,661 Military casualties or a 9.28% loss of all who enlisted. At the Battle of Vimy Ridge Canada lost 3598 soldiers in that one battle on 9 April 1917. DRV/GNR James Sinclair, Don's uncle was killed on 30 Oct. 1917 at Passchendaele. Please note that a photo of Don's uncle along with a few friends vacationing in France during the war appears in the minutes of this meeting.

1st VVIC Vice President's Remarks (G. Flowers USMC)

Departing for a brief vacation to Hawai'i next week. (didn't he just get back from a vacation to the middle east? Life is rough.)

2nd VVIC Vice President's Remarks (T. O'Malley AUS)

Still on the recovery road after his recent treatments in the hospital. However slowly getting back into the thick of things with VVIC and the American Legion.

VVIC Chief of Staff's Remarks (S. O'Grady AUS)

Announces the loss of very close friend and fellow 1st Cav. Trooper David Johnson of Knoxville Tenn.

VVIC Finance Officer's Report (Larry Reid AUS)

VVIC bank account still in the black to the amount of \$514.00. VVIC final finance report for 2006 (Jan to Dec) will be tabled soon.

VVIC Intelligence Officer's report (W. Carmack USMC)

Brings to our attention that the American Legion has an invitation only "honor society" within it. It's called the "40 +8"- something to do with 40 troops or 8 mules in a boxcar. OK.

VVIC Service Officer's Report.

Paperwork still in progress for P. Knauth, C. Ricord and R. Harper. And noted that VVIC member Keith Lang will be taking Service Officer's training in Bellingham.

Quartermaster's Report.

Quartermaster duties here in Vancouver now in the hands of Ron Mella and noted that VVIC Pres Sinclair will be taking a good supply of VVIC memorabilia to share with others in France.

Legislative matters:

Noted that U.S. Senator Jim Webb (USMC- Vietnam) is in the process of constructing a new B.I. Bill for American servicemen..... VVIC President Sinclair will be sending a letter to Jim Pace in Bellingham in support of a new VA clinic hopefully to be located in the Bellingham area. A letter from American Legion Post #75 Commander Tom O'Malley will also be sent. These letters of support will be posted on our VVIC web-site for all to read.

Old Business:

Members are reminded that in the near future each of us will be asked to put on file our "burial requests". Very important.

New Business:

Currently in VVIC some members are a bit overwhelmed with work, assignments or a project, please if you can step up to the plate and lend a hand in assisting in the business of the group. All the issues that we deal with are in aid of veterans or maybe just one veteran,

whatever the case no one will do it for us. We have to help one another, please assist if you can.

In final notes for this meeting it was mentioned that by contacting and dealing with the Frazer Health Authority could result in quicker medical treatment for limb replacement surgery ex: knee, hip etc. And we're reminded that if you take the minimum aspirin dose each day as a blood thinner, as some of us should, the best time to take it is just before one goes to bed. Apparently early morning is the most stressful time of day and most heart attacks and strokes happen at this time.

In closing our thoughts and wishes go out to our Australian Brother Brett Bullions. Hope all is going well with you... Wonderful to have Tom O'Malley back at our meetings. By the look of things he is just about back to normal. Keep it up Tom... One eye done one more to go, Larry Reid good to see all is going well with the cataract surgery.

Woody sorry for the late submission of my last minutes report. I promise in the future I will smarten up. All of us do realize the great amount of work involved in putting a VVIC agenda together and we truly appreciate the fine job you have done these many years. Woody remember that first D.I. in basic way back when? If I'm late again with my report that's the treatment I expect and deserve. Come to think of it my D.I. Sgt. Annelid back at Ft. Dix in 67 taught me more about life than anyone else ever did.

Meeting Adjourned 2126.

Steve O'Grady,
Chief of Staff



Insult to Injury

New data reveal an alarming trend: Vets' disabilities are being downgraded

By Linda Robinson

U.S. News & World Report, 2007.04.07

In the middle of a battle in Fallujah in April 2004, an M80 grenade landed a foot away from Fred Ball. The blast threw the 26-year-old Marine sergeant 10 feet into the air and sent a piece of hot shrapnel into his right temple. Once his wound was patched up, Ball insisted on rejoining his men. For the next three months, he continued to go on raids, then returned to Camp Pendleton, Calif.

But Ball was not all right. Military doctors concluded that Ball was suffering from a traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), chronic headaches, and balance problems. Ball, who had a 3.5 grade-point average in high school, was found to have a sixth-grade-level learning capability. In January of last year, the Marine Corps found him unfit for duty but not disabled enough to receive full permanent disability retirement benefits and discharged him.

Ball's situation has taken a dire turn for the worse. The tremors that he experienced after the blast are back, he can hardly walk, and he has trouble using a pencil or a fork. Ball's case is being handled by the Department of Veterans Affairs—he receives \$337 a month—but while his case is under appeal, he receives no medical care. He works 16-hour shifts at a packing-crate plant near his home in East Wenatchee, Wash., but he has gone into debt to cover his \$1,600 monthly mortgage and support his wife and 2-month-old son. "Life is coming down around me," Ball says. Trained to be strong and self-sufficient, Ball now speaks in tones of audible pain.

Fred Ball's story is just one of a shocking number of cases where the U.S. military appears to have dispensed low disability ratings to wounded service members with serious injuries and thus avoided paying them full military disabled retirement benefits. While most recent attention has been paid to substandard conditions and outpatient care at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the first stop for many wounded soldiers stateside, veterans' advocates say that a more grievous problem is an arbitrary and dysfunctional disability ratings process that is short-changing the nation's newest crop of veterans. The trouble has existed for years, but now that the country is at war, tens of thousands of Americans are being caught up in it.



Now an extensive investigation by U.S. News and a new Army inspector general's report reveal that the system is beset by ambiguity and riddled with discrepancies. Indeed, Department of Defense data examined by U.S. News and military experts show that the vast majority-nearly 93 percent-of disabled troops are receiving low ratings, and more have been graded similarly in recent years. What's more, ground troops, who suffer the most combat injuries from the ubiquitous roadside bombs, have received the lowest ratings.

One counselor who has helped wounded soldiers navigate the process for over a decade believes that as many as half of them may have received ratings that are too low. Ron Smith, deputy general counsel for the Disabled American Veterans, says: "If it is even 10 percent, it is unconscionable." The DAV is chartered by Congress to represent service members as they go through the evaluation process. Its national service officers are based at each rating location, and there is a countrywide network of counselors. Smith says he recently asked the staff to cull those cases that appeared to have been incorrectly rated. Within six hours, he says, they had forwarded him 30 cases. "So far," Smith says, "the review supports the conclusion that a significant number of soldiers are being fairly dramatically underrated by the U.S. Army."

Magic number. In an effort to learn how extensive the problem is, U.S. News spent six weeks talking to wounded service members, their counselors, and veterans advocacy groups and reviewing Pentagon data. At first glance, the disability ratings process seems straightforward. Each branch of service has its own Physical Evaluation Boards, which can comprise military officers, medical professionals, and civilians. The PEBs determine whether the wounded or ill service members are fit for duty. If they are, it's back to work. Those found unfit are assigned a disability rating for the condition that makes them unable to do their military job. The actual rating is key, and here's why: Service members who have served less than 20 years-the great majority of wounded soldiers-who receive a rating under 30 percent are sent home with a severance check. Those who receive a rating of 30 percent or higher qualify for a host of lifelong, enviable benefits from the DOD, which include full military retirement pay (based on rank and tenure), life insurance, health insurance, and access to military commissaries.

But the system is hideously complicated in practice. The military doctors who prepare the case for the PEBs pick only one condition for the service member's rating, even though many of the current injuries are much more complex. The PEBs use the Department of Veterans Affairs ratings scale, which grades disabilities in increments of 10-a leg amputation, for example, puts a soldier at between 40 and 60 percent disabled. The PEBs claim they have the leeway to rate a soldier 20 percent disabled for pain, say, rather than 30 percent disabled for a back injury. If rated at 20 percent or below and discharged, the soldier enters the VA system as a retiree where he is evaluated again to establish his healthcare benefits. Ball, for example, was found by the VA to be 50 percent disabled for PTSD.

Since 2000, 92.7 percent of the disability ratings handed out by PEBs have been 20

percent or lower, according to Pentagon data analyzed by the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission, which Congress formed in 2004 to look into veterans' complaints (Page 47). Moreover, fewer veterans have received ratings of 30 percent or more since America went to war in Afghanistan and Iraq, according to the Pentagon's annual actuarial reports. As of 2006, for example, 87,000 disabled retirees were on the list of those exceeding the 30 percent threshold; in 2000, there were 102,000 recipients. Last year, only 1,077 of 19,902 service members made it over the 30 percent threshold (chart, Page 49).

The total amount paid out for these benefit awards has remained roughly constant in wartime and peacetime, leading disabled veterans like retired Lt. Col. Mike Parker, who has become an unofficial spokesperson on this issue, to allege that a budgetary ceiling has been imposed to contain war costs. A DOD spokesperson, Maj. Stewart Upton, said that the Pentagon "is committed to improving the Disability Evaluation System across the board and to ... a full and fair due process with regard to disability evaluation and compensation."

Other data reveal glaring discrepancies among the military services. Even though most of those wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan have been ground troops, the Army and Marine Corps have granted far fewer members full disabled benefits than the Air Force. The Pentagon records show that 26.7 percent of disabled airmen have been rated 30 percent or more disabled, while only 4.3 percent of soldiers and 2.7 percent of marines made the grade. Services engaged in close combat, experts say, could be expected to find more members unfit for duty and meriting full retirement benefits. Instead, the Air Force decided that 2,497 airmen fall into that category while the much larger Army, with its higher tally of wounded, has accorded those benefits to only 1,763 soldiers since 2000.

How many of these veterans' cases have been decided incorrectly? Nobody knows. These statistics show trends that are clearly at odds with what logic would dictate, but there has been no effort to discover how many of those low ratings were inaccurately conferred or to ascertain why the number receiving full benefits has declined during wartime or why there is such a discrepancy between the Air Force and the other services. But there is abundant anecdotal evidence of a process cloaked in obscurity and riddled with anomalies, and of ratings that are inconsistent and often arbitrarily applied.

DAV lawyer Smith, for example, took on the case of a soldier whose radial nerve of his dominant hand had been destroyed, the same affliction former Sen. Bob Dole has. Like Dole, the soldier was unable to write with a pen or to button his shirt. "There is one and only one rating for that condition, which is 70 percent disability," says Smith. The PEB gave the soldier 30 percent, the lawyer said, "which I found to be fairly outrageous." Upon appeal to the Army Physical Disability Agency, the entity that oversees that service's disability evaluation process, the rating was raised to 60 percent. Smith recently took on another case, that of Sgt. Michael Pinero, a soldier who developed a degenerative eye condition called keratoconus that required him to wear contact lenses.

Army regulations prohibit wearing contacts in combat, which should have made him ineligible for deployment and therefore unfit to perform his specific military duties. But the PEB ignored the eye condition, which Smith believes merited a 30 percent rating or more, and rated Pinero 10 percent disabled for shin splints. Smith has asked the Army to clarify whether it considers the regulation on contact lenses binding or, as one board member alleged, merely a guideline. Disputes over such distinctions are common in the Alice in Wonderland world of disability ratings.

Controversy frequently surrounds decisions on which conditions make a soldier unfit for duty. Smith took issue with a recent statement made by the Army Physical Disability Agency's legal adviser, quoted in Army Times newspaper. The official said that short-term memory loss would not necessarily render soldiers unfit for duty since they could compensate by carrying a notepad. "Memory loss is a common sign of TBI," Smith said, using the abbreviation for traumatic brain injury, which has afflicted many soldiers hit by the roadside bombs commonly used in Iraq. "The rules of engagement are a seven-step process.... If a suicide bomber is coming at you, you cannot stop and consult your notepad," he added. "I find this demonstrative of the attitude that pervades the Physical Disability Agency," which is in charge of reviewing evaluations for accuracy and consistency.

Trying to overturn a low rating can be a full-time job-and an exasperating one. Take Staff Sgt. Chris Bain, who lost the use of his arms but not his sense of humor. "They call me T-Rex because I have a big mouth and two hands and I can't do nothing with them," he jokes. He left the Army in February, but he still has plenty of fight in him. During an ambush in Taji, Iraq, in 2004, a mortar round exploded 2 feet away from him, ripping through his left arm and hand. A sniper's bullet passed through his right elbow. His buddies saved his life, throwing Bain on the hood of a humvee and rushing him to a combat hospital. Once transferred to Walter Reed, Bain refused to have his arm amputated and underwent eight surgeries to save it. That choice cost him. While an amputation would have automatically put him over the 30 percent threshold, the injury to his left arm was rated at 20 percent even though he cannot use the limb.

Bain was angry. A noncommissioned officer who had planned on 20 or 30 years in the Army, he knew his career was over, but he wasn't going to go quietly. "I wanted to be an example to all soldiers," he said. "My job was to take care of troops." He went to find Danny Soto, the DAV representative at Walter Reed he'd heard so much about. "Danny is just an awesome guy. He took great care of me, but he should not have had to," Bain says. Soto is a patron saint to many soldiers at Walter Reed. He walks the halls, finding the newly injured and urging them to collect documents for their journey through the tortuous-and, to many, capricious-system. Many soldiers are young, and after they have spent months or years recuperating, they just want to get home and are unwilling to argue for the rating they deserve. Even though he missed his wife and three children, Bain decided: "I've already been here two years, another one ain't going to hurt me. Too many people are getting lowballed."

With Soto's help, Bain gathered detailed medical evidence of his injuries and went to

face the board. They gave him a 70 percent rating for injuries related to the blast except for his hearing loss, which was not considered unfitting since he had a hearing aid. Oddly enough, however, the board put him on the temporary disabled retirement list instead of the permanent list. "What do they think, that after three years, my arm is going to come back to life?"

A lifetime of adjusting lies ahead for Bain. "I can't tie my shoes, open bottles of water, or cut my own food," he says. "I have to ask for help." The 35-year-old veteran has found a new sense of purpose. He's decided to run for Congress in 2008, and fixing the veterans' system is his top priority. "I do not want this s--- to happen again to anyone. No one can communicate with each other. The paper trail doesn't catch up." It's a tall order, but the soldier says that he has "100,000 fights" left in him.

A systemic fix doesn't appear to be anywhere in sight. A March 2006 report by the Government Accountability Office found that Pentagon officials were not even trying to get a handle on the problem. "While DOD has issued policies and guidance to promote consistent and timely disability decisions," the report concluded, "[it] is not monitoring compliance." But the GAO report did spur Army Secretary Francis Harvey, who was forced to resign last month in the wake of the Walter Reed scandal, to order the Army's inspector general to conduct an investigation of the disability evaluation system. After almost a year of work, the inspector general's office last month issued a 311-page report that begins to pierce the confusion and opacity surrounding the process. While it does not determine how many erroneous ratings were accorded to the nearly 40,000 soldiers rated 20 percent disabled or less since 2000, it does make three critical points: 1) the ambiguity in applying the ratings schedule should end; 2) wide variance in ratings is indisputable, even among the three Army boards, and 3) the Army's oversight body is not doing its job.

Way overdue. Army officials met with U.S. News to discuss the inspector general's report. "This is something that has been near and dear to our hearts for a long time, and it's probably way overdue as far as having someone go and take a look at it," says a senior Army official. The inspector general's team found that Army policy was not consistent with the policies of either the Pentagon or the Department of Veterans Affairs. It recommended that the Army "align [its] adjudication of disability ratings to more closely reflect those used by the Department of Veterans Affairs." For years, the Army has asserted that it has the right to depart from VA standards on grounds that it is assessing fitness for duty and compensating for loss of military career, not decreased civilian employability.

Veterans' advocates argue that federal law requires the military to use the Veterans Affairs Schedule for Rating Disabilities as the standard for assigning the ratings. But over the years, Pentagon directives on applying the schedule have opened up a whole new gray area by saying the schedule is to be used only as a guide. And the services have interpreted them in different ways, engendering further discrepancies. Soto, the DAV national service officer at Walter Reed, says that inconsistencies are especially prevalent in complex cases of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder.

"There is a saying going around the compound here," Soto says, "that if you are not an amputee, you are going to have to fight for your rating."

The inspector general's report calls for ending the ambiguities. "What we're saying is it shouldn't be left to interpretation; it should be clearly defined," says one Army official. "If there were a way to cut down on that ambiguity, I think that variance would decrease."

Finally, the report bluntly concludes that the system's internal oversight mechanism is not functioning. "The Army Physical Disability Agency's quality assurance program does not conform to DOD and Army policy," it says—the same conclusion the GAO came to a year ago. The inspector general's report adds evidence of just how little the watchdog is doing to ensure that cases are correctly decided. The agency is supposed to send cases to either of two review boards when soldiers rebut their rating evaluations, but from 2002 through 2005, the agency sent only 45 out of 51,000 cases to one of the boards. The other review board has not been used at all.

The inspector general's team made 41 recommendations in all, finding among other things that the Army lacks a formal course for training the liaison officers who are supposed to guide soldiers through the PEB process, that the disposition of cases lags badly, that the computerized information systems are antiquated, and that the two key medical and personnel databases are not integrated and cannot communicate with each other. The report has been forwarded to the action team that Army Vice Chief of Staff Richard Cody convened—one of many official groups formed since the revelations of substandard conditions and bureaucratic delays at Walter Reed.

Veterans' advocates are skeptical that the administration or the military bureaucracy will make major changes anytime soon. In testimony to Congress last month, Veterans for America director of veterans' affairs Steve Robinson recommended taking the entire ratings process away from the Pentagon and giving it to the Department of Veterans Affairs. "It's hard to ignore the fact that in time of war they are giving out less disability," he says. "Is it policy? I don't know. But it is a fact."

Congress has not responded to this problem. Says Rep. Vic Snyder, the Arkansas Democrat who chairs the House Armed Services subcommittee on military personnel: "This whole issue of disability ratings is very complex. It is not well understood by many people, including many in Congress. That is why we set up the [Veterans' Disability Benefits] Commission in 2004. We are hoping it will help us sort this out."

A lot is riding on the commission. Its chairman is Lt. Gen. Terry Scott, who retired in 1997 and ran Harvard's Kennedy School of Government's National Security Program until 2001. After the Pentagon data on the disability process were presented to the commission last week, Scott said "we still don't understand the whys and wherefores" of the skewed ratings. The core problem, he believes, is that "the military was not designed to look after severely wounded people for a long time." The commission has not yet decided what changes it will recommend, but he said there is a general sense

that "one physical exam at the end of service should be enough for both agencies, DOD and VA."

Cash and staff. Any solutions that call for transferring more responsibility to the Department of Veterans Affairs will have to be matched by enormous infusions of cash and staff. Already, the VA is reeling under a backlog of over 600,000 claims from retired veterans, which the agency predicts will grow by an additional 1.6 million in the next two years. Harvard Prof. Linda Bilmes, an economist who has published two studies on the costs of the Iraq war and the associated veterans' costs, projects that as much as \$150 billion more will be required to deal with the wounded returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, people like Danny Soto want to know who is going to stop the military boards from giving out ratings like the 10 percent given to one soldier for a skull fracture and traumatic brain injury, when the VA later assigned a 100 percent rating. Soto is also frustrated by a recent case in which a soldier whose legs had been severely injured in a blast in Iraq was given only a 20 percent disability rating for pain and by the treatment of a man who has a bullet hole through his eye and suffers from seizures. As Soto sat with that soldier in front of the board, he asked why he had been placed on the temporary list. "At what point do you think he is going to fall below 30 percent?"

Soto is unsparing in his criticism of the bureaucracy. "This system," he says, "is so broke." Old soldiers say the root of the problem is an Army culture that preaches a "suck it up" attitude. "If you ask for what you are due, you are perceived to be whining or trying to pad your pocket," says a retired command sergeant major. "If you're not bleeding, you're not hurt. That's what we were taught."

With Edward T. Pound

Seeds Planted in Vietnam Flourish in Activism on Iraq

Military Service Decades Ago Puts 2 Veterans at Odds Over Current Mission

By Brigid Schulte
Washington Post Staff Writer
Wednesday, March 28, 2007; B01

Mike Marceau and O.P. Ditch both served in the Vietnam War. But one's dedication to the military mission became the other's disillusion. The conflict set them on profoundly different paths in life, propelled them into activism over the war in Iraq and deposited them on opposite sides of the barricades at this month's antiwar march on the Pentagon.

Marceau, vice president of the local chapter of Veterans for Peace, wore a black T-shirt with a white dove of peace and was among a large number of vets who led the march for an end to the war. Ditch, active in FreeRepublic.com, stood on the restive sidelines with other vets who called themselves Gathering of Eagles, waving a large American flag to show support for the mission in Iraq until victory is achieved.

With the war in Iraq going on for four years, Vietnam vets on both sides of the issue have begun to take leading roles in trying to shape public opinion and direct its course. But which side they take, which reports they believe and whom they trust depends largely on how they fared in the crucible that divided the country more than three decades ago.

For Marceau, who lives in Silver Spring, Vietnam taught him he could not trust the government. "We knew back then the numbers of casualties they were giving out were just fabricated," he said. "We need to get our troops out of Iraq no matter what happens. This war was based on lies and misrepresentation of intelligence."

For Ditch, who lives in Woodbridge, the lesson of Vietnam is to make sure that what he calls the negative mainstream media do not weaken the government's will to fight. "I didn't have any qualms about the reasons we went in" to Iraq, Ditch said. "The one person that I know that has the most intelligence and knows what is going on better than anybody is our commander in chief."

Both say the other side is misinformed. Both say they are the ones supporting the troops.

Said Ditch: "How can you support the troops without supporting the mission?"

Said Marceau: "One of the things we learned after Vietnam is that you can separate the war from the warrior."

The answering machine at Mike Marceau's home says it all: "Speak slowly and clearly so the National Security Agency people can monitor this call without too much trouble."

Marceau, 58, was born at Bethesda Naval Hospital and was the son of a career Navy man. After high school, he lasted just three months at the University of Maryland. "The late '60s wasn't a good time to be out of college," he said.

He got his draft notice on his 20th birthday and was "in country" in Vietnam by September 1969. He worked as a telephone operator in the 43rd Signal Corps, stationed at Pleiku in the central highlands to serve the Army's 4th Infantry Division.

Marceau said he didn't think much about the war's aims. "I was very unaware," he said. "I was willing to do my two years, get out of Dodge and resume my civilian life." He knew about the antiwar movement and even sported a peace symbol on his helmet, but that was more to be ornery, he said, than to make a political statement.

"I think a lot of us had the feeling that it was not wrong to try and help these people," he said.

Then President Richard M. Nixon ordered U.S. troops into Cambodia in March 1970, sparking protests about the escalation of the war. On May 4, Ohio National Guardsmen shot and killed four students at Kent State University and wounded nine others.

"I remember sitting there and just crying about it," Marceau said. He thought to himself: "We're not over here so the National Guard can kill college students."

The next day, the base was attacked. A piece of shrapnel pierced Marceau's lung, bounced off his rib and lodged in his left shoulder, severely damaging his nerves and arteries. His war was over.

Marceau wore a brace for three years until his nerves regenerated and he could begin to use his left arm and hand again. He marched against the war in April 1971. Thirty years later came 9/11.

"I remember thinking, 'We have to be careful about how we respond. Make sure we go get the right people.' And we haven't," he said. "We were attacked by Osama bin Laden. . . . But then the focus came on Iraq, and we let Osama bin Laden get away."

Now living on disability income of \$1,100 a month and working as a bluegrass musician, Marceau speaks at antiwar rallies and visits high schools to tell youths there are other avenues to college than the military.

In a visit to Woodrow Wilson Senior High School the other day, he put on his old brace and passed out a box of his military medals, which include a Purple Heart. He told students not to believe everything military recruiters might promise. And he warned them to do what he had not: Stay abreast of current affairs.

"You have to be aware," he said, "that something going on halfway around the world can impact your life."

O.P. Ditch, 69, wears his political views on his sleeve, literally. In his Woodbridge condominium, he wears a button with a Stars and Stripes ribbon that reads: "Support Our Troops. And Their Mission." An American flag hangs out by the porch.

He grew up in Louisiana and joined ROTC in college. He was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Air Force in 1959 when he graduated. He did a three-year tour and was out for a year, but then he signed up to return for good.

"I realized how much I liked it," Ditch said. "I was moved by the fact that we were defending our country."

He arrived in Vietnam in August 1965. He was stationed at Tan Son Nhut Air Base in what was then Saigon and assigned to photographic intelligence. That year, President Lyndon B. Johnson began the "Rolling Thunder" bombing campaign of North Vietnam. Ditch's job was to assess the damage and evaluate the bombing runs. "The politicians kept stopping the bombing campaign," he said. "Just as we were ready to win, they'd have a truce or a cease-fire."

Unlike Marceau, Ditch was clear about why he was in Vietnam. "There was no question about it," he said. "We were trying to keep the South Vietnamese free from communism."

He, too, was aware of the growing antiwar feeling at home. "I didn't like them," he said. "I thought they were disgusting."

Ditch left Vietnam after 13 months but stayed in the military 22 more years, retiring a full colonel. Over the years, he's thought a lot about the way the war ended. "It was a mistake to quit and pull out when we did. We had 'em to their knees," said Ditch, who started an Internet company and later sold it. "But when the politicians gave up, that was the end of it."

That's why he's so adamant about staying in Iraq.

"We have to stay until the Iraqi government is strong enough to do its own business," he said. "And we also have to make sure Iraq does not become a haven for terrorists."

Ditch's political activism started after the 2000 election. He joined the Prince William County Republican Committee. He organized veterans to support Bush's reelection in 2004 and later started a Web site, TroopsSupport.com. And he credits the power of new technology with making his side of the Iraq debate public in a way it never was during Vietnam. "We didn't have the Internet back then."

At the recent march, vets for and against the Iraq war faced off in confrontations that often devolved into shouting matches and name-calling. "Some of this outburst," Ditch said, "is the fact that we've been silent for so long."

* * *

For the past two years, an antiwar group called Code Pink and a local group affiliated with the conservative Web site FreeRepublic.com have held dueling vigils on Friday nights by the front gates of Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Marceau goes most Fridays and stands with what the other side calls "Code Pinkos." Ditch stands with what the antiwar crowd calls the "FReepers." They stand a half-block apart, veterans of an old war divided by a new one.