



# The Sentinel

Vol. 3 No. 78

Vietnam Veterans of America – Chapter 1002 – Wallkill Valley  
P.O. box 463, Vernon, NJ 07462 - 973-271-2413

May 2016

Website: [www.VVA1002.org](http://www.VVA1002.org)

President: John Harrigan

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President: John Brady

Secretary: Carl Ohlson

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President: Walt Hazelman

Chaplin: George Burns

Treasurer: Owen Martin

Sergeant at Arms: Ted Andrews

## FROM THE MINEFIELD:

*Submitted by John Harrigan*

I will start this months column by reporting the Passing of another Chapter member Kenny Fuchs. Kenny passed away on May 5th and was buried in the Veterans Cemetery in Sparta. This was a shock to all who knew him and he will be sorely missed by all of the members. Remember to keep his Wife Rosemary in your prayers.

We have chosen the winners of our Scholarship contest and they will be attending the June meeting to receive their Checks. As has been reported before we were able to give out 4 one thousand dollar scholarship's. A thank you goes out to Jack and Sharon Ratzler for all the hard work they have done by obtaining the funds doing can shakes, and to everyone who has helped by showing up to these events. Thank you to Rich and Cindy Predmore who organized the committee to read the essays and come up with the final group and to the members who read them to determine who the winners were. Without your efforts we could not have accomplished this.

I met with Jennifer Myers from the VA Regional Office in Newark and they will be holding a Claims Clinic and town Hall Meeting at the Francis M. Glynn American Legion Post 132 in Franklin on Friday June 3rd from 11am till 4pm. There will also be a Town Hall Meeting from Noon till 2pm to answer all your questions on VA Benefits and entitlements. Any Veteran or dependent who has any question about their claim or wants to file for benefits should attend. They will check the status of pending claims and report on the progress. This is a great opportunity to get information about VA benefits, submit a claim or receive information about the status of your pending claim. If there is enough interest there will be more clinics to follow.

I received a letter from Congressman Frelinghuysen on the VA Clinic in Sussex County and they have located a building in the Newton Area and are in the process of negotiating and signing a licensing agreement. Funding has been secured and Staff recruitment is underway. When the licensing agreement is secured they plan to open in July or August of this year. So as it stands now we will have a VA clinic here in Sussex County.

The Casino Night was a great success for the Cemetery and we had about 120 people show up. A thank you goes out to our Chapter members who helped work the event. The next is the Sussex Tec Fashion Show on Thursday May 28th, after that is the Chapter can shake at Mac & Lindys in Vernon on Saturday May 28th followed by the Memorial Day Parade in Vernon on Monday May 30th. We will meet at the Vernon VFW at 9am and we will take a bus to the start of the Parade. This one is not too bad for walking and we will also have a vehicle for some who can't walk.

That's it for now and thank you to everyone who keeps supporting our Chapter

John

## 1<sup>st</sup> VICE PRESIDENT:

*Submitted by John Brady*

This month is one of ups and downs. Unfortunately, Ken Fuchs passed away on May 5 during our Thursday Vets Helping Vets meeting. Ken was buried at the NNJVMC which he helped to establish on Tuesday, May 10.

On a more upbeat subject, a number of chapter members took part in a roundtable discussion with the upper class students at Sussex Vo-Tech. This was my first time attending this since I was unable to attend last years

*Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another!*

discussion. Anyone who says that today's youth have no interest or respect should come and talk to the students at Vo-Tech.

On May 19 there will be a Salute to Veterans concert at Vernon Township High School at 7 P.M. (19:00).

Tuesday May 24 we will be assisting the Sussex Vo-Tech students to place the flags on the front lawn of the auditorium in preparation of the Fashion Show which will be held on Thursday May 26.

Let's not forget our annual canshake at Mac & Lindy's Liquor store on Saturday May 28 during Memorial Day weekend.

We will also be marching in the Vernon Memorial Day Parade, the day and time has yet to be determined.

Last but not least let's remember our fallen brother and sisters on Memorial Day, Monday May 30. This will be a difficult one since Ken always participated in our canshakes and recently with the addition of the wagon and tractor which we had at the 4th of July and St. Patrick's Day Parades was able to "march" along with his fellow chapter members.

Rest In Peace, Ken.

## **SERVICE OFFICER:**

*Submitted by Skip Kays*

No report.

## **WOMEN VETERANS:**

*Submitted by Walt Hazelman*

### **Women Say They Don't Feel 'Respected And Valued' As Veterans In New Survey**



WASHINGTON — Women are still struggling to gain respect for their military service and be taken seriously as veterans, according to a new survey released Monday by The Mission Continues.

Only 37 percent of the respondents said they feel "recognized, respected and valued as veterans in civilian

life." Female veterans are more likely to struggle with unemployment and homelessness than their male peers.

The Mission Continues is a nonprofit that helps military veterans find opportunities when they return to civilian life. The group surveyed its past fellows, resulting in a snapshot representing the experiences of 71 female veterans.

Women today make up 16 percent of the post-9/11 veteran population, the highest in history. They are younger, more diverse, less likely to be married and more likely to have experienced sexual harassment during their service than their male peers. They are also more likely to have faced combat than women in previous eras.

Despite these challenges, women still face perceptions after they leave the military that they're somehow not equal to the men they served with. They are often mistaken as a military spouse and encounter programs that are geared toward male veterans.

"Being a woman hugely affects my identify as a veteran," one respondent said. "It's a regular thing to be told I'm too pretty to have served in the military, let alone at war. I've been told I couldn't possibly have any issues relating to war since I was a female and couldn't possibly have experienced anything but rainbows and sunshine while deployed. I've been called a liar."

Eighty-two percent of post-9/11 female veterans said their readjustment to civilian life was difficult, and 44 percent of respondents said it was somewhat or very difficult.

A new government report that also came out Monday finds that female veterans commit suicide at nearly six times the rate of other women, with the rate highest among young veterans.

"It's staggering," Dr. Matthew Miller, a suicide expert at Northeastern University, told the Los Angeles Times. "We have to come to grips with why the rates are so obscenely high."

The system has been slow to catch up. According to The Mission Continues, formal support groups for women in the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs are more often geared toward the spouses of male veterans than for women who actually served and may want to connect on issues like sexual harassment and military sexual trauma. And while the number of women seeking medical treatment at the VA has more than doubled since 2000,

The Associated Press found that in 2014, 1 in 4 VA hospitals didn't even have a full-time gynecologist on staff.

"I feel ignored, dismissed, disenfranchised everywhere," said another respondent to The Mission Continues survey. "There is no child care in any VA facilities, everywhere I look it's all about male vets. Even the junk mail about VA loans comes addressed to my



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husband who is a civilian. But I am proud to be a vet, I wear my colors proudly.”

## **POW/MIA:**

*Submitted by Bob Gilbert*

### **USS Oklahoma Sailor From World War II Accounted For**

**(Hayden)** May 11, 2016 — The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that the remains of a U.S. serviceman from World War II have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. Navy Chief Petty Officer Albert E. Hayden, 44, of Mechanicsville, Maryland, will be buried May 18 in Morganza, Maryland.

### **Soldier Missing From Korean War Accounted For**

**(Williams)** May 10, 2016 — The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing from the Korean War, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. Army Sgt. Billy J. Williams, 20, of Madisonville, Texas, will be buried May 17 in Madison County, Texas.

## **AGENT ORANGE:**

*Submitted by Owen Martin*

No report.

## **COMMUNITY/PUBLIC AFFAIRS:**

*Submitted by Lou Storms*

Our May Dinner Service/Social at the VA Lyons, was again very successful. Myself, Bob Lewis, Carl Ohlson, Norm Seider and Steve Maksymiuk joined the vets in the Inpatient PTSD Unit for dinner and conversation on May 10th. We brought the handmade wheelchair/walker totes made and donated by Rosemary Fuchs and the ladies of the American Sewing Guild, along with board games and

painting sets donated by Narrowsburg, NY resident Charlie Becker.

I would like to thank Bob, Carl, Norm and Steve for always finding a way to make themselves available for our Lyons trips. Our next trip will be on July 12th. I will be unable to attend the May 29th meeting, so anyone wanting to join us, please email me at [stormy2@optonline.net](mailto:stormy2@optonline.net) or call 973-728-3859.

## **Scheduled Meetings:**

Meetings are held at 2:00 p.m. the 4th Sunday of each month unless otherwise **noted**.

### **2016**

22<sup>nd</sup> May

26<sup>th</sup> June

24<sup>th</sup> July

28<sup>th</sup> August (subject to change for picnic)

25<sup>th</sup> September

23<sup>rd</sup> October

27<sup>th</sup> November

3<sup>rd</sup> December (Saturday – subject to change)

## **Calendar of Events:**

May 26<sup>th</sup> – Sussex Tech Fashion show to benefit the Cemetery

May 28<sup>th</sup> – can shake at Mac & Lindys, Vernon

May 30<sup>th</sup> - Memorial Day Parade, Vernon – meet at the VFW at 9:00 am.

June 11<sup>th</sup> – Can Shake, ShopRite, Franklin

June 25<sup>th</sup> – Can Shake, Acme, Vernon

July 2<sup>nd</sup> – Can Shake, ShopRite, Newton

July 4<sup>th</sup> – Sparta Parade – time not yet available

July 23<sup>rd</sup> – Can Shake, Walmart, Newton

July 30<sup>th</sup> – Can Shake, ShopRite, Warwick

Aug. 13<sup>th</sup> – Can Shake, Walmart, Franklin

Aug. 27<sup>th</sup> – Can Shake, Acme, Sussex

Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> – Can Shake, Walmart, Franklin

Oct. 1<sup>st</sup> – Can Shake, ShopRite, Warwick

Oct. 8<sup>th</sup> – Can Shake, ShopRite, Newton

Visit [www.VVA1002.org](http://www.VVA1002.org) for information on upcoming events.

## **NEW MEMBERS:**

### **“WELCOME HOME”**

Chet Basher

Bruce Blair

## **PASSINGS:**

Kenneth Fuchs

## **CONGRATULATIONS/CONCERNS:**

### Happy Birthday:

Linda Skellenger – May 4<sup>th</sup>

Bob Caggiano – May 8<sup>th</sup>

Don Johnson – May 8<sup>th</sup>

Dave Lambert – May 15<sup>th</sup>

Kathy Brady – May 21<sup>st</sup>

Bea Harrigan – June 14<sup>th</sup>

Rosemary Johnson – June 21<sup>st</sup>

Kathy Schultz – June 30<sup>th</sup>

### Happy Anniversary:

Kathy & John Brady (45 years!) – May 29<sup>th</sup>

Jo & Larry McDermott – June 10<sup>th</sup>

Don & Rosemary Johnson – June 13<sup>th</sup>

## **MEMBERS CORNER:**

1. **\*\*\*\*\* Mark your calendars \*NOW\* and be sure to attend this event! \*\*\*\***

*Submitted by Walt Hazelman*

Friday, June 3rd, 2016 11 AM - 4 PM at Franklin

American Legion Post 132

1 Legion Road

Franklin N.J. 07416

The Department of Veterans Affairs recently contacted the Vietnam Veterans of America Vernon Chapter 1002 to host a \*VA Veterans Affairs Town Hall and Claims Clinic\* day for Sussex County. Franklin American Legion Post 132 was chosen for the location of this event. This is a onetime special day, open to ALL VETERANS, SERVICE MEMBERS and dependents. VA officials will be here with their computers to answer questions as well as to assist with existing claims or to file new claims. They will have instant on-line access to

VA \*national\* databases, and can look up your records and/or file claims for you immediately.

This is a BIG DEAL for veterans in northwest New Jersey, as we do not often have VA representatives from the Newark Regional Office here for a "one on one" conversation with veterans and/or their dependents. The VA is reaching out to help you, here and now!

This is what you should bring to this event:

- Your \*DD214\*, or if you are filing as a dependent, the veteran's DD214.
- Bring any and all of your medical claim records as well as other military records to support your claim.

Please save this newsletter (see page 8 for information). We need \*YOU\* to come to this event to show VA officials how many veterans in our area need help. If we get a good showing at this event, it will help support efforts to have a local Community Based VA Clinic. Spread the word. This is for \*ALL VETERANS\*, spouses and dependents regardless of when or where they served.

## **2. MILITARY UPDATE**

*Submitted by Owen Martin*

### Senators want caregiver benefits phased in for older veterans

By Tom Philpott

Special to Stars and Stripes

Published: May 5, 2016



Shundra Johnson holds a wheelchair for her husband Coast Guard Lt. Sancho Johnson as he gets into a car while traveling to the Navy's wounded warrior training camp for the 2015 DoD Warrior Games, May 29, 2015. Shundra is also her husband's caregiver.

A showpiece of the Veterans First package that the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee unveiled last week is a multibillion-dollar initiative to phase in for older generations of severely injured veterans robust caregiver benefits first enacted in 2010 only for the post-9/11 generation.



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Though it's only part of a huge omnibus bill containing many veteran reform measures that senators previously introduced as separate bills, the plan to expand caregiver benefit coverage carries the biggest price tag. The early estimate is \$3.1 billion over its first five years.

For in-home caregivers of thousands of vets with severe physical or mental injuries, it would mean cash stipends for their time and effort, health insurance if caregivers have none, guaranteed periods of paid respite to avoid caregiver burnout and training to enhance patient safety.

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., prime architect of the caregiver expansion plan, negotiated with Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., the committee chairman, to secure a modified plan that could be funded with budget offsets and gain bipartisan support on the committee. That should improve its chances of becoming law despite still formidable obstacles ahead.

## ADVERTISING

Perhaps the biggest is lingering disappointment over how the current caregiver program operates. Though it is delivering benefits to spouses and parents caring for 31,000 severely disabled veterans of the post-9/11 era, the program remains underfunded, understaffed and lacking modern software to screen applications, track care needs or verify levels of caregiver support and program managers' responsiveness.

The Government Accountability Office found many problems, including too few Caregiver Support Coordinators who run the program locally. The program remains so "badly mismanaged" as to leave the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, chaired by Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., doubtful that the Department of Veterans Affairs can handle a vast expansion of eligibility, a committee staff member said.

"While the intent of the Senate bill is admirable," the staffer said, "we have an obligation not to expand existing programs without first ensuring they function correctly."

But Isakson agreed with Murray that, rather than allow weaknesses in the current program to block expansion to older veterans, they should phase in eligibility for older generations on a schedule that gives

VA time to fix problems while it incentivizes Congress to provide needed funding.

VA promises to have a modern IT system in place for the program by December this year. The Senate package would require the VA secretary within a year to certify that problems GAO identified have been fixed. Then within another year VA would begin to accept benefit applications from caregivers of veterans who served during the Vietnam War or earlier. Two years later, VA would start to accept applications from caregivers of severely injured veterans who served in the period between Vietnam and 9/11.

The pool of pre-9/11-era caregivers likely to be eligible for benefits if the program is expanded could be as high as 80,000, VA reported last year.

With up to 400 new caregivers of post-9/11 veterans qualifying for benefits every month, program costs are climbing steadily, from \$453 million in 2015 to \$650 million this year; \$725 million is sought for next year.

There are problems with the program, but the VA alone isn't to blame, said Adrian Atizado, deputy legislative director for Disabled American Veterans, whose national service officers field caregiver complaints. Congress underfunded it. Meanwhile, DAV and other advocates were slow to sound alarms over the underfunding, poor staffing and the sketchy information about the program that VA has given caregiver applicants and injured vets.

"I totally disagree with the House's interpretation that it should not be expanded because of how the program is running now," said Atizado. "I do share their concern about completely opening it up immediately." But the Isakson-Murray phased expansion, he said, is a "reasonable compromise."

In a statement, Miller said the omnibus deal reached by the Senate committee is a positive development. If it clears the Senate, "I look forward to immediately engaging in conference committee negotiations in order to move a VA reform package to the president's desk," Miller said.

Rather than compile one massive piece of legislation as the Senate committee opted to do, the House

committee shepherded 21 separate bills on veterans' issues through the House, which now await Senate action.

Besides differences in approaches, there are differences in priorities. The House committee said the most pressing VA need is tougher accountability rules so executives who put their own interests ahead of veterans can swiftly be reprimanded or fired. Miller and staff view their House-passed accountability bill, HR 1994, as much stronger than provisions embraced by Isakson and Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, the committee's ranking Democrat, at their Veterans First press conference.

Though the House sought no expansion to the caregiver program, staff noted that all of its House-passed veteran bills are fully paid for with spending offsets verified by the Congressional Budget Office.

Isakson said he and colleagues also found offsets to pay for the Veterans First package, estimated to cost \$4 billion over 10 years, without cutting prized veteran benefits. The offsets no longer embrace a controversial idea to cut by half the monthly housing stipend for family members who use transferred post-9/11 GI Bill benefits.

Instead Isakson would cap total VA employee bonuses paid annually, mandate higher VA home loan funding fees, and "harmonize" the GI Bill housing stipend lower to reflect a total 5 percent dampening of Basic Allowance for Housing rates over five years being imposed on active-duty force members.

Murray said she doesn't know if Miller and his House colleagues will support the caregiver expansion when they conference on veteran issues.

"I do know that this program is about putting veterans' needs first and supporting the men and women who put their own lives on hold to take care of veterans," Murray said. "Taking care of our veterans should never be a partisan issue."

*Send comments to Military Update, P.O. Box 231111, Centreville, VA, 20120*

Related



- [Senators unveil Veterans First Act](#)

Senators took fresh steps this week in the slow effort to reform the beleaguered Veterans Affairs Department and hold it more accountable just as news broke of a new scandal — cockroaches in food at a VA hospital in Chicago.



- [Summit highlights difficulties of veterans' caregivers](#)

Torrey Shannon provides round-the-clock care for her husband, retired Staff Sgt. Dan Shannon, who survived a gunshot wound to the head in Iraq. He needs to live in a remote area because severe post-traumatic stress disorder and brain injury has left him overwhelmed by cities. Despite this, she said she has struggled to get the support she needs as a veteran's caregiver.

- [As veterans come home, a new generation of caregivers](#)

American troops were serving in both Iraq and Afghanistan five years ago when President Barack Obama signed the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act, a comprehensive piece of legislation acknowledging the critical role of caregivers for seriously injured post-9/11 veterans.

## MISCELLANEOUS:

1. **Special Note: If you are a veteran in emotional crisis and need help RIGHT NOW, call (toll free 24/7) 1-800-273-8255 and tell them you are a veteran. All calls are confidential.**
2. Jackets (\$60 (summer) & \$70 (winter)); t-shirts (\$15); hats (\$10); golf shirts (short sleeve \$28; long sleeve \$33) are still available. See Owen Martin for purchases or to place an order (pre-payment for orders are appreciated).
3. Important note to families of deceased veterans, and/or requestors:

*Submitted by Bob Caggiano*

It is the right of every deceased Veteran to have a Military honors team attend the graveside service, to present the Flag at no charge to the family. Honors Teams are sent out, at the expense of the US Government.

In January 2000, Congress passed legislation guaranteeing Veterans the right to at least two uniformed servicemen, a flag ceremony, and the playing of TAPS at their funeral. Unfortunately, there are not enough buglers to play TAPS, so the historic melody has been played on a CD player at many Veterans' last ceremony, or more currently on a bugle that plays Taps using an electronic insert. The volunteer organization "Bugles Across America" (a.k.a. BAA) was created to honor the service of veterans by providing Taps live by a



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bugler using a real instrument (such as a bugle, trumpet, cornet, or flugelhorn) at funerals or any other ceremony requiring a bugler. There are currently over 7500 volunteer buglers nationwide in all 50 states, and some overseas who stand ready to serve. BAA volunteers perform Taps as a free service.

2012 marks the 150th anniversary of Taps, with special services being held throughout the country including a special playing of Taps by hundreds of buglers at Arlington National Cemetery.

As a Vietnam era veteran member of VVA Chapter 1002 and a BAA volunteer bugler, I am available to play for anyone who needs a bugler for Taps (or other appropriate bugle calls) for any honorable discharged veteran or related military ceremony. In the event I cannot play because of a scheduling conflict, I can generally still provide a substitute bugler so please contact me - Bob Caggiano, USAF Veteran, (973) 222-7591 (cell) or FinalTaps@gmail.com.



5023. Also, call him if you notice that the bins are full and he will contact the vendor.

## Editors Corner:

By Linda Skellenger (AVVA)

Please have information to be included in the June newsletter to me by Sunday, June 19<sup>th</sup> (email skelle@ptd.net) or by snail-mail to:

Linda Skellenger  
174 Lewisburg Rd.  
Sussex, NJ 07461

## FUN ACTIVITIES:

No report.

## Chapter Fundraisers:

### Clothing Bins (on-going):

Clothing Bins locations are: Montaque Township Recycling Center, Vernon Township Recycling Center and the Nautilus Gym at the corner of State Hwy 206 and Halsey Road (2 miles North of Newton, behind Fairclough Fuel). They accept used clothing, shoes and stuffed toys. If you know of a location as to where additional bins can be placed, a place where they can be accessed easily, let Ted Andrews know, cell 973 570



The  
**Department of Veterans Affairs  
Town Hall Meeting &  
Claims Clinic**

for  
**Veterans, Service-members and Dependents**

*“Enhancing the Veteran  
Experience”*

Hosted by  
*Vietnam Veterans of America  
&  
Michael Blazis  
Director, Newark Regional Office*

**WHERE:** Francis M. Glynn  
**American Legion Post 132**  
1 Legion Road  
Franklin NJ 07416

**WHEN:** *Friday, June 3, 2016/11AM – 4PM*

*\*Claims Clinic 11AM – 4PM/\*\*Town Hall Meeting Noon – 2PM*

**Who should come?** Veteran, Service-members and dependents of who are interested and eligible to receive VA benefits and entitlements

**\*\*This is a great opportunity to get information about VA benefits and entitlements, submit a claim for benefits or receive information about the status of your pending VA claim\*\***

This event is open to the public

For more information contact Jennifer Myers at 973-297-3384

**Attachments**

- Vet Affairs Town Hall and Claims\_0001.jpg