

January 2002



NORTHLAND VIETNAM VETERANS' ASSOCIATION

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"DignityThru Unity"

Reflections on 9-11 Ground Zero By Fr. Jonn Petrich

In the past, generations have had worker events that define life and history. 1941 December 7 with the attack on Pearl Harbor people responded with loyalty and service.

We remember where we were on 22 November 1963 when President Kennedy was assassinated and our response.

When the Apollo astronauts walked on the moon we were glued to the TV to experience that historical event.

911-01 was similar; it was the worker event of this generation, it calls out of us a patriotism that finds flags every where and a renewed loyalty and purpose that binds our nation together.

It is into this I as a police Chaplain in Duluth was invited to New York to work with the New York and New Jersey Port Authority police at Ground Zero .

This was a week and an experience that I will never forget.

We worked at Ground Zero with the police stress teams from San Francisco police and Boston police assisting rescue and recovery teams with critical incident, stress management

A critical incident is an event that is more than our mind, and heart can cope with; 3000 people dead, 60 police officers and 390 fire fighters, our task was to connect with police and fire departments as well as the victims' families.

This happened at ground zero by working 12 hour shifts every day from noon until midnight.

During our time, the recovery efforts would have very

high highs as well as low lows.

September 30th was a high with about one hundred people found. I was detailed to the temporary morgue that night to pray and commemorate the dead. We draped many American flags over the members of service.

Many of our days would be spent working and talking around ground zero, and with the machinery working the sounds and smells were horrendous.

Often the smoke and smells would be overpowering, which along with not finding victims led to frustration and very low lows. Often the police and fire people would work and speak of a single purpose to recover and bring resolution to the families of the victims. All week we would hear this along with anger, anxiety and grief.

Many of the police and fire knew their comrades or were related to them and for some this tragedy at times was overwhelming. We were there and experienced this from them. We shared hope and faith and good words.

The whole of my time in New York caused me to see what I value in life. As I reflect personally I believe that people matter even more-their stories, experiences and connections. I hear the truth and I believe that out of all life, God is for us and nothing, no evil will prevail.

Together we can make a difference in lives as we listen and share what is dear to our hearts.

SEA CADETS COMING TO DULUTH

An effort is being made to develop a Sea Cadet unit in Duluth. This would be for youngsters ages 14 18, meeting for a day once per month, to learn nautical skills. Meetings will be held at the Duluth Naval Reserve building. The local Navy League is supporting the organization, and local business are being contacted to provide financial sponsorship. In addition, adults in the community are being asked to become involved in management and operations of the unit. A presentation will be made to NVVA at the January 28, 2002 meeting, to provide more information and answer questions.

Sandy Fjeld

To add a article to this news-letter contact

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NWA Memberships

158 Members
80 Associates

Don't Forget Party

March 16. 2002
C W Chips
Rockabilly Review
Happy Hour 6:00 P.M.
Dinner @ 7:00 P.M.

Prizes and Fun for all

Night Before Christmas 2001

'T WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS, HE LIVED
ALL ALONE,
IN A ONE BEDROOM HOUSE MADE OF PLASTER AND
STONE.

I HAD COME DOWN THE CHIMNEY WITH PRESENTS
TO GIVE,
AND TO SEE JUST WHO IN THIS HOME DID LIVE.

I LOOKED ALL ABOUT, A STRANGE SIGHT I DID SEE,
NO TINSEL, NO PRESENTS, NOT EVEN A TREE.

NO STOCKING BY MANTLE, JUST BOOTS FILLED
WITH SAND,
AND ON THE WALL PICTURES OF FAR DISTANT
LANDS.

WITH MEDALS AND BADGES, AWARDS OF ALL
KINDS,
A SOBERING THOUGHT CAME TO MY MIND.

FOR THIS HOUSE WAS DIFFERENT, SO DARK AND SO
DREARY,
THE HOME OF A SOLDIER, NOW I COULD SEE
CLEARLY.

THE SOLDIER LAY SLEEPING, SILENT, A LONE,
CURLED UP ON THE FLOOR IN THIS ONE BEDROOM
HOME.

THE FACE WAS SO GENTLE, THE ROOM IN SUCH DIS-
ORDER,
NOT HOW I PICTURED A UNITED STATES SOLDIER.

WAS THIS THE HERO OF WHOM I'D JUST READ?
CURLED UP ON A PONCHO, THE FLOOR FOR A BED?

I REALIZED THE FAMILIES THAT I SAW THIS NIGHT,
OWED THEIR LIVES TO THESE SOLDIERS WHO WERE
WILLING TO FIGHT.

SOON ROUND THE WORLD, THE CHILDREN WOULD
PLAY,
AND GROWNUPS WOULD CELEBRATE A BRIGHT
CHRISTMAS DAY.

THEY ALL ENJOYED FREEDOM EACH MONTH OF THE
YEAR,
BECAUSE OF THE SOLDIERS, LIKE THE ONE LYING
HERE.

I COULDN'T HELP WONDER HOW MANY LAY ALONE,
ON A COLD CHRISTMAS EVE IN A LAND FAR FROM
HOME.

THE VERY THOUGHT BROUGHT A TEAR TO MY EYE,
I DROPPED TO MY KNEES AND STARTED TO CRY.

THE SOLDIER AWAKENED AND I HEARD A ROUGH
VOICE,
"SANTA DON'T CRY, THIS LIFE IS MY CHOICE;

I FIGHT FOR FREEDOM, I DON'T ASK FOR MORE,
MY LIFE IS MY GOD, MY COUNTRY, MY CORPS."

THE SOLDIER ROLLED OVER AND SOON DRIFTED TO
SLEEP,
I COULDN'T CONTROL IT, I CONTINUED TO WEEP.

I KEPT WATCH FOR HOURS, SO SILENT AND STILL,
AND WE BOTH SHIVERED FROM THE COLD EVE-
NING'S CHILL.

I DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE ON THAT COLD, DARK
NIGHT,
THIS GUARDIAN OF HONOR SO WILLING TO FIGHT.

THEN THE SOLDIER ROLLED OVER, WITH A VOICE
SOFT AND PURE, WHISPERED,
"CARRY ON SANTA, IT'S CHRISTMAS DAY, ALL IS SE-
CURE."

ONE LOOK AT MY WATCH, AND I KNEW HE WAS
RIGHT.
"MERRY CHRISTMAS MY FRIEND, AND TO ALL A
GOOD NIGHT."

This poem was written by a Marine stationed in Okinawa
Japan.

The following is his request. I think it is reasonable
Please.

Would you do me the kind favor of sending this to as
many people
as you can? Christmas will be coming soon and some
credit is due
to our U.S. servicemen and women for our being able to
celebrate
these festivities. Let's try in this small way to pay a tiny
bit
of what we owe. Make people stop and think of our he-
roes, living
and dead, who sacrificed themselves for us.

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Washington D.C trip

**If you are interested in learning more about a 5 day
bus trip to Washington D.C. in late April, please call
Cindy at the Vet Center (722-8654) or e-mail me at
macaulaycindy@hotmail.com.**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Farrell or
December 7, 2001
224-8440

CONTACT: Jim
Allison Dobson (202)

Wellstone Overcomes GOP Secret Hold to Secure Final Passage of His Homeless Veterans Bill

(Washington, D.C.) — Overcoming yet again a renewed secret hold by an anonymous Republican, U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone (D-MN) yesterday succeeded in securing final passage in the Senate of his Heather French Homeless Veterans Assistance Act (S. 739). The Wellstone bill will put the resources in place to reach the national goal of ending veterans' homelessness within the decade. Passage of the conference report yesterday sends the Wellstone bill to the House of Representatives for final passage there next week, and then on to the President for his signature. A nameless Republican senator had used a procedural tactic to block the Wellstone bill for weeks — never explaining why — holding the homeless vets bill hostage. Wellstone himself put a block on all GOP non-emergency legislation and resolutions in response, which successfully focused the concentration of the anonymous blocker's fellow Republicans, resulting in the hold being peeled off. It is still unknown who had placed the hold. Wellstone enjoyed the vocal support of veterans and their service organizations throughout his bare-knuckled legislative fight to help America's homeless vets. "This is a tremendous and hard-fought victory for America's veterans. We still don't know who was objecting to passage of the bill. They never came forward. But the important thing is that they got out of the way. It's unfortunate that I had to break the bill free the hard way -- by holding up other legislation. But I think once other Senators realized that I was serious, and all non-emergency legislation would be stalled in the Senate until we got this done for veterans, we started to see some progress. The House has already passed a similar bill, and should act quickly on a final version that can be sent to the President," Wellstone said.

The bill, which represents the most comprehensive effort to end veterans homelessness, expands and improves the Department of Veterans Affairs' programs for homeless veterans in a number of key areas, including: outreach to veterans at risk of homelessness; support for VA health care providers to develop programs to meet the special needs of homeless veterans—the aged, women, the terminally ill, substance abusers, and those who suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; strengthening the VA transitional housing grant program; and authorizing homeless vets in vocational rehabilitation programs to participate in compensated work therapy programs. The bill will also expand the Department of Labor's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, a small, but highly effective program to assist homeless veterans in finding jobs and to become self-sufficient.

Star Tribune story about National Guard bill and Homeless Vets Bill:

Senate votes to give financial protection to Guard members
Sarah McKenzie
Star Tribune

Published Dec 8 2001

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The Senate voted Friday to give financial protections to National Guard members who are protecting the nation's airports and other sites.

Senators approved on a voice vote a bill that would cap interest at 6 percent on active Guard members' loans and make it harder for lenders to foreclose on them. "Anything we can do to help our soldiers make ends meet, I think is a great thing," said Maj. Gary Olson, a Minnesota National Guard spokesman.

Sen. Paul Wellstone, D-Minn., was chief sponsor of the amendment to a defense-spending bill. "By changing existing law, we will ease the financial burdens of thousands of soldiers and their families protecting us today," he said.

The legislation would aid all Guard members who were activated by governors and close a loophole in current law. Under the Sailors' and Soldiers' Relief Act of 1940, the financial protections are given only to reservists activated by the president. Sen. Mark Dayton, D-Minn., was a co-sponsor.

Rep. Jim Ramstad, R-Minn., has introduced a similar bill in the House. He said Friday that many Guard members have been "forced to take huge pay cuts for their service."

"This is an issue of fundamental fairness for those who have been called to duty to protect our airports, courthouses and other public places," he said. Sen. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., credited Wellstone with identifying a problem that "cries out to be responded to and answered." "These are really extraordinary people who come to service as citizen soldiers," he said. Since October, 176 Guard members have patrolled Minnesota's airports under an order issued by Gov. Jesse Ventura. President Bush asked governors to deploy the soldiers in September.

The full-time duty has had its consequences. The Minnesota National Guard has considered taking some members off of the duty because of financial hardships.

Capt. Charles Kemper, who oversees the Guard at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, said he has sought grants to help needy personnel. National Guard Cpl. Paul Dellwo, who patrols the Twin Cities airport, faced a \$1,000 monthly pay cut from his job as a police officer when he was activated. He said he was grateful to hear the measure had advanced in Congress. "I'm pleased Wellstone took the initiative and the Senate is listening," Dellwo said. "It would be a great relief for a lot of us." Wellstone vets' bill unblocked

In another victory for Wellstone, an anonymous Republican has dropped a hold on his homeless-veterans bill, and he has agreed to drop his retaliatory holds on Republican legislation.

The Senate passed the homeless-vets bill late Thursday; the House is expected to vote on it next week.

Republicans held and then released the hold on the bill three weeks ago, but the legislation then had to be reconciled with a House version, prompting another hold this week. The bill would provide outreach to veterans facing possible homelessness and support veterans who are homeless, strengthen Veterans Affairs transitional housing and expand a federal program aimed at helping homeless veterans find jobs.

Wellstone said he never found out who was blocking the legislation, or why.

-- The Associated Press contributed to this report.-- Sarah McKenzie is at smckenzie@mcclatchydc.com .

House Approves Veterans Bills
By JIM ABRAMS
Associated Press Writer

Published Dec 11 2001

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The House approved three bills Tuesday providing \$6.6 billion over the next five years to help veterans escape homelessness and obtain greater education, housing, burial and disability benefits.

Two of the bills -- \$1 billion to aid homeless veterans and \$2.5 billion to increase compensation payments for disabled veterans -- now go to the White House for the president's signature. The third bill, a \$3.1 billion boost for education and other benefits, still needs Senate approval. All three passed by voice vote.

The homeless bill provides medical and mental health services, substance abuse treatment and job training. It was sponsored in the House by Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Chris Smith, R-N.J., and in the Senate by Sen. Paul Wellstone, D-Minn.

It also authorizes an additional 2,000 low-income housing vouchers, with priority going to those veterans under care for mental illness or substance-use disorders.

Smith said that estimates of veterans sleeping on the streets on any given night run as high as 300,000. He said the goal of the bill is to end chronic homelessness among veterans within 10 years.

The disabilities bill provides a 2.6 percent cost-of-living increase for disabled veterans and their survivors from Dec. 1. The 170,000 veterans who are classified as 100 percent disabled would receive an average annual increase in benefits of \$738.

The third measure would increase the current monthly payment of \$672 that a veteran with three years of active duty can receive for education programs. The stipend would rise to \$800 on Jan. 1, 2002; \$900 from Oct. 1, 2002; and 985 from Oct. 1, 2003.

Smith said that since 1985 only about half of the eligible veterans have taken advantage of the education benefit. "This bill goes a long way to closing the gap between school costs and benefits."

The bill also:

Removes the 30-year period during which respiratory cancers can be linked to exposure to herbicides such as Agent Orange, which was used extensively in the Vietnam War.

Adds type 2 diabetes to the list of diseases presumed to be service-connected in Vietnam veterans exposed to herbicides.

Expands the list of undiagnosed illnesses for which Persian Gulf War veterans would be eligible for disability compensation to include fibromyalgia, a painful disease of the connective tissue; chronic fatigue syndrome and chronic multisymptom illness.

Increases the home loan guaranty for qualified veterans from the current \$50,750 to \$60,000.

The homeless bill is H.R. 2176

The education and benefits bill is H.R. 1291.

The cost-of-living bill is H.R. 2540.

On the Net: Congress: <http://>

Note From Durbin

It should be noted that it was at the Nat. Col. for the Homeless Veterans Conference that NVVA sent three of us to attend is where this bill was introduced. I have been very involved with this bill ever since. The passing of the homeless veterans bill is a big victory for those of us that work on the street

These Pictures provided by Bob Woods after Storm



