



Western New York
Chapter 77
Tonawanda, New York

Mail Call:
April, May, June 2011

President's Message

By: Mike Walker

Spring is on its way and after the cold winter we've had, it will be welcomed. I'd like to thank everyone that helped with the Peter Tycz Scholarship spaghetti dinner. In addition, I would also like to thank the ladies from the AVVA who did a wonderful job on the Chinese Auction. A steady stream of applications has been arriving daily. Just a reminder, the application deadline is May 1, 2011.



Upcoming Events:

- On April 26 the chapter will again sell newspapers (Buffalo News) for Kids' Day to help The Woman's and Children's Hospital of Buffalo. We'll be on the corner of Niagara and Porter selling the papers and trying not to get hit by traffic.
- All you golfers remember our golf tournament is coming June 5. Not only is this a good time but the biggest fundraiser we hold. If you want to help, contact Al Schreier at 693-3441. I know you're going to hear this from Al, but the Chapter does need prizes. We give out about 120 to the golfers and need some for raffles. As I said previously, we have approximately 550 members, we need more than 120 prizes; unfortunately every year Al ends up buying some. Therefore we ask that everyone scratch their head and think of some prizes to donate.
- The VVA National Conference will take place in Reno, NV this August. The Board approved for the Chapter to pay for the meals and registration. However, anyone who attends will remain responsible for paying their own transportation and hotel room. Based on membership, our chapter has 12 votes; the cost to send 12 members would be over \$10,000. We do not have the money to pay the total bill. Cost of airfare will be about \$600 and rooms are about \$110. With 2 in a room the cost will be about \$55. If you want to attend let us know so we can get you registered.

And now for some sad news, long time member Pete Montemurno is leaving the area and going to the land of grits. Pete and his wife are moving to the North Carolina to be with his son, daughter-in-law and the new granddaughter. Pete will not only be missed by us at the chapter, but he'll be missed at the VA hospital where he volunteered. Pete was our liaison to the VA hospital and was on many groups and panels to make to the hospital a better place for all of us. Even though we at the chapter will miss Pete let's all wish him the best of luck and hope he'll remember that he always has friends here and can come back anytime.

Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another

VVA CHAPTER 77 LEADERSHIP

(Terms of office are from April 2010 to April 2012)

Officers

President	Mike Walker	693.4479
1st Vice President	Jack Michel	693.4479
2nd Vice President	Bill Parmentier	693.4479
Secretary	Ron Sdao	694.4411
Treasurer	Paul Pietrowski	693.4479
Service Officers	Delores Garcia, NYS Council	857.3344
	Patrick Welch	858.6349
Pres.: Associates of VVA	Linda Sopic	683.0051

Directors

Fred Bansmer	693.4479	Tom Konopka	694.0857
Ken Berger (Hon.)	693.4479	Mike Marchese	693.4479
Ed Bodine	864.6247	Joe Pasec	693.4479
Jim Burns	693.4479	Jack Toth	693.4479
Jerry Caira	693.4479		

Special Duties

NY State VVA Council Delegates	Paul Pietrowski	Patrick Welch
	Bill Parmentier	Al Brusetti
	Jack Michel	
Newsletter Editor	Jerry Caira	
Associate Editor	Paul Pietrowski	

Standing Committees

Agent Orange/Veterans Affairs	Al Brusetti	636.0338
Color Guard:	Paul Pietrowski	693.4479
Community Affairs:	Ron Pilozzi	694.6052
	Paul Pietrowski	693.4479
Constitution Committee:	Larry Covert	823.9118
Economic Affairs	Al Brusetti	636.0338
Education:	Jerry Caira	693.4479
Employment Training & Business Opp.	Tom Konopka	694.0857
Golf Tournament:	Al Schreier	693.3441
Government Affairs:	Al Brusetti	636.0338
	Patrick Welch	688.0129
	Patrick Welch	688.0129
Grant Writing:		
Homeless Vets:		
Information Technology:	Mike Walker	695.2420
Membership:	Paul Pietrowski	693.4479
	Jack Michel	693.4479
Minority Affairs	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

**THE CALENDAR IS CONTINUALLY UPDATED ON LINE.
PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE, www.vva77.org, FOR THE MOST UP
TO DATE LISTINGS.**

Apr 1 st	Friday	<u>Fish Fry</u> , Am Legion Post 264, 4:00 to 7:00 pm
Apr 8 th	Friday	<u>Fish Fry</u> , Am Legion Post 264, 4:00 to 7:00 pm
Apr 9 th	Saturday	<u>Orange Blossom Sale</u> , 10:00am - 5:00pm, Gander Mountain, (Next to Tops) 880 Young, St., (off the Twin Cities Hwy.), Tonawanda <u>POW Recognition Day</u> , 12:00PM, VA Hospital, Room 301, Freedom Hall
Apr 15 th	Friday	<u>Fish Fry</u> , Am Legion Post 264, 4:00 to 7:00 pm
Apr 21 st	Thursday	<u>Board of Directors Meeting</u> , 5:30pm, Members welcomed <u>General Membership Meeting</u> , 7:00 pm
Apr 22 nd	Friday	<u>Fish Fry</u> , Am Legion Post 264, 4:00 to 7:00 pm
Apr 26 th	Tuesday	<u>Kid's Day</u> newspaper distribution, see article inside for details Niagara & Porter, 6:00 am
May 7 th	Saturday	<u>Orange Blossom Sale</u> , 10:00am - 5:00pm, Budway's Supermarket, 535 Division St, North Tonawanda
May 19 th	Thursday	<u>General Membership Meeting</u> , 7:00 pm <u>Board of Directors Meeting</u> , 7:00 pm, Members welcomed
May 28 th	Saturday	<u>Orange Blossom Sale</u> , 10:00am - 5:00pm, Wal-Mart (Walden Ave.), 100 Thruway Plaza Dr., Cheektowaga
May 29 th	Sunday	<u>Vet Council service at Bridge</u> , 11:00am, Main St. Bridge, Tonawanda
May 30 th	Monday	<u>Color Guard</u> , 11:00am, Chapter 77 service at The Naval Park
June 4 th	Saturday	<u>Orange Blossom Sale</u> , 10:00am - 5:00pm, Save-A-Lot, 77 S. Rossler (Near Clinton), Cheektowaga
June 5 th	Sunday	<u>Golf Tournament</u> , Rothland Golf Course, check tee times
June 16 th	Monday	<u>Board of Directors Meeting</u> , 5:30 pm, Members welcomed <u>General Membership Meeting</u> , 7:00 pm

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

MEMORIAL PROGRAM

By: John Hefferman

Dignity Memorial has developed a Veterans Benefit Program that provides a 10% savings on all pre-paid Dignity Memorial funeral or cremation services and merchandise when you use the services of a Dignity Memorial funeral provider. You also receive:

- 24 hour Compassion Helpline Telephone grief support program staffed with trained counselors that will provide your immediate family with grief counseling, insight and support for an entire year.
- An After Planner^R, this is a unique step by step organizational tool that eases the burden on loved ones by providing them with pre written letters, helpful tips and a complete system to assist with the many tasks necessary to close an estate.
- A Flag Case, this case is specially designed for your government issued United States flag (veterans only) or a Memento Box that will be cherished by your family and loved ones for generations.

Dignity is the largest Nationwide Network of over 1800 funeral homes and cemeteries. It offers national transferability of your prearrangements to any Dignity Memorial provider throughout North America and provides access to substantial savings on airline travel through the Dignity Memorial Bereavement Travel Program. Assistance is available in the preparation of forms to obtain your Government Burial Benefits. Dignity Memorial has a 100% Service Guarantee that ensures your family's complete satisfaction with the services provided.

The following Dignity brochures are available:

- 10 Things Everyone Should Know About Planning a Funeral or Cremation Service
- For Veterans and Spouses – The Benefits of Preplanning your Funeral or Cremation Service
- Pre Paying Your Funeral Expenses (New York State Funeral Directors Association)
- When Cremation is Your Preference
- When a Veteran Passes Away – A planning Guide for the Surviving Family (Vietnam Veterans of America)

Mark Urban is a strong supporter of Chapter 77 and our *go to* person for Dignity. Mark is the Funeral Director, Manager of Dengler, Roberts, Perna Funeral Home at 8630 Transit Road, East Amherst NY 14051. He can be reached at (716) 636-1111. His cell is (716) 639-8479.

ORANGE BLOSSOM SALES

By: Joe Pasek

I will be starting up the Orange Blossom sales in April. Last year this fund raiser produced nearly \$4,000.00 in donations for Chapter 77. This is also a great opportunity to inform Vietnam veterans who are not members that we are here to help them if they are in need and encourage them to join our organization. The orange paper poppies we hand out remind the public that the battle with the effects of Agent Orange is still going on.

Check the Calendar of Coming Events in this newsletter for dates and locations. Additional dates will be posted on www.VVA77.org when they become available.

KIDS DAY

By: Tom Konopka

On Tuesday, April 26th, Chapter 77 will again participate in selling newspapers on Kids Day to benefit the Buffalo Women and Children's Hospital, The Robert Warner M.D. Center for Children with Special Needs and Children's Charities of WNY. Our primary corner is Niagara Avenue and Porter Avenue in Buffalo. We will meet there on April 26th at approximately 0600 hours and we will begin hawking our papers at that time. Let me know if you would like to participate in this worthwhile effort.

GOLF TOURNAMENT

By: Al Schreier

Our 17th annual golf tournament will be held on Sunday, June 5th at Rothland Golf Course.

WE NEED PRIZES! Any donations of restaurant gift certificates, golf balls, etc. would be greatly 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. Contact: Al Schreier, Chairman, 693-3441, amschreier@verizon.net

PAUL'S PAGE (part 1)

By Paul Piotrowski

PETER TYCZ FUND RAISER



Another successful dinner! We managed to raise \$2881.00 from the dinner, basket raffle and special raffle. As usual we had plenty of help. Thank you to everyone who came to help or to eat. I'm told the spaghetti was great again this year despite the absence of "Pasta Pete Montemurno". Pete is leaving the area for the mighty South to be near his new granddaughter; we wish him the best and he certainly will be missed. I had to recruit a new pasta man, Eddie "spaghetti" Bodine stepped up

and did a great job in the kitchen. Rumor has it he is from the Ragu Family! Linda Sopic did an excellent job with the basket raffle and thanks go out to Marge Woodworth for the tea baskets she donates every year and Bob Lillis who buys the large windmill for the special raffle. Thank you to everyone who donated prizes for the basket raffle. Mary Lynne Bodine worked the desert table; thanks to all those who brought deserts. Jim May stepped up to do the dishes in place of Jack Michel, I haven't figured it out yet, but there something going on with the Navy and Marine guys, they like doing pots and pans! Thanks to everyone, I wish I could list all the names of our volunteers but we only have so much room in our newsletter.

CANAL FEST

Yes I know it's only April but before you know it July will be here. This year's dates are Sunday July 17th to Sunday July 24th. In the next newsletter I will have more to report.

MEMBERSHIP

Our membership is 550 again this month. A lot of members are opting for life membership which is a good deal. Remember if you are going to do life membership and you elect to deal with national you must send a copy of your DD214 with your payment. I have copies of DD214's for most of our members on file at the office.

WELCOME HOME NEW MEMBERS

David Beam James Cederman Gary Kuntz Paul Reed

VALOR

As you know, chapter member **Paul Rudnicki** and his committee **VALOR** raise funds for the chapter food pantry. Without these funds we wouldn't be able to assist veterans and their families. To date we have received \$13915.00. On behalf of the membership and officers we thank you very much.

CHAPTER VETERANS SERVICES

- We operate a museum that acts as a community resource
- We sponsor a Color Guard for parades and other public and civic appearances
- We provide speakers to local schools, and organizations to help educate the community about our Vietnam experience
- We are active in pursuing and promoting veterans interests like local tax exemptions for veterans, etc.

Chapter 77 is the oldest and largest chapter of VVA in Western New York and focuses on the needs and problems of **ALL** veterans and their families. Membership is limited to U.S. military veterans with active duty service in Vietnam between Feb 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975, or in any duty location between Aug 5, 1964 and May 7, 1975. But again, we provide services to **ALL** veterans, no matter which branch or time of service. **UNFORTUNATELY, WE DO NOT PROVIDE LEGAL SERVICES.** Among some the services we provide are:

- Provide assistance in directing veterans and their family to accredited service officers to obtain benefits.
- Provide direction for specialized needs like housing, educational benefits, etc.
- We operate a food pantry.

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.**

PAUL'S PAGE (part 2)

By Paul Piotrowski

CHAPTER STARS

Two of our members received honors recently for dedication of service to the community. **Robert J. Clark** was honored as a Man of Honor in the Tonawandas for his service with the New York Naval Militia; he retired as a Command Master Chief. **Merrel Lane** received the prestigious Air Force Distinguished Public Service Award from Gen. Norton Schwartz, Air Force Chief of Staff, for his role in keeping the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station open during the Base Realignment and Closure hearings in 1995 and 2005. Also our good friend **George Trautmen** from the Seabees was also honored as a Man of Honor in the Tonawandas for his work on the Seabees Monument in North Tonawanda. Congratulations to all honorees. Chapter member Dennis Eggers is in Strong Memorial Hospital awaiting a heart transplant. He would be glad to hear from us. His address is: Dennis Eggers, Room 7-3427, Strong Memorial Hospital, 601 Elmwood Ave., Rochester NY 14642.

AGENT ORANGE LAWSUIT

By: Joe Pasek

Recently I read a book entitled "**WAITING FOR AN ARMY TO DIE – THE TRAGEDY OF AGENT ORANGE**" written by Fred A. Wilcox. The author tells the story of a Vietnam veteran who in the spring of 1978 appeared on the TODAY SHOW and shocked the television viewers by announcing: "I died in Vietnam, but I didn't even know it."

Paul Reutershan was a helicopter crew chief who flew almost daily delivering supplies to the 20th Engineering Brigade. Frequently he had to fly through clouds of herbicides being discharged from C123 cargo planes. When he questioned the possible health risks he was told "don't worry about it, its non-toxic." On December 14, 1978 Reutershan succumbed to the cancer that had destroyed his colon, liver and abdomen. In the months before he died, Reutershan founded AGENT ORANGE VICTIMS INTERNATIONAL and spent all of his waning energies trying to inform the American people of the connection between the exposure to AGENT ORANGE and the many illness Vietnam vets suffer from including cancer.

Three weeks before he died, the VA sent him a disability check for which he was too weak to sign. Two days after his death, Paul's mother received a letter from the VA requesting the check be returned. Paul Reutershan was only 28 when he died. Unfortunately this is just one sad example of the countless number of Vietnam veterans who have endured the consequences for coming into contact with AGENT ORANGE. It is also unfortunate that the hands of time cannot be moved backwards. If only the Department of Defense HAD NOT accepted the assurances from the chemical manufacturers that the herbicide they produced was safe and non-toxic. The damage is done and the question remains, can DOW, MONSANTO, DIAMOND SHAMROCK and other chemical companies be held accountable?

Attorneys for these corporations have said their clientele should be free from prosecution on the basis they acted as government contractors at a time of war and produced the herbicide as per specifications. They would like us to believe that the government deliberately forsakes the wellbeing of military personnel in order to eliminate the jungle hiding spots of the enemy.

In order to develop an action plan on this issue from the political standpoint, I wrote to Assemblyman Robin Schimminger and provided him with pertinent documentation. I requested his guidance in overcoming the chemical company's immunity for product liability. He responded with a letter and advised me that to proceed with a lawsuit, the attorney(s) representing Vietnam vets must consider financial feasibility, new and existing evidence, as well as legal precedents. I also learned that courts in most federal jurisdictions have held that the government contractor defense is not available to immunize procurement contractors who manufacture their products NEGLIGENTLY.

So the quest goes on to find a competent law firm that is willing to butt heads with a conglomerate of attorneys the chemical companies employ, who have lobbying power and will likely attempt to tie up any case in the bureaucracy system. Even though it looks like the cards are stacked against us, I am not giving up.

VA DAY TREATMENT CENTER

By: TOM KONOPKA

Our Chapter contributes \$10 restaurant gift cards to the VA Day Treatment Center on Main Street in Buffalo. A few weeks ago, some of our members toured the facility as a guest of Jill Murray, the program manager. We were able to be part of a meeting that is organized by the Veterans who are clients of the center. We were impressed by the resolve of the center's clients to participate in a forum that provides a means of self-governance. The meeting was well organized and resulted in a positive discussion of activities to enhance the operation of the center. Chapter 77's contribution was recognized at this meeting and we were humbled by the many expressions of gratitude.

The Day Treatment Center has a full time psychiatrist on staff as well as many well trained Case Managers who are social workers or nurses. It also has a Partial Hospitalization Program that can provide intensive care for Veterans with serious mental health problems. This program can be an alternative for some Veterans who would otherwise be an inpatient on the 10th floor of the hospital.

Our Chapter should continue doing everything we can to support this treatment center and its excellent staff.

TYCZ SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE

By: Jerry Caira



Tammy Tycz (4th from left), her daughters and granddaughter, and her father, Chapter member Bill Parmentier always attend and appreciate what is done to honor Peter.

The 2011 Peter P. Tycz II Memorial Scholarship is well under way. Applications have been sent to all high schools in Niagara and Erie Counties. Our major fund raiser was held and other fund raising efforts are under way.

The basic format is the same as last year in that each award will be \$250 with the total number of awards dependent on fund raising efforts throughout the year. Since its inception in 2005, 132 scholarships were awarded with a total value of \$33,000.

The scholarship is 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 2011.

Applications must be postmarked by May 1, 2011. Applications are currently available at the Chapter Museum, on line or in the guidance offices of schools. For further information regarding the VVA Chapter 77 Scholarship: Write: Scholarship Committee, VVA Chapter 77, 57 Main St, Tonawanda, NY 15150: E-Mail: vva77@verizon.net; Phone: (716) 693-4479.

Because of its success last year, the AVVA's Chinese Auction was again held upstairs in 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; patrons were able to continuously browse the gift baskets and raffle items and purchased more tickets without the inconvenience of going to another floor. Linda Sopic and her volunteers did a great job organizing and manning the auction. Many thanks to Linda and all of her volunteers.

This year we went back to the old stand-by, spaghetti and meatballs. Paul Peitrowski and Ed Bodine, the designated chapter chefs, again performed their magic by cooking over 80 pounds of spaghetti; they created a magnificent meal that everyone enjoyed. The kitchen at the legion is on the lower floor; food, etc. had to be transported to the dining area on the 2nd floor in a timely manner. Watching the whole operation with workers going up and down stairs, refilling pans, serving food, cooking, waiting on tables, etc. was amazing. The clockwork in which things were orchestrated by Paul Pietrowski made it look easy. It would have been chaotic without his experience and efforts. Thanks for a job well done

The proceeds of our fundraiser were outstanding and were more than we could have dreamed. Chapter 77 is grateful to have so many members, friends and associates that are willing to donate their time, goods and services to this worthy cause. Thanks to their efforts, the dinner and associated raffles raised over \$2,800. I would like to thank everyone – organizers, workers, donors and patrons for making this a success.

In addition to our spaghetti dinner fund raiser, letters have been sent to local businesses, union officers, veteran and service organizations asking for donations to benefit our scholarship. Anyone wishing to make a contribution to our scholarship fund may do so by mailing a check payable to the Peter P Tycz II Memorial Scholarship Fund to Chapter 77, Vietnam Veterans of America, 57 Main St., Tonawanda, New York 14150

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

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #2
Tonawanda, NY 14150

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.)