Vietnam Veterans of America "Stanley E. Taylor" Chapter 196
Lynchburg, Virginia

"THE LISTENING POST"

October 1, 2026

Vol 17 Issue 8

President's Comments

To the members and associates of Chapter 196, at last month's meeting after we had covered old business and new business, I opened it up for one member to tell everyone in attendance what he did in 'Nam. I think this is a good way for us to learn what you did while being deployed. At the conclusion of each meeting, I will get another person to tell their story. It can be as brief or as long as it takes to tell your story.

There is still time to sign up for the oral history at Jefferson Forest High School. This is the fourth year we have been invited to share our experiences. I have four already committed and there is always room for more. If you are interested, contact me as I have to report who is coming.

Remember our meeting starts at 7:00 pm. Hope to see you there.

Keeping you informed,

David Stokes,
President

If at anytime you or your family has a need for some veteran spiritual needs or visitation, please don't hesitate to contact our chaplain, Will Strong, former Army Chaplain at 1 (760) 985-6408.

Vietnam Quotes

There is nothing in the resolution, as I read it, that contemplates [sending American armies to Vietnam]. I agree with the Senator that that is the last thing we would want to do. However, the language of the resolution would not prevent it. It would authorize whatever the Commander in Chief feels is necessary.
J. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT, Senate debate over the passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, August 6, 1964

The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit.
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., speech at Riverside Church in New York City, "A Time to Break Silence", April 4, 1967

Now we have a problem in trying to make our power credible, and Vietnam looks like the place.
JOHN F. KENNEDY, interview with New York Times reporter James Reston, June 1961

We do this [escalating U.S. military involvement in Vietnam] in order to slow down aggression. We do this to increase the confidence of the brave people of South Vietnam who have bravely born this brutal battle for so many years with so many casualties. And we do this to convince the leaders of North Vietnam–and all who seek to share their conquest–of a simple fact: We will not be defeated. We will not grow tired. We will not withdraw either openly or under the cloak of a meaningless agreement.
LYNDON B. JOHNSON, speech explaining his decision to send U.S. combat troops to Vietnam, April 7, 1965

I have asked for this radio and television time tonight for the purpose of announcing that we today have concluded an agreement to end the war and bring peace with honor in Vietnam and in Southeast Asia.
RICHARD NIXON, speech announcing agreement with North Vietnam on the Paris Peace Accords, January 23, 1973

It was to be a "limited war" which accorded well with Johnson's wish to persuade the American people that what was happening in Vietnam was not really a "war."
WILLIAM R. HAYCRAFT, *Unraveling Vietnam: How American Arms and Diplomacy Failed in Southeast Asia*

Upcoming Events

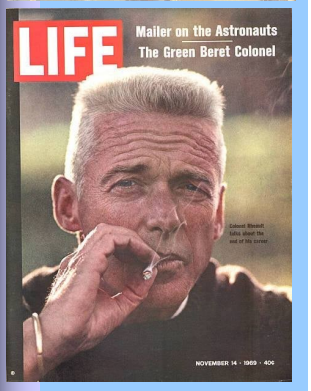
October 13, 2026, 7:00 PM, Monthly VVA Meeting

October 13, 2026, 7:00 PM, Monthly AVVA Meeting

October 13, 2026 U.S. Navy Birthday

Inside this Edition

President's Comments 1
September 8, 2026 Minutes 2
Every Ambush in Vietnam Held Surprises. This One Ended in Death 3
My Father's Vietnam 4
Emotional speech honors Vietnam War veterans 5



Minutes for September 8, 2026 Membership Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by President David Stokes followed by Prayer and draping of the POW/MIA flag.

Committee Reports

Membership VVA-205 AVVA-43

Finance
David Stokes read the Financial Report

There was no Chaplain's Report

Old Business
American Legion Post 16 sent a thank you to Chapter 196 for our donation to Girls State

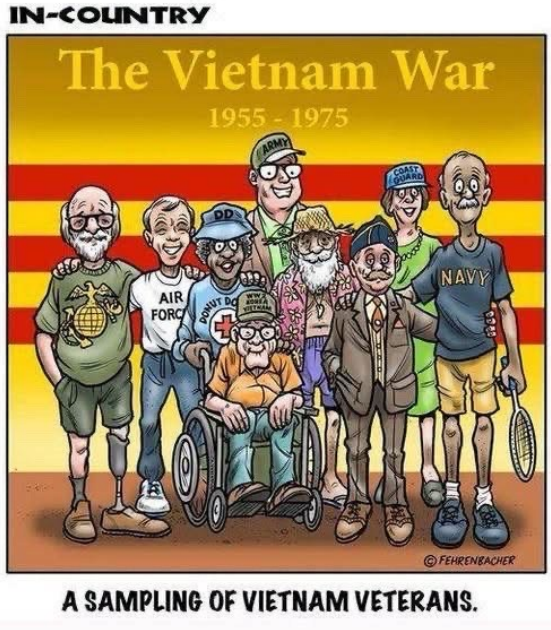
New Business
Chapter 196 received donations totaling $3178 this month.

Field of Flags will be put up Friday night and Opening ceremonies will take place Sunday night.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted.

Robert Crowder, Secretary VVA Chapter 196



TOP 25 SONGS OF OCTOBER 1967

(BASED ON BILLBOARD'S HOT CHART)

1. "The Letter" – The Box Tops
2. "To Sir with Love" – Lulu
3. "Never My Love" – The Association
4. "Ode to Billie Joe" – Bobbie Gentry
5. "How Can I Be Sure" – The Young Rascals
6. "Little Ole Man – Bill Cosby
7. "Come Back When You Grow Up" – Bobby Vee & The Strangers
8. "Soul Man" – Sam & Dave
9. "Expressway to Your Heart" – The Soul Survivors
10. "Apples, Peaches, Pumpkin Pie" – Jay & The Techniques
11. "Gimme Little Sign" – Brenton Wood
12. "Your Precious Love" – Marvin Gaye & Tammi Terrell
13. "Dandelion" – The Rolling Stones
14. "Higher and Higher" – Jackie Wilson
15. "People Are Strange" – The Doors
16. "Gettin' Together" – Tommy James & The Shondells
17. "You're My Everything" – The Temptations
18. "Incense and Peppermints" – Strawberry Alarm Clock
19. "Reflections" – Diana Ross & The Supremes
20. "It Must Be Him" – Vikki Carr
21. "Brown Eyed Girl" – Van Morrison
22. "San Franciscan Nights" – Eric Burdon & The Animals
23. "I Make a Fool of Myself" – Frankie Valli
24. "Please Love Me Forever" – Bobby Vinton
25. "The Rain, the Park & Other Things" – The Cowsills

Every Ambush in Vietnam Held Surprises. This One Ended in Death *by Stanley Ross*

A Vietnam Vet is haunted by the life he took during an ambush. Read his story here...
'We were told that war was simple, either the other guy or me. At the time, I believed our leaders. Now, I'm not so sure'
More than five decades after 1968, an especially violent year of the war, the rain, hunger, and calamity in Vietnam's Central Highlands remain etched in my mind. Death was the purpose of our ambush, and we found it.

I was assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade, 3rd Battalion's A Company as a forward observer, tasked with bridging the gap between our company and the artillery, air support, and helicopter gunships. We were airlifted there because of a heavy Viet Cong presence nearby.

The relentless rain made our lives miserable, especially for me because I wore glasses, which constantly had to be wiped clear. Resupply was nearly impossible since we were positioned on a cloud-hugging mountaintop. Our rations were dwindling to dangerous levels, and we faced the possibility of needing to move off the mountain for resupply.

Though helicopters could resupply troops in the field, hiking to the landing zone would have meant abandoning the mission described in this essay. (Photo courtesy of Stanley Ross)

Our single greatest fear, besides walking into an enemy ambush or stepping on a lethal booby trap, was depleting our radio batteries. Without communication to battalion headquarters, we were vulnerable to attack and being overrun by VC. We kept a single spare battery in a waterproof bag for emergencies.

Hiking to the landing zone for more supplies at the mountain's base was an option, but it meant abandoning the mission. The threat of a VC ambush loomed large, making such a move impractical. On the fourth day of the operation, the lieutenant and platoon sergeant briefed us on an upcoming assignment: Two squads would organize an ambush; I was to accompany them as the forward observer. I meticulously prepared my gear while hoping for a break in the weather. The downpour persisted, but our determination to succeed was unwavering.

In the early morning of the ambush, the site was shrouded in darkness as the rain pounded the trees and bushes. It sounded like machine gun fire. My equipment and pack got soaked during our march to the ambush site. I prayed that our vigilance would guard us from being surprised by the enemy.

With a clean and oiled M-16, along with six ammunition magazines in my sling and one in my rifle, I was prepared to confront the enemy. I sat on my spare poncho to keep dry and wrapped the other around my shoulders.
I laid my hand grenades next to me, ready to grab and throw.

The sergeant checked our positions to ensure that no one was in the line of friendly fire. Two of my buddies each placed a claymore mine along the length of the ambush site. If the VC came from either direction, one of the men would trigger the claymore, sending hundreds of small metal pellets flying toward the enemy.

We needed to sit tight, be quiet, remain patient, and stay awake. We had a lot of experience setting up ambushes and being ambushed. Sometimes we caught people and sometimes not, but we never had to kill anyone.
Time stretched on with the torrential downpour. Having to clean my eyeglasses kept me mostly awake. I just dozed, unlike my friends, who were out cold all around me.

Those hours seemed like days, and the rain tapping on the vegetation now sounded like a lullaby. Fear gripped me as I realized that sleeping jeopardized our safety. A burst of shots pierced the silence as I pulled the trigger. Chaos erupted and everyone started yelling. One guy set off his claymore as the VC fled, leaving one of their own behind.

The author, standing left, at a mountaintop campsite in Vietnam with his company in 1968. (Photo courtesy of Stanley Ross)

The dead VC was no older than we were, a haunting testament to the horrors of war. I felt numb in the realization that I had taken a life.

The following day, the company packed up and marched to the landing zone, where helicopters airlifted us back to the battalion base camp. We were thankful that our mission had ended with no casualties on our side.
In theory, the mission was a success.

He was likely our age, maybe younger. The spiritless, empty look on his face is frozen in my mind. "Does death look like this?" I wondered. His body was like an inanimate object, not the living, breathing person he had been.
Although years have passed, I can still see him moving through the brush, turning his head just as I pulled the trigger. I did not miss. It was the first time I had to kill someone.

Stanley Ross posing with his rifle in 1968 as his company prepares drop supplies for another mission. (Photo courtesy of the author)

When it was over, he lay a few feet away, his eyes still open. I remember kneeling beside him, waiting for a sound, a breath, that never came.

I took a photo. I told myself it was for the record, but perhaps it was something else. Perhaps proof that I had actually done it. Or guilt. For weeks, I couldn't look at the picture. When I finally did, I couldn't let it go.

I thought about his family: a mother waiting for her son, a father who'd never know where he was buried. We laid him in a shallow grave on that mountaintop, the wind cutting through us while scavenger birds circled overhead, looking for a meal.
We were told by our leaders that war was simple: either the other guy or me. At the time, I believed it; now I'm not so sure. That day, I lost a piece of myself I never got back. The boy in me died with that VC. I will always carry the burden of killing another person, marking me forever with the echoes of a distant past. Sometimes, when the night gets too still, I see his face again. And I remember the moment when everything changed.

My Father's Vietnam *By Jon Meacham*

Jere Meacham on patrol in Vietnam with other members of the U.S. Army's Fourth Infantry Division. He sent the images to his son in 1999. In 1999, one former combat soldier from the Army's Fourth Infantry Division in Vietnam sent a package to his son comprised of words and photos regarding his time during the war. Check out the photos and read what his son had to say about the package.

Thirty years after everything happened–and 31 years since he had first set foot in Southeast Asia–my father, a soldier of the Fourth Infantry Division, wrote me a letter. It was 1999, and the note came with a set of recently rediscovered photographs he and his friends had taken with an old 35-mm Minolta in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. There were images of impossibly young men, their helmets heavy on their heads, carrying M-16s, smoking cigarettes, and trying to look happy–itself a form of bravery. There were pictures of the lush landscape and of villagers going about their business, drawing water and sitting, watching, some blankly, all warily.

My father's words, though, were the most poignant part of the package. "I thought you might like to have these," he wrote me. "You are the historian, and I know you will preserve them. I remember the brutal heat, the more brutal humidity, the chop-chop-chop of the helicopter blades, and elephant grass that could cut men up like a knife. And I remember many things that I have never told you or anyone. Those are the demons that I will always bear. South Vietnam, for me, is a place I've never really left."

Neither, truth be told, has America. As I watched Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's illuminating 10-part documentary The Vietnam War, I thought often of my father and, inescapably, of his "demons." He hinted from time to time about harrowing firefights with enemy soldiers but offered no details. The numbers tell a grim story: from 1966 to '70, 2,500 fellow members of what's known as the "Ivy Division" died; 15,000 were wounded. For my father and so many other veterans, the battles never genuinely ended. Over the decades, casualties of this perpetual war included emotional stability, peace of mind, marriages, and, more broadly, America's sense of virtue and of self-confidence.

Jere Meacham on patrol in Vietnam with other members of the U.S. Army's Fourth Infantry Division. He sent the images to his son in 1999 Courtesy Jon Meacham

The power of Burns and Novick's documentary lies in its remarkable capacity to tell the story of the struggle in terms both particular and universal. This is part historical narrative, part cultural exploration, and part therapy–the last made even more effective by its subtlety. Burns and Novick take us from the corridors of power in Washington, Hanoi, and Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) to rice paddies and jungles and POW prisons. Driven by Burns' characteristic devices–curated music, limited but effective interviews, and powerful still and moving imagery–The Vietnam War may have an even larger cultural impact than his landmark Civil War project of 1990. (Colin Powell, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, gave President George H. W. Bush videotapes of that documentary to watch in the run-up to the Gulf War. In his audiotape diary, the President recounted how the moving accounts of the travails of ordinary soldiers helped reinforce his determination to avoid a long land war in the Middle East.) I've always thought about what it would have been like for veterans of the cataclysm of 1861–65 to experience Burns' treatment of their war. With the new documentary, we don't have to wonder, for the warriors of the Vietnam era, many now in their 70s, will relive those momentous, disorienting days.

Vietnam and Watergate were decisive events in the erosion of trust in the government with which we still live, and both Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon admitted in private what they would not say in public. "The great trouble I'm under–a man can fight if he can see daylight down the road somewhere," Johnson told Senator Richard Russell in a tape-recorded conversation in March 1965, early in the journey. "But there ain't no daylight in Vietnam." During the '68 campaign, Nixon was more honest with his aides than with voters–and soldiers: "I've concluded that there's no way to win the war," Nixon said. "But we can't say that, of course. In fact, we have to seem to say the opposite, just to keep some degree of bargaining leverage." The war would last another seven years.

Jere Meacham on patrol in Vietnam with other members of the U.S. Army's Fourth Infantry Division. He sent the images to his son in 1999. Courtesy Jon Meacham

Hal Kushner, a medic, held in captivity for five years by the Viet Cong, is among the film's memorably affecting figures. His voice catching, tears coming, Kushner describes his 1973 release: "There was an Air Force brigadier general in Class A uniform. He looked magnificent. I looked at him, and he had breadth; he had a thickness that we didn't have. He had on a garrison cap, and his hair was plump and moist, and our hair was like straw. It was dry, and we were skinny. And I went out and I saluted him, which was a courtesy that had been denied us for so many years. And he saluted me, and I shook hands with him, and he hugged me–he actually hugged me. And he said, 'Welcome home, Major. We're glad to see you, Doctor.' The tears were streaming down his cheeks."

In the film, Kushner tells this story with Ray Charles' "America the Beautiful" playing softly in the background. To write about it risks making the presentation of Kushner's release seem hokey, but it is not. Far from it. To me, the Kushner sequence is perhaps the most powerful moment in the entire series, not least because of the newly freed POW's sense of dimension and size. The magnificence of the officer who greeted him, the "breadth" and "thickness" and the "plump" and "moist" hair: it's as though the scraggly and sapped Kushner saw the general as the embodiment of the old America, invincible America, victorious America–an America that didn't really exist anymore, or at least not in Southeast Asia.

Picture taken in the Central Highlands in South Vietnam 1968-69. Courtesy Jon Meacham

One cold winter morning after Christmas 1984–I was 15, the same age my son is now–my father and I took a trip to Washington. Like a lot of other veterans, he had been skeptical of the plans for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, thinking the unusual design in a gently sloping hill in the shadow of the monuments to Lincoln and Washington suggested a lack of respect. Seeing it changed his mind. He said nothing as we walked along the wall of the dead. Coming to the years of his service, he stopped, searching for a familiar name. He found it, and it was within reach. He ran a finger over the letters, turned, stepped back, and we moved on.

In his letter to me with the photographs of Vietnam 15 years later, my father was relatively terse about his thoughts in-country. "I wanted," he wrote, "to get back to life." My father is dead now, but for the warriors who remain among us, Ken Burns has at last charted a path back toward life, and toward home.

Emotional speech honors Vietnam War veterans

By John Stewart

The following speech includes a call to action to each of us. Please heed the advice given.,

Recently, I spoke at a very special sunrise service honoring Vietnam War veterans from across Nebraska. You may be asking yourself why I am writing about an event in another state. I want the people of Citrus County to fully understand the difficulties faced by Vietnam War veterans. And perhaps my words below will be of help to anyone in need here.

In 1985, a group of military veterans from World War II and the Korean War formed the Nebraska Vietnam Veterans Reunion (NVVR). As time and the age of personnel passed, the 20-member managing committee became increasingly dominated by Vietnam War veterans and their family members. The purpose of NVVR was simply to have Vietnam War veterans a reunion avenue for sharing and healing. However, it was now coming to an end due to the age of the committee members, with no one else stepping forward to continue the program.

The sunrise service followed a day-before banquet attended by approximately 650 Vietnam War veterans and family members from across the state. The planned keynote speaker, Nebraska's governor, was forced to cancel his banquet appearance due to other commitments. Scrambling to find a replacement, I was contacted and agreed to substitute for the governor.In my 30 years of being heavily involved with the support of veterans, from an emotional stance this was the most difficult task I have ever done.

The main subject of my speech was recovery. I spoke about the difficulties we faced when coming home from the Vietnam War after experiencing the horrific actions of combat and returning to be insulted by those demonstrating against that war, despite the fact that we were in need of recovery.

But while in combat in Vietnam, I said we had two other words that were nearly as important to us as recovery upon return: honor and trust. A perfect example of honor was in our young soldiers. Of those killed in Vietnam, 61 percent were 21 years old or younger, while thousands of them were only 18 years old.

Imagine you had just graduated from high school, and you are still three years away from being able to vote and drink alcohol legally. You may have never had a driver's license. Then, you are drafted into the Army and spend eight weeks learning how to use a rifle and a pistol, a machine gun, a grenade and a bayonet.

Then told to go and serve and kill people … while serving with honor. Those 18-year-old kids may not have been able to put it into words, but they quickly learned what honor was to be. They were doing their best to fulfill their mission and defend and protect their fellow soldiers. Even if risking their own life was necessary.

And for those 18-year-olds, the second important word came into their lives: trust.

They realized their brothers trusted them to do their mission, even if under heavy fire, and their lives were at risk. Teenager or not, honor and trust were also two words every single one of us, regardless of age, lived by while serving alongside our brothers-in-arms in Vietnam. However, after thinking about it, I said a third word is necessary to describe us in Vietnam: courage.

When one of our brothers-in-arms was killed, it was horrific, and we did what soldiers have to do. We cried but crammed our anguish and sorrow way down deep inside into our own secret box and we closed the lid tight so we could carry on doing our job … with courage. But then, one day, we who survived and fought with courage and honor and trust finally came home. But, for many of us upon return, the war never ended. And that word, recovery, came into the forefront.

It is difficult for some people to understand our mental status when on Thursday we could have been in a firefight or watching a village burn or watching friends die, and on Sunday our tour was over, and we were flown out to find ourselves at LA International Airport watching Americans protest our service and sacrifices and calling us baby killers.

Many of us committed suicide at some point after returning to that horrific welcome home. And there were a lot of suicides. It is difficult to obtain accurate figures of how many of us did so, but the Veterans Administration (VA) and National Library of Medicine did issue reports covering the 1979 through 2019 suicides of veterans of the Vietnam War era. The number was rather unbelievable.

To put it into perspective, if every citizen of Inverness and Ocala died today, it would be less than the number of veteran suicides in VA's report. Over 94,000 were in that report. And there are many more years of suicide numbers not included in it.

I often wonder how many of those veterans could have been saved if they had been welcomed home and provided adequate recovery programs.

I told the crowd there were probably some in the banquet room who needed recovery and, fortunately, did reach out for help. However, some of us present may not have sought recovery upon return from the hell of Vietnam due to our post-traumatic stress. I followed that by stating there are probably several reasons why we did not do so.

How could we possibly tell some stranger about the atrocities we had faced? How could anyone who had not been there understand what we had been through?
We killed people or saw others who did so. We saw our friends get killed or wounded. We held them in our arms and cried. We were shot, blown up, and maimed.

We came home and were told not to wear our uniforms in public because it was dangerous. Uniforms we wore and served with courage, honor, and trust. We came home and were cursed at, spit on, and humiliated for our service.

Many of us went looking for comfort in a bottle, in a needle, became homeless, considered committing suicide … or actually did it. We needed recovery and honor, but many did not receive it, and many of us did not seek help.

I was one of them and told my own story. I'll not repeat it here because once was enough in discussing my difficulties and an extremely close moment in my life of nearly committing suicide. I used my story last night to encourage those in need of help to get it as I did.

After my speech, veteran after veteran and family member after family member came up to me to tell their own story of sacrifice, service, and suffering. Many were in wheelchairs, or using strollers or canes, missing both legs, an arm, an eye, or suffering from other injuries after being wounded in Vietnam.

Many were without any physical injuries, but obviously suffered from what I could readily see were mental health issues.

My most emotional moments occurred when multiple spouses of veterans came up to me and said their husbands needed help with their PTSD, never went to get it, and after my speech, I told them they would go get help. Their hugs will never be forgotten.

I held my tears back as best I could, but it was difficult until I returned home and began writing this article immediately. And, as I sit here with keyboard in hand, in all honesty, tears are rolling down my face from my experiences these past few days during this last reunion.

There is no actual number of how many Vietnam War direct-combat veterans reside in Nebraska, just as it is not found in Florida or throughout America. Florida has approximately 423,000 Vietnam-era veterans, according to the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs in March 2025. It is challenging to find an exact number for combat veterans, specifically, as statistics often refer to the broader "Vietnam-era" designation.

Regardless of the number, I am certain that many who served in combat or simply in uniform at other locations during that turmoil are now in need of help. For those reading this article in that situation, here are possible avenues to achieve it:

"You are still, and will always be, our heroes … welcome home." To my brothers-in-arms, as I sit here in tears, I echo Anne's final comment.

Welcome home.

John Stewart is a retired Air Force Chief Master Sergeant and disabled Vietnam War veteran. In 2016, he was inducted into the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame. His columns are sourced from public, government, and private information, and the content is checked for accuracy as best as possible. However, you have the responsibility to verify the contents before taking any related action.

Vietnam Veterans of America—Chapter 196
Lynchburg , Virginia

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
STANLEY E. TAYLOR MEMORIAL CHAPTER 196
LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA®

Vietnam Veterans of America
Chapter 196
439 Westview Circle
Lynchburg, VA. 24504

www.vva.org

www.vva-vasc.org

Give This to a Fellow Vietnam Veteran...

The Vietnam Veterans of America association is a "home of our own" - a community of fellowship with people who share your experiences, needs, and hopes for the future. Agent Orange is still with us and our numbers are dwindling, probably at a much faster rate then we would like it. That makes it even more important for Vietnam Veterans to have a viable and strong organization to represent us in Washington

Membership is open to U.S. armed force veterans who served on active duty (for other than training purposes) in the Republic of Vietnam between Feb.. 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975, or in any duty location between Aug. 5, 1964 and May 7, 1975.

To have a fellow Vietnam Veteran join, either cut out the application and give it to the Vet or better yet, give your copy of our newsletter to him or her. Don't forget that a copy of their DD-214 with their membership application is required.

Families, friends, supporters, and veterans of other eras can join the Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America and receive the same benefits, including a subscription to The VVA Veteran.

BECOME A LIFE MEMBER

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP IN VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA Return to: VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA, P.O. BOX 49030, Baltimore, MD 21207-4930

Name _____ ☐ Male ☐ Female

Address _____ City_____ State _____ ZIP _____

Chapter No. ___196___ Phone ( ) _____ Email _____

SALE **NEW LOWER PRICE!**

LIFE MEMBERSHIP NOW ONLY $50

PAYMENT METHOD ☐Check ☐Money Order ☐Visa ☐Master Card ☐American Express ☐Discover

CREDIT CARD NUMBER _____ Exp. Date _____

ELIGIBILITY: **Membership is open to U.S. armed forces veterans who served on active duty (for other than training purposes) in the Republic of Vietnam between February 28, 1961, and May 7, 1975, or any duty station between August 5, 1964 and May 7, 1975**

Signature _____

New members must submit a copy of their DD-214 along with this application and dues payment.