

CHAPTER 6

THE LONGEST WAR



*Those who make peaceful revolution impossible
will make violent revolution inevitable.*

~ John F. Kennedy ~

DURING THE DECADE OF THE 1960S, THE DAV CONFRONTED AND OVERCAME ENORMOUS CHALLENGES. AT A TIME WHEN AMERICA WAS ABOUT TO ENTER THE LONGEST WAR IN OUR HISTORY, THE DAV WAS FACING SERIOUS FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES AND THE SIZE OF THE NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICERS CORPS WAS IN DECLINE. NONETHELESS, THE ORGANIZATION RESPONDED TO THE CALL AND ANSWERED THE NEEDS OF THE VIETNAM GENERATION.

At the 1960 National Convention, Dale Adams stated:

“Many of those (NSOs) who resigned were our best and most talented people. We cannot sit idly by and let this continue if we hope to carry out the main purpose for which this organization was founded; that is representation of the disabled veteran and his dependents.”

Many cities had no representation. The Washington, D.C., office alone had lost seven National Service Officers. Adams consolidated three areas—insurance, veterans’ benefits, and regional operations offices—allowing better utilization of the NSOs’ training.

An additional move brought NSO Charles L. “Chet” Huber to Washington to assist Adams. Huber would eventually become National Legislative Director.

Some hard decisions had to be made as Adams moved to increase NSO pay without boosting the organization’s overhead. During more prosperous days, the DAV hired secretarial help to assist with the caseload. Now, offices had to be downsized.

NSO salaries did rise the following year, and membership grew to 207,700. In order

to fill the vacancies of retiring NSOs, the DAV started an on-the-job training program. By the following year, only one office was without a National Service Officer.

The 1960 National Convention gave the DAV one last opportunity to honor its first National Commander, Judge Robert S. Marx, who passed away not long after the Convention. It was a sad moment for the DAV. But, as the old order passed away, a new order was taking shape.

Adams remembers meeting Judge Marx at his first National Convention in 1945. Meeting at the Congress Hotel in Chicago, Adams was impressed that Marx was an astute businessman. “He conceived the DAV

HONORING JUDGE ROBERT MARX, 1960





FROM LEFT, MARIA TEDROW, KIT SEAL, DALE ADAMS, AND KAY ADAMS

and then had the fortitude to bring it to fruition in becoming a national organization at the first National Convention,” said Adams. “His idea to speak about the DAV as he campaigned for Cox and Roosevelt at each train stop is really how we became a national organization.”

Delegates to the 1961 National Convention elected Francis R. Buono, whose tenure as National Commander saw the beginning of many changes that would affect the DAV to the present day.

What turned out to be the most significant change was announced in the June 1962 *DAV Magazine*. Adjutant John Feighner was retiring, Commander Buono told the DAV’s members, and Dale Adams had been appointed as the new National Adjutant.

Adams had enlisted in the Army in 1938 and served in the Pacific during World War II. He was discharged in 1944, coming to work for the DAV not long after the war. In 1960 he was named National Service Director but left Washington for Cincinnati in 1961 as Assistant National Adjutant under Feighner.

When Adams took over the adjutancy, the DAV was still plagued by severe financial difficulties and scandal. However, he was determined to save the organization and was prepared to do whatever was needed. If the organization needed a professional, Adams hired one and got the job done. He was never a man to play favorites or political games.

Adams realized he had to do tough things. He didn’t like them, but he recognized they had to be done.

Adams thoroughly revamped the financial and administrative side of the DAV. In fact, during his first year as Adjutant, virtually every aspect of the DAV’s business operations showed substantial improvement.

He moved quickly to accomplish his goal of preserving the organization while laying a foundation for the future. When he became National Adjutant in 1962, membership had fallen, but when he retired in 1988, membership exceeded one million.

By 1965, IT HAD BECOME IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE PUBLIC TO CONTINUE IGNORING THE WAR IN VIETNAM. TOO MANY AMERICAN TROOPS WERE DYING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. TOO MANY WERE COMING HOME DISABLED.

Employment gained another boost as a priority issue in 1961 when DAV life member John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as President. Featuring the slogan, “Ability—not disability—is what counts,” the October 1962 *DAV Magazine* contained a complete roundup of President Kennedy’s Committee on the Employment of the Handicapped. According to the new President:

“Utilization of...handicapped persons in productive employment is sound and necessary, both for the contribution handicapped citizens make to our national productivity and for the sense of independence and well-being which they can derive from doing a job.

“It is fitting that the government, as an employer, should lead the way in selective placement of handicapped persons so as to utilize their skills and abilities.”

The DAV & Vietnam Veterans

The clouds of war were gathering in the early 1960s. Though United States involvement in Vietnam was steadily growing, the American public hardly noticed. However, the facts did not escape the leadership of the Disabled American Veterans.

Dale Adams brought Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Jim Lucas to the 1964 National Convention to tell delegates about the sacrifices America’s young people were making in Vietnam. Adams and other DAV leaders sensed that the Vietnam War could become much larger. They were already thinking of how the DAV could best respond to a new generation of disabled veterans.

By 1965, it had become impossible for the public to continue ignoring the war in Vietnam. Too many American troops were dying in Southeast Asia. Too many were coming home disabled.

The DAV was already on top of the game at the time, bent on making sure the war’s veterans received adequate benefits and services from the government. The organization’s commitment to Vietnam veterans received a high profile in *DAV Magazine*. The veterans were featured on the magazine’s cover four times in 1965 alone, as well as in numerous articles that year.

CAP HOGAN





LEFT TO RIGHT—CICERO CAP HOGAN, VIVIAN D. CORBLY, BONIFACE MALLE, UNKNOWN, UNKNOWN, MILLARD W. RICE, JAMES L. MONNAHAN, JOHN E. FEIGNER, THOMAS KIRBY

During the Vietnam War, the DAV was able to obtain a list of those who were being discharged, and letters were sent thanking veterans for their service. They were given free one-year membership and informed about the services available through the DAV.

As the war years progressed, popular opinion about the war swayed one way and then another. Controversy over the war rocked the Nation, but the DAV held steadily to its course. The organization's commitment was to the well-being of the veterans who came home disabled. That was the purpose of the DAV. No other issue or priority was permitted to get in the way.

The DAV stood steadfastly at the side of the war's disabled veterans, fighting for their interests on the home front. Of particular importance in this battle was making sure these veterans received the full complement of benefits they had earned. Initially, benefits for Vietnam veterans, even those who came home from the war wounded and sick, were not equal to those that had been granted to veterans of World War II.

This angered DAV leaders like Dale Adams, Chet Huber, and Cap Hogan. These men were firebrands, burning with determination to bring justice to the new generation of disabled veterans. And their goal began to be realized when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Veterans Readjustment Benefits Act of 1966.

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THERE WERE 58,151 DEATHS AND
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The DAV had worked hard for passage of this bill, which made newly returned Vietnam veterans eligible for benefits similar to those granted to veterans of World War II and the Korean War. Many improvements were still needed, but the DAV was under way in its struggle to attain just treatment for Vietnam veterans.

Huber's great legacy was his leadership in the development of legislation that granted the children of 100 percent disabled veterans the same educational rights as the children of those killed in war. His insight turned the tide of Congress when he charged that denying these rights was tantamount to the odious suggestion that children were better off personally if their parent was killed in war rather than totally disabled.

While care for those who returned home from war sick or wounded has always been the major focus of the DAV, the group is also greatly concerned with the prisoners (POWs) of war and those missing in action (MIA). The fate of POW/MIAs took on greater prominence at the end of the Vietnam War, and it's an issue the DAV has pursued tenaciously ever since.

Without a doubt, Vietnam caught the VA medical system by surprise, unable to efficiently meet the demands it suddenly faced when a tidal wave of severely wounded veterans washed over its wards.

Some VA hospitals had a particularly hard time. They were subject to some very unflattering treatment in the pages of *Life* magazine and other media. The DAV, already concerned about the VA's inability to mount an effective response to the medical needs of Vietnam veterans, capitalized on the publicity to demand significant improvements in VA medical programs across the board.

The DAV remains one of the greatest advocates of VA health care. But many problems persist in the way our government cares for veterans, and, when the need exists, the DAV can be one of the VA's most vocal and effective critics.

ARTHUR H. WILSON



As the Vietnam War progressed, the DAV renewed its NSO training program. It brought newly disabled Vietnam veterans on board, training them to become experts in the field of veterans' claims. The first Vietnam veteran to become a DAV NSO was Arthur H. Wilson, in November 1966.

National Adjutant Adams, whose own son fought in Vietnam, demanded only the best for those returning from the war, and his fellow DAV leaders shared that single-minded commitment. More than 8.7 million Americans served in Vietnam. There were 58,151 deaths and 153,303 wounded.



**A C-123 PROVIDER AIRCRAFT SPRAYS AGENT ORANGE
IN VIETNAM**

The dedication shown by our Nation's Vietnam veterans serving as DAV NSOs was extensive. At one time, Vietnam veterans comprised more than 80 percent of DAV's National Service Officers. Their determined hard work in support of disabled veterans and their families was significant as they faced a long period in which such issues as Agent Orange and chemical and biological testing issues were slow to evolve. The federal government was slow to answer questions about exposure, anticipated illnesses, and critical consequences. Years would pass before illnesses were diagnosed as service connected. It was the DAV's corps of NSOs that dutifully and relentlessly persisted on behalf of our Nation's veterans to ensure that the service and sacrifice of our Nation's Vietnam veterans would be honored as much as those of veterans of all wars.

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A New National Headquarters

In 1966—on the Eleventh day of the Eleventh month at Eleven a.m., in honor of the World War I veterans who founded the DAV—the organization dedicated its new National Headquarters in Cold Spring, Kentucky.

Bundled up against the gray, wet chill of the day were some of the DAV's founding fathers. Cap Hogan was there. So was Rabbi Aaronsohn, who had served many years as National Chaplain after leading the DAV's first prayer at its first National Convention. Another familiar face was Harry Wentworth, a longtime member and organizer of the second DAV National Convention.

By Veterans Day 1966, 45 years of hard work had brought the organization to this crowning achievement. National Commander John W. Unger cut the ribbon as National Adjutant Adams and the assembled crowd bore witness.

The decision to build a new National Headquarters in Cold Spring, Kentucky, had been made in 1964. The 31-acre site selected was just a few miles south of downtown Cincinnati. Ground was broken for the new 115,000-square-foot headquarters in ceremonies that climaxed the spring 1965 meeting of the DAV National Finance Committee.

DAV NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS, CINCINNATI, OHIO, 1960's





DAV NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS DEDICATION, COLD SPRING, KENTUCKY, 1966

Several factors prompted the move, including the business taxes the DAV had to pay the State of Ohio for its Cincinnati headquarters. Kentucky had no such tax at the time.

Prior to the DAV's 1966 move to its new National Headquarters, a Honeywell 200 computer was installed. Huge and slow by current standards, this machine was a modern marvel in its day. It could handle a mailing of seven million sets of 50 return address labels in 10 days—a task that took 2 1/2 months manually. This technological development came at precisely the right time.

Computerization proved vital in generating fundraising mail and in processing the contributions that came into DAV headquarters. This was particularly true as the Identotag program, though still the DAV's breadwinner, became less and less cost-effective in the succeeding years.

In 1967 the program was discontinued, replaced by mailings of return address labels. The change became necessary after states began issuing annual license stickers to motorists instead of new license plates. Since Identotags were based on new license numbers, the DAV's annual fundraising effort was rendered obsolete. As the new state license registration programs expanded, the DAV witnessed diminishing returns to the point that the program was no longer productive. But to this day, the DAV continues to honor the commitment to return lost keys with Identotags to their owners.

The DAV was faced with finding an alternative, and many were alarmed by the need for this change. The Identotag program had been such a major thrust for the DAV for so long that many simply couldn't envision the organization raising funds in any other way.

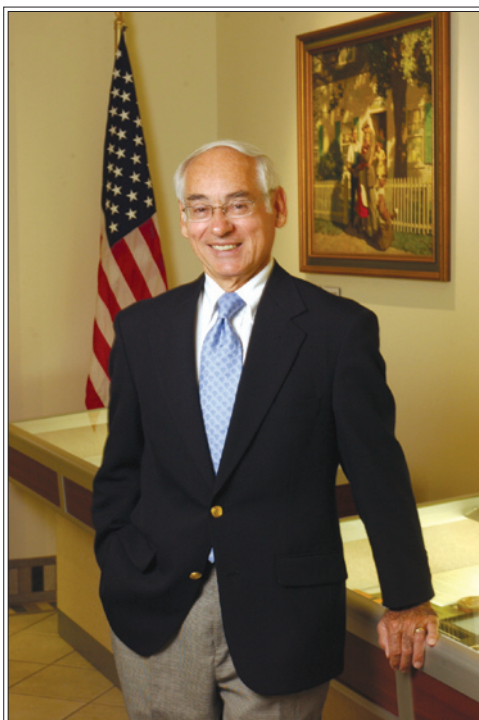
Entrusted to take DAV fundraising into the future was a Korean War veteran whom *NonProfit Times* would one day name "the dean of nonprofit direct mail." A graduate of the marketing program at Ohio State University, Max Hart came to the DAV in 1969, assuming leadership of the marketing aspects of the DAV's fundraising programs.

Hart had gained experience in the science of marketing while working for two powerhouses of American business, Proctor & Gamble and R.L. Polk & Company. He was among the first in America to apply sound marketing principles to charitable fundraising. He tested everything, nothing was left to chance, and DAV fundraising blossomed.

Thanks to the fundraising expertise of this DAV life member, the organization moved into America's top 100 charitable institutions in the years following the loss of the Identitag Program—and has remained in the elite ever since. Along the way, many innovative fundraising programs have been introduced, programs other charities watch closely and try to copy.

Hart's peerless achievements for the DAV were recognized many times. In 1997 he received the Direct Marketing Association Professional Fundraising Achievement Award, and the pinnacle of his notable career was his selection for the association's Hall of Fame in 2001.

In 2002, Hart stepped down as National Director of Fund Raising. He officially retired at the beginning of 2004. However, the legacy of Max Hart will live a long while, not only in the DAV but in American fundraising as a whole. During three decades with the DAV, Hart helped raise more than \$1.3 billion in charitable contributions through the mail in support of essential services to disabled veterans and their families. He truly had the right stuff as a Hall of Famer.



MAX HART