



Vietnam Veterans Of America Chapter One

www.vvachapter1.com
MARCH 2017



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING March 8, 2017

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors took place at the start. Directors present included President Andy Megrath, Treasurer John McLaughlin, Secretary Jack Crowther, and Joanne Reynolds.

Also present was Mickey Young, who is senior vice commander of VFW Post 648 and is joining our chapter as a member. Chapter 1 rents a room in the VFW post building at 15 Wales St..

The secretary's report was approved as printed in the newsletter.

Sculptor Don Ramey poses next to a photo of the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial. He donated his work on the marble carving, shown at the center of the memorial. Chapter 1 is hoping to contract with Ramey to replace the carving with a similar one using a better-quality stone. See discussion of the issue beginning on the other side of this page.



Treasurer John McLaughlin reported \$64,493 in the chapter's bank accounts as of the end of January. The report was unanimously approved. John noted that he had just paid VFW Post 648 \$1,200 for six months' rent, covering March 1, 2017, through August, 2017. He also reported \$601 in the Dodge House fund for replacing the furnishings at the home for homeless veterans in Rutland. Anyone wishing to contribute to the fund may send a check to VVA Chapter 1, 15 Wales St., Rutland, VT 05701. Specify that the money is for the Dodge House refurnishing fund. Also state whether or not you wish to be identified or remain anonymous.

Andy Megrath reported that he had been notified of the death of Wayne R. Gibson of Castleton, a lifetime member who passed away Aug. 7, 2016. Wayne was an Army veteran of Vietnam. Andy wrote a letter of condolence to Wayne's widow, Donna, and offered the help of the chapter, should it needed.

Andy noted he had received a \$200 donation from the family of Meghan Edwards, a Milton High School student whose video about the Vietnam War and Vietnam veterans so impressed members of Chapter 1. We viewed the video, a school project by Meghan, at a meeting in May of 2016. As part of the video, Meghan had interviewed Andy. In appreciation, Andy traveled to Milton High in December and presented Meghan with a certificate of appreciation from Chapter 1, a coin commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, a Chapter 1 patch, and a POW-MIA lapel pin.

In a letter of thanks, Meghan's mother, Deanna Edwards, said, "When she [Meghan] showed me the project I was moved to tears. I was born at the end of the Vietnam era to parents who believed in our nation and the men and women in service to that nation, values and beliefs I tried to instill in both of my daughters."

Her letter continued, "She [Meghan] told me that these items [that Andy had given her] are the most valuable, as they mean the most to her. Thank you all for honoring her with the visit and the gifts. Thank you for the sacrifices that you all made so long ago, and thank you for the ones you continue to make today. Thank you for allowing me to grow up in a safe place and in turn raise my daughters in a safe place. Thank you for having the courage to make those sacrifices, but most of all thank you for being true heroes, not only to our nation but to me and my daughters as well. With much respect, Deanna Edwards. Andy suggested that the donation from the Edwards family be contributed to the Dodge House fund, mentioned above, for refurbishing the facility for homeless veterans. Jack Crowther put that in a motion. Seconded by Joanne Reynolds. Passed unanimously.

Andy noted that Richard Reed, a former service officer for the VVA and later for the state's Office of Veterans Affairs, has joined Chapter 1, transferring from Chapter 926 in Bristol.

Andy said he would be sending out letters to legislators in support of Vermont House Bill 94, which would exempt the disability income of 100-percent-disabled veterans from the household income calculation on the Vermont state income tax return. Chapter 1 member Larry Lyman initiated the bill through Rep. Laura Sibilia of Dover. Andy said the bill is currently in the House Ways and Means Committee. Reps. Fagan and Cupoli of Rutland, Helm of Fair Haven, Gannon of Wilmington, Juskiewicz of Cambridge, Olsen of Londonderry, Strong of Albany, Tate of Mendon, Townsend of South Burlington and Yantachka of Charlotte are cosponsors.

Members can write to their representatives urging support for the measure. One part of the bill needing clarification is the following: "This act shall take effect on Jan. 1, 2018, and apply to claims filed after that date." It is unclear to us at this point which tax return the exemption would begin on or whether it is a reference to disability claims with the VA.

Andy read a letter from the Department of Vermont of the Disabled American Veterans. We had bought an ad previously in the organization's "convention booklet," a fundraising vehicle, and the DAV is seeing another contribution. Chapter 1 was supposed to get a copy of the earlier booklet but never did. A full page ad in the book is \$100 and a half-page \$50. After some discussion, Jack Crowther moved that the chapter donate \$50, provided the DAV send us last year's report and this year's booklet, when it comes out. Seconded by John McLaughlin. Passed unanimously.

Don Ramey returned for our continuing discussion about replacement of the marble sculpture that is the centerpiece of the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial. As noted in the February newsletter, the chapter is looking ahead to maintenance of the memorial once Chapter 1 ceases to exist. As the present leadership looks to retirement from their responsibilities, we are conscious that the days of the chapter won't continue forever.

While new leadership could emerge, that is not certain or likely, based on recent experience. President Andy Megrath has served 13 years in that office, Secretary Jack Crowther 18 years, and Vice President

Dave Mathis a considerable span as either treasurer or vice president. Treasurer John McLaughlin and Directors Dick Doyle, Mike Divoll and Bill Whitney have been in harness for numbers of years.

As reported earlier, the chapter has approached the City of Rutland about establishing a fiduciary trust for the maintenance of the memorial after the chapter passes from the scene. The request to the city has been well received but awaits final action pending review by the city attorney. The attorney, Charles Romeo, has now resigned. Though no particular hitches are anticipated, acceptance of the trust arrangement, including a \$10,000 initial donation from Chapter 1, must await the review by a new city attorney.

The relief carving of the soldier, lying on his back with arms crossed, is deemed one of the more fragile yet essential parts of the memorial, fragile because the original sculpture was created from a low-quality block of marble that had taken a beating over the years. The thought is that a recreation of the sculpture on a new, higher grade marble block would insure the future of the memorial for years to come. Periodic cleaning and sealing would still be required.

This scenario had been discussed and reported on at the February meeting, at which Ramey had been present. He had completed the original sculpture at no cost and was the logical choice for the new one. As Chapter 1 members may know, the sculpture was originally started by the late John Reno, who had carved a face, the outline of a helmet and some outline of the shoulders. Ramey completed the work and has continued to look out for the sculpture. He has cleaned it three or four times and sealed it twice since its installation and dedication in 2000.

Ramey has noted the problems with the current sculpture include a “large crack on the underside” and “micro cracks,” associated with the large crack, all of which pose a threat to the sculpture’s long-term survival. A broken boot has been glued back on. Ramey said the block had been “dug out of a river bed” at some point and bore the marks of an excavator.

Following the February meeting, Ramey was asked to provide a quotation for a new sculpture using a better grade of marble or granite. The Chapter 1 membership was invited to weigh in on their views of the project.

Andy Megrath said he had received one email voicing the opinion that since Rutland was historically noted for its marble and the original was of marble, the replacement should be of marble. This seems to conform with what members present for the last two meetings have felt. A granite sculpture would admittedly be more durable, and the stone would cost less initially. However, carving the granite would be costlier, and it would clash with the marble curbing around the present sculpture. The curbing bears the names of the 18 soldiers from Rutland County killed in action during the war.

Don estimated that redoing the sculpture on a new block would take four to five weeks of work “to do it really nice.” Here are the figures Don presented:

Marble: Danby “Royale” or equivalent block of stone measuring 6 feet, 6 inches long by 2 feet, 7 inches wide by 1 foot, 8 inches thick with approximately 7 inches deep relief (depth of the carving): \$6,100 for the material plus \$3,000 for the labor (at a 30 percent discount), for a total of \$9,100.

Granite: A Barre medium gray stone of the same dimensions: \$3,200 for the material plus \$4,500 for the labor (at a 30 percent discount), for a total of \$7,700.

Installation of the sculpture at the site is not included. It will probably require a crane, as the present sculpture probably weighs 3,500 to 3,800 pounds.

Don noted that the current sculpture is carved four to five inches deep, but he would plan to go six to eight inches deep in the replacement, making it more of a “figure in the round.” He noted that the current sculpture tends to pool water down between the knees, and he will try to make the new one drain well to avoid that. As well, he’s thinking of raising the head slightly.

“There have been a lot of comments about it, positive and negative,” Andy said about the existing sculpture. “A lot of the people that I’ve heard from like the idea that the fact that he is lying prone brings back that a lot of guys didn’t come home. But that’s also the negative part. They don’t like it lying down. They think it ought to be standing up, and I said, well the message doesn’t get across. There’s a lot of guys that didn’t come back.”

“I’ve heard more positive things about it than I have negative,” he added.

“It blew me away; it blew me away when I saw it,” said Joanne Reynolds, one of our directors, who served as a nurse in Vietnam.

There was some talk at the meeting of what would be done with the old sculpture when it is removed. It is quite possible that removing it from the memorial will cause it to break apart. Don Ramey suggested that if it survives the removal process, it might be possible to slice off a section of the old sculpture and preserve a thin slab of the upper half of the existing sculpture.

Jack Crowther moved that the chapter tentatively accept Don Ramey’s proposal for a recreation of the marble sculpture, subject to review and response of the membership by the April meeting. The motion included the expectation that inspection of the stone and a public relations effort coordinated with Don will be part of the process. It is understood that it will be the chapter’s responsibility to remove the old sculpture and install the new one. Don would be available to assist with that process. Motion seconded by Joanne Reynolds. Passed unanimously.

Joanne Reynolds offered to compile pictures and information of the project to create a history.

As always, members should feel free to comment or ask questions about the matter.

The final piece of business was nomination of officers for the coming year. Jack Crowther, head of the nominating committee, made a motion to continue with the present officers for another year. They are: Andy McGrath, president; Dave Mathis, vice president; John McLaughlin, treasurer; Jack Crowther, secretary; and Joanne Reynolds, Dick Doyle, Bill Whitney, George Henry, and Mike Divoll, directors.

Additional nominations can be made at the Annual Meeting April 12. Anyone interested in offering their name for nomination should be present at the meeting or contact Andy Megrath at vthogman@gmail.com, calling him at 775-1745, or writing to him at VVA Chapter 1, 15 Wales St., Rutland, VT 05701.

Jack Crowther won the \$50 drawing. The drawing is held at each meeting as an incentive for members to turn out.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, secretary

**THE CHAPTER WILL HOLD ITS ANNUAL MEETING, INCLUDING ELECTION OF OFFICERS,
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12, AT 6 P.M. AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES
AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND.
A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL PRECEDE THE REGULAR MEETING.**