

The Bugle

Ocean Hills Village Vets

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Commander's Corner

Captain Bob Bechill, SC, USNR-R.

OHCC Village Vets?

I'm often asked what the Ocean Hills Village Vets is all about and who our members are. Here's a quick overview:

Vision

The Village Vets Club is dedicated to supporting and enriching the lives of Ocean Hills veterans, their families, and residents interested in veteran-related activities. We foster camaraderie and operate in a way that is accountable to the Ocean Hills Social Club Board.

Mission

We aim to provide peer support, build a veteran-friendly community, engage both veterans and non-veteran residents, host meaningful guest speakers, and offer an annual off-site trip for our members.

Membership

Any OHCC resident can join. We are one of the largest veterans groups in the county, with over **260 members**—thanks in large part to our non-veteran members. Annual dues are still the same as when Joe Ashby was a pup: \$10. What a deal!!

Leadership and Events

We have a 12-member Board of Directors made up of dedicated volunteers.

Our key events include:

- Bi-monthly general meetings (January, March, May, June—tentative, and September)
- May Hot Dog Extravaganza held outdoors in the Lanai, this year featuring Rear Admiral Terry Kraft, USS Midway Foundation CEO
- Annual off-site trip (July/August), with past visits to Camp Pendleton, Army-Navy Academy, and Submarine Training Group Pacific. This year we are considering a return to Camp Pendleton.
- Veterans Day Observance, led by the club since 2024, with recordings

available on demand. We normally fill Abravanel Hall!

- Year-end party in December, which includes hosting active-duty service members and their families (150 attendees last year)

Communications and Outreach

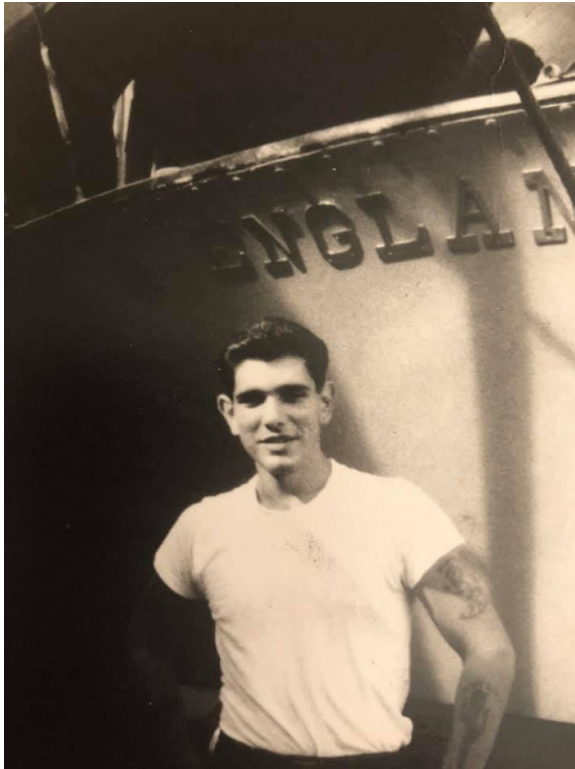
- Our award winning monthly newsletter, The Bugle, distributed to members and available in the clubhouse. Jim McDonough is our editor and is always looking for veterans to interview.
- Monthly article in the OHCC Living magazine
- Articles in the Village Voice
- Monthly eBlasts for updates and reminders
- Our website: <https://jackshabel.wixsite.com/village-veterans>
- Word-of-mouth outreach and participation with other clubs, including The Newbies, Sewing Club, Woodchucks, Choral Society, the Garden Club, and others.

We're proud of what we've built and always looking for ways to improve. Join us!

Our next General Meeting is May 21. See ya there!

A VET IN OUR VILLAGE

Sal Pellerito



Sal is a Chicago native. Like so many young men in the 60's, he faced the certainty of the draft as he finished high school. Sal's Dad was a WWII vet, serving in the Army. He encouraged Sal to find something to do other than the Army, so he wouldn't have to eat out of a can. Sal joined the Navy in 1965. The recruiter offered a choice – go to boot camp at Great Lakes Naval Training Center, north of Chicago, or in San Diego. Sal opted for the latter, and took his first ever plane ride to San Diego. Sal's parents came out from Chicago for his graduation from boot camp in

February and promptly packed up and moved to San Diego.

Sal didn't really know what he wanted to do in the Navy. He was slated to become a barber but never cut anyone's hair. Eventually, he got into supply and worked as a storekeeper. His first sea duty came aboard the USS *Annapolis* (AGMR-1), a U.S. Navy ship recommissioned during the Vietnam War to receive, process and deliver vital communications between the Pentagon and Commanders in the Vietnam theater of operations. She had served in WWII as USS *Gilbert Islands*, an escort carrier. Sal initially was assigned to the deck force and to one of the 3" gun mounts. *Annapolis* was unescorted and lightly armed, and was attacked by North Vietnamese PT boats, but some Air Force planes showed up to scare them off. Sal took the E-4 test and was placed in charge of main stores.

Sal's next ship was USS *England* (DLG-22), a guided missile destroyer primarily used in air defense and as a plane guard. During his two years aboard, Sal attained E-5 and learned how to be an acquisition storekeeper. He made some extra income as the ship's ice cream distributor. Sal was offered an E-6 promotion but declined as it would have extended his active duty.

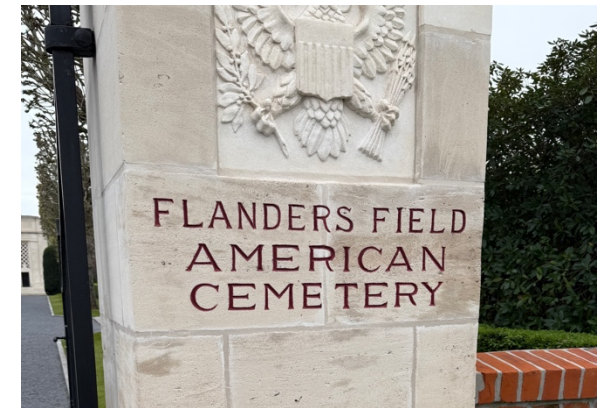
Upon return to the States in 1969, Sal ran into some of that antiwar sentiment and spoke little about his service for a long time. He relocated to San Diego and joined the Vietnam Veterans of America as an at-large member and eventually was persuaded to join the San Diego chapter. He helped build the chapter up as its president,

including raising some funds with the help of his place of work, the Barona Casino in Lakeside.

The two ships that Sal served aboard often were in close proximity to the coast, and Sal's health was affected by Agent Orange. He's a firm believer in the VA health system, and reports that the surgery he underwent at the VA was performed by doctors from UCSD.

Sal and his wife moved to OHCC from Poway in October of 2022, and inside one day he became a member of the Village Vets and the RV Club. He also serves as a coordinator of the Wine Tasting Club. Sal and Susan share five children, eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Sal went on Honor Flight in September 2024, and his guardian was his son, a Desert Storm vet.

Flanders Field American Cemetery



A small US cemetery has 368 US servicemen who died in the fifth and final battle for Ypres, Belgium, in August 1918. A million Germans, Brits, and Canadians died in the first four battles. Photo by Jim McDonough.