



Vietnam Veterans Of America *Chapter One*

www.vvachapter1.com

MARCH 2010



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING March 10, 2010

Five members attended.

Members approved the September 2009 and January 2010 minutes as printed in the newsletter.

Treasurer Dave Mathis reported \$23,005.47 in the chapter's accounts. The report was approved without dissent.

The chapter has a new member, Carl Baldwin of Santa Fe, New Mexico. New life members include Dave Mathis, the chapter treasurer; and Jack Crowther, chapter secretary. Of 136 regular members, 91 are life members, two-thirds of the membership. There are also two associate members.

President Andy Megrath reported that the VVA State Council will meet Saturday, April 10, at the Chapter 1 headquarters in Rutland at 10 a.m. All members are welcome to attend.

The chapter will contribute \$80 to the annual picnic at the Vermont Veterans Home in Bennington. It will be held on June 26. Chapter members are invited to attend and help to serve a traditional summer cookout to the residents.

Jack Crowther made a motion to allow President Andy Megrath to use chapter funds to pay for the mailing of a letter soliciting the 87 at-large VVA members in Vermont to join one of Vermont's seven chapters. Chapter membership would allow the chapters to benefit from a portion of the at-large members' annual dues, which now go entirely to the national organization. The VVA State Council will reimburse the chapter for the expense. Approved without dissent.

Andy reported on the State Council meeting Jan. 30 as follows:

- ◆ The account that supports the work of the service representatives sponsored by VVA showed a balance of \$9,803.97 as of January. The reps are volunteers, but are reimbursed for expenses.
- ◆ The State Council itself has just over \$1,100 in its accounts.
- ◆ A.J. Paige reported that the efforts of the service reps brought in \$3,009,018 in benefits to veterans in the state in 2009. So far in fiscal 2010, which started last fall, the reps had won \$927,786 in benefits for

vets. Over the last eight years, the total benefits secured for veterans was \$14,968,938.

◆ Statewide, VVA has 599 members, making Chapter 1 the largest.

Andy reported on his trip with Christina Morgan, director of the Dodge House for homeless veterans in Rutland, to Montpelier on Jan. 28 to speak with legislators on veterans issues. Andy is also on the Dodge House board. According to Andy it “turned out to be a pretty good day” and included a briefing from Vermont Adjutant Gen. Michael Dubie on the mission of the Vermont National Guard in Afghanistan.

Dick Doyle reported that the Veterans Administration will now “automate” agent orange claims for compensation. It’s uncertain what precisely “automate” means in this case, but it presumably would speed action on claims, once implemented. Information on the change can be found on the VA website. Type in <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/> to learn more. The VA recognizes 15 illnesses linked to agent orange.

The Brain Injury Association of Vermont has assured the chapter that if we renewed our \$350 contribution, they would insure the money would go to scholarships allowing vets to attend their annual convention. Based on that, Jack Crowther moved to donate another \$350 to the organization. Seconded by Dick Doyle. Approved without dissent. Traumatic brain injury, or TBI, is a major injury of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In January, the chapter donated \$300 to the local chapter of the Disabled American Veterans for the purchase of a new van to transport vets to the Veterans Administration Medical Center in White River Junction. We had offered to donate more, depending on the need. Jim Babinski, adjutant-treasurer of the local chapter, reported that the local DAV chapter has to raise \$14,100 as its share for the van. The current van has nearly 90,000 miles on it. Andy will contact Dennis Clark of the local DAV to get a more specific idea of the funds the chapter needs to meet its goal. The local van is one of 16 the DAV operates in the state. In 2009, the vans covered 336,017 miles and transported 5,497 vets.

Jack Crowther reported on his idea to invite Mark Skakel, who teaches forestry and natural resources at the Stafford Technical Center in Rutland, to the meeting. Mark and his students work on community projects, an example being the CVPS solar energy array along Route 7 near the CVPS service center. The purpose of the invitation would be to see if Mark and his students might assist with maintenance of the Rutland County Vietnam War Memorial in Rutland’s Main Street Park. The chapter and Rutland Garden Club have been responsible for maintaining the memorial on city property since its dedication in 2000, but both groups would welcome assistance. Jack said he misdirected his email to Mark and had to resend it just recently, so hadn’t heard back. On March 11, Mark Skakel replied to Jack in part as follows:

“I would be happy to have my students come in the spring to rake, mulch and plant some annuals and in the fall do clean up and possibly plant some mums and other fall plants . . .,” suggesting that would probably be the extent of the help he could offer. Jack will keep pursuing this with Valerie Cleary of the Garden Club.

Chapter life member David Gilman wanted to share the following internet link to the "Virtual Wall," which provides a biography and other information on those killed in the Vietnam War. You can locate people by entering their last names, home state and city, position on the actual wall (based on date of death) or military unit. Depending on submissions, you will find a basic service record, medals awarded, tributes and reminiscences, and sometimes a picture. The link is:

<http://www.virtualwall.org/iStates.htm><

Our next meeting, in April is our annual meeting with election of officers. Jack Crowther moved that the present officers and board be nominated to continue in office. Seconded by Dick Doyle and approved. Remember: **These are just nominations! Anyone interested in serving in a leadership position should contact President Andy Megrath at 802-775-1745 or Jack Crowther at 802-775-1182.** Present officers and board are: Andy Megrath, president; Larry Young, vice president; Dave Mathis, treasurer; Jack Crowther, secretary; and Dick Doyle, Bill Whitney, Maurice Burden, Mike Divoll and Bub Crosby, board members.

Submitted by Jack Crowther, Secretary

**THE NEXT CHAPTER MEETING WILL BE WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14, 2010 AT 6 P.M.
AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND, VT.**