



**The Veteran's Voice**  
**Newsletter**  
**June 2024**  
**Edition**



# THE VETERANS VOICE

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## VVA Calls for Swift Passage of the SERVICE Act

“Vietnam Veterans of America applauds the introduction of the SERVICE Act,” said Jack McManus, VVA National President. “This legislation will save lives as it provides law enforcement with tools and training to help respond to veterans in crisis. We have seen the “suicide by cop” scenario played out all too often. With the appropriate training, police will have tools to both recognize and de-escalate such a situation and avoid unnecessary tragedy.”

The Supporting every At-Risk Veteran In Critical Emergencies (SERVICE) Act (H.R. 3180), introduced to congress by Representatives Dale W Strong (R-AL), Lou Correa (D-CA), Maria Elvira Salazar (R-FL), and Glenn Ivey (D-MD), would establish a pilot program to allow local law-enforcement agencies to use the Department of Justice’s (DOJ)

Office of community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grants to establish dedicated “Veterans Response Teams” within departments to respond to emergency calls involving veterans in crisis.

Law enforcement officers who have a background in military service would be given preference in selections for Veterans Response Teams. Members of those teams would be available 24/7 to respond to instances of a veteran in crisis, including mental health or substance abuse situations. Following the initial response, members of the team would assist in connecting the individual with community and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) resources.

“The deployment of the proven strategy of veterans helping

**Veterans combined with a new focus on mental health or substance-abuse situations, will more effectively address veterans in crisis and those contemplating suicide,” McManus noted . “For these reasons, VVA calls for the swift passage of this legislation.**

## SURVIVORS GUILT

### A POEM

THEY SURVIVED THE WAR, YET PRAY FOR THEIR FUTURE, AND WHAT PROMISE LAY AHEAD,  
WITH HOPE AND EXCITEMENT, THEY TRY TO READJUST, STILL MOURNING THEIR HONORED  
DEAD.

TO THE SURVIVORS, LIFE SEEMS FULL OF HOPE, BUT SOMEHOW THE WAR REMAINS INSIDE,  
SOMETIMES THEY HAVE ANGER AND RAGE, BUT HOLD IT BACK, MARCHING FORWARD IN STRIDE.  
THEY MUSTER DISCIPLINE, AND CALL UPON THEIR BATTLE WISDOM, BUT IT SEEMS TO NO AVAIL,  
THEY START THINKING OF THEIR BROTHERS FALLEN, WITH A GUILT THAT IS FAR BEYOND THE  
PALE.

THEY BLAME THEMSELVES SOMEHOW, FOR WHAT COULD NOT BE CONTROLLED IN THE FOG OF  
WAR.

THEY TELL THEMSELVES STORIES, THAT IF THEY HAD ONLY DONE THINGS DIFFERENTLY, THEIR  
BROTHERS WOULD BE ALIVE TODAY,

THEY REPLAY THE MEMORIES AGAIN AND AGAIN, TRYING TO ALTER THE EVENT, IT IS THE PRICE  
ALL SURVIVORS SEEM TO PAY.

OUR SUBCONSCIOUS MINDS ARE CONSTANTLY WORKING PROBLEMS, JUST DOING WHAT THEY  
WERE DESIGNED TO DO,

THE PROOF IS WHEN IT WAKES YOU UP AT THREE IN THE MORNING, WITH THE PROBLEM  
SOLVED, THAT WAS THE DAY BEFORE, BOTHERING YOU.

TO PROTECT YOU IN THE FUTURE, THE SUBCONSCIOUS TRIES TO SOLVE THE DANGERS THAT  
YOU FACED IN THE WAR,

IT STRUGGLED ENDLESSLY, IT HAD NO CONCEPT, OF WHAT AN ENORMOUS EFFORT WAS IN  
STORE.

IT EXHAUSTS ITSELF IN THAT FEUDAL ATTEMPT, IT CAN FIND NO ANSWER AND THUS BEGINS TO  
TILT,

AS THERE WAS NO FIXABLE PROBLEM, IT TAKES ON THE BLAME, IT MUST BE OUR FAULT, AND  
LEAVES US WITH AN IRRATIONAL CASE OF SURVIVORS GUILT.

THE SURVIVORS' GUILT IS THE DEMON, THAT HIDES IN THE DARKEST CORNER, WITHIN THE  
REALM OF EMPATHIES MANY GIFTS.

IT CAN DEVASTATE OUR LIVES WITH REMORSE, SELF LOATHING, AND GRIEF,

IT CAN BE SUBLIMINAL, ELUSIVELY DESTRUCTIVE, OR OTHERWISE SABOTAGE, THE GOOD  
THINGS THAT HAPPEN IN OUR LIVES, MUCH LIKE A THIEF.

SURVIVORS GUILT CAN DESTROY FAMILIES BOTH YOUNG AND OLD,  
IT SPARES NO ONE, IN THE HOPES OF MAKING US ONCE AGAIN, WHOLE.  
OUR SUBCONSCIOUS MIND WORKS TO SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS EACH DAY,  
IT SPEAKS IN A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE, AND MUCH LIKE A DREAM, CAN LEAD US A STRAY.  
GREAT MINDS SPEAK ABOUT OUR BRAINS, AS USELESS ASSISTANTS AT TIMES,  
SURVIVORS' GUILT SURELY IS ONE SUCH A CASE, THAT LOOKING BACK SEEMS LIKE MORE OF A  
CRIME.

SURVIVORS GUILT IS SO IRRATIONAL, ITS DAMAGE IS SO PROFOUND,  
WE MUST CUT LOOSE THIS ANCHOR, AND BE SET ADRIFT, NEVER AGAIN TO BE BOUND.  
THREE RULES TO HELP US GET THERE, BELOW CAN BE FOUND,

- 1) MISTAKES ARE LIFE LESSONS, DON'T LET THEM BECOME A LIFE SENTENCE.
- 2) MOST GUILT IS IRRATIONAL, IF NOT, RULE NUMBER ONE ABOVE APPLIES.
- 3) IT IS WHAT WE DO NEXT THAT COUNTS THE MOST.

YES, IT IS WHAT WE DO NEXT THAT COUNTS THE MOST, THIS MUST BE OUR QUEST,  
PAYING IT FORWARD FOR OTHER VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES, WE MUST PLEDGE TO DO OUR  
BEST.

BOB JOHNSEY 1<sup>ST</sup> INFANTRY DIVISION

# How Old is Grandpa?

## Would You Believe

Stay with this -- the answer is at the end. It may blow you away. For some of us, this is all true.

One evening a grandson was talking to his grandfather about current events. The grandson asked his grandfather what he thought about the shootings at schools, the computer age, and just things in general. The Grandfather replied, "Well, let me think a minute. I was born before:

- Television, penicillin, polio shots, frozen foods. Xerox, contact lenses, Frisbees and the pill.
- There were no: credit cards, laser beams or ball-point pens
- Man had not invented: pantyhose, air conditioners, dishwashers, and clothes dryers. The clothes were hung out to dry in the fresh air and space travel was only in Flash Gordon books.
- Your Grandmother and I got married first and then lived together.
- Every family had a father and a mother.
- Until I was 25, I called every woman older than me, "mam". And after I turned 25, I still called policemen and every man with a title, "Sir."
- We were before gay-rights, computer-dating, dual careers, daycare centers, and group therapy.
- Our lives were governed by the Bible, good judgment, and common sense.
- We were taught to know the difference between right and wrong and to stand up and take responsibility for our actions.
- Serving your country was a privilege; living in this country was a bigger privilege.
- We thought fast food was eating half a biscuit while running to catch the school bus.
- Having a meaningful relationship meant getting along with your cousins.
- Draft dodgers were those who closed front doors as the evening breeze started.
- Time-sharing meant time the family spent together in the evenings and weekends - not purchasing condominiums.
- 120
- We never heard of FM radios, tape decks, CDs, electric typewriters, yogurt, or guys wearing earrings.

• We listened to Big Bands, Jack Benny, and the President's speeches on our radios. And I don't ever remember any kid blowing his brains out listening to Tommy Dorsey.

- If you saw anything with 'Made in Japan ' on it, it was junk!
- The term 'making out' referred to how you did on your school exam.
- Pizza Hut, McDonald's, and instant coffee were unheard of.
- We had 5 & 10-cent stores where you could actually buy things for 5 and 10 cents.
- Ice-cream cones, phone calls, rides on a streetcar, and a Pepsi were all a nickel. And if you didn't want to splurge, you could spend your nickel on enough stamps to mail 1 letter and 2 postcards.
- You could buy a new Ford Coupe for \$600, ... but who could afford one? Too bad, because gas was 11 cents a gallon.

In my day: "grass" was mowed, "coke" was a cold drink, "pot" was something your mother cooked in, "rock music" was your grandmother's lullaby, "Aids" were helpers in the Principal's office, "chip" meant a piece of wood, "hardware" was found in a hardware store and "software" wasn't even a word. And we were the last generation to actually believe that a lady needed a husband to have a baby. No wonder people call us "old and confused" and say there is a generation gap or it's from the archives. How old do you think I am? I bet you have this old man in mind

... you are in for a shock! Read on to see -- pretty scary if you think about it and pretty sad at the same time. Are you ready ????? This man would be only 70 years old today.

**GIVES YOU SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT ...  
PASS THIS ON TO THE OLD ONES, THE  
YOUNG ONES WOULDN'T BELIEVE IT!**





# President's Corner

**Hello Everyone**

**Where are the months going? Here we are in June and it seems just like a few days ago we were covered in snow.**

**Our events committee is working together to schedule events for our chapter in the coming months.**

**We had a rough start of the year but I am thankful to say our chapter is strong and we are looking forward to doing some great things.**

**I want to thank those members that stepped forward to take an officers position. This allow us to continue on.**

**We are moving forward in a very positive manner and I look forward to working with you all on many projects.**

**If you have an idea for a show please email me and we can talk about it.**

**Respectfully  
Joseph Armstrong  
President**

***From the Desk***  
***Of***  
**Conrad Letellier**  
**1st<sup>st</sup> Vice-President**

**Hello Brothers and Sisters**

**As president Joe stated we now have a full compliment of officers allowing us to move forward into the future.**

**Respectfully**  
**Conrad Letellier**  
**1<sup>st</sup> vice-president**



# **Membership Corner**

**By  
Conrad Letellier Membership Chairman**

**During the last few weeks I have been very busy sending out letters to those members that no longer attend our meetings. Basically, I asked them if they would be willing to share with me the reason that they no longer attend meetings. I also asked them what it was that (WE) the chapter can do to make it interesting for them to attend.**

**I am hoping that we do get a response as it will help to strengthen our chapter.**

**It is so very important to keep up updated on your contact information. Otherwise we can not update you on events and news important to our chapter.**

**Conrad Letellier  
Membership Chairman**

# VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

## Conrad Letellier

### How to Write a Stressor Statement (Letter) for a PTSD Claim for a Veterans Disability Compensation

Before I begin, I would like to tell you what a Stressor Statement actually is. A Stressor Statement (Letter) is a description of the stressful experiences you had in the military that led to your developing PTSD.

When filing a claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs about service-connected PTSD, you will be required to submit a variety of paperwork and documentation.

In addition to the VA forms, you should also plan on submitting a stressor statement. This statement provides a narrative of the events that led to your diagnosis with PTSD.

If your stressor is related to a personal assault, including military sexual trauma and physical attacks, you would file a VA Form 21-0781a.

Keep in mind that the VA makes the final determination in all claims cases based on the evidence and supporting documentation submitted.

If you are preparing your stressor statement, gather accurate information about dates, locations, and nature of your military service, and include statements from friends, family, doctors, and other professionals who can provide further evidence for your claim.

Ok now we know what a Stressor Statement is how do we write one?

Veterans struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can qualify for disability compensation. The VA assigns you a disability rating depending on how severe your symptoms are, which is then used to calculate the size of your monthly benefit. For example, a veteran with a 70% PTSD rating is entitled to at least \$1,716.28 in compensation every month in 2024.

After you submit your application for disability compensation due to PTSD, you'll typically receive a letter from the VA asking you to write a "stressor statement."

What you say in your stressor statement can affect how your PTSD is rated --- which, in turn, can affect the amount of compensation you'll receive.

### **WHAT SHOULD I SAY TO GET A DISABILITY FOR PTSD?**

There aren't any "magic words" you can use to automatically get, say 70% disability compensation for PTSD. You should instead focus on making sure that your stressor statement describes the traumatic events that led to you developing PTSD, as well as how your life has changed since your diagnosis.

### **PREPARE TO WRITE YOUR STRESSOR STATEMENT.**

Make sure to write your statement at a time when you have supportive people, such as a therapist or friend, available for you to call if you become overwhelmed, it's difficult to sit down and write about terrible events that you don't want to think about or remember. You should call somebody you trust before you sit down to write your PTSD statement and then after you have finished it. This can help you to feel less isolated with your memories.

It's ok to say what parts of your experiences you can't remember. Most people can't remember everything about a traumatic event because the body goes into shock and processes information in a different way than it does during non-stressful times.

### **HAVE YOUR RECORDS AVAILABLE FOR REFERENCE.**

You may wish to have your military records and personal communications at hand to help jog your memory. If you don't have your records with you, you can request a copy of your service records from the VA. The records can help you remember dates and other details of what happened.

Ask friends and family members for any letters you sent them while on active duty and check your email account for any messages you sent describing what you experienced. If you keep a diary, it can be useful to refer to your journal entries.

### **DESCRIBE THE EXPERIENCES THAT RESULTED IN PTSD.**

Take time to sit down and complete the statement at your own pace. As best you can, describe the traumatic events in the order that they happened. Say where, when, and what unit you were in when the event happened. Provide as much detail as you're able to. And describe the feelings you had about what happened.

Don't diminish the stressful experience you had and don't make it seem even more severe than it was. Just say exactly what occurred and that will be very effective.

### **DISCUSS HOW YOUR LIFE HAS CHANGED.**

Next describe what your life was like before you began military service. You can talk about what your relationship with friends and families was like, how you did in school, and whether you played sports or had a job. Then write about what happened after you returned home and describe any difficulties you've had adjusting to civilian life. Discuss problems you have with work, school, or relationships. For instance, if you're no longer interested in activities, you once enjoyed, that's important to mention.

Provide specific examples of your PTSD symptoms, such as "I had a panic attack when I heard a car backfire, I thought it was gunfire." or "I heard someone scream on TV and I ran for cover." This will be much more effective than providing clinical descriptions of any symptoms that you may have learned while undergoing mental health treatment.

### **ADDRESSING ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE.**

If you've used alcohol and drugs to cope with your PTSD symptoms, it's ok to write about that in your stressor statement. This is your chance to explain that you struggled to function in the aftermath of your stressful events, and that your alcohol or drug use began (or worsened) after the events occurred.



You can also talk about whether you are now clean and sober and how long you have been in treatment. If you still use alcohol and drugs, talk about why you do so, and how often. This can be evidence of the impact PTSD is having on your life.

### **WHO SHOULD YOU ASK TO WRITE A LETTER?**

Anybody with first-person knowledge of how your behavior has changed is a good candidate for writing a support letter. Your child could say you used to help with homework and now you sit in front of the TV drinking. Your friends could describe how you don't feel safe leaving the house, and everywhere you go you are always looking over your shoulder, on high alert. Your spouse could describe how you wake up terrified in the middle of the night from nightmares.

You can also ask for statements from co-workers, employers, clergy, or anyone else who has seen changes in you. Even someone who has only known you since you left the service can still help by describing how you appear to be affected by your post-traumatic stress disorder.

### **WHAT SHOULD YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY SAY IN THE LETTER?**

Ask your friends and family to describe what your personality was like before you entered the service and what you're like now. Maybe you used to be very outgoing and popular, but now you avoid public spaces and don't like to leave your house. Or perhaps you were easygoing and laid-back, and now you're irritable and quick to anger. Any changes they've noticed about your relationship with your spouse or children should be included as well.

Each person who writes a letter will need to describe their relationship with you, how long they have known you, and how much time you normally spend together. They should be as honest as possible and just let the facts about your behavior speak for themselves. Make sure they sign the letter and include their full name and address.

Finally, write about how you're feeling about your present life and whether any treatment you're receiving for PTSD (such as counseling or medication) is effective. If you're not currently getting treatment, explain why not. Sign your statement, add page numbers, and staple the packet together.

***Never be a Prisoner of your Past.  
It was just a lesson, not a lifer sentence  
By Walt Whitman***

***Submitted by  
Pricilla L. Miles AVVA member***

# POW MIA INFORMATION

*Conrad Letellier*

## STATUS OF THE POW/MIA ISSUE

March 1, 2024

**1,577 Americans are now listed by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) as missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War: Vietnam - 1,237; Laos - 285; Cambodia = 48; Peoples Republic of China territorial waters - 7.**

**On March 23 rd, DPAA posted the accounting for two USAF officers, listed MIA in Vietnam on April 12, 1969/ Their identities - Colonel Ernest DeSoto and Captain Frederick Hall were released on April 7, 2023.**



## History of the POW/MIA Flag

**In 1970, Lt. Commander Michael Hoff went missing in action when his plane crashed over Laos, Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. His wife, Mary Hoff, felt there was a need for the nation to have a symbol in which those who were lost to war would not be forgotten, thus becoming the pioneer of the POW/MIA flag. She read an article in the Jacksonville Florida Time Union about how Annin & Co. Helped to design and manufacture flags for newer UN member nations. Mrs. Hoff contacted Annin and their VP of Sales, Norman Rivkkes commissioned graphic designer Newt Heisley to design a flag to represent the group/**

**Newt Heisley found inspiration for designing the flag from his past experiences as a WWII pilot: "I used to fly within range of the Japanese and wondered how I would hold up if I ever got captured. When I did the design, I thought how easy it would be to forget those guys." The now familiar slogan :You are not forgotten" was born of that senti-**

ment. Heisley's son, Jeffrey, upon returning home ill from Marine training, inspired the gaunt appearance of the flag's silhouette. In addition to the slogan and silhouette, the flag also boasts a 5-point star, a watchtower with a guard on patrol, a strand of barbed wire, and a black and white wreath.

## **WHAT DOES THE POW/MIA MEAN?**

The POW/MIA flag is a reminder for Americans to never forget our Prisoners of War (POW) and those Missing in Action (MIA). Prisoners of War are individuals - whether military personnel or civilians - who are captured and imprisoned by the enemy during times of war. The status of life for those who are MIA have not yet been confirmed. According to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, over 83,00 Americans who fought in wars since World War II are still; missing.

On November 18, 1997 the 1998 Defense Authorization Act was signed into law. A section of the act required that the POW/MIA flag be flown from Military Installations, National Cemeteries, V.A. Medical Centers and many other Federal Buildings



**From The Desk of the Events Coordinator  
Jim Davis**



**NEXT CHAPTER MEETING WILL BE SUNDAY 02 June 2024.  
MEETING WILL START AT 1:30 PM 13:30 HRS.  
THERE WILL BE NOBOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING PRIOR  
TO OUR REGULAR MEETING.**

# *Membership in VVA is the Right Choice*

First I want to say "WELCOME HOME "

The goals of Vietnam Veterans of America are to promote and support the full range of issues important to Vietnam veterans. To create a new identity for this generation of veterans and to change public perception of Vietnam veterans.

VVA is a "home of our own" - a community of fellowship with people who share our experiences, needs, and hopes for the future.

Be as active as your time, talents, and interests allow. Or, simply be a proud member of VVA, knowing that your membership helps VVA work for you and your fellow Vietnam veterans.

Membership includes a subscription to our award-winning newspaper, The VVA Veteran, bringing you updates on issues and legislation affecting veterans, as well as unique articles on the people, places, and history of the Vietnam experience.

Membership is open to U.S. armed force 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.

Our chapter is working very hard to help our brothers and sisters, their families and veterans of today.

We meet once a month at the American Legion Post 26 located at 508 Elm Street Biddeford. Meetings start at 1:30 (13:30)

If you would like further information on joining our chapter please email me your mailing address at **[cwomaine@metrocast.net](mailto:cwomaine@metrocast.net)** I will send the information to you.