

# National Association of Letter Carriers

## Branch 782

### E.A. Baker Union Update



ARVIN  
CALIFORNIA CITY  
McFARLAND  
TAFT

AVENAL  
DELANO  
MOJAVE  
TEHACHAPI

BAKERSFIELD  
EDWARDS AFB  
RIDGECREST  
TRONA

BORON  
LAMONT  
SHAFTER  
WASCO

**CHARTERED FEBRUARY 25, 1901**



## Branch 782 Veterans Day Special Edition 2018

93203 — ARVIN

No Veterans currently assigned

93204 — AVENAL

No Veterans currently assigned

93215 — DELANO

Arnie Reyes-Rios: USA — 2000 - 2006

93241 — LAMONT

No Veterans currently assigned

93250 — McFARLAND

Robert Campos: USA — 1988 - 1991  
Fernando Soto: USMC — 1989 - 1995

93263 — SHAFTER

No Veterans currently assigned

93268 — TAFT

No Veterans currently assigned

93280 — WASCO

No Veterans currently assigned

93301 — DOWNTOWN STATION

Eugene Shebley: USN — 1987 - 1995  
Lynn Hunter: USAF — 1977 - 1978  
Artie Evans: USMC — 1990 - 1994

93304 — SOUTH STATION

Neil Kramer: USA&R — 1985 - 1997  
Mike Meza: USA — 1993 - 1996

93305 — EAST BAKERSFIELD

Cherilyn Morgan: USN — 1983 - 2000  
Steve Lubrecht: USAF — 1984 - 1985  
& National Guard: 1986 - 1989  
George Duarte: USA — 1982 - 1985  
& USAR — 1991 - 1992  
Robert Guerrero: USAF — 1992 - 1996  
Levi Prinz : USA — 2012 - 2015

93306 — HILLCREST

Mark Andersen: USAF — 2009 - 2013  
Joe Gutierrez: USA — 1972 - 1974  
David Renner: USA — 1990 - 1996  
Eric Zuniga: USA — 2013 - 2016  
Otto Hernandez: USAF — 21 YEARS

93307 — BRUNDAGE

R. Woomavovah: USA — 2010 - 2016  
Jessie Gaudia: USA — 2004 - 2013

93308 — DOLE COURT

Ricardo Obando: USA — 1983 - 2004  
Steven Carter: USA — 1988 - 1991  
Paul Hernandez: USA — 1990 - 1994  
Art Mooney: USN — 1974 - 1979  
Daniel Medina: USN — 1983 - 1989  
Lee Collaso: USN — XXXX - XXXX  
Michael Tucker: XXX — 1998 - 2010  
Henry Gasco: USCG — 24+ YEARS

93309 — STOCKDALE

Bobby Cruz: USA — 1972 - 1974  
Cindy Flores: USN — 1979 - 1983  
Vince Gonzalez: USMC — 1986 - 1990  
John Hardin: USN — 1976 - 1980  
Joe Lovoie: USA — 1971 - 1972  
Randy Courson: USAF — 1972 - 1976

93311/13 — CAMINO MEDIA

David Bridges: USMC — 1979 - 1983  
Duane Huse: USAF — 5 YRS 10 months

93501 — MOJAVE

No Veterans currently assigned

93504 — CALIFORNIA CITY

Ray Pasillas: USA — 1983 - 1987  
One Veteran declined participation

93516 — BORON

No Veterans currently assigned

93523 — EDWARDS AFB

No Veterans currently assigned

93555 — RIDGECREST

Tina Dill: USA — 1991 - 1993  
Nicholas Travers: USAF — 2007 - 2013

93561 — TEHACHAPI

No Veterans currently assigned

93562 — TRONA

No Veterans currently assigned

**We also thank all  
Postal employee  
Veterans who are not  
NALC members!**



# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!!

# THIS VETERANS DAY NOVEMBER 11, 2018 WE HONORED ALL WHO SERVED OUR COUNTRY

Every single person who served in the military has a story...and is also a part of a continuing story of the generations of Americans who live out their willingness to become part of a bigger team.



**Bakersfield National Cemetery**

## Michael "Fig" Newton, USN Veteran NALC Branch 782 Retiree

Michael graduated from Bakersfield High School in 1964 on a Friday. The following Monday, he was working for the Santa Fe Railroad as a two-month seasonal worker. By July, he had accumulated muscles he hadn't known existed because he had been moving heavy steel and loads of freight every single hour of some very, very long days! When the "season" was over, he was asked if he still wanted a job and he hired on.

In November 1965, he received greetings from the President of the United States of America informing him that he had been drafted into the United States Army.

(THIS is an interesting side story: Michael's father had somehow joined the USN in 1916 as a sixteen year old. His enlistment ended in 1921.) He didn't want Michael to become a "dogface soldier"; and — because he knew the Navy recruiter — things were worked out so that, in December, Michael found himself signing up for a delayed enlistment USN Star Program.



**AN MICHAEL NEWTON** holds the plaque he received from Capt. Blattmann for being named Plane Captain of the Month for VT-25.

Newton, who received the award at VT-25's personnel inspection, was praised for his meticulous work.

March 1966 found Michael at the Navy Great Lakes Recruit Training Command in Illinois and he graduated in June. Following a short leave in Bakersfield, he reported to his first duty station at Naval Airstation (Chase Field) Beeville, Texas where he was assigned to the Squadron VT 25 Cougars.

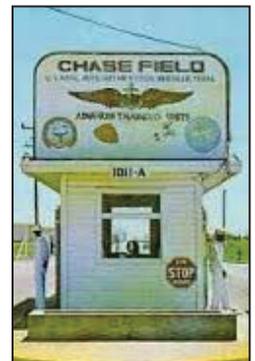


He still has a vivid memory of getting off the air-conditioned bus when he got to the unit and stepping out into the humidity of the northwestern Corpus Christi locale!

As an almost twenty year old, there was an education about life which was punctuated by seeing blinding night time explosions as aircraft disintegrated. Much



of what went on was the training of naval and marine aviators and ground crews and he witnessed things like the flameout of an old F-9 which, coupled with no glide path and low altitude, resulted in the death of the trainee who hadn't bailed out.



And, of course, there were also those water moccasins at the end of the runway to deal with, too...

In time, Michael became skilled in the post-flight routine of ensuring that there was no residual fuel which might lead to a fire. And, his skills were recognized!



After promotion to Airman, E-3, Michael was reassigned to specialty "A School" training in Memphis, Tennessee.



on P-2s and P-3s as they carried out submarine searches and did other recon and observation missions.



Squadron deployments rotated to airfields at Subic Bay in the Philippines, Andersen Air Force Base in the Guam, Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan and even short stints in Okinawa and Midway.

*Continued on next page...*



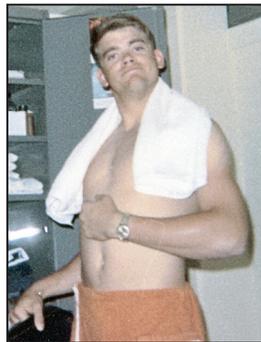
New orders took him to Moffett Field, California where he underwent P-3 Orion Aircraft Familiarization Training for 30 days until he was assigned to VT 28 Patrol Squadron which, in August, was deployed to Adak, Alaska (out in the Aleutian Islands). He worked a ground support assignment as part of a team checking aircraft for structural and functional issues.



In November, VT 28 returned to the squadron's main base at Barber's Point, Hawaii. "Fig" got to go on ride-alongs



"Fig" at Nimitz Beach



Michael, in 1969, spent time at the Cam Ranh Bay logistics facility built by the United States.

It was the major military seaport used by the United States for the offloading of supplies, military equipment and as a major Naval base. Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force units all had compounds and units assigned there.



He remembers the sand and the lack of clean water — which led to the necessity of drinking the much more hygienically pure Schlitz/“Oly” beers. He was just like any of the approximately 2,700,000 young American service personnel who set foot in Vietnam during that prolonged conflict *and he even smoked cigarettes at that time.* It seemed like smoking those Kools or un-filtered Camels helped him stay awake during those extremely long, couldn’t-see-in-the-dark hours when he had to be on duty.

(To those of you who know Mike today, you need to remember that it was a different era and a different world he found himself in.)

He reflects on one particular memory. As a sentry, he’d been issued an M-1 Garand rifle...**WITH ONE ROUND.**

Although he’d had training with some weapons, it had all been in boot camp. Some higher-up must have figured that — *in the event he did have to shoot* — his one bullet would be enough to alert someone that trouble was coming.

Looking back, to this day he wonders just what he might have done if he had needed to defend himself!



One night, he was asleep in his rack and was startled awake by the sound of a .50 caliber machine gun in action. He jumped out of his rack and, out the bunker entrance, saw the flare of rockets in the sky. As he ran outside, he remembers a shower of brass cartridges flying through the air hitting the ground all around him.



Over the course of his three years and seven months as a U.S. Navy Airdale, “Fig” Newton travelled extensively and performed his duties in such a way as to be promoted to E-5. He received awards and accolades in recognition of his attention to detail and was selected as Outstanding Plane Captain numerous times in his naval tour of duty.





What follows is an excerpt of the language in a letter dated 16JUL69 which awarded AMS2 NEWTON the honor of "Warrior of the Month". It serves as an example of the fact that Michael always gave his best in whatever he was doing.

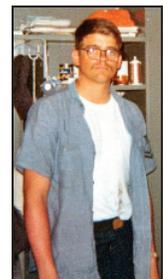
The letter, in part, reads as follows: "...Throughout the Squadron's present deployment at Naha, Okinawa, your performance has been outstanding. You have continually exhibited a high degree of professionalism. Further, your motivation and interest is keenly felt in many of the extra tasks for which you have so graciously volunteered, always performing with great pride and skill. The respect and admiration allotted to you from both seniors and peers is truly a credit to you as an individual..."

Due to a period of national military cutbacks, Michael mustered out of the Navy in September 1969 and returned to Bakersfield where he, once again, started working for the Santa Fe Railroad. Married while in the military, he was concerned that staffing cuts being implemented by that company would impact his family.

No longer "Fig", Mike took a variety of tests for city, county, and state jobs and even — *as did each and every single one of you* — took one for the USPS.

The first organization to contact him let him start a Letter Carrier career which lasted from January 26, 1970 until September 1, 2009 when he retired from Bakersfield's Stockdale Station.

## FIFTY YEARS LATER, MANY NAMES HAVE BEEN LOST TO THE FOG OF MEMORY...BUT, THE SENSE OF I WAS THERE IS STILL ALIVE!



"19MAR69 was the day I got back from Guam. Was I ever tired!"

## David Bridges, USMC Veteran NALC Branch 782 Member

Let's break it down, Barney-style. Dave Bridges is currently a Letter Carrier who works at Bakersfield's Camino Media Station. He was a United States Marine for four years. It was an experience that has had a positive life-long impact on his life.

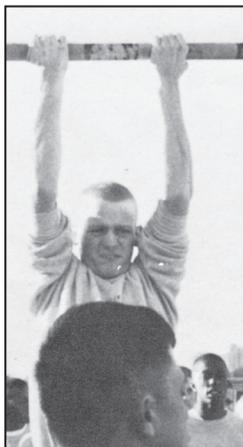


After graduating from Bakersfield's Foothill High School in June 1979, Dave had a vision for his life. Following a successful journey to the Armed Forces Entrance Examination Station (AFES) in Fresno, he enlisted in the USMC on October 7, 1979 — his birthday. His orders to report to Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) San Diego on November 1 were the bow on his gift to himself.



*Even Parris Island Marines might get wistful as they see these pictures and read this account of the memories that David shared.*

On November 26, with a group of other anxious young men headed to “boot camp”, Dave boarded an MCRD bus



B&W pix of PVT BRIDGES becoming a Marine...

at the San Diego airport. At around 2100, they found that the anxiety had been well founded because, upon arrival, they were greeted by a really big Marine who started shouting at them to get off the bus. The loud screaming didn't end even after they had all managed to scramble out and stand on the painted footprints.



*Actually, someone screaming at them all day long was pretty much a constant throughout the entire recruit experience!*

They were then marched without any kind of cadence and in a ragged fashion to a building where, over the course of the next long hours, they were issued a duffel bag and inventoried a dizzying amount of items they would be required to keep track of: boots, trousers, jacket, underwear, etc. They also bagged and labeled



any and all of the civilian items they'd brought with them to be stored for safekeeping. They also learned about contraband.

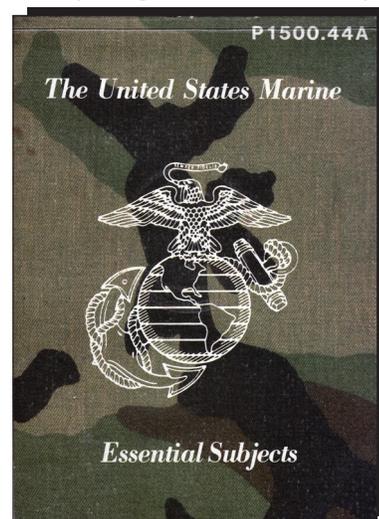
They were lined up again to go through that famous military ritual: the boot camp haircut! Dave remembers seeing a lot of funny looking head tans. Told to focus on nothing but what was in front of him, he vividly recalls directly standing behind a guy who showed signs of some kind of possible lice infestation.

When the night's induction process ended somewhere around 0200, they finally got to fall into their racks. Sleep didn't come easily. Most were in some kind of a state of shock. In that forced dark and quiet room, afraid to even whisper, Dave heard bristle on heads being tentatively explored by recruits (who'd walked in with a head full of hair) until he was finally able to fall asleep.

The sound of a trashcan hitting the deck was the alarm clock and set the pace for days filled with more yelling and examinations by doctors and dentists; inoculations and being marched to the chow hall.

(Note: The three month training program was extended by two weeks because the first group of thirty newbies in the platoon were waiting to receive enough trainees to bring the group up to the full complement of 60.)

Finally, at full strength, four Drill Instructors (D.I.s) introduced themselves in the proper USMC fashion and began the process of making Marines out of the group (e.g. how to break down and clean an M-16 A-1 “Charlie” when blindfolded, first aid, the 12 General Orders and Marine Corps history). Dave still has his copy of the 200 page paperback *P1500.44A — Essential Subjects*.



He learned about a staple of the Corps as he stood “Fire Watch” with another recruit in the middle of the night.

There was a steady diet of pushups, “bends and thrusts” and side-saddle hops and heaven help you if somebody screwed up! The “Thrashings” continued unabated until the platoon began to be more cohesive and got squared away.



At meals, recruits would slide step-by-step, holding their trays rigidly in front of them, and call out each entree as it was slapped down. They would then stand by their seat until the entire platoon had been served. At the command of the D.I., they could begin to eat. Even then, they learned to sit “at attention”.





The MCRD San Diego Third Battalion Platoon 3109 graduation was attended on 15FEB80 by his Dad, Mom, Step-Mother, three Brothers and Sister Debbie Wiles (a Branch 782 Retiree).

It was followed by two weeks leave before he flew via a commercial flight to his assigned unit in Hawaii via Camp Pendleton.

After landing in uniform on Oahu in Honolulu, Dave was asked where he was headed. He was directed to a military bus which was making stops at a number of bases and even to his destination at Marine Air Group (MAG) 24 at Kanoeh Bay on the opposite side of the island from Pearl Harbor. On the drive there, Dave realized that he “wasn’t in Kansas anymore” and was wide-eyed at the absolutely post-card beautiful scenery highlighted by the greenery, sheer cliffs, tunnels and views of the ocean!



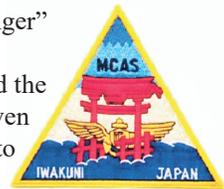
The bus deposited him at the hangar where Marine Air Base Squadron (MABS) 24 was headquartered. After settling in, he began four months of training and familiarization in his Military Occupation Specialty (MOS 3531) as a heavy equip-

ment operator. He would drive jeeps, a deuce (1 ton), a deuce-and-a-half (1 1/2 ton), a five ton tractor trailer and would later be trained and licensed to operate refuel tankers for aircraft support. In this capacity, he would also constantly transport a variety of items and personnel to, from, and around Kaneohe Bay.



Initially, Dave was housed in a squad bay which had been cubed off with partitions. He then moved to a three-man dorm style accommodation where daily inspections and “field days” ensured that their beds were made and living quarters were always clean.

On 26SEP80, he was deployed as an “Airwinger” with VMFA-235 to the Iwakuni USMC Air Station to Japan. He immediately experienced the extremely cold Japanese winter which was even more shocking to him since he’d acclimated to the mild, temperate conditions on the island of Oahu.



Issued a warm field jacket before the deployment, he couldn’t wear it with his civilian clothing and had to stay on base until he was able to purchase clothing more suited to the frigid temperatures.

When he eventually was able to “go into town”, he followed an honorable time memorialized USMC custom of touching base at local bars outside the base and he recalls that he frequented “The Question Mark” at 13-12 Kurumacho 1Chome, Iwakuni City.



Moreover, Dave *did* do more than go bar hopping! He and friends even walked twelve miles (since no one had a privately owned vehicle) to see the Kintai Castle pagoda in the mountains. It was reached by way of a bridge with four wooden arches over a river. It was beautiful!



Thousands of miles away from friends and family in Bakersfield, Dave developed close friendships with other Marines (Mark Posten, brothers Matt and David Shelton, Kevin Berger, Mark Stwally and Jim Lohanas) as they worked for their boss, LT Nancy Hatfield.

Atop a hangar observing the USAF Blue Angels, Dave (4th from left) and other Marines flew their own bird salutes!



*Continued on next page...*

MARINE FIGHTER ATTACK SQUADRON TWO THREE FIVE  
**VMFA-235 The Death Angels**  
*Ride Home*



McDD F-4J "Phantom II"

The six month trip to Japan was marked by a series of mini-deployments to Subic Bay in the Philippines and Okinawa for a variety of flight-ops support missions.

On April, 1981, at the end of his part in WESTPAC 80-81, Dave returned "home" to MABS-24 in "K Bay".

When LCPL BRIDGES was urged to re-enlist, he remembers with a great amount of clarity that he responded by uttering these words, "I respectfully and adamantly decline this invitation. I am ready to go back to being a civilian!"



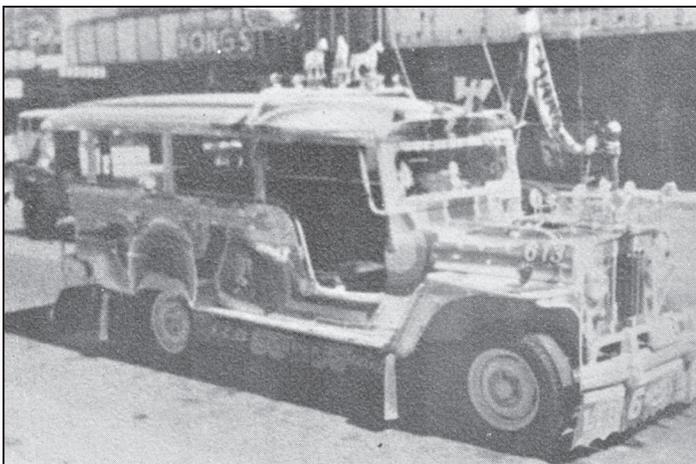
**STEVE**  
 LCPL Martone

**Alex**  
 LCPL Claudio

**DAVE**  
 LCPL Bridges

Due to an unfortunate demotion, he was honorably separated from the Marine Corps in September 1983 as a Private First Class. (Years later, he received a letter of apology because he'd been treated unfairly with respect to charges of insubordination and failure to comply with a direct order — but he was also informed that he had no recourse to appeal the action.)

Back home in Bakersfield, he had no real plans other than to find a job. He soon did and for the next three years — brimming with USMC can-do training and experience operating heavy machinery — Dave drove a tractor trailer in oilfields in Kern County and even became proficient with 8 ton hydro-cranes and learned to operate a massive 20 ton all-terrain fork lift.



In October 1986, David Bridges became a USPS Letter Carrier and a member of NALC Branch 782. But, *that's* a whole different story, eh?



In most fields of endeavor, a shorthand lexicon develops to promote the transfer of the most information in the shortest amount of time. The military lexicon is no exception. What is different is the amount of information that must be transmitted in a short amount of time due to “operational considerations”. Whether American WWI “doughboys”, “dogfaces” of WWII or warriors in any other conflicts there will ALWAYS be a need to pass a message in a way which is understood. Despite the passage of time and the changing of eras, essential details can still be understood if “you’ve been there”:

## WHISKEY - TANGO - FOXTROT: MRES, HAM AND MO-FO’S WHETHER PLAYING IN THE TALL GRASS OR THE SANDBOX, A CHUVILLE OR SITTING BY A FITTY WITH A P-38 IN YOUR POCKET...

# “IRAQI WAR SLANG AND AFGHANISTAN GRUNT LINGO” ❄️

**AOR:** Area Of Responsibility. The assigned area to any given unit.

**APC:** Armored Personnel Carrier. Primary mode of transportation for mechanized infantry units. AMTRAC used by Marines, and Bradley, Stryker used by Army.

**BIAP:** Baghdad International Airport.

**Big Voice:** On military bases, loudspeakers broadcast urgent messages. When incoming rocket or mortar fire is detected by radar systems, the Big Voice automatically broadcasts a siren and instructions to take cover. The Big Voice will also warn of scheduled explosions, usually to destroy captured weapons.

**Bird:** Helicopter. “Chopper” is rarely used, except in movies, where it is always used. A chopper is a kind of motorcycle, *not* an aircraft.

**Bombaconda:** Nickname for LSA Anaconda, a major base near Balad, reflecting the frequent mortar attacks

**‘Black’ on ammo, fuel, water, etc:** As in almost out.

**Blowed up:** Hit by an IED. Example: “I been blowed up six times this year.”

**CHU:** (pronounced choo) Containerized Housing Unit. These small, climate-controlled trailers usually sleep between two and eight soldiers and is the primary unit of housing on larger bases. A CHU Farm is a large number of CHUs together. A Wet CHU is a CHU that has its own bathroom.

**CHUville:** A base consisting of a large number of CHUs.

**CP:** Check Point. Usually numbered.

**CSH:** Combat Surgical Hospital. Pronounced “cash”

**COP:** Combat Outpost which usually houses between 40 and 150 soldiers, often in a particularly hostile area. Life at a COP is often austere and demanding, with every soldier doing guard duty and patrolling.

**Death Blossom:** The tendency of Iraqi security forces, in response to receiving a little fire from the enemy, to either run away or do the “death blossom” spraying fire indiscriminately in all directions.

**DFAC:** (pronounced dee-fack) Soldiers eat in a Dining Facility. Old soldiers show their age when they call it a “chow hall,” and if you say “mess hall” it also dates you. DFACs are modern looking cafeterias; some are decorated with sports memorabilia, movie posters, and televisions with channels like ESPN.

**Dustoff:** Medical evacuation by helicopter. For example, “Dustoff inbound” means that a MEDEVAC helicopter is on the way.

**FAN:** Feet, Ass and Nuts. Used to describe a smell common to military tents and barracks.

**Fitty:** The M2 .50 caliber machine gun.

**FOB:** Forward Operating Base.

**FOB Taxi:** Any vehicle that never leaves the FOB.

**Fobbitt:** Service member who never goes outside the wire off the forward operating base.

**Frankenstein:** A Marine Corps monster truck, bulging and rippling with spot-welded seams of add-on armor. “We scrounge around for what we need and ‘Frankenstein’ it together.”

**Green Bean:** A civilian-run coffee shop common on larger bases in Iraq and Afghanistan.

**Green Zone:** In Iraq, the heavily fortified area of central Baghdad where most government facilities are located. As opposed to the Brown Zone, which refers to the more barren mountains.

**Gun:** A mortar tube or artillery piece. Never used to refer to a rifle or pistol. Military-issued pistols are usually called 9-mils.

**Haji Mart:** Any small store operated by Iraqis to sell small items to Americans.

**IBA/OTV:** “Outer Tactical Vest/Individual Body Armor”. Body armor. Usually consists of a Kevlar vest and ceramic plates. Combined, rated to a threat level IV, meaning it can stop a 7.62mm round.

**IED:** Improvised Explosive Device. The signature weapon of the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, IEDs are low-cost bombs that can be modified to exploit specific vulnerabilities of an enemy. They range in size from a soda can to a tractor trailer and are initiated by anything from a pressure sensor to a suicidal attacker.

**IDF:** Indirect Fire, or simply Indirect. Mortars, rockets and artillery. Term generally used to describe enemy action.

**Inside/Outside the Wire:** Describes whether you are on or off a base.

**ITGA:** Interim Transitional Government of Afghanistan.

**KAF:** That stands for Kandahar Air Field. That is the main base of operations for the Southern part of Afghanistan. The main post is big and has lots of people, it is a main transportation hub -- both Helo and Fixed Wing -- also Convoys of Humvees going in and out.

**KBR:** Kellogg, Brown & Root -- The biggest contractor serving the Coalition Forces.

**MRE:** Meals Ready to Eat. Alternately known as “Meals Refused by Everyone”, Mysteries, and the three lies: they *AREN’T* meals, they *AREN’T* ready, and they certainly *AREN’T* edible.

**PPE:** Personal Protective Equipment

**SAPI:** Small Arms Protective Insert, usually pronounced as “sappy.” Ceramic plates inserted into the front and back of the IBA/OTV.

\* This is a very appreciated glossary shared as a means to link those who went before with the current crop of warriors.

Editor-guy note: This info was culled from a variety of sources in a web search for the specific intent of honoring all Military Vets.

**Robert Mitchell, USN Veteran  
attached to USMC  
NALC Branch 782 Retiree**

Bob grew up in the city of Dearborn, Michigan where his father — who was a real craftsman — owned a business producing dental prosthetics. An interested son, Bob, helped out in the shop and began to learn a lot about how bridges, crowns and other products were made.

In Bob's senior year of high school, his father relocated his business and his family to California. It wasn't such a great thing for Bob. As "the new guy in school", he knew no one. After graduating from Chula Vista High in June 1963, he enrolled at Southwestern Junior College and received an AS degree in 1965.

With a possible induction into the U.S. Army via the draft, Bob sought an alternative. The Navy offered him a deal: Enlist, and based on his dental skills and college education, they would immediately make him an E-3 and he wouldn't have to travel far from home.

December 1966 found him at boot camp was at NTC San Diego. After graduation, he moved to a different part of the base where he completed the USN Dental Tech "A" School which was soon followed by the "C" school where he learned the Navy way of producing prosthetics.

He always assumed that he would be stationed aboard a ship or at a large USN base with a large dental clinic. The Navy had other ideas...

Bob received orders to undergo Field Medical School at Camp Pendleton for cross training as a Corpsman attached to the Marine Corp. The thirty day program took him from "blue side to green side" and gave him a basic knowledge of what his duties would entail if he went out "into the field" and had to deal with massive trauma (sucking chest wounds, gun shots, burns, explosions, knife attacks, etc). Training scenarios found Bob out in the boonies dealing with simulated battlefield conditions.

As indicated in a USMC training manual: "The Marine Corps has an expectation of handling more responsibility from its junior personnel, especially their corpsmen." He also learned that this raised the real possibility that he might be going wherever "The Corps" might need him.

On Memorial Day 1968 (May 30), DT3 Bob Mitchell got boots down at the USAF Base in DaNang Vietnam. He was in a war zone! A corpsman, who was rotating back to the world, rolled up in a jeep to pick up Bob and his gear at the airport and informed him that they were going to the beach... China Beach.

He remembers marvelling, "This is a WAR ZONE. How can we just be going to the beach? Does somebody just declare a 'time out' so we can do this?"

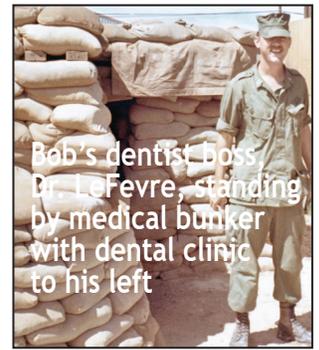


A beach party at China Beach in 1968 with a shot of Bob enjoying the waves.



The next morning, he was flown to a small airfield chopped out of the jungle at his new home: Phu Bai Combat

Base. He explored the small barracks, PX, the EM and Officers Clubs and the dental clinic which was attached to the sick bay. He remembers that it was a little jarring to see sandbags stacked up to offer protection from incoming mortar rounds or rockets.



Bob's dentist boss, Dr. Lefevre, standing by medical bunker with dental clinic to his left

And, before long, the pace of work and the surroundings became familiar.

Like other Vietnam Vets, Bob soon learned about "military pay certificates" and the humidity and sights and sounds of being in a foreign country. Although there was no concertina wire around the perimeter at Phu Bai, there were some tanks and some M50 ONTOS (which had six 105 mm recoilless rifles with three on each side of the vehicle).

After a time, Bob was transferred to the 1st Marine HQ Hospital in Da Nang dental tech duties. Although this may seem boring, there were times (in a rotation with others) that he would be required to go to Graves Registration where he attempted to identify remains with dental records. He never would have anticipated he would be doing this as a twenty-two year old.



Bob and a UH-34 Medivac Helicopter in Da Nang

An in-country R&R facility was located in Da Nang. There was a restaurant and bowling alley and Bob relayed a memory about a night he spent at the on-base movie theatre.

He was watching a movie and the Seabees started blowing up rock to make gravel for their projects. It was loud and it was close. Somebody yelled, "Incoming!" Bob always felt that he would be really "calm and collected" in the event of an emergency. He found himself running out just as panicked as anyone else.



Bob shared a hooch where he had his rack. His days were spent working and — often — feeling bored. When he had the duty, he carried an M-16 with lots of ammo.

There were also some pretty good times at Choco Beach or when he got to go be a tourist around the outskirts of Hue and other locations.



From the back of a truck on the way to beach we saw some helicopters which had landed by the side of the road.

He saw sampans on brown water highways, a lot of small villages, rice paddies, water buffalo, Vietnamese riding bikes or fishing, ARVN troops and even mini-skirted girls singing at the EM Club. AND, Bob even

buffalo, Vietnamese riding bikes or fishing, ARVN troops and even mini-skirted girls singing at the EM Club. AND, Bob even got an opportunity to ask a movie star and model, Ann Margaret, for her autograph!



Phu Bai dental clinic was in the gray trailer with the wheels and tires. Attached to it is the waiting room where the doctor would sleep. Sandbags to the left protect the base medical bunker.



This was pretty much his routine until he rotated back to the States after his one-year tour of duty. Following a 30 day leave period at home in San Diego, he reported to his new home at Camp Pendleton. He worked there until his enlistment ended (after three years and nine months) in September 1970.



Bob started as a part-time employee at Builders' Emporium in Chula Vista at the end of 1970. He worked there until 1979 when his father sold his business moved to Bakersfield and asked him if he would consider transferring to a store in Kern County. One day, Bob heard about a possible postal worker job...



He worked as a USPS Letter Carrier from 1980 until his retirement in 2004.



# Kern County Honor Flight #36 October 27-29, 2018

Fifty years after serving in Vietnam, Bob Mitchell travelled to the capital of our country in Washington D.C. as part of a contingent of various service veterans from Kern County.

Bob had heard of the Honor Flight organization through television news reports and talk among military veterans that he knew. But, he didn't think about going himself until he was at a Memorial Day event at the Riverwalk in 2017. There, surrounded by the crosses which dotted the landscape, he found a booth with folks handing out brochures. He took one, filled in the spaces for the information they requested and then he mailed it in.



He was then contacted and asked if he could meet someone to fill out a more extensive form which would serve as an application and to provide information about his military background.

During that meeting he learned that there is a real push to render this honor to any surviving WWII vets as well as those who served during the Korean or Vietnam War. Next on the list of priority placements are those members of the military who were in later conflicts or eras.

In September, he received a phone call and he was asked if he was still interested in participating. When he responded in the affirmative, he was informed that he was eligible and that he could join others on Flight #36. He was also told that he would receive a packet of information to give him an idea of what he was getting into.

And, he discovered, it was going to be a slam, bam, thank you, ma'am kind of a trip!! They weren't lying!!! (The following times are in military 2400 hour clock.)

Saturday, October 27, officially began at 0300 starting out at the check-in tables on the floor of the Garces High School gym. Bob received "orders" to board an assigned bus which departed around 0330 for the Burbank Airport.

After arriving at 0550, the entire group began at approximately 0615 to proceed through the TSA checkpoint. They left for McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas at 0750 with wheels down at 0855.

At 1010, the now-tired travellers left for the Baltimore-Washington International Airport where they arrived at 1740. With scant time for catching their breath, the vets boarded a bus which took them to an 1800 meal at Mision BBQ in Glenburnie, Maryland; and, at meal's end, they were back on the bus at 1930 to FINALLY arrive at their hotel at 2130 for a good night's rest in their hotel!

Sunday morning began with a hearty, free buffet breakfast...at 0600. West Coast bodies thought it was 0300, and — what was worse — a few folks forgot to reset their timepieces and they missed out on the meal.

To maintain the schedule for activities, they departed at 0700, returned at 1700, had dinner at 1800 and were in their racks/bunks by 2000.

Of course, it was what occurred between the hours of 0700 and 1700 that really made the trip special! As indicated in the Flight #36 Itinerary: "These are a few of the places we *may* visiting during our stay in Washington, DC in **no particular order**

or day - Memorials: WWII, Korean, Vietnam, Lincoln, Women's, Air Force, Navy, Marines, FDR, a visit to Arlington National Cemetery to see the Changing of the Guard, and our Nation's Capital..."

So few words. So much movement!!

And, through it all, some of the memorials had more of an impact on Bob.

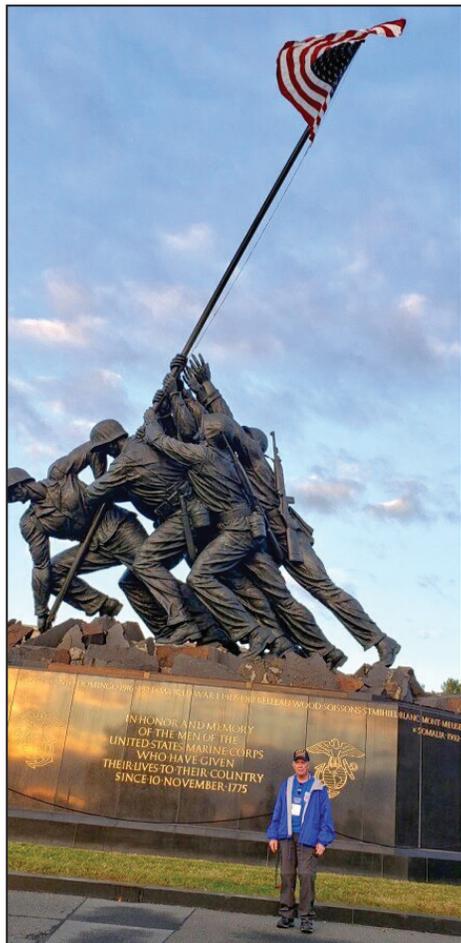


Bob Mitchell outside the USN Memorial Plaza on Pennsylvania Avenue

Wherever Flight #36 attendees went, they travelled as a group. Each veteran (blue jacket) had a companion "guardian", in red jacket, who ensured that each leg of the trip would be as safe as possible.

Honor Flight Kern County (HFKC) is one of 136 hubs from around the country that is part of the Honor Flight Network. HFKC is an all volunteer non-profit created to honor veterans of Kern County and surrounding areas and veterans as far away as the San Fernando Valley. There are approximately 46,000 veterans in Kern County with over 8,000 of them World War II and Korean Veterans. Our mission is to honor and send America's veterans to Washington D.C. to see the memorials built in THEIR honor for their service to our country - at no cost to the veteran. Top priority is given to our most senior veterans - World War II veterans — and those from any conflict that are terminally ill — followed by Korean and Vietnam veterans. Every veteran accepted by HFKC for this honor travels at no cost to him/her due to the generosity of tax deductible donations from our community. The trips include all air and ground transportation, meals, overnight accommodations, and guided tours.

An interesting component brought back memories to many of the vets: Box lunches. Although they were served meals on the bus, most testified that the food provided by Arbys was much better than they remembered getting when they were in uniform!



This picture of Bob shows the sheer scale and size of this iconic USMC monument.

Monday, October 29, shared a similar frenetic schedule with reville early enough to ensure being able to have breakfast at 0600 and a 0645 departure for the day's activities. Again, there were a series of stops made at various historic points of interest in the Capital. 1030 marked the departure on a bus for the return flights through Baltimore, San Jose and Burbank with a planned arrival at 2100 at Garces High School.

The end of the journey was marked by an enthusiastic group of friends and family members who welcomed each and every Veteran home to Kern County.

Looking back at the experience, Bob didn't hold back as he offered his heartfelt message to other Veterans, ***"I would advise any Vet to do this!! Why wouldn't you do it? Being with other Vets makes this so special! The camaraderie with other Vets is very, very amazing!!"***



***"I would advise any Vet to do this!! Why wouldn't you do it? Being with other Vets makes this so special! The camaraderie with other Vets is very, very amazing!!"***  
 Robert Mitchell, USN Veteran and NALC Branch 782 Re-



Pictures above courtesy of the Kern County Honor Flight website. To see more, check out: [https://www.facebook.com/pg/HonorFlightKernCounty/photos/?tab=album&album\\_id=1832033103512156](https://www.facebook.com/pg/HonorFlightKernCounty/photos/?tab=album&album_id=1832033103512156)

There is no way that an event like this could take place without the active participation of many people in Kern County. Countless hours of planning and preparation went into making this such a great and safe success.

Bob wants to make sure that he publicly thanks each and every person who does anything to provide this celebration to honor any Veteran who lives anywhere in the United States. He only hopes that more Vets will live to experience this.

# HOW VETERANS DAY WENT FROM CELEBRATING WORLD PEACE TO THANKING ARMED FORCES

By Katie Mettler  
November 11, 2017  
*The Washington Post*

*On Nov. 11, we celebrate Veterans Day with parades and Old Glory T-shirts, with salutes to those who served and prayers for those who fell.*

But the version of Veterans Day we know now wasn't always so. It wasn't always a holiday, it wasn't always on Nov. 11 and, at first, it wasn't even called Veterans Day. The original intent, established in the wake of World War I, was to celebrate world peace.

Then the wars never ended, so Veterans Day changed.

## Nov. 11, 1918

At the eleventh hour on the eleventh day of the eleventh month, fighting between the Allied Forces and Germany stopped, putting an end to the bloodshed of World War I per the terms of an armistice agreement signed in France that same day.

But World War I — the “War to end all wars” — did not officially end until seven months later.

## Nov. 11, 1919

On the one-year anniversary of the armistice agreement, President Woodrow Wilson signed a proclamation commemorating Nov. 11 as Armistice Day. The celebrations were to include parades, public meetings and a two-minute suspension of business at 11 a.m.

The proclamation read: “... Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations ...”

## June 4, 1926

Congress passed a resolution urging state governors to observe Armistice Day with “thanksgiving and prayer and exercises designed to perpetuate peace through goodwill and mutual understanding between nations.”

At the time, 27 states had already made Nov. 11 a legal holiday.

## May 13, 1938

More than a decade later, Congress made Armistice Day an official holiday dedicated to world peace.

## June 1, 1954

World War I was not the war to end all wars, and lawmakers believed that veterans from World War II and the Korean War also deserved their own day of remembrance. So President Eisenhower signed a bill changing the name of Armistice Day to the more inclusive Veterans Day, a holiday to thank all who had served the United States of America.

## Oct. 12, 1954

Eisenhower published a proclamation in the Federal Register, instructing citizens to recognize Veterans Day on Nov. 11.

He wrote: “On that day, let us solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought so valiantly, on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom, and let us reconsecrate ourselves to the task of promoting an enduring peace so that their efforts shall not have been in vain.”

## June 28, 1968

Fifty years after the armistice agreement, Congress passed the Uniform Monday Holiday Act of 1968, which moved Veterans

Day from its original Nov. 11 date to the fourth Monday in October. The act also declared that Memorial Day, Columbus Day and Washington's Birthday would be observed on Mondays throughout the year. The new dates were meant to take effect in 1971.

**Oct. 25, 1971**

Veterans Day, federally recognized for the first time on a day other than Nov. 11, is celebrated with much confusion. Many states

and most veterans organizations disagreed with the date change and continued to celebrate Veterans Day on Nov. 11, which held historic and patriotic importance.

**Sept. 18, 1975**

Congress passed a bill changing the celebration and observation of Veterans Day back to Nov. 11, where it has remained for the 42 years since.

*Much has changed in the 98 years since Armistice Day was first observed.*

**Now we honor not just servicemen, but servicewomen. Our wars are not fought with cannons, but with drones. The war to end all wars didn't end war at all. Soldiers have fought and died all over the globe.**

Source – <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2017/11/11/how-veterans-day-went-from-celebrating-world-peace-to-thanking-armed-forces/>

# Memorial Day vs. Veterans Day: When is each, why is it celebrated?

By Jill Vejnaska, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*  
(Updated May 23, 2018)

**I**f you've ever wondered what the difference is between Memorial Day and Veterans Day, apparently you're not alone. No less an authority than the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs says people frequently confuse the two holidays.

Make no mistake about it: Both are incredibly important holidays, with their common focus on Americans who've served in the military. The key distinction: *Memorial Day "is a day for remembering and honoring military personnel who died in the service of their country, particularly those who died in battle or as a result of wounds sustained in battle,"* the VA says.

While Veterans Day also honors the dead, it is *"the day set aside to thank and honor all those who served honorably in the military - in wartime or peacetime."*

Here's a guide to each holiday:

## MEMORIAL DAY

When it is: The last Monday in May. This year, it falls on May 28. In 2019, Memorial Day will be on May 27.

Its original name: Decoration Day. Initially, it honored only those soldiers who'd died during the Civil War. In 1868, a veteran of the Union Army, General John A. Logan, decided to formalize a growing tradition of towns decorating veterans' graves with flowers, by organizing a nationwide day of remembrance on May 30 (Logan also served in Congress from Illinois and in 1884, unsuccessfully ran for vice president on the Republican ticket). During World War I, the holiday's focus expanded to honoring those lost during all U.S. wars.

## VETERANS DAY

When it is: November 11 every year. In 2018, Veterans Day falls on a Sunday (as a result, it will be officially observed as a federal holiday this year on Monday, Nov. 12).

One more thing to know: Despite much confusion over the spelling, it's Veterans Day, plural, and without any apostrophes. That's according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, which explains on its web site: "Veterans Day does not include an apostrophe but does include an 's' at the end of 'veterans' because it is not a day that 'belongs' to veterans, it is a day for honoring all veterans."

Source – <https://www.ajc.com/news/memorial-day-veterans-day-when-each-why-celebrated/kUntt9Et00Gck73wwlfvM/>

# On Behalf of a Grateful Nation...



Photo by Manchester, New Hampshire Branch 44 Photographer "Caz" Drozd, November 2018



*When America had an urgent need,  
These brave ones raised a hand;  
No hesitation held them back;  
They were proud to take a stand.*

*They left their friends and family;  
They gave up normal life;  
To serve their country and their God,  
They plowed into the strife.*

*They fought for freedom and for peace  
On strange and foreign shores;  
Some lost new friends; some lost their lives  
In long and brutal wars.*

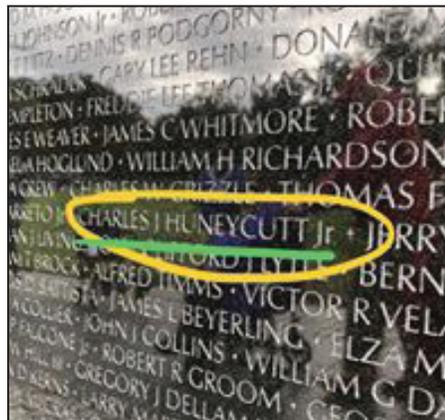
*Other veterans answered a call  
To support the ones who fought;  
Their country had requirements for  
The essential skills they brought.*

*We salute every one of them,  
The noble and the brave,  
The ones still with us here today,  
And those who rest in a grave.*

*So here's to our country's heroes;  
They're a cut above the rest;  
Let's give the honor that is due  
To our country's very best.*

*Joanna Fuchs*

Poem courtesy of Tewksbury, Massachusetts  
NALC Branch 25 November 2018 *WAKE UP!*



Web site photos courtesy of Kern County Honor Flight #36, October 27-29, 2018

