



AVAG News

Summer 2019 • Volume 6 Issue 2



On Saturday April 13, two Vietnam veterans paused for a photo op in front of *The Wall That Heals*, left, Scott Williams, president of the Freedom Committee of Orange County — the main sponsor of bringing this display to Orange County, and John S. Meyer, AVAG director. (Photo Courtesy of Issac Staats)

The Wall That Heals **Costa Mesa Tour Stop**

The Wall That Heals, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Replica and Mobile Education Center was on display at Balearic Park in Costa Mesa from April 10 through Sunday April 14. *The Wall That Heals* is a program of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, founders of The Wall.

During the days it was on display several thousand area residents and veterans visited the site.

The exhibit featured a three-quarter scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. and an Education Center. The timeline of the “The War and The Wall”, along with information about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. gave viewers were given a better understanding of memorial’s legacy. 🦋

IN THIS ISSUE

Downer Lifts Up Veterans

Inspirational speaker and Vietnam veteran Phil Downer spoke to more than 250 at the May 8th AVAG sponsored Veterans Appreciation Lunch.

AVAG Making New Connections

The AVAG team and program continues to make new connections in local communities.

AVAG In Action

The AVAG team members and volunteers have been busy providing assistance to veterans throughout our communities.

Chaplain's Corner

Photos from activities throughout AVAG Southern California communities.

Downer Lifts Up Veterans



Santiago CEO and an original Green Beret Richard Simonian, left, stands with inspirational speaker and Marine Corps Vietnam veteran Phil Downer

Inspirational speaker and Vietnam combat Marine Corps machine gunner Phil Downer drew a full house audience May 8 of more than 150 veterans, family members and service member at the AVAG-sponsored Veterans Appreciation Lunch at the Doubletree Hotel in Claremont.

AVAG sponsored the event to express thanks and appreciation to those who have served our country in the military with the free event.

AVAG Director Mike Keele, a Vietnam helicopter crew chief, said, “When Phil Downer started his presentation a large portion of the audience was distracted, but within five minutes he had everyones undivided attention

Continued on Page 8

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Chaplain's Corner

Casitas La Verne Mobile Home Estates (Photos courtesy Paul Buron)

AVAG team members recently gathered with veterans, neighbors and loved ones in Casitas La Verne Mobile Home Estates to help WWII Army Air Corps veteran Frank Paglia celebrate his 95th birthday in style at the park's community room.



Frank Paglia blows out the candles on his cake.



Paglia goes home with a hand full of celebration balloons.



Frank Paglia and his wife Helen are served cake and ice cream by AVAG volunteer Amanda Breunig.



Left, AVAG Director and Vietnam veteran Mike Keele prepares to enjoy a bite of birthday cake.



Below right, the birthday cake!



Paglia proudly shows his City of La Verne Certificate of Congratulations, with La Verne Mayor Don Kendrick, center, and AVAG Director Mike Keele.



Mayor Don Kendrick, a submariner, visited with many veterans including Navy Ed Kruger.



Director Mike Keele leads the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.



Mayor Kendrick shared war stories with Navy veteran Louis Perez.



Navy veteran Gregory Loya enjoys a light moment with the mayor.



Paglia holds the City of La Verne Certificate of Congratulations at the end of the meeting/birthday party.



Some of the items given to veterans and family members.



Mayor Kendrick poses for photographers with Army veteran Armondo Coronado.



The mayor talks to Army veteran Kelly McGrath.

Casitas La Verne Mobile Home Estates

(Photos courtesy Paul Buron)



Guest speaker Miran Johnson awarded two Dominos gift cards to the winners of the “Getting To Know You” to Anneliese, center and Helen, right during a recent AVAG LaVerne meeting.



Kelly and Frank, left, ponder a pertinent point in the Getting To Know You game.



Helen, left and Anneliese cheerfully working on their winning entry.



Helen is surprised by the presentation and enjoying every moment.



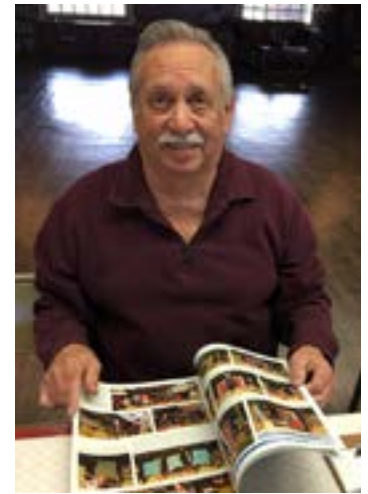
Terri Kruger is grateful for the afghan.



Miran Johnson, an arrangement counselor for the Veterans Burial Program, was one of the guest speakers at the recent La Verne AVAG meeting.



WWII Navy veteran Louie Perez seems to be enjoying the latest edition of the AVAG News.



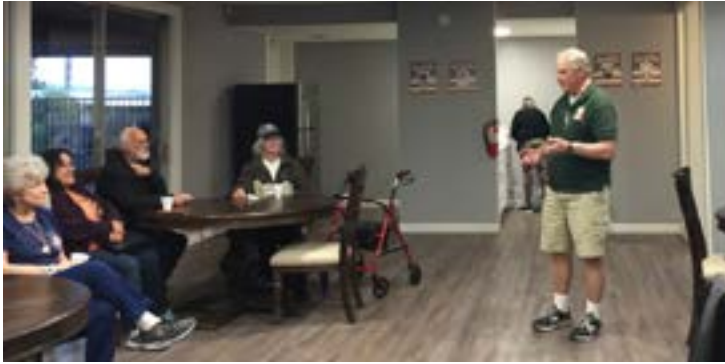
Del Trevino checks out the AVAG News before the meeting starts.



During the meeting AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto, pictured above left in both photos, presented afghans to all the women in attendance crafted by Dottie Cosgrove — a member of the Diamond Bar AVAG group. Cosgrove, 90, has been a consistent, hard-working member who honor veterans widows and wives every month. AVAG Volunteer Amanda Bruenig is on the right, as Terri and Anneliese enjoys their new afghans.

Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park

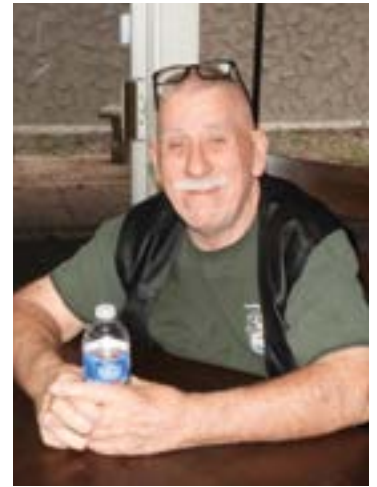
(Photos courtesy Paul Buron)



At a recent AVAG meeting in Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park, AVAG Director Mike Keele filled in the guest speaker who cancelled at the last minute. Keele, a Vietnam veteran spoke about his experiences in Vietnam where he served with B Company of the 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion of the 1st Cav, where he earned a Distinguished Flying Cross.



Army veteran William Turner listened to Keele's presentation. It was the first AVAG meeting for Turner, a Vietnam veteran.



Marine Corps Vietnam veterans Darryl Beatty is all smiles before the pizza arrives.



Rev. Richard D. Ross, Jr., spoke after the pizza dinner and snacks were served. Rev. Ross received the "best dressed veteran" award for the night.



Rev. Ross attracted a large audience of AVAG veterans, family members and neighbors.



The Goens men took a break from telling stories about their days in the Navy to Army Crew Chief Mike Keele, right, for this photo op: from left, Robert Goens, Dennis Goens and AVAG veteran handymen and long-time volunteer extraordinaire, Mike Goens.



Korean War Marine Corps veteran and retired Fontana Police Department Officer James Eger and his loving wife Linda.



The Egers were soon joined by other AVAG veterans, from left, Mike Keele, Darryl Beatty, "Cowboy" and Bill Turner.



AVAG member Roberta Gardner keeps an eye on Larry, left and Mike Newminski.

AVAG Making New Connections

The AVAG team and program continues to make new connections in local communities in an effort to bring more services to veterans, service members and their families.



Travis Riley, center, and Indigo Allendorf, left, visited the AVAG Team during an April meeting at its headquarters in Orange, after making a generous donation to AVAG.



At left, the AVAG team and Board of Directors from left: Scott McReynolds, John Yeandle, Doreen Matsumoto, guests Indigo Allendorf and Travis Riley, Richard Simonian, Mike Keele, Jim Duffy and John Meyer.



Above, later, the AVAG team leaders met with Army/Marine Corps veteran Johnny Rojas, who is helping veterans in Orange County.



The AVAG team recently attended an event on Los Alamitos base where team members networked with veterans, reservists and Army officials.



Above left, Captain Ruth Rivas, commanding officer of the California National Guard Recruiting office on base beams after receiving a handmade afghan woven by Diamond Bar AVAG team member Dottie Cosgrove.

Above right, after the meeting, (from left) AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto met with Emeline Noda recreation manager on base, a Marine Corps veteran, Capt. Ruth Rivas and Vietnam veteran and founding member of the Orange County Veterans Military Families Collaborative Chase Wickersham.



AVAG continues to reach out to organizations that support veterans, service members and their family members. AVAG Chaplain recently attended a regional military affairs committee in Orange County that discussed many topics of evolving issues that can help and assist veterans. Those in attendance, from left, were: Los Alamitos City Councilman Dean Grose, a Marine Corps veteran, Steven Bao Mai, field representative for State Senator Thomas J. Umberg, and Col. Richard Lalor, PAO and AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto.



Above left, in the spirit of Easter, Travis Riley, right, and Indigo Allendorf met Cottonwood Church Youth Paster Ryan Johnson, left, and presented him a \$3,000 donation to help 10 children in AVAG Bible study groups to participate in summer camp in July. AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto is in the center of this new networking group.

At right, Travis Riley and Indigo Allendorf stop long enough for a family photo after the check presentation.



Also participating in the Cottonwood Church event was Boy Scout Troop 104 from Santiago Creekside Estates. From left, Troop Scoutmaster Luis Gomes, Scouts Damion, David, Daniel and Vanessa, standing with So/CAL Patriot Riders Ride Captain David Grubb and Natasha Kaushal, field representative for Congressman Harley Rouda and AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto.



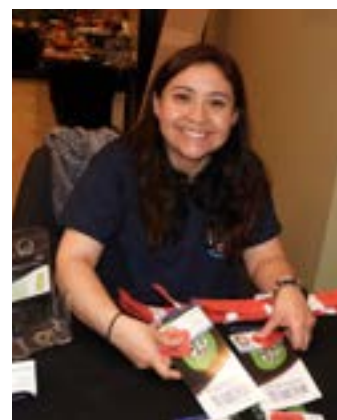
Longtime AVAG volunteer/donor extraordinaire Mellissa Arriola Breunig, of the Richard Breunig Foundation, displays three recent certificates of appreciation and recognition from the cities of Los Angeles and Los Alamitos, and the U.S. Congress. She, her husband David, and daughter Amanda have long supported AVAG events and worked side-by-side with AVAG volunteers to help veterans, services members and their families. Congratulations to the hard-working, caring Breunig family.



Over the last 18 months, one of the ever-improving AVAG networking efforts has been with Cottonwood Church, which recently hosted a Veterans appreciation and recognition night. Above, veterans, family members and church members recite the Pledge of Allegiance during the event's opening moments.



Among the many events, retired Sgt. Maj. Robert Crebbs received a patriotic-themed Quilt of Valor. Crebbs is a member of Special Forces Association Chapter 78.



A new AVAG veterans outreach volunteer, Patricia Espitia, is passing out testimonial pamphlets of AVAG Team member Richard Simonian, who is the chaplain and treasurer of Special Forces Association Chapter 78 based in Orange.



AVAG worked with the Unleash Your Purpose Ministry event recently in Orange where Mellissa Arriola Breunig, Yvette Figueroa and Maria Harrison shared their testimonies how God is working in their lives. AVAG translator/ Chaplain Susanna Gonzalez joined us today for the combined event at Santiago Creekside Estates where food, drinks, and Bibles were distributed and raffles were held.

Downer Lifts Up Veterans continued

Photos courtesy Paul Buron

with his excellent presentation. Once he got into his story, everyone was happy....Everyone in attendance that I talked to said they thoroughly enjoyed Mr. Downer's presentation as well as the entire event. And, did I mention the food? The chow was the best we've ever had for any AVAG event."

Downer was a machine gunner with the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines in Vietnam in 1967 and 1968. In recent years he has spoken to more than 288,000 men and women of all branches of the U.S. military at 916 events. His motivational messages strike a chord with military service members as he constantly stresses the value of building character, integrity, teamwork and core value leadership while service in one of America's five armed services.

He also presents professional military training and speaks about post-traumatic stress, war trauma, traumatic brain injury and the military marriage and family. He is a successful author of "From Hell To Eternity: Life After Trauma. Phil's story has been featured on the award-winning "Day Of Discovery" television series, "The War Within."

The following days, Downer took his message to AVAG communities in San Bernardino and Orange. 🦋



The capacity crowd listens intently to Downer as he articulates a pertinent point in his presentation.



Eva Thiel-Maiz, of Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis' office, presents a certificate of recognition to Chairman of the AVAG Board of Directors, Mike Keele and Richard Simonian, an Original Green Beret and AVAG Advisor.



AVAG volunteers Yvette and Amanda checked in all attendees to the free AVAG-sponsored Veterans Appreciation Luncheon.



Guest speaker and Marine Corps veteran Phil Downer waved in acknowledgement of the quilt's masterful design and patriotic theme as a recipient of his Quilt of Valor.



La Verne Mayor Pro Tem Charlie Rosales presented Certificates of Recognition to veterans at the luncheon including, from left: Coast Guardsman Kenneth Baines, Army veteran Joseph Magallanes, Marine Corps veteran John Chovan, and Air Force veteran Amelia Pear-Lee.



A key element to making the luncheon another successful AVAG event were AVAG volunteers, from left: Karen, Gayle, Roberta, her daughter April, and Patricia. They also worked to set up the May 9 Downer event in San Bernardino at the Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park.



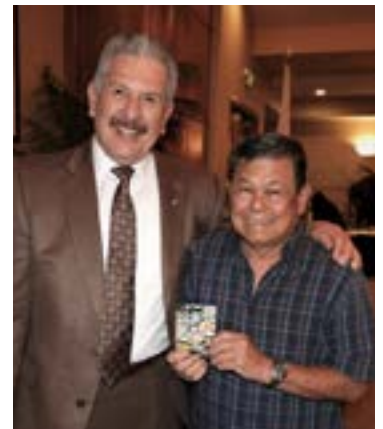
Here are the 17 sponsors who contributed to make the AVAG event a success.



So/Cal Quilts of Valor representatives Deanna Bryce, left, and Shanin Williams present one of their patriotic quilt masterpieces to VA Chaplain Rev. Richard D. Ross, Jr., from VA Chaplain Services at the VA Loma Linda Health Care System in the Ambulatory Care Center.



This table of veterans and significant others happily relaxing during the luncheon.



La Verne Mayor Pro Tem Charlie Rosales presented veteran Mike Lam one of the \$25 Stater Brothers gift cards that were awarded to veterans.



Happy veterans and their family members before they got on a bus for a ride back to the VA Center in Loma Linda.

Santiago Creek Orange Estates

(Photos courtesy Paul Buron and Doreen Matsumoto)

The recent Santiago Creek Orange Estates AVAG meeting featured VA Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist Hector M. Galicia, from the VA offices in Long Beach. Before the evening was over, Hector had found ways to help AVAG veterans apply for more benefits and programs available through the VA.



Pat and George Roth, an Army veteran, won one of the gift baskets provided by AVAG at the meeting.



AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto after presenting Army veteran Joseph Magnante with a gift basket.



USMC Vietnam veteran and AVAG member Glenn Williamson picks up some pizza from a new AVAG volunteer Karen Horsley. Glenn couldn't resist the tasty donuts either.



VA Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist Hector M. Galicia provides details about improved services from the VA that are available to AVAG veterans.



Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist Hector M. Galicia answers questions from AVAG veterans and family members.



Karen Horsley, third from left and VA Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist Hector M. Galicia join the post-meeting group photo at Santiago Creek Orange Estates in April.



AVAG staff members and volunteers recently opened a new partnership with the city of Los Alamitos which have clothing, fresh bread and baked goods that have been distributed to veterans and family members in Orange. Here, Santiago Creek Orange Estates "Mayor" Linda Cooperider begins preparing the baked goods for distribution to AVAG veterans and their families.

At a recent AVAG meeting in Santiago Creek Oranges Estates, the guest speaker was Scott Williams, president of The Freedom Committee of Orange County. Scott addressed two major issues: the Freedom Committee's on-going efforts to have veterans speak at area school in Orange County and he announced the arrival of a scaled-down version of the famous Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C., simply referred to as *The Wall*. This version that was on display in early April was called *The Wall That Heals*.



Scott Williams explains the program of veterans speaking to school students, as AVAG Director John S. Meyer and veterans and loved ones look on.



AVAG veterans review information on *The Wall That Heals* during Scott Williams' presentation.



From left, Pat and George Roth, with Air Force veteran Ana Maria.

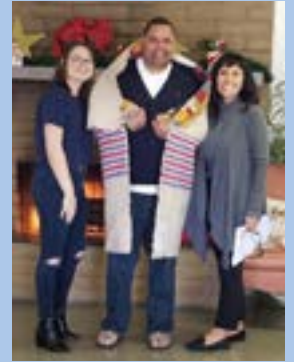


AVAG members with Scott Williams pose for the post-meeting photo.



At a recent Santiago Creek Orange Estates AVAG Veterans Appreciation Potluck, Vietnam veteran Mark Swanson was presented an AVAG shirt and a hand-crafted quilt from the ladies of So/Cal Quilts of Valor.

He was surprised, as is evident, to be so honored. The beautiful quilt is held by his wife Patti, left, and sister-in-law Pam Crawley.



Marine Corps Veteran Christopher Long, one of our youngest AVAG veterans living at Santiago Creek Orange Estates. Since joining AVAG he has been a team player helping to deliver love bags to members of the AVAG community. At a recent AVAG Veterans Appreciation Potluck, Long received his Quilt of Valor — pictured above with Doreen Matsumoto and AVAG volunteer Amanda Breunig on the left.



Santiago Creek Orange Estates, longtime AVAG Team member and Korean War veteran "Bud" Stoddard received his Quilt of Valor. In his 80s, Bud drives for Uber Eats and always offers to help in any AVAG project or program when he isn't working. "Bud" enjoyed being wrapped in his new quilt. Standing next to him is his son, Donna Atkinson (a member of the Bible study group), and Doreen Matsumoto.



Sometimes, being awarded a Quilt of Valor can be a morale builder, and such is the case with Air Force veteran Dave W. Winterhalter Jr., who suffered significant injuries in a recent car accident. Linda Cooperider and Doreen Matsumoto hold the So/Cal Quilt of Valor recently presented to a healing Winterhalter.

Santiago Creek Orange Estates

(Photos courtesy Paul Buron)



The second winter AVAG meeting at Santiago Creek Orange Estates featured guest speaker Doctor John Martin and his service dog Barnabas — which means “Son of a Encouragement”. Martin discussed how dogs can assist veterans coping with PTSD. Here, Korean War veteran Bud Stoddard, left, asks Martin a question.



Pam Crawley and her WWII Navy veteran father Harold Gomer pose briefly before digging into their pizza.



Allen, left and James, right, flank guest speaker John Martin as Barnabas checks them out.



John Martin has a few more words of wisdom, mixed with a good sense of humor to the AVAG as the meeting wraps up.



One of the highlights of the night was the presentation of three afghans hand-crafted by 90 year old Dottie Cosgrove, a member of the Diamond Bar AVAG team to Rita, Linda and Linda. AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto, left, oversaw the presentation to the ladies.



Upper left, the meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Upper right, food is served before the meeting's presentation.



At left, guest speaker John Martin and Barnabas with Harold Gomer and his daughter Pam Crawley after the meeting.



The AVAG team gathers with John Martin for the post meeting photo. Left to right Rita Crawley (David's sister), Nancy and Glenn, Joe, Bud, John, Pam, Harold, Gayle, Linda, Mr. and Mrs. Braverman, James and Linda.

AVAG Bible Studies

(Photos courtesy Paul Buron)



The ladies from the Santiago Creek Orange Estates AVAG Bible study group are all smiles after a recent meeting, which included good food and fellowship to go along with The Word.



With assistance from Maria Lugo, right, the AVAG Santiago Desert View Estates Bible Study group recently met in Barstow where they worked on the Operation Timothy Book One Bible study.



At left, children at the Santiago Creekside Estates AVAG Bible study group enthusiastically answer questions during the student activity lead by AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto. At right, the youngsters gather with prizes they earned during the Bible study.



Youngsters in Santiago Creekside Estates enjoy their afternoon pizza and snacks before their Bible study.



AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto, center, opens the youth Bible study in Hemet with a prayer.



Hemet students proudly show off their handiwork, with AVAG Volunteer Amanda Breunig.



After enjoying pizza, drinks and studying the Bible, the AVAG Hemet RV Park Bible study group took a break for this photo op.



Left, members of the AVAG Diamond Bar Estates Bible Study Group were all smiles after a recent meeting in the community room.

Right, the youth Bible study at Santiago Desert View Estates had plenty of smiling faces too.

Diamond Bar Estates

(Photos courtesy Paul Buron)



At a recent AVAG Diamond Bar Estates Chapter meeting veteran Alan Pierce made a detailed presentation on real estate purchases and financing advice to avoid pitfalls while purchasing property.



Pierce spent a lot of time answering veterans questions.



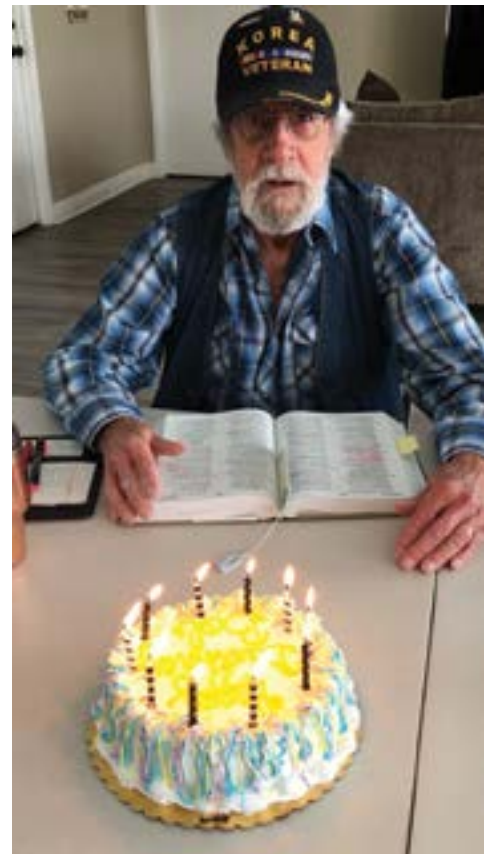
Alan Pierce joins the Diamond Bar AVAG team for its traditional post-meeting photo.



Miran Johnson, an arrangement counselor for the Veterans Burial Program, a guest speaker at a recent Diamond Bar AVAG meeting, standing next to a beautiful flower display that she presented that night.



At a recent Diamond Bar AVAG Chapter Meeting, Ralph Torres, funeral director at Torres Cremation and Burial Services and a guest presenter presented Bob Dunbar, a Korean War POW with a full-size flag and a special memory book.



Korean War veteran and POW Bob Dunbar recently celebrated his 88th birthday following a Bible study with AVAG members in Diamond Bar.



AVAG Director John Meyer stands between Hector, left and Bill who won two gifts cards during the game section of the meeting.



Lucy, left and Julie are focused on the night's game.

Santiago Palm Vista

(Photos courtesy Amanda Breunig)



When winters colds and fevers prevented the AVAG chaplain and planned speaker from appearing at the monthly AVAG meeting in Palm Vista earlier this year, AVAG Director John S. Meyer, a Vietnam veteran, stepped in to fill the big shoes of those who were ill. Here, most importantly, Meyer inspects the food served to the veterans.



AVAG Team Leader Bob Brown takes a break from his meal to smile for the camera.



Palm Vista veterans, family members and volunteers listen to Meyer's presentation on the secret war fought by the Green Berets during the Vietnam War.



During a recent AVAG meeting at Palm Vista Hemet, the guest speaker was Marine veteran and DAV volunteer Chad Shipley, left. AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto presented him a \$200 donation for DAV after his presentation.

AVAG Headquarters

(Photos courtesy Paul Buron)



Navy Veteran Paul Gomez received his Quilt of Valor following a recent Bible study at AVAG headquarters in Orange.

TAPS



This photo of Jim Eger and his loving wife Linda was taken at the AVAG Thanksgiving celebration last year. Sadly, Jim passed away May 3. He was Korean War Marine Corps veteran and a retired Fontana police officer who lived in Santiago Hillside Estates. The long-time AVAG member will be missed by all.

AVAG In Action



New AVAG team member and Vietnam veteran William Turner gives a thumbs up after the AVAG volunteers and staff were able to obtain and install a new water heater him.



When it rains and your roof is leaking, who do you call? At AVAG, in recent months that call went to the Ken Cooper Roofing & Construction. In recent months Cooper has worked on a few AVAG veterans' roofs. Here he's inspecting a veterans roof to find a pesky leak.



Another way AVAG veterans/volunteers help members is to pick up supplies from Veterans Affordable Housing Program warehouse that are donated to veterans or used by handymen to do repairs/improvements in veteran's homes throughout communities with AVAG programs in place.

Above left, Marine Corps veteran Dave Rosales carries molding to the delivery truck, working in between cloud bursts. At right, Navy veteran Paul Gomez removes supplies from the warehouse.



Korean War James Brown, and his daughter Diane, left, looking pleased after an AVAG team of volunteers and staff provided him a new porch and steps for his home in Santiago Hillside Estates. Removal of the old steps and construction of the new porch and steps were done while working closely with Park Manager Marissa McCaffrey, right. AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto assisted in coordinating the effort for Brown.



Army veteran George Hilbert stands outside his home in Santiago Hillside Estates after AVAG team volunteers and staff worked with Park Manager Marissa McCaffrey, right, to replace his siding, rebuild front and back stairs and install a new front porch.

AVAG News

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Army Vietnam Wayne Osborne proudly stands in front of his new porch and steps that were installed by AVAG staff and volunteers recently. Osborne is standing with Santiago Hillside Estates Park Manager Marissa McCaffrey, left, and AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto.



Army veteran Anthony Oquindo and his wife Loretta stand on their newly repaired porch and steps with AVAG handyman Alex Gavidia, Iraqi war veteran and Marine who recently completed those repairs, as well as repairing their water heater door, at their Pacific Palms Mobile Home Park in Highland.