

VFW Post 9877
 C/O John Stewart
 107 Grandview Terrace
 Amherst, VA 24521



September - October 2007 Edition

AMHERST VETERAN'S TRIBUNE



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VFW Post 9877 – Amherst, Virginia

“Meeting the 3rd Tuesday of Each Month, 7pm at the Amherst Library”

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I want a divorce!!!

A married couple is driving along a highway doing a steady forty miles per hour. The wife is behind the wheel. Her husband suddenly looks across at her and speaks in a clear voice. "Darling," he says. "I know we've been married for twenty years, but I want a divorce."

The wife says nothing, keeps looking at the road ahead but slowly increases her speed to 45 mph. The husband speaks again. "I don't want you to try and talk me out of it," he says, "because I've been having an affair with your best friend, and she's a far better lover than you are."

Again the wife stays quiet, but grips the steering wheel more tightly and slowly increases the speed to 55.

He then pushes his luck. "I want the house," he says insistently. The car's now up to 60.

"I want the car, too," he continues. 65 mph.

"And," he says, "I'll have the bank accounts, all the credit cards and the boat"

The car slowly starts veering towards a massive concrete bridge. This makes him a wee bit nervous, so he asks her: "Isn't there anything you want?"

The wife at last replies -- in a quiet and controlled voice "No, I've got everything I need." She says.

"Oh, really?" he inquires, "So what have you got?"

Just before they slam into the wall at 75 mph, the wife turns to him and smiles.

"The airbag."

NEVER, EVER, underestimate how a woman thinks.

Agent Orange

Approximately 20 million gallons of herbicides were used in Vietnam between 1962 and 1971 to remove unwanted plant life and leaves which otherwise provided cover for enemy forces during the Vietnam Conflict.

Air Force officials are working with the other services to allow its people to enter military installations without requiring them to display a base decal on their vehicles.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. T. Michael Moseley recently ended use of the sticker, officially called a DD Form 2220, on Air Force installations because of cost, a lack of utility and long-term threats facing bases. The decal was developed in the 1970s as part of a vehicle registration and traffic management system, not to bolster security, said Col. William Sellers, the Air Force chief of force protection and operations for security forces.

"There was a clear and definable need for this system (then)," he said. "A nationwide vehicle registration database did not exist, insurance was not required by all states, and a process was needed to expedite vehicle entry onto installations."

Air Force officials began questioning the value of the vehicle registration system in 2005 because of security concerns.

Many people incorrectly viewed the decal as being designed to bolster security, Colonel Sellers said. In actuality, the decal lessens it by identifying vehicles of Airmen and civilian workers as potential terror targets and may lure gate guards into complacency. Laws now require motorists to have a legal driver's license issued by a state, proof of vehicle ownership/state registration, evidence of insurance, and safety and emissions inspections. A national vehicle registration system is used by all civilian and military police departments in the country.

Replacing Military Records

The National Personnel Records Center is now accepting request for records on-line. This is an alternative method to the standard Form 180 to request for example a copy of your DD-214. You may now access the new web-based application from NPRC at the following Web Site Address: <http://vetrecs.archives.gov/>

Welcome to our first mailed issue of the Amherst Veterans Tribune. It is sent free to every Post 9887 member and placed on the Post webpage for anyone to read and download. If you have comments, input or suggestions please email me at cornhusker69@yahoo.com. I'm sure you'll note some errors, but bear with me as we get going.

John Stewart

Air Force Seeks Nursing Program Applicants

Due to a shortfall in the number of qualified applicants, a supplemental board is scheduled for October 2007 to select 50 additional candidates to attend the Air Force's Nurse Enlisted Commissioning Program for the spring 2008 start date. Airmen must advise AFPC of their intent to apply by Sept. 24, submit transcripts for an academic evaluation by Oct. 5, and submit their completed application by Oct. 15 to: AFPC/DPAMW, 550 C Street West, Suite 27, Randolph AFB, TX 78150-4729. Airmen who successfully complete the nurse training program will be commissioned as second lieutenants. For more information on applying for the supplemental board, call the Air Force Contact Center at (800) 616-3775.

Important Telephone Numbers

Salem VA Hospital

1970 Roanoke Boulevard
Salem, VA 24153
Phone: (540) 982-2463 or (888) 982-2463
Fax: (540) 983-1096

VA Insurance (800) 669-8477
VA Loan Guaranty Eligibility Center (888) 244-6711
VA Website www.va.gov
Virginia Dept of Veterans Affairs Website
<http://www.dvs.virginia.gov/>
VA Burial Benefits (800) 827-1000
DEERS (800) 538-9552
Delta Dental (888) 838-8737
Virginia Veterans Care Center Admissions Director, Patti Smith at (540) 982-2860 ext. 4052 or by email at Patti.Smith@dvs.virginia.gov



Support Our Troops

Here's how you can help right now. *VFW Operation Uplink* provides free pre-paid phone cards to deployed troops and hospitalized veterans so they can hear a loving voice when they need it most. Show them that you haven't forgotten what they have done for our country y making a generous contribution to today at www.vfw.org.

Just \$25 will help 4 service members call home on birthdays and anniversaries. \$50 will help boost the morale of up to 10 of our defenders. Your generous gift of \$75 helps up to 20 of our troops surprise their family with a call home. Please honor our heroes by making the most generous gift you can manage to connect them with loved ones back home.

New VFW Post 9877 Webpage

Go to www.debbiefields.com/vfw9877/index1.html and take a look at our new Post webpage. You'll find many, many veteran sites to visit from there.

Try to fill in the missing numbers.

	X		+		11
X		+		X	
	-		-		-7
+		X		/	
	X		+		59
12		44		4	

Use the numbers 1 through 9 to complete the equations. Each number is only used once. Each row is a math equation. Each column is a math equation. Remember that multiplication and division are performed before addition and subtraction.

A thoughtful mind, when it sees a Nation's flag, sees not the flag only, but the Nation itself; and whatever may be its symbols, its insignia, he reads chiefly in the flag the Government, the principles, the truths, the history which belongs to the Nation that sets it forth.

Henry Ward Beecher

Midlife is when the growth of the hair on our legs slows down. This gives us plenty of time to care for our newly acquired mustache.

VICTORY FOR VETERANS AS COURT BRINGS BACK JUDGES

Chief Judge William Greene, Jr., of the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, has called up two retired federal judges to help the court deal with an unprecedented number of pending appeals. The decision has earned the praise of the chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

"I'm hopeful this will help cut down on the record number of cases before the court and help the court keep up with the record level of incoming cases," said Sen. Larry Craig (R-Idaho). "I commend Judge Greene for his leadership in making this call. His decision is a victory for veterans who would otherwise wait too long for a decision to be reached. Veterans shouldn't have to wait and wait and wait to receive a final determination."

Just two years ago there were about 2,700 cases pending and the court was taking in less than 200 new cases per month. But the court is now taking in over 300 new cases per month and the number of pending cases has grown to over 5,800. The U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims is in the judicial branch of government and reviews decisions rendered by VA's Board of Veterans' Appeals, which is in the executive branch of the federal government. Most of the court's decisions deal with disability compensation.

"At a hearing this July, I cautioned that if trends continue without action, such as bringing in more judges, the number of pending cases could reach 10,000 in the next five years. Hopefully, by bringing in the retired judges, they can cut the backlog down and give all veterans a timely decision. That's what veterans deserve," Craig said.



I like to see a man proud of the place in which he lives. I like to see a man live so that his place will be proud of him. ~Abraham Lincoln

VA ups limit on home loan guaranty

America's veterans and their families now have greater chance to make their dreams of home ownership a reality, thanks to an increase in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) home loan guaranty limit. Changes in the loan guaranty limits mean veterans are able to get no-down-payment loans up to \$417,000. The previous ceiling was \$359,650.

For more information, call 1(800) 827-1000 or go to the following website:

www.homeloans.va.gov

When an American says that he loves his country, he means not only that he loves the New England hills, the prairies glistening in the sun, the wide and rising plains, the great mountains, and the sea. He means that he loves an inner air, an inner light in which freedom lives and in which a man can draw the breath of self-respect. ~Adlai Stevenson

Mid-life has hit you when you stand naked in front of a mirror and can see your rear end without turning around!

Retired Pay Restoration Act of 2007

The Retired Pay Restoration Act of 2007 would allow the receipt of both military retired pay and veterans' disability compensation with respect to any service-connected disability (currently, only a disability rated at 50 percent or more). The proposed legislation (S. 439 and H.R. 303) would make individuals who were retired or separated from military service due to a service-connected disability eligible for the full concurrent receipt of both veterans' disability compensation and either military retired pay or combat-related special pay.

Post Office Reissues Purple Heart Stamp

The U.S. Postal Service issued the 41 cent Purple Heart stamp for public sale earlier this month. According to the Postmaster General, the stamp commemorates servicemembers' sense of duty, dedication to service, spirit of valor, and willingness to sacrifice. The 41-cent stamp is the third issue of the Purple Heart postage stamp, which honors the Purple Heart medal and those who wear it. Aug. 7, 2007 marked the 225th anniversary of the Purple Heart. For more information about the medal, including educational materials for students, visit the Military Order of the Purple Heart website.

Did You Know?

Your Post website has links to every branch of service's website? Go to <http://www.debbiefields.com/vfw9877/index1.html>

Try to fill in the missing numbers.

				15
				30
		6	7	20
2	0	2		7
	8			22
17	24	21	17	22

The missing numbers are integers between 0 and 9. The numbers in each row add up to totals to the right. The numbers in each column add up to the totals along the bottom. The diagonal lines also add up the totals to the right.

Website Offers PTSD and TBI Information

The U.S. Army's new Behavioral Health website at <http://www.behavioralhealth.army.mil/> provides information for Soldiers and their families on behavioral-health needs before, during and after deployments. Topics on the website include pre- and post- deployment health assessments; post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) and symptoms; suicide prevention; Battlemind training; and resources where Soldiers and families can get help. Links and points of contact are also provided for additional information.

Some TRICARE Beneficiary Data At Risk

Data for nearly 600,000 households enrolled in TRICARE stored on a government-contractor's unprotected computer server could have been exposed to hackers. The Department of Defense and the Science Applications International Corp. (SAIC) are mailing letters to beneficiaries whose data was put at risk. An incident response center has been set up and can be reached toll free within the United States at 1-888-862-2680, or collect at 1-515-365-3550 from outside the United States. Information on steps TRICARE beneficiaries can take to protect themselves from identity theft.

Marines Tighten Up on Civilian Attire

As the summer temperatures rise, many start dropping clothes in an effort to beat the heat. All Marines - officer and enlisted, male and female - should ensure their dress and personal appearance are in accordance with the standards of the Marine Corps, according to Marine Corps Order 10120.28. Items such as bandanas, plain white t-shirts, and shower shoes are prohibited. Fashion trends such as bare midriffs or earrings on males are not allowed. Males need to keep their haircut up, wear belts, and no baggy clothing. Plain green undershirts cannot be worn out in town either.

I Remember When...

You could hardly see for all the snow,
Spread the rabbit ears as far as they go.
Pull a chair up to the TV set,
"Good Night, David. Good Night, Chet."

Depending on the channel you tuned,
You got Rob and Laura - or Ward and June.
It felt so good. It felt so right.
Life looked better in black and white.

I Love Lucy, The Real McCoys,
Dennis the Menace, the Cleaver boys,
Rawhide, Gunsmoke, Wagon Train,
Superman, Jimmy and Lois Lane.

Father Knows Best, Patty Duke,
Rin Tin Tin and Lassie too,
Donna Reed on Thursday night!
Life looked better in black and white.

I want to go back to black and white.
Everything always turned out right.
Simple people, simple lives.
Good guys always won the fights.

Now nothing is the way it seems,
In living color on the TV screen.
Too many murders, too many fights,
I want to go back to black and white.

In God they trusted, alone in bed, they slept,
A promise made was a promise kept.
They never cussed or broke their vows.
They'd never make the network now

But if I could, I'd rather be
In a TV town in '53.

It felt so good. It felt so right.
Life looked better in black and white.

I'd trade all the channels on the satellite,
If I could just turn back the clock tonight
To when everybody knew wrong from right.
Life was better in black and white!

Did You Know?

The term "the whole 9 yards" came from W.W.II fighter pilots in the South Pacific. When arming their airplanes on the ground, the .50 caliber machine gun ammo belts measured exactly 27 feet, before being loaded into the fuselage. If the pilots fired all their ammo at a target, it got "the whole 9 yards."

Bill Would Allow Vets to Salute the Flag

The Senate has introduced a bill (S.1877) clarifying U.S. law to allow veterans and service personnel not in uniform to salute the flag. Current law (US Code Title 4, Chapter 1) states that veterans and servicemembers not in uniform should place their hand over their heart without clarifying whether they can or should salute the flag.

Editor's Note: There are wide spread false reports claiming that this bill has passed. This bill has not yet gone to the House for a vote, which is not expected to happen until Congress returns from summer recess in September.

Current status according to the Library of Congress: 7/26/2007 Referred to House committee. Status: Referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary.

M E T A P F O O L I S H A L H
 Y I H N J N C D Z V X N O D F
 M E S L A I T F A K N N S S K
 M V U G T R Q O I Z E D T T U
 U I M A U R O M I L E W U U P
 D L N U E I M N Y D O D P P E
 T U L S U M D W G R I F I E C
 L F O G D U H E T I E X D F A
 H L L G D U S H D L L U D I R
 A Y B S S E L T N I O P G E G
 U N I N T E L L I G E N T D S
 A G Y W S S C R A Z Y T Z N I
 F S C S D E G G A R T P L F D
 T F W Q H L N T A U D J Y O K
 W R S I U Y W H X V S L Q Q D

Find These Words



- CRAZY
- DAZED
- DISGRACE
- DOLT
- DULL
- DULLARD
- DUMMY
- EVIL
- FOOLISH
- IDIOT
- IGNORANT
- LONELY
- LOSER
- LUNATIC
- MISGUIDED
- POINTLESS
- RAGGED
- STUPEFIED
- STUPID

Keep Track of Your Important Papers

The veteran's service discharge form should be kept in a safe location accessible to the veteran and next of kin or designated representative. The veteran's preference regarding burial in a national cemetery and use of a headstone provided by VA should be documented and kept with this information. The following documents will be needed for claims processing related to a veteran's death: (1) veteran's marriage certificate for claims of a surviving spouse or children; (2) veteran's death certificate if the veteran did not die in a VA health-care facility; (3) children's birth certificates or adoption papers to determine children's benefits; (4) veteran's birth certificate to determine parents' benefits.



"I don't plan to grow old gracefully. I plan to have face-lifts until my ears meet."
 - Rita Rudner

Senate Confirms JCS Chairman: The Senate confirmed Adm. Michael Mullen to be the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Staff, and Marine Corps Gen. James Cartwright to be the JCS vice chairman.

GI Bill Increases

The Department of Veterans Affairs has announced that the GI Bill will soon be worth \$38,700 - a total increase of nearly \$1,500 over last year's rate.

This total is based on the new monthly full-time student payment rate of \$1,075 multiplied by the 36-month limit. If you are GI Bill eligible you get the increase no matter when you became eligible or begin using it.

Military Retirement Pay Cap is Lifted

Retiring military personnel - who have had due 30 years of service or more - will no longer have their retirement pay capped at 75 percent of base pay thanks to changes in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007. For example, a member who served 32 years will receive 80 percent of their retired pay base and a member who has served 42 years will receive 105 percent of their retired pay base. More detail about the new retirement pay schedule is available from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service.

The Corrupted Iranian Government

The Iranian government is behind shipping components used to make improvised explosive devices to Iraqi insurgents, a senior intelligence official in Iraq said. Labels on weapons stocks seized inside and outside Iraq point to Iranian government complicity in arming Shiite militias in Iraq, Army Maj. Gen. Richard Zahner, the deputy chief of staff for intelligence with Multinational Force Iraq, said at a news roundtable.

U.S. officials have said in the past that Iran is fomenting instability in Iraq. In August, Army Brig. Gen. Michael Barbero said that the Iranian government is training many members of the Shiite insurgency in Iraq. Barbero is the deputy operations chief on the Joint Staff. "Iran is definitely a destabilizing force in Iraq," Barbero said during an Aug. 23 Pentagon news conference. "I think it's irrefutable that Iran is responsible for training, funding and equipping some of these Shiia extremist groups and also providing advanced (improvised explosive device) technology to them, and there's clear evidence of that." Zahner said Iran is funneling millions of dollars for military goods into Iraq. He noted that labels on C-4 explosive found in Baghdad make it clear where the munitions came from. "You'll find a red label on the C-4 printed in English and will tell you the lot number and name of the manufacturer," he said.

In 2002, the Israelis seized a small ship bringing military supplies to Hezbollah. "Compare the labels on the military C-4 in that and tell me if they're not identical," Zahner said. He said British, Iraqi and American officials in Basra also have found blocks of C-4. "You will see the same red label for each and every one of those," he said.

Zahner also said it's clear that the Iranian government is behind the munitions shipments. "I will tell you that the control of military-grade explosives in Iran is controlled through the state apparatus and is not committed through rogue elements right there," he said. "It is a deliberate decision on the part of elements associated with the Iranian government to affect this type of activities."

Your Post 9877 webpage has links to many local websites such as the Town of Amherst and Amherst County webpages. Simply go to the following address and look for the links.
www.debbiefields.com/vfw9877/index1.html

Law Changes for Vietnam Veterans

During the Vietnam War Jonathan L. Haas, was a U.S. Navy sailor who served on an ammunition ship off the coast of Vietnam, but he never set foot on land in Vietnam. He subsequently contracted diabetes, nerve damage and loss of eyesight. He filed a claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs ("VA") for compensation claiming that these maladies were the result of Agent Orange - clouds of which drifted out to sea and "engulfed his ship." Haas' claim was denied by the VA. Haas appealed the denial. The VA's reason for the denial was that Haas' ship had never docked in Vietnam and he never came ashore. According to VA officials, these factors would have been necessary conditions for Haas' claim to be considered by the VA. For those of you who may have not seen this story in newspaper or who do not have access to the Internet - on Aug. 18, 2006, the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans' Claims, in a 31 page decision entitled Haas v. Nicholson, handed down a ruling that may have a significant positive impact on many veterans, especially those who served in the Navy or Coast Guard off the coast of Vietnam during the Vietnam War, and who have been denied health coverage, and other benefits based on a claim of service connected disabilities, and/or who have never filed a claim with the VA. According to Military.com, "The Court's ruling states that Veterans Affairs requirement for 'boots on the ground' as the definition of 'service in the Republic of Vietnam' is unreasonable, and does not align with Congress' intent. In addition the law does not limit application of the presumption of service connection for herbicide exposure to those who set foot on the soil of the Republic of Vietnam. The Court cited that the law defines 'service in the Republic of Vietnam' as including 'service in the waters offshore, or service in other locations if the conditions of service involved duty or visitation in Vietnam.'" The Court ruling decimated the Veterans Administration decision denying Haas' claim. The Appeals Court based its argument on the inconsistencies of the VA's rationale for the denial

of the claim. Court documents revealed the inconsistencies in the reasons for the original denial, for example, as Military.com points out, "the unclear nature of the policy was further demonstrated when Secretary Nicholson [the Veterans Administration Administrator] was asked to apply the regulatory interpretation in the case of a veteran who served in the waters off of Vietnam, in water where his feet did not touch the seabed, versus a veteran who was in the waters where he was able to touch the seabed, he [Nicholson] responded that neither veteran would be entitled to the presumption because the regulatory definition is limited to those veterans 'who set foot on land, if you will boots on ground, not touching the ocean floor.' When later asked if there was a difference between the case of a veteran who served on a vessel floating up a river - which, according to the Secretary's argument, could be miles wide - who never touched land within the Republic of Vietnam, and a veteran who served on a ship within 100 feet of the shoreline who never touched the land, the Secretary simply responded, without rationale, that the latter form of service would not warrant application of the presumption of service." According to the Court decision, this kind of reasoning is "inconsistent with longstanding agency views, plainly erroneous in light of legislative and regulatory history, and unreasonable, and must be SET ASIDE." The presumption noted above is the so called "application of presumptive coverage" that has been part of the VA's policy in deciding these matters. As a result while many veterans who served on the ground in Vietnam later became qualified for compensation because of Agent Orange, numerous sailors were denied claims because they failed to meet the "presumptive coverage" threshold. All veterans who served in the waters offshore to speak with a service representative or service officer as soon as possible to see if they have a viable claim for compensation.

TRICARE Redesigns Website

Beneficiaries should find it easier to find answers to their TRICARE questions at the newly-redesigned My Benefit portal at the TRICARE website. A key feature of the redesign is that users will now receive personalized information about their health care benefits by answering a few simple questions about their location, beneficiary status and current TRICARE plan. The website's Plan Wizard helps new beneficiaries who may not be sure which TRICARE plan they are enrolled in and offers a list of plans for which they may be eligible. An online tutorial is available at the Using the New TRICARE.mil for Beneficiaries website.

Female Veterans Face Added Challenges

A recent program on National Public Radio's program "Talk of the Nation" included a discussion about access to mental health care and other issues female military servicemembers and veterans face after returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. According to remarks made by experts during the program, female veterans are susceptible to job instability and homelessness and are more likely than men to experience post-traumatic stress disorder.

First Airman Receives New Combat Medal

Staff Sgt. Paxton, recently became the first airman to receive the new Air Force Combat Action Medal. The medal was created to recognize Air Force members who were engaged in air or ground combat off-base, in a combat zone including those who were under or engaged hostile forces with direct and hostile fire. Award eligibility is retroactive to Sept. 11, 2001, including posthumous awards. Personnel no longer on active duty can submit packages to the Board for Correction of Military Records.

Send Your DVD's to The Troops

"AMVETS, Operation DVD" is an appeal to patriotic Americans to donate their new and used DVDs, which will then be shipped to our fighting men and women overseas. DVDs will be distributed to Troops in audiences of USO tours and ultimately "Children Titles" will be provided to Boys & Girls Clubs located on military bases around the world. For more information on donating, visit the AMVETS website at www.operationdvd.us

Suicide Hot Line Begins Operations

The Department of Veterans Affairs national suicide prevention hot line for veterans has begun operations. The toll-free hot line number is 1-800-273-TALK (8255). VA's hot line will be staffed by mental health professionals in Canandaigua, N.Y. who will take toll-free calls from across the country and work closely with local VA mental-health providers to help callers. To operate the national hot line, VA is partnering with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services



*In times of war and
not before
God and soldier
men adore.*

*But in times of
peace with
all things righted,
God is forgotten
and the
Soldier slighted.*

Official Medal of Honor Citation: Sergeant Cornelius H. Charlton, Infantry, United States Army, a member of Company C 24th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action against the enemy on 2 June 1951, near Chipo-ri, Korea.

His platoon was attacking heavily defended hostile positions on commanding ground when the leader was wounded and evacuated. Sergeant Charlton assumed command, rallied the men, and spearheaded the assault against the hill. Personally eliminating two hostile positions and killing six of the enemy with his rifle fire and grenades, he continued up the slope until the unit suffered heavy casualties and became pinned down. Regrouping the men he led them forward only to be again hurled back by a shower of grenades.

Despite a severe chest wound, Sergeant Charlton refused medical attention and led a third daring charge which carried to the crest of the ridge. Observing that the remaining emplacement which had retarded the advance was situated on the reverse slope, he charged it alone, was again hit by a grenade but raked the position with a devastating fire which eliminated it and routed the defenders. The wounds received during his daring exploits resulted in his death but his indomitable courage, superb leadership, and gallant self-sacrifice reflect the highest credit upon himself the infantry, and the military service.

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Chaplain's Blessing

*I shall not pass this way again. Therefore, any good I can do, or any kindness I can show,
Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.*

Army Offers Big Enlistment

Bonus: The U.S. Army Recruiting Command announced recently a \$20,000 "quick-ship" bonus for aspiring recruits. The bonus applies to new recruits with no prior military service who enlist for at least two years active duty. They must agree to report to basic training within 30 days of enlistment. The program ends Sept. 30. The quick-ship bonus contributes to the Army's strength and efforts to grow the active force by more than 34,000 soldiers. The \$20,000 quick-ship bonus can be combined with the Army's other cash enlistment bonuses, up to a maximum combination of \$40,000, if an enlistee signs up for at least four years. Prospective recruits can learn more about the Army's opportunities by visiting a recruiter or logging on to www.goarmy.com.

Who Are America's Veterans?

There are 25.6 million living veterans
24.1 million men and 1.5 million women
48 million Americans have served since 1776
Nearly 1 million people have died in combat or combat-related events.
This year, an estimated 88,000 veterans will be laid in honored rest at National Cemeteries.
There are more than 578,800 surviving spouses, children, and parents of deceased veterans.
The largest number of living veterans served during the Vietnam War: 8.2 million. Veterans make up the majority of all men in the U.S. population ages 65-85.

SOURCE: Dept. of Veterans Affairs

Grandma

Grandma changed
In the dim and distant past
When life's tempo wasn't so fast,
Grandma used to rock and knit,
Crochet, tat and baby sit.

When the kids were in a jam,
They could always call on Gram.
But today she's in the gym
Exercising to keep slim.

She's checking the web or surfing the net,
Sending some e-mail or placing a bet.
Nothing seems to stop or block her,
Now that Grandma's off her rocker.

Older Retirees Will See an End to SBP Premiums

Participants in the Uniformed Services Survivor Benefit Plan for retired military members now have a new milestone to mark on their calendars.

Effective October 1, 2008, SBP participants who reach 70 years of age and have made 360 payments (30 years), will no longer have to pay premiums for continued SBP coverage and will be placed in "Paid-up SBP" status.

Paid-up SBP provisions were mandated by the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal 1999. The law also established a paid-up status, also beginning on October 1, 2008, for participants in the Retired Serviceman's Family Protection Plan once they reach 70 years of age.

No action is required of SBP participants to be placed in Paid-up SBP status. Once the eligibility criteria has been met, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service will automatically stop deducting premiums from qualifying military retired pay accounts.

The law establishing Paid-up SBP does not allow for refunds of premiums paid before October 1, 2008, even though a retiree may have reached age 70 and made 360 or more premium payments.

DFAS is currently developing changes to the military retiree pay systems that will monitor the number of SBP premiums paid and the age of the participant. The system updates are targeted for a May 2008 completion date. At that time, SBP participants who will be eligible for Paid-up SBP status on October 1, 2008, or will meet eligibility within a short time of the implementation date, will be notified by mail of their impending paid-up status.

Those military retirees who become eligible for Paid-up SBP status after the initial group will be notified of their SBP status on their December 2008 annual Retiree Account Statements that will note the number of premiums paid to date. Each RAS issued after December 2008, whether annually or as a result of a pay change, will include the Paid-up SBP premium "counter," based on DFAS records, to help retirees monitor their eligibility status.

Fighting Soldier from the Sky....

Medal of Honor recipient Master Sergeant Roy P. Benavidez, then Staff Sergeant, United States Army distinguished himself by a series of daring and extremely glorious actions on 2 May 1968 while assigned to Detachment B-56, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, Republic of Vietnam. On the morning of 2 May 1968, a 12-man Special Forces Reconnaissance Team was inserted by helicopters in a dense jungle area west of Loc Ninh, Vietnam to gather intelligence information about confirmed large-scale enemy activity. This area was controlled and routinely patrolled by the North Vietnamese Army. After a short period of time on the ground, the team met heavy enemy resistance and requested emergency extraction. 3 helicopters attempted extraction, but were unable to land due to intense enemy small arms and anti-aircraft fire.

Sergeant Benavidez was at the Forward Operating Base in Loc Ninh monitoring the operation by radio when these helicopters returned to off-load wounded crew members and to assess aircraft damage. Sergeant Benavidez voluntarily boarded a returning aircraft to assist in another extraction attempt. Realizing that all the team members were either dead or wounded and unable to move to the pickup zone, he directed the aircraft to a nearby clearing where he jumped from the hovering helicopter, and ran approximately 75 meters under withering small arms fire to the crippled team. Prior to reaching the team's position he was wounded in his right leg, face and head. Despite these painful injuries he took charge, repositioning the team members and directing their fire to facilitate the landing of an extraction aircraft, and the loading of wounded and dead team members. He then threw smoke canisters to direct the aircraft to the team's position. Despite his severe wounds and under intense enemy fire, he carried and dragged half of the wounded team members to the awaiting aircraft. He then provided protective fire by running alongside the aircraft as it moved to pick up the remaining team members. As the enemy's fire intensified, he hurried to recover the body and classified documents on the dead team leader. When he reached the leader's body, Sergeant Benavidez was severely wounded by small arms fire in the abdomen and grenade fragments in his back. At nearly the same moment, the aircraft pilot was mortally wounded, and his helicopter crashed. Although in extremely critical condition due to his multiple wounds, Sergeant Benavidez secured the classified documents and made his way back to the wreckage, where he aided the wounded out of the overturned aircraft, and gathered the stunned survivors into a defensive perimeter. Under increasing enemy automatic weapons and grenade fire, he moved around the perimeter distributing water and ammunition to his weary men, re-instilling in them a will to live and fight. Facing a buildup of enemy opposition with a beleaguered team, Sergeant Benavidez mustered his strength, began calling in tactical air strikes and directed the fire from supporting gun ships to suppress the enemy's fire and so permit another extraction attempt. He was wounded again in his thigh by small arms fire while administering first aid to a wounded team member just before another extraction helicopter was able to land. His indomitable spirit kept him going as he began to ferry his comrades to the craft. On his second trip with the wounded, he was clubbed with additional wounds to his head and arms before killing his adversary. He then continued under devastating fire to carry the wounded to the helicopter. Upon reaching the aircraft, he spotted and killed 2 enemy soldiers who were rushing the craft from an angle that prevented the aircraft door gunner from firing upon them. With little strength remaining, he made one last trip to the perimeter to ensure that all classified material had been collected or destroyed, and to bring in the remaining wounded. Only then, in extremely serious condition from numerous wounds and loss of blood, did he allow himself to be pulled into the extraction aircraft. Sergeant Benavidez' gallant choice to voluntarily join his comrades who were in critical straits, to expose himself constantly to withering enemy fire, and his refusal to be stopped despite numerous severe wounds, saved the lives of at least 8 men. His fearless personal leadership, tenacious devotion to duty, and extremely valorous actions in the face of overwhelming odds were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service, and reflect the utmost credit on him and the United States Army.

VA Guarantees Home Loans

Servicemembers returning to the states from overseas can take advantage of the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) home buying guarantee. Servicemembers apply for home loans through a bank or lender as they normally would. Then, the VA loan guarantee is like having a guaranteed co-signer for the servicemember's loan. If the loan defaults for any reason, VA guarantees the bank or lender a percentage paid back. By using VA, some homes can be purchased with no money down, which often means more money in the pocket of servicemembers to buy necessities for their new home. For information about VA home loan guarantees, visit the VA's Home Loan Guaranty Services website.



Hugo the Idiot and smiling friend Cindy get tight during their televised appearance as he condemns our country.

Venezuela Dictator Vows To Bring Down U.S. Government

Venezuela Dictator Hugo Chavez has vowed to bring down the U.S. government. Chavez, president of Venezuela, told a TV audience: "Enough of imperialist aggression; we must tell the world: down with the U.S. empire. We have to bury imperialism this century."

The guest on his television program, beamed across Venezuela, was Cindy Sheehan, the antiwar activist. Chavez recently had as his guest Harry Belafonte, who called President Bush "the greatest terrorist in the world."

Chavez is pushing a socialist revolution and has a close alliance with Cuban dictator Fidel Castro.

The Venezuela government, run by dictator Chavez, is the sole owner of Citgo gas company.

Task Force: Raise TRICARE Fees, Retail Drug Co-Pays

The Pentagon-appointed Task Force on the Future of Military Health will endorse higher TRICARE fees, deductibles and co-payments for under-65 retirees and their families in an interim report to be sent to [Congress](#) May 31.

It also will back other key features of the TRICARE "reform" package first proposed last year by the Department of Defense. These include:

-- Raising beneficiary co-payments on prescriptions filled in the TRICARE retail pharmacy network.

-- Indexing TRICARE fees and deductibles so that automatic annual adjustments keep them in step with rising healthcare costs.

-- Establishing tiers for the new TRICARE fee structure, probably based on rank at retirement, so that retirees with bigger annuities pay more for their health care coverage and retirees with smaller annuities pay less.



Roy P. Benavide
Congressional Medal of Honor

Editor's Note: Elsewhere in this issue you will read the story of Master Sergeant Roy P. Benavide. Unfortunately, Roy passed away on Sunday, 29 November 1998 at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, at the age of 63. Roy had bravely battled diabetes and was overcome by respiratory failure. His story was widely publicized at the time in 1981 when he was presented the nations highest award by President Reagan. What many may not know is that it came thirteen years after the battle, and if not for fellow combatant and Green Beret Brian O'Connor confirming the account of the battle by writing to the Army Medal of Honor Board, Roy's story may never have been fully told.

Tricare Mail Order Pharmacy proves cost effective, convenient

The Department of Defense, in an effort to contain healthcare costs and sustain a first-class health care benefit, is stressing the Tricare Mail Order Pharmacy as a cost effective and convenient way for beneficiaries to get prescription medications. The program is administered by Express Scripts, Inc. While the military pharmacy is still the least expensive for both the customer and DoD, the Mail Order Pharmacy comes in second in cost savings, well ahead of the retail pharmacy. Beneficiaries may save as much as 66 percent of the cost for maintenance medications for such conditions as high blood pressure, asthma and diabetes. These significant savings result because Tricare Mail Order Pharmacy mails beneficiaries up to a 90-day supply of most medications for the same cost as a 30-day supply at a retail pharmacy.

Beneficiaries may refill their prescriptions by telephone, mail or on-line, and medications are delivered directly to their home. Using the mail-order pharmacy also saves beneficiaries travel costs and time. Generic medications are another way that Tricare beneficiaries save out-of-pocket expenses and help contain rising health care costs. Generic drugs must meet the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) testing and approval requirements before they are added to the Tricare medication formulary. United States Public Health Service Capt. Thomas McGinnis, Tricare Management Activity Pharmaceutical Operations Directorate chief, said FDA-approved generics are not only safe and effective, but they are therapeutically equivalent to brand-name medications. DoD's regulation on generic drugs requires all prescriptions to be filled with a generic medication if one is available.

To be eligible for the mail order pharmacy, the sponsor and family members must be enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (commonly known as DEERS). Beneficiaries with pharmacy coverage through another health insurance plan may use the mail order benefit once they have exhausted their current prescription benefit or if the drug they are taking is not covered under their insurance plan.

For more information about Tricare's mail order pharmacy, please visit the Tricare Web site at www.tricare.osd.mil/pharmacy/tmop_order.cfm.

No Co-Pay on TRICARE OTC Meds

TRICARE co-payments on mail order OTC (over-the-counter drugs), are now free. As part of a two-year test, TRICARE beneficiaries are now able to substitute over-the-counter versions of certain prescription drugs without a co-payment. The test is currently limited to the TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy only. However, plans call for expanding this test to retail network pharmacies once the program details are ironed out.

Army Boosts Enlistment Bonuses

Army officials are implementing a new bonus for recruits who sign up by the end of this fiscal year. The \$20,000 "quick-ship" bonus is for aspiring recruits with no prior military service who enlist for at least two years of active duty and report to basic training within 30 days of enlistment. The program ends Sept. 30.

Prescription Help

An Irishwoman of advanced age visited her physician to ask his help in reviving her Husband's libido.

"What about trying Viagra?" asks the doctor.

"Not a chance", she said. "He won't even take an aspirin".

"Not a problem", replied the doctor. "Give him an Irish Viagra. Drop it into his coffee. He won't even taste it. Give it a try and call me in a week to let me know how things went".

It wasn't a week later that she called the doctor, who directly inquired as to progress.

The poor dear exclaimed, "Oh, faith, bejaysus and begorrah! T'was horrid. Just terrible, doctor!".

"Really? What happened" asked the doctor?

"Well, I did as you advised and slipped it in his coffee and the effect was almost immediate! He jumped his self straight up, with a twinkle in his eye, and with his pants off! With one swoop of his arm, he sent the cups and tablecloth flying, ripped me clothes to tatters and took me then and there, making wild, mad, passionate love to me on the tabletop! It was a nightmare, I tell you, an absolute nightmare!"

"Why so terrible?" asked the doctor, "Do you mean the sex your husband provided wasn't good"?

"Oh, no, no, no, doctor, the sex was fine indeed! 'Twas the best sex I've had in 25 years! But sure as I'm sittin' here, I'll never be able to show me face in Starbucks again."

Looking for the latest in veterans news? Go to the Post 9877 website at the address below. You'll find links to VFW National and VFW Virginia.
www.debbiefields.com/vfw9877/index1.html

Goodby

A 65-year segment of history ended Sept. 30, when the last American servicemember based in the country left Iceland. U.S. servicemembers will continue to work with, train with and operate with their NATO ally, but troops will not be based in the island nation.

The United States will continue to defend Iceland as part of the 1951 Defense Agreement between the two nations and as a NATO ally. An attack on one NATO nation is considered an attack on all.

At one time, Iceland had more than 10,000 U.S. servicemembers based there. Then, the threats came from first Nazi Germany and then the Soviet Union. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the threats have changed and come from new directions: terrorism, international crime, and drug trafficking.

The United States is stepping up its coordination with Iceland to help maintain the security of the country and the region against such emerging threats. U.S. forces could go back into the country quickly if conventional threats re-emerged. There will be at least yearly exercises and U.S. ships will visit the nation on a regular basis.

During World War II and the Cold War, Iceland was critical to keeping the sea lines of communication open.

Reserve Component Mobilization: The total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization for the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 78,384; Navy Reserve, 5,326; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 6,104; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,898; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 308. This brings the total number of mobilized Guard and Reserve personnel to 96,020

I Hear You...

An elderly gentleman had serious hearing problems for a number of years. He went to the doctor and the doctor was able to have him fitted for a set of hearing aids that allowed the gentleman to hear 100%.

The elderly gentleman went back in a month to the doctor and the doctor said, "Your hearing is perfect. Your family must be really pleased that you can hear again."

The gentleman replied, "Oh, I haven't told my family yet. I just sit around and listen to the conversations. I've changed my will three times!"

How to Initiate a Request for Military Personnel Records

Go to the following website:
www.archives.gov/veterans/evetrecs/index.html.

Click on the "Request Military Records" button. This will launch a separate window. Enter the required information in the system to create your customized request form. There are 4 steps that you need to navigate. The system will guide you through the steps and tell you exactly which step you are on.

Print, sign and date the signature verification area of your customized form. If you don't have a printer, have a pen and paper handy and we will guide you through the process. This is important because the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 552a) requires that all requests for records and information be submitted in writing. Each request must be signed and dated by the veteran or next of kin.

Mail or fax your signature verification form and it will be processed. You must do this within the first 20 days of entering your request, or your request will be removed from the system.

Former Army Spc. Teresa Broadwell



Perhaps one of the most feared battle situations for any soldier is a well-laid ambush in an urban setting. Then-Pvt. Broadwell and her team came face-to-face with that situation on Oct. 16, 2003, on the mean streets of Karbala, Iraq.

Tensions in Karbala had been heating up for some time, and the sense of danger seemed almost palpable. Broadwell's military police company was patrolling side streets that day to make sure citizens were obeying a weapons ban. Broadwell was a few streets away when gunfire erupted and a call for help went out over the radio. Broadwell's team rushed to the trapped unit and found themselves in the middle of a concerted attack from multiple directions.

Broadwell stood atop her Humvee's turret, but she was too short to see through the weapon's eye hole. She instead relied on tracer rounds to target her fire accurately. And accurate she was: without her quick trigger, several U.S. troops would not have made it out of the death trap alive – because, as one lieutenant later told The Washington Post, "She was up there doing what we trained her to do as a gunner... She kept [the enemies'] heads down." She did so even as explosions landed in front of her vehicle, and constantly threw her back. Each time she got back up and continued firing off quick, methodical, deadly bursts. A number of soldiers were awed by her calm demeanor.

The firefight was over nearly as quickly as it had begun. Broadwell and the rest of her MP unit are credited with having eliminated at least 20 enemy fighters. For her actions, Broadwell was awarded the Bronze Star with a "V" for Valor in the fall of 2003.

Iraq Veteran PTSD

According to a recent report from the Veterans Administration, more than 50,000 vets from Iraq and Afghanistan are believed to be suffering from mental health problems — nearly half of them from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD. It's well documented and, says the Pentagon, well treated both in the field and at home. But CBS News chief investigative correspondent Armen Keteyian reports that at least in one large military base in Colorado, soldiers are saying members of the Army Command are simply paying lip service, at best, to PTSD — hindering their treatment and upending their careers.

In a recent report, more than one-third of Iraqi war veterans sought help for mental health problems, including PTSD, within a year of returning home. A report from a congressional watchdog group detailed failures by the Department of Defense to identify and deal with anxiety issues like PTSD. In the face of what some are calling an epidemic of PTSD in the military, nearly a dozen soldiers at Fort Carson told CBS News that their cries for mental health either went unanswered or they found themselves subject to unrelenting abuse and ridicule.

Kaye Baron is a clinical psychologist in private practice in Colorado Springs, Colo. Each week, she counsels up to 25 "emotionally broken" soldiers who are either unwilling or unable to face their problems while on base.

Lt. Col. Eric Kruger, Commanding Officer of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team at Fort Carson, says he's concerned that soldiers aren't seeking help due to fears of fearing ridicule or reprisal. Col. Kruger says the Army offers ample means to get help for PTSD without jeopardizing one's career — such as a comprehensive screening program in which soldiers are asked to answer questions about their mental state.

By Jim Garamone, American Forces Press Service

Special operations forces personnel, so accustomed to operating in the shadows, stepped sadly into the light tonight as the Navy presented the widows of two SEALs killed in Afghanistan with the nation's second-highest military award for valor.

Navy Secretary Donald C. Winter presented the Navy Cross to Cindy Axelson, widow of Petty Officer 2nd Class Matthew G. Axelson, and to Patsy Dietz, widow of Petty Officer 2nd Class Danny P. Dietz.

The ceremony was fittingly held here at the U.S. Navy Memorial. "These were our men," said Rear Adm. Joseph Maguire, commander of the Naval Special Warfare Command, at the start of the ceremony.

Axelson and Dietz were part of a four-man team inserted behind enemy lines June 27, 2005, east of Asadabad, Afghanistan, to find and kill or capture a key local militia leader.

Anti-coalition forces spotted them the following day and promptly alerted the militia forces. The SEALs fought valiantly against "the numerically superior and positionally advantaged enemy force," according to the citation that accompanied the awards. Three of the four SEALs were wounded and forced into a ravine, where they radioed for help. An MH-47 Chinook helicopter with eight more SEALs and eight Army troops aboard went to the rescue, but was hit with a rocket-propelled grenade and crashed, killing all aboard.

Dietz and Axelson, though wounded, provided cover for their partner to escape. The teammate, whose name is being withheld to protect his identity, evaded the enemy for days before being rescued. He, too, received the Navy Cross at an earlier ceremony.

More than 300 family members, teammates and friends attended today's evening ceremony. A large contingent of sailors from SEAL Team 2 in Norfolk also journeyed to Washington to pay their respects.

SEAL teammates spoke about their friends during the ceremony. "These men are heroes, not because of the way they died, but how they lived as well," said Navy

Lt. Brad Geary, who served with Dietz. He spoke of Dietz's quiet professionalism and sense of responsibility to the team, the Navy and his country.

Petty Officer 1st Class Dave Albritton spoke about Axelson, his SEAL teammate, much the same way. Albritton, who went through SEAL training with Axelson, said it became obvious early in the training that Axelson was a born leader -- a man all his classmates looked up to.

Winter said the two men "embodied the values of the Navy's elite SEAL community: courage, daring, ability and esprit de corps." He said their combat service to the country deserves "special recognition and a special place in the heart of every American."

The nature of special operations missions means that the servicemembers who carry them out do not receive the public recognition for their exploits, Winter said. He called today's ceremony a rare opportunity for the American people to learn of the heroism and commitment of the special warriors, and the debt Americans owe them.

"In this war, Special Forces have been used in new ways and unprecedented numbers," Winter said. "They are precision weapons that are defeating a ruthless enemy."

Winter said the two SEALs honored today served on the frontlines of freedom in operations around the world. "Their insertion into an enemy-held area, surrounded by risk and danger, is typical of the kinds of missions that are routinely assigned to SEALs," he said.

Even after being wounded, both men "continued to fight the enemy with undiminished zeal, covering the extraction of the rest of their team while they stayed and fought," Winters said. "Putting the safety of their teammates ahead of their own, they displayed extraordinary heroism in combat."

Winters uttered two words -- "extraordinary heroism" -- he said "perfectly capture their last selfless acts on this earth."

Web site honors Air Force heroes

by Staff Sgt. Jeremy Larlee, Air Force Print News

SAN ANTONIO (AFPN) -- A nonprofit organization's Web site is letting people pay tribute to Air Force heroes. A section in the Air Force Memorial Foundation's Web site, titled Air Force Heroes, allows people to honor an Airman with a paragraph about what makes them extraordinary. With the Air Force memorial scheduled to open in the mid-October, the Web site is a great resource for people to prepare for the opening, said Maj. Kimberly Tebrugge, a public affairs officer for the 60th Air Force Anniversary Office.

"It is a great opportunity for people to see those who may have slipped through the cracks in regards to recognition," Major Tebrugge said. Major Tebrugge thinks the Web site has been underused because it is new and not many people know about it.

"It is very important to recognize the proud heritage we have and the sacrifices and contributions of those who pioneered ahead of us," she said. "It makes you proud to see a collective representation of the similar values that we all share as Airmen and how they are displayed in different ways."

People interested in posting a tribute, or browsing the tributes that have already been posted, can visit the Web site at ww.airforcememorial.org/heroes/. It's important to note that the reference to Airman includes Air Force members of any rank.

What's the difference between a dog and a fox?

About eight beers.

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service's Cleveland Center is working to upgrade the service that retirees and annuitant surviving spouses receive when you contact the Retired and Annuitant Call Center. When you call DFAS at 1-800-321-1080 or (216) 522-5955, your call will soon be answered by an automated operator. The system will ask you to either say your Social Security number (SSN) or enter it through the numbers on your touchtone phone. You will need to give your SSN so that the system can access your records. You will then be able to use the automated system to perform certain tasks - changing your correspondence or bank address or requesting a new retired pay or tax statement. (Note: These statements are not mailed until the end of the year.) DFAS plans to expand this technology to help you accomplish other account maintenance tasks or to request other documents.

"I don't feel old. I don't feel anything until noon. Then it's time for my nap."
- Bob Hope

Police arrested two kids yesterday, one was drinking battery acid and the other was eating fireworks. They charged one and let the other one off.

Air Force Master Sgt. Michael L. Keehan III



As U.S. forces advanced toward Baghdad between March 20 and April 5, 2003, then-Tech. Sgt. Keehan and his team faced numerous life-and-death situations – where their lives, and those of the men around them, hung in the balance.

As part of a ground-forces unit, Keehan and his men had to not only perform their duties as airmen – by providing reconnaissance and relaying enemy positions to air support – but to fight alongside everyone else during fierce ground combat.

In the heavily fortified city of Samawah, Keehan's unit met heavy opposition. At one point during the battle, Keehan ran out into heavy fire to identify enemy positions along the riverbanks and roads. Once he located their positions, Keehan and his team returned fire and inflicted significant damage.

A few days later, Keehan and his unit were thrust once more into the jaws of heavy combat. On their way to Baghdad, they were suddenly surrounded by enemy forces – just as a paralyzing sandstorm blew in, stripping the team of sight and awareness. Outnumbered and barely able to see, Keehan's team quickly began relaying information to their air support – enabling the deliverance of a devastating blow against the enemy.

The team pushed on. But just as they approached the outskirts of Baghdad, enemy mortars and tank fire rained down on their position. Under intense fire from T-72 tanks, artillery, and small arms, Keehan edged his unit forward. As he had done countless times before in the preceding two weeks, he risked his life to protect his unit by emerging from a relatively safe position into the heart of the battle. He once again braved intense fire to ensure the accurate relay of enemy positions to air support.

Throughout it all, Keehan never faltered and he did not fail. For his gallantry in action, he was awarded the Silver Star medal in June 2007.

Post 9877 meetings are held at the Amherst Library, 7pm, on the 3rd Tuesday of the month. Come out and join us. You'll have a great time with your fellow veterans.

Veteran Support

A U.S. railroad freight firm has earned the right to blow its locomotives' whistles in celebration of Defense Department recognition for superb support of its employees in the National Guard and Reserve. BNSF Railway, with headquarters in Fort Worth, Texas, is one of 15 U.S. businesses selected to receive the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award for 2006.

Today, more than 175 of BNSF's 40,000 employees are serving on active military duty, with more than 485 having been called up for service since the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks on the United States. The company provides "enhanced and extended benefits for those employees called to active duty in the war on terrorism." That includes company-provided differential pay to supplement an employee's military salary, as well as extended health-care benefits. Additionally, BNSF organizes welcome-home celebrations and provides care packages for employees who are called up for active military service. The company also dedicates resources to assist employees' transitions when they depart for duty and after they return.

The railway also has an aggressive veterans' hiring program. The firm hired more than 750 former servicemembers in 2005. And BNSF has hired more than 700 veterans so far this year, amounting to about 20 percent of all hires. ESGR assists Guard and Reserve members and their employers understand employee eligibility and job entitlements, employer obligations, benefits and remedies under the act.

In February, BNSF underlined its commitment to those who serve in the National Guard or Reserve by signing ESGR's "5-Star Statement of Support." Very few employers of National Guardsmen and reservists have achieved such status, which recognizes patriotism and high standards of employee support. Formerly known as Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, BNSF Railway is one of America's largest railroads. Its more than 6,000 locomotives and 220,000 freight cars ship automobiles, timber, minerals, food, chemicals and metals over 32,000 miles of track, serving 28 western states and two Canadian provinces, company officials said.

Each man must for himself alone decide what is right and what is wrong, which course is patriotic and which isn't. You cannot shirk this and be a man. To decide against your conviction is to be an unqualified and excusable traitor, both to yourself and to your country, let men label you as they may. ~Mark Twain

VA-DoD Disability Reforms

After months of top-level negotiations, the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs are only weeks away from testing a plan to streamline and partially merge their separate disability rating processes. This is the result of the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors, which released its final report Wednesday, recommending getting "DoD completely out of the disability business" by giving VA sole responsibility for setting disability ratings and awarding compensation.

The Story Begins...

World War II produced many heroes. One such man was Lieutenant Commander Butch O'Hare. He was a fighter pilot assigned to the aircraft carrier Lexington in the South Pacific. One day his entire squadron was sent on a mission. After he was airborne, he looked at his fuel gauge and realized that someone had forgotten to top off his fuel tank. He would not have enough fuel to complete his mission and set back to his ship. His flight leader told him to return to the carrier. Reluctantly he dropped out of formation and headed back to the fleet. As he was returning to the mother ship, he saw something that turned his blood cold.

A squadron of Japanese bombers was speeding their way toward the American fleet. The American fighters were gone on a sortie and the fleet was all but defenseless. He couldn't reach his squadron and bring them back in time to save the fleet. Nor, could he warn the fleet of the approaching danger. There was only one thing to do. He must somehow divert them from the fleet. Laying aside all thoughts of personal safety, he dove into the formation of Japanese planes. Wing-mounted 50 calibers blazed as he charged in, attacking one surprised enemy plane and then another. Butch weaved in and out of the now broken formation and fired at as many planes as possible until finally all his ammunition was spent. Undaunted, he continued the assault. He dove at the planes, trying to at least clip off a wing or tail, in hopes of damaging as many enemy planes as possible and rendering them unfit to fly. He was desperate to do anything he could to keep them from reaching the American ships. Finally, the exasperated Japanese squadron took off in another direction. Deeply relieved, Butch O'Hare and his tattered fighter limped back to the carrier. Upon arrival he reported in and related the events surrounding his return. The film from the camera mounted on his plane told the tale. It showed the extent of Butch's daring attempt to protect his fleet. He had destroyed five enemy bombers.

That was on February 20, 1942, and for that action he became the Navy's first Ace of W.W.II and the first W.W.II Naval Aviator to be awarded the Medal of Honor. A year later he was killed in aerial combat at the age of 29. His home town would not allow the memory of that heroic action to die. And today, O'Hare Airport in Chicago is named in tribute to the courage of this great man. So the next time you're in O'Hare visit his memorial with his statue and Medal of Honor. It is located between terminal 1 and 2.

And Now, The Rest of The Story...

Some years earlier there was a man in Chicago called Easy Eddie. At that time, Al Capone virtually owned the city. Capone wasn't famous for anything heroic. His exploits were anything but praiseworthy. He was, however, notorious for enmeshing the city of Chicago in everything from bootlegged booze and prostitution to murder. Easy Eddie was Capone's lawyer and for a good reason. He was very good! In fact, his skill at legal maneuvering kept Big Al out of jail for a long time. To show his appreciation, Capone paid him very well. Not only was the money big; Eddie got special dividends. For instance, he and his family occupied a fenced-in mansion with live-in help and all of the conveniences of the day. The estate was so large that it filled an entire Chicago city block. Yes, Eddie lived the high life of the Chicago mob and gave little consideration to the atrocity that went on around him. Eddie did have one soft spot, however. He had a son that he loved dearly. Eddie saw to it that his young son had the best of everything; clothes, cars, and a good education. Nothing was withheld. Price was no object. And, despite his involvement with organized crime, Eddie even tried to teach him right from wrong. Yes, Eddie tried to teach his son to rise above his own sordid life. He wanted him to be a better man than he was. Yet, with all his wealth and influence, there were two things that Eddie couldn't give his son. Two things that Eddie sacrificed to the Capone mob that he could not pass on to his beloved son: a good name and a good example. One day, Easy Eddie reached a difficult decision. Offering his son a good name was far more important than all the riches he could lavish on him. He had to rectify all the wrong that he had done. He would go to the authorities and tell the truth about Scar-face Al Capone. He would try to clean up his tarnished name and offer his son some semblance of integrity. To do this he must testify against The Mob, and he knew that the cost would be great. But more than anything, he wanted to be an example to his son. He wanted to do his best to make restoration and hopefully have a good name to leave his son. So, he testified. Within the year, Easy Eddie's life ended in a blaze of gunfire on a lonely Chicago street. He had given his son the greatest gift he had to offer at the greatest price he would ever pay. I know what you're thinking. What do these two stories have to do with one another? Well, you see, Butch O'Hare was Easy Eddie's son.

This Issue's Second Worst Joke and I'm Quitting While I'm A Head (Get It? If not, read the joke and you will!)

A man is waiting for his wife to give birth. The doctor comes in and informs the dad that his son was born without torso, arms or legs. The son is just a head! But the dad loves his son and raises him as well as he can, with love and compassion. After 21 years, the son is old enough for his first drink. Dad takes him to the bar, tearfully tells the son he is proud of him and orders up the biggest, strongest drink for his boy. With the entire bar looking on curiously and the bartender shaking his head in disbelief, the boy takes his first sip of alcohol. Swoooop! A torso pops out!

The bar is dead silent; then bursts into a whoop of joy. The father, shocked, begs his son to drink again. The patrons chant, "Take another drink"! The bartender still shakes his head in dismay. Swoooop! Two arms pop out.

The bar goes wild. The father, crying and wailing, begs his son to drink again. The patrons chant, "Take another drink"! The bartender ignores the whole affair. By now the boy is getting tipsy, and with his new hands he reaches down, grabs his drink and guzzles the last of it. Swoooop! Two legs pop out.

The bar is in chaos. The father falls to his knees and tearfully thanks God. The boy stands up on his new legs and stumbles to the left. Then to the right -- right through the front door, into the street, where a truck runs over him and kills him instantly.

The bar falls silent. The bartender sighs and says, "That boy should have quit while he was a head."

Proud Patriots Sends Care Packages

Proud Patriots, Inc. sends care packages, cards and letters to servicemembers. Proud Patriots currently supports ten Marine units, eight Army units, two field hospitals, seven Navy ships, six Reserve/National Guard units, and two Air Force squadrons. Donations to Proud Patriots are shipped to these various units, which are in Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan, and Africa. For more information, visit the Proud Patriots website at <http://www.proudpatriors.org/>.

Operation Give a Hug

Operation Give a Hug provides children of deployed parents a special doll with a photo of the deployed parent on the face of the doll. The program is sponsored by The Kiwanis Club of Greater Tacoma Foundation located in Tacoma, Wash., where the program was originally launched. To date, Operation Give a Hug has distributed more than 14,000 dolls through family readiness groups, family liaison officers, family programs coordinators, school counselors, casualty assistance officers, Fort Lewis Fisher House, and TAPS (Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors).

Simply A Hero

The Story of Army Specialist Crystal Davis

Army Spec. Crystal Davis proved her steely grit the night the up-armored wrecker she was driving in Iraq hit an improvised explosive device. Trapped in the destroyed vehicle with her right foot nearly severed, she told her cohorts she'd hoist herself out rather than risk having them come in. "I think about it every day," Davis told country music singer-songwriter Rockie Lynne Aug. 18, at a dinner for wounded servicemembers and their families. "Every moment that goes by a part will flash back. I tell it differently every time because I remember different things as time goes by." Davis was one of about 20 severely injured servicemembers from Walter Reed Army Medical Center here and the National Naval Medical Center, in Bethesda, Md., who dined on the rooftop of The Exchange restaurant here. Lynne was among the 40 or so family members, veterans and other guests who joined the troops at the dinner hosted and sponsored by Jim Nicopoulos, owner of The Exchange. "What an inspirational story -- she's amazing," said Lynne, a former Army infantryman, after listening to Davis describe her experience and profess her determination to stay in the Army. "This is such an example of how today's battlefield is so vastly different than even the Gulf War, because now there are no frontlines. There are no support units in the rear," he said. "In today's military, there is clear and present danger for every single person who joins."

Davis, 22, a native of Camden, S.C., joined the Army in January 2004 to become a track mechanic and also trained as a vehicle recovery specialist. As she put it, her job was to "pick up blown up, broke down or stuck vehicles." Assigned to the 54th Engineer Battalion in Bamberg, Germany, she deployed to Iraq in November 2005. At first, she said, she didn't feel threatened being there. "I just felt like it was another day at work," she said. "I would go outside the wire three, four, five times a week, doing different missions." On Jan. 21, 2006, a two-hour firefight ensued outside the wire. Her team chief remarked that he hated to go outside into a bunch of irate Iraqis. "I just kind of laughed at him and brushed it off," Davis recalled. "He asked if I wanted him to drive that night. I said no, I'd drive. He said we'd be taking the same route we always took so it would be all right -- but it just wasn't all right." Davis was driving the second to last vehicle in a convoy doing route clearance. As she straightened out of a left turn onto the road, Iraqi insurgents detonated a remote-controlled IED. "It was about 2 in the morning," she recalled. "I had just taken off my eye protection because I'd been up all day and I wanted to stretch and scratch my eyes and kind of wake up a little bit. I had one hand on the wheel, and as I went to grab for the glasses I saw a red flash and heard a boom. I put my hands on the wheel and hit the gas to get out of the danger zone." The next thing she knew, she awoke to find the vehicle stopped. She was facing the driver's door, but the door had been blown off. She had glass fragments in her eyes. "I turned and saw my weapon was still there but my seat belt had been blown off of me," she said. "My right leg was bent backward on top of the steering wheel and my foot was hanging off - it was still connected, but I guess you could say it wasn't there."

"I couldn't see my left leg. I didn't know where it was. All of a sudden my team chief said, 'Hey Ms. Davis, are you all right? Talk to me; talk to me.' All of a sudden the pain just hit me at once, and I said, 'My legs hurt. I don't know why. My legs hurt.'" **(Story continues on another page this issue)**

(Continued from another page, Simply a Hero)

Within what seemed like seconds to the injured soldier, Sgt. Jessie Venable, Davis' best friend and the unit's medic, was there. "She looked at me, and I could see the tears in her eyes, but she kept everything professional and she did her job. "She took off my helmet and my flak vest and turned to the people who were going to help her and said, 'I don't know how we're going to get her out.' She didn't know I heard her. Trapped in a vehicle the size of an 18-wheeler with 4-foot-tall tires, Davis told Venable, "'Hold on a minute, let me see if I can get myself out. If I can't then you can try.'

"I'd rather hurt myself worse than have her climb in there and hurt herself and hurt me," she said. Davis found her left leg crushed underneath the seat. Knowing her right foot was already lost, she put pressure on that leg to lift herself up. She grabbed her other leg and set it on the doorjamb. "I grabbed my left leg and gently pulled it over, and as I went to go set it down somebody grabbed my foot, so I set my leg on top of my foot where it was disconnected," She said.

Venable told Davis to fall forward and she did. Davis said she believes she fought off death shortly after she was put on an air evacuation plane. "I don't know what happened, but I felt the medic's lips on mine and I felt her pushing on my chest, but at the same time I was looking down at her. It was like someone was telling me, 'You can give up now peacefully, or you can fight.'

"I've never quit," Davis told Lynne. "I've never given up a fight. I'll be the first one in the middle of a brawl."

Davis said some people say she's crazy because she wants to stay in the military. "But, there's a reason to my madness," she said with a slight smile. "I'm doing everything I can to push myself to the limit and past it to get there. They're going to have to put up with me for the next 18 years."

Every bone in Davis's left leg was broken. Her heel, ankle and nerves were crushed. Today, she said she has partial feeling in her foot. She cannot wiggle her toes. She can move her foot up and down a little and side to side. She said it looks like the doctors took a handful of screws and put them in her foot. She has a plate holding her heel together. She also got a prosthetic right leg she's been walking on since mid-March last year.

The Department of Defense (DoD) provides military funeral honors at the burials of veterans on request. Funeral honors can be given at private or government-operated cemeteries. For military funeral honors, the rights of veterans and the responsibilities of the federal government were written into a law, the National Defense Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-65), which took effect in 2000. Military funeral honors include the presence of a funeral honors detail to fold and present the U.S. flag and play "Taps," either by a high-quality recording or by a bugler. The law defines a military funeral honors detail as two or more uniformed military persons, with at least one being a member of the veteran's branch of military service. Funeral home directors request funeral honors from DoD, whether burial is in a national cemetery or another cemetery. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) staff at national cemeteries also can assist to arrange funeral honors at VA national cemeteries. Some local veterans organizations may provide military funeral honors or assist military members rendering honors. When honors are desired at a national cemetery, they are arranged by the funeral home in advance of the committal service.

Cold War Recognition Certificate

Eligible individuals who have been holding off applying for the Cold War Recognition Certificate in order to avoid the initial rush may now find it a good time to apply. Officials report the program is still going strong and the turn around time has been cut from six months to the current two months. The certificate was authorized by the FY1998 National Defense Authorization Act. The Secretary of Defense approved awarding Cold War Recognition Certificates to all members of the armed forces and qualified federal government civilian personnel who faithfully and honorably served the United States anytime during the Cold War era - defined as Sept. 2, 1945 to Dec. 26, 1991. Fax the application with your supporting document to 1 (800) 723-9262; or mail to:

U.S. Army Human Resources
Cold War Recognition Program
Room 3N45
ATTN: AHRC-CWRS
200 Stovall Street
Alexandria, VA 22332-0473



Acceptable supporting documents include any official government or military document that contains the recipient's name, Social Security Number or Military Service Number or Foreign Service Number, and a date showing at least one day of service during the Cold War era (Sept. 1945 to Dec. 26, 1991).

For any other information, please check the following Web site:

<https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/active/TAGD/coldwar/default.htm>

Why can't you hear a pterodactyl go to the toilet?

Because it has a silent P.

You cannot spill a drop of American blood without spilling the blood of the whole world.... We are not a nation, so much as a world. ~Herman Melville

"First you forget names; then you forget faces; then you forget to zip up your fly; and then you forget to unzip your fly."

- Branch Rickey

TRICARE Problems

More than 168,000 TRICARE Prime enrollees -- those in managed care networks set up more than 40 miles from a military base or a base closure site -- could lose access to those networks and therefore pay higher out-of-pocket costs under new TRICARE support contracts to take effect in 2009.

Retiree advocates say a proposed change to the next generation of contracts, floated by TRICARE in a draft bid proposal, would encourage contractors like Humana, TriWest and Health Net to make more cost-competitive bids by dismantling provider networks that aren't near military treatment facilities or Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) sites.

Tricare Prime travel

Tricare Prime beneficiaries referred by their primary care manager for specialty services at a location more than 100 miles from their provider's location may be eligible to have their reasonable travel expenses reimbursed by Tricare. Beneficiaries must have a valid referral and travel orders before traveling, and file a travel claim upon their return. This can be requested at the military treatment facility or from the Tricare Regional Offices if the doctor is a Tricare network provider. Beneficiaries will receive a briefing on the entitlement process, coverage, and their responsibilities at the MTF or from the TRO point of contact.

"Prime enrollees should not have to pay out of pocket for travel expenses to receive approved care at a distant location," said Maj. Gen. Elder Granger, deputy director of the Tricare Management Activity. "Programs are available to cover these costs, and representatives are standing by to help."

Reasonable travel expenses are the actual costs incurred by the beneficiary when traveling to their specialty provider. Costs include meals, gas, tolls, parking, and tickets for public transportation (i.e., airplane, train, bus, etc.). Beneficiaries must submit receipts for expenses above \$75. The MTF or TRO will provide the beneficiary with specific instructions on how and where to submit his or her travel entitlement claim. Government rates are used to estimate the reasonable cost.

Beneficiaries are expected to use the least costly mode of transportation. Costs of lodging and meals may be reimbursed up to the government per diem rate. For more information on the Tricare Prime Travel Reimbursement, refer to www.tricare.mil/factsheets.

Cell Phone Use

The Air Force has implemented a new cell phone restriction for drivers. Drivers are not allowed to talk on their cell phones while driving on Air Force installations without a hands-free device. This policy, effective this past February, is part of the Department of Defense's Joint Traffic Guidance.

"This is really a cooperative effort for everyone from the base populace to the base leaders," said Master Sgt. Gloria Ornelas, the superintendent of law enforcement for Air Force Security Forces. "I think it is long overdue. The DoD recognized that, and we are now in line with what some states and municipalities are doing to create a safer environment for drivers."

Only cell phones with hands-free devices will be allowed for use by drivers.

Homes for Our Troops

Homes for Our Troops is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that assists severely injured Servicemen and women and their immediate families by raising donations of money, building materials and professional labor and coordinating the process of building a new home or adapting an existing home for handicapped accessibility. The organization has another 20 houses in progress, each of which will include features geared toward each individual servicemember's specific injury. The group is anticipating taking on another 10 to 15 houses in the near future. For more information, visit the Homes for Our Troops website at <http://www.homesforourtroops.org/site/PageServer>

Searching for a website that might help you find an old military buddy? Go to the Post 9877 website below and you'll find links to site that may help you. www.debbiefields.com/vfw9877/index1.html

H-Bomb Lost For 48 Years

During the early morning hours of Feb. 5, 1958, an Air Force B-47 Stratojet bomber was soaring high above the Lowcountry coast on a simulated combat mission, but at approximately 2 a.m., disaster struck at 36,000 ft. A group of Air Force F-86 Saberjet fighters were in the vicinity, and without warning, one of the aircraft slammed into the bomber.

The collision destroyed the fighter, with the pilot ejecting safely, but the real concern was the weaponry aboard the crippled B-47: a hydrogen bomb. Though the bomb utilized a removable nuclear capsule, which is required for a nuclear explosion, the weapon was not considered fully armed, but still inherently dangerous.

"The fighter was not directly involved with the B-47 simulated combat mission and did not detect the plane until it was too late to avoid a collision," said Dr. Billy Mullins, associate director of strategic security, Headquarters, United States Air Force.

The F-86 crashed after the pilot successfully bailed out, and the B-47 was damaged but flyable. After three landing attempts at then Hunter Air Force Base, Ga., the 400-pound bomb was jettisoned several miles from Savannah, Ga., into the Warsaw Sound area of the Atlantic Ocean.

"The incomplete bomb was jettisoned from the damaged bomber to avoid possibility of a conventional explosion if there was a crash landing at Hunter Air Force Base, Ga.," said Mullins.

The pilots did not see an explosion upon impact and returned for a crash landing at Hunter AFB. Recovery efforts began the following morning.

"The area was intensively searched using the Air Force 270th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squadron and approximately 100 navy personnel equipped with hand held sonar, galvanic drag detectors and cable sweeps," Mullins said.

The search was conducted over a three square mile area where the bomb was believed to have hit the water. If the bomb did not explode on impact, based on the depth of water in the impact region, the bomb should have been

buried nose-down, anywhere from 5 to 15 feet below the seabed.

"After weeks of intense searching, no evidence of the bomb, or the bomb's resting place had been found. The Air Force declared the bomb irretrievably lost on April 16, 1958," said Mullins.

In August 2000, Congressman Jack Kingston requested the Air Force reinvestigate the accident following inquiries from media and local civilians. After the search, the Air Force published its findings in an April 2001 report.

The Air Force received assistance from the Navy, the Department of Energy, the Savannah District Army Corps of Engineers and the Skidaway Oceanographic Institute in looking for the bomb. They wanted to investigate the details surrounding the incident, the most likely current condition of the bomb, associated hazards and to determine whether search and subsequent recovery operations should be attempted. Based on the available data, the suspected orientation of the bomb, the search methods and available equipment, the Navy Supervisor of Salvage estimates there is a very low possibility of successfully locating the bomb. If the bomb was found and the decision made to recover it, there could have been a substantial economic impact to the region if an accidental detonation occurred during search or recovery operations.

The Air Force decided to leave the bomb status as irretrievably lost for the following reasons. If the bomb remains in its resting place, there is no possibility of a nuclear explosion, no risk to the public and it avoids the potential of unacceptable impact to the environment.

Again in 2004, an investigation was opened. The Air Force organized a team of experts to conduct a radiological survey of an area in Warsaw Sound alleged to have elevated levels of radiation. The survey revealed only naturally occurring radioactive sources. No new information was uncovered to lead the Air Force to modify its 2001 conclusions.

Sharing A Thought *Words from a Korean War*

In 1951 during the first year of the Korean War (or police action as it was called) like so many young men in the neighborhood and neighborhoods across the country, I felt called upon to serve. After three months in boot camp I was stationed aboard a destroyer, the U.S.S. Douglas H. Fox, DD779 for a tour of duty in the Korean waters. The naval Forces in Korea had two main task forces. Seventy seven which acted as escort and screening force for our might aircraft carriers, and 95 which we called the bomb line. Here alone and sometimes in the company with other ships, we took under fire cities with exotic sounding names like: Sonjin, Hungnam, Hamhung, Mayangdo and Wonson, which was under siege by the navy for 861 days. The final shell falling one minute before the cease fire, 10pm, 27 July, 1953.

While we came under fire many, many times, we were lucky. We were hit once suffering three casualties, all of whom survived. Not so for our sister ship the U.S.S. James C. Owens, DD776 which one morning at Sonjin harbor while on a fire mission and turning broadside to the beach, in a moment received several hits which resulting in four dead and eight wounded.

While I served in the Navy, my brother Tom was serving in Korea with the Army's 10th Corp. as a truck driver, coming under fire many times himself. After our tours were over we came home, thanking God for his mercy, and getting on with our lives. But one thing always remained; while we had left Korea, Korea had never left us. I must have made that cruise a million times in my mind.

One day almost forty years later, while taking out her winter clothes, my daughter Angela came across an old box in the attic. In the box she found my dog tags and service medals. Oh nothing grand or heroic I assure you. It was the National Defense, United Nations and Korean Service medals (2 battles stars). Also in the box was the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation which was given to all who served there. As a surprise for me, my daughter took the medals and had them mounted. As she hung them above a picture of me in uniform, she asked me if I liked it. I answered "yes, very much, it almost makes me feel special". She turned to me and said "You are special, you and all of those

men and women who went and served". It sort of swelled my head.

A few days later, it being the Christmas season, I made my semi-annual trip to Calverton Cemetery in Long Island to pay my respects to my brother Tom and my buddy Vinnie Laino. I noticed that the new section in the back of Vinnie had the white upright stones instead of bronze plaques on the ground. After leaving Vinnie, I drove the short distance to the new section. I left my car and walked among the stones. I remembered that a young Marine Corps Major who was killed when his helicopter crashed in the Persian Gulf was buried there. I found his grave. I stood there wondering who he was, what he was like, and what he must have felt as he faced the realities of war and his moment of truth.

As I stood there, an elderly couple stopped nearby. We nodded at each other in a silent greeting. The lady came over and asked if the deceased was a relative. I said no, actually I didn't even know him. We chatted a few moments and after wishing each other a Happy Holiday, they moved on. I went to my car and took one of the wreaths I had and put it out on his grave. Standing alone again in my chill gray of that December morning a thought came to me.

"Sure I knew him. My brother and I knew him in Korea, my cousin Steve knew him in Vietnam, my brother Jim knew him in WWII and dad knew him in WWI. As I reached down to touch the stone, I thought of what my daughter had said about being special. My eyes filled with tears, hell I wasn't so special. Marine Corps Major Eugene McCarthy is special. He will always be special. But Oh My God, what a price he paid for that honor....."

Anthony M. Pionegro
Disabled American Veteran

*Editor's Note: Mr. Pionegro, you **are** a special person. By serving in uniform in defense of this nation's freedom – you are a hero alongside the millions and millions of men and women of this country who did the same. Thank you for serving America and the price you paid in doing so.*



The Editor's Voice



Across our great country and throughout the world, Americans will pause on November 11th to honor our brave fighting men and women who for more than 231 years have underwritten our freedom by their duty, honor, and selfless service. We must recognize that every single veteran has given something to maintain our liberty. Some have given all, laying down their very lives to defend the freedoms we hold so dear.

To all our veterans I have a simple yet heartfelt message -- thank you -- all of you, for your service. I want you to know that your example serves to inspire others who follow in your footsteps. Thank you for your selfless sacrifices in peacetime and war, here in this nation and throughout the world. You veterans, regardless of branch of service and era served, have paid a price for the freedom we enjoy with your courage and honor. You have defended America through both the best and worst of times and have performed difficult duties tirelessly with little recognition or fanfare. You have sought neither fortune nor fame but served only because of a simple love of country and liberty.

I salute our veterans for this selfless service and recognize that their devotion to duty makes them a source of inspiration for all to emulate. They are my heroes because they have repeatedly triumphed over adversity. They know what it is like to stand guard in the frozen cold of the night while others sleep. They understand the meaning of hardship; standing watch at freedom's frontier far from loved ones. They have seen the horror of war and catastrophe. Yet they endure, and it is this devotion to duty that gives us strength. It inspires today's military men and women to serve. Looking out on the world today, we can see how this unbroken line of heroes continues the work of veterans from bygone eras.

Today we see many changes. For example, how the Army -- the oldest of our military services -- embodies the "Spirit of 1776." Now, instead of militias and the Continental Army of General George Washington protecting this nation, it is a team of National Guardsmen, Army Reservists, and active duty Soldiers who help defend our towns and cities. Together with state and local authorities, these modern day patriots form a team that is our nation's first line of defense against terrorists and other threats to our livelihood.

At home and throughout the world, our Soldiers uphold the finest traditions of veterans from other bygone eras. In Europe they continue the legacy begun by the "Doughboys" of World War I, and continued through World War II and the Cold War. Today, our Soldiers guarantee peace and stability throughout Europe, to include new countries fresh from Eastern bloc oppression now living in freedom.

In Korea, the legacy of veterans who fought for and sustained a fragile peace on the Korean peninsula continues. Today, nearly half a century after our military led a United Nations force that stopped communist aggression, an unbroken line of American Soldiers continues to stand guard for freedom at Korea's 38th parallel. In that time, we have seen a free and democratic Republic of Korea prosper and the false promises of communism revealed by the impoverishment of North Korea.

In Iraq, our forces currently involved in Operation Iraqi Freedom have kept faith with Gulf War veterans. Together with a coalition of many nations, our military ended the repressive regime of a ruthless dictator and freed the people of Iraq from more than thirty years of terror and oppression. Now as the fight for democracy continues, it is our soldiers who help underwrite the transition to a free and democratic Iraq. Currently our Soldiers are serving in about 120 countries throughout the world and the legacy of our past veterans continues to inspire each of them to answer the call to duty. Join me in thanking our veterans for their service. Applaud them not only for their past service, but the example they set for our current and future military.

(continued on another page this issue)

What is Agent Orange?

Agent Orange was one of the weed-killing chemicals used by the U.S. military in the Vietnam War. It was sprayed to remove leaves from trees that enemy troops hid behind. Agent Orange and similar chemicals were known as "*herbicides*." Agent Orange was applied by airplanes, helicopters, trucks and backpack sprayers. One of the chemicals in Agent Orange contained small amounts of dioxin (also known as "TCDD"), which had been found to cause a variety of illnesses in laboratory animals. More recent studies have suggested that dioxin may be related to several types of cancer and other disorders.

Bill Clinton's Retirement Plans

- Spend more quality time with Chelsea and her 13 half brothers and sisters.
- Tour the nations' prisons to improve conditions and visit friends.
- Write book: "The American Presidency: An Oral History."
- Buy a Hooter's franchise.
- Catch up on eight-year stack of "Penthouse"
- Continue work counseling interns.
- Stop using fake names in personal ads.
- Take little Buddy out three times a day -- also walk the dog.
- Get to know those Gore girls better.

Another Scam

Recently a TRICARE beneficiary reported a possible telephone scam involving someone asking for personal bank account information. Personal or financial information should never be given to anyone who calls you or comes to your home uninvited, claiming they are collecting fees or other funds on behalf of TRICARE or selling TRICARE-related products. If you receive a call of this nature from someone identifying themselves as a TRICARE representative, please TRICARE know by writing to: TRICARE Management Activity, ATTN: Privacy Office, 5111 Leesburg Pike, Suite 810, Fall Church, VA 22041. For tips on protecting your identity, visit the TRICARE Website.

Be filled with ease as you enter our home

For we look to you as our brother,

And all these blessing the giver has sent

We'll share with one another.

Come sit at our table, fill your plate

Join us in the feast of Kings,

For he has been fit to bless us

With these many wonderous things.

So join us friend no matter

If it be in house or stable,

For in our home when we break bread

God sits at the head of our table.

Author

*Anthony Pionegro
Member of Disabled
American Veterans*

(The Editor's Voice continues...)

We have learned from the past that our military needs our support. Korea and Vietnam have taught us this lesson. After the Korean War our veterans returned home to a country that appeared indifferent to their service. After Vietnam our military faced scorn from some circles. Scorn and indifference have no place in our heroes' homecoming. Instead, let us show our gratitude by welcoming all our heroes home when they return to the cities and towns they so bravely defended.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on American soil, our military did the job of taking the fight to the enemy in Afghanistan and Iraq. But that is not enough. We now know our enemies will not be deterred solely by our ability to retaliate. We will be vigilant. We will maintain our indomitable fighting spirit and our military might. Our Soldiers of today, like the veterans who came before them, will always draw their strength from American values – loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. These values have always been with our troops, and they continue to sustain us. They are embodied by all who have served and continue to serve our nation.

Now with the Global War on Terrorism, our Soldiers confront an enemy with the same vigor our veterans have always displayed. The horror of 9/11 demonstrated to many that we cannot take our past peace and prosperity for granted. But our veterans already know this. They know our nation was founded not on the guarantees of the past, but the promise of the future. They know that freedom isn't free and that eternal vigilance is the price we must always pay for our liberty. What we must resolve is to now keep faith with our veterans and our military as this nation fights and wins the Global War on Terrorism.

We must also resolve not to remember our heroes simply on Veterans Day, but every day. Remember our veterans and the price they paid physically and emotionally to keep this nation safe. Remember our troops -- America's future veterans – America's sons and daughters, who have selflessly made the decision to defend your rights under freedom.

Additionally, remember that veterans' families have also paid a price for freedom. We may never be able to adequately thank our veterans but we must always support their families. Always. Through your total support our future will be guaranteed by American veterans and their families. They will continue to honor their sacred duty of protecting this nation, our fellow citizens, and the freedoms we hold so dear throughout the world.

God Bless our veterans, and may HE continue to Bless the greatest country in the world -- **The United States of America.**

John Stewart
Your Editor



Our great modern Republic. May those who seek the blessings of its institutions and the protection of its flag remember the obligations they impose. ~Ulysses S. Grant

Tricare Mail Order Pharmacy proves cost effective, convenient

The Department of Defense, in an effort to contain healthcare costs and sustain a first-class health care benefit, is stressing the Tricare Mail Order Pharmacy as a cost effective and convenient way for beneficiaries to get prescription medications.

The program is administered by Express Scripts, Inc. While the military pharmacy is still the least expensive for both the customer and DoD, the Mail Order Pharmacy comes in second in cost savings, well ahead of the retail pharmacy. Beneficiaries may save as much as 66 percent of the cost for maintenance medications for such conditions as high blood pressure, asthma and diabetes. These significant savings result because Tricare Mail Order Pharmacy mails beneficiaries up to a 90-day supply of most medications for the same cost as a 30-day supply at a retail pharmacy.

Beneficiaries may refill their prescriptions by telephone, mail or on-line, and medications are delivered directly to their home. Using the mail-order pharmacy also saves beneficiaries travel costs and time. Generic medications are another way that Tricare beneficiaries save out-of-pocket expenses and help contain rising health care costs. Generic drugs must meet the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) testing and approval requirements before they are added to the Tricare medication formulary. United States Public Health Service Capt.

Thomas McGinnis, Tricare Management Activity Pharmaceutical Operations Directorate chief, said FDA-approved generics are not only safe and effective, but they are therapeutically equivalent to brand-name medications. DoD's regulation on generic drugs requires all prescriptions to be filled with a generic medication if one is available.

To be eligible for the mail order pharmacy, the sponsor and family members must be enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (commonly known as DEERS). Beneficiaries with pharmacy coverage through another health insurance plan may use the mail order benefit once they have exhausted their current prescription benefit or if the drug they are taking is not covered under their insurance plan.

For more information about Tricare's mail order pharmacy, please visit the Tricare Web site at www.tricare.osd.mil/pharmacy/tmop_order.cfm.

VFW Elects George Lisicki as its New Commander

KANSAS CITY, Mo., Aug. 20, 2007--The nation's largest association of combat veterans has elected George Lisicki its new national commander during the Veterans of Foreign War's annual convention, held August 18-23 in Kansas City--home of the VFW National Headquarters. A Vietnam War veteran from New Jersey, Lisicki has been involved with the VFW for 36 years.

Lisicki served in the U. S. Army from 1966-69. In Vietnam he served with the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry, 4th Infantry Division in the Central Highlands near Pleiku. He was awarded the Bronze Star, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Good Conduct Medal and the National Defense Service Medal among others.