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Volume 2, Issue 1

Rolling Thunder CA-1 Quarterly Newsletter

Our Mission

The major function of Rolling Thunder® Inc. is to publicize the POW-MIA issue: To educate the public that many American Prisoners of War were left behind after all previous wars and to help correct the past and to protect the future Veterans from being left behind should they become Prisoners Of War-Missing In Action. We are committed to helping American Veterans from all wars. Rolling Thunder® Inc. is a non-profit organization and everyone donates his or her time because they believe in the POW/MIA Issue that we are working on.

Rolling Thunder®, Inc. CA-1 is the first fully chartered west coast chapter of Rolling Thunder® Inc. We are dedicated to helping those who are serving, have served and the families left behind of those members in the armed forces who have been wounded, missing or killed in action.



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Meetings

Monthly Meetings

We meet the
3rd Wednesday of
every month at the
Elks Lodge at 6:30 PM.

Address:
The Elks Lodge #2477
158 Conejo School Rd
Thousand Oaks, CA.
91360

Become A Member

Whether you are a veteran or not, family member of a veteran or not, ride a motorcycle or not, YOU ARE WELCOME!

Rolling Thunder Story

Incorporated in 1995, [Rolling Thunder[®], Inc.](#) is a class 501(c)(4) non-profit organization with over 90 chartered chapters throughout the United States and members abroad. While many members of Rolling Thunder[®], Inc. are veterans and many ride motorcycles, neither qualification is a prerequisite. Rolling Thunder[®], Inc. members are old and young, men and women, veterans and non-veterans. All are united in the cause to bring full accountability for Prisoners Of War (POW) and Missing In Action (MIA) of all wars, reminding the government, the media and the public by our watchwords: "We Will Not Forget."

Annual Events

Rolling Thunder CA-1 attends numerous events through-out the year to support, honor, and/or assist local veterans. The following list are those events that are scheduled so far for 2025.

Ride for the Blue	5/3/2025
Conejo Valley Parade	5/18/2025
Memorial Day at Pierce Brothers	5/26/2025
Camarillo Heritage Days	7/19 & 7/20/2025
Camarillo Air Show	8/16 & 8/17/2025
Thousand Oaks Street Fair	10/19/2025
Wreaths Across America	12/13/2025

If there is an event that you would like Rolling Thunder CA-1 to consider, please let us know. We are always looking for ways to support our veterans and raise awareness of the Prisoner of War (POW) and Missing in Action (MIA) issue.

Dates to Remember

JANUARY

- 1 New Year's Day
- 20 Inauguration Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 27 Vietnam Peace Accord (1973), Holocaust Remembrance Day

FEBRUARY

- 3 U.S. Four Chaplains Day (1943)
- 9 National Salute to Veteran Patients Week Begins
- 17 Presidents Day
- 19 Coast Guard Reserve Birthday
- 23 Flag raised on Iwo Jima (1945)

MARCH

- 3 Navy Reserve Birthday
- 4 National Hug a G.I. Day
- 5 Seabees Birthday
- 9 Daylight Savings Time Begins (set clock ahead one hour)
- 13 K-9 Veterans Day (Birthday of U.S. K-9 Corps)
- 15 American Legion Birthday
- 17 St. Patrick's Day
- 29 National Vietnam War Veterans Day

Missing in Action (MIA) Update

Unaccounted for by War (as of 12/30/2024):

- World War II 71,989
- Korean War 7,447
- Vietnam War 1,573
- Cold War 126
- Gulf Wars 6
& Libya

Total MIA count for California : 6,337

Total accounted for so far in FY 2025 (10/1/2024 - 9/30/2025): 20

WWII = 13, Korean War = 6, Vietnam War = 1

Rolling Thunder CA-1 Officers & Board

Officers

- President: John Short III
(800) 606-1390
- Vice President: Allan Woods
(805) 377-4492
- Secretary: Christina Woods
- Treasurer: Lisa Connolly

Board of Directors

- Chairman of the Board: Pat Connolly
- Gov't & Veteran Affairs/Board Member: Jerry Schmidt
- Membership/Board Member : Tom Cook
- Board Member: Jim Kirby
- Board Member: Bob Jones
- Board Member: Mike Smith



Rolling Thunder CA-1 2024 Holiday Party



Vietnam Memorial Wall Facts

A little history most people will never know or see.

There are 58,267 names now listed on that polished black wall, including those added in 2010.

The names are arranged in the order in which they were taken from us by date and within each date the names are alphabetized.

- There are three sets of fathers and sons on the Wall.
- 39,996 on the Wall were just 22 or younger.
- 8,283 were just 19 years old.
- 33,103 were 18 years old.
- 12 soldiers on the Wall were 17 years old.
- 5 soldiers on the Wall were 16 years old.
- One soldier, PFC Dan Bullock was 15 years old.
- 997 soldiers were killed on their first day in Vietnam.
- 1,448 soldiers were killed on their last day in Vietnam.
- 31 sets of brothers are on the Wall; 31 sets of parents lost two of their sons.
- 8 Women are on the Wall; Nurses
- 244 soldiers were awarded the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War; 153 of them are on the Wall.

For most Americans who read this, they will only see the numbers that the Vietnam War created.

To those of us who survived the war, and to the families of those who did not, we see the faces and we feel the pain that these numbers created. We are, until we too pass away, haunted with these numbers, because they were our friends, fathers, husbands, wives, sons, and daughters.

There are no noble wars, just noble warriors.



Veteran Spotlight (as reported by Tim Coates)

You will read some data in this article, not so much to the point of being boring, but I hope you find it relevant. Data from the Vietnam Era war can be as erroneous as body counts were, but they do show trends. So, included herein will be some information regarding Veterans, and some information about our brother in Rolling Thunder, the very recognizable **Jim Kirby**, a Vietnam Era military Veteran.

What is the difference between a Vietnam Veteran and a Vietnam Era Veteran? Some used to think that Vietnam Veterans were only those “in-country with “Boots on the Ground”, and those with duties offshore, whether in the skies or the blue waters offshore were considered “Vietnam Era” soldiers, sailors, and airmen. “The service commendation uses the term “Vietnam Veteran” to describe those who served on Active Duty in the U.S. Armed Forces at any time during the period from Nov 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975, regardless of duty location: (reference from NCESC.COM)”. “A total of 9.087 million military personnel served on active duty during the Vietnam Era, with over 2.7 million Americans serving in country in Vietnam, a total of about 9.7% of the generation in service. 7,484 women served in Vietnam, with the majority of those, 83.5%, serving as nurses. Nurses saw it all, the carnage and having to give comfort to the emotional pleadings of young men wounded and in fear they may never see home again.

A further clarification of Era vs Vietnam Vet comes from issuance of the Combat Action Ribbon (CAR), meant to define those actions where a soldier received and returned enemy combatant fire.

The average age of US soldiers killed in action in Vietnam was 23.1 years, with 5 men killed at 16-years and the youngest killed was 15-years (having been in country for only one month). Who were those young men and women and where did they come from, and when did they give service to our country?

Please follow along and get to know a little about one such Marine veteran, Jim Kirby, aka: Wizard, aka: Gandalf. Jim worked at a local High School and the students called him Gandalf.

Wizard is a founding member of our chapter, Rolling Thunder CA1, the first and only Rolling Thunder Chapter in California. He takes pride in his service, trying to help veterans through activities with Rolling Thunder, engaging them in conversation, and listening to their stories.

Jim was born July 23, 1946, in Rhode Island. His family moved often. When he was in the 9th grade, he attended 4 different schools in 4 different states! Not an easy adaptation for a 12-13-year-old young man trying to fit in and make new friends.

Jim attended John Francis Polytechnic High School and graduated in 1964. He ran track and was a high jumper and pole vaulter in High School. His favorite class was art. He later attended Los Angeles Valley College and majored in Art. Jim has paintings he created through his art.

Wizard has a love for cars. He has had a variety of vehicles: '60 Triumph TR-3, a Metropolitan, a '57 Chevy, '46 Ford Woody, '67 TR-4A-IRS, '68 MGB, '72 Ranchero, '64 VW Bug, '64 VW Split Window VW Bus, a '75 VW Transporter. There are a lot more, but I had to move the interview along. He still stops to talk to drivers of classic vehicles. That's where his heart is. In 2003, he fulfilled his dream of owning a Harley Davidson Anniversary Springer Softail. Now, with his Gandalf beard, long hair, and Rolling Thunder leathers, he is the consummate biker!

He felt a strong sense of patriotism as a young man. His Grandfather had served the country in the Army during WWI, and his father served during WWII, participating in the landing of troops on Normandy Beach. Jim wanted to follow in their boot steps.

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Veteran Spotlight (continued)

After High School, feeling the need to answer the call for his country, he enlisted in the Marines. He went to Boot Camp in San Diego at MCRD. After Boot, he was sent to Camp Pendleton for Infantry Regiment Training. After Camp Pendleton, he went to Millington TN, where he learned how to be a UH-34 Helicopter mechanic. His next duty station was at New River North Carolina (across from Camp Lejeune with the contaminated water). At New River he was assigned to a Helo squadron, HMM-161, and later HMM-162. He was also sent to serve on Guantanamo, went on two Caribbean Sea tours on LPH USS Boxer and the USS Guam. He also was sent to the Island of Viegas off Puerto Rico.

Jim has regrets about not being sent to Vietnam. At that time, the military was phasing out the UH-34 helicopters from combat duty and bringing in the UH-1 Huey that we see in most Vietnam photos. He had to go with the Squadron.

The mascot for the Marine Corp is a bulldog named Chesty, currently Chesty XV. A Marine is a Marine forever, even up through the gates of heaven. Semper Fi, the Marine Corps motto, means "Always faithful, always loyal". Wherever in the world there is potential for threats against this country, there is a Marine standing-by in ready response along with Army, Air Force, Navy, or Coast Guard personnel. It takes a family and a country to support soldiers in the field. Every person in uniform is part of that family and part of the country's mission.

Jim served the country for 4 years before being Honorably Discharged. For many veterans, it was hard making an adjustment back to civilian life. He had begun drinking during his time in the Marines, and it stayed with him for some years. He has been 40-years sober now.

Jim met Debbie and they married. They are inseparable and have been married for 40 years. Debbie is Jim's third wife, but as he says, "the third time is the charm"! Jim is also a proud father of 6 children and 8 grandkids.

Jim is the friendliest, most kind and attentive person. He is always willing to help others. We were at lunch one day and a homeless person was sitting on the sidewalk. Jim approached the person and gave him \$20 and talked to him for a while. He understands the need to be seen.

Debbie and Jim love animals. About four years ago they lost their best buddy, a four-legged furry family member named Harley. Harley was a constant companion and the love of their lives.

If you haven't been introduced to Jim, or maybe didn't know about some of his past, talk to him. He will be your new bestie. .



Donations

Thanks to all who have contributed in any way to our chapter, organization and Veterans. We are 100% donation driven and 100% volunteer based. No one in the Rolling Thunder® Inc. organization draws a salary. All proceeds donated goes directly to help our Veterans and their families through projects we fund and manage.

How You Can Help

Without your help we would not be able to help our veterans. Rolling Thunder® Inc. CA-1 is a 501(c)(4) & Rolling Thunder® Inc. Charities is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation.

You may send any donations to: P.O. Box 6672, Thousand Oaks, CA 91359.



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