



Remembering on Memorial Day

BY JOHN ROWAN

As we attend Memorial Day parades and events, we all have special friends we remember who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. I have several, including Jean-Claude Esnault, who was killed in Vietnam in 1963; a high school classmate, William Henry Bauer, who died serving with the 1st Cav in 1969; and Kevin Ross, a kid who lived across the hall from my grandmother. Please remember these men and all the men and women who were killed in Vietnam and all of the other wars fought on behalf of democracy.

In this issue (*see page 26*), you will find obituaries on two other veterans, Dennis Koehler and Ray Ellison.

I had the privilege of attending Dennis' funeral service in West Palm Beach. He and I served on the first Board of Directors in 1984-85 after having been elected at VVA's Founding Convention. Dennis was a VVA pioneer. After serving at the national level, he spent many years working on behalf of the Florida VVA State Council. He will be sorely missed.

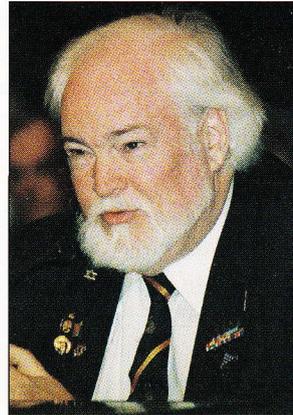
Ray Ellison was a veteran of World War II and Korea. While we honor his service, it was his work in the Household Goods business that was of great importance to VVA. It can truly be said that without his support, VVA's finances might have dried up years ago and we would not have been able to serve Vietnam veterans as well as we do.

On May 6-9, I attended a Vietnam veterans tribute at the Fargo Air Museum. It also gave me an opportunity to attend a North Dakota VVA State Council meeting. Although it has a small population, North Dakota is very active under the leadership of BOD member and SC President Dan Stenvold.

The best part of my trip, however, was meeting representatives from the four chapters in South Dakota. I presented a charter to our newest chapter, North Eastern Dakota Chapter 1054. Although new, it will soon be the largest chapter in South Dakota. The best news is that the four chapters have agreed to come together in the capital, Pierre, to form VVA's latest State Council. We look forward to welcoming them at the National Convention. I want to thank Dan Stenvold and Regional Director Steve House for their help in this effort.

Another highlight of my trip was reuniting with our brothers in the Canadian Vietnam Veterans Association. These Canadian gentlemen served in the American military during the Vietnam War. They travel with their own version of *The Wall* that honors the 121 Canadians killed in Vietnam, as well as seven MIAs. The CVVA presented me with an official life membership in their organization, for which I am eternally grateful.

Beginning on page 28, you'll find statements from the candidates who are running for the National Board of Directors and for the four National Officer positions. Please review those statements carefully. They will help you prepare for the Reno Convention, which is closer than you might think. ■



MICHAEL KEATING