



From the Executive Director

My heartfelt thanks to everyone who participated in National Sew Day in February. I know you had a great day and I want you to think of the great day a veteran will have when awarded your QOV.



*Ann Rehbein,
Executive Director*

Have you checked out the new website design at www.QOVF.org? We will continue to make updates and enhancements to meet the needs of our users.

I am very happy to announce the addition of a new volunteer to the QOVF family. Dawn Gifford is joining us as IT Director. She brings a wealth of knowledge to the position and we are very happy to have her join us.

Check elsewhere in this newsletter for information about the 2016 Annual Conference and EXPO. It is shaping up to be an awesome event and one you won't want to miss.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our State Coordinators. They volunteer many hours and resources in arranging awards, attending guild meetings, driving thousands of miles, while living the mission to honor and comfort. Thank you seems inadequate, but please know that the entire QOVF family appreciates what you do, day in and day out.

Finally, Spring is arriving and on March 20th we celebrated the International Day of Happiness. My hope for each of you is that you quilt with peace and happiness, knowing you are making a difference.

QOVs HEAL OLD AND UNSEEN WOUNDS

By Marsha Strand

The Comstock Lode Quilters began in 2015 with six friends who wanted to make QOVs for northern NV veterans returning from their Honor Flights. Partnering with three Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) chapters, Battle Born, Washoe Zephyr, and Nevada Sage Brush, the group has awarded 199 QOVs—of those 108 were awarded to Vietnam War veterans.

Rarely do quilters in our group know the veterans who will be awarded the QOVs we've made until the presentation ceremony. Equally rarely do we fully understand how deeply the experience affects our veterans, although we do know they appreciate anything done for them.

Many of the Vietnam War veterans were deeply moved by receiving a quilt bearing their name on the embroidered label. As we gave our "Quilty Hug" we heard such comments as, "No one has done anything so special like this," or "The trip was like getting cake, but getting this quilt is not only the cake, but the icing and champagne too."

Some veterans write touching and heartfelt thank you letters that motivate us and strengthen our dedication. One letter stood out and helped us realize what a difference our quilts make in a veteran's life, and how deeply and long veterans may suffer emotionally.

In his own words, Sergeant Harold "Butch" Heater, a Marine Vietnam War veteran, explained the comfort brought by his QOV. What follows is the text of his letter.



SGT Harold "Butch" Heater, United States Marine Corps, wrapped in his QOV awarded by the Comstock Lode Quilters upon his return with Honor Flight NV from visiting the memorials in Washington, DC.

Monday, December 28, 2015

Dear Honor Flight Nevada,

I just received my copy of the Honor Flight CD the other day. I can't adequately express in words my gratitude for being included for the Oct. 3-5 trip. I'm sure you have heard many stories from grateful VETS who have been on these trips. Here is mine.

My twin brother and I were born and raised in the Air Force. Our whole world was the military. Looking back, we could not have had a more enriched upbringing and childhood experience.

Like so many other BRATS, we chose to join the military after high school. My brother, Paul, entered

Continued on page 2

the USMC in 1965. I followed early in 1966.

While stationed at Camp Pendleton in August of '66 I was told by my commanding officer that my twin brother had been killed in action.

Later that Fall, while stationed at NAS Jacksonville, FL, I was bothered by a constant twitch in one of my eyes, as well as a deep down aching inside. A young Navy doctor explained that the eye twitch was most likely caused by the emotional trauma I was experiencing. Time heals. Soon after, the eye twitch stopped.

But, the aching persisted. For the past 50 years, I have often felt that ache, as well as the survivor's remorse and regrets, and constant reminders of the ill treatment experienced by so many who gave so much.

During my experience on the Honor Flight, a change came over me. Reaching up to touch Paul's name on the Memorial Wall, surrounded by my comrades, I experienced a feeling of peace for the first time in all those years.

After I returned home, the QOV stayed in its protected cover for several days while I contemplated where it should be kept. Then one evening, I took it out of the cover and sat back in my favorite chair. As I sat there with that beautiful quilt wrapped around me, I began to feel that peaceful contentment again, and the ache finally went away. I'll have it by my side always.

Thanks so much to you and everyone who has had a part in this very healing experience. Please feel free to share this letter with them. On behalf of all VETS, you folks have done a wonderful thing for us.

Thankfully yours,
SGT. Harold "Butch" Heater
USMC

(About the Author: Marsha Strand is a volunteer with the Comstock Lode Quilters and Regent, Battle Born Chapter of the DAR. Contact Marsha at mastrand@yahoo.com.)

AMERICA'S OLDEST VETERAN RECEIVES QOV

By Roxanne Brown

Frank Levingston, a WWII veteran who lives in Lake Charles, LA, was honored last year on Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, while participating in an Honor Flight to Washington, DC. At 110, Frank is considered America's oldest living veteran. He was a private during WWII, serving in the Naples-Foggia Campaign in Italy. He was discharged in 1945.

Roxanne Brown, Louisiana State Coordinator, awarded Frank's QOV on November 13, 2015, which happened to be his 110th birthday, just a few weeks before his journey to the capitol. She followed the story of her awardee's trip on local and national news, and was happy to see his QOV went with him. In photos taken on an obviously breezy day at the WWII Memorial, Frank's QOV is tucked snugly around him.

Frank's quilt was pieced and quilted by Robin Hauser of DeRidder, LA, a member of the Knotted Threads QOV



Frank Levingston, America's oldest living veteran, holds his QOV close during ceremonies last December at the WWII Memorial in Washington.

group of Glenmora. Another of Robin's QOVs was among those displayed at "Quilted to Honor & Comfort" at the National Quilt Museum last year.

"We sometimes wonder if recipients really use their quilts. It was so neat to know his QOV was with Mr. Levingston there and back," Roxanne said.

(About the Author: Roxanne Brown is QOVF Louisiana State Coordinator. Contact Roxanne at roxanne.brown@QOVF.org. Photos courtesy Jillian Corder, KPLC News, Lake Charles.)



Frank Levingston, cozy under his QOV, displays his country's flag at the WWII Memorial in Washington, DC.

HONOR ON BOTH SIDES

By Jina Barney

My parents immigrated to America from Australia when I was a young girl. When they became American citizens, my siblings—all under eighteen at the time—became Americans automatically. As I was nineteen, I did not.

Later, I later married an American, paid taxes, and did everything a good citizen does. My husband was nervous when I traveled abroad on my Australian passport, worrying I might be denied reentry.

Recently, with a significant birthday coming up, I decided the perfect gift to myself (and to my husband) would be gaining U.S. citizenship. I completed the paperwork, paid the fees, and passed the test, answering 200 questions many Americans probably couldn't!

During a special ceremony, I stood with people of many different original nationalities and became an American citizen. I am proud to say I now travel on an American passport.



In Alpine, UT, Jina Barney presents a QOV and a hug to her brother, Ammon.

Last summer at a quilting industry event, I heard Marianne Fons talk about QOVF. Later, I told her how privileged I feel to be an American, and happened to mention that my brother, Ammon, is a U.S. Marine.

The following week, Marianne

reached out to me and said she'd like to make a quilt for my brother. While she worked on Ammon's quilt, I organized other quilters in my home state of UT. I planned a special evening for November 14, 2015, just after Veterans' Day. At 7 p.m., nine veterans, their family members, and friends came together to rub shoulders with many who were there simply to show their love and support.

The evening began with a flag ceremony conducted by Boy Scout Troop 1139. My ten-year-old niece sang "The Star Spangled Banner." Three speakers shared their families' heritage, their journeys through military life, and what patriotism means to them. One by one, each quilter awarded the QOV she made to each veteran, reading a short bio about the recipient's service.

Being part of this event was an honor for me. Awarding a Quilt of Valor to my brother is an honor and privilege I will never forget.

(About the Author: Jina Barney is Design Director for Riley Blake, maker of Penny Rose fabrics. She lives in Alpine, UT.)

TEAMWORK, NOT TERRITORIES

By Ginger Fondren

Many years ago, I worked for a company that initiated an incentive awards program. When various departments reached specific goals, points were awarded to everyone in that department. These points were accumulated and then redeemable from a catalog of prizes. When this program was presented to the company's employees, a theme song was part of the presentation. The chorus of that theme song went something like this—**"fantastic things can happen when you dare to have a dream—and then go after it, working as a team."**

That verse stayed with me throughout my working career and recently came to mind when a QOVF volunteer apologized to me for stepping into "my territory" to make an award. It also comes to mind whenever I hear

similar comments regarding areas within a state.

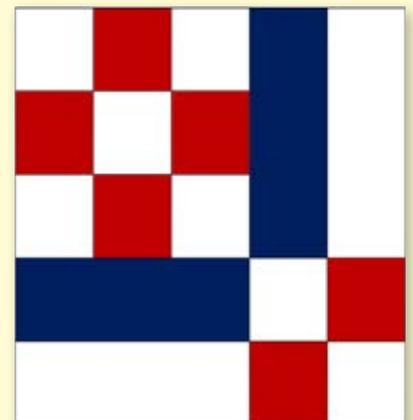
Teams are comprised of many people having varied skills—and we see this in our QOVF volunteers. We have volunteers who are excellent in assembling quilt tops, long-arm quilting, and binding. Other volunteers excel in being leaders as State Coordinators, group leaders, or being part of the Executive Staff. And there are several State Coordinators and group leaders who offer assistance in awarding quilts outside their areas. Those are the fantastic things that happen when we go after our mission as a team!

It takes all of us working together to complete our mission. Let's all remember, we share the same territory—honoring our veterans.

(About the Author: Ginger Fondren is the Assistant Executive Director, QOVF. Contact Ginger at ginger.fondren@QOVF.org)

The 2016 Block Drive is now underway. "Valor Square," designed by Denise Siegel, is being collected by Karen Demaree, Wisconsin State Coordinator.

For more information, see <http://www.qovf.org/events/>.



SEWING EXPO AND NATIONAL CONFERENCE

By Ann Rehbein

Mark your calendar! The annual Quilts of Valor® Conference will be held on May 24-25, 2016 at the Iowa Events Center in Des Moines, IA. Along with regular breakout sessions from the staff members, Mary Fons will be a featured speaker and present a trunk show. There will be award ceremonies, updates on all things QOVF from our Board members, and possibly a surprise field trip.

The Conference is being sponsored in part by the America Quilts EXPO, which will be held May 26-28, 2016, also at the Iowa Events Center. Several special events and a portion of the admission fee are earmarked to support the mission of QOVF. During the EXPO, a QOVF award ceremony will be held each day with 50 quilts total—one from each state. The EXPO will feature classes, special guests, an ice cream social, quilting production lines creating QOV, and vendors galore. For more information, visit <http://sewingexpo.com/AmericaQuiltsEXPO.aspx>.

Quilts Reported

2012: 6,169

2013: 12,314

2014: 17,373

2015: 18,772

2016: 2,521

Total: 133,975

(as of 29 February 2016)

QOVF Core Values

Treating people with respect • Promoting excellence

• Valuing service over self • Being accountable

QOVF Founder and Board Member Emeritus

Catherine Roberts

Board of Directors

Eric McCarty, President

June Moore, Secretary/Historian

Michelle Leonard, Treasurer

Marianne Fons, Quilting Industry

Walt Davis, Military Affairs

Greg Jensen, Fundraising

Sue Reich

Executive Staff

Ann Rehbein, Executive Director

ann.rehbein@QOVF.org

Ginger Fondren, Assistant Executive Director

ginger.fondren@QOVF.org

Jackie Dudek, Director of Membership

jackie.dudek@QOVF.org

Elayne Gassett, Longarm Coordinator

elayne.gassett@QOVF.org

Deanna Bryce, Destination Coordinator

deanna.bryce@QOVF.org

Debra Coppa, Coordinator of Individual Requests

debra.coppa@QOVF.org

Jeff Thorne, Director of Donor Relations

jeff.thorne@QOVF.org

Suzanne DiCarlo,
Information Desk Coordinator
suzanne.dicarlo@QOVF.org

Special Events Coordinator
Debra Kaldenberg
debra.kaldenberg@QOVF.org

Jennifer Keltner, Managing Editor
jennifer.keltner@QOVF.org

Coordinator of Quilt Shop Relationship
Development
Position Open

Dawn Gifford, IT Director
dawn.gifford@QOVF.org

Ginger Fondren,
Director of Software Management
ginger.fondren@QOVF.org

Juliet Madsen,
Under Our Wings Program Coordinator
juliet.madsen@QOVF.org

Mailing Address:
Quilts of Valor Foundation
PO Box 191
Winterset, IA 50273

For more information about QOVF, see
www.QOVF.org

For more information about the BOD,
the QOVF staff, and how to contact your
State Coordinator (SCs) go to [http://
www.qovf.org/content/about-us.html](http://www.qovf.org/content/about-us.html).



Newsletter

Ann Rehbein, *Editorial Director*
Jennifer Keltner, *Managing Editor*
Tony Jacobson, *Graphic Designer*

Photos that appear in *Threads* are either used with permission or are public domain images. The editorial team makes every effort to credit photographers.