



Vietnam Veterans Of America *Chapter One*

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SEPTEMBER 2011



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING Sept. 14, 2011



On June 27, the giant Patriot Flag (30 by 60 feet) visited downtown Rutland as part of its journey around the country. It was scheduled to make its way to Ground Zero in New York City on Sept. 11. Andy Megrath brought the flag over from New Hampshire and took part in the flag raising.

Seven members attended.

The minutes of the June meeting were approved as printed in the newsletter.

Treasurer Ed Wiehe reported a balance of \$23,670.15 in the chapter's two accounts. The report was approved without dissent. Ed will continue checking local credit unions to see if the chapter might earn more interest on its savings.

President Andy Megrath read a letter from member Roberto Eaton of Paraguay, a former Vermonter. Andy enlisted the help of Vermont Sen. Bernard Sanders to help Eaton's son unite with his wife at his current duty station in Hawaii.

The wife is a native of Paraguay and was having trouble getting the resident visa necessary to join her husband. She now has the visa and is with her husband and "most happy." Her husband is a two-tour veteran of the war in Iraq.

Gov. Shumlin has appointed Andy to the Governor's Veterans Advisory Council. The council has 17 members. The appointment is for two years but normally is extended if the member wishes. Andy has already attended one meeting in Randolph. He is on the Legislative Committee, which was to meet the Monday following the Chapter meeting. The council advises the governor on veterans' issues. The appointment represents yet another "hat" worn by Andy in addition to his being president of the chapter, vice president of the VVA State Council and participating in other vet-related activities. He said he hopes to speak for the interests of the common soldiers who had "boots on the ground."

Andy unveiled a prototype of a VVA State Council patch that was designed by his granddaughter and made up by Initial Ideas in Rutland. The patch features a representation for the state Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Sharon, along with colors of the Vietnam Service Medal, set in a round patch.

Andy reported on his trip to the VVA National Convention in Reno, Nev., in August. John Rowan was re-elected president, but the other three officers are new. Committee chair appointments are in the works and a cause of some controversy, according to Andy. Andy said Rowan would like to make some changes and that's caused some discontent among those who feel the current chairs have done a good job. The Board of Directors will decide the issue in October.

"When I left Reno it was 110 degrees, and I landed in Albany, it was 54," Andy noted. "So, a little bit of a temperature change."

"I was very surprised," he went on, "same way I was when I went to Washington (to VVA board meetings in 2010). It's all business, right from the go in the morning till close of business at the end of the day. There were 756 delegates from around the states."

"There was quite a discussion Friday afternoon when we went into session about where this organization's going to go," Andy continued. "There are a lot of people that are saying 'last man standing,' meaning no new members from outside the Vietnam War era. "There are people saying we should turn it over to these young guys (young veterans) and allow them to come in, and there are guys that are arguing they don't want to change the name and allow these guys to take over the organization. And there are guys that basically said, well, we are the only congressional approved organization for Vietnam veterans, and it took an act of Congress in order to get that and it would be the IRS and all the other people that would be involved in changing the name."

Andy noted there is a national organization of sons and daughters of Vietnam vets, and some felt they're the ones that the organization should be turned over to "because they would carry on with the same ideals." "It was a pretty — I won't say loud — but it was a very active discussion," Andy said. "There were pros and cons. It was a good three hours long, and they finally just cut it short because there wasn't anybody that was really for any one thing. . . . And that's basically all it was meant to be, a discussion to get people's feelings out there."

Andy noted a couple of vet-related housing projects, one of which will provide homes near VA medical centers to house the family members of vets receiving treatment. Another project is sponsored by the Home Depot Foundation to commemorate the 10th anniversary of 9/11. From then until Veterans Day (Nov. 11) of this year, Home Depot is offering to conduct work projects on military members' personal homes. Home Depot will provide the materials, labor and contractors. Projects will include repairs and installations. Priorities are: 1) Wounded warriors returning from combat and disabled veterans, 2) Members returning from deployment, 3) Members with special needs (either themselves or family members), and 4) All others. Further details can be found at the foundation's website: <http://homedepotfoundation.org/>.

Also available free for vets is the AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) Driver Safety Program, during the month of November. Spouses and surviving spouses are eligible to attend. The program is a four-hour classroom refresher course designed to help older drivers keep up to date on safe driving strategies. Several insurance companies offer a discount to graduates. Anyone interested can register using the program's online course locator at www.aarp.org/findacourse. Dave Peters, Vermont state coordinator for the program, is happy to answer questions at 802-888-3394 or davep@pwshift.com.

The computer that Andy has been using for VVA business is “past the point of usefulness,” despite a previous enhancement to it. After a brief discussion, Dave Mathis moved to allot up to \$1,500 for a new computer and necessary software. Seconded by Jack Crowther. Passed unanimously.

The old computer is available to any chapter member who can use it. Get in touch with Andy at 802-775-1745 or email vthogman [AT symbol] comcast.net, if interested.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack Crowther, Secretary

**THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE WEDNESDAY, OCT. 12, AT 6 P.M.
AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND, VT.**