

Fred Amore, Commander of the Suffolk County Veterans of Foreign Wars and Dorothy Holland. Mrs. Holland and Commander Amore were pen-pals while he was serving in the Vietnam War. They remain close friends today.

WARTIME LETTERS A LIFETIME BOND  
DETENTION OFFICER, VIETNAM SOLDIER HAVE  
FORGED LASTING RELATIONSHIP  
(By Rob Morrison)

When Fred Amore, Commander of Suffolk County Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), looked into the crowd during the Cow Harbor Day Parade last weekend, he was searching for the face of a friend who has stood by him through years of war and peace.

As she does every year, Dorothy Holland, 75, of East Northport stood along the parade route waiting to catch a glimpse of Commander Amore, 55, also of East Northport, marching along. Seeing him brought back many memories of her years working for the Northport-East Northport School District and the year-long period she and Commander Amore were pen pals while he was serving in the Vietnam War.

The two met in 1965. Mrs. Holland had just begun her tenure at the old Northport High School building on Middleville Road as the detention officer. It was during the spring of that year when Commander Amore, then only a teenager, was given detention for cutting class with his high school sweetheart.

"From that day on Fred and I were friends," Mrs. Holland told *The Observer* during an interview in her home Tuesday.

While the two remained friends, Commander Amore graduated the next year, in 1966, and attended Suffolk Community College. But in the spring of 1967 Commander Amore received his draft notice. On June 13, 1967, he went into the United States Army as an Infantryman. Before he left, she went to all the boys "who were leaving," Mrs. Holland said. "I had tears in my eyes and I said 'I will write to you but you have to write to me.'"

Commander Amore returned home from boot camp for Thanksgiving in 1967, then he left for Vietnam December 10 of that year. That Christmas, knowing he would not have a tree of his own, Mrs. Holland sent Commander Amore a photograph of herself in front of her Christmas tree. It was not until January 1968 that Commander Amore said he wrote his first letter to Mrs. Holland.

"I remember saying to Walter, my husband, 'Oh, he'll never write,'" Mrs. Holland said.

But Commander Amore said he became very homesick during his time in Vietnam, especially during the holidays. Commander Amore wrote as often as he could from his military post in Soc Trang on the Me Kong Delta.

"He only said 'I'm so lonely' and 'It is a horrible war,'" Mrs. Holland said. "That's when I started getting worried."

But her fears of the worst became stronger when she stopped getting letters from him. It was February 1968 and Commander Amore was in the thick of battle, attempting to hold off the North Vietnamese during the Tet Offensive. Commander Amore said the three-month ordeal mostly took place at night and forced him and his fellow servicemen and women to live in their foxholes.

"We knew it was coming," Commander Amore said. "It was all over the constantly being bombarded by mortar attacks. The South Vietnamese military was supposed to be protecting the base and the members of the 1st Aviation Battalion, of which he was a part. When the North Vietnamese attacked, however, the South Vietnamese dropped their weapons and fled, leaving Com-

mander Amore and his colleagues stranded. He had been on base for 90 days and still did not have a weapon.

"I had to wait for someone to leave or die to get a weapon," Commander Amore said.

While many soldiers on base were killed during the offensive, Commander Amore said all of the 25 men in his unit survived.

Commander Amore spent several months hoping he would live to see his home again. In the meantime, Mrs. Holland waited to hear news from Commander Amore and the rest of the Northport High School graduates she knew were in Vietnam.

"My heart went out to all the boys," she said. "The stories were just horrible [in their letters]. They knew they weren't accepted back home. That was the worst for them."

After coming out of Vietnam unscathed, Commander Amore was disturbed to hear the negative public opinion of the Vietnam War.

"I knew the feeling of the people before I left and I knew the feeling when I came back," he said. "I didn't want to talk about it."

It was not until 1991 when Commander Amore decided to get involved in veterans activities and build up pride for his service during the war. He joined VFW Post 9263 in Elwood and Commack. In June, he was appointed commander of the Suffolk County VFW after serving as commander of his own post for five years.

"I had no intention of joining the VFW when I got out," he said. "I didn't want any part of it for a lot of reasons."

He always remembered, however, the letters of support that Mrs. Holland wrote him. Despite the nationwide disdain for the war, Mrs. Holland was a proud supporter of the boys who left high school to fight in Vietnam.

"The letters would pick you up," Commander Amore said. "That would get you to the next mail call. I really figured when I went into the service I wouldn't hear from her again. She knew how to keep your morale up and keep you going."

"While working at the high school I met the greatest students," Mrs. Holland said. "I haven't forgotten them and they haven't forgotten me. That school was the happiest part of my life."

THE UNACCOMPANIED ALIEN  
CHILD PROTECTION ACT OF 2003

HON. ZOE LOFGREN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 21, 2003

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, imagine being a 9-year-old girl trying to escape abusive parents that eventually abandon you. Imagine having no choice but to escape to America with relatives who eventually get angry and turn you over to the immigration authorities at the age of 14. Then imagine being detained for over 6 months in a juvenile jail as you are represented by an unscrupulous attorney who doesn't even care to show up to your immigration hearing, leaving you to defend yourself with no knowledge of the law or any adult guidance. Then imagine finding out that the immigration judge orders you to leave the country and you have nowhere to go, nobody to help you, and through it all, you're all alone. This was the plight of Esther—a Honduran victim of abuse, abandoned by her parents and relatives, and left to face a complex immigration system at the tender age of 14.

The sad reality is that Esther is not the only child that has suffered this terrible fate. This is

the plight of many young girls and boys who travel hundreds and sometimes thousands of miles alone in seek of refuge in the United States. Some of these children are treated in a manner that our country usually reserves for criminals, not helpless victims, like fourteen-year-old Esther.

It is true that Congress last year transferred care, custody, and placement of unaccompanied alien children from the Department of Justice to the Department of Health and Human Services to improve the treatment children receive when encountered at our borders. This is certainly a big step in the right direction and I commend the Department of Health and Human Services for taking important steps to improve the care and custody of these vulnerable children. Unfortunately, Health and Human Services inherited a system that relied upon a variety of detention facilities to house children and was given little legislative direction to implement their new responsibilities. As a result, some children from repressive regimes or abusive families continue to fend for themselves in a complex legal and sometimes punitive system, without knowledge of the English language, with no adult guidance, and with no legal counsel.

Now is the time for new legislation to complete the positive steps we have already taken to ensure that unaccompanied alien minors are not locked up without any legal help or adult guidance. This is why I have introduced the Unaccompanied Alien Child Protection Act of 2003. It will ensure minimum standards for the care and custody of unaccompanied children and require a smooth transfer of minors from the Department of Homeland Security to the Department of Health and Human Services. It will also ensure that children receive adult and legal guidance as they navigate through our immigration system.

Mr. Speaker, no child should be left to fend for herself in a complex immigration system that even you and I would fear. We need to pass the Unaccompanied Alien Child Protection Act. I urge this body to swiftly consider this important legislation.

FAREWELL TO CHARLIE "CHOO-CHOO" JUSTICE

HON. SUE WILKINS MYRICK

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 21, 2003

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay respect to one of the most distinguished athletes in North Carolina's history. Last Friday morning, October 17, 2003, North Carolina bid farewell to Charlie "Choo-Choo" Justice, who passed away at the age of 79.

The people of North Carolina remember Charlie from his days of playing football at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill from 1946–1949. In his four seasons Charlie scored 234 points, accounted for 64 touchdowns, and rushed for 2,634 yards. In 1948, and 1949, Justice was runner up for the Heisman Trophy, which recognizes the best college football player in America. Many people who saw Charlie play say that he was the most exciting football player they have ever seen.

After college, Charlie went on to play professional football from 1950–1954 with the