



Western New York
Chapter 77
Tonawanda, New York

Mail Call:
January, February, March 2010

President's Message

By: Tom Konopka

It is the beginning of a new year and I have a suggestion for every Vietnam Veteran. Resolve to support the WNY VA Healthcare System. We can do this in a number of ways. Some of the most important are:

Write to members of Congress and the President expressing support for initiatives to improve the VA. Register for healthcare benefits at the VA. (In-country Veterans and certain others are eligible for registration because of their exposure to Agent Orange. Era Veterans may be eligible thru the expanded Priority 8 category or a means test). Talk to fellow Vietnam Veterans about the importance of registering at the VA. Insure that you keep your appointments and be on time. (Allow plenty of time to find a parking place). Volunteer to assist at the VA. Talk about the excellence of the WNY VA System. (We are fortunate to have an excellent hospital in Buffalo, well staffed clinics in surrounding communities, and outstanding treatment facilities in Batavia, Bath, and Canandaigua). It is disappointing to see criticism of the VA in the local media based on an individual Veterans complaint of sub-par treatment. Privacy regulations prevent the VA from effectively responding to an individual case. Criticism of VA policies, treatment protocols, the drug formulary, etc. are fair game, and can result in reasoned debate and system improvement. This should be the focus of media reporting on the VA Healthcare System. It is apparent that change is coming to the way healthcare is funded and delivered in our country. The VA System seems to be secure and its funding method has recently been improved. We must therefore insure that it remains viable and available when we need it.

The past year was a successful one for Chapter 77. Our membership increased and we participated in some activities for the first time. We are in good shape financially and new members have become active in fulfilling our mission of assisting Veterans and their families. We will be electing officers and directors for the next two years in April. Everyone is urged to consider becoming a part of our leadership team. It is very satisfying to be part of an organization that works to provide solutions to the problems faced by Veterans and their families and to improve the welfare of Vietnam Veterans in particular.

THANKS TO EVERYONE FOR SUPPORTING OUR CHAPTER AND FELLOW VETERANS.

Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another.

VVA CHAPTER 77 LEADERSHIP

(Terms of office are from April 2008 to April 2010)

Officers

President	Tom Konopka	694.0857
1st Vice President	Jack Michel	693.4479
2nd Vice President	Greg Cain	771.1157
Secretary	Ron Sdao	693.4479
Treasurer	Paul Pietrowski	693.4479
Service Officers	Delores Garcia, NYS Council	857.3344
	Pete Montemurno, National VA Hosp. Rep.	689.4870
	Patrick Welch, Erie Co. Veterans Services	858.6349
Pres.: Associates of VVA	Linda Sopic	683.0051

Directors

Fred Bansmer	693.4479	Mike Marchese	693-4479
Ken Berger (Hon.)	693.4479	Pete Montemurno	689.4870
Ed Bodine	864.6247	Rick Topolski	693.4479
Jerry Caira	693.4479	Mike Walker	695.2420
Bill Hicks	695.2188		

Special Duties

NY State VVA Council Delegates	Pete Montemurno	Paul Pietrowski
	Patrick Welch	Bill Parmentier
	Al Brusetti	Jack Michel
VA Hospital Volunteer Ser. Rep.	Pete Montemurno	
Newsletter Editor	Jerry Caira	
Associate Editor	Paul Pietrowski	

Standing Committees

Agent Orange/Veterans Affairs	Al Brusetti	634.5869
Color Guard:	Paul Pietrowski	693.4479
	Pete Montemurno	689.4870
Community Affairs:	Ron Pillozzi	694.6052
	Paul Pietrowski	693.4479
Constitution Committee:	Larry Covert	823.9118
Economic Affairs	Al Brusetti	634.5869
Education:	Jerry Caira	693.4479
Employment Training & Business Opp.	Tom Konopka	694.0857
Golf Tournament:	Al Schreier	693.3441
Government Affairs:	Al Brusetti	634.5869
	Patrick Welch	688.0129
Grant Writing:	Patrick Welch	688.0129
Homeless Vets:	Pete Montemurno	689.4870
Information Technology:	Mike Walker	695.2420
Membership:	Paul Pietrowski	693.4479
	Jack Michel	693.4479
Minority Affaira	Ron Polozzi	693.4479
Museum Curator	Paul Pietrowski	693.4479
POW/MIA Affairs	Paul Pietrowski	693.4479
PTSD	Jack Michel	693.4479
Public Affairs:	Patrick Welch	688.0129
Nominating Committee:	Larry Covert	823.9118
Vets History Project:	Patrick Welch	688.0129
Veteran Benefits	Jack Michel,	693.4479
	Tom Konopka	694-0857
Women Veterans	Kathy Cromwell	693.4479

Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 77,
57 Main St. Tonawanda, New York, 716.693.4479, www.vva77.org

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

(Board of Director meeting dates are subject to change. Please call the office to verify dates and times.)

Meeting Location

Chapter and Board of Directors meetings are held at the museum/office located at 57 Main St. in the City of Tonawanda. The office/museum is open every Wednesday & Saturday from 9 AM- 1 PM. Telephone is 716-693-4479 or visit the website at www.vva77.org

WHAT'S NEW??????? **The Chapter 77 website: www.vva77.org and
The Chapter 77 e-mail: vva77@verizon.net**

January 4th Monday Board of Directors Meeting, 7:00 PM Members Welcomed
January 21st Thursday General Membership Meeting, 7:00 PM

PETER TYCZ SCHOLARSHIP DINNER:

January 28th Thursday 4:00 PM – 7:00 M, American Legion Post 264 60 Main St. Tonawanda, NY 14150, \$6.00 per person, call 693.4479 for reservations

February 1st Monday Board of Directors Meeting, 7:00 PM Members Welcomed
February 12th Friday Fish Fry, Am Legion Post 264, 4:00 to 7:00 PM
February 18th Thursday General Membership Meeting, 7:00 PM
February 19th Friday Fish Fry, Am Legion Post 264, 4:00 to 7:00 PM
February 26th Friday Fish Fry, Am Legion Post 264, 4:00 to 7:00 PM
March 1st Monday Board of Directors Meeting, 7:00 PM Members Welcomed
March 5th Friday Fish Fry, Am Legion Post 264, 4:00 to 7:00 PM
March 12th Friday Fish Fry, Am Legion Post 264, 4:00 to 7:00 PM
March 18th Thursday General Membership Meeting, 7:00 PM
March 19th Friday Fish Fry, Am Legion Post 264, 4:00 to 7:00 PM
March 26th Friday Fish Fry, Am Legion Post 264, 4:00 to 7:00 PM
April 2nd Friday Fish Fry, Am Legion Post 264, 4:00 to 7:00 PM

Any other activities will be communicated during the Board, General Membership meetings and by e-mail distributions.

TYCZ SCHOLARSHIP

By: Jerry Caira

The Board of Directors of Chapter 77 has formalized the Peter P. Tycz II Memorial Scholarship for 2010. Sergeant First Class Tycz was a US Army Green Beret who died in the line of duty in Paktika Province Afghanistan in 2002. The chapter has chosen to honor this Tonawanda native with a memorial scholarship for numerous reasons including his local ties, involvement in the community, devotion to his family and country, and exemplary military service. He was the son-in-law of chapter member, Bill Parmentier and is survived by his wife, Tami J Tycz and 5 daughters.

The basic format will remain the same in that each award will be \$250 with the total number of awards dependant on fund raising efforts throughout the year. Thanks to our fundraising efforts, since its inception 5 years ago in 2005, a total of 108 scholarships have been awarded with a total value \$27,000.

This year, our main fundraiser will be a spaghetti dinner; people seem to prefer spaghetti over baked ziti. It will be held on Thursday, January 28, 2010, from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM, at the American Legion Tonawanda Post 264, 60 Main Street, Tonawanda, NY. Because of its success in previous years, the AVVA's Chinese Auction will again be held upstairs in the center of the dining area. This proved to be a great move because it kept the auction in the forefront instead of isolated on a different floor. Last year, they were able to raise over \$1,100.00. Pete Montemurno, the designated chapter chef, will create a magnificent meal that I know everyone will enjoy. The cost, this year, will remain at \$6.00; tickets may be purchased at the door or you may call 693.4479 for reservations.

As in the past, the scholarship will be designed for a graduating high school senior who:

- resides in Niagara or Erie County,
- has a relative who is/was a veteran (Reservists who have completed 180 continuous days of service are considered veterans.),
- shows a unique blend of academic achievement and community service,
- and anticipates enrollment in an accredited program of higher education beginning in the fall of 2010.

Applications will be available in mid January 2010. For further information regarding the VVA Chapter 77 Scholarship: Write: Scholarship Committee, VVA Chapter 77, 57 Main St, Tonawanda, NY 15150: EMail: vva77@verizon.net; Phone: (716) 693-4479.

WHAT'S NEW??????? **The Chapter 77 website: www.vva77.org and
The Chapter 77 e-mail: vva77@verizon.net**

AGENT ORANGE UPDATES

By: Jack Toth

There have recently been a number of developments related to Agent Orange. The first is that in October 2009, Parkinson's disease, ischemic heart disease and hairy-cell leukemia have been added to the list of presumptive illnesses associated with exposure to Agent Orange. For a complete list of afflictions and more information on service-connected disability compensation for exposure to Agent Orange, visit www.veteranshealth.org

Another development has to do with our offspring. Many of us have noticed that a large number of our children and grand children are afflicted with various neurological and physiological diseases, much like the afflictions that we have because of exposure to Agent Orange. If you have noticed this, you are not alone. The VVA is gathering information for all Agent Orange health issues for Vietnam vets, their children and grandchildren. The contact person at the VVA is Mokie Pratt Porter, Director, VVA Communications and Publications, 8605 Cameron St. Suite 400, Silver Springs MD 20910-3710, Phone: (301) 585-4000 Ext. 146, E-Mail: mporter@vva.org It is your choice to act now, it only takes a few minutes; by registering now, maybe our offspring will get some help from the government in the future.

Another organization, the National Organization on Disability, with funding from the Ford Foundation Special Initiative on Agent Orange/Dioxin has commissioned a study to not only examine the effects of exposure on us, but also on our families. A National Birth Defects Registry has been established to gather information about possible links. The study is in its beginning stages and if you, your children or grand children would like to participate by registering, you can contact www.birthdefects.org

GOLF TOURNAMENT

By: Al Schreier

Our 16th annual golf tournament will be held on Sunday, June 6th at Rothland Golf Course. Additional information and details will be in the next newsletter.

WE NEED PRIZES. Any donations of restaurant gift certificates, golf balls, etc. would be appreciated. The success of this fundraiser depends on these donations. Be sure to put the name and address of the donor on each item. Include your name in case of any questions. Donation letters are available at the Chapter. Any Questions??? Contact me, Al Schreier, by phone: 693-3441 or by e-mail: amschreier@verizon.net

PAUL'S PAGE

By: Paul Pietrowski

FOOD PANTRY REPORT

Our food pantry has been really busy this past year, especially at Thanksgiving and Christmas. A huge **THANK YOU to Paul Rudnicki and VALOR**, without their help we would not be able to assist veterans and their families. We received our first check for \$11,890.00 and it came at the right time, we really needed it. The chapter assisted approximately 111 families on Thanksgiving and Christmas. We gave out groceries with a value of \$4,440.00 and TOPS cards worth \$5,550.00. For the fiscal year we have spent \$13,775.00 for gift cards and \$5,153.40 for groceries at Wegman's for items that were needed in the food pantry. We are averaging 5 requests a week for assistance, sometimes more, so the need is there. The chapter received food donations from several sources during the year. St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute donated 24 large boxes of canned goods again this year. The food is collected by the students and our chapter is fortunate to receive a donation from them each year. Girl Scout Troop 202 from Tonawanda really came through. The girls passed out 4000 flyers throughout Tonawanda asking for canned goods and pop cans to be put out for collection by the scouts. They collected a total of 1300 lbs. of canned goods, \$630.15 in pop can returns and 40 lbs. of pop can tabs!! They worked many hours sorting the food, taking the tabs off the cans and returning the cans. If my math is correct that's 12,603 cans!! We are going to honor the scouts with a pizza party and certificates of appreciation. They did an outstanding job. I would also like to thank Joanne Michel and Joe Pasek for the great job they and the many volunteers we had who worked in the cold basement sorting and putting the bags together. John Heffernan and his wife, Linda Jenkins and her sons, Linda Sopic and her family, Mary Cameron and her family, Jim Rosten, Jim Burns, Mike Zak, so many others I can't recall everyone. Please for give me if I didn't mention your name. This is why our chapter is so successful at what we do, you people make it happen. We are starting to see new members come by to assist us and that's great, I hope we don't scare them off!

MEMBERSHIP

Our membership stands at 540; we have 223 life members, if you are over 60 years old a life membership is the way to go, \$50.00 down and \$25.00 a month. Please consider this option when renewing.

NEW MEMBERS: WELCOME HOME

Art Foscucci	Ed Frankiewicz	Max Gabriel	William Hamilton III
Tom Jackson	Roberta Kane	Leonard Kunze	John Mastrangelo
Roger Mazikowski	Paul McAfee	Tom Peasland	Michael Rydzewski
Fred Tomasello			

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS: If you wish, your dues payment can be mailed directly to the chapter office. This will allow us to update the membership roster on a more regular basis.
THANKS TO EVERYONE FOR YOUR EFFORTS IN BUILDING OUR ORGANIZATION

**WHAT'S NEW? The Chapter 77 website: www.vva77.org and
The Chapter 77 e-mail: vva77@verizon.net**

VIETNAM VETERAN'S ASSISTANCE FUND

By: **Tom Konopka**

A fund to help needy Vietnam Veterans and their families was established at the bequest of David R. Limburg, a United States Navy Veteran of the Vietnam War. Dave was very proud of his Vietnam service and knew that there were Vietnam Veterans and their families who are in need. Dave passed away last year and left a portion of his estate to Western New York Chapter 77 of the Vietnam Veterans of America. In his Will, Dave stated that "It is my wish and request that this bequest be used for providing for indigent Vietnam Veterans and their Families."



Chapter 77 will use the bequest from their deceased brother to establish the Limburg Memorial Veterans Assistance Fund. The Chapter's Board of Directors has been charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the Fund is disbursed as the will directs. Additional donations to the fund can be made by mail to Chapter 77, Vietnam Veterans of America, 57 Main Street, Tonawanda, NY 14150

At left, Dr. Patrick Welch, Erie County Director of Veterans Affairs, looks on as Paul E. Rudnicki, Esq. presents a bequest from the estate of David R. Limburg to Tom Konopka, Chapter 77 President, and Jack Michel, Chapter 77 1st Vice-President. Dr. Welch and Attorney Rudnicki are also Chapter 77 members.

ELECTIONS

By: **Jerry Caira**

In the past we have talked about involvement in the chapter activities, helping veterans and their families and the satisfaction that it brings. Another way to accomplish this is to run for a chapter office. This is different because you have a say as to which projects the chapter will undertake and what direction the chapter will go. Your inputs and opinions are highly valued and taken seriously. Members who would like to place their names in nomination for an office can e-mail Larry Covert at lcovert@aol.com or call him at 823-9118. Elections will take place at the April General Membership Meeting and nominations will be accepted from the floor. There is plenty of time to think it over; it is just another way to help veterans. More information will follow in the next newsletter.

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VA HOSPITAL NEWS BY

By: **Peter M Montemurno**

A new program started at the VA on December 15th. It is called the Support and Family Education (SAFE) and is a free education program that teaches family members and friends of Veterans about the symptoms and course of mental illness and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The 90 minute meetings will be scheduled every other week and deal with a specific topic pertaining to mental illness and PTSD. The dates are as follows: January 12th & 26th; February 9th & 23rd; March & 23rd - April 13th & 27th May 11th & 25th, June 8th & 22nd, July 13th & 27th, August 10th & 24th

There is no need to make reservations and people can attend one or every session. This program is suitable for adult family members, spouses, parents, siblings, grandparents, close friends and other adolescents. The meetings will take place in Freedom Hall (room 301) from 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm. If you have any questions please feel free to contact, Elizabeth Wahlig at 862-7473 or Toyla Burges at 862-7384

WHAT IF I.....

By: Jack Michel

We all like to sit around and complain about the problems of the world and how "if I had the power" or "if I were running things" it sure would be different. The thing I have noticed is that most of the ones doing the complaining are the ones who don't do anything to make a change in the way things are run.

By this I mean too many people whine and complain about governmental interference or the fact that so much waste goes on in the State/National spending, policy, foreign aid, "THE WAR" but too few of us actually get involved with the process.

I send letters in the form of e-mails to my representative in Congress, the Senate, Albany, Erie County, Amherst and even once to the Speaker of the House about most anything that is going on that in my opinion is wrong. I do this because my voice matters! And so does yours! We have been told for so long by those sitting in Albany, Buffalo, Erie/Niagara Counties and Washington that they are the government that it has become too common place in America to allow our elected employees to do as they please. Over the last few decades we have seen America go from government "of the people, for the people and by the people" to a few in elected power telling Americans what they want, how it will be done and how Americans will take it or leave it. They don't care!

If you sit back and do nothing, as one of our prominent members says all the time, nothing is what you will get. If you're not happy with the way things are tell your employees in your respective areas about it. It only takes a few minutes of your time. All of our representatives have local offices with local phone numbers. You only have to care enough to take the time to call, write or e-mail your concerns and comments.

If we all do this, all 540+ members of chapter 77 we will make a difference. If you truly care about the direction America is heading, our State, Western New York and the communities we live in e-mail, write or call with your view. Your comment will get a response and your voice will have been heard.

The last thing I want to say is have a happy holiday and I hope 2010 is prosperous and healthy for you and your families as well as for all of us at V V A 77

ORANGE BLOSSOM SALES

By: Rick Topolski

I would like to thank everyone involved with making the sale of Orange Blossom (the symbol of Agent Orange) a success. I feel that it is important that veterans be made aware of the effects of Agent Orange and other veteran's benefits like local tax assessment reductions and health care benefits. Through our efforts, we were able to set up 7 displays, collect over \$5,801 and pass out numerous information packets to veterans.

THIS HAPPENED BECAUSE OF YOU, THANK YOU, ORANGE BLOSSOM VOLUNTEERS.

I would like to thank the following businesses for their support for the veterans and the use of their store front to sell Agent Orange Blossoms.

The Premier Group Wine & Spirits
3445 Delaware Ave.
Amherst, NY

Wal-Mart
5033 Transit Rd
Williamsville, NY

Wal-Mart
2055 Niagara Falls Blvd.
Amherst, NY

I would especially like to thank all the members who helped man the displays this year.

Jim Burns
Pete Montemurno
Mike Zak

Mary Cameron
Jim Rosten
others missed

Bob Gritzke
Jack Toth

Bob Lillis
Mike Walker

Mike Marchese
Rick Topolski
Jack Michel
Jay Wopperer

AVVA NEWS

By: Linda Sopic

Greetings for the New Year 2010! The Chapter's annual Peter Tycz Scholarship dinner will be held on Thursday, January 28 and, AVVA is currently accepting donations of single items, gift certificates, or baskets already made up for our terrific fundraiser, the Chinese Auction. These may be dropped off at the chapter on Wednesdays, or Saturdays from 9-1:00. Thanks to many, many generous folks, we always have a fantastic variety of unique items and baskets, many homemade.

Once again, Marge Woodworth has been very busy for the past several months creating homemade items, all lovingly put together into her one-of-a-kind baskets....thank you very much, Marge. If you would be interested in helping that evening, please call me at 683.0051, or the chapter at 693.4479. Thank you in advance.

Vietnam Veterans of America
WNY Chapter 77
57 Main St.
Tonawanda, NY 14150

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #77
Grand Island, NY 14072

Application for Membership

Please send this application, with you dues payment and a copy of your DD-214 to: VVA Chapter 77, 57 Main St., Tonawanda, NY 14150

Name _____ Male Female Date of Birth _____

Address _____ e-mail address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone number _____ Sponsor (optional) _____

Membership Type: Individual – 1 year \$20 Individual Member – 3 years \$50

Life Member: \$250 (age 49 and under) \$225 (age 50 – 55) \$200 (age 56 – 60)

\$175 (age 61 – 65) \$150 (age 66+) Time Payment Plan: \$50 down, \$25 per month

Eligibility: Membership is open to U.S. armed forces veterans who served on active duty (for other than training purposes) in the Republic of Vietnam between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975, or in any duty location between August 5, 1964 and May 7, 1975. You must submit a copy of your DD-214 with this membership application.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

I am a spouse, family member or friend of a Vietnam veteran and would like membership information about the Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America.

I would like information on membership for permanently hospitalized Vietnam veterans.

I would like information on membership for incarcerated Vietnam veterans.

I want to help Vietnam veterans and their families. Please accept my tax-deductible donation: \$10 \$20 \$50 Other: \$ _____

(VVA is a non-profit, veteran's service organization. Programs and services are funded by member dues and public donations.)