

U.A.W. VETERANS COMMITTEE SPECIAL EDITION

WEEPING

The Lord looked down upon his earth.

He watched many lives being lived,
and witnessed many births.

Then The Lord noticed that there was
something wrong
Soldiers left behind
and forgotten for so long!

Some were still alive,
others buried and long gone.
All had been deserted;
left to fight on all alone;
rejected by their country,
a country they'd called home.
They'd fought with pride and honor!
Why was nothing being done?

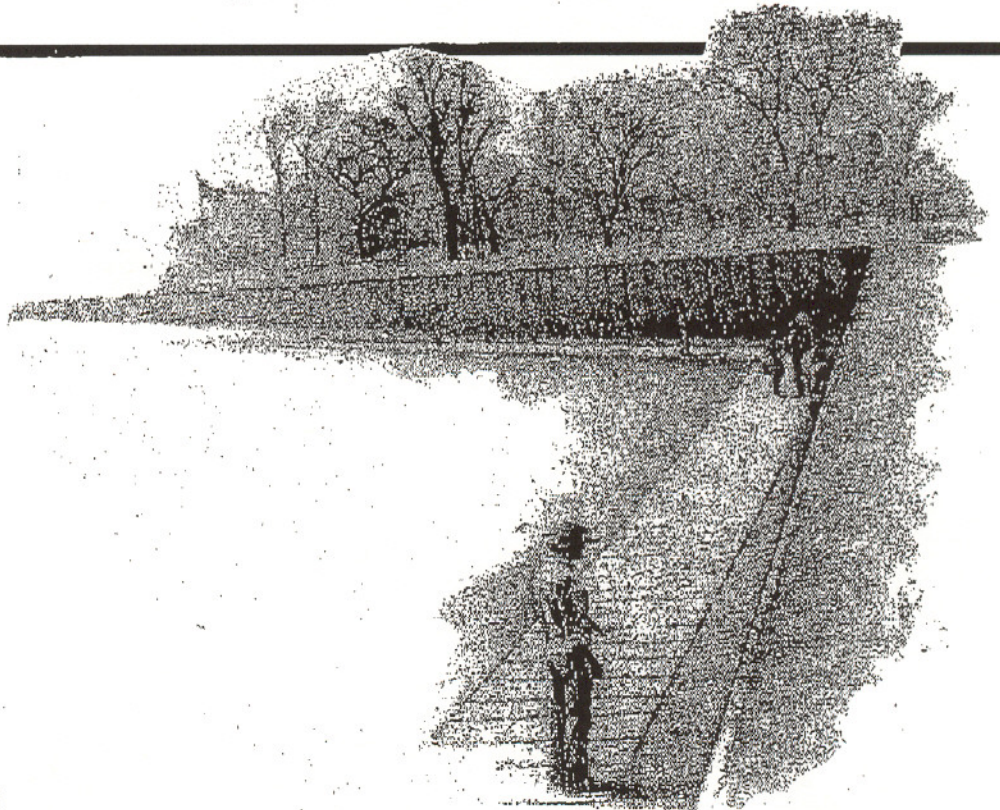
The Lord saw this and He began to
weep.

His tears soaked into the hearts of
those whose love flowed deep.
His tears eased the pain and sorrow of
those who the endless vigil kept,
and nurtured hearts and minds as in
their loneliness they wept.

As His tears dropped,
a man was at The Wall.

He looked up into the sky
felt the sorrow in those drops.
He knelt over and he wept,
at his silent vigil spot.

The rain kept on falling,
but he didn't see the rain.
He was one special teardrop
for each who'd suffered pain.
He keenly sensed the forgotten ones
who'd been left behind alone
in mental cages, felt the rain
containing great and wondrous love.
And knew his silent Vigil helped
ease tortured hearts and pain.



Rolling Thunder and the Ride for Freedom

In just a few short weeks, the Veterans Committee, along with about one-hundred of our own guests, plus 300,000 motorcycles totaling over a half a million other veterans, bikers, and concerned citizens will again embark on our Nation's Capital to participate in the annual POW*MIA rally called Rolling Thunder.

This year will mark the 14th anniversary of Rolling Thunder, named after Lyndon B. Johnson's massive bombing campaign during the Viet Nam war, this rally equals any demonstration ever held in Washington DC.

To pull off something as immense as Rolling Thunder, it takes thousands of veterans groups and citizens from not only across the nation, but the free world. Supporters actually come, and some ship their bikes, from other countries like Australia, Great Britain, Italy, and France. It is very common to see and meet many good people from Canada also.

This year will mark the Veterans Committee's Tenth Anniversary of our own "Ride for Freedom", which is what we call our own ride to Washington. Seems like only a few short years since that cold May morning when myself and three others took the first trip by motorcycle.

Since then, the committee has dedicated itself to promoting and providing a very meaningful Memorial Day weekend to anyone wishing to attend. Over the years, some of our guests have included lawyers, nurses, fire and policemen and editors of both the national and local media. The list does and will continue to grow.

With the continued growth, the committee has faced a lot of growing pains along the way. We have not let anyone or anything detour us from the focus of our mission. Seems like year after year mother nature wants to dampen the path, but our spirits remain on focus because whatever we endure along the route, it is of small measure because we know the men and women we are riding for beared much worse conditions than most of us can even conceive.

Rolling Thunder and the Ride for Freedom is about being an American and believing in the principles that make us the greatest nation on earth. It is because of our fighting servicemen and women that we as Americans can acknowledge this, and without them America would not be as it is today.

■ 5 June 2003

UAW PRIDE IN THE NEW RIVER VALLEY

UAW Veterans

Ride for Freedom

The Veterans Committee Ride for Freedom Memorial Ceremony kicked off Saturday morning, May 24th, at the union hall front lawn. The skies had finally given us a break from all of the rain we had in the month of May.

Scott Stevens of WPSK and WFNR and the NRV Radio Partners had set up to do a live remote prior to the beginning of the ceremony. Scott played many song with the American theme which included Billy Ray Cyrus' "All gave some, Some gave all". Interviews were given by many of the Veterans Committee and the participants of the Ride for Freedom.

Jeffery (Murdock) Walke had the Master of Ceremony duties and called for Commander of VFW Post 1184 Jim Duncan to post the colors. Reverend Doug Patterson opened up the ceremony with a moving invocation.

Emotions were very high as the guest speakers took the podium. Dennis Setliff from the front office, he is the Order Engineering Manager. Dennis is a fine patriot and our "go to guy" with the Ride for Freedom trucks. Dennis gave an account of what the messages on the side of the trucks mean to him personally. Year after year Dennis is a huge supporter of the Vet Committee. He is a Vietnam Veteran and his dad Lee Setliff is a WWII veteran.

Mayor of Wytheville, Trent Crewe spoke and praised all the work of the Veterans Committee and commented on how well we represented the veterans at their Welcome Home Ceremony. Trent is an awesome fellow and a great supporter as well. We appreciate his heart.

Here is where it really got tough for everyone.

Ret. Col. Dallas Cox, a hometown spokesman for veterans, a professional soldier and a Vietnam Veteran and also a Town Council member gave chilling, sordid and graphic details on what our American POW's went through. Dallas made it real tough for Kimberly Johnson who followed with a song that she had wrote, "Scars", after a trip to the Wall.

I could hardly hold it together as I watched most everyone in the crowd wiping the tears from their eyes.

I had the distinguished honor to

introduce our Guest of Honor. Julius Wollen Long Jr. American, Prisoner of War of the Vietnam War.

It was the hardest public speaking I had ever done. The sad, gut wrenching and crippling accounts of the battle that led up to Junior's capture grasped everyone in the heart and throat.

After the introduction and bio the Veterans Committee presented Junior Long with a beautiful plaque with befitting words of heroism and valor.

Junior Long was very appreciative and humbly accepted the Veterans Committee offering and compassionately thanked everyone in attendance. In Junior's last remarks he stated so befittingly "If you love your Freedom... Thank a VET."

Lt. Col. Bill Stringer, Assistant Commandant, Va. Tech Corps of Cadets closed the speaking by saying he was very pleased to be speaking in a part of Virginia with such a "rich tradition" of military contribution. Col. Stringer closed his remarks stating "no government puts as many resources into locating POW*MIA's as the United States. "That's because people [like us] won't let them forget".

John Kallam of Pulaski played America the Beautiful and Taps on bugle. Sonny Bishop of Christiansburg and the Virginia Highlanders played a melody and Amazing Grace on the bagpipes.

During the ceremony also recognized were - John Lawson, retired union member and resides in Draper. John is a WWII veteran. He was wounded in the war and still carries a piece of German 88 in his leg.

PFC. Anthony Smith Jr., son of union member Kathy Smith (dept. 456) Anthony returned home on Mothers Day from Operation Iraqi Freedom with the 82nd Airborne.

Thank You's

We cannot miss the opportunity to give thanks to everyone that had a hand in helping the Veterans Committee. They include.

Christian Motorcycle Association-Mountain Curve Riders.

Blue Knights of NRV. Dennis Raykes handled the traffic control.

DJR Printing- for the wonderful job done on the tee-shirts.

Gary Martin. Owner of, Martin's Backhoe Service. He lined us up for the radio spots.

These good people had owner and sponsorship of the live remote. Thank you all.

Most of all we must continue the praise of our union membership. Through your support, we are able to continue the mission of the Veterans Committee. And the RIDERS of the Ride for Freedom. You continue to make it happen!!



Ride for Freedom Tee-Shirts

The committee had to put back several hundred tee shirts to insure that folks riding with us and the people attending the ceremony, had the opportunity to purchase one. Right now we still have plenty but again they won't last long. Get yours now if you haven't, if you have THANKS.



Junior W. Long

His bio given at the ceremony

Good morning, and thank you all for coming to this important event. Julius Woolen Long Jr. was born July 12 of 1944; he was raised up on Mt. Olivet in Pulaski Co. where as a child and teenager he loved to hunt, fish and explore around the Gatewood Reservoir.

As so many of our young men who served in all wars, Junior's days of youth on the mountain were shortened. In the prime of his very young life Junior was drafted to serve his country on May 4th 1967. After his Basic Training Junior was sent into the Vietnam War with 106th Indirect Recoilless Rifle Brigade. While in Vietnam, Junior was later changed to an infantryman with Company E, 2nd Battalion of the 1st Infantry with the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. At 23 years old Junior was considered the old man of his squad.