

Focus

Warrior's Weekend and the Victoria Photography Club

This month the *Journal's* occasional article entitled Focus, which features a member or member club, turns to Victoria Photography Club.

Stories about men and women who, in the face of danger, display unselfish courage are occasionally featured in the media. Sadly, these heroes appear only as a paragraph or two in the print media or a 30-second television news story. Because the names and the events have no local special meaning, they are soon forgotten. A group of volunteers in Victoria, Texas who don't want this to happen, especially for those who were wounded or died in battle defending the United States formed *Warrior's Weekend* as a way to honor these heroes. The Victoria Photography Club was asked to be the event photographer.

Warrior's Weekend is an event that was organized three years ago by concerned people to pay tribute to these men and women for their service and sacrifice in Iraq and Afghanistan. *Warrior's Weekend* is an annual event in May that includes fishing and relaxation for wounded American soldiers, their families and caretakers in Port O'Connor, Texas, a small coastal town 50 miles south of Victoria. *Warrior's Weekend* provides transportation and accommodations for everyone to come from Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Fort Campbell, Kentucky; Fort Riley, Kansas; Fort Hood, Texas; Walter Reed Hospital, Washington DC, and Brooke Army Medical Center, San Antonio, Texas.

The weekend activities started on Friday, May 15, in Victoria at the *Healing Field* ceremony: a display of flags that honors all wounded service men and women who have made the supreme sacrifice for our nation's security and freedom. Over 1,000 adults and children showed their support by carrying signs and flags. Others with flags and signs lined the streets and highways as the chartered buses made their 50-mile trip to Port O'Connor for a big fish fry and some entertainment. The next day, all the guests boarded boats for a day of fishing. Over 150 local fishing guides and other individuals provided boats for the fishing trips. The day ended with a barbecue dinner and more entertainment. After breakfast the next morning, the participants left for "home."

The Victoria Photography Club (VPC) of Texas was to be asked to provide photographers for the *Warrior's Weekend* event. Fifteen club members gave *Warrior's Weekend* over 8,000 images of all of the weekend activities.



Jim Payne
PSA Representative

Two soldiers talking
about the Warrior's
Weekend activities
© Jim Payne



Soldier with prize-winning red fish © Jim Payne



Two thumbs up for these warriors finishing air slide
© Larry Wedel

VPC is a relatively new organization with 37 members. It was started in 2000 to serve Victoria, Texas and the surrounding area. To accomplish its mission of promoting, understanding, and enjoying photography, the Club provides opportunities for its members to learn about various techniques of photography, plus monthly and yearly competitions. In addition, members of the Club have monthly outings where participants can practice their photography skills together, and enjoy fellowship with each other. The club also partner's with Coletto Creek Park and Reservoir by providing photography workshops and by building and maintaining bird watching/photography blinds for the Parks guests.

More information about the Victoria Photography Club can be found online at www.victoriaphotographyclub.com. ■



Juan Diaz inside the structure supporting the lighthouse operator's living quarters © Mark Oberle



Kimberly Haley shooting boat loading from roof of building © Jim Payne



Plaques were given to each soldier by the Warrior's Weekend organization as a token of appreciation © Jim Payne



Soldiers welcomed aboard fishing boat © Jim Payne