

Vietnam vet walks and waves for UCLA's Operation Mend

By Angela Hill

Oakland Tribune

POSTED: 11/12/2014 03:11:45 PM PST

Wave at this guy

Dedicated man walking: Vietnam vet Ric Ryan, 68, known as "The Walking Man of Murphys," regularly strides along Highway 4 near his home up in Gold Country, happily returning friendly waves from passing motorists.

He does this to exercise, to exorcise old demons from the war and, since 2011, to raise money for a good cause. Every time somebody waves at him, he donates 25 cents from his disability checks to UCLA's Operation Mend, providing reconstructive surgeries for wounded soldiers. He's given more than \$19,000 from his own pocket -- that's a lot of waving! -- and \$48,000 has come to the surgery program from others sending money on his behalf.

Now folks can wave at Ryan online. Using #wave4operationmend, post a photo or video of yourself waving to him via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Vine, and he'll donate more quarters. This virtual version is mostly to raise awareness, not just bankrupt Ryan. But people can also supplement Ryan's donations at www.operationmend.ucla.edu/support.

Word rage

OK, if the phrase "a whole nother thing" wasn't bad enough, now we have "firstable" as the latest nonword to ensure the downfall of the English language. This news comes from a BuzzFeed report and Twitter-tracking company Topsy, which logged 96 uses of "firstable" in the past month. OK, 96 doesn't sound like much in the vast Twitterverse, but that's how it starts. That's why we now have words such as Twitterverse, "adorbs" (adorable), "cray" (crazy) and "phablet" (I have no idea) actually accepted as real words in the Oxford Language Dictionaries Online.

Apparently, "firstable" is being used by people who intend to say "first of all" and who either don't know the actual phrase or who are evil space aliens out to confound human communication in a virtual Tower of Babel so Earth will become ripe for takeover by some Big Giant Head who turns out to be William Shatner. Yes, I know new words evolve from common usage. But do we really need some of these mashups or mutilations? Isn't "crazy" just as good as "cray?" Or indeed better? The "z" adds a certain zing. Be advised, there have already been online sightings of "secondable." If Noah Webster were still alive, this would probably kill him.

Highs for Loew

In the category of making us look like slackers, 14-year-old Sydney Loew, of Palo Alto, is a nominee for Young Inventor of the Year at this weekend's seventh annual Toy and Game Inventor Awards in Chicago. Her toy, the Poketti, is a cute little plush/pillow/animal with handy pouches for carrying important kid items like phones or glasses or "tooth fairy goodies," Sydney says on Poketti.com, describing how she raised \$20,000 on Kickstarter to put these things into production. They're now sold online and in more than 30 retail stores. Smart kid. Bet she doesn't say "firstable."

Contact Angela Hill at ahill@bayareanewsgroup.com.