



# AVAG News

Winter 2023 • Volume 10 Issue 1



Veteran Jack Reed was presented with a Quilt of Valor by Southern California Quilts of Valor at the Annual Thanksgiving Veterans Luncheon at Casitas La Verne.

## Quality Material Handling Inc. and American Veterans Assistance Group Annual Thanksgiving Veterans Luncheon

QMH team never fails to show up!

They partnered with AVAG to give back to and serve our veterans and seniors every Thanksgiving for the past three years.

In planning the annual Thanksgiving event with AVAG this year, they knew they wanted to make it the best so far. QMH took their #WESERVE mentality an extra mile this year and decided to prep and cook the Thanksgiving meal themselves. There was such a good turnout

Continued on Page 2

### IN THIS ISSUE

#### Quality Material Handling Inc. and AVAG Annual Thanksgiving Veterans Luncheon

QMH, Inc. and AVAG partner to honor Veterans and seniors at Thanksgiving.

#### AVAG Founder Receives the St. Philip Neri Award

Richard Simonian honored by the Special Forces Association.

#### Congressman Lou Correa Honors Creek Orange Veterans

Creek Orange veterans honored at their Veteran's Day celebration.

#### LAPD Military Liaison Partners with AVAG to Celebrate Veterans and the Marine Corps Birthday

AVAG invited to LAPD Headquarters to participate in Veteran's Day and Marine Corps Birthday celebration

#### AVAG and Hope Chapel Monthly Visit to the Veterans Hospital Long Beach Veteran Low Sight and Blind Rehabilitation Program

#### AVAG Chaplains and Volunteers Reach A Very Special Veteran Golf Community

PGA HOPE Golf clinic introduces golf to Veterans with disabilities.

#### AVAG Celebrates the Holidays

From Veterans Day to Thanksgiving to Christmas — AVAG Communities celebrated them all, enjoying numerous activities over the last months of 2022.

Follow us on  
Facebook and Instagram

 @AmericanVeteransAssistanceGroup

 @socal.avag

or learn more about us at  
[AVAGUSA.com](http://AVAGUSA.com)

## QMH Inc. and AVAG Annual Thanksgiving Veterans Luncheon continued

this year, with over 25 employees who either donated money, prepped and cooked the meal; and/or volunteered their time to serve the meals and spend time with the veterans.

In total, their team helped prep, cook, and serve over 100 Thanksgiving meals for the veterans and seniors at Casitas La Verne in La Verne, CA.

American Veterans Association Group Team does an amazing job coordinating the event where they hosted a raffle and had a ceremony honoring one of the Veterans Jack Reed with a Quilt of Valor.

### Words from QMH

“We are so grateful to experience another successful year with a great team and good company. We truly live and breathe our core values: “We serve,” “We do what others don’t/won’t,” “We celebrate,” and “Do the right thing;” and are grateful to have a team that equally shares such values.

We’re so thankful for our friends at AVAG “who help make this happen.” Till next year! Special thank you to Hector, Brenda and Julia Pinto for their continued partnership with AVAG.

**Stephanie Mercado**

*Admin Operations Manager, Quality Material Handling Inc. 🦋*



## AVAG Founder Receives the St. Philip Neri Award

Richard Simonian, AVAG founder and an original member of the US Army Special Forces Green Berets, was awarded the Medal of St. Philip Neri by the Special Forces Association. Here is some history regarding the honor.

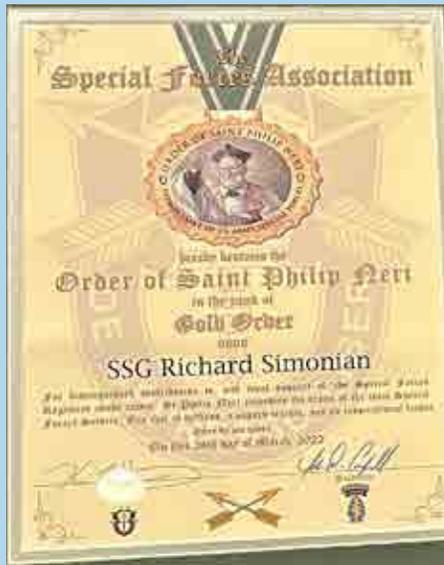
### Why is Saint Philip Neri the patron saint of US Special Forces?

The St. Philip Neri Award Program was established by the United States Army Special Forces Command in 2002. St. Philip Neri was selected as the Patron Saint of Special Forces because he embodied the traits of the ideal Special Forces soldier: selfless, superb teacher, and inspirational leader.

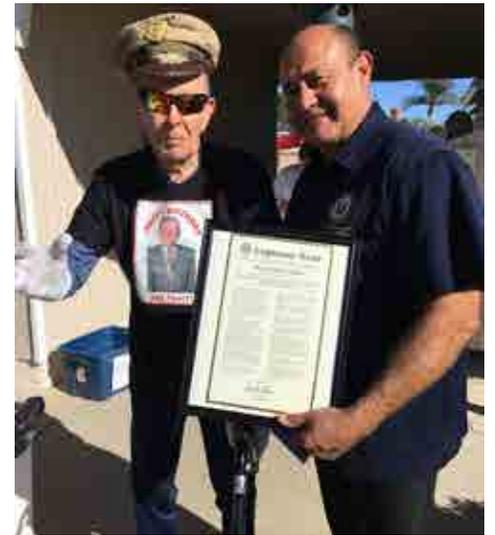
St. Philip Neri was an Italian saint, and is best known as the founder of the secular order “The Congregation of the Oratory.” He was an important figure in the Counter-Reformation. Philip worked with the poor in Rome and had many followers in this area of work. Philip helped to revive Catholicism during the spread of Protestantism. St. Philip Neri truly knew how to carry out the Corporal Works of Mercy.

The Special Forces Association recognized that Richard is the true epitome of the “Quiet Professional.” He has helped literally thousands of Veterans and refugees since leaving the Army in the 1950s. Santiago Communities is made up of 1,500-plus affordable residence communities across the nation and has helped thousands of veterans with housing and a chance to get on their feet. In addition, he has committed to getting the Afghan commandos and interpreters safely out of the danger zone. He has created two communities, Mojave and Ridgcrest, where he has helped the members move in and get situated. While he has been helping others, he has never said a thing about his work and is recognized as a true Quiet Professional.

The Special Forces Association was proud to present this award to Richard. A name change to the Richard Simonian Chapter for Special Forces Association Chapter 78 is being considered. ✨



## Rep. Lou Correa supports veterans, military members with legislation and projects on the home front including AVAG



Congressman Lou Correa, at right, honors a WWII veteran celebrating his 100th birthday.

Now serving his third term in the U.S. House of Representatives, Congressman Lou Correa has continually worked on legislation in D.C. and on projects in his District (CA46) to support veterans and military personnel.

His voting and legislative records show Congressman Correa’s commitment to veterans and military personnel. He also works in his community as a citizen patriot to ensure veterans are recognized and honored.

He recently partnered with Chapman University and Judge Fredrick Aguirre (Ret.) to honor Latino veterans and gave special recognition to American Veterans Assistance Group (AVAG) founder Richard Simonian, an original member of the U.S. Army Special Forces, more commonly known as the “Green Berets.” Ultimately, Chapman University will record the stories of Latino veterans to document their service to our country.

Congressman Correa explained his motivation: “Our servicemembers have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country.” ✨

## Celebrating Veterans Day at Creek Orange

Janet Brown, Field Representative from Congressman Rep. Lou Correa office, visited Creek Orange for their Veterans Day celebration. She presented information on veterans benefits and presented the community's veterans each with a special recognition certificate. All of our veterans and their wives enjoyed lunch and the raffle with items from Bed, Bath and Beyond. We also celebrated Army Veteran Joe's birthday. He was so surprised when Doreen came out with the cake! 🐦



## LAPD Military Liaison Partners with AVAG to Celebrate Veterans and the Marine Corps Birthday



Left to right, Mary Cruz, Doreen Matsumoto, LAPD Military Liaison Police Officer Ryan White, Art Flores, and Amanda Bruenig

On November 10, 2022, at the Los Angeles Police Headquarters (Deaton Hall), AVAG partnered with LAPD Military Liaison Police Officer Ryan White to celebrate Veterans Day and the Marine Corps Birthday.

This is the second consecutive year AVAG has been asked to come out to show our support for over 150 veterans.

There were many veterans' resources, sharing information to help our veterans who continue to serve their community as Los Angeles Police Department officers.

Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto shared information on the work that AVAG is doing to assist our veterans across California.

The veterans at the event received Quilts of Valor from AVAG. Barbara Winkler, the founder of SoCal Quilts of Valor, guides us in making the presentations of the quilts a big success.

The veterans stood in line as each one of them received a beautiful, one-of-a-kind quilt. This is a wonderful way to honor them and give back to all who served our country.

There was also a cake cutting ceremony for the Marine Corps Birthday. Chief Michael Moore personally thanked us for our ongoing support for Los Angeles Police Department veterans.

Special thanks to our volunteers who help present the Quilts of Valor: retired Deputy Sheriff and Army Veteran Art Flores, Mary Cruz, Paul Buron, and Amanda Breunig. ✨

## AVAG and Hope Chapel Monthly Visit to the Veterans Hospital Long Beach Veteran Low Sight and Blind Rehabilitation Program

AVAG and Hope Chapel chaplains and volunteers visit the Veteran Low Sight and Blind Rehabilitation Program at the Veterans' Hospital in Long Beach once a month for dinner and after dinner companionship and activities.

This VA program, led by our activity liaison, Liz Greco, offers the following blind and low vision rehabilitation services for our Vets:

- Vision-enhancing devices and technologies (like electronic reading machines and electronic mobility devices) — and training in how to use them
- Training in new visual skills to help with everyday tasks (like reading, writing, cooking, managing your medicines, and locating and reading signs)
- Sensory training (training that helps Vets better use other senses, like hearing or touch)
- Mobility and orientation training (training that helps a Vet create mental maps that may help the veteran feel more confident as they move through the world)
- Strategies for restoring a veteran's ability to communicate through writing or using the computer
- Counseling and group therapy to help a veteran adjust to blindness
- Family-centered care that helps families of Vets learn how to support a veteran as they adjust to blindness

Desserts are enjoyed with our Veterans along with sweet company through conversations, prayer (if requested), art competitions, games, and music at these gatherings.

Our chaplain and volunteer team, whether onsite at the hospital or even at a local golf course, share their hearts and joyous times with sight-challenged Veterans. These photos on this page say it all. ✨



Jazz/Blues music being played here by our talented Vets. Music is great therapy. Eventually, one of our Chaplains joined in singing Diana Krall tunes.



One of our Chaplains enjoying blues music played by one of the veterans in the program that spent time as a professional musician.



One of the employees at the VA choose to belt out a song for the Vets while one of our Chaplains played guitar for her.



Sweet conversation and fellowship.



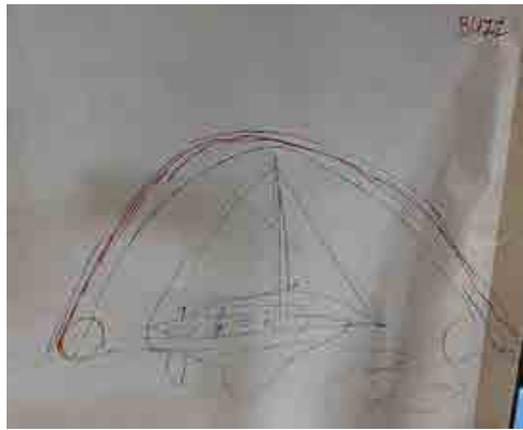
One of our chaplains helping enlarge a game on a computer screen for one of our Veterans.



One our Chaplains chatting with a Vet during dinner.



A volunteer helps Vets get their voting in for the art competition.



Buzz, a veteran and program participant, talks about his art, shown at right, with a volunteer. He described sailing along the coast of Hawaii when he hit an eddy and a squall. This later resulted in him seeing a rainbow with the sun, the moon, and school of dolphins outside his sail boat. Buzz discusses beauty and peace after a storm.

One of our Veterans shares the story behind his artwork.



A black, seeing eye dog, Basil, and her Veteran master, Doris, using lipstick to coat the pups paws for prints to create this masterpiece for one of the art show competitions.

One of our Veterans, Pablo describes his great time at a KISS concert through his art.

More sharing of stories behind the art. All art work participants got to choose a gift brought in by one of our volunteers.



A coastal view by one of our Veterans, with lava rock, trees, beach and plenty of sunshine. She depicts herself as a whale with her sons (the two whales that follow behind her in her picture). She shared with the group about her family relationships, her career as a teacher, and military service work in the 1950s.



Jack's art work above pictures him in a tree hanging by his parachute in the desert after he ejected due to mechanical problems from the plane he was flying. The plane hit a nearby mountain. He used his art and words to describe every detail of the incident including his eventual rescue after being in the tree at least three hours and one unsuccessful helicopter rescue attempt.

## AVAG Chaplains and Volunteers Reach A Very Special Veteran Golf Community



As many of you know, our AVAG and Hope Chapel chaplains and volunteers serve our veterans in a variety of environments. Recently, one of our chaplains, Kathleen Rowden, who loves our veterans and enjoys golf, connected with an organization that her dad, Robert Schrader, an 80-year-old avid lifetime golfer and USAF retired Chief Master Sergeant Retired, has for years served with the Joe Grohman Golf Foundation (JGGF). The PGA Hope Golf Clinics are now teamed with the JGGF and host six-week adaptive golf clinics at various Southern California locations, as well as tournaments for golfers with various challenges. Some of the populations served at these wonderful clinics include our local VA Hospitals, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the local veteran community.

The Joe Grohman Golf Foundation (JGGF) is a non-profit organization that uses golf as a rehabilitative outlet to instill a true sense of community, promote positive social interaction, regain lost confidence, renew focus, and redevelop physical and mental strengths.

JGGF accomplishes their goals by hosting weekly, monthly, and annual golf clinics and tournaments at various golf courses throughout the year. JGGF provides a golf venue and

luncheon, along with volunteers giving of their time, expertise and support.

JGGF feels it is their duty to give back to those who have given so much and to those from whom much has been taken. They also base their foundation efforts on the proven fact that hospital patients are known to recover quicker when exposed to pleasant landscape views, physical activity, and positive social interaction.

PGA HOPE | PGA HOPE (Helping Our Patriots Everywhere) is the flagship military program of PGA REACH, the charitable foundation of the PGA of America. This program is open to all Active Duty, Reserve, National Guard, and Veterans. This program is provided at no cost to the Veteran. Veterans can range from World War II-era to post-9/11-era Veterans to those newly separated from the military. PGA HOPE also introduces golf to Veterans with disabilities to enhance their physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being.

The program introduces the game of golf through a developmental 6-to-8-week curriculum taught by PGA Professionals trained in adaptive golf and military cultural competency. All programs are funded by PGA

REACH and supplemented by PGA Section Foundations, so the cost of programming is free to all Veterans and Active Duty.

Chaplain Kathleen and her dad, Robert Schrader, served at the last series of six-week clinics at Old Ranch Golf Course in Seal Beach, California. Kathleen and her dad were accompanied in service by other volunteers from JGGF, golf professionals, PGA-Southern Section, Old Ranch Golf Course workers, Long Beach Veterans Hospital bus drivers, and rehabilitation professionals at these clinics.

At the end of the clinic, there is a graduation celebration. Chaplain Kathleen arranged a raffle, raffle prizes, and additional volunteers, including her sister Maureen, a former professional golfer, and AVAG's Chaplains Doreen and Amanda to participate. SoCal Quilts of Valor (QOV), a nonprofit foundation whose mission is to provide a Quilt of Valor to all active-duty military and veterans. Southern California Quilt of Valor donated many quilts for our golf veterans to choose from. Approximately, 8-10 Veterans were honored and presented with "Quilts of Valor" for their military service at the golf event. ✨





**Larry Schneider, Golf Vet**

From 1964 until 1968, Larry served in the Marine Corps. In Quantico, Virginia, he completed his basic training before moving on to the New River air facility near Camp Lejeune. From there, he was assigned to a Marine Corps Air Base in Vietnam. He was put in charge of the control tower, where he would keep an eye on the radar, track the plane traffic, and ensure that the airfield was clear. Larry spent 13 months stationed in Vietnam. He was given the Captain title as the highest rank.

The job he was performing and the camaraderie with the other service members were the best parts of serving. The hardest part was that he couldn't ever get warm or dry while he was in Vietnam during the rainy season. No matter what he did, he was constantly damp. The beach was just 200 yards away from where he was stationed in Vietnam, and the water there was like bath water.

He had no problems transitioning back to civilian life. Larry said, "We all thought we were doing the right thing being in Vietnam, even though everyone back home was protesting against our involvement."

His last assignment was at the El Toro Marine Corps Air Station, where he ran all of the air operations. For example, when President Nixon would fly in, he had to be up in the control tower to make sure all operations were ran smoothly.

For R&R, he went to Hong Kong and Bangkok for a week. During that week, Larry and his buddies hired a cab driver. He was great; if they woke up at 1 a.m., he would pick them up and drive them wherever they desired. On their last night, they took him to the only place that served pizza for dinner. The look on his face was priceless because he had never had pizza before and wasn't sure what it was or how to even eat it. They couldn't tell if he liked it or not. It was really funny; he was a great guy.

Larry has always been into golf; he was a good player even before he joined the Marine Corps. After leaving the service, he worked in finance and banking. He felt he couldn't advance very far there, so when he was around 39 or 40 years old, he got more into the golf business. He ended up at the Anaheim Hills Golf Course and started instructing at the pro shop. Eventually he was running the whole golf course. 🦋



Southern California Quilt of Valor honored 8-10 Veterans by presenting "Quilts of Valor" for their military service at the golf event.



# Anaheim Ducks Honor AVAG Veterans

On November 9th, the Anaheim Ducks held their annual Military Appreciation Night, presented by Pacific Premier Bank. Pacific Premier has been proud to partner with the Ducks for many years to honor our military who serve our country.



Pacific Premier Bank states: “As the Official Business Bank of the Anaheim Ducks, Pacific Premier Bank takes pride in the communities where we work, do business, and live, supporting local community organizations, but not forgetting those who serve our great nation. Thank you to all who are serving and who have served.”

Kristine Chung, Senior Vice President, Director of Commercial Banking, George Mestakides, Vice President, Senior Relationship Manager, and Victor Nava, Relationship Manager, invited AVAG to participate in the Military Appreciation Night at the Honda Center in one of their Premier suites, which included food and drinks for all the veterans.

There was VIP access to everything — the veterans invited were amazed to be part of this event. Our veterans who attended were:

- Richard Simonian, Army Special Forces (An Original Green Beret)
- Paul Gomez, Navy
- Alex Gavidia Marine Corps
- Doug Zimmerman, Air Force
- David Ponce, Army veteran, 10 years
- Sgt. David Carballo, active duty, has served for 14 years
- Mary Cruz, Vietnam Veteran’s Widow
- Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto



# AVAG Celebrates Veterans Day 2023 at the American Legion Post 295, Cypress, CA



A packed house at the AVAG/American Legion Post 295 Veterans' Day event in Cypress, CA.

Veterans gathered at the American Legion Post 295 in Cypress, CA enjoyed a steak dinner cooked up by David Breunig, the post chaplain, along with all the delicious sides donated from Bracken's Kitchen.

Thank you to the 82nd Airborne Association for the presentation of the colors.

Also a thanks you to DJ Dennis, who brought the entertainment.

Certificates were presented to our veterans by Assemblywoman Janet Nguyen.

Presentation Quilts of Valor by So Cal Quilts of Valor were made to:

- **Joe Castillo** — US Navy deployed to Libya, 1984 to 1990
- **John L. Gibson**, Post 295 Commander — US Army, served four years rank E4, he is a Desert Storm veteran.
- **Christopher Englert** — US Navy with six years service.
- **Gerald Bishop** — US Marine Corps, Vietnam 4 years where he served as a Sergeant E5 helicopter mechanic and crew chief.
- **Tom Roepke**—US Air Force, served 1988 to 1996, Staff Sergeant, security police, law enforcement

- **Steve Nulk** — US Navy, 1985 to 1991
- **Jim Larson** — US Army, Vietnam era, serving from January 1967 to December 1969
- **Lloyd Weiland** — US Navy, Vietnam, two years active duty, four years reserves, NAS Agana, Guam, third class airmen
- **Timothy John Ramirez** — US Air Force from 1975 to 1979, than the US Army from 1979 to 1983, serving during the Cold War.
- **Walter A. Ball** — US Navy, USS Independence, USS Tripoli, USS Enterprise, he served in the Gulf War.
- **David Rosenberg**, US Navy, served for four years during the Korean War.
- **Charles Lee Green** — US Marine Corps, 1972 to 1974 in Twentynine Palms California, E4 corporal combat engineer

Amazing free raffle prizes were donated by AVAG and Richard Breunig Foundation

Thank you to all of our volunteers, especially Yvette, Jason, Sasha, the Legion Auxiliary, Megan, Sumie and Mama Duco. ✨



Members of the 82nd Airborne Association present colors at the beginning of the event.



At right, David Breunig, the post chaplain, a the grill.



Nancy Hall filling Army Veteran Robert Crebbs plate with the delicious sides supplied by Bracken's Kitchen.





Joe Castillo  
US Navy



John L. Gibson  
US Army



Christopher Englert  
US Navy



Gerald Bishop  
US Marine Corps



Volunteer Yvette Figueroa prepares the Quilts of Valor for presentation.



Tom Roepke  
US Air Force



Steve Nulk  
US Navy



Jim Larson  
US Army



Lloyd Weiland  
US Navy



Bob Crebbs of the 82nd Airborne Association and AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto



Timothy John Ramirez  
US Air Force



Walter A. Ball  
US Navy



David Rosenberg  
US Navy



Charles Lee Green  
US Marine Corps



DJ Dennis



Sumie, 93-year-old veteran widow who is volunteering to pass out raffle tickets



Doreen calls out a winning raffle ticket number, while Mellissa holds the prize.



Mellissa presents a prize to Marine Corps Veteran Frank Parra



Happy event attendees

# AVAG and Helping Hands Giving Hope Deliver Thanksgiving Blessing Bags

Thank you Helping Hands Giving Hope for including AVAG again this year.

Shannon and Amber Stewart, founders of Helping Hands Giving Hope, are an amazing example of “if you want change in the world, you have to be part of it.” Not only does this organization help at Thanksgiving — they help people all year long.

With their help we were able to deliver Thanksgiving meals to our veterans, seniors, and low-income families in Barstow and Orange County.

For the past 4 years, this amazing organization has helped supply Thanksgiving dinners to the veterans, seniors, and low income families in our communities.

Thank you to all the volunteers who helped bag up all the turkeys with all the fixings and fresh vegetables and fruit, and of course, the pumpkin pie. 🦃



## AVAG partnered with Children Giving Gifts

This amazing organization gives children the opportunity to experience the joy that comes from giving to others. The goal is to teach these children it is better to give than receive it also plants the seed for future acts of kindness during their very important developmental years.

They provided for children ages 5-12 years old, the opportunity to 'shop' and give a beautiful new gift... free of charge. A variety of new high quality gifts were available to choose from — wallets, coffee mugs, pen and pencil sets, baseball caps, sport watches and more, for men, and women's gifts included bracelets, earrings, cosmetic bags, decorative housewares, frames, and many other gifts.

The shopping events were held at Hope Chapel in Huntington Beach, Hemet Valley RV Park, and Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park, Orangewood Mobile Home Park, and Ninth Street Mobile Home Park in San Bernardino.

The gifts were displayed on long tables with linen tablecloths so that the children could see and touch the gifts before making their choices. Our volunteers were there to guide children on their shopping experience. 🦋



## Marine Riders Help AVAG Spread Christmas Joy

This year the Marine Riders donated a great number and variety of toys to AVAG to help us bring Christmas joy to a large number of children in our communities.

The Marine Riders are former and active-duty Marines and FMF Corpsmen. They look to strengthen and help communities wherever they can. They bring together people from a like background of military service who enjoy riding with a focus on community service and spirit. They focus on giving to those in need through charity events and community service activities while promoting a positive self-image.

The Marine Riders come from all walks of life. Their members act in good faith with other members and uphold the finest traditions of the United States Marine Corps. Their emphasis is on military charities and helping Marines and other military service personnel injured and/or in need of assistance, but also support other community service activities.

The Marine Riders promote fellowship and safety among motorcycle riders to improve relations between the general public and motorcycle riders.

AVAG wishes to thank the Marine Riders for their service to our country and for allowing us to help them bring so many smiles to children this year. 🦋

# 7th Annual Christmas Toy Giveaway

American Veterans Assistance Group and the Richard Breunig Foundation partnered to bring joy to all the children at the 7th Annual Toy Giveaway held at the Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Community.

As the families checked in, Pam Caldwell Van Goey and David Breunig offered them pizza, cookies, hot chocolate, and special treats. One of our veterans, Michael Goens, dressed up as Santa Claus for the kids.

First, every child had the opportunity to shop for their parents with the items from Children Giving Gifts. Veteran Dale Fredrick from Orangewood helped the kids to select gifts.

After that, they went with one of the personal shoppers, Mellissa Arriola Breunig, Amanda Breunig, veteran David Rozales, or Elisa Mercado, to choose the toys they would like for Christmas.

Then they went to the free table, manned by two of the young teenagers in the park, who gave them books and other small items.

Thank you to our volunteers from Sequoia, our AVAG volunteers, and Roberta Gardner for hosting the volunteer potluck.

The Richard Breunig Foundation is a real blessing. The foundation donated toys and all of the amazing locations that allowed us to put out collection boxes for toys.

Thank you also to the American Legion Post 295 - Cypress, California, Heroes & Legends Barbershop, Amanda Elekes, Nancy Elekes, Santiago Creek Estates, Linda Cooperider, Sierra Nevada and My Place Bar and Grill, Kaycee Cooper, Cottonwood Church, Hope Chapel Huntington Beach and the Joint Forces Training Base. 🦋





## Meet Army Veteran Art Flores



“I served in the military right out of high school. I served for four years, three of those years I was stationed in Central America. During that time I saw extremely impoverished families. That experience made me grateful for the opportunities this country has afforded me. After 32 years of service, I retired as a detective from the Los Angeles County Sheriffs Department. I continue my service to the public by volunteering my time with AVAG. This is a great group of people that help support veterans through struggling times. This past Christmas AVAG conducted several Christmas toy giveaways for needy families. Seeing and being around veterans of all branches, coming together to make these events a success in bringing happiness to families for the holidays is the reason I volunteer with this group. I love being around positive people who try to do good in this world.”



# AVAG Sponsor a Child for Christmas

Every year AVAG puts out a call for people to get involved during the holidays and sponsor a child for Christmas.

Every child that submitted a request was filled. You could see all the happy faces. Each child was so blessed by their generosity.

A special thank you to:

- Jim and Joan Larson
- Lloyd and Nancy Hall
- Elly and Bill Houser
- Carlos and Lucy
- Gina Figueroa Mulato
- Lori Workman Lammers
- Patrick Lewis and his family who support this event every year.

Thank you Mrs. Tiffannie Jochum and Joan for taking on the teenagers request.

Amanda and Nancy Elekes, in honor of Nancy’s husband who passed away earlier this year, took on the responsibility of finding sponsors for many of the children. They did a great job getting new people involved, like Emily, Joan and Jean.

We had another beautiful, heartfelt story associated with Joanie McSherry Holcomb and her husband Steve. I can’t believe how amazing she and her husband are. And of course, Jellybean, their sweet doggy, who happily posed for a photo.

They sponsored twelve children, and the best thing of all is that they did it in honor of her wonderful friend Elaine Karnas, who passed away recently. Even from heaven, she’s blessing children here on earth.

### Luke 6:38

*“Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure, you use it will be measured back to you.”*

Thank you for all you did to bring joy to all the children and their families this Christmas.. ✨



Joanie McSherry Holcomb, her husband Steve, and Jellybean



Elaine Karnas

## Ninth Street Christmas Event

A table set up for the children to write a letter to their Christmas sponsor, with hot chocolate and treats for everyone in attendance. Santa veteran Mike Goens was there to take photos with the kids.

We set up a Children Giving Gifts table for the kids to shop for the parents or guardian. We brought Bed, Bath and Beyond items for the parents. Everyone was able to get new socks donated to us by Cottonwood Church.

Each child waited until all the toys were passed out. The kids took home so many gifts.

We filled one special request from a child’s Christmas list; she wrote that she needed a bed so her mom and the baby wouldn’t have to sleep on the floor. One of the sponsors, Emily Vera, made sure we had a bed for them. Mike and Robert Goens helped deliver it to their house. ✨



### Diamond Bar Estates

We had a table set up for the children to write a letter to their Christmas sponsor. There was hot chocolate and treats for everyone in attendance. Each child waited until all the toys were passed out. The kids took home so many gifts they needed a wagon to get them home. ❄️



### Veterans Families Sponsored for Christmas

After their daughter recently passed away, Margaret and Army Veteran Able Gurule have been assisting with the care of her five children. This year, every youngster was sponsored, and they all received unique gifts. At two occasions, the kids even sang Happy Birthday Jesus for us.

What was amazing is Julie and Bob Saczawa sponsored the girls and their names were the same as their granddaughters. Amanda and Nancy Elekes and Josh took charge of the gifts.

Marine Corps Veteran David Rozales has two young daughters that were sponsored this year and receive special gifts. Their gifts came all the way from Oakland California from Josue Franco Sway.

Marine Corps Veteran Alex Gavidia and his wife, who is still active in the Army, have five sons. All of them were sponsored this year and received bicycles from Hope Chapel Chaplain Patrick and Lorene Duffy and Joyce Noelani from Heroes Barbershop. Extra gifts were provided by Amanda and Nancy Elekes.

Veteran's widow Roberta Gardner's granddaughter lives with her. She was sponsored this year and receive special gifts from retired LAPD Officer Linda Compton. 🦋



Alex Gavidia with Lorene and Patrick Duffy

# AVAG In Action

## Giving Back to Our Communities in San Bernardino and Orange Counties

AVAG received brand new mattresses from our partners at Grateful Hearts.

The mattresses were given to veterans at San Bernardino locations, Glen Aire Mobile Estates, Santiago Hillside Estates, Sequoia Plaza MHP, and Santiago Creek Orange Estates, located in the city of Orange.

Some mattress pads from Bed Bath and Beyond were also distributed.

A special thank you to our friend Blair Petrini, who always supports our veterans outreach. 🦋



Veteran Luis Vielmann, passing out new mattress pads.



Amanda Breunig and Rosy Navarro at Sequoia Mobile Home Park.



Jarrell Smith, Glen Aire Mobile Home Park



New members of the Creek Orange Community.



Veteran Luis Vielmann



Ronnie



## SoCal Quilts of Valor Visits Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park

A surprise Quilt Of Valor presentation at Sequoia Mobile Home Park was made for Air Force veteran Valereie Miller and Army veteran Arthur Lloyd, AKA BUBU. What a blessing to celebrate these two amazing veterans.



Valerie Miller, Air Force veteran served from 1981 to 1985 and retired as a Staff Sergeant.



Arthur Lloyd, aka BUBU, an Army Veteran who served in Vietnam.



## SGM (E-9) Bruce Dale Long United States Army Retired 32 years of dedicated service

**May 17, 1942 – September 14, 2022**

We have said a final goodbye to our friend, Bruce Dale Long, who passed away on September 14, 2022, at the age of 80, surrounded by family and friends at his home in Corona, California. His battle with cancer over the past couple of years showed his courage in facing life's challenges with a smile and determination. Despite the pain, Bruce came out as our hero and stayed strong until the very end.

In 1961, he wanted to serve his country and so he joined the United States Army, serving in Vietnam. After attending jump school, Bruce was assigned to 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC, from 1962– 1964, and was then part of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, Vietnam, 1966–1967. From 1968–1969, he was assigned to the 46th Special Forces Company (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, Thailand.

In 1969, Bruce received an honorary discharge and continued serving his community by joining the Westminster Police Department. While serving on the Westminster Police Department, he completed his Bachelor of Arts with a Major in Criminal Justice at California State University Fullerton, and he went on to earn his Master of Arts at Pepperdine University. Bruce rose to the rank of detective, and became a member of their SWAT team, attending the FBI Training Academy in Quantico, VA.

Bruce joined the United States Army Reserve in 1977 and served with the 12th and 19th Special Forces Groups, retiring in 2001 as Sergeant Major with 32 years of dedicated service to the United States Army and Special Forces.

Sergeant Major Bruce Long joined the Special Forces Chapter 12 and served as Chapter President from 2006 to 2008. He then joined the Special Forces Chapter 78 in 2012 and served as Chapter President from 2014–2017 and again from 2020–2021 for a total of three terms. 🦋





## In Memoriam: Richard Stephan Bergquist

Richard Stephan Bergquist was born on September 18, 1949 and went to Heaven on October 19, 2022.

Rick joined the United States Army, where his sister Patricia was currently serving, rather than be drafted into the Vietnam war. He joined in 1967 for Boot Camp (not today's Boot Camp, as he would say). He went to Vietnam from 1968-1969 as a combat infantryman, and a did a second tour from 1969-1970 as a door gunner.

When Rick came home from his service, he lived for those who did not. He hoped he lived each day as another would have, if they were able to have had the chance. He wanted to do the fallen proud.

He did not forget, and neither do we.

Rick supported all AVAG events, Vietnam Veterans Day, Memorial Day, POW/MIA Day, and Veterans Day.

He also showed up to our first Veterans Connect in July 2022, where he shared important information regarding suicide prevention for veterans.

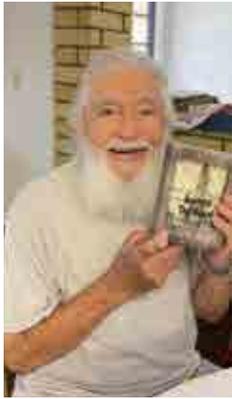
In his last days, I was able to visit him at his home, and I asked him, "What are you going to say to Jesus when you see him?"

And his answer was "I made it!"

He is survived by his sister Patricia, wife Chiara, daughters Beatrice and Stella, sons Eli and John, and three grandchildren, Koal, Kyle, and Aubrey. 🐦



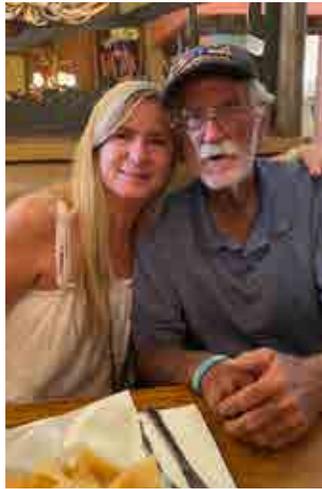
# In Memoriam



## Louie Perez

WWII US Navy Veteran Louie Perez from Casitas LaVerne, passed away on December 24, 2022.

He was born May 28, 1928 in Pomona, CA. He lived there most of his life until moving to La Verne. He served as a seaman from July 10, 1945 to July 29, 1947. 🦋



## Francis Leon Brammer

February 3, 1936 – November 6, 2022

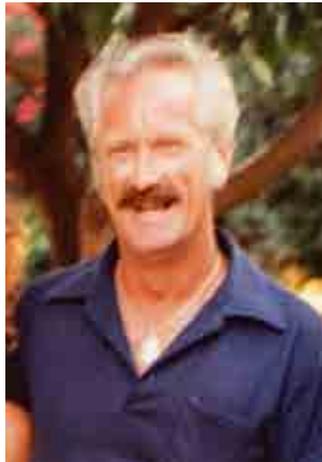
We had to say goodbye to one of our veterans from Palm Vista in Hemet.

Before he passed we were able to give him a brand new RV. He was so excited and amazed what AVAG did.

Little did we know his son David and daughter Cynthia lived at Creek Orange and would see the story in the newsletter.

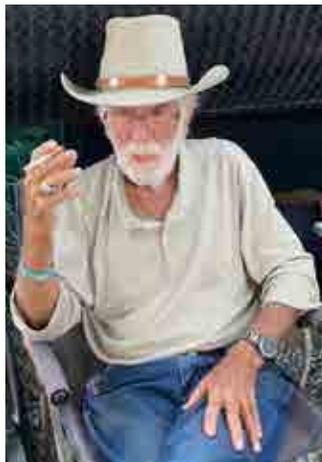
Cynthia said: “Something compelled us to pick up and read the Summer 2022 AVAG News, which to our surprise included a write up and picture of our father, Frank Brammer (Cowboy Frank) on page 5, which reunited us after many years. We were blessed to spend three months with our father before he passed. He was a Korean war veteran, accomplished horseman, skilled craftsman in his trade of construction, he enjoyed country life, the outdoors, hunting and fishing, antiquing, leather working, collecting and repairing watches, and was an extremely independent and proud man. He will be deeply missed. We are grateful for Chaplain Doreen and AVAG as they truly change lives and we are eternally grateful.”

He will be missed by the community he lived in everyone loved him. 🦋



## Joe DuBois

Joe DuBois, Navy SEAL Veteran who served in the Vietnam War from 1964 to 1974, passed away in December. A well-loved member of the Pacific Palms community, he was always looking out for his neighbors, always ready to help if he could. His friendly spirit will be dearly missed. 🦋



# AVAG News

### Contributors:

Doreen Matsumoto • Kathleen Rowden  
Amanda Bruenig • Paul Buron

### Graphic Design:

Debra Holm/Dinwiddie Holm Graphics

For questions or additional information,  
contact us at our website: [www.avagusa.com](http://www.avagusa.com)



Under the aegis of VAHP  
[VeteransAffordableHousing.org](http://VeteransAffordableHousing.org)  
(888) 923-VETS (8387)