



THE FORWARD OBSERVER

The National Newsletter of American Veterans for Equal Rights, Inc.
Volume 5 Issue 2 July 2011

President and Pentagon Certify Repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Policy

Albuquerque Chapter to Host AVER National Convention - October 6 - 9, 2011



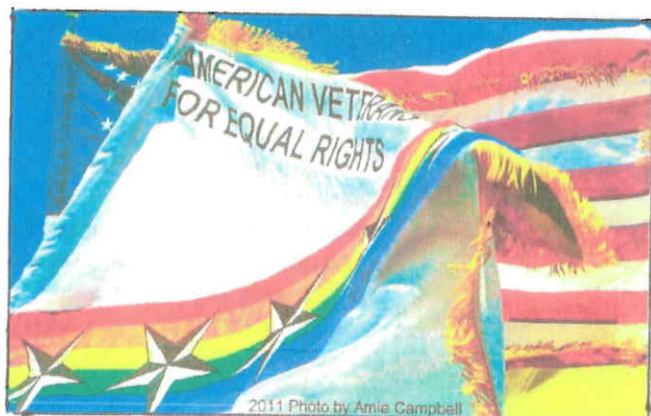
Local Chapters Celebrate Pride Across America



Chicago



New York



Albuquerque



Palm Springs, CA

CONTENTS

President's Column 3	Statement by AVER President 8
Editor's Column 4	National News 9-10
E-mailing <i>The Forward Observer</i> 4	Chapter Reports 11 - 14
AVER National Convention 5-6	DADT Certification 15
AVER President's 4 th of July message 7	TAPS 16

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For the latest information about forming chapters, refer to the AVER national Web site: www.aver.us. Select Chapters under About AVER.

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Come Soar in Albuquerque for the AVER National Convention 6-9 October 2011

The **AVER NATIONAL CONVENTION** on 6-9 October 2011 in Albuquerque is getting closer by the day. The convention coincides with the Albuquerque Hot Air Balloon Fiesta and will include an optional colorful morning ascension with a walk among the launching balloons. The convention Registration Website is at:

<https://www.signup4.net/Public/ap.aspx?EID=AMER131E> so **Register soon**. The **early registration price ends on 31 July** and increases \$15 on 1 August.

The schedule includes AVER general meetings and national elections, programs of "Gays in the Combat Zone", a trip to Sandia Tram, "Influencing the Community", and an optional visit to Sandia Casino and trip up the Sandia Mountain Tramway. Members of our New Mexico Congressional Delegation have been invited to speak to the convention. A more detailed list of the current convention schedule can be found at

<https://www.signup4.net/public/ap.aspx?EID=AMER131E&OID=160>

The convention is at the **Sandia Courtyard Hotel and Convention Center** near Eubank Blvd and I-40. Rooms are available now and members can also choose to attend sections of the convention at reduced prices.

Schedule for Events include:

Early Arrival Wednesday, 5 Oct 11

Thursday, 6 Oct 11 for those in town or who arrive on Wednesday - visit to **Albuquerque Old Town**, ride on the **Sandia Aerial Tramway**, and try your luck at **Sandia Casino**.

In the morning, **Albuquerque Old Town** gathers around the original square founded in 1706. Numerous merchants, restaurants and several museums welcome visitors to Albuquerque.

In the afternoon, the **Sandia Peak Aerial Tramway** transports you above deep canyons and breathtaking terrain - a distance of 2.7 miles. At sunset the desert skies produce a spectacular array of color, and your vantage point from the observation deck atop 10,378 foot Sandia Peak in the Cibola National Forest affords an 11,000 square-mile panoramic view of the Rio Grande Valley and the Land of Enchantment.

In the evening, the **Sandia Casino** will try your hand and wallet at card games, one armed bandits and good food.

Regular arrival Thursday, 6 Oct 11 from 2 PM to 7 PM Cash Bar

Convention Friday - Sunday, 7-9 Oct 11 for AVER business meetings; chapter development,

sessions on Public Affairs, Getting the Word Out, Organizing a Chapter and Influencing the Community; evening hot air balloon glow; early morning hot air balloon ascension; silent auction; national AVER elections, and banquet with guests speakers.

Convention Speakers will include members of the New Mexico Congressional delegation, ACLU on DADT discharge inequities, recent Iraq War veteran on gays in the combat zone and presentations on strengthening AVER chapters.

Convention Costs:

The Sandia Courtyard Hotel and Convention Center has been a strong supporter of the LGBT and veterans communities in Albuquerque for many years and has reached out to provide very competitive rates for AVER.

Room Rates per day include tax, breakfast, coffee and shuttle to and from the airport: 800-877-4852

- Double Queen and single King = \$77.97
- Upgraded Double Queen = \$89.27
- There is a 72 hour cancellation notice required for these rooms.
- Hot breakfast included with both

Convention Registration/Banquet Fee: <https://www.signup4.net/Public/ap.aspx?EID=AMER131E>

- Includes AVER Banquet & Saturday Lunch
- Early Registration fee = \$125.00 NLT 31 July
- Late Registration fee = \$140.00 after 1 August
- Single day registration:
 - Saturday = \$75.00 Including lunch & dinner
 - Friday or Sunday = \$40.00
 - Banquet only for locals & supporters - \$24.00
 - Sunday AM only - \$15.00

Optional Event Expenses:

Sandia Aerial Tramway (On Thursday) - Adults \$20, Seniors 62+ and active duty w/ID \$17

Balloon Fiesta - Glow or Ascension is \$9 each for transportation shuttle and entrance fee.

Balloon Fiesta dates are 1- 9 Oct-2011 for those wishing to arrive early.

Sandia Casino (On Thursday) - no entry charge

Trip to Santa Fe for spouses on Friday - \$8.00 payable at the Railrunner Express

Contacts

Steve Loomis at email sloomis@swcp.com or 505-301-1737 for additional information.

[From Valley Forge to Baghdad, we proudly serve! We have earned the right to serve openly!](#)

Steve Loomis

LTC, EN, U.S. Army (Retired)

President, Bataan Chapter - New Mexico

Vice President Region IV

American Veterans for Equal Rights

505-301-1737

For Immediate Release

Re: President, Pentagon Certify Repeal of DADT

Contact: Danny Ingram, President 678 596-
Denny Meyer AVER Public Affairs 718 849-

Friday, July 22, 2011

Atlanta, GA - Certification of the Don't Ask Don't Tell Repeal is now official with the announcement by the White House this afternoon that President Obama, Defense Secretary Panetta, and Chairman Mullen have certified that the repeal of the DADT law will not harm US military readiness. The law will now officially end in 60 days, sometime in September. Gay, lesbian, and bisexual service members will then officially be able to serve with integrity and honor along with other patriotic volunteers in our American armed forces.

Danny Ingram, President of AVER and among the first to have been discharged under the policy in 1994, commented with two words: "Promise Kept!" Having been present in December when President Obama signed the repeal authorization legislation, Ingram said he had faith that the President of the United States would keep his word. "Today America is more free than we were yesterday."

AVER continues to advocate for full and equal benefits for our service members; only when that is achieved will we have full equality.

aver.us



Editor's Column

Greetings



As you can see from the many articles in this newsletter this year has been an extremely busy time for AVER. From the Pentagon Survey, and AVER's response, to the numerous AVER Chapter Pride Parades across the country - and to the continuous press coverage of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy there has been no time to rest. We all should be so thankful that AVER has an excellent National Board of Officers and has been able to respond in a timely fashion to this whirlwind of activity and publicity.

We look forward to September 20, Military Freedom Day, when DADT is officially dead. We thank the many, many members of GLBVA/AVER who worked fearlessly over the years to bring us to this historic point in time. We also thank all those courageous politicians who, over the years were willing to stand up and be counted. Bravo!

September is dues time. Our dues are \$35.00 a year and payable every September. AVER has no paid staff. We are all volunteers. We depend upon your dues and donations to keep the organization going. Let me take this opportunity to thank you in advance for your continued support. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" did not come to its demise on its own. Your continued support is what eventually toppled it. Please send your dues to your local chapter.

Thank you for continuing to serve your country.

Jim Darby
Newsletter Editor

The Forward Observer - on line

Attention Readers

We mail out *The Forward Observer* first class to all of our members. It is also available *on-line* for download from our web page - www.aver.us , or if you would like to send us your email address, we will send it out to you electronically. Simply send an email with "My email address" in the subject line to editor@aver.us

AVER President's 4th of July Message

Today we celebrate the birthday of our great nation, and there is much to celebrate that we most often take for granted. As LGBT citizens we do not yet enjoy the same freedoms as all Americans, but we are very lucky to have been born in a nation where being who we are does not carry the death sentence. We can speak out about our lives. And we can vote. Yes, these victories have been hard won and there is still a long way to go. But we should be grateful.

I am grateful and proud to be an American. I accept the mistakes my country has made and I work hard to make up for them. I promise that I will not be silent when I see the same discrimination that has burdened my own life heaped upon another group. Freedom is a sweet, precious gift, and unlike some others before me, when I have something really precious, I like to share it with everyone. America will fulfill her destiny only when all Americans feel the same.

US Independence is a military victory, won at the cost of military lives. The men and women whose courage and dedication broke the grip of the most powerful military force of the age gave us the freedom we enjoy today. And those men and women who wear our nation's uniform today maintain that gift for us. We can take our freedom for granted only because they hold the line for us. I am grateful for each of them. And for all of you, for us, who have held that line before them, thank you, for the 4th of July. We demand that they be true to who they are. And we support them in their mission. Many of them probably don't realize how precious a thing they guard. That wisdom probably only comes with age. But they hold it none-the-less with honor and fortitude as we did in our day.

I love to see a right proper spit shine, and I know you don't get one without patience and perseverance. There is no easy way. You stay at it, and polish, and polish. You add layer upon layer upon layer. You maintain the same, gentle persistent touch until you eventually see the brilliance of that mirror shine. That is the America we must demand of ourselves and those around us. That is the America we must continue to envision. That is the America we owe to those who gave their best to bring about the birth we celebrate today. It is the vision of that brilliance that we must maintain, even when older eyes need more help to see it. And it is the vision of that brilliance that we must demand of those men and women who stand brave and proud to hold the line for freedom on distant shores today.

May they, and you, be forever blessed for holding that line. The gift we have received is far too precious to keep to ourselves. May we always be generous in sharing it. Celebrate it. Honor it. Among all Americans, you best know its price. You held the line. You earned it.

Danny Ingram, National President
American Veterans for Equal Rights

A Statement from the President of AVER

When I was first elected to serve as your National President of AVER, one of my primary goals was to bring some much needed healing to this organization. Like all organizations AVER has suffered over the course of its 20 year history from in-fighting and disagreements, even to the point that officers have been removed against their will and individuals have been stripped of their membership. While disagreement is an expected part of any group, there should be room for debate and discord without disrespecting and punishing those who disagree. The need for organizations to engage in debate without self destruction is one of the reasons that US Brigadier General Henry M. Robert developed his famous procedural manual, Robert's Rules of Order, which has become the most widely used manual of [parliamentary procedure](#) in the US and remains today the most common [parliamentary authority](#) by most American organizations, including AVER. It is possible to "agree to disagree" without demonizing members of our own organization or attacking the character or activities of members with whom we have conflicting views. To this end I have tried to offer apologies and enact reconciliation when possible. If we cannot treat our fellow members with the dignity and respect that we all deserve as US military veterans, why should we demand that others do the same? It is right and just that we treat each other with compassion and respect. It is dishonorable to do otherwise, and if I accomplish nothing more in my tenure as AVER's president than treat our members with the respect and honor that we all deserve, I will have had a successful term.

As part of this goal I am issuing the following statement. Many of you will not know the background behind this statement, and it is not necessary for you to do so in order to understand the need to make it. We are an honorable people. My hopes are that this statement will bring closure to an old hurt to a valued and honored member of AVER.

Following is an official statement from me, Danny Ingram, as the current National President of American Veterans for Equal Rights, that is meant to clear the air over an old issue. This statement should put this issue to rest and allow AVER to move forward as an organization that values compassion and respect as a core value of who we are.

* * * * *

There exists no evidence whatsoever that Miriam Ben Shalom, at any time while serving in a position of responsibility in GLBVA/AVER, misappropriated, mishandled, or otherwise misused any funds entrusted to her, and any false statement made to the contrary is not only entirely without merit, but is shameful, irresponsible, and dishonors the dedication and courage of one of AVER's honored founders. Furthermore, Ms. Ben Shalom remains a Life Member in good standing with American Veterans for Equal Rights, and AVER is grateful and proud of Miriam's ongoing commitment and service to the cause of justice and equality for all members of the United States Armed Forces.

Danny Ingram, National President
American Veterans for Equal Rights

Log Cabin Republicans Legal Challenge helps lead to DADT Repeal

July 22, 2011 - Washington DC - LCR Release

(Washington, DC) - Log Cabin Republicans respond as the president, Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff submit certification that the United States military is ready and able to implement open service.

"Log Cabin Republicans are proud to have helped put an end to 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell.' It is our hope that the clear precedent established in federal court that will ensure an absolute end to this unconstitutional law," said R. Clarke Cooper, Log Cabin Republicans Executive Director, a combat veteran and captain in the United States Army Reserve. "Log Cabin Republicans fought this archaic policy on many fronts, from working with the Pentagon's Comprehensive Working Group which showed servicemembers were unopposed to the change, to securing the needed Republican votes in Congress for repeal, as well as bringing the legal case before the Ninth Circuit which should declare 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' unconstitutional. It has been a long campaign, but victory is in sight at last."

Log Cabin Republicans have maintained a three-front strategy against 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,' lobbying for repeal in Congress, consulting with the Department of Defense, and filing suit in federal court. The case went to trial in July of 2010, and the Ninth Circuit Court ruled on September 9, 2010 that the policy violated the First Amendment and Fifth

Amendments of the Constitution.

OutServe

American Veterans for Equal Rights has joined other "world-class" organizations including the CIA, SLDN, Amazon.com, HRC, the Log Cabin Republicans, and Stonewall Democrats in sponsoring OutServe, the nation's first network of actively serving LGBT military personnel. In deciding to sign on as a sponsor for OutServe, the AVER National Board believes that we should do all that we can to help this group start out with a firm foundation. Our sponsorship of OutServe will give AVER an important presence at OutServe's Armed Forces Leadership Summit in Las Vegas, Nevada, the week following our own National Convention in Albuquerque. Furthermore, AVER's presence at the Summit will allow us to gain first hand knowledge of the needs of our active duty military personnel in order to better position ourselves to meet those needs in the future. AVER's official sponsorship of OutServe not only gives our organization much needed exposure to active duty personnel, but allows us to develop a more comprehensive mission in order to secure that American Veterans for Equal Rights remains a viable organization in serving the needs of America's military service members and veterans.

Palm Center Merges With Williams Institute

The Palm Center, a think tank that has been dedicated to unparalleled research about the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy over the course of the law's life, has merged with the Williams Institute. This merger folds together two of the most well known LGBT entities in the nation.

Although both are think tanks that operate under the auspices of the University of California, Palm had operated out of the University of California, Santa Barbara, whereas Williams operates out of the University of California, Los Angeles.

Aaron Belkin, Palm's Director said that "The Williams Institute brings the highest scholarly standards to its research, and it is an honor to become a part of the Williams family." Palm's new web address is www.palmcenter.org.

Aaron Belkin and Nathaniel Frank from Palm Center have both spoken at AVER Conventions.

Father McNeill

"Taking a Chance on God" a documentary film about the life of Reverend Dr. John McNeill, World War II veteran, pioneering gay priest, and prominent author, will have its US debut at 4 PM, July 1st, at the Renaissance Washington Hotel in Washington DC. John McNeill is a Life Member of AVER and helped place a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery last year in commemoration of AVER's 20th anniversary.

"Taking a Chance on God", a title from one of McNeill's most famous books on LGBT spirituality, had its world debut at the Europride Festival held in Rome, Italy, in the first 2 weeks of June. Dr. McNeill, 86, and his partner of 45 years, Charlie Chiarelli, marched in the Europride parade which included 300,000 people from 22 European nations. Dr. McNeill noted what an amazing experience it was to march in a Pride parade that passed right by the famous Roman Coliseum. McNeill, an ordained Roman Catholic priest, was refused a request to meet with Vatican officials. Pope Benedict, then Cardinal Josef

Ratzinger, had McNeill expelled from the Jesuit Order for refusing to terminate his ministry to LGBT people.

John and Charlie plan to attend the US debut of the film, which is open to the public. Following the DC showing, the film will travel to all the major film festivals around the country, both gay and straight, including New York's famous Tribeca Film Festival and the Sundance film Festival in Utah. The couple does not plan to follow the film around the country but will be available via Skype following screenings.

For more information on the screening of "Taking a Chance on God" call the Renaissance Washington at 1-202-898-9000.

Military members march in San Diego Gay Pride Parade

For the first time ever, a group of U.S. service members marched in the San Diego Pride Parade on Saturday, July 16th. Organizers of the parade touted this as an "unprecedented step" for gay and lesbian military personnel under the present military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

The military contingent number more than 200 people, and the former Navy operations specialist who brought the group together said that many are currently in the military. While others were veterans. They dressed in civilian clothes.

Marine Corporal Will Rodriguez-Kennedy is on active duty and said he looks forward to next year's parade, when he believes it will be possible to march in "dress blues."

Gay service members have been known to march in other pride parades, but usually in a low-key manner.

Chapter News

Albuquerque, New Mexico - Bataan Chapter

The New Mexico Bataan Chapter of AVER in Albuquerque publishes a monthly bulletin, *High Desert Signals*. Please contact President Steve Loomis for information at swloomis@swcp.com

At the April meeting new Officer elections were elected. There was a presentation of "Duty to Honor for Our Country." - new Power Point presentation which includes AVER at the Equality Across America March in Washington and Color Guard presentations for Veterans Day Parade and Albuquerque Pride Parade. The AVER Color Guard again led the Albuquerque Pride Parade on June 12th.

The Power Point presentation has been given at both a local young men's group, at Prime Timers and PFLAG meetings and at the Rainbow Vision retirement Community in Santa Fe.

On August 14, the Bataan Chapter will celebrate its annual End of Summer Pool Party & BBQ.

There are tentative plans to set up a GLBT booth at the State Fair.

The dates for the Bataan chapter vary, but they alternate between Board meetings and General meetings. Most meetings are held on weekends at Steve Loomis' home. More info is available from Steve at:

Steve Loomis, President
Bataan Chapter of AVER
P.O. Box 30625
Albuquerque, NM 87190

505 301 1737

Bataan-AVER@swcp.com

Chicago Chapter

Greetings

News about the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy this year has dominated many of the events in Chicago.

In March AVER traveled to Deerfield, IL to give a presentation on DADT at a synagogue.

In May several members of AVER donated items for the Chicago History Museum's *Out in Chicago* exhibit. Jim Darby donated his 1952 Navy uniform which is displayed in a glass case. Travis donated his hat and dress and also was filmed for a video presentation. The exhibit covers 50 years of LGBT history in Chicago.

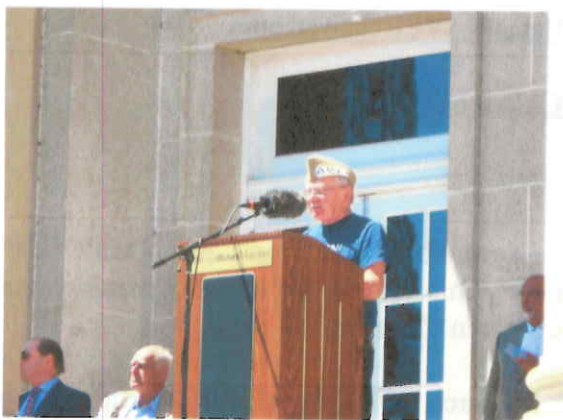
In May, for the 18th year members of AVER held a Remembrance Ceremony at the grave of Allen Schindler. In May we also participated in two other Memorial Day events. AVER, along with the LakeSide Freedom Marching Band marched in the City of Chicago's huge Memorial Day Parade.

With the Lakeview Neighborhood Association, we also co-sponsored a Memorial Day Ceremony at Space Park.

June began with the Chicago Chapter's annual Beer Bust & Barbeque at Buck's Saloon.

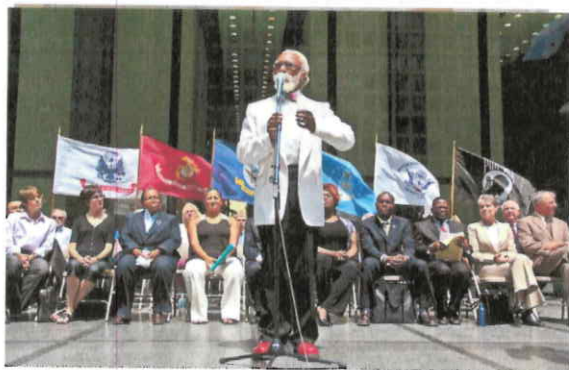
In June Chicago members marched in the City of Chicago's annual Pride Parade. We mounted a full Color Guard, and also had 38 people who carried our giant 50 foot flag. It is

always quite an adventure. We also set up a booth for the two-day Pridefest.



In June members of AVER participated in setting up a n LGBT Information table at Hines VA Hospital with their newly-formed LGBTQ employee group.

In June AVER provided a Color Guard for three events - a Memorial service for WWII veteran, Harry Crossey, the LBGT group from the National Education Association which was having its convention in Chicago, and on the 4th of July we provided the Color Guard for the Chicago History Museum. Jim Darby read the *Declaration of Independence* at that event.



On Tuesday, July 26 Chicago AVER celebrated the 9th annual “*Salute to LGBT Veterans*” in Daley Plaza.

The Chicago Chapter meets the 1st Thursday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at the Center on Halsted.

Jim Darby, President
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www.averchicago.org

Florida Gold Coast Chapter - Ft. Lauderdale



President - Marshall Belmaine
Vice-President - Charles Egan
Treasurer - Richard Crowner
Secretary - Angel Acevedo

FGC meets the second Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at the Community Center - Pride Campus, 2040 N. Dixie Highway, Wilton Manors. Call 954 537 3582 or contact

President - Marshall Belmaine
P.O. Box 11247
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33339
www.aver-fgc.us

Chapter Report: AVER NY

AVER-NY celebrated the Senate DADT repeal authorization vote in late December at a press conference with NYC Councilman Danny Dromm seen on all local TV newsbroadcasts.



At the NYC GLBT Expo in March, we met hundreds of LGBT vets at our booth, encouraging Pride in Service and provided VA Benefits information.



AVERNY marched in Pride in two of NYC's June summer pride parades, in Queens County and Manhattan (AVERNY Photo 2, AVERNY Photo 3) with millions of New Yorkers cheering and shouting, 'thank you for serving'.

AVER-New York, serving LGBT veterans, service members and reservists in the Metropolitan tri-state region of NYC, Long Island, Hudson Valley, Northern NJ, and CT: www.averny.tripod.com



Palm Springs Gay Veterans

The Palm Springs chapter continues rolling along under the great leadership of Mel Tips who founded the Chapter 19 years ago.

Monthly meetings are held at the Golden Rainbow Center on Palm Canyon Drive on the second Friday of every month at 1:00 in the afternoon.

Unlike most other chapters, the Palm Springs vets have a potluck with the main course put together by Mel. Mel, incidentally, was a cook in the Navy for 20 years so he can make all those wonderful delicacies that all sailors remember.

In May of this year members of AVER teamed up with Veterans for Peace to recognize the 10th Anniversary of the GLBVA/AVER obelisk monument in Desert Memorial Park in the Palm Springs Cemetery. It was a memorable experience with veterans and friends coming in from around the country. Mrs. Dorothy Hadjys-Holman flew in from Steger, IL to honor her son, Allen Schindler. Brig Gen Keith Kerr came from Sonoma County, Jim Darby and Pat Bova came from Chicago. And the guest speaker was Danny Ingram, National President of AVER who came from Georgia. President Ingram awarded several Lifetime memberships to veterans who were 80 years old. Special thanks to Sgt. Tom Swann who organized the event. Seven doves of peace were released at the closing of the ceremony.

After the ceremony everyone retired to Leon's Bar & Grill for a grand banquet.

Mel hosted an old fashioned 4th of July event at his palatial home in the desert with 1/4 lb. hot dogs, burgers, potato salad, etc.

Palm Springs Pride Parade will be held the

first week in November. The temperature in June is usually over 100 degrees.

Mel Tips
PO Box 5012
Palm springs, CA 92263-5012
760 329 6560
miltips@aol.com

Sacramento Valley Veterans

Thanks to Ty Redhouse the Sacramento Valley Veterans Chapter is up and flourishing.

The newly elected Board of SVV is

President Ty Redhouse, USAF
Vice-President Tina Stidman, USA
Secretary Gene Silvestri, USA
Treasurer Charlie Peer, USN
Member-at-large - Larry Vasquez

In September SVV held an *All Hands* meeting at Sacramento State University.

In October the Sacramento Valley Veterans hosted a "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Town Hall meeting at the Sacramento Gay and Lesbian Center.

In November SVV held another DADT Town Hall meeting at the Center.

SVV meets on the 3rd Monday of every month at 6:30 p.m. at the:

Lavender Library
1414 21st St
Sacramento, CA 95811

Contact info:

Ty Redhouse
916 436 7676

www.facebook.com/1/d745e

www.sacigbtveterans.org

AVER Region 1 report

AVER Region I, Northeastern US: New Jersey Chapter in formation.

A new AVER Chapter is being formed in Highland Park, New Jersey, with plans for another chapter in Philadelphia. The AVER NJ chapter meets every second Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm at the Pride Center of New Jersey, 85 Raritan Ave., Highland Park, NJ. Please contact AVER-NJ at

aver.nj@gmail.com

There is interest in restarting the BRAVER Chapter in Columbus Ohio; contact AVER Region 1 VP Denny Meyer at

dennymeyer@aver.us

AVER Veterans Affairs

In the period leading up to full repeal of DADT, AVER Veterans Affairs is moving forward in serving LGBT service members and veterans; speaking at a conference focused on VA treatment of LGBT vets at the VAMC in NYC, at a forum in Washington DC, working with OutServe on healthcare issues, and in conjunction with TAVA disseminating information about the new VA Directive regarding respectful dignified treatment of transgender veterans.

vetsaffairs@aver.us

AVER Public Affairs

AVER Public Affairs is currently focused on advocating equal benefits for LGBT service members and veterans, following the repeal of DADT, at forums such as that at a Lehman College conference on DADT in November 2010

publicaffairs@aver.us

The End of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"

On Friday, July 22, 2011, President Obama, Secretary of Defense Panetta and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mullen certified that the repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't tell" policy is complete. The will officially end on September 20 and all gay, lesbian and bisexual servicemembers will be able to openly and honestly serve their country.

This has been a long and painful journey, and we should remember all the dedicated warriors who fought this battle with us over the years. Now.....it is time to celebrate! Hallelujah!

CERTIFICATION

Pursuant to section 2(b)(2) of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010, Public Law 111-321 (10 U.S.C. 654 note) (the "Act"), we hereby certify the following:

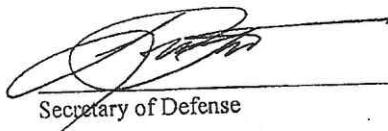
- (1) That we have considered the recommendations contained in the report required by the memorandum of the Secretary of Defense referred to in section 2(a) of the Act, namely, the Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," and the Report's proposed plan of action.
- (2) That the Department of Defense has prepared the necessary policies and regulations to exercise the discretion provided by the amendments made by section 2(f) of the Act.
- (3) That the implementation of the necessary policies and regulations pursuant to the discretion provided by the amendments made by section 2(f) of the Act is consistent with the standards of military readiness, military effectiveness, unit cohesion, and recruiting and retention of the Armed Forces.



President of the United States

22 July 2011

Date



Secretary of Defense

July 21, 2011

Date



Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

21 July 2011

Date

TAPS

Don Stevens - Albuquerque Chapter

Albuquerque's Bataan chapter mourns the death of chapter founding member Don Stevens who passed away at his home on 9 June. Don was a graduate of the Milton Hershey School for orphaned boys in Pennsylvania. He served in the US Navy from 1953 to 1957 during the Korean War. Duty vessels include the USS Benington, CVA-20. Don fought an early private fight against homophobia. For many years he served the youth of Pennsylvania as an adult leader for the Boy Scouts of America and is fondly remembered by many of those young men he helped guide. He took Scouting crews on challenging backpack trips to Philmont Scout Ranch in northern New Mexico. New Mexico became his second home and upon retirement he moved to Albuquerque. He is a founding member of the American Veterans for Equal Rights Bataan Chapter in 2001. Don will be greatly missed by both the Bataan Chapter and Albuquerque's LGBT community in which he was very active.

Ron Schwed - Chicago

Pfc. Ronald Schwed was not thrilled to receive his Draft notice a week before Christmas in 1949. Being an only child, he probably could have applied for some kind of a deferment, but, since all of his friends were being drafted, he felt that it was his duty as an American citizen to serve his country. Little did he know what was in store for him on the other side of the world.

After Boot Camp in Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, Ronnie was sent off to Japan. The North Koreans had invaded South Korea, and war had broken out. While in Japan, Ronnie came down with pneumonia, and his whole battalion went on to Korea without him. When he recovered he was assigned to the next battalion leaving for Seoul. His memory of Seoul is "a completely flattened city." Only three buildings were standing, a bank, a department store and City Hall.

Once there they immediately boarded trains heading for the South. The memory of that train ride is forever fixated in the minds of many Americans—all the bodies floating down the river, and laying on the banks. Were they American or Korean? Did it make a difference?

In Pusan, Ronnie met up with Lennie, a fellow Chicagoan who worked in the Chicago Stock Yards with him. Lennie was part of Ronnie's original battalion. That battalion was made up of men from Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Iowa and Indiana. Lennie said there were only 3 men left. Everyone else was dead. Pneumonia may have been a blessing.

What did he do in Korea? What didn't he do? He served as a lineman, communications clerk, cook, litter bearer, and finally volunteered for the front lines so he could get more points so he could get out sooner. In October 1952 he was sent back to the United States and discharged in Camp Carson, Colorado. Lennie never returned. He was MIA.

Ronnie Schwed – One of AVER's outstanding members. Ronnie was buried at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, IL with full military honors on March 14, 2011. He was 83 years old.