



Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vietnamvetschapter1.org

OCTOBER 2026



MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING OCT. 14, 2026

I counted 27 people attending, 6 on Zoom and 21 in person. I believe we had one guest and the rest regular or AVVA (associate) members.

The minutes of the September meeting were approved unanimously.

Treasurer Richard Reed reported on our accounts. Richard recommended purchasing another CD as a way to earn better interest on our money.

Richard said he was becoming “more and more unenamored” of the Heritage Family Credit Union, where we do our banking. “They are screwing up statements, they’re saying they are sending me information and not sending it, and they’re sending stuff to my personal email that relates to the chapter,” he said. Richard said he was “looking around” and should have recommendations at the next meeting. The report was unanimously approved.

Membership chair Dick Doyle reported 183 members, an all-time high. Present were new member Armand Gevry, an Army vet, and soon-to-be member Guy Rinebolt, an Air Force veteran. Dick cited member Paul Patten, who recently has recruited two new members.

Stan Clark of Perkinsville said the Southern Vermont Committee of Chapter 1 hasn’t always been able to attract a quorum of 5 to its meetings. Meanwhile, he continues his visits to vets, logging 33 hours and 858 miles in his September report.

President Bill Ellwood noted the successful luncheon last month for veterans who are residents of the Gables and Meadows facilities in Rutland Town. Roughly eight chapter members attended to eat and socialize with the veterans. The group of residents notably included 103-year-old Marion Rice, who served as a nurse in the Philippines in World War II. Bill then segued to the planned Nov. 11 ceremony at the newly completed World War II monument honoring Rutland County soldiers who died in the conflict. The event will take place at 11 a.m. in Main Street Park, to be followed by free luncheons at VFW Post 648, where Chapter 1 meets, and American Legion Post 31. Bill will be one of the speakers at the memorial unveiling.

Paul Patten reported on his liaison role with the local Civil Air Patrol chapter, again expressing his admiration for the squadron. He said a recent class focused on “character development.” Paul said the local commander, Joanne Larson, is hoping to visit Chapter 1 and report on the squadron’s activities and thank Chapter 1 for its support. Members of the squadron will take part in the Nov. 11 dedication of the Rutland County World War II monument in Rutland. Paul also mentioned that he and Joe Donaldson had traveled to the Vermont Veterans Home in Bennington for a memorial service for Tom Pritchard, of Fair Haven, a Vietnam veteran, though not a Chapter 1 member.

Jack Crowther said he believes the Chapter 1 sign for the VFW building, where we have our office, is completed but its placement needs to be approved by the city’s Architectural Review Board. This is because the sign is in the Downtown Business District, which has rules for signs. A tentative meeting of the review board is set for Nov. 11. Jack intends to go to the meeting. Jack said he is not anticipating a problem.

Andy Moyer gave a brief but enthusiastic presentation on the Leatherstocking Honor Flight he took recently. As noted in recent newsletters, Leatherstocking flights are free trips for veterans to visit the memorials in Washington, D.C., including Arlington National Cemetery and the Tomb of the Unknown soldier. Andy noted, as have previous participants, the impressive escort from Bennington to Albany International Airport and the large reception and greetings both there and on arrival in Baltimore, Md. Andy and Bill Yerke presented a check for \$2,000 from Chapter 1 to the Honor Flight program.

Lee Phillips, who was on the same Honor Flight as Andy, noted, “The walk to the plane and the ceremony when we got in there was just overwhelming. I can kind of sum up my weekend: It was the best weekend of my life. All those of you who have not gone, take advantage and go.” He was impressed by the sendoff from both Albany and Maryland. Lee is hoping to find a place in his home to post the letters he received as part of the welcome to the nation’s capitol.

The next Honor Flight will be in the spring. Further information and the application form can be found at leatherstockinghonorflightny.org. Other departure locations, like Plattsburgh, N.Y. can be found at honorflight.org.

Norm Flanders is still working with the Vermont Veterans Home in Bennington to find a source of American-made blankets to donate to veterans living there. The idea is to have the individual vet’s branch of service emblazoned on the blanket.

Bill Ellwood again brought up the idea of chapter members recounting their military experiences for family members. If desired, their stories would be shared as part of the Chapter 1 document archive. Bill proposed appropriating \$500 for a “pilot project” to try out the idea. AVVA member Janelle Faignant has expressed an interest in conducting the interviews and writing them up, for which she would be paid. A few different formats, such as phone or Zoom interviews, are under consideration. It will be “a chance to tell your story,” as Bill put it. He noted that Norman VanCor, a Chapter 1 member from Spofford, N.H., is certified by the Library of Congress for recording veterans’ stories and is willing to provide guidance.

Dick Doyle moved to provide \$500 for the project. Seconded by Mark Truhan. Passed unanimously. Any member interested in taking part should let us know by telling Bill or Jack Crowther in person or emailing the chapter at vietnamvetschapter1@gmail.com. Your account would not need to be about Vietnam but simply your time in the service.

Chapter 1 had several members — Dave Potter, Mike Burke, and Joe and Paula Donaldson — attend the graveyard ceremony in Hubbardton for Herbert Ballantyne, a Marine veteran from Whitehall, N.Y., who died in September. He grew up in Hubbardton. Memorial contributions have been directed to Chapter 1. Bill encouraged those at the meeting to let the chapter know when a Vietnam vet from the area dies, so that the chapter can be represented at services.

The next Veterans Town Hall in Rutland will be Friday, Nov. 6, at the Godnick Center on Deer Street. A free dinner for those who pre-register will be held at 5:30 p.m., followed by brief talks by veterans at 6 p.m. The program is free. Veterans are invited to talk of their experience in the service, but there is no question period. The public is welcome to attend and listen. Chapter 1 is sponsoring the meal in Rutland and at the Brattleboro Vets Town Hall Nov. 8. To sign up for the dinner or to speak, visit vetstownhall.org. Registration to speak as a vet is encouraged but not required. Registration for the dinner is required by the end of October. Town Halls in Bennington and Middlebury are Nov. 6 and 12 respectively.

A Gala in support of the Dodge House in Rutland for homeless veterans will be held Friday, Nov. 13, at the Elks Club in Rutland. Chapter 1 contributed \$1,000 for a table of eight. Those tickets are spoken for, but anyone who would like to support the Dodge House can purchase a ticket for \$50. The event runs from 6 to 10 p.m. and features heavy hors d'oeuvres, music and entertainment, a silent auction, and raffle. The featured speaker is J.T. Dodge, son of the Dodge House namesake and a member of the Dodge House Board of Directors.

Tickets can be obtained here: https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/keys-to-hope-gala?fbclid=IwY2xjawU_fUNleHRuA2FlbQIxmABwZG9mAWJyaWQRMU1CSzBwNjVacm13MlIWZVlzcRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjIwMzkxNzg4MjAwODkyAAEeLFIEbMXuWSNM-mRCubKspKXuq6sDUnfskH1gL1_D4Q813QpudB6n20bLk9Q_aem_SPEvEaB_V0sdqm0DLtGZsA

Yes, that's an amazingly long link, but I tested it and it took me to the Dodge House Facebook account, where you can get tickets.

Larry Gold, Louise Clarino and Beth Higgins will coordinate our contribution to the Stuff-a-Bus food drive in November, for which we've appropriated \$500. Anyone interested in taking part in the drive, which involves purchasing food for local food shelves, can contact the chapter via our email address, vietnamvetschapter1@gmail.com or contact Larry, Louise or Beth in person.

In December, the chapter will again contribute \$1,000 to the WSYB Christmas Fund for needy families. Richard Reed made the motion, which passed unanimously.

In proposing a December social event for the chapter, Bill Ellwood made a motion to approve up to \$1,000 for food and other expenses, like prizes, for the event. Seconded by Norm Flanders. Approved unanimously. Mike Burke volunteered to head up the planning, and Jim Freese promptly agreed to help. A healthy show of hands indicated many of those present would attend the event. Subsequently, Mike and Jim booked Tuesday, Dec. 8, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the VFW banquet room for the event. Further details will be sent out, but feel free to RSVP by emailing the chapter at the address cited above.

Dick Doyle reported on a recent visit to the Kurn Hattin Homes, a residential facility in Westminster for children from troubled families. To quote its website, Kurn Hatton provides "children in grades 1–8 with a safe, nurturing, year-round residential and educational community." Dick was invited to be interviewed by a humanities class of eighth-graders. "Now what a hoot that was," Dick said. It was a

one-hour interview and back and forth conversation. Dick talked about being a Vietnam veteran, “and they imparted to me stuff about what they’re going through in their life,” Dick said. Bill Ellwood encouraged other members to get out in the community, as Dick did, and let the chapter know about it.

Jack Crowther reported on an email from Allison Hasser of No One Left Behind, a non-profit organization that seeks to bring to the U.S. Afghan and Iraqi nationals who assisted the U.S. military during our actions in those countries. U.S. policy has made it difficult for those efforts by NOLB, but they continue. Allison asked that Chapter 1, which supports the group with a \$200-a-month contribution, if it might offer a testimonial in support of its work. In response to the request, Jack moved that the chapter approve the following resolution: “Chapter 1, Vietnam Veterans of America, supports the work of No One Left Behind in fulfillment of our commitment to Afghan and Iraqi nationals who assisted the U.S. military during our involvement in those countries’ conflicts.”

In discussion, Mark Truhan, a Vietnam vet who also served in Iraq in 2004 and 2005 as an advisor to the 1st Iraqi Division, spoke of working with female interpreters. One of the interpreters was called out by an uncle, berated, and shot to death. The other escaped from the country. “If we can do anything to help them get away from the stupidity of that part of the world I’d say yeah . . .,” Mark said. Bill Ellwood supported the motion, noting, “I look at it in relationship to what we know of the Vietnam conflict, of all the people we left behind in Vietnam that had to try to flee on boats and whatever and get over to this country, and they needed people to help them.” He seconded the motion. Mike Murphy supported the motion, mentioning that he mentors some Afghan teenagers. The motion passed unanimously.

After discussion, we decided to next meet in February. However, in consultation with each other later, Bill Ellwood and Jack Crowther decided to change that to January as a way to keep up with the business of the chapter. The assumption is that we will skip meeting in February, then meet in March, when nominations for chapter officers and board members will take place. The Annual Meeting with election of officers will take place in April.

In a final exchange Guy Rinebolt asked how a community obtains a visit from one of the “Traveling Walls,” the reduced-size replicas of The Wall, the memorial to veterans killed in Vietnam. One of several versions of The Wall recently visited Glens Falls, N.Y. A visit of the Traveling Wall came to Rutland in 1991, which is when longtime member Dick Doyle joined Chapter 1. Mark Truhan agreed to look into what is require for a visit from one of the “traveling walls.” It is believed, from past inquiries, that a visit requires considerable expense and volunteer effort and because of that a return visit has not been pursued.

Finally, Bill Ellwood described his response to people who thank him for his service. His reply is, “Thank you for caring, we really appreciate it. Did you serve or have family members that served?” “Almost invariably,” Bill said, “there’s someone they can think of that served. And then we will start talking about that, and I finish up with, ‘Well, thank you for that person’s service, too.’”

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, Secretary

**The next meeting will be Wednesday, Jan. 13, at 4 p.m., downstairs at VFW Post 648,
15 Wales St., Rutland.**