

NOCVA News

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION of CHAMORRO VETERANS in AMERICA
NATIONAL OFFICE NEWSLETTER



FROM THE FOUNDERS

Cel Aguigui, Larry Cruz, and Frank Blas

As we look ahead to another Veterans Day and the season of Thanksgiving, it's important to remember our nation's veterans and be thankful for their service and sacrifice. NOCVA continues to reach out to anyone who can help us fulfill our mission to advocate for Chamorro Veterans and improve their quality of life.

This month we highlight one of the goals of our mission: Recognition and Appreciation, which seeks to honor the memory and service of Chamorro veterans through commemorative events and initiatives, and by maintaining a website that features information of interest to Chamorro veterans. With the introduction of last month's *NOCVA News*, we can add a newsletter, as well. As a group, Chamorro veterans are often spread out by distance, but that doesn't mean they have to be "out of the loop." To overcome the challenge of sharing news and events of interest to our members, we must use any and all available communication methods. In doing so, we build a database of shared knowledge that we can use to organize ourselves and be informed about issues that affect us.

We are gratified that the response to our first newsletter was overwhelmingly positive – These are some of the comments we received: "Full of good information ... I am really pleased with the concept ... excellent method of sharing ideas and keeping everyone abreast with the latest news within NOCVA. ... NOCVA's headquarters must continue with communication and updates, and the newsletter is the perfect medium."

We are thankful for the opportunity to serve those who have served.

VETERANS DAY MESSAGE 2013

To the Veterans of past generations and those who have served in all corners of the earth -- many in conflict areas -- we salute you for your service and sacrifice.

Our Nation's Veterans served to ensure that the freedoms so many take for granted continue to survive and flourish. YOU have done your part to protect our freedoms – so WE must do our part by supporting you. The formation of NOCVA, a unique and dynamic organization, is built on the strength of Chamorro veterans and brings attention to the challenges they face. NOCVA is now the right catalyst to put all things in perspective and to advance the mission and goals for unity, solidarity, and equitable treatment for our Veterans. NOCVA members come from all walks of life and volunteer their valuable time, talent, and energy for a common cause; they are dedicated to making a true difference in the lives of Chamorro veterans.

As we celebrate and give thanks to those who have served, we should
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2014 Guam High School Reunion!

9 Aug 2014
Las Vegas, NV
Information and registration info:
www.chamorro.com/reunion
Proceeds from this reunion and
from the 2011 Las Vegas
Reunion will go to
Guam Beautification Projects.

NATIONAL OFFICE ACTION ITEMS

NOCVA RECEIVES NON-PROFIT STATUS

In September, NOCVA national office received the good news that the application to function as a non-profit organization has been approved. Effective 1 November 2012, NOCVA is exempt from Federal income tax under section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, and classified as a "public charity."

This new status presents additional requirements:

- To include NOCVA chapters under the organization's non-profit status, NOCVA will need to request that the IRS consider NOCVA under a "group ruling." This request will be an addendum referencing the relationship between the national organization and the chapters.
- Each chapter will need to file for its own individual EIN number (by state).

NOCVA national coordinators will be sending regional coordinators specific information regarding the new requirements, along with a copy of the compliance guide for 501(c)(3) Public Charities.

U.S. Department of Defense Military Awards for Valor – Top 3

America has a time-honored tradition of recognizing acts of valor performed by Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines. Our nation's most prestigious valor awards:

- Medal of Honor (All Services)
- Distinguished Service Cross (Army); Navy Cross (Navy and Marines, and Coast Guard); Air Force Cross
- Silver Star (All Services)

For descriptions and lists of recipients see

<http://valor.defense.gov/DescriptionofAwards.aspx>

Source: U.S. Department of Defense website

CHELU, WE REMEMBER YOU

Military Service Awards

Individuals with Chamorro names* awarded The Distinguished Service Cross Medal for Actions during the Vietnam War:

- Tomas Garcia Reyes, Staff Sergeant, U.S. Army, Killed in Action, 9 Nov 1967
- Enrique C. Cruz, Staff Sergeant, U.S. Army, Action Date: 30 Jun 1966
- Joseph M. Perez, Specialist Fourth Class, U.S. Army, Action Date: 26 May 1967
- Vincente T. Dydasco, Sergeant First Class, U.S. Army, Action Date: 28 Oct 1967
- Jesus H. Guevara, Specialist Fourth Class, U.S. Army, Action Date: 27 Sep 1968
- Juan Ogo Blaz, Sergeant Major (then Staff Sergeant), U.S. Army, Action Date: 18 Jan 1969
- Martin A. Manglona, Command Sergeant Major (then Staff Sergeant), U.S. Army, Action Date: 23 Feb 1969

For complete citations, see *Military Times database*:

<http://projects.militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/>

*There may be other Chamorros who have yet to be identified in this database. Records of award recipients do not indicate mother's family name or place of birth, making it difficult to accurately track those who are of Chamorro ancestry. If you know of Chamorros who are not included in the official record, please contact us so that we may include them. NOCVA is dedicated to establishing a complete and accurate database of military award recipients and casualties of Chamorro ancestry.

VETERANS AFFAIRS NEWS

Terri Guevara Smith Appointed to VA Advisory Committee for Minority Veterans

Terri Smith has been appointed by Veteran Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki to serve on the VA's Advisory Committee for Minority Veterans. Committee members represent various minority groups (Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, African Americans, as well as Pacific Islander Americans) and provide advice to the Secretary on the needs of minority veterans regarding health care, rehabilitation benefits, compensation, outreach, and other programs administered by the VA.

In addition to her advocacy for Pacific Islanders, Terri also serves as the Senior Adviser to NOCVA for Chamorro Women Veterans and Regional Coordinator, Maryland Chapter. In her role on the VA committee, Terri will be representing Pacific Islander veterans to ensure that their needs and concerns are raised and considered. Should official documents/policy implications result from work done by the committee, Terri will provide status reports to NOCVA national coordinators, who will then communicate as necessary with regional coordinators.

Terri has a long history of supporting Chamorros and other Pacific Islanders. We are proud of Terri for being selected for this honor and extend our congratulations and best wishes to her!



Terri Guevara Smith

Teresita "Terri" Guevara Smith was born and raised in Ordot, Guam, to Juan Gogo Guevara (Kalu) and Teresita "Cid" Cruz Cruz (Fungo); she is one of nine children. She joined the U.S. Army in 1975 and retired after 22 years of service in 1997, as a Sergeant First Class. After retirement from the Army, Terri worked as a DOD contractor and Civilian Intelligence Officer. She currently works as a federal civilian employee for the Department of Defense in Washington, D.C.

Terri graduated from George Washington High School and attended the University of Guam. Her military career spanned 1976 to 1997, with tours in Germany, Maryland, California, and Washington D.C. As a DOD civilian, Terri received one of the highest honors in Military Intelligence, the "Knowlton Award," awarded by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence for her work in the DOD Open Source Intelligence Collection Management Program, and its system architecture.

Since 1993, she has been an active member of the Guam Society of America in Washington, D.C., serving in various leadership roles. Terri and her family live in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

VETERANS DAY MESSAGE

(continued from page 1)

always remember the significance of Veterans Day so that our nation remains strong so that freedom and liberty will continue to exist for future generations of Americans. -- *Frank H. Flores*

Veterans Day pays tribute to all American veterans, living or dead, but especially gives thanks to living veterans who served their country honorably during war or peacetime.

Source: <http://www.history.com/topics/history-of-veterans-day>

Frank Flores Honored for Outstanding Service by NOCVA's North Carolina Chapter

Frank Flores, who recently joined NOCVA's efforts to establish a program to help Chamorro veterans navigate the complicated VA claims process, was honored by NOCVA's North Carolina Chapter, Fayetteville, in June for his work as the Founder/Mentor of Project Guiding Light Veterans Volunteer Advocacy Group (PGL).

According to **Tony S. Duenas**, NOCVA NC PGL Coordinator, Frank's dedicated service to Chamorro veterans has earned him the respect and title as "VA Resident Expert"; particularly noteworthy is the fact that out of 24 claims submitted for benefits to date, 15 veterans have received 100% compensation.



Frank H. Flores

Frank H. Flores (a.k.a Apo, Cabeza, and Tagasi) was born in 1950 in Agana, Guam. From birth, Frank was raised by his grandmother, Ana Flores, and by his parents, the late Francisco San Nicholas Flores and Mercedes Guerrero Flores, formerly of Barrigada and now Ipan. He graduated in 1968 from George Washington High School. He enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and retired in October 1990 at Los Angeles Air Force Base (Space and Missile System Contracting Division) as a Master Sergeant. Frank retired after 22 years of military service; four months later, he returned to the work force.

In January 1991, he was hired as a GS-7 Trainee Veteran Benefits Counselor (VBC). He was promoted to GS-9 the following year and then to GS-10 Temporary VBC Lead Counselor. Three years into his tenure at the Los Angeles VA Regional Office, he was promoted to GS-11 as one of two Public Contact Representative Supervisors at that station. On his fifth year, he was nominated, certified, and selected as a Rating Officer, GS-12, where he started his career in decision making at one of the largest VA Regional Offices in the nation. He performed various duties such as Field Service Counselor for the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), covering Barstow Marine Corps Base and Fort Irwin Army National Training Center for Desert Warfare.

He volunteered for and was selected as the VA Regional Office (VARO) POW Assistant Coordinator and Assistant Senior Rating POW Officer under the direction and supervision of the Senior Rating and Training Officer at that station. He was selected for and managed the VARO Congressional Liaison Office with a staff of two. Other duties followed until he was certified for and selected to a pilot program for Senior Rating Officers (184 slots nationwide) as part of the VA Decision Review Officer (DRO) Program, GS-13. Frank was the first Chamorro VBA employee to be selected for this new and continuing program of appellate review. As a DRO, he was responsible for appeal cases in his assigned jurisdiction for a final review and decision prior to cases being certified and transferred to the Board of Veteran Appeals (VBA).

Frank retired from the VA and founded Project Guiding Light Veterans Volunteer Advocacy Group to bring attention to the plight of many veterans who were caught in the complex process involved in VA claims processing. He is now the Technical Consultant on VA Benefits and Federal/ancillary benefits and services for NOCVA. Frank lives in Las Vegas, NV.

NOCVA NATIONAL OFFICE STAFF

Celestin “Cel” Rivera Aguigui, *Founder/National Coordinator*

Lorenzo “Larry” Concepcion Cruz, *Founder/National Coordinator*

Francisco “Frank” Dumanal Blas, *Founder/National Coordinator*

Norma Villanueva Jeter, *Executive Administrator*

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Libby Aguigui Nau, *Editor/Media Relations*

Terri Guevara Smith, *Chamorro Veteran Women’s Advisory Group*

Frank H. Flores, *Technical Adviser for VA Benefits and Services*

Lou Balajadia Barrett, *Adviser*

Rick Arriola Perez, *Adviser*

NOCVA is a non-political, non-partisan national advocacy organization based in the Nation’s capital that seeks to unite and organize Chamorro veterans and their supporters to leverage their collective political influence in the U.S. to work on behalf of the Chamorro people – in the US, in Guam, and in the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

To become a member, visit our website at www.nocva.org to download a membership form.

Please address comments
and suggestions to *Editor*

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