

**August 2014**  
**Post Newsletter**  
WesternSpringsVFW.org

**Commander's Stuff**

**By Mike Winner**

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Fellow Veterans,

As we near the end of summer, I ask that you take advantage of our National Park System. To see some of the majesty of this great country leaves you speechless. Last month, my family and I travelled across the country in a car, not an airplane, and visited many state parks across the country on our way to see my oldest son, who is working summers in the mountains of Idaho. Active duty veterans and retired veterans are granted free admission to our parks. I think that is a good start, but I wish that all veterans could be granted free access. Regardless, I ask that you take advantage of the opportunity to enjoy *purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain!*

Our meeting last month was productive. We welcomed two new members. We were informed of a most gracious gift from the son of a fellow veteran. We also discussed distributing some of our resources to great veteran endeavors. Each meeting, we further the voice of the veteran. I'm excited to be a

**Save the Dates**

Aug. 12<sup>th</sup> – 7:30 p.m. **Post Regular meeting** at Grace Lutheran Church  
Aug. 14<sup>th</sup> – Hospital Visit  
Aug. 15<sup>th</sup> – deadline for September newsletter  
Sept. 9<sup>th</sup> – 7:30 p.m. **Post Regular meeting** at Grace Lutheran Church

part of this endeavor!

Semper Fi,  
R/S Mike Winner

**Poppy Day Funds Support Vets at Fisher House, Hines Hospital**

**By Walt Bergenthal**

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Statement of funds as of 7/8/14:

|                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Post General Fund | \$14,951.33 |
| Post Relief Fund  | 5,744.33    |
| Post Dues Reserve | 4.25        |
| TOTAL:            | \$20,699.91 |

Your Poppy Days efforts are paying off. We delivered a \$3,000 check to the Fisher House to help fund their upkeep.

In addition, we dropped off a \$2,000 check to Hines Volunteer Services to purchase a standing frame and safety

gait to be used in the rehabilitation/kinesiotherapy section.

Our Post was honored to receive a \$5,000 check from the Wakerly Family Foundation in the name of Ralph F. Wakerly to help our Post as we see fit. Ralph was a charter member of our Post who passed away two years ago. He had enlisted in the Army Air Corps in August 1939 and was discharged in December 1945 with the rank of Tech Sgt. Ralph served overseas in England and France as a P38 mechanic. During his stateside duty he had received a broken back in an Army plane crash and spent many months in rehab.

Welcome back West Point grad Joe Barker. Joe just returned from his third tour in Afghanistan. In as short time he'll be retiring from the Army after 34 years then it's back to teaching at Lyons Township High School and resuming his position as Junior Vice Commander of our Post.

Welcome aboard to two Vietnam veterans.

William Nawrot served in the Army as an E4 aircraft maintenance man with one year, one month, 15 days overseas duty.

George Bryar served in the Army as a Lt. Col. Neurosurgeon with one year Vietnam service.

It's good to see Vietnam vets stepping up and joining our Post.

### **Obama's Prisoner Exchange on Firm Historical Footing, Part I**

**By Carol Anne O'Donnell**  
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*The above titled article, which follows, is taken from the Chicago Tribune dated June 10, 2014, and was written by Michael J. Allen, an associate professor of history at Northwestern University and author of "Until the Last Man*

### *Comes Home: POWs, MIAs and the Unending Vietnam War:*

“‘The United States has always had a pretty sacred rule,’ President Barack Obama said in response to those who criticized his decision to exchange five Guantanamo detainees for Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl. ‘We don’t leave our men or women in uniform behind ... period.’ Anyone familiar with the battle of Mogadishu depicted in the film ‘Black Hawk Down’ or who can recall Army PFC Jessica Lynch’s rescue in the Iraq War knows the extraordinary lengths to which the U.S. armed forces will go to uphold this creed.

Yet while this commitment has long enjoyed widespread acclaim among Americans, for some, including Sen. John McCain, Obama’s decision goes too far. ‘We should have certainly made efforts to bring Bergdahl home,’ McCain said, ‘but this price is higher than any in history.’ Though there are unanswered questions and legitimate concerns surrounding the president’s actions, McCain’s criticism is historically inaccurate. Not only does the U.S. have a long record of giving more in exchange for its prisoners, it did so in the war in which McCain fought.

Obama stands on firm historical footing when he claims, ‘This is what happens at the ends of wars.’ Indeed, prisoner exchanges have gone hand-in-hand with negotiating an end to wars, and more often than not marked the passage from war to peace. In the Korean War, for instance, the question of whether to forcibly repatriate prisoners who preferred not to return to their former commands prolonged that conflict long past the point of the military stalemate reached in 1951. The breakthrough came in the form of an

exchange of 684 sick and wounded United Nations forces for 6,200 sick and wounded communist forces in April 1953. That paved the way for a general armistice later that summer, bringing the release of 12,773 UN prisoners in return for 75,000 Chinese and North Korean captives. *(EDITOR'S NOTE: There is still no peace treaty.)*

This history not only confirms Obama's point that prisoner exchanges have historically accompanied the end of hostilities, it suggests that his desire to use a prisoner transfer to pave the way for a broader peace agreement with the Taliban was neither as treacherous nor foolhardy as critics allege. President Eisenhower, during the Korean War, and President Nixon, during the Vietnam War, used prisoner exchanges to win face-saving exits from wars they determined the U.S. could not win. ..."

See Part II next month. As you can see basic policy regarding prisoner exchanges remains the same under Republican and Democratic Presidencies as did the lack of will to bring back all our POW/MIAs.

Please remember all our POWs and MIAs and their families in your prayers.

## **YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN**

### **Veterans Benefits**

**By Chuck Bosko**

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Many veterans have a rather "good" idea as to the array of veteran benefits available from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. Yet, many veterans are not aware of the benefits from the

Illinois Department of Veteran Affairs, or IDVA.

The June edition featured a listing of those benefits and the Veterans' Compensation Award, more commonly known as the "War Bonus." This month, you will read about the Illinois Veterans' Homes administered by the IDVA.

Currently, there are four homes located at Quincy, LaSalle, Anna and Manteno. Future plans include a site near the Irving Park Rd and Oak Park Ave and the Hines VA campus.

The home at **Quincy**: The home provides residency, intermediate skilled care including a special needs unit for veterans afflicted with Alzheimer's or related dementia. The home provides 551 skilled care beds and Anderson-Somerville Barracks offers 132 residential rooms.

The home at **LaSalle**: The home provides skilled nursing care for 160 residents and a 40 bed unit for veterans with Alzheimer's or related dementia.

The home at **Anna**: The home provides skilled nursing care for 50 residents and offers six apartment style domiciliary units for 12 people.

The home at **Manteno**: The home provides skilled nursing care for 300 veteran residents and 40 veterans with Alzheimer's or dementia. There is the Prince Homeless/Disabled home at Manteno also. This home provides professional social service individuals. The programs there assist these veterans with medical needs and supportive educational benefits (to which is a benefit for veterans) and skills that will enable these vets to get back into the mainstream of society.

The future home in **Chicago**: As mentioned above, this home will provide an additional 200 beds facility

for our veterans with a unit for those veterans with Alzheimer's or related dementia.

All the homes offer recreational and social events and, yes, the homes do offer these services to spouses or the widows/widowers. There are monthly maintenance fees based on a veteran's income, which is capped at \$1,429 per month as of July 1, 2012. "This fee covers all room, food, medication, all levels of medical care, recreation and activities and any special therapy or treatments prescribed by the attending physician. NOTE: Admission of a veteran is not limited or conditioned in any manner by the financial status of the resident or his/her ability to pay maintenance charges. No veteran will be turned away solely due to an inability to pay" (1)

**Eligibility:** Eligibility to an Illinois veterans' home has been established by Illinois law. Any "HONORABLY" discharged veteran must meet the following criteria:

- Served at least one day during a wartime period recognized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs wherein a campaign or expeditionary medal has been awarded. These are: WW II: Dec. 7, 1941-Dec. 31, 1946, continuous service before July 26, 1947, considered WW II service; Korean Service: June 27, 1950-Jan. 31, 1955; Viet Nam: Feb. 28, 1961- May 7, 1975, IF the veteran served in country in Viet Nam during that period, all other cases Aug. 5, 1964 – May 7, 1975; Persian Gulf: August 2, 1990 – TBD
- Honorably discharged or retired for a service connected disability or injury.
- Served as an enlisted person for at least 90 days on active duty in the armed forces of the United States excluding active duty for training purposes only and entered the service prior to Sept. 8, 1980.
- Served as an officer for at least 90 days on active duty in the armed forces of the United States excluding active duty for training only before Oct. 17, 1981.
- Served active duty in the armed forces of the United States for 24 continuous months, excluding active duty for training only after Sept. 7, 1980.
- Served as a reservist in the armed forces of the United States or the National Guard and called to federal active duty and completed the term for that activation. Excludes active duty for training only.
- Discharged for hardship or reduction in service prior to the completion of the required term of service.
- Completed 20 years of satisfactory service in the Reserves/Guard and eligible to receive retirement benefits is eligible for domiciliary care only.

Should the reader have additional questions, seeks clarification or wishes to apply for one of the homes, please contact me at one of the above points. Now – are you glad you read this?

Airborne & Allons  
Chuck

**1 IDVA summary**