

# BACK STORIES of Hinesburg

## Veterans Helping Veterans

### Hinesburg Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association Firing on All Cylinders

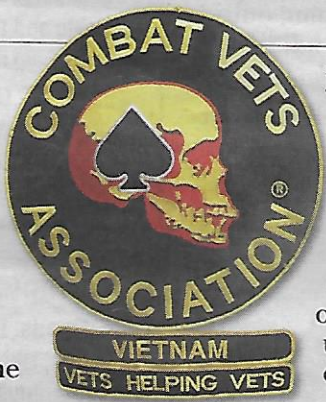
BY KEVIN LEWIS

The Chapter 26-1 Commander of the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association is Hinesburger Floyd (Omen) Wood who, at age 72, still rides a 1868cc (114 cubic inches) Harley Davidson and, more importantly, still helps any veteran any time of the day or night.

“Veterans Helping Veterans” is our motto,” says Floyd, “but it is much more than that.”

Continues Floyd, “As a member of the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association you are treated like family from day one. There is nothing that any one of us wouldn’t do for the other.”

For Floyd, the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association (CVMA) family literally saved his life when he



*Red represents the blood shed on battlefield. Gold is for all the branches of the U.S. military. Black is for the heavy hearts of those who sacrificed. The skull and the ace are for the death that war leaves in its wake.*

joined in 2008. A Vietnam vet of the Army 4th Infantry (16th Artillery Forward Observer) Floyd lived a life on the wild side after his honorable discharge in 1970 and the missing fingers on one hand are chocked up to those days and not combat.

Combat, however, left Floyd injured in other and worse ways. Today he is classified by the Army as “totally disabled.” Joining the CVMA helped Floyd with his disabilities and, more importantly, turned Floyd’s life around.

What saved Floyd is what has saved many other vets: somebody who will listen, understand and just be there. Whether a vet has seen combat or not, there is unspoken bond among vets which allows help to be received

from what otherwise would be complete strangers. Just as important, vets who give the help find a purpose and perhaps even a kind of control over their lives that they formerly may have lacked.

### The Gift of a Challenge Coin



Floyd has come to believe there is genuine power in the act of giving, and Floyd even gave this interviewer – a non-veteran whose idea of combat is weedwacking – a challenge coin that brought the point home. The challenge coin itself typifies the spirit of giving and the bond among veterans. Given to vets by fellow vets as well as by presidents, this coin, when presented, buys favor from other coin holders, regardless of circumstance.

**Cementing the bond among CVMA members is the common interest in all things motorcycle.**

Today, CVMA serves over 22,000 veterans nationwide, with chapters in all 50 states, plus hundreds more members overseas in places like South Korea and Germany.

Originally, in the Vermont Chapter of CVMA, it was just member dues that went to vets and it was only a few hundred dollars each year. In 2009, Kathleen, Floyd’s wife, came up with idea of a fundraiser at the Champlain

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Floyd (Omen) and Kathleen Wood at their Hinesburg home.

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Valley Exposition. A raffle of just five items raised \$10,000 the first year. "We couldn't stop people from buying raffle tickets," says Floyd. "They kept coming back for more!"

Since that time, the Vermont CVMA has raised \$100,000. All of that goes into a 501(c)(19) nonprofit checking account governed by a board of directors. If somebody knows a veteran who needs help they just ask. "We look into it and pay the rent or whatever," says Floyd.

The Vermont CVMA has donated thousands of dollars to organizations such as the VFW Post 782 (Burlington), Hinesburg Fire Department, Blue Star Mothers of Vermont, Pet Program, Vermont Adaptive Veteran Ventures, Boys Scout Troop #252, Purple Hearts Reunited, 2020 Vermont Veterans Summit, North Country Honor Flight, Vermont Paws & Boots Service Dog Program, Vermont National Guard COVID-19 Food Distribution Team, Ryan Grady Memorial Scholarship Fund & Ride, and Friends of Veterans, Inc.

**COVID-19 Impact**

The COVID-19 lockdown required that this year's Champlain Valley Exposition fundraiser be canceled, as well as plans for the annual leaf-



*Winston (left) and Clementine Churchill, both a bit over the 500cc size requirement for membership in the CVMA, but tolerated by Floyd and Kathleen nonetheless.*

peeper Coffee Break event where untold amounts of coffee and delicious baked goods are given away at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial rest stop on Interstate 89 in Sharon.

It is important to note that the CVMA is an association and not a motorcycle club. Although it does serve certain geographic areas, the CVMA does not claim territory. There is no club house and members do not wear cuts or colors, but rather vests. The patch on the back is one piece.

**Motorcycles Mandatory, and BIG!**

Now, about the motorcycling: yes, to be a CVMA member, you need own a motorcycle, it needs to be of a certain size, and you need to ride it regularly. Now, since nearly every weekend the CVMA in Vermont organizes rides, the latter stipulation should not be a problem. Usually rides consist of between 5 and 15 members and all are welcome.

**Just don't be late - there won't be anybody waiting around for you!**

Today, Floyd still rides regularly on the big Harley, with Kathleen often riding behind. When he's not doing that, or fundraising, or helping other vets no matter what, Floyd likes

watching and tending the bird feeders in his Hinesburg backyard, and staying out of the way of his bevy of pets, including two old English bulldogs who, while completely lovable, tend to walk about like small bulldozers.

As his granddaughter wrote in another article recently, "He [Floyd] tries to stay healthy by working in the yard or in the house using the KitchenAid mixer to make some delicious Italian bread. Long motorcycle rides to ease the stress, the pain, the heartache, and the wishes asked upon shooting stars for a better life. Grasping onto a life trying to live life to the fullest."

For more information go to [vtcombatvets.com/](http://vtcombatvets.com/) or email Floyd at [floydew@gmail.com](mailto:floydew@gmail.com).



*Members of the Vermont CMVA.*



*The CVMA sharing coffee at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Sharon, Vermont.*

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