
Increasing Access to Veterans Services in Grant County

Presented by
Grant County
Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 358

November 10, 2011

Members Present

DAVID PRATESI-----US. NAVY 1969—1971 = RANK E-4 NAVAL SECURITY,
FORCE- NAVY SEALS
VIETNAM

PAUL MADRID-----US. ARMY 1961—1969 = RANK E-4
TRANSPORTATION
GERMANY/ VIETNAM ERA

JULIAN JACQUEZ-----US. NAVY 1965---1969 = RANK E-3 HOSPITAL
CORPMAN
VIETNAM

JOSE A. RAY, JR-----US. ARMY 1971---1972 = RANK E-4 COMBAT
INFANTRY--11 BRAVO

ARMANDO Y. AMADOR-----US. ARMY 1971---1972 = RANK E-4 COMBAT
INFANTRY—11 BRAVO

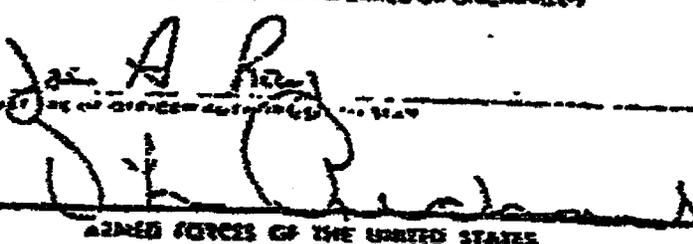
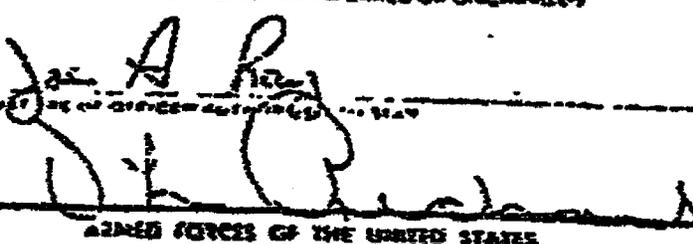
Thank you for having us here today.

This is what we're going to cover:

- History — We will briefly recount 30 years of our efforts to get more services.
- Service Needs/Gaps — We will discuss the extreme gaps in services for veterans in the Grant County service area and the opportunity for local providers to do fee-based services to fill some of the unmet needs/gaps.
- Successes
- Challenges
- Request — We need your help!

History

- We are here to let you know we have a long-standing history in our community.
- We have a large number of veterans in our area - **7,051** (per 2010 U.S. Census data)
- After returning home from Vietnam, some local vets realized that in signing, under duress, discharge papers leaving Vietnam, they inadvertently had signed a statement **WAIVING** VA Benefits. (DD214)

Ref Item 22a: EM signed a statement waiving VA Benefits on		23 Mar 72
AUTHENTICATION	31 PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES AFTER TRANSFER OR DISCHARGE (Use PO Box, Street, Apt, or PO Box) Same as Item #21	32 SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING REGISTERED OR DISCHARGED 
	33 TYPE NAME GRADE AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZING OFFICER D L RICHARD CPT CE ASST ADJUTANT	34 SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZING OFFICER 
DD FORM 214 1 APR 67	PREVIOUS EDITIONS OF THIS FORM ARE OBSOLETE EFFECTIVE 1 APR 67	ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES REPORT OF TRANSFER OR DISCHARGE

History

- Because of this, local Vietnam Veterans returned with many issues, including questions regarding accessing benefits/entitlements, and they felt very confused.
- Vietnam Veterans nationally fought to have the Korean and Vietnam conflicts defined as wars.
- It took years to resolve this issue.

Reception Station in Tacoma, WA upon return from Vietnam.



Picture taken on April 13, 1972 - arriving in Tacoma, Washington
from Vietnam.
Not one person brought a smile home.

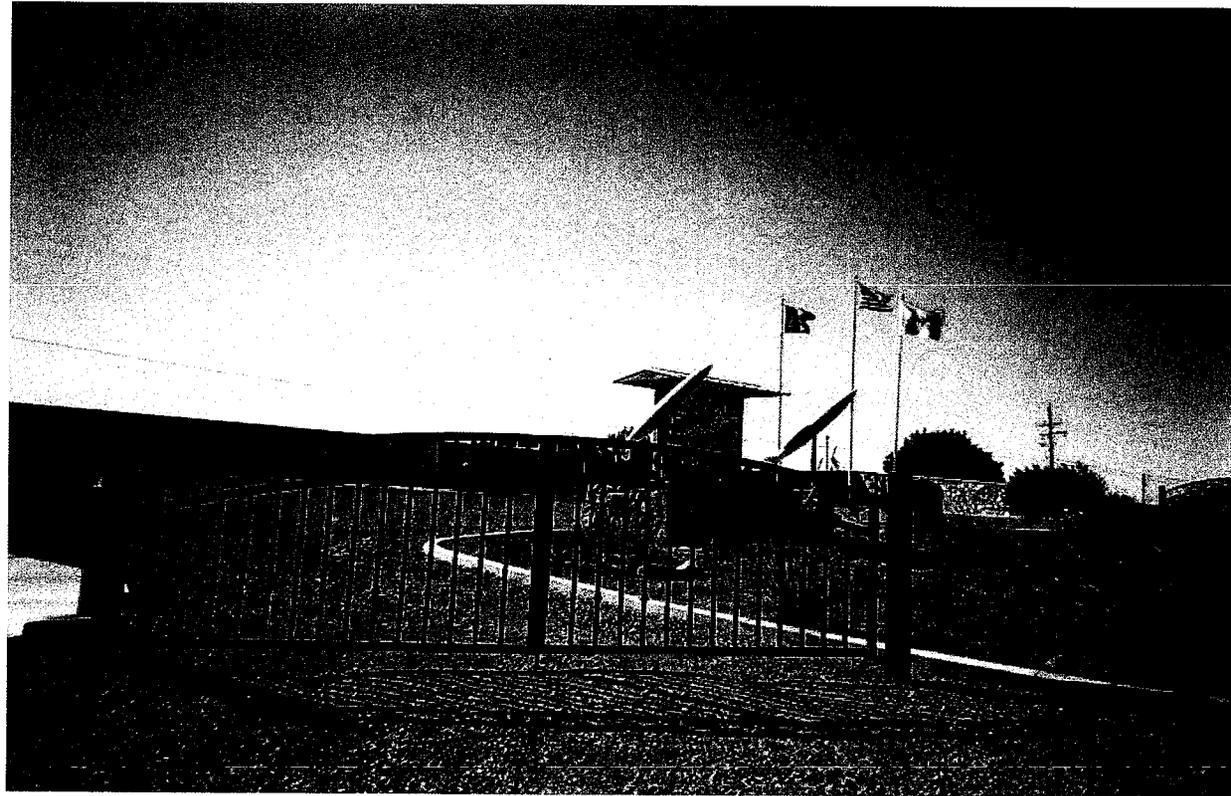
Local Vietnam Veterans Chapter 358

- In the early 1990s, Vietnam Vets created their own veterans organization locally—Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 358.



Silver City Chapter 358 Officers (left to right) Fred Holguin, Eloy Gonzales, Bill Gassert, Armando Amador, Raymond Holguin, Joe Andazola, Rudy Martinez

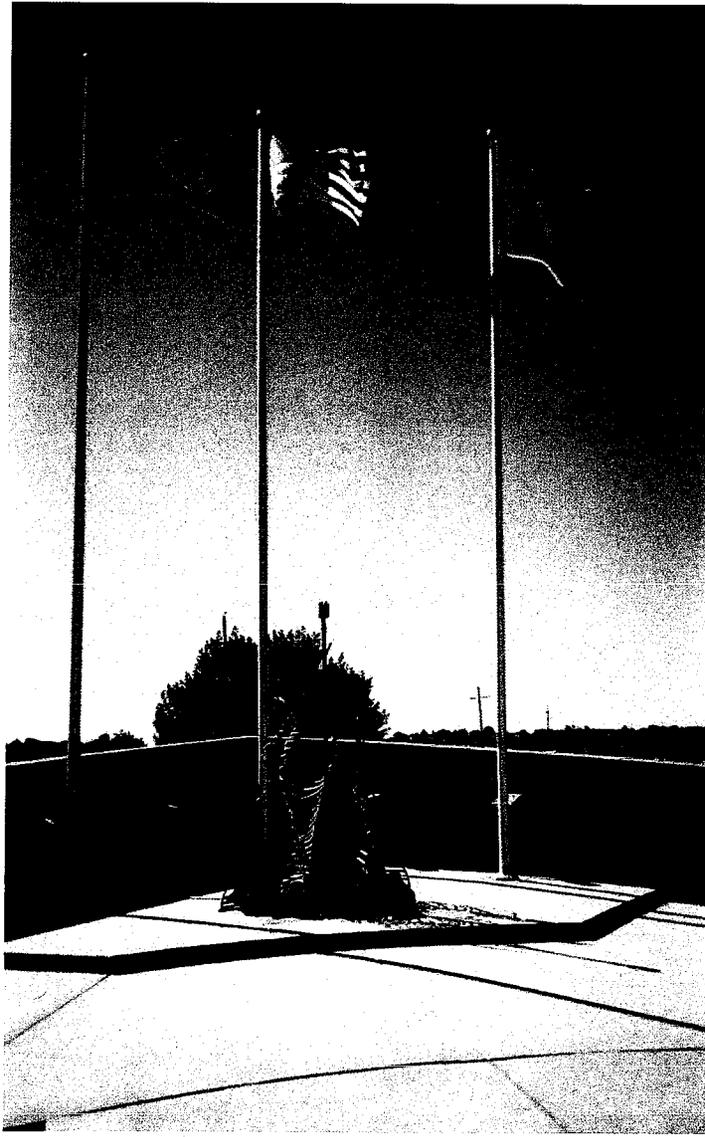
- In mid/late 1990s, Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 358 members and volunteers began work on a local “Forgotten Veterans Memorial” at Bataan Memorial Park – still a community effort for veterans in their healing process.



Forgotten Veterans' Memorial



Forgotten Veterans' Memorial



GAPS

- In mid-1980s, local veterans, realizing they were suffering from post-traumatic stress symptoms, formed a group to support one another, as **local** vet resources were scarce.
- The numbers of vets wanting to participate outgrew the capacity/capabilities of the group.
- In early 2000s, efforts began working towards developing a federal Vet Center in Grant County.
- After years of work by many and 2,500 signatures from the local area supporting this center, the vet center was placed in Las Cruces, instead of Grant County.

GAPS, cont.

- As a result, a social worker (combat vet) from Las Cruces Vet Center serves the area once a week, after local veterans negotiated for the service - about 70 participate in three different groups.
- Fee-for-service primary health care (ex: imaging, labs, care management, and physical therapy), funded by VA to private entities, is depleted within first quarter of year (per local VA Clinic personnel)
- One of our challenges is the gap in comprehensive, reliable, consistent data for planning and advocacy.

SUCCESSSES

- In an effort to address needs of regional Vietnam veterans, members of the local Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter traveled to Roswell, Carlsbad, Artesia and formed new chapters.
- In addition, a veterans' group was formed in Quemado, NM.
- After formation of new chapters in mid-2000s, New Mexico rose from being 36th in the nation in awarding disability benefits to being 1st.

CHALLENGES

- In 2005, several vigorous attempts were made by local advocates to move Silver City VA community-based outpatient Clinic to planned “new” Fort Bayard Medical Center (FBMC), without success.
- In addition, the Silver City VA community-based outpatient clinic lost staff, heading for imminent closure, and area vets rallied to save the clinic.
- Recently, community members have advocated for a women veterans’ PTSD and counseling facility at old Fort Bayard, to no avail.
- Veterans’ continuing frustration is caused by these challenges in taking care of veterans locally.

Recommendations to NM Legislative Military and Veterans Affairs Committee

- First and foremost, we want you to understand we have an unmet need toward providing veterans' benefits/entitlements to our local veteran population.
- We would like this committee to support/sponsor a memorial, which calls for a study to make recommendations and support implementation of services to fill identified gaps and make the services locally available to veterans of the Grant County service area.

Recommendations for the development of a Memorial by the NM Legislature:

- We recommend the New Mexico Department of Veteran Services in partnership with New Mexico Behavioral Health Purchasing Collaborative, VA Medical Center in Albuquerque, Las Cruces Veteran Center, Silver City Veterans Administration Clinic, Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 358, and other interested Grant County Veterans, study the unmet Behavioral Health (including PTSD and detox) needs for Grant County service area veterans.
- We recommend the New Mexico Department of Veteran Services through partnership with Silver City VA Clinic, other appropriate local community and health-care agencies, Vietnam Veterans Chapter 358 and other interested Grant County veterans, study the unmet (fee-for-service) primary health-care needs of veterans in the Grant County service area.
- We recommend that the findings of this study be reported to this committee in July 2012. Following the results of the study, we recommend an action plan be developed and implemented that will promote an increase in veteran services in the Grant County service area.