



Western New York Chapter 77 Tonawanda, New York

Mail Call:

April - June 2020

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Mike Walker

As of the writing of my notes I don't have a list of members running for officers and the board. The elections will be held on April 16 at the regular meeting. So make sure you show up and vote for the member you think will do the best job for the chapter and keep the values of the national organization.

A question has come up as to what was decided at the convention as far as the future of Vietnam Veterans of America. The only thing that was decided was the officers and the board of directors are going to look in to what it will take to allow us to bring in the younger veterans and not change anything till it is voted on by the members that are at the next convention and then things will start to change. If the vote is for the change it will take about ten years to implement them. I'm hopping at the next state meeting we will get some information. If I get information I will pass it on to all. There is an article here to try to explain what is going on. This article was put out by the Council of State Presidents.

With the Corona Virus around please stay safe.

MEMBERSHIP

We saw a spike in membership last month, we stand at 676 members. I sent out transfer notices to 46 At-Large members and we managed to get 8 transfers. Please continue to promote Chapter 77 as we are still the largest in NY.

AGENT ORANGE

By Bill Paton

VA officials said they will not make a decision on new Agent Orange conditions until the results of two VA studies are finalized. (Jon C Lackey/The Salisbury Post via AP)

Under pressure from Congress to determine whether to add four diseases to the list of Agent Orange-related conditions, Department of Veterans Affairs officials have disputed a scientific panel's findings and said they will wait for additional research to conclude before making what could be a \$15.2 billion decision.

In a report sent to the House and Senate Veterans Affairs committees on Monday, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said VA experts "noted significant concerns and limitations" with several National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, or NASEM, reports concluding that there is suggestive or sufficient evidence linking development of bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, Parkinson's-like tremors and hypertension to exposure to herbicides for defoliation in the Vietnam War.

According to Wilkie, NASEM did not identify any "definitive causal links" between Agent Orange and the diseases, and at least two — hypertension and bladder cancer — have other risk factors besides herbicide exposure, such as age, diet and tobacco use, that can contribute to their development.

VVA CHAPTER 77 LEADERSHIP

(Terms of office are from April 2018 to April 2020)

OFFICERS

President	Mike Walker	693-4479
1st Vice President	Ed Bodine	693-4479
2nd Vice President	Tom Konopka	693-4479
Secretary	Joe Rajnisz	693-4479
Treasurer	Paul Pietrowski	693-4479
Service Officer	Dee Garcia NYS Council	

DIRECTORS

Dan Brady	693-4479	Dennis Jorden	693-4479
Peter Divergillo	693-4479	Dale Zdrojewski	693-4479
John Heffernan	693-4479	Bill Paton	693-4479
Lee Chase	693-4479	Joe Pasek	693-4479
Tom Thompson	693-4479	Tim Huges	693-4479

SPECIAL DUTIES

NY State VVA	Ed Bodine	Bill Paton
Council Delegates	Paul Pietrowski (Alternate)	Tom Konopka (Alternate)
Newsletter Editor	Mike Walker	

STANDING COMMITTEES

Agent Orange / Veterans Affairs	Joe Pasek	693-4479
	Bill Paton	
Color Guard	Paul Pietrowski	693-4479
Community Affairs	Paul Pietrowski	693-4479
Constitution Committee	Lee Chase	693-4479
Scholarship	John Heffernan	693-4479
Employment Training & Business Training	Tom Konopka	694-0857
Golf Tournament	Al Schreier	694-3441
Government Affairs	Al Brusetti	693-4479
Web Master	Mike Walker	693-4479
Membership	Mike Walker	693-4479
	Paul Pietrowski	693-4479
Museum Curator	Paul Pietrowski	693-4479
POW/MIA Affairs	Paul Pietrowski	693-4479
PTSD		
Public Affairs	Patrick Welch	693-4479
Nominating Committee		
Veterans Benefits	Tom Konopka	693-4479
VA Hospital Reps.	Tom Konopka	693-4479
	Ed Bodine	693-4479

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL 4

APRIL FOOLS DANCE, SIKORA POST 7-11PM
ADVANCE TICKETS 12.00 15.00 AT THE
DOOR CRASH CADILLAC **CANCELED**

APRIL 16

BOD MEETING 6PM, MEMBERSHIP
MEETING 7PM, PIZZA AFTER THE MEETING

MAY 21

BOD MEETING 6PM, MEMBERSHIP
MEETING 7PM, PIZZA AFTER THE MEETING

MAY 24

TONAWANDA VETS COUNCIL SERVICE
ON THE RENNISANCE BRIDGE 12 NOON,
PARADE AT 2PM IN N.TONAWANDA

MAY 25

VVA77 MEMORIAL DAY SERVICE, VIETNAM
MEMORIAL BUFFALO NAVAL PARK 12
NOON

JUNE 13

STREET DANCE, YOUNG ST TONAWANDA,
CHAPTER SELLING HOTDOGS, MORE INFO
TO FOLLOW

JUNE 18

BOD MEETING 6PM, MEMBERSHIP
MEETING 7PM, PIZZA AFTER THE MEETING
JUNE 20, FILL THE HELMET FUND RAISER
WITH POST 264

JULY 5

VVA AND POST 264 CAR SHOW, NEW DATE,
NIAWANDA PARK ,TONAWANDA 9AM-4PM

JULY 19-26

CANAL FEST, CHAPTER TENT ON THE
BRIDGE, CANAL FEST PARADE JULY 21

**NO CHAPTER MEETING IN JULY AND
AUGUST**

AUGUST 22

CHAPTER GOLF OUTING , 9 HOLES AT
SHAWNEE GOLF COURSE 60.00 PER PERSON
MORE INFO LATER

CONTACTS FOR VETS

E-Benefits Portal Site

<https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits-portal/ebenefits.portal>

Enrollment/Eligibility

<http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility>

Health Resource Center

1-877-222-8387 (VETS)

OEF / OIF

<http://www.oefoif.va.gov>

Women Veterans

<http://www.va.gov/womenvet>
Benefits Line: 1-855-829-6636

Dental Care

http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/resources/publications/IB10-442_dental_benefits_for_veterans_2_14.pdf

Copays

<http://www1.va.gov/CBO/brochures.asp>

Health Resource Center

1-877-222-8387

Suicide Prevention Hotline

1-800-273-8255 (TALK)

Prosthetics

<http://www.prosthetics.va.gov>

My HealtheVet

<http://www.myhealth.va.gov>

Homeless Veterans Hotline

1-877-424-3838



SNOWFLAKE BALL

The Snowflake Ball is a dance sponsored by N.Tonawanda Mayor Art Pappas and his wife Linda. Every year they choose a non-profit organization to raise money for and this year they chose Chapter 77. It was held on February 15th at the Knights of Columbus. 109 people attended and had a great time. Thanks to all who attended and the sponsors. We received \$7500.00 from the dance to help us with the programs our chapter is involved in.



Frank and Joyce Gubala

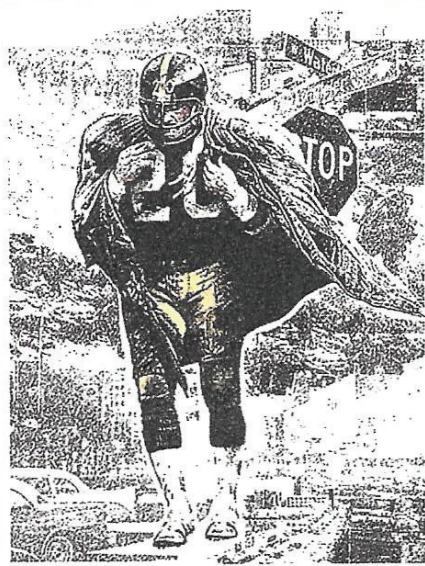


Tom and Char Konopka, Marsh and Mary Wood



John Grobe and wife, Joe Rajnaisz, Ed Bodine and Mary Lynn





THE PLAY

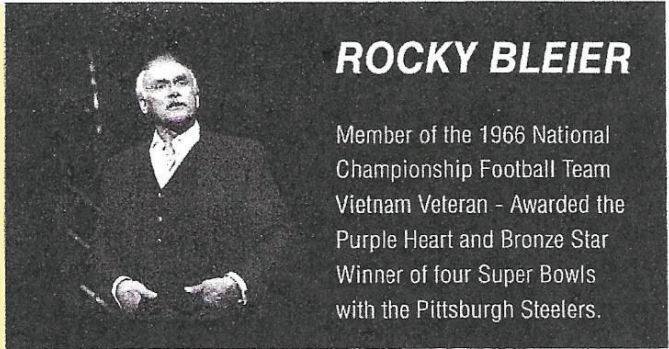
WITH ROCKY BLEIER

Opus 3 Artists Production
www.facebook.com/rockybleier

August 8, 2020
7:00 P.M.

**Riviera Theatre &
Performing Arts Center**

67 Webster St, North Tonawanda
riveratheatre.org
716-692-2413



ROCKY BLEIER

Member of the 1966 National
Championship Football Team
Vietnam Veteran - Awarded the
Purple Heart and Bronze Star
Winner of four Super Bowls
with the Pittsburgh Steelers.

THE PLAY

Born of proud parents, given the name Rocky by the customers in his Dad's tavern, the oldest of four, Rocky Bleier excelled in sports early and was successively team captain of his high school football, basketball, and track teams. He was a three-time All Conference, two-time All State & Parade Magazine High School All-American. He is a National College Football Championship winner and eventually captained his Notre Dame football team. A member of The Great 68 Class of ND he was drafted by the Pittsburgh Steelers and at the close of his rookie year was promptly drafted into the US Army.

Sent to Vietnam in May 1969 he was assigned to the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. In August, in a firefight in Heip Duc, Rocky was shot in his left thigh and then his right leg and foot were severely torn up by an enemy grenade. Awarded a Bronze Star and Purple Heart, he was told he'd never play football again. But his grit told him otherwise. Several surgeries later and after letters of encouragement from Steeler's owner Art Rooney, he returned to football and played in four Super Bowl Championships.

He retired after the 1980 season with an NFL career of 3,865 rushing yards, 136 receptions for 1,294 yards, and 25 touchdowns. He has gone on to become a successful businessman and is married with four children. **The Play** is his story, as he tells it. It is a story of strength, perseverance, and just plain guts and the smarts to make it work!



Vietnam Veterans of America
Niagara County CHAPTER #268



Chapter 268 is dedicating "The Play" to the 80 veterans from Niagara County, who made the ultimate sacrifice during their service and will give all WNY Veterans and others an opportunity to hear Rocky's story first hand.

In order to bring this Broadway-quality show to the Riviera, we need the support of our community. Please take the time now to make your pledge.

Very Truly Yours,

John Shepard, Chapter President

Net proceeds benefit:

NIAGARA
HOSPICE &

Niagara County Veteran Mentors

Yes - I would like to make a gift to bring Rocky Bleier to Western New York

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Enclosed is my gift of:

☐ \$2500 ☐ \$100
☐ \$500 ☐ Other _____

Chapter 268 is a 501(c)(19) not for profit organization.

Kindly mail check payable to: Vietnam Veterans Chapter 268 and mail to:
Vietnam Veterans of America, P.O. Box 585, Lockport, NY 14095

Program Sponsor Only:

☐ 1/2 Page Ad: \$50 ☐ Full Page Ad: \$100

Please Include Photo Ready Copy

UNDERSTANDING RESOLUTION GA 21

State Council President's meeting

From the CSCP - Resolution GA-21; What it Isn't.

At the Conference of State Council (CSCP) President's meeting in January 2020 there was considerable discussion among the State Council Presidents regarding Resolution GA-21 "Changing the Name of Vietnam Veterans of America." Several State Council Presidents reported they had received questions from their members wondering if changing the name of the Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. to something that doesn't include Vietnam Veterans, and then opening the membership to younger veterans was a "done deal", and some members expressed concern that a final decision may have already been made.

Resolution GA-21 was a topic of discussion among the State Council Presidents and there was considerable difference of opinion and misunderstanding regarding the purpose and status of the Resolution. In response, the Chair of the CSCP determined it would be beneficial to publish articles in The VVA Veteran to explain to the membership what the Resolution is, and what it isn't.

This is the first of two articles which will address "GA-21; What it isn't." An article in the next issue of The VVA Veteran will address "GA-21; What it is." It is not the intention of the CSCP to influence the membership to either support or oppose Resolution GA-21, but rather to provide factual information so members can use that information to form their own factually based decisions.

Resolution GA-21 -- Changing the Name of Vietnam Veterans of America, reads, "Resolved, That: Require VVA's Officers and Board of Directors to investigate the requirements to change the name of Vietnam Veterans of America to a name that would entice Post-Vietnam era veterans to join the renamed organization and then open up membership to these newer veterans. The proposed changes would be presented to the delegates at the 2021 Convention for ratification".

Resolution GA-21 simply requires VVA's Officers and Board of Directors to INVESTIGATE the requirements to change the name of the VVA to something that would entice Post-Vietnam veterans to join the

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WHITE HOUSE RESPONSIBLE FOR DELAYED DECISION ON NEW AGENT ORANGE DISEASES, DOCUMENTS SHOW

Internal documents reveal the disagreements within the Trump administration over adding new Agent Orange-connected diseases.

By Patricia Kime

Also, Wilkie said, members of the NASEM panel, in drawing their conclusions, relied heavily on studies of Army Chemical Corps members "with known high occupational exposure" that don't necessarily reflect the experience of most U.S. troops in Vietnam.

Given the concerns and the cost, which according to VA could run between \$11.2 billion and \$15.2 billion, depending on interpretations of a court ruling, VA is waiting for the results of its own studies, expected later this year, to announce any decision, the report says.

The soonest the secretary would be able to consider adding any new presumptive conditions is in late 2020," the report states.

The VA reports in question, the Vietnam Era Health Retrospective Observational Study, or VE-HEROES, and the Vietnam Era Mortality Study, are complete but the conclusions must be analyzed and peer-reviewed as part of the decision-making process, according to the report.



organization and THEN to open up membership to younger veterans. The Resolution only directs the National Board of Directors (of which the VVA National Officers are members) is to investigate the requirements to make changes, not to actually make those changes.

Resolution GA-21 does not, and cannot, authorize changing the name of the VVA or authorize changing the requirements for membership in the VVA because both of those attributes are embedded in the VVA Constitution. The name Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc., is established in the VVA Constitution, Article I, Paragraph A, and the requirements for membership in the VVA are established in the VVA Constitution, Article I, Section 3, Paragraph A, which is open to any veteran of the military service of the United States of America, who served on active duty during the dates established by federal law for the Vietnam War.

Changing the name of the VVA and/or changing membership requirements for the VVA would require amending the VVA Constitution which can only be accomplished at a National Convention by a 2/3 affirmative vote of the delegates present.

Resolution GA-21 is not a “done deal”, but rather is the first step in investigating the requirements for

renaming the VVA and then opening membership to Post-Vietnam veterans. Resolution GA-21 does not address the benefits that would be gained by changing the name of the VVA and then opening the organization to younger members. To gain the delegate support necessary to approve those changes in the VVA Constitution the National Board of Directors must provide the membership and delegates with a well-developed plan that includes factual information that supports the benefits to be gained by changing the name of the VVA and opening membership.

The CSCP expects Resolution GA-21 and related amendments to the VVA Constitution to be hot topics in the months leading up to the 2021 VVA National Convention and encourages the VVA membership to remain actively engaged in the subject. VVA members should discuss the initiatives in Resolution GA-21 among themselves, at the Chapter level, and State Council level, and should ensure their voices are heard at the Region Director level. State Council Presidents are members of the CSCP and are expected to represent their members at CSCP meetings, and Region Directors are members of the National Board of Directors and are responsible for representing their members at National Board of Director meetings.

NEWSLETTER BOOSTER FORM

Fill out and submit with a check for \$12 payable to the chapter.

Name: _____ Branch: _____

Unit: _____ Year: _____

Vietnam Veterans of America
WNY Chapter 77
47 Main St.
Tonawanda, NY 14150
Return Service Requested

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

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Please send this application, with your dues payment and a copy of your DD-214 to: VVA Chapter 77, 47 Main St., Tonawanda, NY 14150

Name _____ Male ___ Female ___ Date of Birth _____
Address _____ e-mail address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Telephone number _____ Sponsor (optional) _____

Life Member: ___ \$50 (Only Membership Available)

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.)