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**Subject:** WHEN THE PUBLISHER OF KOREA VET NEWS WORKED FOR THE FATHER OF MITT ROMNEY

***The Korean War Veteran***  
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*Flashback*

When the publisher of Korea Vet News  
worked for the father of Mitt Romney



**Brilliant businessmen studying at an American university. One in foreground wrote program for George Romney's National Center for Voluntary Action, which has prevailed for more than 40 years. Fellow in center became public affairs vice president of a major American liqueur company and one at end was a marketing executive with Campbell Soup.**

I suppose that it was a long time ago.

I joined the Canadian Army a few days after my 16th birthday.

I was discharged shortly after turning 19 and so what could have been high school years were tough ones spent in uniform.

When I turned 21, a scowling, deprecating counselor "permitted" me to enter a Canadian university.

I wasn't very happy there. I studied independently and subsequently sat for the College Entrance Board exams at an American university. I was enthusiastically welcomed aboard.

A few years later, in fact when I finally graduated, I was the managing editor of a good newspaper and privileged to know (though not well) George Romney, then the Governor of Michigan. He is the father of Mitt Romney, now running for the U.S. presidency.

I spent some time with George in conversation and worked with him a little on his final campaign as Michigan's governor. He then was appointed to the cabinet of Richard Nixon, as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development – a very big and prominent portfolio.

I had segued into public affairs and at one point was director of the Chevrolet Motor Division public relations account. There I worked with Elliot M. "Pete" Estes, who was the division's general manager and also a vice president of the parent General Motors Corp.

"Pete" later became president of General Motors.

Though I worked directly with brilliant, highly placed, internationally known executives who had much influence, I was very lowly paid by comparison and reminded often to not do anything to outshine anyone. My work was respected, so long as I did not step into their limelight – which I was paid to help generate.

The advertising agency I worked with was actually housed within the General Motors Building in Detroit. We were a floor away and steps from GM's most senior officers.



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**President Bill Clinton shown with President George H. W. Bush at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D. C. March, 2011. President Clinton introduced President Bush, who was there to receive the Thousand Points of Light Institute Tribute Award. The latter is the current name of the nongovernmental agency developed 43 years ago by the publisher of the Korean War Veteran as the National Center for Voluntary Action.**

One day we received what was called a “KMA” request. I won’t explain the acronym, but it is not difficult to figure out. It was a term used when somebody put the arm on the agency to do a job we would not be paid for.

This request came from George Romney.

There had been savage racial riots in Detroit, and in several other major American cities. George wanted to find some way to get the people united and make some tangible efforts to remove some of the problems.

The request came to our agency’s chairman and he took it smilingly and bucked it on down the line and it wound up with me. I think I was given a verbal instruction. There was no budget, no money to spend. They thought the request was ludicrous.

However, the chairman had assigned one of our colourful vice president account executives to it as client contact man. The fact was, he had no assignment at the time and was probably facing dismissal. He had been a lieutenant in the U.S. Marines in Korea and was well liked. He had a very Irish name and in those days an account executive’s job was to act partly as one of the agency’s “designated drinkers.”

He met with me and was very perturbed. He had no idea how we could respond to what

seemed a strange and hopeless request from a member of President Nixon's cabinet. He did not even understand the request, and I suspect most others didn't, either.

If a project like that is filled with land mines and pitfalls and is not one that can be glibly talked through, as in a dashing speech, everyone sidesteps it. Eventually it lands in the hands of someone they think is a sucker for taking it on; but others stay tuned from a distance in case it works out and there is an opportunity to steal the glory.



It seems to me that I spent a few hours working on it, maybe as much as a weekend. When I met with my friend the account executive again I showed him a complete and workable action plan for achieving exactly what George Romney wanted to do – but which until then had not even been put into intelligible words.

This was before computers. It was even before telephone facsimile. We communicated by telephone and teletype. We put down our plans on paper.

**The author of the National Center for Voluntary Action plan and its theme and agenda. The agency chairman said to keep him away from certain clients as he was highly intelligent and intimidated them.**

What I envisioned was signing several Detroit based voluntary agencies onto the entity that would be known as the “National Center for Voluntary Action.”

Once approached with a request to join in this worthy mission, how could anyone turn the chance down?

We would access the distribution lists of those agencies, and incorporate the names of their official and volunteers into our national data bank.

But that was the start. The Detroit agencies were branches or affiliates of dozens, even hundreds of other agencies. In some cases they had connections in every major city in America.

We would request participation and mailing lists from all of them – the entire multi-faceted nationwide works of them. A million volunteers, professional in their callings. I didn't call them “a million points of light.”

We would establish many volunteer coordinating centres in the major cities. They would reach out to thousands of other volunteers depending on need, time and place.



**President Barack Obama was the featured speaker at the Thousand Points of Light Presidential Forum in October, 2009 and congratulated President George W. Bush for developing the “thousand points of light” movement when he had taken office 20 years previously – although, it was actually developed as a non-billable project by a Canadian Korean War Veteran working in a major advertising agency, as requested by then George Romney, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development in the Nixon Administration. The history of the movement has an unbroken line, but it came from that veteran.**

My marine friend – I won’t name him, he was in the Incheon Landings – was absolutely incredulous.

“You’ve got it all done,” he said. There was a haunt in his voice. The assignment was probably his last chance to stay with the agency, to keep his job. Here the baffling assignment has been wrapped up in a couple of days. It may have been a little longer, it seems like a weekend in retrospect.

So, asking me to stay quiet and go along with his elaborate ruse, he kept the complete plan in his back pocket.

He set up his first meeting in Washington with the national president of the American

Red Cross, who was heading the new project for Secretary Romney.

He was in my office sometimes, calling that fellow, telling him how he was “bashing heads” trying to make progress with his team in Detroit. He and I were the team and he didn't do any of the work.

He was dragging out the assignment, flying back and forth to Washington, having a grand time of it. He was only giving out hints of the comprehensive plan, a little at a time, to give the impression that he had a huge agency working very hard behind him and that the work was tough and demanding - breaking new ground every step of the way.

Meanwhile, I was making the plan work. I asked all of the Detroit participants to turn over their mailing lists.

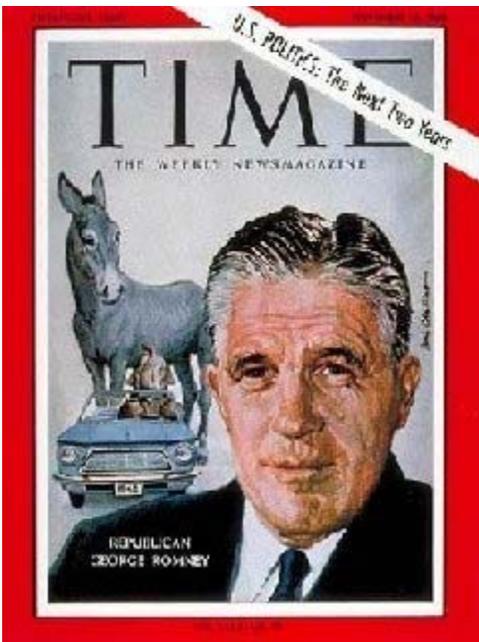
In those days mailings were done mechanically. Each addressee had a nameplate that was fed into a computer.

We soon had tens of thousands of these nameplates. We needed a warehouse to contain them. One million names means one million nameplates. They were being shipped in from all over America.

Volunteers were logging and warehousing all of them and it was possible, by using several printing machines, to make a massive national mailing, even though the press runs would take a week or more.

Cumbersome, but workable.

Now George Romney called for meetings and progress reports. True to the advertising business in which even alleged good friends will cut each other's throats for exposure and more money, the executive I reported to (not the account executive) stepped in to represent the agency.



He got a thorough briefing from me, reviewed what had been achieved, and then he took a personal friend with him and went to Washington for a few days to meet with the cabinet minister!

**George W. Romney was featured on cover of Time magazine in 1962, when he left American Motors as its president to run for Governor of Michigan.**

My name was never mentioned in the Washington meetings.

The program I had developed was very comprehensive and the mailing feature that would bring a million volunteers into the fold was only a mechanical part of it.

What it enabled people in Washington to do, those who would operate the national center, was look up and consult with experts in any area of concern, in any location in America. We had it

indexed that way.

I had also developed the goals, the vision statement, the whole program in its entirety.

Those who took credit for it snubbed me once it was seen as a resounding success, even sacrificing friendships. Friends are cheap where careers and income are concerned.

The marine, when he had to hand over the program to the appointed officials in Washington, returned to the agency on general assignment and I believe was eventually fired. I think his mind and his heart was still at Incheon and at the Chosin Reservoir in Korea.

Across West Grand Boulevard from the General Motors Building where our agency was located was the Fisher Building. Max Fisher, a Detroit financier who greatly aided Israel with collected donations of money in the six-day Arab-Israeli war of 1967, had his penthouse office there. The building was not named after him but after the Fisher Brothers who had founded the Fisher Body Corporation which became a major part of General Motors Corp.

Max had bought the magnificent building. I had met him in his offices a few times for various reasons. He was confirmed as the first chairman of the National Center for Voluntary Action by President Richard Nixon when Nixon announced it as a federally endorsed program.

*(Continues below photographs)*



The beautiful General Motors Building was the largest office building in America and a marvellous place to work. You entered through gleaming brass framed glass doors no matter which street you came in from. The floors inside were marble, inset with large brass insignia and terrazzo motives. Dozens of excellent restaurants and bistros surrounded the building. The food in some was better than in Paris, as was the atmosphere. It was connected to two other GM-owned buildings by tunnel and by aerial bridge - the huge Argonaut Building in the rear and the First Avenue Building on the east side. Everything inside had to do with planning and administration and sales. All engineering and technical work was handled at the General Motors Technical Center in the suburban city of Warren. GM gave the building to the City of Detroit for \$1 when it moved into the Renaissance Center on Detroit's riverfront.



Main entrance to the General Motors Building off of West Grand Boulevard. One's chest swelled when he neared this edifice, even if tired from a late night's work. It was stepping from a humdrum, too busy world of petty complaints and the bizarre happenings of that tumultuous time into an energetic, staid and forever upward atmosphere where everyone was dedicated to their work; not just to building and selling cars, but to building America. The fortunes of hundreds of thousands of

**Americans and Canadians and those in other counties with connections to General Motors were in the hands of those working there. In the 1960's, despite great changes underway in American society, the only black people working inside were janitors and a very few young black women employed as typists.**

**In the advertisements for Cadillac, Chevrolet, Buick, Oldsmobile and Pontiac cars black people were never shown in the pictures or in the TV commercial footage. The Chevrolet ad agency took on the job of developing programs that would advance the rights and opportunities of black people. The National Center for Voluntary Action was one of them. There also were no women executives in then entire General Motors structure, not even junior ones. The agency had but one and she was there for appearance as a consultant on women's tastes and how to incorporate them into car designs. Today General Motors, in all of its operations around the world, is loaded with women executives in every discipline, including key engineering posts, and the global chief of vehicle design, who is a corporate vice president, is a black man. Below, entrance from Second Avenue. Near the glass entrance doors seen down the corridor at are rows of fine clothing and jewelry stores.**



Well, my program, that has never shown my name, has lasted for more than 40 years. The National Center for Voluntary Action is still alive and viable in Washington, though it has had some amalgamations and so forth, but it still essentially follows the original plan. It is now called the Thousand Points of Light Institute. It still has offices in Washington and New York City but has shifted the headquarters operation to Atlanta, Georgia.

For many years it was indeed a key nongovernmental agency for addressing crises in America's cities. In the Administration of President George H. W. Bush, the *first* President Bush, it was the unofficial agency that handled his "Million Points of Light" program.

Under that much talked about program he sought voluntary participation by Americans to work on a myriad of social problems, especially educational problems. Actually, it was a continuation of the work of the National Center for Voluntary Action with a new name.

Later on, when his son, George W. Bush became president he changed the mission of the National Center for Voluntary Action to an anti-terrorist role.

The dictionary account that follows this article, while not fully accurate, speaks of the organization that a Canadian Korean War Veteran developed over a hard working weekend – it could have been a whole week – and it still is in existence.

As many of my colleagues advised, without much effect, one should never undertake something unless he is going to gain personal recognition and benefit if it works, yet can escape the brickbats and put blame on somebody else if it doesn't.

Doing something good isn't the point, one veteran adman said. Making it look like you did something good was what counted and was remembered.

Many such guys are stars on their feet and spout good sounding things like quicksilver, but often can't fill a single page with written words that make any sense. On paper they are dunces but in oration they are tigers.

I never listened to the schemers who told me not to do things simply to do them well, but always to work craftily for personal gain. If you didn't, they cautioned, everyone else was doing it and they would consume your efforts - and your deserved rewards.

Through the years, in other situations, I advised many corporations and developed words and even corporate policies for presidents and chairmen, who let me do it with the unspoken agreement that I stay in the background. They held my motives suspect and once success was achieved, shoved me out of the way.

Sometimes I wrote speeches for some of them about things within their own companies that they had very little knowledge of themselves, but which won them ovations.

I spent a career in corporate affairs working under those conditions. That is something not taught in the Harvard Business School, or the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, or even in the Richard Ivey School of Business in London, Ontario, where they charge tuition of \$76,000 for one year of graduate study.

Korean War Veterans would know the process. Do the brutal hard work, face the grave danger, suffer the wounds, then get out of the way. Somebody else who hung back and is not "*one of us*" will kill to get the credit.

Anyhow, I suppose if I wanted to, I could claim the work mentioned above as some form of association with the current U.S. Presidential aspirant, Mitt Romney – for his father, George Romney, stayed with the National Center for Voluntary Action for many years.

When he left the federal government he became its chairman. Mitt Romney's mother, Lenore Romney, also played an executive role in the early years of the organization, and once was a vice president.

Those were hard years and not fun as one might think. Our careers – mine and associates of mine - were colourful and probably exciting, as well as scary at times.

As a corporation executive later I traveled back and forth to New York City regularly and worked with our specialist in the New York Stock Exchange. I had meetings and arranged news conferences in the Trade Towers that were destroyed by suicidal Arabs only to give America some hurt and which horrid acts of murder accomplished nothing whatever for their people or for their beliefs.

I saw in news footage of the rubble the escalator we had taken up three or four stories to get to the lower level restaurant.

Before that had happened I spoke one time at the Wall Street Club and looked out and down into the harbour at the Statue of Liberty and had sixty or so tough Madison Avenue admen caught up in my words. Most of them shook my hand afterwards.

But even on Wall Street that day, making that speech, my thoughts were partly with soldiers I had served with in Korea.

In truth, the Korean War had been on my mind nearly every step of the way, through studies at five universities and a career that friends later called "blue chip" all the way.

Strange how things last.

Finally I came back among Korean War veterans.

Through about 17 years I have received many castigations from veterans who do not know me, many ugly things have been said about my independent work because it has not been controlled by or "sanctioned" by various veteran association groups - even in affiliated Commonwealth countries - but thousands of veterans, not only in Canada but in other nations, likely have benefited from it.

Some have knowingly benefited and berated me behind the scenes just the same. Some have swiped the work and taken credit for it and accepted undeserved accolades from their peers. Not much different than in the national advertising agency business.

I guess in America, many no doubt have benefited from the National Center for Voluntary Action that I formed some 40 years ago. None have castigated the author of that program, or derided the good that it has achieved.

To the contrary, *five* American Presidents have acclaimed it!

It is noteworthy that in its present form, the Thousand Points of Light Institute, the organization last October honoured President George W. Bush for perpetuating its mission and message in a lavish ceremony attended by President Bill Clinton and President Jimmy Carter.

President Barack Obama also honoured President Bush before that in 2009 on the 20th

anniversary of his launching the “Thousand Points of Light” initiative, which President Obama said also formed the basis for some of his own cabinet’s philosophy.

Indeed, President George W. Bush used the thousand points of light expression and reference to American national volunteerism in his inauguration speech... but it was building on a theme and a program that began when a Canadian Korean War Veteran developed the program that became the National Centre for Voluntary Action, which, with Bush's involvement, evolved into the Thousand Points of Light Institute.

The theme and maybe some of the language has been adopted by others and recycled many times over through the years... but fundamentally, it has never changed.

And American Presidents have spoken highly of it.

## National Center for Voluntary Action

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **National Center for Voluntary Action** was an independent, private, non-profit organization that existed between 1970 and 1979, and then extended on in merged forms, that sought to encourage volunteerism on the part of American citizens and organizations, assist in program development for voluntary efforts, and sought to make voluntary action an important force in American society.<sup>[1][2]</sup>

The organization had its origins in 1969, the first year of the Nixon administration, when the Cabinet Committee on Voluntary Action was put into place. Led by United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development George W. Romney,<sup>[3]</sup> a study performed by this committee found a need for a national, non-governmental organization.<sup>[4]</sup>

Hence came the National Center for Voluntary Action, created in 1970<sup>[4]</sup> by executive order of the president.<sup>[5]</sup> At its first meeting on February 20, 1970, Romney stressed the value of voluntary action as the "fourth way" of solving problems (along with the federal government, state and local government, and private industry).<sup>[6]</sup> In April 1970, Henry Ford II became the organization's first chair and Bud Wilkinson its first president.<sup>[4][7]</sup>

### *Logo of the Voluntary Action Centers created by the National Center for Voluntary Action*

The organization launched a nationwide effort to develop Voluntary Action Centers as local volunteer centers to help people meet their needs through actions of volunteers.<sup>[4]</sup> A heart-shaped logo was devised for the Voluntary Action Centers and used nationwide.<sup>[4]</sup> It

operated an information bank known as Clearinghouse.<sup>[2]</sup> By October 1971, Voluntary Action Centers had been established in 32 communities, with 30 more underway and 250 other communities having expressed interest.<sup>[8]</sup>

Wilkinson left in August 1970.<sup>[7]</sup> Lenore Romney, George's wife, became a director of the organization, and a member of its executive committee by 1971,<sup>[9]</sup> and vice president by 1973.<sup>[10][11]</sup> Ford departed in 1972,<sup>[11]</sup> and W. Clement Stone, who was the treasurer, became acting chair.<sup>[1]</sup>

In 1973, as he left the Nixon administration, George Romney became chair and CEO of the National Center for Voluntary Action.<sup>[1]</sup>

In 1976, the organization sponsored a national Congress on Volunteerism and Citizenship in conjunction with the United States Bicentennial of that year.<sup>[4]</sup>

In 1979, the National Center for Voluntary Action merged with another organization, the Colorado-based National Information Center on Volunteerism (which had been in existence since 1970, and as the National Information Center on Volunteers in Courts, since 1967), and together became a new organization, **VOLUNTEER: The National Center for Citizen Involvement**.<sup>[4][12]</sup> Romney remained as head of the new organization.<sup>[13]</sup> The organization simplified its name to **VOLUNTEER: The National Center** in 1984 and to the **National Volunteer Center** in 1990.<sup>[12]</sup> Romney remained as chair of these organizations throughout this time.<sup>[14]</sup>

In 1991, the organization merged into the Points of Light Foundation, which had been created in 1990 under the aegis of President George H.W. Bush. The merged organization also became known during the 2000s as the Points of Light Foundation and Volunteer Center National Network. That organization then in 2007 merged with the Atlanta-based Hands On Network to become the Points of Light Institute.

