

2019 VVA Candidate Statements

19TH NATIONAL BIENNIAL CONVENTION, SPOKANE

NATIONAL OFFICERS

John Rowan

President



As a new Congress opens with Democrats in charge of the House, I find myself working with my fifth Chair of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Rep. Mark Takano (D-Calif.) (*see photo*). I have known him for several years. He is a friend of VVA leaders in Southern California. We look forward to working with him and Ranking Member Dr. Roe (R-Tenn). As always, we maintain relations with all Committee members no matter the party.

I have had the privilege of serving as your President for fourteen years and thank all the members, Chapters, State Councils and the Regional and At-Large Directors for having faith in me over these years and thanks to my fellow officers for their continued support. They each took on areas of responsibility that have made my job easier, especially Vice President Marsha Four, who helped with administration and staff issues. I will miss Marsha who is not running this year. I wish her well.

We have gone through some staff changes this year, but they have performed excellently on behalf of our members and all veterans and their families. We are very proud of them. Thank them when you can.

The *VVA Veteran* has been an award-winning newspaper thanks to the peerless staff for which we are very proud.

Our Membership Department with guidance from the Membership Affairs Committee has persevered through changes in consultants, staff, technology, and structure.

Our Government Affairs Department has no peer in Congress. The courts have supported the Blue Water veterans, but we continue to push for legislation and our lobbying effort has been enhanced by our Chapters and State Councils.

The Finance Department, the Administration Department, the IT staff, and our Household Goods Program also keep our organization running efficiently. I want to thank them for their efforts.

The Veterans Benefits Department has been dealing with the changes that have gone on in the VA as well as VVA. Thankfully, our new Director, Felicia Mulaney, a recent Army veteran, and Senior Attorney Kelsey Yoon, and all our legal staff are up to the task.

The Communications Department has brought us into the digital era with Facebook, Twitter, and

other outlets, while getting our message out to the print and video media. Thanks to Amber Chaney and Kris Goldsmith in Government Affairs, we are reaching many new audiences and insuring our message is not corrupted.

The Veterans Health Council recently welcomed its new Director, Col. Dr. Artie Shelton (USA ret.). He is already expanding our reach through our new 501(c)(3).

I thank the members, chapters, and state councils for the hard work you do on behalf of our veterans and families. You make us look good and give us the authority to work on your behalf in Congress and the VA.

I thank you for your support and hope you will allow me to continue to serve as your President.

Thomas R. Burke

Vice President



VVA has come a long way over the last forty years. We have built one of the best, if not the best, service organization in the country. Have we made mistakes? Sure we have, but in my opinion we have made more right decisions than we have

made wrong ones. Thus our stature and status have risen considerably over many years. You and I as members have been part of those decisions. Hopefully you have voiced your opinions along the way.

Is there more to do? Always! You need only to look at the agendas of our National Standing Committees to realize that our job is yet not complete. My belief is that we need to carry on as long as possible. We now stand among the best in the country. Major decisions will have to be made in the near future. How much longer will we exist? What will happen to our State Councils and Chapters? Will we pass on our knowledge and know-how to a new group? If so, who and when? These are questions that must be addressed. The future direction of our organization may well be decided at the Convention in Spokane.

I wish to be a part of any decisions that affect VVA's future. I also believe we are up to the task. As a member of the National Board of Directors, we should listen to you the members and your desires regarding the future direction of VVA. I also know that the majority of the National Board of Directors desires to do the right thing and make good decisions. I am here for one reason: you the Vietnam veteran, your spouse, and children.

Most of you know that I have been around VVA for many years. I am a proud life member. I have served in many capacities. National Board of Directors as At-Large Director, then as Region 5 Director. Many National committees: Government

Affairs, Veterans Benefits, Public Affairs, Finance, Veterans Incarcerated, Disciplinary Committee, CSCP, and others. State Council President for eight years, and Chapter President/Vice President.

In 2006 I retired from the Canadian National Railroad after twenty-seven years as a Market Manager responsible for \$38 million in pulp & paper products. The last several years I worked in the trucking industry, attaining the level of Vice President Marketing.

I ask for your support as the next Vice President of our organization. The position is so much more than just a title. First of all it's a privilege, also a passion, commitment, and a dedication to you my fellow veterans and to our organization. It is the willingness to listen as well as act on our needs and the well-being of our members for the overall good of us all. No matter where our future takes us, strong leadership is a must. I hope you will agree to support my effort to become the next Vice President of Vietnam Veterans of America.

Bill Meeks

Secretary



As your elected National Secretary since August 2011, I have insured that a draft of all National Board of Directors meeting minutes have been distributed within three (3) to five (5) days after each meeting. In an effort to make our membership more aware of upcoming VVA business, I have prepared the National meeting agendas and provide these on a continual basis until the meeting date. With the creation of the VVA BOD Motions and Policies Reference Guides, which are posted on the VVA website, our membership has a better understanding of what policies and motions are in place for the National Board of Directors to conduct VVA business properly.

By posting all of the approved National Board of Directors Meeting Minutes from 2013 to present on the VVA website, I have made each member aware of what VVA business took place during these meetings. This move has provided easy access for members to get a better understanding of VVA National's operation. The VVA Secretary Notification of BOD Action Form has provided a record that the VVA Membership Department has notified the chapter members of a National BOD action,

that the database has been documented to show chapter revocation or voluntary disclosure of chapters and provide a record of this action to the regional director and the state council.

After the 2015 VVA National Convention I drafted the first Convention minutes to my knowledge other than Convention recordings taken by VVA staff to document the VVA business undertaken during the entire Convention. These minutes are posted to the VVA website. I continue to be a special advisor to the VVA Membership Affairs Committee. I continue to serve for my chapter as the Secretary and Editor of the chapter newsletter. I continue to chair the Constitution & By-laws Committee for the VVA Texas State Council and have not missed a state council meeting since 1994.

I served with the Marine Corps as a platoon radioman for Bravo Company, 1st Bn 27th Marines in 1968 in I Corps in Vietnam. Since joining VVA in 1992 I have held numerous elected or appointed positions at the chapter, state council, and national levels. I am married to Suzie, we have three children, eight granddaughters, one grandson, and three great-grandchildren. I am employed by Van De Wiele & Vogler Engineering in Houston, Texas, for the last thirty+ years. I was fortunate enough to be recognized as the VVA Member of the Year in 1999. I have received the VVA Achievement Medal and the VVA Commendation Medal for my endeavors for VVA.

I will continue to work with our membership to improve communication, the distribution of correspondence from VVA National, and provide timely responses to our membership. I would appreciate your vote for Secretary at the upcoming convention in Spokane!

Jacob (Jake) M. Barsottini

Treasurer



Jake Barsottini, MSgt USAF Retired, was born in Beaver Falls, Pa., April 30th, 1952. He married Pamela Patterson and has three children and three grandchildren. Jake enlisted on May 1, 1970, into the USAF Reserves delayed enlistment program while attending Slippery Rock University. Jake entered active duty August 11, 1971. His Primary ASFC was Comptroller, Accounting & Finance, and he retired as a Deputy Accounting and Finance Officer and Comptroller Superintendent with AFSC 67299. Jake obtained a secondary AFSC Security Police Law Enforcement W81172 and qualified as expert marksman with three different weapons.

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NATIONAL OFFICERS

Later in his career he deployed with USAF Special Service Teams and Stateside served on Emergency Service Units. Jake obtained degrees in Human Resource Management, Financial Management, and Business Law. He graduated from the Community College of the Air Force, The Jr. NCO Leadership School, the NCO Leadership School, and Sr. NCO Academy. He taught effective writing as a Squadron Instructor and Historian.

Jake's Major Decorations include three AF Meritorious Service Medals (one for his contributions to Operation Just Cause and Desert Storm), two AF Commendation Medals, the AF Achievement Medal, the National Defense Service Medal with two Bronze Stars, and five Good Conduct Medals. His personal Awards include Wing and Strategic Air Command Airman of the Year, USAF NCO of the Year, and numerous quarterly awards. Jake retired from the USAF September 1, 1991, at Grissom AFB IN as Deputy Accounting & Finance Officer and Comptroller Superintendent.

Jake's overseas assignments include TDY with 16th Special Operations Command in Ubon, Thailand, 1972/73; Aviano, Italy, 1978; Decimomannu Air Base, Italy, 1979; 36th Tactical Fighter Wing, Bitburg AB, Germany, 1983-87; TDY Beriut, Lebanon, 1983; Panama Operation Just Cause, 1989; Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, Desert Shield and Desert Storm, 1990-1991. MSgt Barsottini currently serves as President of the Pennsylvania Veterans Assistance Fund, a 501(c)3, Treasurer of VVA Pennsylvania State Council, Treasurer of VVA Chapter 862, Member of VVA National Finance Committee, VVA National Working Group I, and BOD Veterans Health Council of America.

Jake has assisted other states and chapters with the formation of their own 501(c) 3's, and he incorporated the Veterans Health Council of America, Inc., as well as converting the Associates of Vietnam Veterans from a 501(c)4 to a 501(c)3 for which he received the AVVA Commendation Medal. Jake is a Life Member VVA, DAV, VFW, American Legion, Air Force Sergeants Association (former chapter president), and the American Society of Military Comptrollers.

I will bring business and non-profit experience to the already excellent VVA organization. I will work for our membership as a strong experienced Treasurer. After retirement MSgt Barsottini was em-

ployed for five years as Business Manager for Ron Lewis Automotive Group and later Caputo Insurance, Inc., where he was a licensed agent in 22 states as well as its sister company, EmployShare, Inc., as VP and COO. EmployShare specializes in Payroll Services, HR, Employment Law and business consulting. Jake held licenses in Property, Casualty, Surplus lines, Life and Annuities.

Larry Matika

Treasurer



Since I retired as a college professor ten years ago, I have been attempting to give back to my brother and sister veterans with my service. I am currently Chapter 273 President after having

served as its longtime Treasurer. I am a delegate to the Rhode Island State Council and currently serve as Vice President. At the national level for the past several years, I have been attending the Board of Directors meetings and am a member of the POW/MIA Affairs Committee.

My service to veterans beyond VVA is currently serving as Treasurer for both my DAV chapter and the Bristol County Veterans Council. I am an appointed member of the Rhode Island Governor's Advisory Council which oversees the State Veterans Cemetery and Veterans Home. I also volunteer at the Providence VA Medical Center, giving more than 2,500 hours in the past ten years in many areas such as driving patients to their appointments and assisting in the Dialysis Clinic. I also serve on the hospital's VAVS Committee.

I am a Certificated Public Accountant. When I practiced, I specialized in the auditing and consulting of nonprofit organizations. I left the practice of accounting to attend graduate school where I earned a Ph.D. in accounting and finance. The balance of my working life was as a college pro-

fessor where both my teaching and research specialty was nonprofit organizations.

Over the course of my career, I have lived in Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York, Michigan, and Indiana. I currently live with my wife Gina in Barrington, R.I. We each have children from previous marriages and two granddaughters.

I have always carried out my duties as a soldier, employee, professor, and volunteer in a professional and honorable manner. I promise that if you grant me the privilege serving you as Treasurer, I will give you the same professionalism and honorable service I have shown in the past.

I respectfully ask for your vote so that I can give my knowledge and expertise to our organization and its members.

Thank you for your considering my candidacy.

Wayne Reynolds

Treasurer



I am running for re-election as National Treasurer because I want to continue the progress we have made in improving our financial management. I am a proven leader who can work with all levels of VVA and AVVA. I promised to make

VVA's finances transparent and, with the help of the Finance Committee, we have accomplished that. Now I am asking for your support so I can continue to work with everyone to achieve VVA's goals.

These have been two very busy years. I have met with the contractor who supplies ads for *The VVA Veteran*. As a result, we are receiving more revenue for fewer ads (which leaves more space for content), and the Editor remains in control of advertising content. Our contract for implementation of the iMIS software, which VVA purchased, has continued to improve our membership and financial operations. As Compliance Officer, I review our contracts to ensure that we are receiving cost-effective services.

I provide oversight for our Information Technology and Finance Departments. We have streamlined financial reporting to make it more understandable and to reflect actual expenditures.

I have also been active in using my contacts in Congress to promote legislation that will assist veterans. The Veterans Benefits, Veterans Health Council, and Agent Orange commitment from VVA has increased, and I have been an active congressional lobbyist for VVA and our successful Toxic Substances Legislation. We have increased VVA's financial commitment to a wide range of areas serving all veterans. I also have assisted Regional Directors and State Council Presidents by making presentations at their meetings.

Last year I received the Silver Medallion from the Chapel of the Four Chaplains in recognition of my service to veterans.

VVA SERVICE: Life Member of VVA. I served three years as President of Chapter 511 and have been Alabama State Council President for twenty-one years. I was also the National Treasurer 2001-03 and from 2011 until the present. I have served on the following National VVA Committees: Finance, Public Affairs, Veterans Health Care, PTSD & Substance Abuse, and Constitution. I also am a former Secretary of the Conference of State Council Presidents. As a member of the Board of the Vietnam Veterans Assistance Fund for four years, I assisted in raising funds for the Service Officer Program and other projects.

MILITARY SERVICE: I served in Vietnam with the 95th Evacuation Hospital and 22nd Surgical Hospital in 1968-69.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT: I hold a Master's Degree in Finance from the University of Georgia and a Doctor of Education Degree from Auburn University. I am a retired Public School Superintendent and currently a Registered Nurse. For two decades I have been the owner and CEO of a consulting business. This year I was elected as one of eight members on the Alabama State Board of Education.

PERSONAL LIFE: I am the oldest of twelve children; my father was a World War II and Korean War veteran. I have been married to Carol Reynolds for forty-seven years, and we have two children and two grandchildren. ■

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, AT-LARGE

Dottie Barickman

At-Large Director



My Mission Statement: "My highest priority and commitment is to ensure that the veterans who served for us will be served by us."

VVA National Level: 2015-19 At-Large Board of Director for Vietnam Veterans of America.

Member of the Finance Committee, Constitution Committee, Women Veterans Committee, Legisla-

tive Committee and PTSD Committee. VVA Council of State Council Presidents: Held positions as 1st Vice Chair and Committee Chair of the Political Action Committee.

VVA Region 6: Held positions as alternate Region 6 Director. VVA Nebraska State Council: Held positions as President and Delegate for Chapter 279. VVA Chapter 279: Held positions as Vice-President and Secretary.

VVA member since 1987.

Other organizations: Held positions as alternate to Nebraska Veterans Home Board, Nebraska Veterans Council, and Governor's Round Table.

Events and functions: Facilitated play *A Piece of My Heart* in Omaha, Nebraska, and Women in Military Service Association in Washington, D.C.,

partnership with the Vietnam War 50th Commemoration, Offutt Air Force Base Open House Committee, VVA Region 6 workshops host, keynote speaker for veterans events, advisor for veterans projects and testified for Nebraska veterans legislative bills, Nebraska Vietnam Veterans Honor Flight, assisted with selection of veterans; Memorial Dedication for Gulf War Veterans.

Education: Northwest Mississippi Junior College, Associate Degree in Accounting; Memphis State University, one and a half year Accounting.

Professional: Production Control Manager for a Manufacturing Firm; Manager for a Third Party Administrator; Human Resources Client Services Consultant for a Payroll Firm.

Larry D. Bramblett

At-Large Director



As a Director, my goal is to work with the Board to continue the service of VVA in support of veterans. I plan to focus on veteran homelessness, suicide rates, toxic exposure, and veteran legislation.

I believe it is essential that the legacy of VVA be designed to continue the excellent work that VVA has accomplished over its

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lifetime. I joined VVA Chapter 391 Sonora, Calif., in 2010 and became a Life Member in 2014. As Chapter President, I have had the privilege to work with many community organizations on a variety of local veterans issues. I am proud to represent the largest chapter in California. I was a chapter delegate to the National Conventions in New Orleans and Springfield and will be again in Spokane. I served as a delegate to California State Council Conventions in 2014 and 2016. In St. Louis, Mo., and Tucson, Ariz., I attended leadership training for the chapter. I am the current delegate to the California State Council for Chapter 391. I enlisted in 1966 into the United States Air Force. I served (1966-68) Air Police at F.E. Warren, Cheyenne Wyoming, 90th Strategic Missile Wing. (March 1968-March 1969) 377th Security Police at Tan Son Nhut AFB, Vietnam, and (1969-70) Security Police at Holloman AFB, 49th TAC Fighter Wing.

I graduated from CSU Sacramento with a B.A. in Criminal Justice and did postgraduate work at UC Berkeley in Computer Science. Retired Senior Systems Analyst, Pacific Bell Telephone Company.

Gene Crego

At-Large Director



Gene was born in Glendale, Calif., in 1948. Graduated from Paradise H.S. in June 1966. Attended Yuba Jr. College in Marysville, Calif., 1966-67. Attended MCRD, San Diego, July-Sept. 1967. Stationed at III MAF, H&S Co. Security/Club System from 1968-70 in Da Nang, Vietnam. Re-enlisted in June 1970 and retired in August 1989 as a Gy.Sgt. at Twenty-Nine Palms, Calif.

Moved to Kingman, Ariz., in 1990 working for Flamingo Hilton Resort in Laughlin, Nev., as a Security Officer, retiring in 2005. Became active in veterans organizations in 2002. Joined VVA in 2004 and At-Large Dir. for Arizona State Council. In 2006-08 became Charter Member and President of VVA Chapter 975. From 2008-10, Committee Chair, Veterans Expo and Leadership of Mohave Co.

In 2010 moved to Mesa, Ariz. Became a member and BOD for Unified Arizona Veterans, 2011-present, which has 59 member organizations. From 2010-12 1st VP for VVA AZ SC. 2012-Present VVA AZ SC President. Presently, CSCP Legislative Chair. Serve on the Veterans Benefit, Veterans Health, Women Veterans, and Govt. Affairs Committees. 2011-Present visit Arizona State Capitol for Veteran Bills & Issues. Since 2013 visited Capitol Hill on the issues six times. Visited the VA Headquarters on veteran issues. Awards received: VVA National Achievement Medal, Inducted into the Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame, and Arizona Luke Award.

Have built excellent working relations with Arizona VA Campuses, State Legislature, and Arizona U.S. Congress members and staff. If elected I will use my knowledge and experience to continue the fight for veterans rights.

Richard DeLong

At-Large Director



Richard joined VVA in 1988 and has been actively serving his fellow veterans since. Richard grew up in Harrisonville, Missouri, and joined the Army in 1965. He served two tours in Vietnam from 1966 to 1968 with the Army Security Agency and received an honorable discharge in 1969. Richard worked for AT&T in Texas and then Bell South in Louisiana for thirty-one years before retiring in 2002.

Richard has served at all levels of the VVA. He was Sergeant-at-Arms, Treasurer, and President of Chapter 141 in Lafayette, La. In 1998 he was elected President of the Louisiana State Council and remained in this position until 2006. In 2002 he was elected chair of the Conference of State Council Presidents and became a member of the VVA National Board of Directors serving in this position until 2004. He has been a member of the Veterans Advisory Committee for the VA Clinic in Jennings, La., and the VA hospital in Alexandria, La. In 2003 he was appointed to the Board of Directors of the VVAF.

Richard has served as an At-Large Director on the National Board for the last ten years. He is a member of the POW/MIA Committee and served as Chair of the committee from 2012 until 2017. Richard currently serves on the Membership, Veterans Against Drugs, National Awards Committees, and is a member of the National Disciplinary Committee. Richard's forty-plus years of experience at every level of VVA have made him an asset to the organization.

Gumersindo Gomez

At-Large Director



Since joining the National Board in October 2017 and becoming the Chair of the Minority Affairs Committee, many positive things have emerged. First, we assured the Board and the State Council Presidents that this committee was going to be re-energized.

After making my first presentation to the Board, I discovered we were supported and respected by many members of the Board and the State Councils. At present we are communicating and determined as we tackle the issues of minority veterans.

Our workshop at the Leadership & Education Conference in Palm Springs drew forty participants, including our National President and Vice-President. All participated in an exercise on how to recruit minority veterans.

Puerto Rico has been an area of interest to VVA after Hurricane Maria devastated the island. Under the direction of President John Rowan, I traveled to Puerto Rico in November to take part in a roundtable meeting focused on veterans and their families. The VA has created the Office of Transitional and Economic Development as a mechanism to increase veterans' access to the benefits and services to which they are entitled.

We have commenced work with Korean-American Vietnam War veterans. The ROKs were our strongest ally in Vietnam; 325,517 of them served with us during the Vietnam War. Today 2,800 of them have become U.S. citizens. They are asking for our support in being recognized as veterans of the war, able to receive services from the VA for their PTSD and Agent Orange exposure.

Dennis Howland

At-Large Director



Asking for your vote. Allow me to serve our organization.

Four decades veterans advocate, serving in positions of leadership and team member.

VVA Life Member, established Utah's Chapter 1079 and Utah State

Council. Served as Chapter President and current Utah State Council President.

2016, President Rowan appointed me Chair, VVA National Public Affairs Committee. The committee created the JROTC Cadet Medal program and the new Eagle Scout Medal; focus-VVA legacy. Serve on the VVA Government Affairs and POW/MIA Committees.

Marine nearly eight years, Vietnam in 1966 and 1967. VFW Life member. Retired federal employee. Retired from area school district.

Veterans Service: Chair, Project Development, Fundraising, and Construction of Utah's Replica Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, dedicated July 14, 2018. Member: Utah Governor's Veterans and Military Affairs Commission, County Veterans Advisory Committee. Spearheaded five pieces of legislation with a State Representative to honor Vietnam veterans. Served three years on the Utah Governor's Veterans Advisory Council. Originated Northern Utah Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home Parade.

Served on the Construction Oversight Committee for Northern Utah Veterans Home. Veterans Home Advisory Council, six years. Work with South Vietnamese Community to honor U.S. Veterans, worked with publisher/producer of book *Time To Honor* and documentary *Journey Home* for Vietnam veterans, and brought back the Veterans Parade to Northern Utah after a fifty-year absence. Past Utah VFW Commander.

Awards: Utah Governor's Veterans Service Award, Utah State Elks Citizen of the Year, Myers Veteran Service Award, England Corporation Honored Veteran, Utah Veterans Home Distinguished Veteran.

John L. Margowski

At-Large Director



John L. Margowski, a VVA Life Member since 1987, served as a Captain in the U.S. Air Force (1969-74) and was Honorably Discharged in 1985. Margowski served as a County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO) for thirty-

two years and is a founding officer and President of a non-profit Veterans Foundation. Margowski proudly served on Sen. Herb Kohl's U.S. Service Academies Screening Committee for two decades (1992-2012).

Margowski has been an active VVA chapter member, held chapter offices as Treasurer, Vice-President, President, and is a Director on VVA Chapter 425's Board of Directors.

Margowski served as Service Officer for the Wisconsin State Council (WSC) for nearly three decades (1988-2017). John was elected as the WSC Vice-President and later President (1998-2002). John has led WSC committees, is a member of TEAM Wisconsin-WSC's Toxic Exposure Committee doing town halls in Wisconsin, throughout VVA Region 6, and at a VVA Leadership Conference.

John served as VVA At-Large Director (2005-11), VVA Region 6 Director (2011-15), and presently as VVA At-Large Director (since 2017). John's knowledge and experience has been beneficial working on VVA Committees, including Veterans Benefits, National Disciplinary, and Women Veterans—and as a working member of the VVA's Strategic Planning in Working Group 1.

John's commitment extends beyond being an active member of VVA locally, in the state, and nationally; he is active and held office in the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS, and Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans Chapter 1.

Charles R. Montgomery, Jr.

At-Large Director



Life Member of Chapter 969, residing in Virginia Beach, Virginia, I first joined VVA in January 1987. I have been actively involved since that time. I have served as Director At-Large, Region 3 Director, and National Membership Committee Chair. I served as the Chair of the Con-

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS, AT-LARGE

ference of State Council Presidents for six terms and have served as the State Council President of Virginia since 1995. I also served two terms with the Vietnam Veterans Assistance Fund. I feel I have a lot of knowledge and enthusiasm to offer our organization and can best serve you by having your voice at the National table. I have devoted much of my time and energy at all levels to this organization. We have many more important issues of concern. I am a very devoted and committed individual and want to do the best I can for our organization.

I proudly served in the U.S. Army with the 173d Airborne Brigade in Vietnam from 1969-70. I finished my military service with the 82nd Airborne Division from 1970-71. Since that time I have retired from the City of Norfolk with forty years of service. I am happily married to my wife Nancy.

I promise to continue to serve you as diligently as I have in past years. Let's build a strong organization together as a team. There is one reflection I have from one of our past Presidents: Be true to yourself and be true to the ones you serve.

Ed Oller

At-Large Director



I first realized that VVA existed in 2010, which is the first year I started going to the VAMC (due to my wife's encouragement). I kept insisting that I wasn't eligible for care—I wasn't injured during my tour of duty. I didn't deserve to go to the VAMC, let alone apply for benefits.

After several months, I listened to my wife and started the process to be seen at a VAMC and learned that my many illnesses were related to exposure to "Agent Orange." Now I needed support to file a claim—soon to be multiple claims. This led me to discover VVA and what it could do for me.

Skeptical at first, I became a member in July of 2010. I joined Chapter 242. After attending a few Chapter 242 meetings, I started to realize that I was not alone. Many of the members experienced many of the same effects of serving in Vietnam. Now VVA National, Chapter 242, and the Illinois State Council have become a big part of my extended family. The people I care about and I know, care about me.

Therefore, I no longer want to sit on the sideline. I want to be a voice, not just mine but for all of my extended family, to be heard, to preserve VVA's "Legacy"—"Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another." I will do whatever it takes to get the job done.

Felix (Pete) Peterson

At-Large Director



I am running for reelection for the position of Board of Director At-Large.

In April 1962 I was drafted, and I went on to serve enlisted tours with the 5th Special Forces Group and the Army Security Agency.

After attending Officer Candidate School at Fort Sill, Okla., I have had various officer assignments that included Battery Commander and Battalion Commander. During my career, I have had two tours of duty in Vietnam, three tours of duty in Germany, a tour of duty in Korea, and numerous tours state-side and special assignments. My military education includes the Command and General Staff College and the Army War College. After 31 years of military service, I retired at the rank of Colonel.

My civilian education includes a B.S. in Business Management from the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma and an M.A. in Human Relations from the University of Oklahoma with post-graduate work at the University of Oklahoma. I have served as the Program Administrator for the Agent Orange Class Assistance Program for the State of Oklahoma, and the Director of Veterans Family Services where I still serve now.

Nationally, I have served as the Committee Chairman for the 2012 Leadership Conference and I am currently serving as the Chairman of the Government Affairs Committee, Chairman of the State of Oklahoma Veterans Council and the Chief Service Officer for the State of Oklahoma. I serve on the Minority Affairs Committee, the Convention Committee and the Veterans Benefit Committee.

I am a life member of VVA.

Dave Simmons

At-Large Director



It has been a privilege to serve on the VVA National Board of Directors for the past four years, and I am asking the membership to allow me one more term as an At-Large Board Member.

As a combat veteran,

I served in the Army in Vietnam from 1969-70, first with the 196th Light Infantry Brigade in a Mortar & Recon Platoon, and I was later assigned to the 71st Helicopter Company.

One of my most recent and rewarding experiences has been to help the National United Mine Workers of America to establish a program within their national union organization that guides their membership with information on the benefits available for their veteran members.

I have spent my time and energy working for veterans and their families. While I belong to numerous veterans organizations and continue to work with my local and state Veterans Assistance Programs as the seven-term President of the West Virginia State Council of VVA, I have devoted the bulk of my time to VVA.

I have served as the National Chairman of the Veterans Against Drugs Committee for the past sixteen years, and I have also served as a member of the Minority Affairs, Veterans Incarcerated, and Government Affairs Committees.

Dan Stenvold

At-Large Director



I'm Dan Stenvold and I'm asking for your vote again as a Director At-Large in the best veterans service organization in the world!

I served three tours in Vietnam in 1969, 1970, and 1971 as an artilleryman in the 2/35th. We

were a 155mm self-propelled howitzer unit attached to the 11th Cav, the Aussies and New Zealanders out of Nui Dat and fired for anyone that needed our help. Our motto: "You yell, we shell like hell, open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week."

I have been the mayor of Park River, N.D., for the past thirteen years, working with a \$6M budget.

My duties in VVA include: State Council President of North Dakota since 1999; National Committees include Public Affairs, PTSD & Substance Abuse, and Finance; and I chair the Convention and Awards Committees. My proudest moment in VVA was accepting VVA's Commendation Medal!

I have completed thirty-seven Agent Orange Roundtables in the state of North Dakota with the help of two \$50,000 grants from our legislature. It really gave me the chance to visit with several thousand veterans and their families about how Agent Orange has affected them.

What can I do for the future of VVA? I would like to use my leadership to help guide VVA in the right path into the future! There will be some very hard decisions that will have to be made, and this will take a VERY strong board.

Kerwin B. Stone

At-Large Director



I have been practicing law in Beaumont, Texas, since 1978. My practice includes corporate law, contracts, banking, and real estate. My older son (a retired Air Force fighter pilot) flies for United Airlines; my younger son is a Methodist pastor. I am

blessed with four marvelous grandchildren. I am a Christian and an active member of my church.

I earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees in mathematics from Southern Methodist University, and entered the Air Force in 1970. I was assigned to Ko Kha AS, Thailand, for a year. I separated as a Captain in 1975 and went to law school at The University of Texas on the GI Bill.

I joined VVA as a life member in 1993. I was Treasurer of Chapter 292 for six years, and have served as its President since 2005. Following four years as Secretary and four years as Vice President, I have served as President of the Texas State Council since 2018. I have served as an At-Large Member of VVA's National Board of Directors since 2015. I am an Agent Orange victim. VVA is both a family and a passion for me.

I have formed hundreds of organizations. I have served on the Boards of many companies (both for-profit and nonprofit), and as a school board Trustee. My experience, both as a lawyer and as a proud VVA member, can help VVA face its future with confidence.

Sandie Wilson

At-Large Director



For the past fifty years, I have had the pleasure of providing health care and advocacy for my brother and sister veterans and their families. In addition to my many years of caring for soldiers on active duty, I have actively participated as a veteran to make the lives of Vietnam veterans and their families better.

On the state level I held most of the leadership roles within the state council as well as representing VVA on government commissions and task forces. Within VVA on the national level, I have been a board member and participated in numerous committees. I know VVA very well.

Now that we have matured, we can reflect on our many accomplishments. We continue to grieve for those members who were an important part of the team but are no longer with us. At times we ask how long each of us has before we are forced to join that larger chapter. We also have to ask how long each of us will be physically able to continue our efforts.

I believe now is the time for the members to decide what is to become of VVA. Our members need to set priorities, taking into consideration our age. Is it time to change our priorities and set goals and financing for what is most important in our limited time? With the majority of us retired, we have the time to work on VVA priorities but it takes us twice as long to accomplish what we could in the past. ■

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, REGIONAL

Herman "Skip" Hochreich

Region 1 Director



I joined the Army in July 1965, took basic and AIT at Ft. Dix, N.J. Afterward, I was assigned to the 86th Combat Engineer Bn. The battalion shipped to Vietnam on the U.S.S. *Gen. Weigel* in October 1966. We were

stationed in the Mekong Delta in III and IV Corps with the 1st Inf. Div. Some of our duties were working with the infantry "bustin' brush," clearing jungle with Cat dozers fit with "Rome Plows" for LZs and fire bases. My last few months I was with the 11th ACR in Tay Ninh province. I returned home in October 1967 and ETS'd from Ft. Devens, Mass., in July 1968.

Around 1982 we chartered Chapter 111 in Springfield, Mass., and attended the dedication of The Wall in D.C. Around 2004 we took over Chapter 866 in Springfield and brought it out of a long suspension and back into the VVA fold.

I served as chapter president for two terms before becoming state council president. The new accountants I hired balanced the books and the state council moved forward. Today it is in great financial shape and very active.

In 2017 I became Region 1 Director.

I created our first website for the region, vama.org and webmaster. July of 2018, we hosted the first regional conference held in several years. Plans being made now for another conference this summer.

I look forward to another term as Region 1 Director with your vote.

Ted Wilkinson

Region 2 Director



Ted Wilkinson enlisted in the U.S. Army August 1969 and was honorably discharged in 1972. He served two tours in Vietnam with the 20th Engineer Brigade and Engineer Command.

Ted's life changed dramatically last year when his charming wife of forty years passed on May 30, 2018.

Ted has served many ways in his twenty years with VVA: New York State delegate, 2002 to present; New York State Western District Director from 2006-16; New York State Membership Affairs Committee Chairman, 2008-present; Current VVA Region 2 Director representing Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania; Member of VVA National POW/MIA Committee; Member of VVA National Vet-

erans Against Drugs Committee; and Member of VVA National Membership Affairs Committee.

Some lifetime achievements are: Founder and President of New York State Wyoming County Joint Veterans Council from 2007-15; Member of Automotive Hall of Fame located in Midland, Mich.; and Member of New York State Veterans Hall of Fame

His military awards include: Good Conduct Medal; Army Commendation Medal; Two Bronze Star Medals, his second Bronze Star for Valor during the Easter Offensive in Binh Thuy; Vietnam Campaign Ribbon; Vietnam Service Ribbon with Four Campaign Stars; Expert Marksman Badge; Conspicuous Service Cross (New York State's highest award for combat valor); and New York State Council Vietnam Veterans of America Distinguished Service Award.

In memory of my loving wife Nyla. I would not be here without her.

Jack Mattingly

Region 3 Director



Serving as VVA 1st Vice President 2015, Kentucky State Council; (Life Member) VVA Kentucky State Council President 2016 to present; VVA Working Group II; Founder and President of VVA Chapter 1104, 2014-present; VVA Achievement

Medal; Congressman Andy Barr's Military Affairs Committee; Governor's Advisory Board Military Affairs; Commonwealth Ambassador; Chairman, Joint Executive Committee of Veterans Organizations; President Pro-Tem, Kentucky Veterans Hall of Fame.

Commandant, Marine Corps League Detachment 858; Marine of the Year 2016 & 2019; President, The Traveling Kentucky Vietnam Wall; Chaired The Traveling Vietnam Wall 2013; Co-Chaired The Traveling Vietnam Wall for state of Kentucky 2015; Past Commander, VFW Post 6935, 2011-14; Started two Honor Guards; member of Rolling Thunder and Patriot Guard.

Named Hometown Hero, Lexington, Kentucky, 2016; Inducted into Kentucky Veterans Hall of Fame, 2017; Having road sign or memorial for each of the 1,106 we lost in Kentucky in Vietnam installed in their county. Lecture High School students on the history of the Vietnam War and flag etiquette.

I enlisted in the Marine Corps, 1969. PFC out of Boot Camp; Communication School, Promoted L/Cpl.; Camp Lejeune, promoted Cpl., MAG-16, Marble Mountain Vietnam (70-71) Secret & Confidential Files and TAD Door Gunner; promoted Meritorious Combat promotion, Sgt/E5; Honorably Discharged at Beaufort, S.C., 1972.

Manager for IBM, Lexington, Ky.; Corporate Director of Corp. Services, H.J. Wilson, Inc.; self-employed, Mattingly Enterprises (Mattingly Realty & Auction Co., Home Inspection Group, Accu Forms and Rental Property), Concealed Carry Instructor. Degree in Drafting and Business Management.

Sara McVicker

Region 3 Director



I graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and served in the Army Nurse Corps from 1968-71, including a tour at the 71st Evacuation Hospital in Pleiku, RVN, where I was awarded a Bronze Star for Meritorious Service.

I worked for the VA for twenty-seven years, the last seven in VA Central Office.

I joined VVA in 1982, have been a delegate to all but four National Conventions, was Secretary of the Washington State Council from 1987-90, and currently am in my sixth term as Maryland State Council Secretary. I am Vice Chair of the National Finance Committee and Chair of the Budget Oversight Subcommittee and a member of the Health Care and Women Veterans Committees.

VVA will be making serious decisions about its future over the next few years. The VVA Constitution says "control and management of the Corporation and its funds and affairs shall be vested in the Board of Directors." My experience in VVA and veterans issues will enable me to be a knowledgeable participant in that process. I believe very strongly that the National Board of Directors must seek to include the State Councils and Chapters in the decisions it will be making about VVA's operations and activities.

If re-elected, I will listen to your concerns and I will be available to help you. Most of all, I will work in the best interests of VVA, Region 3, and its members, Chapters, and State Councils.

Spence Davis

Region 4 Director



My name is Joseph "Spence" Davis. I am seeking re-election as Region 4 Director. In 1966 I was drafted into the Army, went to Ft. Benning for Basis Training and AIT (infantry radio repairman). After leaving Ft. Ben-

ning I was sent to Biggs Field in El Paso, Texas, before being sent to Vietnam in August 1967. I was attached to HHSB, 2/4th Artillery, 9th Infantry Division in Tan An south of Saigon. Ending my army career August 1968.

I have owned the following businesses: Advanced Electronics, Davis Trucking, The Shoe Stop, and presently, Davis Farms. Retiring from Roadway Express after twenty years.

I have been Treasurer of VVA Chapter 1010, Past Treasurer of the Georgia State Council, and am presently serving my fourth term as President of the Georgia State Council. During this

time I actively served on both the Region 4 Disciplinary Committee and the National Disciplinary Committee.

I have been married to my wife, Elaine, for forty-three years. We have a son, Dr. Brett, and grandson, Kyan. Elaine and I are members of the Methodist Church.

My goal for being Region 4 Director is to assist veterans and promote the VVA. I would like for the region to work together to promote VVA programs and have conferences to provide the tools and information to be better leaders. VVA is still growing and I would like to continue to promote growth. Working together we can accomplish our goals. I am again asking for your vote and support.

John H. Riling III

Region 5 Director



My name is John H. Riling III and I'm running for the position of Region 5 Director. I joined Vietnam Veterans of America in February 1986. I am a life member of Chapter 528. I want to lead Region 5 down a proud and positive path.

I plan to visit, attend, and maybe even participate in state council meetings of each state. I will proudly represent Region 5 at all the events I attend. Good communication and transparency on all levels of VVA are vital at this stage of our organization.

I've been involved in VVA at all levels: chapter, state, and national. I'm currently in my seventh year as President of the Michigan State Council. I serve on the Veterans Benefits Committee on the National level and I'm the Director of the Michigan Service Officer Program.

As stated, I'm a VVA lifer and I want VVA's legacy to continue long after I'm called home. All the blood, sweat, and tears we've put into this great organization must not die nor be forgotten. Our legislative achievements must continue to transition into future veteran-friendly laws and regulations.

On a personal level, I'm married to my beautiful wife Debby. I have three grown children and eight grandchildren. I retired from Wayne County Community College in September 2010. I enlisted in the U.S. Army and served from July of 1968 to July of 1971. My tour of Vietnam was with 18th Military Police Brigade from August 1970 to July 1971.

Bob Grabinski

Region 6 Director

(continues)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, REGIONAL

Dennis J Andras

Region 7 Director



I'm a decorated combat veteran serving in Vietnam with the 101st Airborne Division, 2/502 Infantry as a Forward Observer and Reconnaissance Sergeant, 1969-71. Married for forty-eight years and have two sons, one of which is an Iraqi

War Veteran.

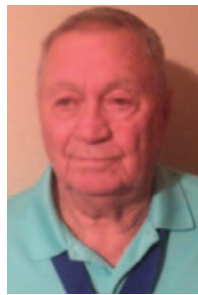
I have held these positions in VVA: Region 7 Director, Louisiana State Council President and Vice President, and Chapter President and Vice President. Also I have co-chaired two National committees: Agent Orange and Economic Opportunities. Not to mention that I have lobbied on Capitol Hill many times on behalf of veterans issues. Recently appointed by the Governor of Louisiana to the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs as a member of the Military Assistance Foundation Board as a Director.

We in VVA are at a turning point in our history as an organization at this next National Convention. We cannot afford the excuses and the mistakes of the past; we only have one chance at getting this right. We need someone who has the experience and the ability to carry out the will of Region 7. We need someone who will vote as directed by Region 7 delegates and State Council Presidents; we need someone who will faithfully perform the duties all the time as a Regional Director! We need someone who has business experience which I have, as a past owner of two corporations that at one time employed over seventy-five personnel, with a multimillion-dollar payroll annually.

I would appreciate your consideration and your vote.

Allen J. Manuel

Region 7 Director



Served in the U.S. Army, 1956-66. Made a tour in Korea and in Germany twice until I finished my enlistment. Went to NCO academy, and was a Staff Sergeant E-6. I was motor Sergeant for three years.

Allen is retired from working with Amoco Production offshore for twenty-four years. Joined VVA in 1992 and became very active. I serve with Chapter 632 as treasurer, vice president for finance. From 1996 to 2000 was elected La. State vice president, served as finance chairman, and as a Board Director for the foundation. I sit on the advisory board of the VA hospital in Louisiana until now. I am a member of Incarcerated Chapter 689 of Angola, La. Was elected to the National Board of Directors as Region 7 Director in 1999 until 2015. Serving on the National Finance Committee for the past fourteen years and the Incarcerated Veterans Committee. In the past sixteen years nine VVA Commendation medals were written in Region 7 and everybody did receive it. That's working for veterans.

I was awarded the VVA Achievement Medal in 2002 and in VVA 13th National Convention was awarded the Commendation Medal in 2007. Also received two Chapel of Four Chaplains awards.

I believe that my past experiences in military and in civilian life have provided me with tools for the leadership VVA.

I am married to Norma sixty-nine years, and the father of six children, Richard, Anita, Scott, Shelly, Vickie, Tonya.

Francisco F. Ivarra

Region 8 Director



Fellow Veterans.

I am seeking re-election for the position of Region 8 Director. I currently serve as President of the Washington State Council and have previously held the positions of Vice President, Washington State Council; President, Vice President, and Secretary of Chapter 102; At-Large Member, National Board of Directors; and Chair, Minority Affairs Committee. Also honored with the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs Superior Service Award, and served as Grand Marshal of the 2018 Auburn Veterans Day Parade, "Honoring Vietnam Veterans." I am a combat veteran and Purple Heart recipient who served with the Americal Division 196th Light Infantry Brigade, 3/23 Infantry, I Corps (1968-69).

In the past two years I have visited the four active states in Region 8 several times. Also, I have and will continue to make every effort to help reorganize Wyoming into a State Council. I have not missed writing a Report in *The VVA Veteran* magazine on the many success stories shared by our Region 8 membership and leadership. Region 8 is committed to effectively serving our veterans and their families, and we have not lost our focus in accomplishing these responsibilities. As the Region 8 Director, I will continue to effectively represent your interest and will not waver on my responsibilities or obligations in resolving your concerns. The leadership and membership of Region 8 will continue to serve our fellow veterans, and we stand firm by our mission and core value that: "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another."

Dick Southern

Region 9 Director



My name is Dick Southern and I am seeking re-election as the VVA Region 9 Director. I served in the Army as a Specialist 4 and a Hospital Ward Technician in B Co. 5th Medical Battalion, Support Command, 5th Infantry Division

(Mech.) from July 1966 to January 1968. I have been a member of VVA since 1996. I am a Life Member of VVA. I was elected Secretary of Chapter 391 in 1997 and still serve in that office.

I have been a California State Council delegate to the last ten VVA Conventions. I was elected to the office of the California State Council President in June of 2002 and then to Second Vice President in 2004 and still serve in that office. I have served on the VVA National Membership Affairs Committee since 2001. I have been a member of the VVA National Veterans Benefits Committee since 2005. I was elected Region 9 Director in 2007.

I will continue to bring input from Region 9 to the National Board of Directors and let the members in Region 9 have a more active role in the decisions that are made. I strongly believe that "Communication is the key."

I ask for your vote and promise that you will continue to have an advocate to the many issues of Vietnam Veterans of America with me as your Region 9 Director.

Thank you. ■

CANDIDATE SUBMISSIONS: The Elections Committee asked candidates to submit biographical statements with photos to *The VVA Veteran*. The rules were simple: 500 words for officers; 250 words for Board of Directors candidates. The statements are printed as is, without editorial review.

