



2ND QTR
2026

NEWSLETTER VOLUME 01

Rowland Freedom Center



CEO CORNER: BOB HAMPTON

MUSEUM HOURS

OPEN:
WEDNESDAY - SUNDAY
10:00 - 4:00 PM

CLOSED:
MONDAY & TUESDAY

 (707) 449-3402

 300 County Airport Rd.
Ste. C4
Vacaville, CA 95688

We are very excited about rolling out our newsletter to those who share our common interests, vision and mission! Rowland Freedom Center (RFC) is a 501(c) 3 established to honor those who have defended our nation's freedoms by educating present and future generations about the sacrifices and service from the men and women who have given much to keep us free. As our benefactor (Herm Rowland) has stated many times, freedom isn't free.

Within the newsletter, you will find out about current events taking place at RFC, find out interesting fun facts and historical highlights showcased by our many displays and exhibits. Also, it will be a way for you to keep updated on our growth and development as a museum, as we are looking at an extensive expansion of our facilities in the very near future! Additionally, starting this fall, we will be implementing a speaker series honoring those who have first hand knowledge defending our freedoms by sharing their personal stories.

A few teasers going into this year; on May 30th RFC will be hosting a sit down black tie Gala Event recognizing our Nation's 250 year Anniversary. Get your tickets online or swing by and drop off a tax donatable check to attend. It will be quite an event as tickets are going fast. Julie Clark, 2025 Aviation Hall of Fame Inductee, will be our keynote speaker and Herm Rowland, benefactor of RFC and patriarch of Jelly Belly Candy Company, will also share personal stories. July 10th we will be hosting the annual Farm-to-Fork event with Visit Vacaville. In the fall, RFC will be sponsoring community-wide Student Speeches, which was a great hit last year. RFC and its sponsors gave out over \$4,000 directly to the participants!

Finally, there is always an opportunity to support our mission in keeping RFC active and vibrant within our community. Donor opportunities are posted on our webpage and contributions can go directly to the museums displays, exhibits, events, educational outreach and promotion in honoring our nation's rich history and remembering those who serve.

Welcome to the Team!
Bob Hampton
CEO, Rowland Freedom Center



 www.rowlandfreedomcenter.org



Heroes Through History Gala:

Celebrating 250 Years of America's Independence

Rowland Freedom Center would like to personally invite you to.....

...join us as we celebrate 250 Years of America's Independence. It will be an evening of elegance to include dining, live music, exquisite desserts, a live auction and incredible storytelling. All proceeds from the gala will go directly towards the mission and vision of the organization that include military history education, building programs that encourage hands-on learning, scholarship funds for local high school students, high quality exhibits, historic displays and much more!

Tickets are \$200 each (general admission at 6pm), VIP Tickets are \$250 (include early entry and welcome sparkling wine, first choice seating at any open table, meet & greet with Guest of Honor Herm Rowland and Keynote Speaker Julie Clark, one free drink ticket)

Please reach out to Jennifer House (530) 310-6123 or jennifer.house2@yahoo.com for further information and to learn more about sponsorship opportunities. To purchase tickets, please go to our webpage www.rowlandfreedomcenter.org.

Other Upcoming events:



The Rowland Freedom Center

requests the honor of your presence for

'Heroes Through History'

An evening dedicated to celebrating the 250th anniversary of America's Independence, preserving history, honoring service, and supporting the continued mission of the museum.

Date: Saturday, May 30th, 2026

Time: 6pm to 10pm

Location: Rowland Freedom Center, 300 Airport County Rd. Ste. C4,
Vacaville, CA 95687

The program will include a formal dinner catered by LaGuagua, live music from Sweet Marie & the Suspects, keynote remarks by honored guests Herm Rowland and Julie Clark, silent auction, live auction and live dessert auction, benefiting the museum's educational initiatives.

Dress Attire: Formal

Individual Ticket \$200

(General admission entry, open seating)

VIP Ticket \$250

(Early entry at 5:30pm, sparkling wine, drink token, first choice in open seating)

Sponsorship Opportunities Available

Please Reach Jennifer House jennifer.house2@yahoo.com 530.310.6123

*We look forward to sharing this distinguished evening with you
as we celebrate the legacy of those who served.*

May 2 @ 9:00

Cup of Joe

May 3 @ 10:00am - 2:00pm

Military Resource Fair

May 7 @ 5:30pm - 7:00pm

Vacaville Chamber of Commerce Mixer
- hosted by Rowland Freedom Center

May 15 @ 12:00pm - 2:00pm

Vietnam Wall Dedication



Written by: Paul Mirich, General Manager, Rowland Freedom Center

Date: May 15, 1968 **Country:** South Vietnam **City:** Thu Duc

American Forces: US Army, Company A, 2-18 Infantry, 1st Infantry Division

Commander: Captain Edmond John Landers, a resident of Vacaville, California

Mission: A reconnaissance in force mission which is a deliberate, aggressive combat operation conducted by a large military force to discover or test the enemy's strength, positions, and reactions. Unlike small-unit scouting, it uses significant firepower to compel the enemy to reveal its defenses.

Captain Landers was serving as Commander of his unit on a reconnaissance in force mission near the village of Thu Duc. While moving through an area of thick vegetation, the friendly force was suddenly subjected to intense machine gun and automatic weapons fire from a numerically superior Viet Cong force. The insurgents occupied a series of well-concealed and strongly fortified bunkers and all approaches to the hostile positions were covered by integrated patterns of fire. At the time of initial contact, Captain Landers courageously led his men forward through the intense hostile fire. He ignored the enemy rounds hitting all around him as he moved from position to position checking for casualties and adjusting friendly artillery fire upon the well-entrenched insurgents. Captain Landers then led an assault across an open rice paddy and from this forward position he was able to direct effective fire on four enemy bunkers. He directed evacuation helicopters into the area to insure that the wounded would be promptly extracted. Once again, he reorganized his men and had them continue their assault. Moving through the area, destroying numerous enemy bunkers, Captain Landers suddenly spotted several Viet Cong about to fire from a pagoda. He shouted for his men to take cover but before he himself could reach safety, he was hit and mortally wounded.

His selfless actions and concern for the welfare of his men undoubtedly saved numerous lives and contributed significantly to the defeat of the large Viet Cong force, in which Captain Landers was the recipient of the Silver Star, receiving it posthumously.

Captain Landers, his sister Mary and her husband immigrated from Ireland to Vacaville in 1957. Mary's married last name was De Wald. Landers, too, was married, and had a daughter Chantelle. After arriving in Vacaville, Landers took a job with PG&E and was in the Army reserves. In 1968, he was called to active duty and was sent to Vietnam. After his death on May 15, 1968, his body was sent to Ireland to be buried in the family plot, so it is assumed that his wife and daughter moved back to Ireland as they are not found anywhere in the Vacaville area. After further research, we located an Army friend of Private First-Class Thad Jessiman who still lives in the East Bay, Ronald John Jimenez.

On May 15th @ 12pm, 58 years to the day of the Thu Duc incident, The Rowland Freedom Center will be holding an event to honor all our Vietnam Veterans. We will be dedicating 2 sections of a ½ scale version of the Vietnam Wall used in San Diego as a traveling Wall, but was recently decommissioned. The names in these sections include all the men in this article. It is a free event and will start at 12 noon. Guest speakers at the event will be PFC Jessiman's friend Ronald John Jimenez, Richard "Dog" Brenneman, who was a POW in North Vietnam for over 5 years, Nick Sanza who was a tunnel rat in Vietnam and veteran Sherly Matzinger. We hope you will join us for a special afternoon!



Also killed in this engagement were the following eight men who served under Captain Landers:

SP4 Benjamin N. Goldberg, Baltimore, MD
SP4 Dennis I. Pedersen, Duluth, MN
SP4 Donald F. Vogel, Chicago, IL
SP4 Robert West, Huntington Beach, CA
PFC Stanley W. Behm, Escondido, CA
PFC Homer B. Bell, Tullahoma, TN
PFC Thomas W. Bishop, Bluffton, IN
PFC Thad B. Jessiman, Castro Valley, CA



Middle: PFC Jessiman, Castro Valley, CA



A huge thank you to our amazing RFC volunteers.....

I'd like to start by thanking my fellow volunteers for their help the last year in welcoming me to the team here at Rowland Freedom Center – I couldn't ask for a more friendly and enthusiastic bunch of folks to work with while keeping the museum clean, accessible and fun to visit. The last few months have seen an increasing pace of public events and private party usage of the museum, which has been excellent for increasing our public profile and has kept us increasingly busy! We've highlighted some challenges that have been made more apparent with the higher operations tempo, notably communications – my focus will be on providing a smooth and consistent flow of information between volunteers



Want to get involved and help advance RFC's mission? [Click here](#) to Volunteer today!!

and staff, as well as better coordination before and during projects and events to ensure that we all get things done safely, effectively, and in a timely manner. I'm pretty excited to see the consistent progress that we've made with limited resources and personnel. Whether large or small, there is always room to improve the museum and the processes we use to make things happen. While plans for a future location and building will proceed in the background, we still have a year or so in the current facility, and we'll keep working to make sure that we keep making the Rowland Freedom Center a better place to visit and enjoy each day. The recent field trip to the Flabob airport was really eye-opening. They have a truly massive amount of public outreach programs, youth programs, activities and events that invite public participation and attendance. The recurrent theme was hands-on activities meant to get children and young adults exposed to aviation, technology and history, from model rocketry to working on actual aircraft and more. We'll be looking at ways to implement some of them (modified to fit the scale and scope of our own facility) to add even more value to what we can do for and with the community. A massive THANK YOU to all the volunteers for continuing to lend their precious time, effort and enthusiasm to the operation of the Freedom Center... and I look forward to continue making the volunteer experience better and more rewarding every way I can. - *Bob Budde, Board Advisor*



American troops marching through the snowy mountains of Korea, c. 1951

New Upcoming Exhibit: Korean War / Vietnam

The RFC is undergoing a transition from the temporary Marine Corps 250 exhibit to the permanent Vietnam and Korea display. It is long overdue to highlight the "Forgotten War," where 36,515 Americans lost their lives from 1950-1953. We will be displaying Korean War uniforms and artifacts in tandem with additional information available via QR codes.

The Vietnam section of the exhibit will display two panels from a half-scale Vietnam Wall memorial in addition to maps, uniforms and other military ephemera. The exhibit will include sight and sound immersion as well as an interactive activity with the Wall. This exhibit is the long awaited addition to our Vietnam UH-1 helicopter and vehicle display outside.

Rowland Freedom Center relies on community donations to keep our doors open & our mission alive. Every contribution directly supports displays, educational programs, and honors the legacy of those who served. Without donor support, this living piece of history couldn't continue to operate. Thank you for your continued support!



Gonzales Brothers Mercantile



The Rowland Freedom Center is excited to celebrate the 250th birthday of America with our new line of America 250 merchandise. Front and center of the Gonzalez Brothers Mercantile Gift Shop, visitors will find commemorative apparel and keepsakes designed to honor this once-in-a-lifetime milestone. Guests can purchase America 250 hats, shirts, magnets, mugs and much more! At the heart of the collection is the Rowland Freedom Center America 250 Challenge Coin. This exclusive piece symbolizes honor, history, and legacy and is a must for any Challenge Coin collector. Don't miss out; join us as we celebrate 250 years of America! Open during museum hours - Wednesday to Sunday 10:00am to 4:00pm!



Leave us a Google Review and have a chance to win an America 250 magnet!

During the month of May, leave us a positive review on Google and be entered into a chance to win an America 250 magnet! Let us know about your positive experience at the museum, friendly staff you may have met, or your favorite exhibit or event you have attended at Rowland Freedom Center! After leaving your review, please email a screenshot of the review to info@rowlandfreedomcenter.org. All entries received by 11:59pm on May 31st will be entered into a random drawing. Thank you, as we aim to boost our online presence!



[Click here to leave a review!](#)

