

NOCVA News

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION of CHAMORRO VETERANS in AMERICA
NATIONAL OFFICE NEWSLETTER

March 2014
Volume 1, Issue 5



SPECIAL EDITION

Chamorro Veterans Commemoration Ceremony Anniversary March 2012-2014

Recognition was long overdue. The generation of Chamorro veterans who served in the Vietnam War are in their 70's and 80's, and they don't want to wait anymore for outside help to right past wrongs. To make things happen, they would have to do it themselves.

Two years ago this month, on 24 March 2012, a group of Chamorro veterans worked together to initiate, plan, and conduct the first commemoration ceremony held in the nation's capital to honor the 70 servicemen from Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) who died in the Vietnam War.

The idea for the ceremony came from Chamorro veterans from North Carolina who simply wanted to find a way to recognize the sacrifice and service of their fellow Chamorro soldiers who had died while serving their country.

On the day of the ceremony, despite a steady rain, the Chamorro spirit was shining bright. Chamorro veterans, their families, and over 50 supporters gathered at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall to witness history.

Surrounded by crowds of people visiting the nation's memorials and monuments, the Chamorro veterans had finally accomplished what they had set out to do. In a solemn and heartfelt ceremony, they paid tribute to a group of soldiers that will never be forgotten.

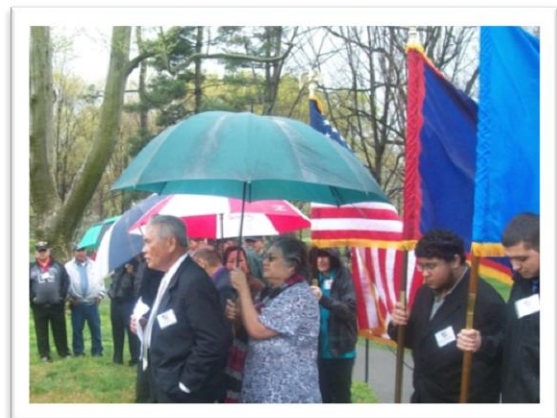
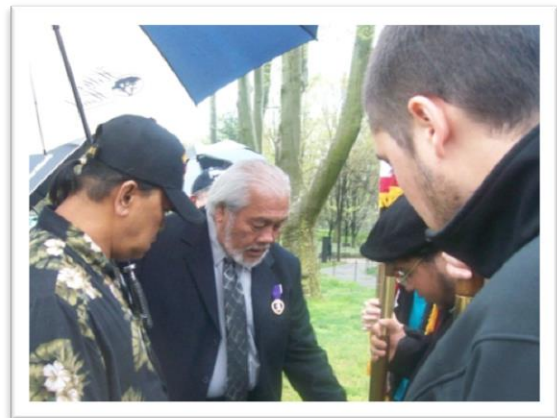
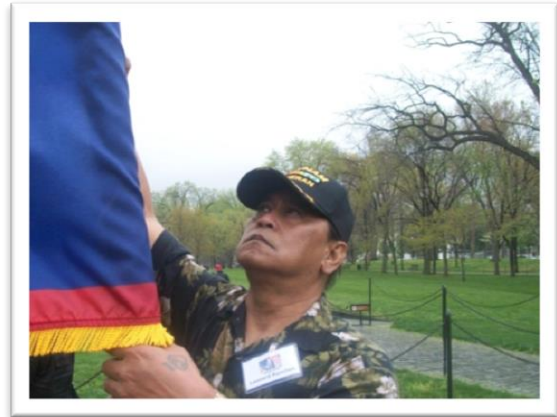
This determination to pursue a goal – ignited by the energy and enthusiasm of the Chamorro spirit – defines the mission and vision of NOCVA. This spirit guides NOCVA and shows that, through the power of grassroots advocacy, we can accomplish anything.

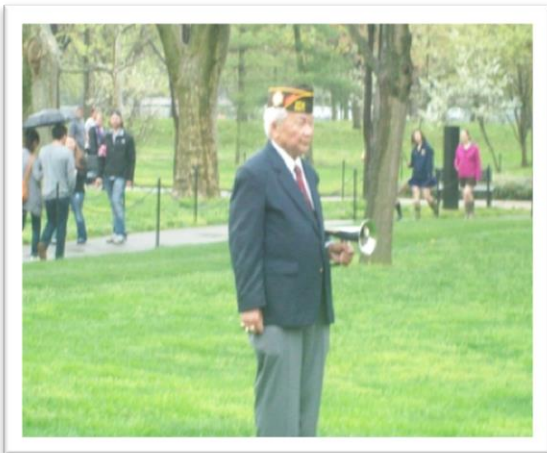
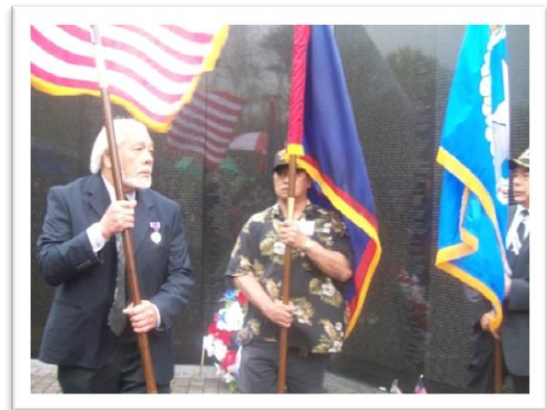


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PHOTO GALLERY





Chamorro veterans who participated in the historic ceremony: Roque Acfalle, Gregorio Concepcion, Mariano Cruz, Joseph Damian, Pedro Iriarte, Jose Meno, Tom Muna, Joaquin Nauta, Albert Quintanilla, Leonard Ratches, Terri Guevara Smith, Joe Torres, Cel Aguigui, Frank Blas, and Larry Cruz. Special thank you to Jaime "Jim" Padre for performing Taps.

OPENING REMARKS

"We are here to pay homage to the young men whose names appear on the wall behind me. These young men gave their lives so all of us can live in freedom and pursue our happiness in the greatest country in the world, the United States of America.

"The greatness of this country is not based on how much you own, it's not based on who you are, it is based on our values and sacrifice, such as the one made by the young men who gave their lives to make sure that you and I -- and everyone in America -- will be able to live in peace and harmony and free from oppression from any other country in the world.

"Let us also remember that freedom is not free. We have to earn it. And the way you earn freedom is the constant struggle of a country to make sure that oppressors and enemies are never allowed to lay foot on this ground where we stand. We have to be prepared to defend our country, and fight to defeat our enemies at all costs, including the lives of our people.

And the young men we are honoring today understood that duty. They spent their time back home in the small islands of Guam and the Northern Marianas. As they grew up, they were imbued with a sense of duty that when they grew to manhood and became eligible they would enlist in the military.

They enlisted in great numbers knowing full well that the Vietnam War was going on at the same time. They enlisted and went through their training, and the next thing you know they were deployed to Vietnam fighting the war.



These are the young men whose names are etched in the Wall.

So although they are no longer with us, we honor their sacrifices, and we want to ensure that their sacrifice will continue to be remembered in our hearts and minds.

For their parents in Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands, for their brothers and sisters who are not able to be with us today, we want to give them our respect, and sympathy, and gratitude for their loss.

In closing, we as Chamorro citizens who are living here, away from our home, have no greater honor than to stand here – even in the rain – to honor those brave soldiers who represent the best thing about being a Chamorro: patriotism, duty, love of country.

Therefore, I'm glad that we're all here to honor that legacy. Thank you very much.

Cel Aguigui
NOCVA National Coordinator

SPECIAL TRIBUTE



Terri Guevara Smith read the Special Tribute during the ceremony. She suggested adding the phrase "Chelu, We Remember You" to express the Chamorro spirit.

We Remember Them
In the rising of the sun and in its going
down ...

We Remember Them

In the blowing of the island breezes
and in the sparkling ocean waters...

We Remember Them

In the blueness of the sky, and in the
warm sands of the beach...

We Remember Them

In the beginning of the year and when
it ends...

We Remember Them

When we are lost and sick at heart...

We Remember Them

So long as we live,
They too shall live
For they are now a part of us
As We Remember Them

Chelu, We Remember You

"We Remember Them" was written by Rabbi R.B. Gittelsohn, adapted from a prayer by Rabbis S. Kamens, and J. Riemer. NOCVA national coordinators further adapted the litany to reflect the island heritage of fallen Chamorro soldiers for the Special Tribute used in the first Chamorro Veterans Commemoration Ceremony held in Washington, D.C., on 24 March 2012.

RECITING THE NAMES OF THE FALLEN

With pride, honor, and dignity, a small but dedicated group of Chamorro veterans initiated, planned, and conducted the first Chamorro Veterans Commemoration in Washington, D.C., to publically honor the memory of their fallen brothers.

As U.S. citizens proud of their Chamorro ancestry and heritage, Chamorro veterans felt no greater honor than to ensure that the sacrifices of Chamorro soldiers would finally be recognized.

The hour-long ceremony included opening remarks, the Pledge of Allegiance, the Guam Hymn, a special tribute, a recitation of the 70 names of the fallen, a wreath laying, and a final sounding of Taps.



See *SUPPLEMENT to NOCVA News SPECIAL EDITION: Chamorro Veterans Commemoration Ceremony Anniversary, March 2012-2014 (March 2014)* for a list of the 70 names that were recited during the ceremony. The supplement includes images of each name as it appears on the Vietnam War Memorial.

To see more photos and information about the ceremony, please visit our website at <http://nocva.org/fallen-heroes/>



ADDITIONAL RECOGNITION FOR CHAMORRO SOLDIERS AND VETERANS

News articles about the ceremony appeared in the *Saipan Tribune* and *Pacific Daily News*, spreading the word about the Chamorro veterans and what they did to honor their fallen brothers.

Pacific Daily News

26 April 2012

Group honors Chamorro vets by Oyaol Ngirairikl

<http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/guampdn/doc/1009618825.html?FMT=ABS&FMTS=ABS:F&T&date=Apr+26%2C+2012&author=Oyaol+Ngirairikl&pub=Pacific+Daily+News&edition=&startpage=&desc=Group+honors+Chamorro+vets>



Saipan Tribune

21 April 2012

Chamorro soldiers killed in Vietnam War honored in DC rites

By Clarissa V. David

<http://www.saipantribune.com/newsstory.asp?cat=1&newsID=118265>



VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA NATIONAL CONVENTION

Veterans from Guam Recognized

At their 16th national convention held in August 2013, the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) approved numerous resolutions, including one that recognizes the extraordinary service and sacrifice of Vietnam veterans from Guam.

About the VVA

Founded in 1978, the VVA is a non-profit organization dedicated to Vietnam-era veterans and their families. VVA is a congressionally chartered national Vietnam veterans service organization with over 70,000 individual members in 650 local chapters.

source: www.vva.org

RECOGNITION OF THE SERVICES AND SACRIFICES MADE BY THE VETERANS OF THE TERRITORY OF GUAM AND U.S. PACIFIC ISLANDERS

History: First adopted in 1997 as MA-8-97; Renumbered in 2011 as MA-8

Issue: According to the March 1993 issue of VFW magazine, 58.9 of every 100,000 males was the national average state death rate during the Vietnam War; West Virginia had the highest state death rate: 84.1 for every 100,000 males. According to the 1990 U.S. Census of Guam, there were 47,362 males on the island of Guam. Guam had 71 of their sons die in the Vietnam War. These 71 out of 47,362 is a ratio of 149.8 per 100,000.

Background: There are currently 8,037 veterans of Guam who have proudly and honorably served in the armed forces of the United States of America in World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Persian Gulf War. The programs and services available to the veterans of Guam are severely limited in comparison to their comrades on the U.S. mainland. It is 3,500 miles to the nearest fully staffed VA Outpatient Clinic and over 7,000 miles to the nearest U.S. DVA medical center. 3,142 Vietnam-era veterans reside on the island of Guam and 71 sons of Guam died in the Vietnam War, a ratio of 149.8 per 100,000 males, a proportion higher than any other state or unincorporated territory.

The island of Guam, "Where America's Day Begins", also is the first American soil reached by the repatriated remains of POW/MIAs on their journey back from Vietnam, and appropriate ceremonies mark each occasion.

Resolved, That: Vietnam Veterans of America recognizes the contributions made by the veterans of Guam; and commends and salutes the Vietnam veterans of Guam for their courageous and gallant contributions to the United States of America during the Vietnam War. Furthermore, VVA strongly supports the improvement of veteran's benefits and health care provided to veterans of Guam and other U.S. Pacific Islanders.

Excerpted from 2013 Convention Resolutions, adopted at the 16th National Convention, page 52
source: <http://www.vva.org/OrgDocs/VVA-Resolutions.pdf>

A CASE STUDY IN GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY: NOCVA'S CHAMORRO VETERANS COMMEMORATION CEREMONY

By taking on the challenge of conducting a national-level event for the first time, with limited resources, NOCVA volunteers and Chamorro veterans focused on one goal: honor the memory of the fallen Chamorro soldiers in a way that would make their families and the people of Guam and the CNMI proud.

NOCVA's founders and volunteers spent months planning for the historic event. The labor of love required coordination with the National Park Service, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Washington offices of the Guam and CNMI delegates, and the Washington, D.C., Guam Society of America.

The veterans who wanted to participate in the ceremony but who lived out of town arranged for their travel and accommodation at their own expense.

The ceremony was an example of grassroots organization at its best – many people working together, each motivated by an inner desire to ensure success of a common goal.



NOCVA undertook four new initiatives as a direct result of the ceremony:

1. Established the “Chelu, We Remember You” Project, which seeks to honor fallen Chamorro veterans
2. Produced a DVD of the ceremony to preserve the memory for all
3. Presented gifts to the people of Guam and CNMI, including the bell used in the ceremony
4. Translated the Special Tribute into Chamorro and made it available to be recited at memorial and funeral services of Chamorro veterans

INITIATIVE 1

“CHELU, WE REMEMBER YOU” PROJECT



Donald S. Adam, a National Park Service Ranger who had been assigned to help NOCVA with logistics, was motivated to do something to recognize the fallen Chamorro soldiers. On his own initiative, he made rubbings of each of the 70 names on the Wall and entrusted them with NOCVA’s founders to be delivered as gifts to the families.

The rubbings are traditionally made when a visitor to the Wall finds the name of a loved one and wants to remember the experience with a keepsake. Visitors are allowed to place paper over the name and rub it with pencil, creating a memento to help keep the memory of their loved one alive.

For family and friends in the islands who cannot easily travel to Washington, D.C., obtaining such a memento in person is often difficult or impossible. For this reason, NOCVA established the “Chelu, We Remember You” Project as a way to express gratitude for the sacrifice of families of fallen Chamorros by honoring the service of their loved ones.

NOCVA is dedicated to locating the family of each of the 70 soldiers from Guam* whose name appears on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. Once a family member is identified, NOCVA will present them with the following:

- The original rubbing of the name as it appears on the Wall
- A complimentary DVD of the Chamorro Veterans Commemoration Ceremony held in Washington, D.C., on 24 March 2012
- A letter from NOCVA explaining the “Chelu, We Remember You” Project

*NOCVA recognizes that the list of 70 does not include Chamorros who entered military service outside of Guam.

This initiative seeks to contact all family members of fallen Chamorro soldiers, whether they entered military service in Guam or elsewhere. If you know of Chamorros who are not included in the official record, please contact NOCVA.

NOCVA is dedicated to establishing a complete and accurate record of Chamorro casualties so that all may be honored along with the 70 fallen heroes officially listed from Guam.

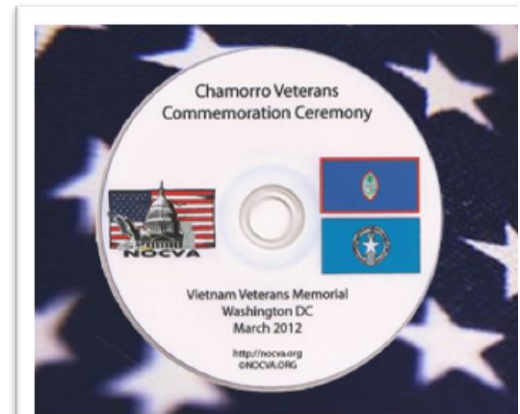
INITIATIVE 2

CHAMORRO VETERANS COMMEMORATION CEREMONY DVD

NOCVA's first initiative, the Chamorro Veterans Commemoration Ceremony, was conducted in Washington, D.C. It was important that the ceremony be held at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, the site where family and friends often go to see the names of their loved ones who died in Vietnam.

However, because of the great distance to Washington, D.C., most Chamorros living in Guam, the Mariana Islands, and the rest of the country, cannot easily travel to see their loved ones' names etched on the wall.

To ensure that anyone could share in the experience, even those who could not attend, NOCVA arranged to have the ceremony videotaped. In doing so, the ceremony could be preserved for all, especially the families of the fallen. NOCVA then produced a DVD of the entire ceremony, which includes the recitation of the names of the 70 fallen soldiers from Guam.



The Chamorro Veterans Commemoration Ceremony is available for free viewing by following these online links:

Youtube

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1ppHGYV1dQ>

NOCVA website

<http://nocva.org/initiatives/cvcc/>

If you would like to buy a DVD, please contact NOCVA at nocva.1@verizon.net or by mail at NOCVA
11704 Cygnet Drive
Waldorf, MD 20601

INITIATIVE 3

MEMORIAL GIFTS TO PEOPLE OF GUAM AND CNMI

Four months after the Chamorro Veterans Commemoration Ceremony, Chamorro veterans representing NOCVA presented memorial gifts to the people of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands.

Chamorro veterans from Fayetteville, North Carolina, who had participated in the Washington, D.C., ceremony, decided to make the presentation in Guam during the 2012 Liberation Day commemorations.

The gifts included the bell that was rung in the ceremony and a plaque listing all 70 of the fallen heroes from Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands who died during the Vietnam War.

NOCVA co-founder and North Carolina Regional Coordinator Frank Blas, Mariano Cruz, and Tony Duenas made the presentation on 26 July 2012 at the Latte of Freedom Foundation in Agana, Guam. Lt. Governor Ray Tenorio was in attendance, along with other island officials and family and friends of the fallen.

The presentation was made possible with the assistance of Tony Ramirez, Director of the Guam Museum Foundation, in coordination with NOCVA's island adviser Bill Cundiff, who is also Chairman of the Guam Veterans Commission.

The NOCVA Chamorro veterans also met with families of fallen Chamorro heroes to deliver mementos as part of NOCVA's "Chelu, We Remember You" Project.



Agana, Guam



Photo of bell that was rung after each name was recited during the Chamorro Veterans Commemoration Ceremony in Washington, D.C., on March 2012

INITIATIVE 4

SPECIAL TRIBUTE TRANSLATED INTO CHAMORRO

The special tribute used in the Chamorro Veterans Commemoration Ceremony was originally adapted by NOCVA's founding members to include phrases that would uniquely reflect the island heritage of the fallen Chamorro soldiers.

Since then, members of NOCVA's Washington state chapter have worked together to prepare versions translated into Chamorro for use in honoring Chamorro veterans at funerals and memorial services.

The "Chelu Special Tribute" has been recited at a number of funeral services of Chamorro veterans as a way to honor not only their military service, but also their island identity.

NOCVA is committed to honoring Chamorro veterans by making available the "Chelu, We Remember You" Special Tribute as requested.

Gi Memorias Mu...Ta Hasso Hao
Gi kinahulo' i atdao, yan i tumunok na
Ta Hasso Hao
Gi guinaifen i freskon manglo' gi isla' ta, yan
gi mina'lak i hanom tasi
Ta Hasso Hao
Gi inasut i langhet, yan i minaipen unai gi
kanton tasi
Ta Hasso Hao
Gi tinituhon sakkan, yan esta i finakpo'na
Ta Hasso Hao
Gi malingu'ta, yan gi piniten i korason'ta
Ta Hasso Hao
Mi'entras man lala'la ham, Hagu lokkue'
lala'la, sa patte hao gi ya hami
Ta Hasso Hao



29 MARCH -- VIETNAM VETERANS DAY

Two years ago, President Obama signed a Presidential Proclamation designating 29 March 2012 Vietnam Veterans Day.

Presidential Proclamation -- Vietnam Veterans Day

On January 12, 1962, United States Army pilots lifted more than 1,000 South Vietnamese service members over jungle and underbrush to capture a National Liberation Front stronghold near Saigon. Operation Chopper marked America's first combat mission against the Viet Cong, and the beginning of one of our longest and most challenging wars. Through more than a decade of conflict that tested the fabric of our Nation, the service of our men and women in uniform stood true. Fifty years after that fateful mission, we honor the more than 3 million Americans who served, we pay tribute to those we have laid to rest, and we reaffirm our dedication to showing a generation of veterans the respect and support of a grateful Nation.

The Vietnam War is a story of service members of different backgrounds, colors, and creeds who came together to complete a daunting mission. It is a story of Americans from every corner of our Nation who left the warmth of family to serve the country they loved. It is a story of patriots who braved the line of fire, who cast themselves into harm's way to save a friend, who fought hour after hour, day after day to preserve the liberties we hold dear. From Ia Drang to Hue, they won every major battle of the war and upheld the highest traditions of our Armed Forces.

Eleven years of combat left their imprint on a generation. Thousands returned home bearing shrapnel and scars; still more were burdened by the invisible wounds of post-traumatic stress, of Agent Orange, of memories that would never fade. More than 58,000 laid down their lives in service to our Nation. Now and forever, their names are etched into two faces of black granite, a lasting memorial to those who bore conflict's greatest cost.

Our veterans answered our country's call and served with honor, and on March 29, 1973, the last of our troops left Vietnam. Yet, in one of the war's most profound tragedies, many of these men and women came home to be shunned or neglected -- to face treatment unbefitting their courage and a welcome unworthy of their example. We must never let this happen again. Today, we reaffirm one of our most fundamental obligations: to show all who have worn the uniform of the United States the respect and dignity they deserve, and to honor their sacrifice by serving them as well as they served us. Half a century after those helicopters swept off the ground and into the annals of history, we pay tribute to the fallen, the missing, the wounded, the millions who served, and the millions more who awaited their return. Our Nation stands stronger for their service, and on Vietnam Veterans Day, we honor their proud legacy with our deepest gratitude.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 29, 2012, as Vietnam Veterans Day. I call upon all Americans to observe this day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities that commemorate the 50 year anniversary of the Vietnam War.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/03/29/presidential-proclamation-vietnam-veterans-day>

In February 2013, the Senate introduced a bill that "Authorizes the President to annually issue a proclamation: (1) designating March 29 as Vietnam Veterans Day, (2) honoring and recognizing the contributions of veterans who served in Vietnam during war and peace, (3) encouraging state and local governments to establish a Vietnam Veterans Day, and (4) encouraging the people of the United States to observe such Day with appropriate ceremonies and activities."

source: <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/s409/text>

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NOCVA is a non-profit 501(c) (3) 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 United States 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.

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11704 Cygnet Drive
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NOCVA News is published
monthly eight times a year, from
September through November
and from January through May
by the National Office Staff,
based in the Washington, DC,
metro area.

Members receive the newsletter
as a free service. Contributions
to NOCVA are deductible as
charitable contributions for
income tax purposes.

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