

# LOS GATOS

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An exclusive magazine serving the residents of Los Gatos  
The Heart of Los Gatos

# Living



**Board members include Left to Right**

Seated: BJ Tucker, Chuck Swan, Advisory Board Member James Free, Standing: The Honorable Gil Decker – former Assistant Secretary, US Army, Stan Weitzman, Ellen Manzo, George Hall, Diane Chandler, The Honorable John Lochner – former two-time Mayor of Los Gatos, Major General Kent Hillhouse US-Army (Ret.), Stephen Guruwaiya, Michael Frangadakis and The Honorable Francis J Harvey - 19 th Secretary of the U.S. Army.

*Will you join us to  
create a legacy?*



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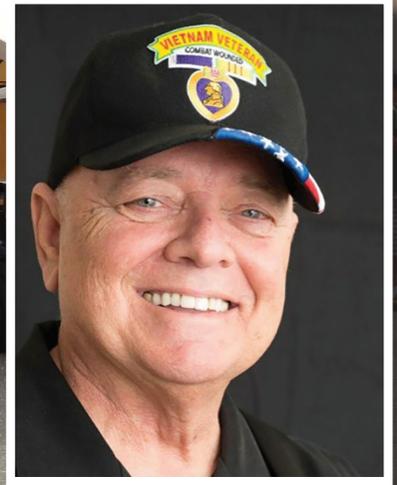
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**Delivering Honor, Respect, Gratitude, and Healing To Those  
Who Have Served and Those Who Continue The Sacrifice**

Cover photo by Dave Lepori

Board Members Clyde Horn (far left), Mike Frangadakis, (second from right) and Ellen Manzo (far right) join Foundation Board Member LT COL Thomas Griffin US Army (Ret.), Chairman of the Veterans Transition Center (VTC), and other military volunteers at the VTC Stand Down weekend, a four-day event conducted to deliver assistance to hundreds of homeless veterans who are shuttled to the program from five counties of northern California.

PHOTO BY REX NADEN



Dr. Clyde R. Horn, Board Director

# *Will you join us to create a legacy?*

## **Delivering Honor, Respect, Gratitude, and Healing To Those Who Have Served and Those Who Continue The Sacrifice**

*By Ellen Manzo, Inside Images Supplied by the Veteran's Memorial & Support Foundation.*

*Speak German? Japanese? How about Russian? Ever think about the language you might be speaking right now without their sacrifice?*

### **PASSION**

“What are you passionate about?” is a question that often appears in college and job interviews. How many of us, I wondered, have ever really defined passion. I recently saw a blog writer named Shillpi Banerji comment that in her life, “Passion is more than just a word... it’s a feeling that drives me insane from the core. Something that strives me to do more.”

Ms. Banerji’s definition of “passion” is very apropos for the attitude that fills the room at the weekly board meetings for the Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation. The Veterans Foundation Board consists of dedicated volunteers from all walks of life - veterans, war heroes, high-ranking military retirees, a former Los Gatos mayor who served, a former Secretary and former Undersecretary of the Army, and reservists, some of whom are still active. Equal in number are individuals who have never worn a uniform. They are parents of military service members, children of veterans and patriotic citizens who look

upon their dedication to the board’s mission as their opportunity to give back to our country.

The common thread? Passion. Passion for delivering to America’s veterans the support they so richly deserve in return for the freedom they have safeguarded on America’s behalf. I, like most others on the board, have been showing up for six years to these meetings. Proud to be part of the team? Who wouldn’t be thrilled to be associated with a more dedicated group of volunteers?

### **A Common Dream**

The team registered the business in late 2012, filed for non-profit status and secured the IRS approval in 69 calendar days which seemed unprecedented of that agency compared to the typical 12-18 month review. I will never forget the laborious discussions around our table as we formulated our mission. Pivotal to the core of all was the goal to see that America’s veterans were honored for their contributions and received the support they deserved. It was apparent that America’s tax dollars were not adequately addressing veterans’ necessities. It was also evident that no one quick-fix exists to solve all of the issues confronting veterans. Were the situation different, perhaps there would be no need for a Foundation.



Left to right: Advisory Board Member The Honorable Francis J. Harvey, Former 19th Secretary of the U. S. Army; Foundation V.P. George Hall; Board Member and Former Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Army, The Honorable Gil Decker; Foundation President Major General Kent Hillhouse U.S. Army (Ret); and Board Member & Former Captain of Police Los Gatos – Monte Sereno, Duino Giordano.

On our board are individuals who are keenly aware of veteran's needs. Los Gatos resident Dr. Clyde Horn, a semi-retired licensed psychotherapist, Vietnam veteran and Purple Heart recipient, gives of his time every Friday to meet with veterans for breakfast gatherings where he becomes well acquainted with their changing needs. Army retired and Vietnam veteran Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Griffin, is the Founder and Chair of the Veterans Transition Center, a non-profit enterprise that refurbished 40 homes on the former Fort Ord military base to house 55 homeless veterans and families. His creative and focused leadership has resulted in the Veterans Transition Center reaching new metric heights for its success in converting homeless veterans to self-sustaining civilians.

And our own team has engaged in supporting homeless veterans through a bi-annual Stand Down program, a weekend-long event that brings support services to homeless veterans of five counties in northern California. Two years ago, shuttle buses picked up over 400 homeless veterans for the program. At Stand Down, veterans are treated with the professional services of doctors, dentists, beauticians, barbers, veterinarian services for man's/woman's best friend, resource centers, psychiatrists, psychologists, clergy members, and lawyers and judges who hold court on site. The weekend ends with participants departing unfortunately for a homeless existence back on the streets with new clothing, bedding, and toiletries under their arm, having enjoyed hot showers, great meals, and a clean shave. Qualified to understand the needs of veterans? You bet.

Our board researched war while attempting to define our mission. Every person around our table despises war, most especially those whose lives were interrupted by a draft to serve in combat. We discovered a significant statistic - that the world has been at peace only 4% of the time. Like it or not, it identified the ugly fact that war is an element of human nature and was here

to stay. Acknowledgment that conflict will forever exist dictated the realization that our humanitarian support needed to forever live and was the catalyst for creating a plan to deliver assistance to vets "in perpetuity."

"In perpetuity"... two words that became vitally important to our mission. Our board debated about how to achieve the delivery of support best perpetually and determined that education was key to success. Our strategy was simple. We were convinced that the more informed our constituency, that we would be well equipped to deliver the help needed to serve our veterans with the buttress of Silicon Valley's support. But our team was only a dozen strong. How could we continually educate when we weren't in front of an audience? Did we have rocks in the head?

Enter the concept of a veterans memorial. A memorial informs 24/7 without the need of personnel being present. It could provide a venue for delivering public programs, promote honor, respect, and gratitude to those who served and convey that our town backs the foundation and values defining America. It was that idea - the brainstorm to build a veterans memorial - that evolved into our dream.

Realizing the power of a veterans memorial caused the team to flip our goals upside down in order of execution. We decided to:

First, build the memorial upon which we could host community events.

Second, through the community events, educate our public, which we viewed as the conduit to acquiring the financial backbone for humanitarian support programs.

Third, deliver humanitarian support programs, the nature of which would vary over time, to address the dynamic needs of our veterans.

## The Lesson Learned on Our Journey

We knew we wanted to establish a memorial that delivered honor, respect, and gratitude to those who serve. What we didn't realize in our planning and have come to learn along this journey is the healing capability of a memorial itself. Three examples:

- » It took Dr. Clyde Horn, fifty years following his year of service in Vietnam to visit the Vietnam Wall, which he did as a guest and through the encouragement of his son. In Clyde's words as published in an article titled "Fifty Years Later":

*"As we come around a bend, I see a curve and wall of deep reflective granite. I stop. 58,286 names of those soldiers who died.*

*Emotions overtake me as my son holds me while I sob. He holds me with love as I leak my feelings.*

*Tears for those who died next to me.*

*Tears for my deep pain of 50 years.*

*Tears for the generations of soldiers who preceded me in wars.*

*Tears for my trauma.*

*Tears for the sacrifices in serving our Country.*

*I walk with courage to the Wall touching it feeling the power of healing..."*

Clyde goes on to mention the six soldiers who died next to him. Their ages: 19, 21, 23, 27, 26, and 24. All confirmed deceased, all fellow warriors. These were kids who could have been any of our children or any one of us. According to Clyde, the visit served to heal. The visit fostered a greater appreciation in Clyde's son about Clyde's Vietnam experience and cemented a greater bond between father and son.

- » Sandy James is the a former Cupertino Mayor and Chair of the Cupertino Veterans Memorial based in Memorial Park which commemorates the Navy SEALs who lost their lives while serving on a mission known as Operation Redwing and depicted in the movie "Lone Survivor". Sandy tells the story about a WWII veteran, a Grandfather, who visited the memorial in the company of his family members and grandchildren. The elderly man stopped in his tracks upon seeing the silhouette of his WWII destroyer USS Little sandblasted into a boulder. The U.S. Navy veteran had served on that destroyer which sank on May 8, 1945, resulting in the loss of 30 shipmates during a Kamikaze attack off the coast of Okinawa. He put down his cane, shed some tears, sat upon a grassy knoll at the site, and for the next two hours, shared his personal combat experience with his family members and grandchildren including the pain of losing his buddies. The family had never heard the story of his wartime experience and were so powerfully moved that they reached out to Sandy and the Cupertino Board to thank them for all they learned about Grand Dad that day.
- » The last example is one of my own. My father and six uncles enlisted to serve in WWII. Two years ago I had the honor to escort my father in the company of 65 WWII veterans and 70 guardians to the magnificent WWII Memorial in Washington



The Foundation Face to Los Gatos. Board Member Diane Chandler.

D.C. I heard stories about my uncles and my father that I never knew. I saw the power of a memorial as one vet, ninety years of age, Michael Alhanti, was asked to speak extemporaneously about the day's experience. Following jokes and laughter, Michael's voice cut over to a solemn tone, and with cracking in his expression, he said slowly,

**"Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for this day. You've just done so much for me and so much for my life."**

Two sentences that conveyed the 75 years of pain felt by Michael and the other veterans in the room. The words spoke to me about the critical importance for what we were embarking upon in Silicon Valley like a two-by-four in the middle of the forehead. Before then, I knew instinctively we were onto something that would deliver value to our vets. Mr. Alhanti's words were testimony and confirmation that we had no other choice than to get this thing built.

In short, our Board has learned that a memorial can itself become the catalyst to healing. So today, we have amended our mission and state that our goal is to establish a world-class memorial in Silicon Valley that expresses honor, respect, and gratitude, and provides healing to those who serve.

## We're On a Roll

In October 2016, this publication featured an introductory story about the Foundation. We had already conducted two national arts challenges and had chosen the top design renderings with input from Civic Center stakeholders, the public, the Town Council, and our board. So where are we now? Our efforts have accelerated to full throttle. Two years and 98 board meetings later hosted at Alain Pinel's downtown office (thanks Alain Pinel!) the Foundation has:

- » Conducted an independent study that included sample interviews of 25 parties with influence, affluence or both, which concluded that we should initiate our campaign.
- » Successfully gained Town Council approval (December 2017) to install *The Flame of Liberty* design that will adorn the Civic Center lawn under the majestic Redwoods.

- » Designed a memorial element to recognize First Responders who have a handshake responsibility with our military to support homeland security and natural disasters.
- » Gained permission from the parents of two local 9/11 heroes – Todd Beamer and Mark Bingham - to include a tribute to their sons in a 9/11 memorial commemoration.
- » Launched a capital campaign.
- » Created a Steering Committee, Prospect Review Committee, Major Gifts Committee, and Special Gifts Committee staffed by community and board representatives to seek donations.
- » Acquired the volunteered support of CEO Gary Filizetti and Devcon as our general contractor. Devcon ranks as the largest Silicon Valley general contractor for the majority of the past two decades, maintains a significant regional presence with offices throughout the West and handles both large, e.g., Levi Stadium, and small projects.
- » Finalized our architectural plans.
- » Nearly have secured building permits.
- » Captivated the support of local publishers to carry the Foundation’s story or profiles of those who served in the press and in local magazines (last count: >20 articles/2 years).
- » Hosted an open house articulating our plans to the community.
- » Participated in the 2017 Senior Thanksgiving Luncheon and Veterans Resource Fair.
- » Organized booths at two Fiesta de Artes events, 20 Jazz on the Plazz performances, two Wine Walks and the 2018 Town Symphony 4th of July in the Park Celebration.
- » Sponsored a Secretary Reception at the 2017 Red, White & Blue Town July 4th Celebration introducing Los Gatos resident and 19th Secretary of the United States Army, Francis J. Harvey.
- » Delivered a multitude of presentations to service and community organizations.
- » And thanks to the generosity of Vice Mayor Stephen Leonardis and family, are beginning to take occupancy over our new capital campaign headquarters at 25 East Main Street.

And may I repeat, about a dozen volunteers who work, have families and other commitments are marshaling this effort. Passion? Is there any question?



*Contribute to the legacy of The Flame of Liberty Memorial with your time, skills or financial support. Visit the Foundation’s website at [www.HonorAVet.org](http://www.HonorAVet.org). Orders are being taken now for the Wall of Gratitude and commemoration pavers. Volunteers welcome.*