



Vietnam Veterans Of America Chapter One

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NOVEMBER 2017



Rutland County Memorial Rededication Draws Veterans Day Crowd

Rededication of the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial took place on Saturday, Nov. 11, drawing a crowd of about 90 people. Highlight of the event was the formal presentation of a new sculpture of a soldier by Don Ramey of West Rutland, replacing the original, which was showing signs of deterioration.

Rutland Mayor David Allaire gave the keynote remarks. “The city of Rutland is honored to be hosting this memorial, and we salute the brave men and women who fought and served in this most terrible conflict,” the mayor stated.

Conceding that he was too young at the time of the war to understand the toll the conflict was taking on the country, the mayor noted that many veterans were horribly treated on their return. “Fortunately,” he said, “time heals, and I believe the nation has come to terms with many aspects of the Vietnam War, and now honors the men and women who sacrificed so much for their country.”



This was the scene Nov. 11 as the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial was rededicated in Main Street Park. The weather was cold but sunny. Photo - Ken Heleba

Haley Pero of Sen. Bernie Sanders’ staff read a letter from the senator, who pledged his continued efforts on behalf of veterans, to include preserving, protecting and improving the VA, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Chapter 1 President Andy Megrath provided some background on the Vietnam Veterans of American organization and Chapter 1, which was chartered in 1980 as the first VVA chapter in the nation.

Andy read the names of soldiers from Rutland County added to the Honor Roll. They are Gerald Granger, Daniel Hogan, Paul Hughes, Gary Reilly, Edward Robinson, Thomas Rondeau, Nicholas Ross, Francis Timbers, and Mark Treanor, all of Rutland; Thomas Perry Jr. of Fair Haven; Joseph Phillips and John Rogers, both of Poultney; Stanislaus Reczek of West Rutland; and Keith Wetmore of Brandon.

Andy noted that the Honor Roll initially had 126 names and has grown to 344.

Don Ramey of West Rutland, who created the marble sculpture from a block of Danby Imperial marble, spoke briefly.

Barbara Giffin, president of the Ann Story Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, gave recollections of the Vietnam era and presented pins to Vietnam veterans and their wives.

The invocation was given by the Rev. Pete Hulst of Poultney, who read the names of the 18 men from Rutland County who were killed in action.

Lausanne Allen of South Starksboro played “Ashoken Farewell” on the fiddle at the start of the service and “God Bless America,” which everyone sang at the close.

The program offered special thanks to Giancola Construction Corp., Fabian Earth Moving, Gawet Marble & Granite, Shaun and Danielle Tomasi, and Kenny Heleba, all of whom contributed to the event.

Chapter 1 offered printouts of the new Honor Roll and the other placards at the memorial, all of which were replaced for the occasion. The placards give the history of Chapter 1, the memorial, and the Vietnam War.

Chips left over from the sculpting have been collected and will be available in the future as a memento.

The new sculpture was completed in October but was moved to its home in Rutland only on Nov. 2. The crane, operated by Dick Pietryka of the Vermont Crane Service, lowered the sculpture into place. Precise placement on the plinth, the marble frame constituting the base for the sculpture, proved challenging, since the positioning had to be to within a quarter inch or less.

Ultimately the sculpture was placed on metal shims, and Don Ramey filled the gap below the stone with grout.



A crane lowers the new sculpture, carved from a 5,000-pound block of Danby Imperial marble, onto its base on Nov. 2. Assisting were (from left) Jack Crowther, John Center, Andy Megrath, Daniel Hogan, and sculptor Don Ramey. Photo - Ken Heleba



The new sculpture of the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial was installed Nov. 2. Sculptor Don Ramey (second from right) oversaw the placement. Photo - David Fretz

MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING NOV. 15, 2017

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors took place. Directors present included President Andy Megrath, Treasurer Richard Reed, and Secretary Jack Crowther. No business was conducted.

New member Jim Ficken of Rutland joined us.

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

Treasurer Richard Reed reported \$46,865 in the chapter's accounts. The donor fund for refurbishing Rutland's Dodge House for homeless veterans contains \$196. It was agreed to send the balance to the Dodge House for the intended purpose. The treasurer's report was unanimously accepted.

The Vermont State Fair sent us a thank-you note for Chapter 1's contribution of \$500 for a free day for veterans at this year's fair. The note, signed by nine representatives of the fair, noted that more than 700 vets were admitted free to the fair on the free day. The fair hopes to increase that number to more than 1,000 next year.

We received a request for funds from Gulf War Memorial Inc., based in Cumberland, Md., for a memorial to more than 8,000 veterans who died in the Gulf War, Afghanistan and Iraq. The memorial consists of black granite "pages" with the names of the deceased, and will feature a bronze battle star. The organization is privately funded.

Jack Crowther moved that Andy check out the legitimacy of the organization and report back at the next meeting. Seconded by Richard Reed. Approved without dissent.

After learning that sculptor Don Ramey, had spent around 175 hours on the new Vietnam veterans memorial, we had invited him to suggest an additional payment beyond the \$3,000 he originally quoted. While expressing some reluctance in going beyond his original quote, Don noted that were he to quote on the work actually done, it would fall in the range of \$4,000-\$4,500, allowing for a 40 percent discount. Work on the sculpture increased with the greater depth of carving than first anticipated and additional details that became part of the project as it developed. Don graciously said that any portion of the \$4,000-4,500 figure would be appreciated.

Some discussion occurred. We recognized that Don had done further work with the installation of the sculpture and repair to some minor chipping that occurred during installation. Andy Megrath felt Don had done "a super job" and he (Andy) had "heard nothing but good remarks" about the sculpture during the dedication. Andy also noted the extra detail added beyond what was in the original sculpture, including a Vietnam era "boonie hat," instead of a helmet, and more realistic boots.

Ultimately, Jack Crowther moved to add an additional \$1,500 to Don Ramey's compensation. Seconded by Jim Ficken. Agreed to without dissent.

We briefly discussed what should become of the old sculpture from the memorial. The sculpture was begun by veteran John Reno, using a low-quality stone. Don Ramey completed the sculpture, which survived nearly 20 years but was showing signs of deterioration. After removal, the original sculpture has been in Don Ramey's yard.

One option considered is to preserve a shallow slice of the sculpture, of the head and shoulders, for example. This would be much more portable and could be stored or displayed as an artifact of the

original. With that in mind, Andy Megrath will seek out a quote for sawing out a portion of the old sculpture.

Preparation of our new web site by LMW Design Inc., operated by graphic artist Laurie Musick Wright, is nearing completion. The scope of work required to remake the site has gone beyond original expectations. "She has put a lot into it," noted Andy Megrath, citing recent additions like a photo display featuring Mark Truhan, an early president of the chapter who served in both Vietnam and Iraq, and a picture of Dave Mathis and Dick Doyle, whose units were featured in books written about the Vietnam War.

Andy will ask Laurie for a further bill for her services.

Jack Crowther won the \$50 drawing among those who attended.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, secretary,

**THE CHAPTER WILL HOLD ITS NEXT MEETING WEDNESDAY, JAN. 10,
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.**

Please Note: If you have an email account, please consider receiving this newsletter by email. Doing so will save the chapter money and the time required to address and stamp newsletters. Simply notify Andy Megrath at vt hogman@gmail.com.