



Vol. 15 Issue 4

**VVAChapter12♦ Newsletter**

April 2015



**Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 12  
PO Box 276, Allenhurst, NJ 07711**

**'For those who fought for it, Freedom has a special flavor the protected will never know.'**



## Chapter Officers & E-Board

Dennis Beauregard	President	908-902-8789	<a href="mailto:vva12p@verizon.net">vva12p@verizon.net</a>
Ernie Diorio	1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President	732-245-5552	<a href="mailto:litetrop67@aol.com">litetrop67@aol.com</a>
Don Davison	2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President	732-988-4056	<a href="mailto:soulpony@aol.com">soulpony@aol.com</a>
Paul Bausch	Secretary	732-323-8269	<a href="mailto:nayu67@aol.com">nayu67@aol.com</a>
Rich Brandon	Treasurer	518-966-8347	

## Committees

Bob Lopez	Minority Affairs	732-988-9241	<a href="mailto:seabees7@verizon.net">seabees7@verizon.net</a>
Tony Corbella	PTSD	732-272-8770	<a href="mailto:paddybella@optonline.net">paddybella@optonline.net</a>
Don Davison	School Speaker Program	732-988-4056	<a href="mailto:soulpony@aol.com">soulpony@aol.com</a>
Tom Milmo	Agent Orange	732-859-8783	<a href="mailto:milmoe7@aol.com">milmoe7@aol.com</a>
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Hopkins	Membership, Grievance, Chaplain	732-531-2574	<a href="mailto:herc3000@aol.com">herc3000@aol.com</a>
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Michael Quilty	Homeless Vets, Car Show	732-939-8938	<a href="mailto:quiltym@gmail.com">quiltym@gmail.com</a>
Tony Ponzo	Finance, Fund Raising	973-979-0142	<a href="mailto:ybor47@ptd.net">ybor47@ptd.net</a>
Joe McCreary	Veterans' Health Care	732-228-7852	<a href="mailto:joecmbg@yahoo.com">joecmbg@yahoo.com</a>
Dan Higgins	Civil Affairs, Cremains	732-341-2544	<a href="mailto:danielhiggins123@comcast.net">danielhiggins123@comcast.net</a>

## State Council Delegates

Michael Berman Delegate	Mike Quilty, Alternate Delegate
Paul Bausch, Delegate	Dan Higgins, Alternate Delegate
Tony Ponzo, Delegate	

## Other Contacts

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## President's Message

On March eighth I attended the State Council meeting in Mt Arlington at which the National President, John Rowan, informed the Council that he will be running for another term as VVA President. Yes at our next meeting April 1,2015 we will hold our Chapter elections, if anyone would like to run, please let Bob Hopkins's know.

Also at this meeting we will be sell our dinner dance tickets for the same price as in the past-\$40.00 each or two \$75.00. Ernie and I are still taking Ad applications for our Chapter Journal. This is our only fundraiser of the year, and we are hoping to have a banner year so that we can continue with our programs. Please, we need you to SELL A \$50.00 or \$100.00 add and PURCHASE yourtickets.

I would like to thank our brothers on the cremains committee for all their hard work in helping to expand this great program. The school speaker program is scheduled to visit 3 schools in the next two month. If you have any memorabilia that you wish to donate to our program , please let Don or Ernie know. I was talking to chapter member Ed Mura about our program during our weekly pool tournament, and the very next week he donated a helmet that was used by a helicopter pilot in Nam in 1968, Thanks Ed.

On Feb 28, Treasurer Richard Brandon informed me that he completed all necessary paperwork to file with the by-laws of VVA. Thanks Rich great job.

With Middletown High School North Hockey team beating Ramsey High School for the NJSIAA Devils Public Title, we were asked to present the Colors at the New Jersey Devil's game on March 23 . Big Hand to Ernie DiOiro , Paul Bauch, Mike Quilty , Bobby Lopez , Don Davison, Tony Corbella, and lastly, our own Devil's mascot Rich Gough. Great game but the Devil's lost.

*The Colonel*



### UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS

The next Chapter meeting will be on Wednesday, April 1, 2015 at 7:30PM. Location is at VFW 2226, 212 Norwood Ave., Oakhurst, NJ.

April 25, 2015 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Installation Dinner/Dance May

3, NJ Gold Star Family Monument Ground Breaking

April 4, Vietnam War Living History

May 2, Spring Wall Washing

### BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

April 13, Hedwig Davison

Anyone born in April ?? Please let me know so I can put it here!!

\*\*\*\*\*

If you wish to post a birthday or anniversary please submit the info by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month for the next month's news letter.

VIETNAM VETERANS of AMERICA  
NEW JERSEY SHORE AREA  
CHAPTER 12



**21<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL INSTALLATION & DINNER DANCE**

**CELEBRATING 33 YEARS OF SERVICE**

**Our Annual Dinner Dance will be held on Saturday,**  
**April 25, 2015, 6:30 pm at VFW 2179**, One Veterans Lane, Port Monmouth, NJ 07758. Tickets are \$40 per person or \$75 per couple. To reserve tickets, please contact, Ernie Diorio at 732-245-5552, or Tony Ponzio 972-979-0142 We hope to see some more familiar faces there this year.

Featuring entertainment by **ROCK N RHYTHM**

# VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

## NEW JERSEY SHORE AREA CHAPTER # 12



VVA Chapter 12 will be holding its **Annual Dinner Dance** on April 25, 2015. An integral part of our yearly operating budget is based on our fund raising efforts.

Over the past years we have enriched the lives of veterans and their families through a variety of activities including lobbying for veterans legislation, both in Trenton and Washington; assisting veterans in the VA hospitals; aiding and referring veterans for counseling in PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder] and substance abuse; providing assistance in filing service connected disability claims. We also sponsor public awareness programs connected with the POW/MIA issue. We are active in the community, providing speakers for elementary and high schools history classes; we have participated in New Jersey Adopt a Highway program, to help keep our state highways clean.

We would appreciate your advertising in our ad journal. Let veterans know you care and support our activities. Business or personal ads are welcome.

Please fill out the enclosed ad form and send your check or money order for the appropriate amount to the above address. Make your check or money payable to: **VVA Chapter 12.**

The deadline for all ads is April 1, 2015.

FULL PAGE	HALF PAGE	THIRD PAGE
\$100.00	\$50.00	\$30.00

For Further Information call:

**Dennis Beauregard** 908-902-8789  
**Ernie Diorio** 732-245-5552

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

PO BOX # 276, ALLENHURST, NJ 07711 •• E-mail: [VVA12P@VERIZON.NET](mailto:VVA12P@VERIZON.NET)

# VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

## NEW JERSEY SHORE AREA CHAPTER # 12



Please enclose your business card or print card or print out your ad the way you wish it to appear in the ad journal.

Thank you for your support. You also can e-mail your ad to [vva12p@verizon.net](mailto:vva12p@verizon.net)

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Please check desired size

FULL PAGE

\$100.00

HALF PAGE

\$50.00

THIRD PAGE

\$30.00

Deadline for ads is April 1, 2015

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

PO BOX # 276, ALLENHURST, NJ 07711 •• E-mail: [VVA12P@VERIZON.NET](mailto:VVA12P@VERIZON.NET)

## New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation Announces 2015 Scholarship Program

November 2014 Dear

Friends:

Graduating seniors have until Friday, April 17, 2015 at 5:00 PM to submit their applications and essays to qualify for one of two (2) scholarships offered by the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation. The scholarships, each in the amount of \$2,500, will be awarded to high school seniors from New Jersey who plan to further their education either at a college or university or trade/technical school.

Winners will be notified in early May and will be awarded the scholarship on Monday, May 25, 2015 during the Memorial Day Ceremony held at the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial.

In addition to the scholarship application and proof of acceptance to a college or trade school, all applicants must submit an essay about his/her visit to the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, located off the Garden State Parkway at exit 116 in Holmdel.

The deadline for application and essay submission is 5:00 p.m. on Friday, April 17, 2015. *(Those postmarked prior to due date, but received after the deadline, will NOT be accepted).* Applications may be mailed, faxed (732) 335-1107 or delivered to the NJVVM Scholarship Program, 1 Memorial Lane, P.O. Box 648, Holmdel, NJ 07733.

**For more information about our Scholarship Program please** call (732) 335-0033 xt. 100.

Thanks.  
Lynn Duane



**GOLDSTAR**  
*FAMILY*  
MONUMENT

## **Gold Star Family Monument**

**The New Jersey Gold Star Family Monument**

**Foundation Is Proud *to* Announce our**

**Ground Breaking Ceremony**

**Marking the Start**

**Of the Construction Phase**

**Of our Monument.**

**We hope you and your Organization's members**

**can join us on Sunday, May 3, 2015 at 2:00 PM**

**At the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans'**

**Memorial 1 Memorial Lane**

**Holmdel, NJ 07711**

( The Brochure is being sent as another attachment )

Vietnam War Living History Day  
Battleship New Jersey



Thanks for your call!

We'd love to have your group come out to the Battleship for our annual Vietnam War Living History Day on Saturday, April 4. The day will feature Vietnam-era military vehicles on the pier, artifacts on the Battleship and a Vietnam Veteran Sessions, where vets will share their experiences from the Vietnam War to guests touring the Battleship in the Officers Wardroom during the day.

A flier on this year's event is attached.

Also, The Battleship New Jersey offers Fire Power guided tour at a group rate. These tours, which are approximately 90-minutes long, showcase the weapons systems and how the crew lived aboard this floating city. We offer a special adult rate of \$19, and a senior/veterans rate of \$16 per person for groups. Let me know if interested.

We also offer add-on options for groups, including:

**Battleship BBQ:** Enjoy a delicious barbecue with all the fixings on the historic fantail deck of the Battleship! Burgers, hot dogs, ribs, chicken, even a cash bar, can be added. Price for the BBQ is about \$20 per person, based on the menu.

**Rations Lunch:** Enjoy a sandwich, salad, snack and soft drink prepared and waiting for your group at either the crew's mess or on the fantail.

**Bar Service:** If you would like cocktails, we can offer a cash or open bar option. Cash bar cost would be \$150 for bartender and guests would then purchase their drinks. Open bar would be approximately \$27 per person.

Jack Willard  
Battleship New Jersey Museum and Memorial  
62 Battleship Place  
Camden Waterfront, NJ 08103

**Vietnam Veterans of America (Chapter 12) and VFW Post 2226,  
212 Norwood Ave., Oakhurst, NJ**

**Will host a FREE Flounder Fishing Seminar for Veterans**

**10:00 a.m. Saturday, April 18, 2015**

*To register, please phone Greg at 732-785-9278 or email*

*gkucharews@jcaa.org*

The FREE Winter Flounder Fishing Seminar is geared towards veterans struggling with PTSD & TBI but all veterans are welcome to attend. The goal is to connect veterans to VA Service Offices/Outreach Centers, NJ Coastal Parks, Fishing Clubs, Veteran Organizations, and help veteran men and women take time to heal by utilizing healthy outdoor activities, such as fishing. Door prizes and refreshments will be available. The event is sponsored by The Vietnam Veterans of America (Chapter 12) & VFW Post 2226.

Speaker: Greg K, Shore Surf Club President, Jersey Coast Anglers Association's Youth Education Chairman, and Member # 164 New Jersey Beach Buggy Association. We also have information for veterans about places to go and fun things to do such as; FREE Fishing & Hunting License for Service Connected Veterans, Discounts for Lakewood BlueClaws Games and Home Runs for Heroes, Car Shows for Veterans (Sponsored By VVA Chapter 12) 9/2015, Family Fishing Fluke Tournaments, Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament Beach Wheelchairs, New Jersey Disabled Access Locations New Jersey, DEP Fish & Wildlife/Parks Outdoor Events, Veteran Charter Boat and Kayak Trips, Chariot Rider Horses for Heroes, Run For The Warriors Events, Shark Fishing Tournament for Wounded Warriors, Honor & Courage "Wounded Warrior Run, Roll & Stroll 5K, NJ Veteran Golf Outings, Fishing Events for Veterans, FREE Hunter Education Programs, America's Disabled Veteran's Outings (NJBBA/Elks, VFW, & Others), Veteran Service Organizations that Sponsor Events, NJ Heroes On the Water and Project Healing Waters, Membership Opportunities for Fishing & Hunting Organizations Near You and NJ State Park Passes for Qualified Veterans.

**FREE WINTER FLOUNDER SEMINAR  
FOR VETERANS  
SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 2015  
10:00 A.M.**

*Refreshments*  
*Free Surf Rig*



*Door Prizes*  
*Win A Rod & Reel*

**VFW POST 2226  
212 Norwood Ave.  
Oakhurst, NJ**

*PLEASE REGISTER*

**PHONE GREG AT: 732-785-9278**

**Email: [gkucharews@jcaa.org](mailto:gkucharews@jcaa.org)**

*REFRESHMENTS WILL BE PROVIDED*

**LEARN**

- **How to set up a flounder rod/reel and maintain fishing equipment**
- **Flounder bait**
- **Rigs and chum**
- **Identify productive fishing areas**

**Recreational therapy has helped veterans cope with PTSD/TBI.  
The Best Fishing is just starting at the Jersey Shore**



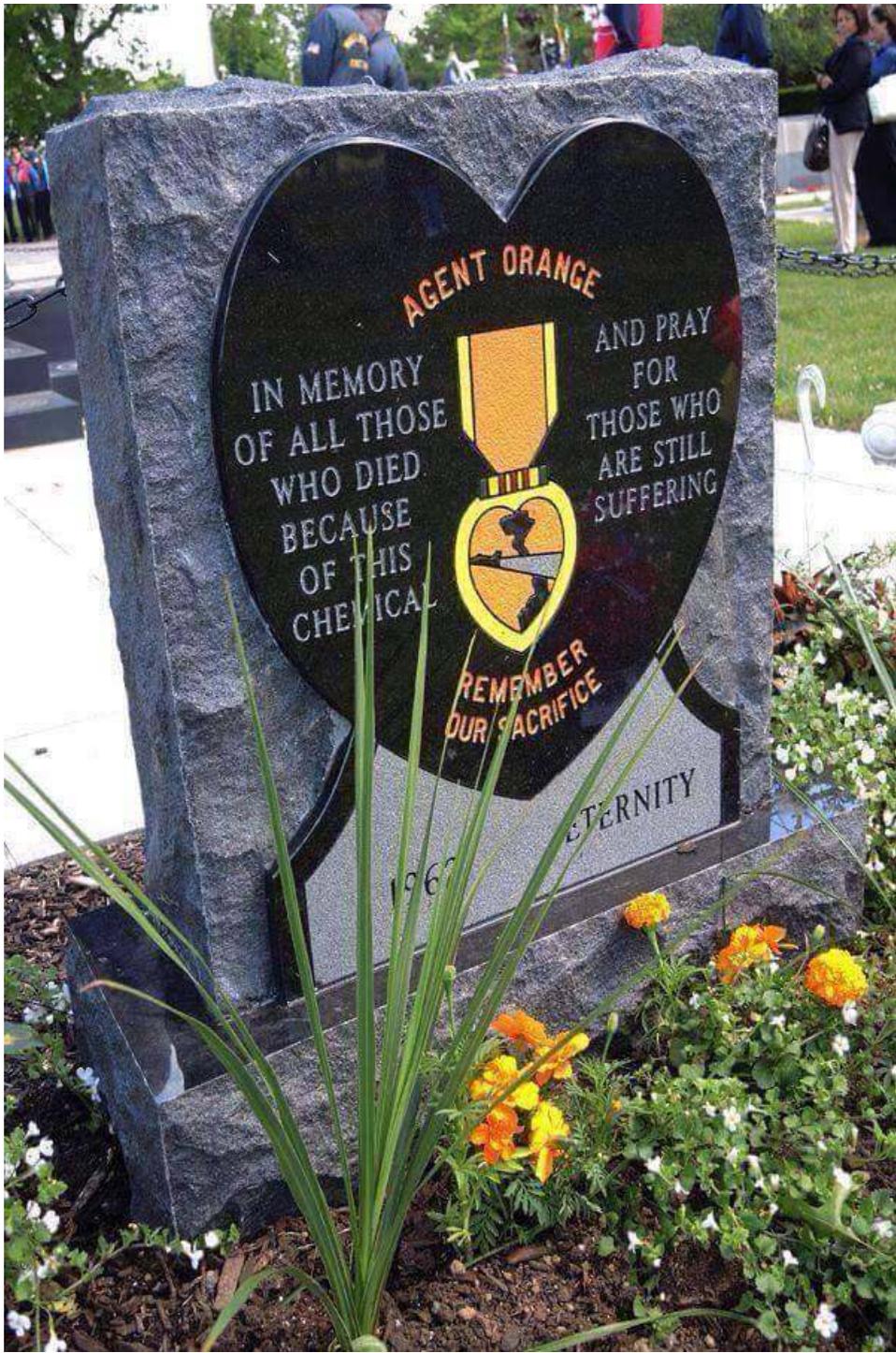
# **MAN POWER IS NEEDED FOR** **May 2, 2015 AT 10:00AM**

**WALL WASHING AND CLEAN UP OF ALL GROUNDS AROUND  
MEMORIAL AND WALKWAYS.  
PLEASE CONTACT:**

**TOM WOJO: [tomwojciechowicz@comcast.net](mailto:tomwojciechowicz@comcast.net) 201-970-0782**

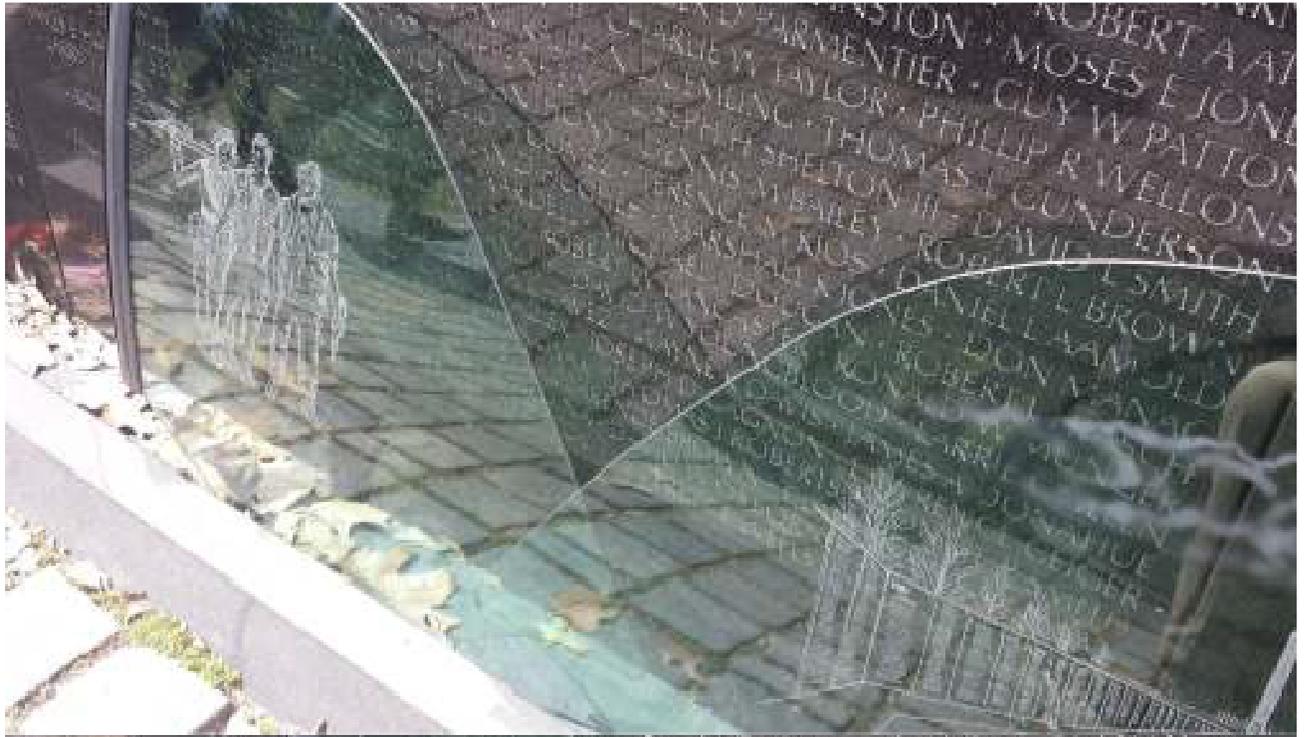
**JOHN AITKEN: [jwa437@comcast.net](mailto:jwa437@comcast.net) 732-757-1711**

**In brotherhood  
The Colonel**



**A daughter who recently lost her dad in Salina, Kansas posted this, a proud daughter of William Bonilla and husband of Liz Bonilla.**

On Saturday, 28-March 2015 these were left at The Wall. Volunteer Joe 'Radar' Leone was the only Volunteer working down at The Wall on this bitter cold day when a visitor brought them. The visitor related to Joe that he had purchased a used car - and these were the rear side windows. They are extremely detailed etchings into the glass - not decals. Someone spent a lot of time doing this work. The visitor said that he knew the windows belonged at The Wall - so he took them out of the car and brought them down. We're assuming he replaced them!



## A GREAT, GREAT VIDEO

You do not have to be a veteran to have goose bumps run down your body. Just watch this quick video and think back. The narrator would roll over in his grave if he knew what our present administration looks like. This is an incredibly great video. Humbles you right down to your toes. I will pass this to all I can as it is one of the best " America Tributes"!!\*

[\\*http://www.youtube.com/embed/rKsW6c\\_CgFY?feature=player\\_detailpage\\*](http://www.youtube.com/embed/rKsW6c_CgFY?feature=player_detailpage)

# A MOMENT OF GREAT PRIDE AT 4 SEASONS: THE RAISING OF A POW-MIA FLAG MARCH 19, 2015

By David Miller

As we residents came to the Clubhouse over the years to enjoy our various social activities, most of us barely noted the flags flying outside. The vivid colors of the Red White and Blue American flag always stood out, but there were two others. A New Jersey state flag and one from K Hovnanian.

About six months ago, Ernie Di'Orio attended one of the Community's Board of Trustees meetings. A Four Seasons resident, Armed Forces veteran and now Chairman of the Manalapan Township Veterans Advisory Committee, he mentioned to the Board his dismay that we were not flying a POW-MIA flag. The Board noted the presence of the builder's flag, and said that that flag had to fly, as long as the builder was formally present in the Community. The Board promised to remove the K Hov flag when the builder eventually departed in the coming Winter, and replace it with a POW-MIA flag. As soon after the builder's departure as could be arranged, the day arrived.

Thursday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, was a clear, sunny and cold. The wind was strong and the temperature was palpably low. Mayor Jack McNaboe, Deputy Mayor and Four Seasons resident, Mary Ann Musich and Board of Trustees were present, but this day was for the 50 or 60 veterans in attendance, proudly wearing their military colors and insignia. The cold didn't bother them. In fact, it seemed to invigorate them.

The group gathered at the flagpoles in front of the Clubhouse, Mayor McNaboe gave words of thanks for the service of the veterans, and the ceremonies began. The K Hov flag was lowered and, as it was about to hit the ground, several veterans rushed up to gather it in. There was no particular sentiment for the builder, but this group knows the respect that any retiring flag is entitled to.

Ernie Di'Orio offered sentiments about the occasion, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all, and a rendition of "Taps" sounded quietly in the background. Though barely discernable, it brought tears to the eyes of nearly all in attendance.

Ernie and his fellow committeemen, Donald Klieger and Tony Lordo, attached the new POW-MIA flag, and it started up. "Hand Salute" was shouted, fingertips touched eyebrows, and eyes watched as the new flag went up. "Recover" was shouted, salutes came down, but eyes continued to admire the new flag, flying in the strong and cold breeze. Proudly, the assemblage dispersed, to repeat the ceremony at the flagpoles near the main entrance, above the signage facing Route 33. Mission accomplished!



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## Presenting the Colors at a Devils' Game







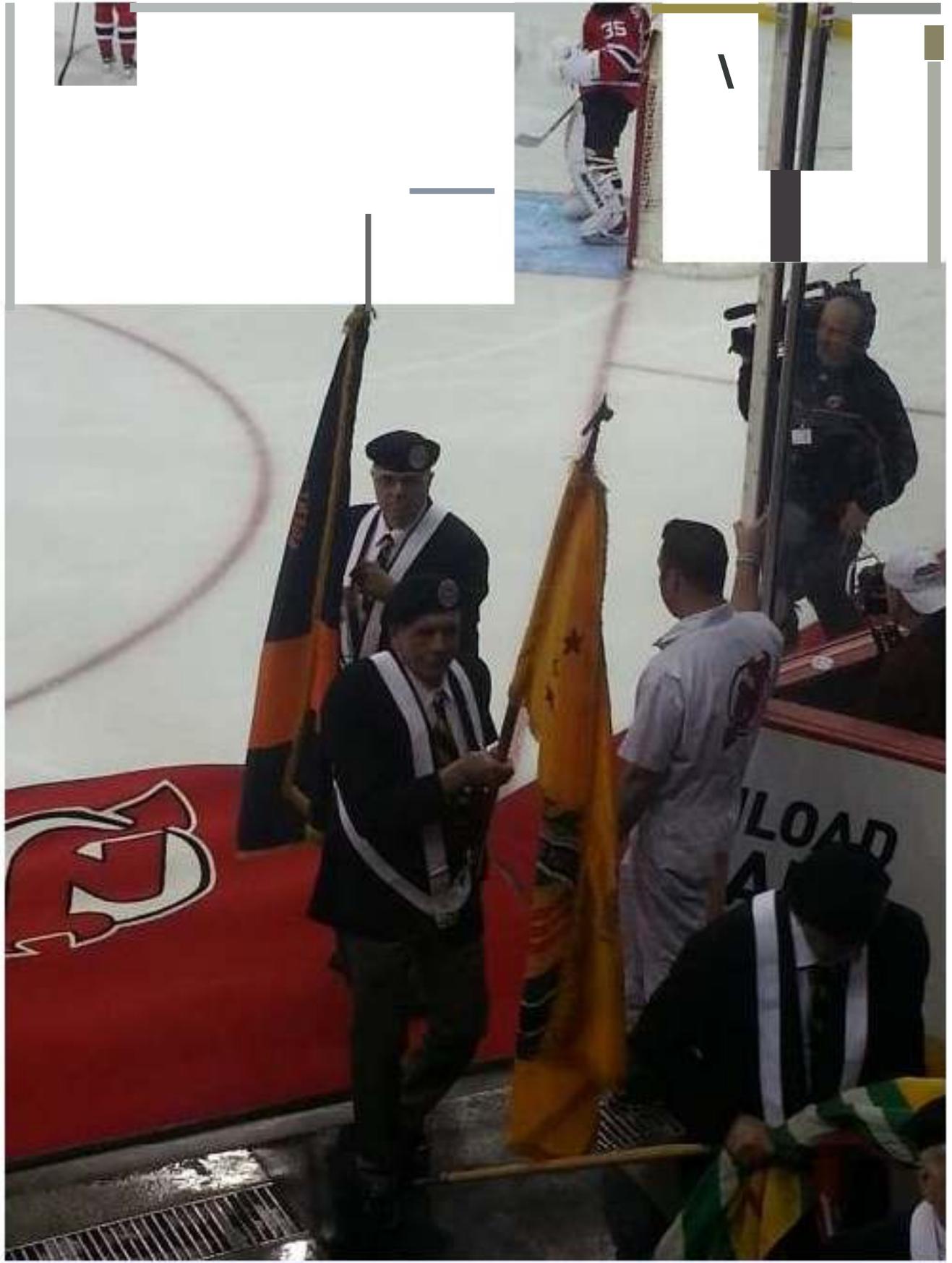






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March 30, 2015

## Vietnam Veterans of America Joins in Lawsuit Against VA Secretary for New Claims Policy That Violates Rights of Disabled Vets

(Washington, D.C.)-- "Vietnam Veterans of America has joined four other veterans service organizations as a co-plaintiff to The American Legion et. al. v. McDonald in an effort to stop the implementation of a new rule eliminating most informal VA claims and limiting the types of claims the VA will adjudicate," announced John Rowan, VVA National President. "Informal claims account for approximately half of all claims the VA receives," said Rowan. "The new rule, which went into effect March 25, eradicates the decades-old right of a veteran to write a letter to the VA, seeking a specific VA benefit and having the VA consider that letter as an informal claim. The new rule also prevents the VA from considering claims that are supported by the evidence in the VA record but have not been specifically claimed by the veteran."

The new rule changes, which require claims to be submitted on the VA's standardized forms, will impose barriers for all those without access to those forms, as well as those without the medical and legal knowledge needed to fill them out correctly. "While the VA has promoted this rule change as being more efficient and therefore favorable to the veteran, in fact, this rule change over-formalizes the veterans claims process, making it more adversarial than ever before. We will not stand by silently as our government places further obstacles in front of our injured and disabled veterans and their families, undermining our nation's pledge to care for those who have borne the battle and their families," said Rowan.

Prior to March 25, under the informal VA claims system, any benefits awarded would be paid back to the date that the VA had received a notice from the veteran, signaling his or her intent to file.

Under the new rule changes, however, the clock for an effective date for benefits starts only when a veteran files the standardized VA paperwork. The suit, which seeks to have the Department of Veterans Affairs' new rule declared unlawful by the courts, was filed in the U.S. Court of Appeals on March 20 and was entered into the court's docket on March 26. The other co-plaintiffs in the lawsuit are the American Legion, AMVETS, The Military Order of the Purple Heart, and the National Veterans Legal Services Program.

Vietnam Veterans of America ([www.vva.org](http://www.vva.org)) is the nation's only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated to the needs of Vietnam-era veterans and their families. VVA's founding principle is "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another.";

## VA Eliminates “Net Worth” for Healthcare Eligibility



The Department of Veterans Affairs announced March 17 that it is updating the way it determines eligibility for VA healthcare, a change that will result in more veterans having access to the healthcare benefits they've earned and deserve. Effective 2015, VA eliminated the use of net worth as a determining factor for both health care programs and copayment responsibilities. This change makes VA healthcare benefits more accessible to lower-income veterans and brings VA policies in line with Secretary Robert A. McDonald's *MyVA* initiative, which reorients VA around veterans' needs. Instead of combining the sum of veterans' income with their assets to determine eligibility for medical care and copayment obligations, VA will now only consider a veteran's gross household income and deductible expenses from the previous year. Elimination of the consideration of net worth for VA healthcare enrollment means that certain lower income, non-service-connected veterans will have less out-of-pocket costs. Over a 5-year period, it is estimated that 190,000 veterans will become eligible for a reduction in costs for their healthcare services.

Veterans may submit updated income information at [www.1010ez.med.va.gov/](http://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/) or by visiting their nearby VA healthcare facility.

For more information, visit [www.va.gov/healthbenefits](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits) or call VA toll-free at 1-877-222-VETS (8387).



## **Bipartisan Group of Senators Urge Improvements to Veterans Choice Program**

Vietnam Veterans of America  
February 27, 2015

The Veterans Choice Card program was established by Congress last year in response to the nationwide crisis of veterans' access to care, but has yet to be implemented as Congress envisioned. The program allows veterans who live more than 40 miles from the closest VA facility, or who face a significant delay in scheduling an appointment, to access non-VA care.

"The VA is construing the eligibility criteria as it relates to the 40-mile rule so narrowly that it is excluding too many who are far away from the care that they need," wrote the senators. In addition, the Veterans Administration has said that it plans to propose reallocating funds for the Veterans Choice Program to other VA accounts.

Senators Ben Cardin (D-MD), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Susan Collins (R-Maine), Jerry Moran (R-Kans.), John McCain (R-Ariz.), Angus King (I-Maine), Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), Ed Markey (D-Mass.), Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), David Vitter (R-La.), Joe Manchin (D-WV), Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), Mark Warner (D-Va.), Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), Pat Roberts (R-Kan.), Tim Kaine (D-Va.), John Barrasso (R-Wy.), Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND), Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), Thom Tillis (R-NC), Pat Toomey (R-Pa.), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Steve Daines (R-Mont.), Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), Richard Burr (R-NC), Lamar Alexander (R-TN), John Thune (R-SD), Tom Cotton (R-Ark.), John Hoeven (R-ND), Ted Cruz (R-Texas), Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), Ron Kirk (R-Ill.), Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), Tim Scott (R-SC), and Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii) signed on to the letter below this week urging VA Secretary McDonald to make certain that funding provided by Congress is being used to implement the Veterans Choice Program to the fullest extent possible.

810 Vermont Avenue  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald:

Since November 1, 2014, the Choice Card, as provided under the recently enacted Veterans Choice, Access, and Accountability Act of 2014, has been distributed to approximately 8.5 million Veterans nationwide, yet less than one percent of recipients -- 0.37 percent -- have been authorized to access non-VA care through this program. With this in mind, we write to convey serious concerns regarding your implementation of the Choice Card Program with respect to funding for the program in connection with the Fiscal Year 2016 Presidential Budget Request and your interpretation of the 40-mile rule as provided under the Act. We ask you to address both of these concerns immediately.

First, we were dismayed to learn from the President's Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Request that the Department of Veterans Affairs intends to submit a legislative proposal that would reallocate part of the funding for the Veterans Choice Program to other programs within the VA. It is deeply disturbing that the Administration would try to reduce funding for this program before this program has even been allowed to work -- being in existence for only a few short months -- and as barriers to care continue to exist. Instead, the Department should make certain that funding provided by Congress is being used to implement the Veterans Choice Program to the fullest extent possible.

Second, the VA is construing the eligibility criteria as it relates to the 40-mile rule so narrowly that it is excluding too many who are far away from the care that they need. As you know, the Choice Program provides Veterans with the option to receive non-VA health care rather than waiting for a VA appointment if there is a significant delay in scheduling an

appointment or a Veteran has to travel more than 40 miles to receive VA care. While many Veterans are satisfied with care provided through the VA Health Care System, trips to VA medical centers can be difficult for rural Veterans, especially those who are elderly or ill. Because long drive times are a hardship for these individuals and can present a significant barrier to accessing care, many Veterans anticipated using their Choice Cards when Congress established the Choice Program last year.

The VA's definition of the eligibility criteria is too narrow in two important respects. First, the VA does not consider the type of care available within 40 miles of where a Veteran lives. In many areas across the nation, the effect is that those who need services only available at a VA medical center, but who live near a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic, are prevented from using the Choice Card to access specialty care in their local community. While the Clinic may be within 40 miles, the VA hospital offering the required care is often more than 40 miles and hours of travel time away.

Second, the VA measures the 40 miles "as the crow flies" and not the actual distance that the Veteran would have to travel. Congress' intent was to establish a pilot program that would allow Veterans to access non-VA care when they face an obstacle to care, whether it be an unacceptable distance to care or wait time for care. Given the clear intent of Congress to reduce barriers to care, it is perplexing that the VA is not using its authority to allow non-VA care for those who face a geographic challenge in accessing care, including long drive times or health conditions that make travel difficult. The impact of such an interpretation is to exclude from the program many of the Veterans for whom Congress aimed to make health care more accessible. For Veterans in remote and rural areas with limited transportation access, this could mean the difference between 30 minutes and half a day of travel.

As Secretary, you already have the authority to modify the way that the distance criteria is calculated so that the Choice Program is implemented as Congress intended, and we urge you to rectify the overly narrow definition without delay. Additionally, we urge you to stop any attempt to propose a reallocation of funds designed to kill the Choice Card program in its infancy.

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## VA Works to Expand Choice Program Eligibility

Eligibility criteria for 40 miles calculation would change to driving distance

Washington -- In order to expand eligibility for the Veterans Choice Program, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced that it will change the calculation used to determine the distance between a Veteran's residence and the nearest VA medical facility from a straight line distance to driving distance. The policy change will be made through regulatory action in the coming weeks. The Veterans Choice Program was authorized by the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACAA).

"VA has worked very quickly to implement the Veterans Choice Program and we appreciate the constructive feedback shared by Veterans and our partners to help us improve service to Veterans," said Secretary Robert McDonald. "We've determined that changing the distance calculation will help ensure more Veterans have access to care when and where they want it. VA looks forward to the ongoing support of our partners as we continue to make improvements to this new program."

The method of determining driving distance will be through distance as calculated by using a commercial product. The change is expected to roughly double the number of eligible Veterans.

The Veterans Choice Program is a new, temporary benefit that allows eligible Veterans to receive health care in their communities rather than waiting for a VA appointment or traveling to a VA facility. Veterans seeking to use the Veterans Choice Program should call 1-866-606-8198 to confirm their eligibility and to schedule an appointment. Since the Choice Program went into effect on November 5, 2014, more than 45,000 medical appointments have been scheduled.

Using expanded authorities from VACAA, VA continues to expand access to care through increased staffing and enhanced collaboration with both the Indian Health Service and Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems. See the VACAA progress factsheet here:

VA is enhancing its health care system and improving service delivery to better serve Veterans and set the course for long-term excellence and reform. VA has made significant progress in various areas of the legislation, such as extending the Assisted Living/Traumatic Brain Injury Pilot program and Project Arch, to expand timely access to high-quality health care for Veterans.

For more details about the department's progress and related information, see [www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/factsheets\\_and\\_details.asp](http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/factsheets_and_details.asp) and [www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/documents/FactSheets/Progress-Report-March-2015-Fact-Sheet.pdf](http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/documents/FactSheets/Progress-Report-March-2015-Fact-Sheet.pdf).

# Chuckles

## CAN YOU SOLVE ALL THREE WITHOUT PEEKING AT THE ANSWERS?

### Mystery one

A man was found murdered Sunday morning. His wife immediately called the police. The police questioned the wife and staff and got these answers:

The wife said she was sleeping.  
The cook was preparing breakfast.  
The gardener was gathering vegetables.  
The maid was getting the mail.  
The butler was polishing shoes in the pantry.

The police instantly arrested the murderer. Who did it and how did they know?

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### Mystery two

A man walks into his bathroom and shoots himself right between the eyes using a real gun with real bullets. He was wearing a cape.

How did he do this?

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### Mystery three

Poor Mr. Teddy was found dead in his study by Mr. Fiend. Mr. Fiend recounted his dismal discovery to the police:

"I was walking by Mr. Teddy's house when I thought I would just pop in for a visit. I noticed his study light was on. There was frost on the window, so I had to wipe it away to see inside. That is when I saw his body. So I kicked in the door. I called the police immediately afterwards."

The officer immediately arrested Mr. Fiend for the murder of Mr. Teddy.

How did he know Mr. Fiend was lying?

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Try to figure these questions before looking at the answers below.

## **ANSWERS:**

1. It was the Maid. She said she was getting the mail but there is no mail delivery on Sunday.
2. He shot his reflection in the bathroom mirror.
3. Frost forms inside of the window, not the outside. So Mr. Fiend could not have wiped it off to discover Mr. Teddy.

Did you get them right? Be honest! Thinking is sooo very good.

# EXERCISE FOR PEOPLE OVER 50

Begin by standing on a comfortable surface, where you have plenty of room at each side.

With a 5 lb. potato bag in each hand, extend your arms straight out from your sides and hold them there as long as you can. Try to reach a full minute, and then relax.

Each day you'll find that you can hold this position for just a bit longer.

After a few weeks, move up to 10 lb. potato bags.

Then try 50 lb potato bags and eventually try to get to where you can lift a 100 lb potato bag in each hand and hold your arms straight for more than a full minute. **(I'm at this level).**

After you feel confident at that level, put a potato in each bag.

They dressed the truck up with the guy tied down on the roof.  
The driver and passengers put on Moose heads.  
Then they went down the Interstate.  
Yes - they went to jail...  
Yes - alcohol was involved...



**Men cannot be left**

## TAPS

### Shore Area Vietnam Vets Called Home By The Lord

Allen, Robert Joseph, Toms River, USAF

Anderson, Thomas G, 68, Toms River, Navy

Bellarosa, Raymond, 72, Bayville, Navy

Clifford, Jeremiah, 68, Middletown, USMC

Crooker, Arthur J., 65, Toms River, Army

Karczewski, Stephen, 70, Forked River, Army

Klemanski, Joseph, 72, Middletown, USAF

Knox, Louis, 67, Normandy Beach, USCG

Murphy, Edward F., 73, Toms River, USMC

Richardson, Paul Lawrence, 68, Brielle, Army

Roe, Bobby, 70, Berkley, Army

**REST IN PEACE BROTHERS**