

# UPDATES

Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. Enewsletter

Volume 5 Issue 5

September/October 2010

## President's Message

On August 12, 2010, during the 6th Biennial Meeting in Orlando, Florida, the AVVA State Delegation elected national officers for the upcoming three years. Four officers and nine Regional Directors were sworn into office and we all are honored to serve our membership.

AVVA is a great National organization and now is the time to nurture the internal structure that holds us together- our membership. Our members are the very lifeblood of our existence. And, the newly elected Board of Directors is committed to developing our associates to their full potential. We are well aware that there are state and chapters that are floundering; our goal is to provide leadership and guidance for those in distress and to provide encouragement and development to those who are prospering.

Although our Policy and Procedure Manual lists the basic duties and responsibilities of our state and local leaders, there is still a need for a more detailed instruction in completing those duties. We envision a handbook for our leaders; a "bible" that will help you make the right choices and use proper procedure in holding meetings and a guide to help with the day-to-day obligations of each position.

Communication is a two-way street. This newly elected Board will be communicating to the membership, and expect to hear from our members as well. Our plan is to establish an electronic newflash to our state leaders; keeping them abreast of what is happening on the national level. In turn, this line of communication will be open for responses, opinions, and ideas.

After the elections in Orlando, questionnaires were passed out to our State Representatives and Presidents. If you have not returned those, please do so. We cannot know or appreciate your ideas without feedback. This is your organization; you are important to us. The time has come to empower this organization through our state leaders, chapter leaders, and membership. So please talk to us!

*(continued on page 2)*

Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.

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Silver Spring, MD 20910  
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### Officers

President: Nancy Switzer  
nswitzer@avva.org

Vice President: Frances Cartier  
fcartier@avva.org

Secretary: Sharon Hobbs  
shobbs@avva.org

Treasurer: Bill Williams  
bwilliams@avva.org

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During the upcoming months, AVVA will be developing a strategic three-year plan. Two important issues for me personally are (1) the transgender effects of Agent Orange. This issue is near and dear to my heart. I want to educate and assist states in organizing and presenting Town Hall Meetings in communities. Let's get this issue out to the public. These dioxins have affected our spouses, children and grandchildren; I want AVVA to be a point organization for this problem. The second issue (2) is the rapid loss of our veterans. Our families need preparation, education, and knowledge of benefits due them after the passing of a spouse. We will be exploring ways to get this message out to the survivors of veterans.

I could never express in words how much AVVA wants to enhance our relationship with VVA. We have been together for many years and we love you very much. You are our reason for existing. Please don't ever forget that. We want to work closely with them and will continue to support and promote their endeavors as never before. They are our life.

Judith Young, President of the Gold Star Mothers National Monument Foundation, was the keynote speaker of our Biennial Meeting. She is a lovely lady who is on a very important mission. She verbalized her need for legislation concerning the Gold Star Mothers Monument Act of 2009 (HR4197) and emphasized the importance of this bill in Congress. The Gold Star Monument Act was introduced in 2009. The Act authorizes a monument to be built in the District of Columbia area. She urged everyone to contact their Congressional Representative and ask that they support this bill. Our Gold Star Mothers have given the ultimate sacrifice. They deserve this respect.

In closing I want to introduce the National Board of Directors to everyone. We thank you for your support and vote of confidence:

President: Nancy Switzer (NY)  
Vice President: Frances Cartier (ME)  
Secretary: Sharon Hobbs (TN)  
Treasurer: Bill Williams (MT)  
Region 1 Director: Donna Anderson (CT)  
Region 2 Director: Cathy Keister (PA)  
Region 3 Director: Donna Crowell (NC)  
Region 4 Director: Suzanne Blohm-Weber (FL)  
Region 5 Director: Penny Meinhardt (MI)  
Region 6 Director: Pat Furno (WI)  
Region 7 Director: Kathy Andras (LA)  
Region 8 Director: Frances Rowan (OR)  
Region 9 Director: Joanna Henshaw (NV)

Together Always,  
Nancy

Photo by Suzanne Blohm-Weber



Executive Board 2010 - 2013  
Sharon Hobbs - Secretary, Nancy Switzer - President,  
Frances Cartier - Vice President,  
and Bill Williams - Treasurer.

**Scholarship Awards:**

Thomas Hall	\$1,000.00	Marrietta, Georgia
Brad Schlosser	\$500.00	Chesterfield, MO
Lauren Schlosser	\$500.00	Chesterfield, MO

**AVVA Member of the Year:**

Penny Meinhardt, Michigan



**Fellowship Award:**

Terry Clauson, Oregon

**Secretary's Message**

First of all, I want to thank the voting delegation for choosing me as the National Secretary. I am aware of the importance and dedication required to complete the tasks of this office; I will strive to live up to the expectations of the membership and earn your respect. Congratulations to all of the newly elected Board Members and to the reelected Board members as well. We are anticipating an exciting term and believe that AVVA is on the move in a positive and productive manner.

Since the election, we have setup a Newsflash bulletin email for communication to our Board, State Representatives, and Presidents. This communiqué is designed to keep everyone in sync with current happenings and events. Electronic messages are the fastest and most economical means of communicating with our membership. Expect to receive regular updates from national. Once again, thank you. I look forward to working with the AVVA Board, VVA, and with our members.

Sharon Hobbs, National Secretary

**Presidents Lifetime Achievement Award:**



Mary Ann Miller - Pennsylvania



Pat Furno - Wisconsin



Margaret Wojciechowicz - New Jersey



Mary Yeomans - Florida

Photos by Suzanne Blohm-Weber



Photo by Marilyn Rose

VVA Event Coordinator Wes Guidry helps newly elected AVVA President Nancy Switzer from pool during member gathering and information exchange.

## *Splash*

### We have a new President!

Members of AVVA initiated our newly elected National President, Nancy Switzer, on Thursday evening, August 12<sup>th</sup>, at the Rosen Centre in Orlando FL. Onlookers from around the nation watched as members carried Nancy to the outdoor pool and “gently” tossed her in.

After submersing to the bottom of the pool and resurfacing, Nancy swam around to the cheers of all who were present. Wes Guidry, VVA Event Coordinator, helped Nancy from pool.

Thanks to Nancy for being such a great sport.

The Membership Committee will be in touch with our members soon. We are expecting growth and anticipating new and greater things!

Cathy Keister,

National Membership Chair

### Treasurer's Message

What a summer it has been. Orlando was a great meeting and as always it was nice to see alot of our members who were there. Had a good time visiting with everyone and for those of you who voted for me THANKYOU!!!!. I am looking forward to the next 3 years as your Treasurer and just to remind everyone that if there is anything I can do for you or if there is anything that I can answer for you, please contact me. Let us move forward and make things happen.

Bill Williams, Treasurer

Photo by Marilyn Rose



AVVA members carry Nancy Switzer to the pool while photographer Michael Keating follows for the documentation.

# Laying of the Wreathes at Woodlawn National Cemetery

By Frances Cartier

An initial and important preliminary activity for the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) Leadership conference and Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America (AVVA) National convention held in Orlando, Florida, Tuesday, August 10, 2010 through August 14, 2010, was honoring Vietnam veterans as well as all other veterans and all branches of the service.

Wreaths were placed in honor of Vietnam Veterans at the Vietnam Memorial in the Woodlawn national Cemetery, Orlando, Florida, Tuesday morning August 10, 2010 by representatives of VVA Vinny Monitto, Grant coats, Rick Weidman and Tom Hall. Representing AVVA was Frances Cartier and representing the National VVA staff was Mokie Pratt - Porter.

While visiting the national Cemetery the group paid honor to all veterans and all five branches of the service: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air force, Coast Guard and additionally the Merchant Marines by visiting their memorials that are in this national cemetery.

The group was privileged to be afforded the opportunity to honor their brothers and sisters that have served this great country.



photo by Frances Cartier

## Vice President Message

Thank-you electing me to the position of AVVA National Vice President. I am grateful for the opportunity to over see the wishes of the membership and the trust that you have placed in me to serve this organization as we move into our next decade.

As Vice President I will support the AVVA National President, the captain of this ship by relaying instructions from AVVA membership, AKA this ships navigators to the captain and from the captain to the to the navigators. Continued communication between all AVVA members, as well as between AVVA and VVA, is vital to our success.

Additionally, I will be a source of encouragement to all veterans groups and their supporters. I will facilitate sharing resources so the voice of all veteran's and their family's are amplified and unified thus assuring that the mission and vision of the AVVA is advanced.

I look forward to hearing from you with your input and feed back.

Thank-you

To coin a phrase " Go Serve A Vet."

Frances Cartier  
AVVA National Vice President

I had the honor of presenting my late husband's square to Henry and Sheila Snyder, who displayed the Agent Orange Quilt of Tears during the AVVA Biennial Meeting in Orlando Florida on August 10-15, 2010. After many months of working together on this event with them, I finally found the courage to acknowledge the fact that Michael had died from his exposure to Agent Orange during his tour in Vietnam. I wanted his name added to the list of loved ones who have also suffered from this deadly toxin and to help spread the awareness of the generational effects of AO exposure.



Suzanne Blohm-Weber

## October is Agent Orange Awareness Month

Help spread awareness in your area, and please access the website below for help obtaining information.

## Balloon Launch

On Veterans Day - check the website for information to pass out in your area

*Don't Forget*

## Agent Orange Widows and Victims Support Network, Inc. "QUILT OF TEARS"

<http://www.agentorangequiltotears.com/>



photographs by Frances Cartier



AVVA, Poker "Walk" Run winners with the 2 best hands of poker AVVA National Treasurer Bill Williams and National VVA staff member Mokie Pratt-Porter.



Convention attendee, Ann Clark, completing over 250 loops with the hula hoop during the Poker "Walk" Run AVVA Scholarship Fundraising event

## "Poker Walk" Fundraiser

By Frances Cartier

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) membership held their bi-annual Leadership Conference and Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America (AVVA) held their Biennial Convention in Orland, Florida August 10, 2010 to August 14, 2010.

Tuesday August 08, 2010 AVVA Region IV Director Suzanne Blohm-Weber and AVVA Region I Director Frances Cartier as well as many other AVVA members volunteered their talents and time to conduct a scholarship fundraiser. The Poker "Walk" Run began at 1:30 PM. A donation enabled players to play a hand of poker for prizes. Wild cards could be "earned" by getting credit for getting a hula-hoop stay up for more than one round.

AVVA was honored that Blanch Duggins, late past VVA President George Duggin's wife, assisted with the hula-hoop portion of the festivities.

Special thanks to Elaine Simmons, Past AVVA President for the use of her hula-hoops and providing special prizes for the 2 people that completed the most rounds with the hula-hoops. All of the other prizes were donated by AVVA Florida State Association.

Ann Clark, a guest attending the convention won an electronic book reader and Debra Williams, staff of the National VVA won a digital camera for the most rounds using the hula-hoop.

## UPDATES

Sign up to receive this enewsletter by sending your email address to:

1. avvaupdates@yahoo.com
2. Membership at national
3. State Representative/President
4. Regional Director

## Join the AVVA Talklist!

Send an email to:

[southern@lodelink.com](mailto:southern@lodelink.com)

and request to be put on the talklist



### Region 3 Director - Donna-Marie Crowell

This is a new position for me. I'll start by introducing myself. My name is Donna-Marie Crowell and I live in Jacksonville, North Carolina. The Camp Lejeune area.

Since it has not been very long since the elections I will tell you a few things about myself. Well, I have been so to say the proverbial Bridesmaid (Region 3 Deputy) for 6 years and now I am the Bride (Region 3 Director). I am fairly easy to get along with. I am straight forward. Quite a few AVVA members know how I am and how I do things.

I look forward to serving the AVVA members in Region 3 and doing everything in my power to keep you informed on what is going on in AVVA. I plan on visiting each state at least once during my term. I just ask that the States and Chapters keep me informed on what is going on with them. I look forward to meeting the AVVA members in the States of Region 3.

Respectfully,

Donna-Marie Crowell



### Region IV Director

Suzanne Blohm-Weber

I would like to thank you for returning me to this position, I promise to continue my service to this region. I have named Beverly Thomas, Florida, as this region's deputy director which met the approval of the board at their first meeting on August 13, 2010.

I am excited about the upcoming three years with all the new board members, increased participation of the membership and all of the new directions that this group of enthusiastic members have started us on. We need your input to steer this organization and have been shown a great start with the decisions made at this past biennial meeting in Orlando.

Please join committees, stay in touch with your state representatives and regional directors, and let's get this train back on the track! There is much work to be done, keep up the momentum and look forward to working with you.

Respectfully,

Suzanne

## The Process . . .

Qualified Delegates gather to address the business before them.



The President guides the process so that it is completed both properly and on a timely basis.



Questions are asked and answered. The voting on governing documents and election of the Board of Directors are conducted.



Delegates work together so that all is understood and the membership is represented.



Registered attendees oversee the process.

Hello my name is Penny Meinhardt and I am the Region 5 director. I represent Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana. I am really looking forward to the next three years working with my state representatives and the national board members. It has been a real pleasure working with Sandy, Freda, and Annette the last two years.

Previously I have been involved in a number of activities and I am still serving a great deal of them. I have served in leadership positions in the State of Michigan as the State Representative since 2000 and led the State through the incorporation process. I am the State President for Michigan. I am the Fund Raiser Chair for National and carry all of the National merchandise. Last year I helped raise over \$7000 at the National Table at Leadership.

It was a great honor to receive the AVVA Member of the Year Award presented to me at the AVVA National Convention in Orlando, Florida this year.

Some of my goals for the next three years are to continue to develop stronger lines of communication with all State Representative/Presidents within the Region with VVA and AVVA; to be available to give assistance as needed to all of our AVVA and VVA members and veterans; to continue to work for our Veterans and our families, and to represent the interests of Region 5's membership at the National Board.

Looking forward to working with all of you,

Penny Meinhardt  
Region 5 Director

Mary Katherine Andras  
Region Seven Director  
3505 Lake Arrowhead Dr.  
Harvey La. 70058-5124

It is my honor once more to serve Region 7 as your AVVA Director. I thank everyone for your support and confidence and trust you have placed with me. I know that I will not be able to attend every State Council meeting in Region 7 but I will do my best to attend as many as my budget allows.

I see a bright future ahead for AVVA and Region 7. There is nothing we cannot accomplish if we all work together as a team. My door is

always open to you at all times, day or night. I can be reached at my business 504-398-9094, or at my residence, 504-366-2087 or by my cell 504-382-9123, please feel free to call me with any concern or question you may have.

By keeping our lines of communication open there is nothing we cannot do for our beloved Veterans and AVVA.

Once again thank you for your trust in me.

Kathy Andras  
AVVA Region 7 Director

Hello to all:

This summer I traveled to Newport Oregon for the VVA-AVVA State Council Meeting lead by our Oregon State Rep. John Birch, attended by the Medford AVVA, Grants Pass AVVA, Lebanon AVVA. Much was discussed, especially on fund raising for our local AVVA's.

All of those attending the State Council have been very active with helping their local Veterans, and their families. The more I hear what they do the prouder (is this a word?) I get. And again a member of the Brookings, Oregon Chapter 757 was chosen for the Fellowship Award of the Year.

I also traveled to Alaska, paying for my trip out of my own pocket, hoping to have contact with an AVVA member. I have a name and hoping to contact her after all this traveling I'm doing is over. The next trip was to Billings Montana for their State Council Meeting. I was hoping to see Sandy Weisand, our contact for the state of Montana, her husband took sick and was taken to the hospital the night before they were to leave for Billings. But I did have a wonderful meeting with Linda Morales from Bozeman. Bozeman is very busy raising money to help with their Veterans and their families, at Christmas, and they take clothing articles, blankets, lap robes to their Veteran Hospital located north of Bozeman.

Idaho has been working with their VVA Chapters, helping the Veterans and the families of their state. I haven't traveled to their state this year, as I haven't traveled to the state of Washington, or Wyoming. Now I traveled to the state of Washington, but the date that I received that the meeting was being held was a week too early, so I'm the one that missed out.



## TEXAS

MARILYN ROSE – PRESIDENT  
281-991-1467  
Mrose4319@sbcglobal.net

Our chapters have been working really hard all year long.

**CHAPTER 685** – Galveston County is going to have a Rededication of our WATCHFIRE PARK on the Texas City Dike. The whole dike (largest man made dike in the world) was destroyed during Hurricane Ike like most of Galveston County. The dike has been rebuilt/repared and the City of Texas is going to do a rededication for the chapter.

We will have the Priest from the Catholic Church re-bless our ground, since this is where we do the Flag (torn and tattered) disposal. We will be posting the colors, POW-MIA ceremony, setting the Field Crosses, selling some food and tee shirts, etc.

We will also have a Band and singer, Michael Martin from Nashville, TN Area. He is a Vietnam Veteran and was from Texas. He used to be with Doc Holiday (deceased), also a Vietnam Veteran. Michael and Doc are also co-founders of the veterans' advocacy group, Last Patrol.

Everyone is invited. So come on down to Texas City, TX on November 12th, the day after Veterans Day for our Rededication of our WATCHFIRE PARK. We would love to have everyone.

**CHAPTER 991**- Palestine, TX. Everyone has also been working hard in their chapter. They are having a WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS in Jacksonville, TX on September 18, 2010. Parade, Texas Veterans Commission, VFW, and American Legion. Sounds like a good time for everyone.

**CHAPTER 404**- Borger/Fritch, TX. Everyone is also working hard in this chapter. They set up booths at different functions held in the area, Hold garage sales, helping veterans in their area.

All the other chapters in Texas are working hard also. Everyone please keep up the hard work on helping veterans.

Our Last State Council meeting was held in San Antonio, TX. in June. There was a great turnout. We had a "Job Well Done, Brother" print that was matted and framed donated to the AVVA State Group in February, 2010. We held a raffle for

the print. Nine chapters from the state participated in the endeavor. Each participating chapter received \$134.58, State received, \$403.75. Total of the Fund Raiser was \$1615.00. Thanks to all the chapters.

As the AVVA State President, I attend the VVA Leadership Conference/AVVA National Convention in Orlando, Florida. Great. A.V.V.A has turned over a new leaf, New Officers, and new beginnings. We are all going to move forward and work together to make AVVA a bigger and better organization together.



Texas AVVA President, Maryilyn Rose enjoys time with Past National President Mary Miller during the Awards Luncheon on Thursday, August 12, 2010.



Kathy Andras, AVVA Region VII Director, poses for a photo with one of the ceterpieces made by Florida AVVA at the luncheon.



FUN  
IN THE  
SUNSHINE  
STATE



Associates of Vietnam  
Veterans of America

Region IV

thanks you for attending the  
Biennial Meeting in sunny  
Orlando Florida.

“Ya All Come Back Now, Ya Hear”



From left to right:

Suzanne Blohm-Weber - Region IV Director, Mary Yeomans - Past Vice President, Jeri Wallis - Georgia State Representative, Beverly Thomas - Region IV Deputy Director, and Donna Maury - Florida Association Secretary/Treasurer.

## UPDATES DEADLINES

Starting in September 2010 there will be an issue sent out every other month.

**Next deadline:**  
November 1, 2010

Feel free to submit at any time, it will be published in the next issue.

Please send submissions and email changes or requests to:

**[avvaupdates@yahoo.com](mailto:avvaupdates@yahoo.com)**

All submissions will be considered, screened for content and edited if necessary. “Letters to the Editor” are strictly the opinions of the author and not that of Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America. All chapter, state and regional reports are the responsibility of the writer and must contain name and contact information in order to be published. Content must be verifiable, accurate and appropriate for this newsletter. Thanks for your support.

*Together  
Always*