

## JOINT VETERANS' COMMISSION OF CUYAHOGA COUNTY

### PAST PRESIDENTS

\*\*\*\* *We salute these distinguished veterans for their exemplary service* \*\*\*\*

1957-58	Judge Arthur H. Day	Army & Navy Union
1958-59	William J. Gill	Catholic War Veterans
1959-60	Arthur Pink	Marine Corps League
1960-61	Cecil Whitcomb	Legion of Valor
1961-62	Robert Grogan	United Spanish War Veterans
1962-63	Morris Morgenstern	Jewish War Veterans
1963-64	Dr. E. J. Guzik	Polish Legion of American Veterans
1964-65	John T. Corrigan	Army and Navy Union
1965-66	Judge Norman Fuerst	Catholic War Veterans
1966-67	Frank D. Celebrezze	Marine Corps League
1967-68	David T. Matia	Legion of Valor
1968-69	Leo Chimo	United Spanish War Veterans
1969-70	Harry Jaffe	Jewish War Veterans
1970-71	Theodore Holtz	Polish Legion of American Veterans
1971-72	Bernard J. Stuplinski	Army & Navy Union
1972-73	Judge Robert J. Grogan	Catholic War Veterans
1973-74	Robert C. Keller	Marine Corps League
1974-75	Judge Jame F. Kilcoyne	Legion of Valor
1975-76	John T. Patton	United Spanish War Veterans
1976-77	Harry Marshall	Jewish War Veterans
1977-78	Edward F. Rybka	Polish Legion of American Veterans
1978-79	Anthony J. Celebrezze	Army and Navy Union
1979-80	Ron Seman	Catholic War Veterans
1980	Robert S. Valerian	Army and Navy Union
1980-81	Edward Sheehan	Marine Corps League
1981-82	Edwin M. Robins	Jewish War Veterans
1982-83	Edmund Goodwin	Polish Legion of American Veterans
1983-84	James S. Carnes	Army & Navy Union
1984-85	Joseph V. Klubert	Catholic War Veterans
1985-86	Thomas C. Westropp	Marine Corps League
1986-87	Rich Kruger	Polish Legion of American Veterans
1987-88	Matthew J. Hatchadorian	Army and Navy Union
1988-89	Robert L. Bloom	Jewish War Veterans
1989-90	Richard G. France	Catholic War Veterans
1990-91	Mathew Lobas	Polish Legion of American Veterans
1991-92	Norman E. Lewis	Military Order of the Purple Heart
1992-93	Edwin M. Robins	Jewish War Veterans
1993-94	Ron Kimmel	Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 15
1994-95	Denny Frangos	Navy Seabee Veterans
1995-96	Ken Milenovic	Polish Legion of American Veterans
1996-97	Frank Anderson	Paralyzed Veterans of America, Buckeye Chapter
1997-99	Sean S. Ennis	Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 15
1999-00	Louise E. Koballa	WAVES National, Unit 133
2000-01	Roman Rakowsky	Ukrainian American Veterans
2001-02	James D. Quisenberry	82nd Airborne Division Association John Towle-Cleveland Chapter
2002-03	Edwin M. Robins	Jewish War Veterans
2003-05	Vernon Kramer	Reserve Officers Association
2006-07	Bohdan Samokyszyn	Ukrainian American Veterans
2007-08	Rimantas Ray Saikus	82 <sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Association, John Towle, Cleveland Chapter

## JOINT VETERANS' COMMISSION OF CUYAHOGA COUNTY

JUDGE FELIX T. MATIA / CHESTER J. KOCH  
2007 OUTSTANDING VETERAN OF THE YEAR

### Melvin E. Lowe

Vietnam Veterans of America, Greater Cleveland Chapter 15

Melvin Edward Lowe was born on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 1941 in Cleveland, Ohio to Melvin A. and Mary R. Lowe. Mel's dad volunteered with the Navy during WWII. Mel graduated from St. Stephen School, attended St. Edward High School for two years, and graduated in 1959 from West Technical High School. While in high school, Mel worked summers for the City of Cleveland Division of Recreation as a Red Cross Lifeguard. The Cleveland Press did a story on Mel, at 16, being the youngest Lifeguard in the city. He attended Ohio State University for two years.

Mel worked, on and off, as a Union Iron Worker for Local #17, where his father was a Business Agent. As work became scarce, Mel joined the Air Force, in November 1962, began Basic Training at Lackland, AFB, Texas. He went on to the Weather Observing Technical School at Chanute, AFB, Illinois. As a Student Flight (Platoon) Leader, Mel was presented the Spirit of Honor Award in a competition with 600 other students. In June of 1963 assigned to Fort Lee, Virginia with the Washington Area Air Defense Sector, or WAADS. He was commended, for the highest test score ever and longest errorless work streak encoding information for the computer. Mel concurrently attended college at night at the Richmond Professional Institute and being a licensed Red Cross Water Safety Instructor was in charge of the NCO Club Swimming Pool and taught swimming lessons to all ages. In his last year of enlistment he transferred to Cape Newenham, Alaska.

In the hopes of an assignment in Europe, Mel planned to extend for a year but learned his choices were either Greenland or a mountaintop in Turkey. He then volunteered for Vietnam and underwent extensive psychological and physical combat training at Fort Richardson in Anchorage, Alaska prior to shipping out. Reported to Tan Son Nhut, AFB, South Vietnam in October 1966 and was assigned as a Combat Weatherman with the US Army. Mel had a short stint with the 1<sup>st</sup> Air Cavalry Division and then joined the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, operating with the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in a Michelin Rubber Plantation. He flew back seat on missions with the FAC's in an O1E Bird Dog single engine Cessna. He extended 6 more months to be stationed at Vung Tau Army Airfield. Mel was awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal for meritorious service.

After coming home he again worked as a Iron Worker until offered a job back in Vietnam by RMK-BRJ. With the Military Sealift Command, he directed in Nha Trang the first ever fuel oil transfer in Vietnam. In Cam Ranh Bay he directed the sealift operations of refugees and vessels and finally the evacuation of that area. Other assignments included Brown & Root a subsidiary of Halliburton in Indonesia, the North Sea in 1976 on the Ekofisk Project as the Senior Material Coordinator/Planner, 1981 & 82 in Mexico offshore Ciudad Del Carmen. After that, he says he lost desire for boating/fishing. Back home again, he studied and obtained his Property and Casualty, Life, Accident, and Health licenses and became an agent for A1 Insurance Agency. He embarked on a few more overseas adventures including Kuwait in June 1991 for six months, St. Petersburg, Russia from 1995 to 1998 where he met then Vice-Mayor Vladimir Putin. Upon returning home, he has worked at Contract Operations Planning (COP) and Evergreen/UNI as a Subrogation Analyst, Claims Adjuster, and Escrow Agent in the Surety Bond Division. Mel formed Firewatch Contracting of Florida, a Service Disabled Veteran Owned (SDVO) small business in 2006 and is the CEO and managing member of this General Contracting, Construction, Demolition, Industrial, and Environmental Firm. His stated personal goal is to hire as many veterans as possible while he has this opportunity to help.

Life member of various veterans organizations including VVA Chapter 15, PLAV, DAV, AL, VFW, CWV, Cleveland Grays, as well as Secretary of Silver & Gold, which supports police, fire and EMS. He has been with the USO of Northern Ohio for 10 years and as its president for the last four. He led the USO to welcome veterans and their families at their facilities. He has supported the Memorial Day picnic at Brecksville VA Hospital, also bringing cheer with his parrot, "Sunnjy", on his shoulder.

His outreach to his fellow veterans, service men and women, their respective families, and the community has not wavered. Mel is highly respected by all who have worked with him, his enthusiasm for and commitment to projects he undertakes has been known to be highly contagious.

We wish Mel good health and energy so he can continue his commendable lifetime of volunteering, many of us could learn to emulate, and most important, for fellow veterans, service men and women, and their families, to continue to benefit from his caring, generosity and wisdom.

**JOINT VETERANS' COMMISSION OF CUYAHOGA COUNTY  
JUDGE FELIX T. MATIA / CHESTER J. KOCH  
PAST HONOREES - OUTSTANDING VETERAN OF THE YEAR**

1980	Ron Seman	Catholic War Veterans
1981	Stanley Sternik	Polish Legion of American Veterans
1982	Congressman Ron Mottl	Army and Navy Union
1983	Edwin M. Robins	Jewish War Veterans
1984	George M. Stricker	Polish Legion of American Veterans
1985	Robert Chaloupka	Catholic War Veterans
1986	Sam W. Berkowitz	Jewish War Veterans
1987	Richard G. France	Catholic War Veterans
1988	Casey Jaworski	Polish Legion of American Veterans
1989	Sam Rubin	Jewish War Veterans
1990	Robert G. Yuhas	Military Order of the Purple Heart
1991	Edward Sheehan	Marine Corps League
1992	Mathew Lobas	Polish Legion of American Veterans
1993	Donald R. Briggs	Vietnam Veterans of America
1994	Martha A. Kolley	United Spanish War Veterans
1995	Rich Kruzer	Polish Legion of American Veterans
1996	Robert W. Mills, Sr.	Catholic War Veterans
1997	Timothy T. (TJ) Stem	Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 15
1998	Joseph Chervin	Jewish War Veterans
1999	Holly Koester	Paralyzed Veterans of America, Buckeye Chptr
2000	Kenneth P. Milenovic	Polish Legion of American Veterans
2001	Terrance Tyna	Paralyzed Veterans of America, Buckeye Chptr
2002	Chuck Ianni	82nd Airborne Division Association, John Towle - Cleveland Chapter
2003	Leonard Weinstein	Jewish War Veterans
2004	Robert Camburn	Vietnam Veterans of America, Chptr 249
2005	A. Steve Klosowski	Polish Legion of American Veterans
2006	George F. Qua	82nd Airborne Division Association, John Towle - Cleveland Chapter

**JOINT VETERANS' COMMISSION OF CUYAHOGA COUNTY (JVCOCC)  
2008 INCOMING PRESIDENT**

**Rimantas Ray Saikus**

82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Association - John Towle Cleveland Chapter

Ray was born July 24, 1946 in Rottweil, Germany to Jonas and Elena Saikus after they had escaped the Soviet occupation of Lithuania. In 1948 the family moved to Caracas Venezuela where he completed grade school. In October of 1959 the Saikus family moved to Cleveland and Ray attended the 8<sup>th</sup> grade at St. Jerome's School, then St. Joseph High School, graduating in 1964. He went to Cuyahoga Community College for a year and then started to work as a draftsman for Bailey Controls. In October 1966 he joined the Army, completed basic training at Ft. Benning, and when home on leave for Christmas, he became a U.S. citizen. Training included Pioneer Engineer AIT at Ft. Leonard Wood, Airborne at Ft. Benning, Special Forces Light and Heavy Weapons Specialist at Ft. Bragg. In October of 1968, Ray was assigned to the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade in Vietnam as an Operations and Intelligence Specialist, awarded the Bronze Star and Army Commendation Medals. In Vietnam he also served as assistant and bodyguard to Battalion and Brigade Chaplains, and to the Red Cross Representative. Upon returning in September 1969, he went to college and worked as a mechanical designer. Ray obtained a Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering degree in 1977 from CSU's Fenn College of Engineering and went to work for TRW, he also obtained his Private Pilot license. He joined the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (now ASME International), held various offices including 1983-84 Chairman of the 1000 member Cleveland Section. He continued his education, obtaining an MBA in 1984. He works as a business and technical consultant.

In 1983 Ray joined the Ohio Military Reserve with the Rank of Major and was the Chief of Unit Training until 1986. He became active with veterans while working with Jim Quisenberry for the 1988 Vietnam Veterans Reunion in Cleveland. Veteran activity includes: co-founder of Greater Cleveland Veterans Memorial Inc. (initially Vietnam Veterans Memorial Inc.); lifetime member of both the Vietnam Veterans of America (Chapter 15) and 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Association; member of the Polish Legion of American Veterans and the Cleveland Grays. He is President of the Memorial Day Association of Greater Cleveland ([www.mdaogc.org](http://www.mdaogc.org)). He was a member of a Vietnam Veterans group who stopped the renaming of Interstate 77 from Vietnam Veterans of America Highway to Hall of Fame Highway. He is a delegate from the JVCOCC to the Cleveland Cultural Garden Federation (CCGF) representing the Liberty Veterans Memorial Garden and serves on the CCGF Executive Board. Ray has helped gain initial approval for the Liberty Veterans Memorial Garden in Rockefeller Park (details on the back cover). He is co-founder of Equal Honor for All ([www.equalhonor.org](http://www.equalhonor.org)), its mission is to establish a National Military Honor and Service Museum in Washington, D.C. that will record in one place our nation's defenders service and sacrifice, starting with the Revolutionary War, spanning all the conflicts where our soldiers have come in harms way, and incorporating future events.

Civic activities are also part of Ray's volunteerism. He was both a Boy Scout and a Sea Scout; chairman of the Lithuanian College Union of Greater Cleveland; board member of the Euclid YMCA; co-founder of Citizens Vision ([www.citizensvision.org](http://www.citizensvision.org)) and serves as President; has been involved in preserving the Hulett Ore Unloaders and the Steamship William G. Mather and was instrumental in their designation as ASME Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmarks and placing the Huletts and Whiskey Island on the National Register of Historic Places. Defending the Huletts, he was a lead plaintiff in a successful lawsuit against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a Federal Court ruled that the USACE violated the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and as a result, the dredging permit was revoked from the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority.

In 2006 he testified in Washington before the U.S. Senate Sub-Committee on National Parks, opposing legislation to exclude veterans, families and the public from the review process of the proposed Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitor Center (VVMVC). He has testified numerous times before the National Capitol Planning Commission opposing the VVMVC for being built underground, a design that diminishes the significance of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and in an area susceptible to flooding from storm runoff. He currently serves as a consulting party to the NHPA mandated National Park Service Section 106 process on VVMVC. Details at [www.equalhonor.org](http://www.equalhonor.org)

Ray married Sylvia, a Nurse-Midwife, in 1970. Their son Christopher is an Electrical Engineer pursuing an Executive MBA and daughter Christina is a Chemical Engineer who has completed the Medical School and now is working on the PhD in Engineering part of a MD-PhD degree.

We wish Ray success in continuing to lead the JVCOCC in service to veterans, veterans' families, our men and women in uniform, our country and communities.

## Calendar of Events 2008

We encourage all veterans, families and fellow citizens to join in observing the following dates.

April 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2008	End of Vietnam War Ceremony	Vietnam Veterans of America
May 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2008	VE Day	
May 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2008	Memorial Day Commemoration 140 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary	Memorial Day Association of Greater Cleveland
June 13 <sup>th</sup> , 2008	Flag Day & U.S. Army Birthday	JVCOCC
July 27 <sup>th</sup> , 2008	End of the Korean War Ceremony	Korean War Veterans
August 21 <sup>st</sup> , 2008	VJ Day	
November 11, 2008	Veterans' Day	JVCOCC
December 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2008	Pearl Harbor Ceremony	Pearl Harbor Survivors

## Significant Issues Needing YOUR Support

**LIBERTY VETERANS MEMORIAL GARDEN** - Establish a garden to honor all of our nation's defenders who gave their lives not only in the defense of our country but also to bring freedom to many nations around the world. It is appropriate to establish the garden among Cleveland's Cultural Gardens since the people of many of the nations represented in the Cleveland Cultural Garden chain now enjoy their freedom due to the ultimate sacrifice of those to be honored here. It is also to be an expression of gratitude to their families, those who served with them and their families. This site will let our current defenders and their families know that their sacrifice will not be forgotten.

The garden address is 710 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, and located near the Northernmost and West point of the Cleveland Cultural Garden Chain with a prominent view as well as an ample area to honor past and future generations of our nation's defenders and hold ceremonies in remembrance of their sacrifice and service. More details can be found at [www.jvcooc.org](http://www.jvcooc.org)

A tree will be planted in the garden for each century in which our nation has lost its sons and daughters in battle, starting with the Revolutionary War. There will be four trees initially planted, one for each of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. A unique monument, near each of the century trees, will depict for the viewer the significance of the events that moved veterans and citizens to memorialize the sacrifice of those who gave their all. Theirs was the ultimate contribution to culture.

Our allies will be honored and remembered with a tree planted in the Liberty Veterans Memorial Garden for all who gave their lives while fighting alongside us on our soil and throughout the world. A monument will identify the defining events and present to the viewer their contributions.

A center monument of unique and significant design will be installed to express the citizens and veterans gratitude to our nations defenders and their families. It will allow future generations to continue to honor those who serve and help them never to forget those who came before them.

A separate stone with a plaque or a monument will introduce the visitor to this site and the WWI Veterans Liberty Row Memorials along Martin Luther King Jr. Drive (in 1919 dedicated as Liberty Boulevard in memory of those who died during WWI). We are also committed to restoring the trees and markers for the soldiers lost during WWI, it will follow the establishment of the garden.

**Doan Brook Restoration Project** (Veterans were left out of the process) - **Negative Affect on WWI Memorials (Liberty Row)** in Rockefeller Park along MLK Jr. Drive. This issue stems from the transferring of a wetlands project, due to the airport expansion, to the Liberty Row area. The introduction of wild and unmanaged growth will make the area look abandoned and create a safety issue for visitors, neighbors and volunteers because it will become a haven for wild animals (rabies) and the criminal element. The taking of so much cared for land will remove the opportunity for replanting missing trees that had honored our veterans from throughout Cuyahoga County "Who gave their all" in WWI. Over 800 trees were planted with medallions at their bases. Sample city resolutions available by writing to JVCOCC w/self addressed stamped envelope.

**Memorial Day 2008** - The Memorial Day Association of Greater Cleveland needs donations and volunteers to help with decorating the gravesites and with the Ceremony. Please contact MDAOGC P.O. Box 32700 Cleveland, OH 44132 Tel. (216) 514-7001 [info@mdaogc.org](mailto:info@mdaogc.org) [www.mdaogc.org](http://www.mdaogc.org)

## Joint Veterans' Commission of Cuyahoga County

Army and Navy Union  
Catholic War Veterans  
Jewish War Veterans  
Korean War Veterans Association  
Marine Corps League  
Military Order of the Purple Heart  
Navy Seabee Veterans of America  
Paralyzed Veterans of America



Polish Legion of American Veterans  
Reserve Officers Association  
Ukrainian American Veterans  
United Spanish War Veterans  
Vietnam Veterans of America  
Waves National  
82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Association

## **83<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Installation and Awards Dinner**

**Monday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008 7:00 p.m.**

**100<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Restaurant**

***HONORING ....***

**Melvin E. Lowe**

***Judge Felix T. Matia/Chester J. Koch***  
***2007 Outstanding Veteran of the Year Award Recipient***

**Rimantas Ray Saikus**

***Joint Veterans' Commission of Cuyahoga County***  
***Incoming 2008 President***

## Joint Veterans' Commission of Cuyahoga County

### OUTGOING OFFICERS - 2007

**Rimantas Ray Saikus,** *President*  
82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Association - John Towle Cleveland Chapter

**Frank Anderson,** *1<sup>st</sup> Vice President*  
Paralyzed Veterans of America Buckeye Chapter

**Jim Quisenberry** *2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President*  
82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Association - John Towle Cleveland Chapter

**Ken Milenovic,** *Secretary-Treasurer*  
Polish Legion of American Veterans

**Ron Kimmel,** *Chaplain*  
Vietnam Veterans of America -Chapter 15

**Sean Ennis** *Chaplain*  
Vietnam Veterans of America -Chapter 15

### INCOMING OFFICERS - 2008

*President* **Rimantas Ray Saikus**  
82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Association  
John Towle Cleveland Chapter

*1<sup>st</sup> Vice President* **Charles H. Kiessler, Sr.**  
Marine Corps League  
Major S.J. Logan Detachment

*2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President* **Frank Anderson**  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
Buckeye Chapter

*Secretary-Treasurer* **Daniel Engel**  
Vietnam Veterans of America -Chapter 15

*Chaplain* **Joseph I. Mendise**  
Korean War Veterans Association

*Chaplain* **Jim Quisenberry**  
82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Association  
John Towle Cleveland Chapter

### Contact, Volunteer, and Donation Information

JVCOCC P.O. Box 32700 Cleveland, Ohio 44132-0700  
Tel. (216) 373-7799 [www.jvcooc.org](http://www.jvcooc.org) E-mail: [info@jvcooc.org](mailto:info@jvcooc.org)

## Joint Veterans' Commission of Cuyahoga County

### PROGRAM

Assembly & Salute Colors: **Ken Milenovic, Past President**  
Delegate - Polish Legion of American Veterans

Pledge of Allegiance: **All attendees**

National Anthem: **SFC Robert A. Scott,**  
OH National Guard, MEPS Liaison

Invocation: **Reverend George Hankins, Chaplain**  
Cleveland VA Medical Center

Master of Ceremonies: **Mayor Thomas O'Grady, Major Ret. U.S. Army**  
Member - 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Association

Introductions: **Head Table, Veteran's Organizations &  
Auxiliaries, Guests, Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame**

Recognition: **JVCOCC Past Presidents and Past Recipients of  
Judge Felix T. Matia/Chester J. Koch Award**

Greetings: **Rimantas Ray Saikus**  
President JVCOCC

Introduction: **Family and friends of  
Rimantas Ray Saikus**

Outstanding Veteran of the Year: **Melvin E. Lowe, Honoree**  
Judge Felix T. Matia/Chester J. Koch Award  
**R. Ray Saikus and Judge David T. Matia**

Acceptance: **Melvin E. Lowe**

Introduction: **Family and friends of  
Honoree Melvin E. Lowe**

Congratulatory Presentations: **Recognition of Honoree Melvin E. Lowe**

Friend's Tribute: **Jim Cole**  
Veteran and CEO Noshok Co.

Installation of New Officers: **Vernon Kramer, Past President**  
Delegate - Reserve Officers Association

Acceptance Remarks: **Rimantas Ray Saikus, President**

Liberty Veterans Memorial Garden: **Rimantas Ray Saikus**

Benediction: **Reverend George Hankins, Chaplain**  
Cleveland VA Medical Center

\*\*\* Salute Colors / Dismissed \*\*\*