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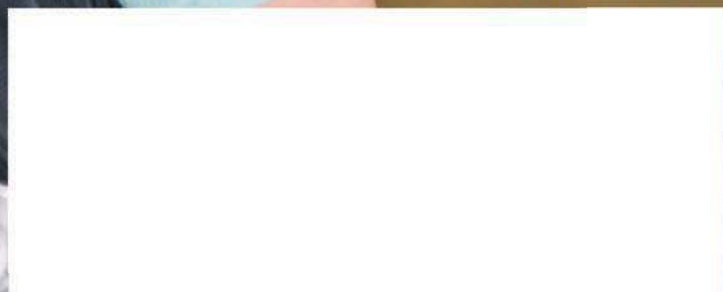
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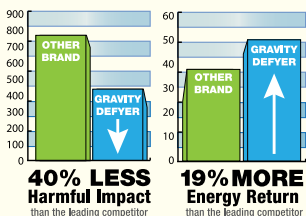
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100th contents

August 2013 • Vol. 175, No. 2

20 The Unstoppable Abrams

Defense cuts threaten to close America's last tank plant, but local support and allies in Congress keep it alive. *By Douglas Wissing*

28 All the War's a Stage

The Army's Command Military Touring Shows brought entertainment to Vietnam's front lines. *By Matt Grills*

COVER STORY

36 The Legion on Campus

Student veterans around the country are starting posts at their colleges. *By Andy Romey*

ON THE COVER North Dakota State University Post 400 member Megan Tiegs adorns her backpack with a cluster of veteran-themed pins. *Photo by Amy C. Elliott*

5 *Vet Voice*

8 *Commander's Message*

10 *I Am The American Legion*

12 *Big Issues*

14 *Living Well*

18 *Veterans Update*

52 *Rapid Fire*

64 *Comrades*

68 *Parting Shots*

44 A Friendship Rekindled

The United States and the Philippines are mending their relationship as a deterrent to China's aggressions. *By Alan W. Dowd*

48 Legacy Run

Follow the American Legion Riders and friends as they roll from Indianapolis to Houston.

50 The Medicare Maze

Research and compare your options to choose the right health coverage for you. *By J.J. Montanaro*

LIBERATORS REMEMBERED

In honor of the 69th anniversary of the Normandy invasion, American Legion National Commander James E. Koutz placed a wreath at the Brittany American Cemetery near St. James, Normandy, France, in June. See page 52. *Photo by Jeff Stoffer*

The American Legion Magazine, a leader among national general-interest publications, is published monthly by The American Legion for its 2.4 million members. These wartime veterans, working through 14,000 community-level posts, dedicate themselves to God and Country and traditional American values; strong national security; adequate and compassionate care for veterans, their widows and orphans; community service; and the wholesome development of our nation's youth.

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‘How Did We Get Such Good Men?’

I read David W. Taylor’s beautiful article (June) through tears. Thank you a thousand times for honoring us infantrymen. We had been for so long abandoned, then forgotten, and demonized in books and films. The image of the Vietnam War veteran has been painted by people who were never there.

It is true that we only knew our little section of the war and quickly learned that it would not be as easy or quick as the military experts believed, but still we fought with tenacity, cunning, courage and guile. We were, and are, men of great honor. The threat to the world was faced by us, and in the end communism fell.

– Gerald O’Hare, West Deptford, N.J.



I want to thank The American Legion for this story. I also want to thank David Taylor for keeping the enemy away from our convoys as much as possible. I served with the 1st Logistics, 48th Group, 7th Infantry from November 1968 to January 1970. We went as far as Tay Ninh and surrounding areas. I’m proud to have served for this command, and I know we did a hell of a job.

– Frank Feliz, Anaheim, Calif.

This article brought back memories. I served in the 196th Brigade, 23rd Infantry Division (Americal) in 1970. I remember calling for Dustoff to pick up the sick and wounded. And I can relate to the author’s description of soldiers being slim and having body sores – I weighed only 110 pounds.

I wasn’t wounded in Vietnam, but I lost most of my hearing and suffer from tinnitus. As for the PTSD, it never goes away. I was told to forget about it and move on, but how can you when you watched your buddies die, and there was nothing you could do to save them?

– David Tank, Shelby Township, Mich.

‘The Battle of Graignes’

Keith Nightingale’s story (June) had special meaning for me, as my first cousin, Staff Sgt. Nelson “Buddy” Hornbaker Jr., was a medic attending the wounded at the church in Graignes when it was overrun by the Germans. His name is on the memorial erected there, and he is still listed as MIA. He was also at Schofield Barracks when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor – a true American hero.

– Don Eisenman, Shallotte, N.C.

I wish to identify the “Louisiana Cajun” as Cpl. Leo Charpentier from the Lake Pontchartrain area. He could speak and converse in French but did not write it. The article does not tell more of what he did, which included donning civilian clothes and accompanying French locals to get an idea of the German troops in the vicinity – an activity which could have gotten him shot. Charpentier performed at Market Garden and Bastogne as heroically as he did at Graignes. I am glad to have been one of his buddies.

– Bob Reynolds, Alva, Okla.

I did two original commemorative paintings at Normandy as a result of creating the Coors Combat Art Series – one for Graignes and the other for the 50th anniversary of the invasion. I had the pleasure of working with then-Secretary of the Army John Marsh Jr., and traveled to Graignes for the presentation to the townsfolk in 1986. I was thrilled when Marsh told me that my painting persuaded him to make the Army Airborne School the reactivated 507th Airborne Regiment. At the Legion convention that year, I signed and Coors gave away about 3,000 posters of my painting. Keith Nightingale is right – the French people of Normandy love Americans.

– George L. Skypeck, Accokeek, Md.

This is one of the best articles I have ever read about a battle. The prose made me feel like I was there. I hope Keith Nightingale expands this into a book, or better yet, a screenplay. Also, what a great illustration by Matt Hall. It perfectly captured the feel of the article. One note: the major from the 3-507th was Charles Johnston, not Johnson.

– Joe Giardiello, Lakewood, Colo.

'Assault on the Nation-State'

Alan W. Dowd's well-written article (June) sent chills up my spine. His solutions are practical – nations' accountability for their actions, support of at-risk nations, promoting democracy and guarding against further erosion of U.S. sovereignty – but at odds with the policy of the current administration.

– Robert W. Wright Jr., Bradford, N.H.

Alan W. Dowd did a masterful job of outlining the four threats to nationalism. However, I must parse him on his comment that the Obama administration seemingly holds a nation-state accountable for its actions. Perhaps, but Obama wants that done through the United Nations, which involves surrendering U.S. sovereignty to that less-than-august body.

– Charles Block, Woolford, Md.

The rise of the supranational entity is simply the continuation of an age-old process of consolidation of larger political entities, a process that started before the creation of the Greek city-states. The United States itself is a good example of this trend; there is a reason why "E pluribus unum" is on our Great Seal.

In a world of instantaneous worldwide communication and weapons that can literally destroy every human being on the planet, it cannot be surprising that we need institutions different from ones perfectly suited to the 18th century.

– Robert Stolberg, Brookline, Mass.

Universal background checks

Where does one start with Rep. Matt Cartwright's statements (Big Issues, June)? I doubt there is a single "unlicensed federal firearms dealer" anywhere. If you weren't licensed, you wouldn't be a federal dealer. As for a terrorist buying an automatic rifle online, it would already be a violation of federal law to possess it, so what good would one more law do?

– Wayne Thomas, Coral, Mich.

Sen. Chuck Grassley says that universal background checks are "a non-starter for me and many of my colleagues." Aren't they supposed to represent the American people, the majority of whom want background checks?

– Peter L. Jensen, La Porte, Ind.

Does Rep. Matt Cartwright really think criminals are going to submit to background checks? The very people he wants to keep guns away from don't buy them online, but on the streets (it's called the black market).

– George Barger, Timonium, Md.

The founding fathers prefaced the Second Amendment, "A well regulated Militia ..." That is a far cry from an unregulated marketplace for sophisticated firearms that can wipe out two dozen people in seconds.

– Clifford D. Edgcombe Sr., Newtown Square, Pa.

People still use the tired old excuse that there were no rapid-fire weapons with large magazines in 1791. There was also no Internet or TV, so should our First Amendment rights be restricted due to changes in technology? It's the Bill of Rights, not the Bill of Relevancy.

– Randy Francis, Powhatan, Va.

The right to keep and bear arms predates the Constitution – an inalienable human right to protect one's self, loved ones and property from predatory acts by others. The Second Amendment prohibits the government from infringing on that right.

– Dave Garthoff, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

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Those who served honorably deserve a path to financial stability for themselves and their families. It makes sense, then, that veterans are able to capitalize on their military experience once they're ready to hang up their uniforms and pursue their dreams. Unfortunately, they're often expected to undergo the civilian equivalent of training they've already had – a practice that's inefficient and unfair.

The American Legion's Economic Commission is engaging this issue

on two fronts: pushing states to pass credentialing bills that will allow veterans to put their service-learned skills to use in the public and private career fields, and at the local level, directly connecting veterans to employers at hundreds of job fairs the Legion hosts or co-hosts throughout the year.

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Since last year's success in getting legislation passed that loosens federal credentialing requirements for veterans, the Legion has been focused on state-mandated requirements. Our goal is to persuade all 50 state legislatures to pass credentialing legislation on par with the federal laws. So far, 37 either have passed or are debating such legislation.

Still, we have a long way to go, and we need the help of our members. Legionnaires can call their state lawmakers directly and explain to them why we must pass legislation removing obstacles for veterans whose training and skills should count toward professional certification.

We've seen results in departments such as Arizona, Indiana, Georgia and Maryland, where Legionnaires organized "call teams" to successfully encourage local representatives to support credentialing legislation.

As for veterans who didn't receive specialized training in the military, the Legion is working on their behalf, too. We've joined with RecruitMilitary LLC, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Military.com and other organizations to sponsor job fairs where veterans meet face to face with employers in environments where they can communicate what they learned in the military. The Legion helped put on more than 1,200 job fairs nationwide in 2012, from big cities to rural towns. Thousands of veterans were hired, and we're aiming higher in 2013.

Many times, American Legion posts are the sites for these events, giving Legionnaires an opportunity to get involved by recruiting local employers, organizing the event, publicizing it, and inviting local and state Chamber of Commerce officials. Not sure where to start? Contact the Economic Division at (202) 861-2700 or econ@legion.org.

Veterans really don't want a handout. They want a handshake upon accepting a job offer.



National Commander
James E. Koutz

MEMORANDA

2013 NATIONAL CONVENTION

The American Legion's 95th National Convention is Aug. 23-29 in Houston.

Several major events – the **Color Guard and Band contests**, the **Patriot Memorial Service** and gavel-to-gavel **floor coverage** – will be streamed live on www.legion.org.

Other events include the National Convention Parade, American Legion Family Night with the Houston Astros and more.

Also planned are workshops and roundtables on topics of interest to the Legion, such as veterans credentialing and employment, and the annual job fair.

Information on all of the above, as well as late-breaking news from Houston, can be found on the National Convention page of the Legion's website.

www.legion.org/convention

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– Carol K., Benbrook, TX



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The Marketplace Fairness Act



SUPPORT

Rep. Steve Womack, R-Ark.

■ Womack is a member of the House Appropriations Committee.

Main Street businesses across the country are committed to the people and communities they serve. Whether it's supporting a Little League team, a local veterans group or our schools, these businesses strengthen the nation one community at a time. For them it's natural, because these are their communities, too.

Unfortunately, the Supreme Court's outdated *Quill v. North Dakota* decision is putting these retailers, their ability to support their communities, and the communities themselves in jeopardy. The 1992 ruling said that states cannot compel online-only retailers to collect and remit sales tax – effectively turning many brick-and-mortar stores into glorified showrooms where consumers can walk in, try out a product, then go home and buy it online without paying sales tax.

But these sales are not tax-free. In fact, 46 states have statutory sales and use the taxes to help support the most basic local services: firefighters, police and local schools. But the responsibility of recording and reporting them is on the consumer instead of the retailer, who is supposed to pay them at year-end. The problem is that only three people in 1,000 actually comply. As a result, our Main Street businesses lose out, and state and local governments are shortchanged by more than \$23 billion every year.

Every day this loophole goes unfixed, more local retailers go out of business. That's where the Marketplace Fairness Act comes in, giving states the ability to enforce their own laws and leveling the playing field between brick-and-mortar businesses and online-only retailers. And consistent with our free-market principles, it allows consumers – not the federal government – to pick marketplace winners and losers.



OPPOSE

Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas

■ Cruz serves on the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.

The Internet is a flourishing ecosystem of entrepreneurial freedom that should be protected and nourished, but tax-hungry politicians are eager to squeeze revenue from it to bail out their big-spending governments. Consider the misleadingly titled Marketplace Fairness Act, which

would require online businesses to collect and remit sales taxes to the 46 states that charge them. Keep in mind that each state has its own audit, forms, tax base and definitions. That means that every online seller could

be subject to dozens of audits each year.

To call it fair is cruel. Brick-and-mortar stores aren't subjected to all these rules. Why should a Texas business collect taxes to support big spending in California? Or to underwrite nanny statism in New York or an anti-Second Amendment agenda in Chicago?

Enjoy Web-based entertainment such as Netflix and iTunes? Or how about the projected 56 billion apps downloaded in 2013? Well, this bill will open the door to new taxes on every TV show, movie, game, song or app you download.

Naturally, state and local governments love the prospect of \$23 billion in new revenue from the private economy – especially when the out-of-state consumers paying those taxes and the out-of-state business owners who collect them can't vote them out of office. And big business supports this bill because it will drive smaller competitors off the Internet and out of business.

Raising the tax burden on small businesses in one of the still-thriving sectors of the economy doesn't make sense. And imposing a national Internet sales tax while the nation is trying to create jobs and provide new opportunities for out-of-work Americans is economic foolishness.

THE HEART OF THE ISSUE

The Marketplace Fairness Act allows states to collect a sales tax on online sales to benefit traditional brick-and-mortar stores. Critics say it would damage commerce and hurt consumers.

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Fight off belly fat

Belly fat can be a bellwether for the long-term health of men, *WebMD Magazine* reports. "The waistline is an important vital sign," says Dr. Steven Feinleib of Cleveland Clinic. "It may be a better indicator for diabetes and heart disease than overall weight or BMI (body mass index)."

He says fat buildup in the gut can harm the body's ability to handle insulin.

To avoid the accumulation of belly fat, Feinleib advises men to reduce their calorie intake. They should also eat more vegetables, fruits, lean meats, grains and healthy sources of fat, including salmon, and spend 150 minutes per week on "heart-pumping" workouts.

Living Well is designed to provide general information. It is not intended to be, nor is it, medical advice. Readers should consult their physicians when they have health problems.

The 'heart' truth

Heart disease is the leading cause of death among women, but not enough know how to identify its warning signs.

BY BETH W. ORENSTEIN

Six years ago Gail Alexander-Wright of Chesapeake, Va., got upset with herself for taking nearly 12 minutes to run a mile. The Navy reservist chalked up her slow time in the annual physical readiness test to getting older.

Three days later, she had a heart attack.

Looking back, Alexander-Wright – now 43 – sees the signs that should have alerted her to heart disease. "I do remember having had severe pain on the left side of my neck for a few days before and thinking that I needed to go buy new pillows," she recalls.

Then, in December 2008, Alexander-Wright had a stroke. She had stopped taking her blood-thinning medication on her doctor's advice. Now, fully recovered from both scares thanks to medical care and lifestyle changes, Alexander-Wright says she wants to raise awareness to other women about the signs of heart disease.

Go Red. Alexander-Wright is active in the American Heart Association (AHA)'s Go Red For Women campaign, which VA joined in 2012. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in American women, more deadly than all forms of cancer combined. And it appears to be rising among women veterans. VA reports nearly one-third of women under its care have high cholesterol and/or high blood pressure – risk factors for heart disease.

Dr. Sally Haskell, deputy chief consultant for VA's national Women's Health Services office, says it's unclear why VA is seeing more heart disease cases. But she suspects it is related to the increasing number of women – including veterans – who are obese or have diabetes. VA has become more vigilant in trying to identify and prevent these conditions in women and men.

According to a recent AHA study, one in five women believes heart disease to be her greatest health threat. "If a woman has any of the risk factors for heart disease ... she needs to talk to her health-care provider about aggressive management," Haskell says. Alexander-Wright has a family history of heart disease, which is another risk factor.

Women should know that the signs and



See **HEART** on page 16

Media Bakery

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HEART *continued from page 14*

symptoms of heart disease can be different in women than in men, Haskell says. The most common symptom of a heart attack is a crushing chest pain, pressure or discomfort. However, women are more likely than men to have neck, shoulder, abdominal or upper-back discomfort. Women may also experience shortness of breath, nausea or vomiting, sweating, lightheadedness or dizziness and unusual fatigue.

Don't ignore symptoms. Before her heart attack, Alexander-Wright felt lethargic and was sweating profusely, even after showering. When her daughter Brittany woke Alexander-Wright up from a nap, she noticed her mother was pale and clammy. At the hospital, doctors discovered that Alexander-Wright had a blood clot blocking her left anterior descending artery.

Alexander-Wright had thought she was eating healthy, but since 2008 has changed her diet to include more fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy and lean protein. She also continues to exercise regularly – though not as vigorously as before – and to reduce stress, which she and her cardiologist believe was a primary cause of her heart attack. At the time, she was working a full-time job in IT, ran a custom cake business on the side, and was active in the Navy Reserve and parenting a teenager. Her husband Andre, a sailor, had just been deployed to Afghanistan for nearly nine months.

Alexander-Wright says she learned the hard way that “when something feels outside the norm, you shouldn't ignore it. You need to get help right away.” She hopes other women veterans learn from her experience and take better care of themselves so they might avoid heart disease.

Beth W. Orenstein is a freelance writer living in Northampton, Pa.



Media Bakery

How to cut risk of heart disease

You can't change some risk factors for heart disease, such as family history or age. But there are ways to reduce risk:

Don't smoke. If you do, quit. Women who smoke and take birth control pills are at greater risk of having a heart attack or stroke than women who do neither.

Get regular exercise. At least 30 minutes of moderate exercise five days a week reduces the risk of heart disease.

Eat heart-healthy. Focus your diet on fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy. Limit saturated fats (found in red meat, dairy, coconut and palm oils) and trans fats (found in fried foods, bakery items and packaged snack foods).

Maintain a healthy weight. Excess weight increases your risk for high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

Get regular health screenings. Know your blood pressure and cholesterol (blood fat) levels. If your numbers are too high, talk to your health-care provider about how to reduce them.

Surprising diet foods

WebMD has good news for dieters: Some foods that have gotten a bad rap can actually help you lose weight and keep it off.

■ **Eggs** have come under fire in a cholesterol-obsessed culture, but new research suggests that “an egg a day is safe and nutritious for most adults – and if you eat that egg for breakfast, you'll boost your odds of losing weight. The reason: Eggs are packed with protein, which takes time to digest.”

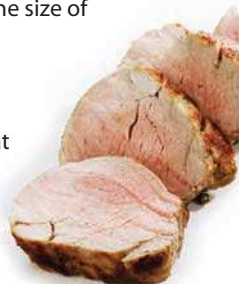


■ Cholesterol concerns also steer many away from red meat. “But **steak** is not always bad for the waistline. In fact, a lean cut of beef has barely more saturated fat than a similar-sized



skinless chicken breast.” But WebMD experts add an important caveat: “To get plenty of protein with less fat, choose tenderloin, sirloin or other extra-lean cuts – and limit portions to the size of your palm.”

■ “Today's cuts of **pork tenderloin** are 31 percent leaner than 20 years ago. That makes this white meat a lean source of protein with benefits similar to those of lean beef.”



■ “Rather than avoiding **pasta** when you're dieting, make the switch to whole grain and keep your portions small.”

■ Many dieters try to trim calories by cutting out **dairy foods**. But this may be counterproductive: “One theory is that the body burns more fat when it gets enough calcium, so eating low-fat cheese, yogurt and milk may actually contribute to weight loss.”

Find out more at webmd.com.

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Shinseki: VA backlog goals in sight

BY TOM PHILPOTT

VA Secretary Eric Shinseki says he knows the goals he set in 2010 to eliminate the backlog of disability compensation claims within five years, and with an improved accuracy rate of 98 percent, must have made some VA claims processors “suck wind through their teeth.”

Back then the backlog of claims was already rising fast, due not only to more veterans returning from war but to decisions Shinseki made that expanded compensation eligibility for post-traumatic stress disorder, Gulf War illness, ischemic heart disease and Parkinson’s disease.

Despite doubts raised by critics – including Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., chairman of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee – Shinseki says his plan to end the backlog in 2015 is on schedule, and his goals will be reached.

Regardless, he will never regret setting them, he said.

“I’ve been writing plans all my life,” the retired four-star general and former Army chief of staff said as he visited a VA claims processing center in Newark, N.J. “I never wrote a tentative plan. That’s not what you expect from a guy you want to solve a problem. If I had written a plan that said we’re going to end the backlog in 2025, I wouldn’t have gotten any resources.”

VA’s budget is up almost 50 percent since 2009. Some of those added resources pay salaries for thousands more claims processors. They financed the development, testing and fielding of the Veterans Benefits Management System, an electronic claims-processing network which by June had been installed in all VA regional offices, six months ahead of schedule.

As criticism intensified, Shinseki ordered new initiatives: a two-month effort to complete all 42,000 disability claims in the VA system for more than two years, a policy to expedite claims at least a year old using new provisional approval authority to begin benefits based on evidence submitted to date, and a mandated 20 hours of overtime a month for all claims processors.

VA has also teamed up with The American Legion and Disabled American Veterans to expedite claims identified as “fully developed.”

Shinseki said the backlog grew sharply on his watch, due in large part to the decisions on compensation eligibility. For two years following his 2010 Agent Orange decision, which established new conditions as service-connected and compensable, VA assigned 2,300 of its most experienced processors – a third of its claims staff – to retroactively review 260,000 claims that qualified for special handling under the 1985 *Nehmer* court ruling. Overall, 131,000 veterans or survivors received \$3.65 billion in retroactive pay.

Shinseki stands by the decision but admits he didn’t understand all the rules of *Nehmer*. “(Staff) had to go through every page of every claim. It wasn’t enough to say, ‘Vietnam, exposure to Agent Orange and therefore Parkinson’s disease, (so)

grant service connection.’ The *Nehmer* decision required them to see if there was anything else in the file, page by page by page. And by the way, *Nehmer* goes to the head of the line. Everything else waits ... I should have asked more questions. I didn’t pick up on that.”

Was his decision influenced by how Vietnam-era veterans were treated, compared to today’s vets?

“There is some of that there. I would caution that was not the only reason ... But why would I come take this job?” Shinseki asked. “It’s to give back to the kids I went to war with. It’s to take care of the kids I sent to war as the service chief. And then, really, it was the opportunity to take care of what I would call the giants in the military profession, the World War II vets and the Korea vets ... You don’t have many opportunities like that in your life, and this was one for me.”

Tom Philpott, a Coast Guard veteran, has written about veterans and military personnel issues for more than 30 years.



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The Unstoppable Abrams

Defense cuts threaten to close America's last tank plant, but local support and allies in Congress keep it alive.

BY DOUG WISSING



Their cannons precisely angled to a distant horizon, awe-inspiring Abrams tanks stand side by side under the lights of the cavernous building. Wide black tracks from the treads of the 65-ton behemoths mark the thick concrete floor. Here and there, workers with checklists confirm arcane manufacturing details. In one corner, a silent turret ominously turns as its cannon lowers, operated by a white-haired quality-assurance inspector verifying that another of America's most lethal and survivable combat vehicles is ready to go to war.

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The government-owned manufacturing equipment includes some of the most advanced cutting, tooling, welding and testing equipment ever made. The plant is one of the top two titanium users in the country, rivaled only by Callaway Golf. The Lima testing grounds form a veritable gantlet of tank challenges: a two-mile track, deep-water fording pits and treacherously angled test slopes. The workforce includes some of the most skilled industrial craftsmen on the continent, who use their combined centuries of experience to build the world's preeminent tank.

Now, far from the battlefield, the tanks and plant are facing a danger unrelated to warfare.

Citing declining budgets and an oversupply of state-of-the-art Abrams tanks with an average effective age of two and a half years, the Army recommended in early 2012 that the Lima tank plant be shut down for three years. Army officers argued that it would cost about \$600 million to mothball and restart the plant vs. \$3 billion to maintain production. "The Army had to make some tough choices," modernization boss Lt. Gen. Bill Phillips told Congress. "Thanks, but no tanks," a CNN headline read.

But the Lima plant's advocates challenged the Army's budget figures and warned of the dire impact on the hundreds of subcontractors, many tank-specific, that make thousands of Abrams parts. Since then it's been a battle royale between the Army and plant supporters.

The Army took the offensive, implying that the days of tank-on-tank warfare were past. On the topic of sustaining the tank suppliers, Army Deputy Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Robert Lennox said, "We don't want to be in the position of 1939, when we say we have to go out and protect the saber and saddle industry because our cavalry is going to need it for the future."

Congressional members and regional political leaders counterattacked. Rep. Marcy Kaptur, D-Ohio, a Defense Appropriations Subcommittee member, argued that the proposed 2014-2017 plant closure would actually cost about \$500 million more than sustaining the plant and its 880

suppliers and subcontractors. "The United States has been in continuous tank production since 1941 – more than 70 years – and the Abrams tank will be a vital component of the U.S. Army's combat forces for another four decades," she said.

Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, joined the argument, adding, "Ending the Abrams production line would jeopardize our national security, the safety of our men and women in uniform, and the highly skilled workforce in Lima – not to mention that eliminating this program would be more costly to taxpayers than continuing it. That's why I will continue to push to ensure that the Abrams program remains intact in the years to come."

The Lima business community rallied around the economically important plant. Lima native John Heaphy owns the popular Beer Barrel, a vintage brick tavern located near the facility. He's seen the effect of the plant's fortunes up close and personal. "The tank plant, buying local, makes a huge impact on local business," said Heaphy during a break from playing 1970s hits with his band. "This plant, over the last 10 years, has been on a roller-coaster ride."

War and Peace The Lima Army Tank Plant emerged from the smoke and fire of the German blitzkrieg of 1939 and 1940, when thousands of Panzers overran Europe's defenses. The tank-led routs convinced the U.S. Army's general staff that America needed combat vehicles – and fast. Planners of the newly formed Tank and Combat Vehicle Division decreed that U.S. industry needed to build 1 million vehicles, including 14,000 medium tanks, within a year.

In May 1941, the Ohio Steel Foundry broke ground in Lima on a government-owned plant to manufacture centrifugally cast gun tubes. Lima's steel mill, five railroads and proximity to national highways entered into the site decision, as did the region's highly skilled manufacturing workforce. By November 1942, more than 4,000 Lima workers were constructing combat vehicles, including the M5 light tank and the T26 Pershing tank. During the war, more than 5,000 employees – many of them women – produced more than 100,000 vehicles, mostly for the European battlefields.

In a closed-off section of sprawling Building 147, Lima workers labored on a top-secret project: amphibious tanks for D-Day. Called Duplex Drive (DD) tanks, the Sherman tanks' upper parts were equipped with large canvas skirts, designed to float low in the water so that the bobbing armored monsters would look deceptively like rubber boats

as they plowed through the anticipated foot-high swells. The 35-ton tanks had two propellers to churn four knots across the sea, and could drive 25 mph on land. But of the 29 DD tanks launched four kilometers off Omaha Beach on D-Day, only two made it to land. Six-foot-high swells sank the other 27 tanks, which underwater archeologists explored in 1997.

When peace broke out after World War II, Lima's tank production ceased and the facility became a sprawling storage yard where decommissioned tanks were "canned" in enormous dehumidified gas cylinders, dubbed the "tank farm."

The Korean War revived the plant. By 1951, 2,700 employees were manufacturing wiring harnesses and reconditioning combat vehicles, but eight years later, the plant was again deactivated.

It stood silent until August 1976, when the government reactivated the facility under the name of the Lima Army Modification Center (LAMC), where the XM1 tank was built under contract to the Chrysler Corp. The LAMC was a GOCO (government-owned, contractor-operated) facility. A sister plant, the Detroit Arsenal Tank Plant, assisted with assembly of the Lima-made parts. Rather than cast metal, the XM-1's hull and turret were armored steel plate, making the tank lighter and stronger than earlier models.

The Cold War brought giant government contracts to the plant. In February 1980, the first M1 Abrams tank clanked out of the LAMC. Within a few years, 30 M1s were rolling off the assembly lines each month under the aegis of General Dynamics Land Systems, which had bought Chrysler Defense in 1982. President Ronald Reagan's huge defense buildup resulted in a massive influx of federal dollars to the plant. By late 1986, the ramped-up production lines were completing 120 updated M1A1 tanks per month, eventually manufacturing more than 10,000 Abrams tanks.

In early 1990, Dick Cheney, then secretary of defense, abruptly announced plans to close the Lima tank plant. The Berlin Wall had fallen; the Soviet Union had collapsed. The American public demanded a peace dividend financed by cuts in defense spending.

The potential effect on Lima was obvious. The tank plant was the county's largest employer, with 2,600 high-paid industrial workers earning a \$100 million annual payroll. A former seminary student and community organizer, Lima Mayor David Berger clearly understood the potential economic devastation of a plant closure. Speaking to a *BusinessWeek* reporter, Berger paraphrased the



Tank treads are rolled out at the Joint Systems Manufacturing Center in Lima, Ohio, where combat vehicles have been produced almost continuously for 70 years. Photo by Doug Wissing

Bible: "Beating swords into plowshares is not an option." Berger organized the Save the Tank Task Force, which recruited a broad range of local, state and national leaders to lobby for the facility.

Foreign sales have helped keep the plant going. Operation Desert Storm in 1990 and 1991 demonstrated the M1's supremacy, and orders from foreign powers flowed to Lima. By 1992, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Egypt bought tanks, eventually totaling 1,200 Abrams tanks. South Korea bought special armor packages for its tanks. Australia signed agreements. Israel contracted with the Lima plant to build the mammoth Namer armored personnel carriers, based on the Merkava tank chassis.

A gargantuan recycling project secured the Lima plant's continuing role in U.S. armaments. General Dynamics Land System and its Washington allies pushed appropriations through Congress for a "tank recapitalization" project, essentially refurbishing and modifying previously manufactured tanks to state-of-the-art battlewagon standards.

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“We don’t produce new Abrams anymore,” General Dynamics spokesman Brian Hahn said. Instead, older Abrams tanks stored in California’s Sierra Army Depot are shipped to Anniston Army Depot in Alabama, where they are disassembled and stripped to bare armor. The “Rusties,” as the unpainted tank carcasses are called, then move on to Lima, where workers transform them into 21st century Abrams M-1A2 SEP V2 fighting machines.

“It’s the epitome of recycling,” Hahn says, estimating that the \$5.5 million refurbishing saves taxpayers 50 percent compared to a new tank.

Even with foreign sales and recapitalization, employment at the Lima plant plummeted to 500. At least it was still open. After DoD closed the Detroit Arsenal Tank Plant in 1996, Lima was the country’s sole remaining Abrams fabricator and final systems integrator – America’s last tank plant.

In 2004, the Lima facility was renamed the Joint Systems Manufacturing Center, reflecting the bright hope of the Marine Corps’ Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV) to be built there. The titanic combat vehicle was both amphibious and ambitious. Designed to disembark from ships 25 miles at sea, the armored EFV could swiftly transport 20 Marines to shore, where the vehicle with its 30mm cannon could penetrate hundreds of miles inland. The Marines invested \$3.1 billion in JSMC equipment and infrastructure, including some of the most sophisticated manufacturing and quality-control equipment on earth.

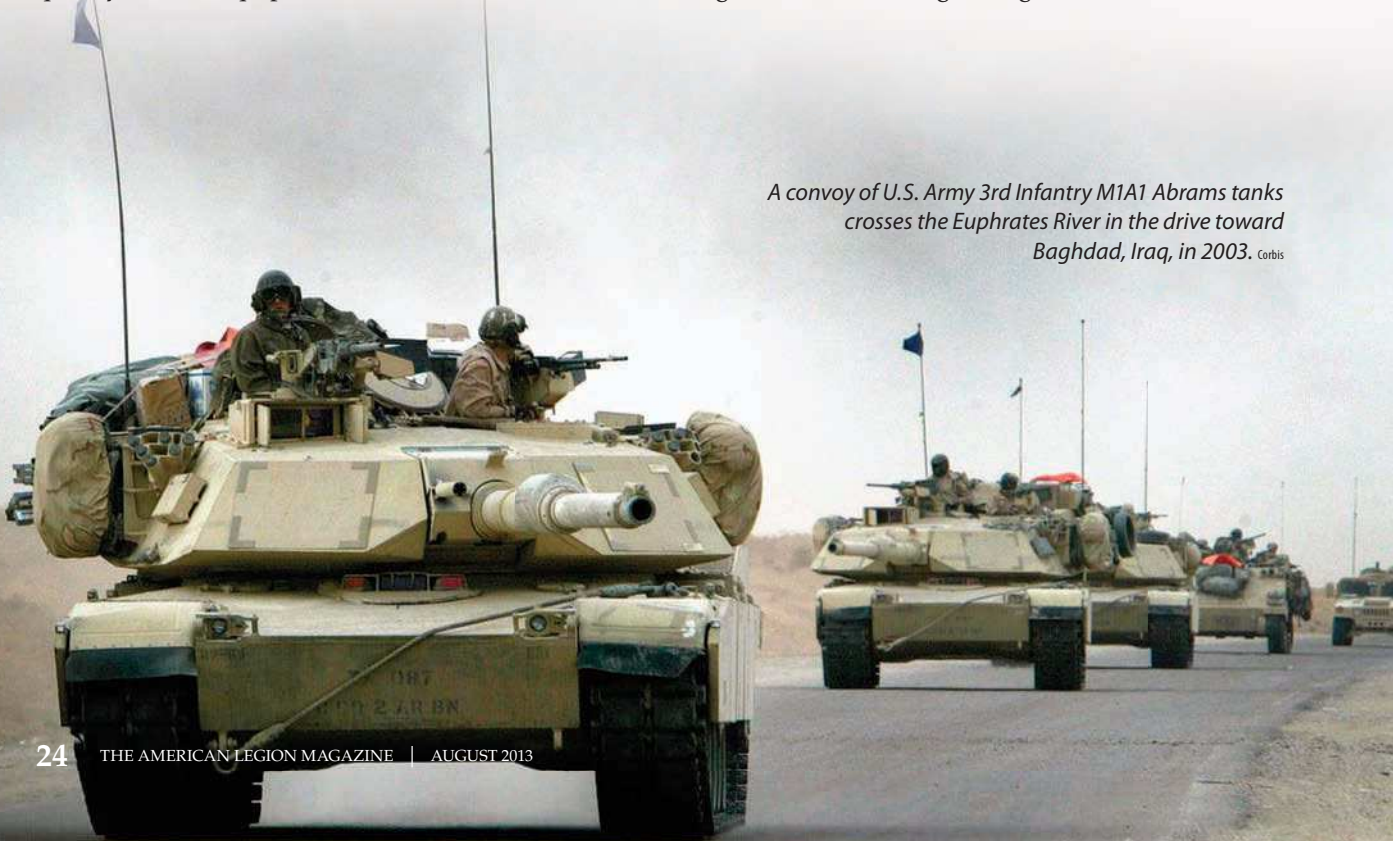
The 2005 BRAC base closure gave further hope to Lima, as the plant was realigned to continue to manufacture armored combat vehicles, including the Army’s high-tech Future Combat Systems (FCS) program, the EFV chassis and the M-1 recapitalization program. The plant landed a contract for the MK-4 naval gun system for littoral protection, and helped develop the IED-defensive Stryker Double V-Hull for the Army’s wheeled fighting vehicle. Lima engineers and production workers used their accumulated experience to fast-track the Stryker program. Within a year, the first transformed Strykers were ready, and by last November more than 450 armored Strykers were saving soldiers’ lives in Afghanistan.

“We’re not just your father’s tank plant anymore,” Hahn said.

But the winds began to shift. The Obama administration announced defense cuts. In 2009, the FCS program was canceled. Faced with declining budgets, the Army began to question the JSMC’s meat-and-potatoes tank-recapitalization program. Then, in January 2011, Lima got a shock. Engineers were testing seven of the amphibious EFVs when Pentagon officials announced they were canceling the program to build 543 of the combat vehicles. “Secretary of Defense (Robert) Gates decided they couldn’t afford them,” Berger said. “The need remains, but they weren’t yet in the production mode, so they pulled the plug.”

After more than two decades as Lima’s mayor, Berger was still leading the fight to save the tank

A convoy of U.S. Army 3rd Infantry M1A1 Abrams tanks crosses the Euphrates River in the drive toward Baghdad, Iraq, in 2003. Corbis





2009 Agriculture – Three Sisters method of planting



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plant and its high-skilled manufacturing jobs. “The community is very interested in the plant’s long-term future,” he said. “We need the tank plant. It’s the only remaining tank facility in the country. The entire supply chain, and even the workforce here, will go off and find something elsewhere.”

Reservoir of Talents So what’s the future for the Lima tank plant? Last December, 693 skilled workers (35 percent of whom are veterans) were laboring in the plant supported by hundreds of specialized subcontractors across the country. Craftsmen in white coveralls and safety glasses pedaled industrial tricycles down the gigantic plant’s “Main Street” past assembly lines of armored combat vehicles. Computer-driven laser, plasma and water jet cutters carved thick sheets of armor steel and titanium into a jigsaw puzzle of tank parts. Sparks from mil-spec certified welders flared through the air. A giant tank-sized X-ray machine examined intricate welds, while a high-tech Wenzel measuring machine’s robotic probe confirmed that each hole on a tank’s surface was machined within 1/1000th of an inch of specs. Enormous paint booths awaited the next tank. Slowly the tanks moved down the transfer line, transformed from disembodied “Rusties” into fearsome cannoned war machines.

But the JSMC’s future is hanging by a thread. “It’s getting enormously more complicated,” said engineer and local United Auto Workers (UAW) President Craig Kiefer about the financial cloud over the plant. “This year Congress voted for it and appropriated the funds. But they’ve got to do this every year. And nothing overturns sequester.”

Kiefer spoke of the foreign business in the plant, the refit order for Saudi tanks and a potential order for 250 more Saudi tanks. “It’s a hopeful situation, but there’s still a lot of angst about getting the work.” He also mentioned the importance of the skilled Lima tank fabricators, who are nearing retirement. “This place has become a reservoir of those talents. In the United States, we’re losing a lot of those skills. They need to train the next generation.”

In August 2012, Congress appropriated \$129 million for Abrams-tank modernization and \$165 million for upgrades in fiscal 2013. With the congressional appropriations and other combat vehicle contracts, the Lima plant could operate for another year.

“There’s a large sense of pride here,” said Keith Deters, director of plant operations, who took time from the factory floor last winter to talk about the



Workers put a turret on a refurbished Abrams tank at JSMC. The Army intends to use upgraded variants of the tank until at least 2050, but its orders have been filled, and the current tank fleet meets specifications. Meanwhile, since 2011, the plant has produced hundreds of the Army’s IED-defensive Stryker DVH, of which more than 450 have been used in Afghanistan. General Dynamics

facility’s accomplishments. “The Abrams is the best-built tank in the world. With the defense cutbacks, we’re reaching out to our allies. The Stryker is very important to us.”

A longtime engineer from Lima who began working at the plant in 1982, Deters talked about the production challenges the plant faces: “We’re dodging bullets, filling gaps, plugging holes. If we hadn’t diversified, a lot of these people wouldn’t be here. To shut the plant down and set it up again, I don’t know how you’d do that.” But despite the uncertainty of Army and congressional support, he was optimistic about the future. “We’ve gone through some tough times – defense cuts, layoffs, BRAC – but this community has stood behind us.”

Doug Wissing has written for The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, National Geographic Traveler, American Life, Forbes Life and Gray’s Sporting Journal.

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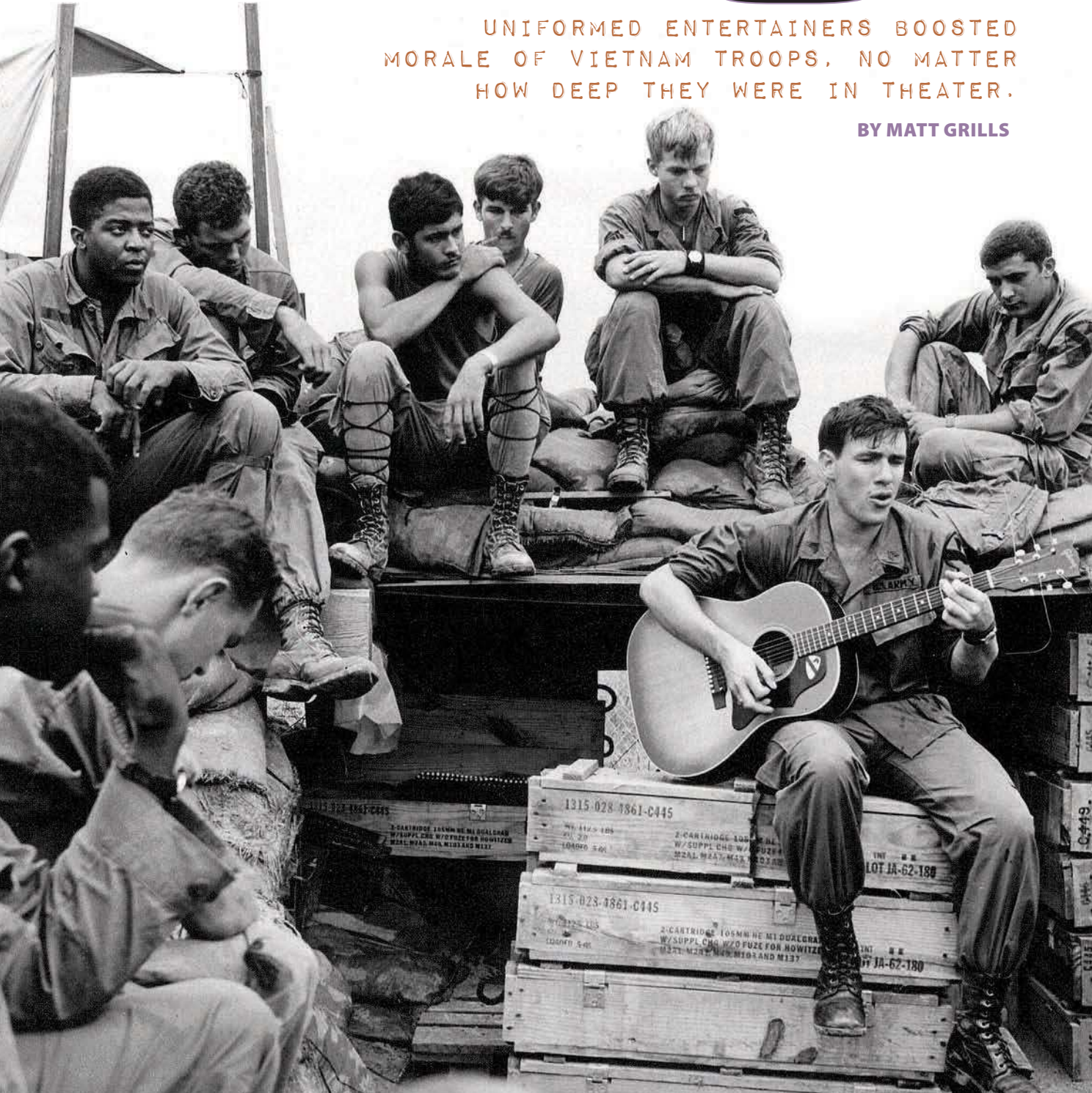
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ALL THE

War's a Stage

UNIFORMED ENTERTAINERS BOOSTED
MORALE OF VIETNAM TROOPS, NO MATTER
HOW DEEP THEY WERE IN THEATER.

BY MATT GRILLS





All Rick Holen wanted to do was theater. A draft notice, slipped into his graduation card by his parents, didn't slow him down. He enlisted in the Air Force but spent his off hours working at the historic Dock Street Theatre while stationed in Charleston, S.C. He took a bus to rehearsals every night and slept in the prop room on weekends. "I learned a hell of a lot there," he says.

Vietnam, predictably, interrupted. When Holen arrived in country July 4, 1969, he had resigned himself to a year away from acting. Counting, wrapping and taking the Bien Hoa base exchange's money to Saigon seemed as far from the stage as he could get.

"I got lost one day and drove by the Army Special Services compound, and there was a big sign that said, 'Auditions for 'The Fantasticks,'" Holen recalls. "My heart skipped a beat because it was an opportunity – an opportunity that I wanted really bad."

He knew the musical well, having directed and acted in it for a summer stock company. He got the part of The Mute, the only character that hadn't been cast, and three weeks later received orders for temporary duty in Saigon. Holen figured that's where "The Fantasticks" would run. In fact, he traveled all over Vietnam, on a tour that took him from the DMZ to the Mekong Delta, from the Cambodian border to the South China Sea – anywhere there were U.S. troops to entertain. For three months, the group flew on Chinooks, C-123s and C-130s to bases large and small, performing on flatbed trucks, bunkers, sandbags and other makeshift stages.

"I think we mounted that show in a week and a half or two weeks," Holen says. "Sometimes we did two shows a day, sometimes three. I remember playing Freedom Hill up at Da Nang, and about halfway through the show, about 12 Marines came in and sat down in the front row. They had all

their gear: M60 machine gun, M16s, hand grenades hanging off their belts. About 15 minutes into the second act, there are some love songs between the boy and girl, and these guys were crying. They had dark spots all over their uniforms, like mud. When the lights came on, I saw it was blood. They'd just gotten out of a mission. It was hard to process that kind of a moment.

"Once you were cast in one of these shows, you played your heart out for these guys."



Between 1966 and 1971, 114 Command Military Touring Shows (CMTS) units performed in active combat areas in Vietnam – locations considered too dangerous for most celebrities and too remote for big USO tours. Nearly 600 U.S. servicemembers participated in CMTS, including a few female civilians employed by Army Special Services.



"Most of them didn't carry a rifle and most of them weren't wounded, but these were people who were drafted and did their jobs and had a talent that was able to build the morale of the troops," says Hershel Gober, a former acting secretary of VA and retired Army major who served two tours in Vietnam. His singing and songwriting caught the ear of Gen. William Westmoreland, who asked Gober to put a band together and perform for men in the field. The Black Patches went wherever their music could do some good, whether it was the camp of a 12-man Special Forces A-team or a hospital full of critically wounded soldiers who watched from their beds.

"We never set a limit on our shows," Gober says. "As long as they wanted us to play, we'd do two or three shows for the same group of people. They just liked to hear music they knew and to think that somebody really cared about them having a chance to just sit and relax and listen."

When he went out, Gober wasn't just playing music. He was evaluating the mood of the troops for Westmoreland, who saw the need to revive the old "soldier show" concept – GIs entertaining GIs.

Bill Ellis, a 1st Air Cavalry infantryman, plays guitar for U.S. troops in the field. Photo by T. Tynes/National Archives

Dozens more bands followed: country, folk, rock ‘n’ roll, jazz, soul. Army Special Services staff had ‘thousands of hobby cards filled out by military personnel entering the country, and someone who played guitar or was in a garage band back home was invited to audition. Those selected had only a few days to put together a song set and head out on tour.

Ken Holeczi, a drummer from Michigan who was drafted into the Army, played in two CMTS bands: Raspberry Fig Tree and Mixed Bag.

“The response from the troops was great,” he says. “But performing for the guys who had just come out of the bush and back to base camp was always special to me. You could see on their faces that they were tired and were somewhere you would not want to have been.”

After his first tour, Holeczi returned to the 10th Transportation Company in Long Binh, carrying a letter from Army Special Services requesting he be released from his unit for another two months. His captain said they were scheduled to invade Cambodia in two weeks. Holeczi told him that he felt he was doing more for his country entertaining the troops than driving trucks.

“Do what you need to do,” the captain replied. “I think I can find another driver to replace you.”

There were solo acts, too. While celebrating the recording of his rock band’s first album in San Francisco in 1967, Bill Ellis was drafted. Liberty Records subsequently canceled the release, and the young man traded his guitar for a rifle as a grunt in the 1st Air Cavalry. But after a few months, a guitar found Ellis, and he was asked to perform for the officers’ mess, a CBS radio show in Saigon and firebases in the 1st Cav’s area of operation.

“I’d go out there and spend the night many times, then come back in, grab another chopper and go somewhere else,” he says.

Soon Ellis linked up with CMTS and traveled the length and width of Vietnam, singing “Firefight,” “Freedom Bird” and other songs that were a salve

for soldiers grieving the losses of friends, fearful they might not make it home themselves.

“They’d really break down, and it brought out the emotion,” Ellis recalls. “I talked to a colonel and said, ‘Should I be doing this? It really seems to have an effect on people.’ He said they felt it was good because it was a relief.”



In 1968, the Army drafted Robert Silver, an aspiring actor who’d finished law school at Columbia University in New York and was pursuing a master’s degree in theater there. The day after Thanksgiving, he was on his way to Chu Lai to work as a personnel specialist for Headquarters Company, 23rd Infantry Division.

Meanwhile, the USO and Army Special Services were preparing to launch a production of “The Fantasticks” in Saigon, but an airman cast in one of the roles had to be medevaced after he was wounded by a taxicab bomb. A woman who’d worked with Silver in community theater when he was stationed at Fort Jackson, S.C., recommended him for the part.

“While I was there, I became aware of CMTS, which at the time was really a music program,”

Silver says. “I thought, ‘Why not send out something like a play or a musical?’ So I suggested it to Brad Arrington, who ran CMTS, and he asked me to write up a proposal about how it could be done.”

Silver helped assemble “The Maniacors,” a musical revue with a couple of blackout sketches, three Harold Pinter revue sketches, and original tunes by Jay Kerr, an Army entertainment specialist stationed in Bien Hoa who created touring shows for the 1st Cav. He ended up touring with the revue as an accompanist.

Higher-ups in Saigon had reached out to Kerr, who had written for Princeton’s Triangle Club and worked for the CBS children’s television series “Captain Kangaroo” before he was drafted.

With four guys and a girl – Jan Brantley, a talent scout and producer for Army Special Services and the first woman to travel with a show in Vietnam –



In the CMTS production of “The Fantasticks,” Henry (Jim Lorenzen) and Mortimer the Cockney Indian (Roy Faudree) make their entrance out of the prop box as The Mute (Rick Holen) looks on. National Archives

The Spirit of the West Express-Silver Edition



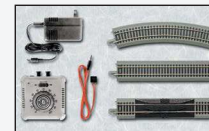
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After the success of "The Maniacors," CMTS staged the unofficial first nonprofessional production of the hit musical "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown," with Kay Johnson playing Lucy, Joe Mauro as Schroeder, David Wright as Linus and Burt Hem as Snoopy.

National Archives

"The Maniacors" went to small firebases and aircraft carriers alike.

"It went over like hotcakes," says John Akers, an Army chemical specialist who toured with a CMTS band called New Generation before joining "The Maniacors." One of his favorite memories is the warm reception they received aboard USS *Kitty Hawk*.

"I felt like a Hollywood star," Akers says. "Many of the sailors visited with us afterward to ask about what was going on in the States. They thought we were USO. We had to tell them that we were there in Vietnam as soldiers."

Military entertainers in Vietnam had a job to do and did it. They also acknowledge that those who saw combat had it far worse.

"I had a good time," Kerr says. "I have a sense of guilt about that. But I was much more valuable to the Army playing the piano and writing songs than I would have been missing the enemy because I couldn't hit the broad side of a barn."

"It was never like work. It was enjoyable. I know that on one of our USO tours our helicopter was hit by enemy fire, but I was napping and had no idea it happened. It was a blessed life. If you had to go through the war, it's the way to have done it."

* * *

On the heels of "The Maniacors," CMTS staged "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown," written by Clark Gesner, a friend of Kerr's. This was the unofficial first nonprofessional production of the hit musical – and the troops loved it.

"We had one round-eyed girl in our show," jokes Gary Branson, an infantry squad leader who was tapped as pianist and music director after winning

an all-Vietnam talent competition. "If nothing else was received warmly, she was."

Initially, the show couldn't find a female lead, so Kay Johnson – Army entertainment director for III Corps – stepped into the role of Lucy. "I'd never performed in a play, so it was a big deal for me," she says. "I traveled the entire country with nine enlisted men and lots of equipment."

The group went from Da Nang in the north to Can Tho in the south, with stops in Pleiku, Qui Nhon, Nha Trang, Cam Ranh Bay, Cu Chi, Bien Hoa and Saigon. "Seemed like we were always waiting for a ride to haul our sets, electric piano, luggage and us," Branson says.

Travel was usually an ordeal. En route to Da Nang, they took ground fire, and the pilot stood the plane straight up on its tail, throwing everyone and everything that wasn't strapped in around the cargo bay. Complicating matters, the troupe's van had a flat tire on the way to the theater.

"Needless to say, we were late arriving, and 'Gone With the Wind' was entertaining our audience," Johnson says. "When the motion picture was halted, the crowd booed, but they forgave us once we got under way and even gave us a standing ovation at the end."

Another time, leaving Pleiku, the group's helicopters never arrived. They waited for hours before boarding a bus that took them on unsecured roads to their next performance.

If it wasn't pouring rain, the weather was suffocating. "The heat was so intense that it actually bubbled the paint of the roof of Snoopy's doghouse," Johnson says.

But these moments were outweighed by plenty of good times, such as taping a TV show in Saigon,

performing for a room full of brass at MACV Headquarters at Tan Son Nhut and, really, any show where they knew they were breaking up the boredom or fear of daily living for GIs.

"I went from sloshing through the paddies to playing piano for a show about fictional 6-year-olds in a few days' time – a rather stark contrast," says Branson, who was an infantry sergeant assigned to B Company 4/9 Infantry, 25th Infantry Division, at Tay Ninh.

"I felt guilt about leaving my men in the boonies, but happy to be out of the field. Those same feelings are still with me to a certain extent."



Shows continued to be big events in the field until U.S. forces began to stand down in 1971. CMTS organized productions of "The Odd Couple," "Barefoot in the Park," "The Star-Spangled Girl," "The Private Ear" and "The Public Eye," and "The Roar of the Greasepaint – The Smell of the Crowd."

Knowing that a lot of soldiers had never seen live theater, Holen and his "Fantasticks" castmates were buoyed by positive reactions. "A guy from Brooklyn came up to me after a show and said, 'When I get home, I'm going to go to every Broadway show I can. That was quite moving.'"



In the CMTS production of "The Fantasticks," Hucklebee (Gerald Schetzle), center, and Bellomy (David Adamson), right, sing "Plant a Radish" while The Mute (Rick Holen) watches in the background. National Archives

Jim Lorenzen, who joined the musical after a short time at Long Binh's data center, heard an even better one while having drinks with some Green Berets or Marines – he can't remember which – after a performance.

"One was a big, burly guy you'd expect to see jump out of a plane with no parachute. He said, 'I'm glad to see some culture here. Those guys are a bunch of animals. They don't appreciate this stuff.'"

Audiences, though, didn't always know what they were getting.

"The people who met us at each of the places we were going to do the show tended to ask, 'Are you guys the band?'" says David Adamson, who was cast in "The Fantasticks" after a few months as a darkroom technician with the 1st Military Intelligence Battalion north of Saigon. "We finally stopped correcting them and said, 'Yeah, we're the band,' because it was too hard to explain that we did a play."

If troops wanted to hear music, they wanted to see girls even more.

"Sometimes you would hear 'Take it off!'" says Lynn Skyneer, who played The Girl in "The Roar of the Greasepaint – The Smell of the Crowd."

"You'd get the cat whistles. They must not have seen that I looked almost anorexic. I think I walked away saying, 'Wow, I must be pretty glamorous!'"

Having spent four years as an air operations specialist, Skyneer left the Air Force and worked for an Australian war correspondent before taking a UPI stringer job. By 1971, she was "Vietnam-ed out" – sick, exhausted and down to 98 pounds.

She learned through a friend about an actress who had to bow out of a production, and the director needed a woman fast. "Somehow that just seemed like such a bright light," Skyneer says. "There was something so positive about it. So I said yes to this with zero talent, and suddenly I'm put with the most talented people.

"I can assure you that I was neither an actress nor a singer. An American woman was hard to find, so they were stuck. When you couldn't get Raquel Welch, you had to settle for me."

Kent Monken remembers Skyneer well. While working as a company clerk in Cam Ranh Bay, he was cast as the lead in "Greasepaint."

"The play needed a woman," he says. "What group of GIs is going to see a musical of all men?" In fact, the first two scenes are just male characters, so Monken had Skyneer come out early and stand around as the male characters talk.

“It worked better,” he says, chuckling.

When Monken returned to his unit, his fellow soldiers had a new respect for the actor. The first sergeant, however, did not and punished him by making him night guard at the motor pool.

CMTS entertainers may have been popular in the field, but getting approval to leave their units for two or three months wasn't without hurdles.

Holen had to go to a full-bird colonel at Long Binh for the green light to do “The Fantasticks.” Kerr promised his commanding officer that 1st Cav would get more shows than it was entitled to if he could go on tour. Silver was arrested when his show came to Chu Lai – even with just two months left in country; he'd been gone longer than his orders permitted, and he had to arrange to get a newcomer with his MOS to replace him so he could keep performing.

CMTS organizers didn't have it any easier. “As a producer, the most disappointing thing was not getting one pianist I needed,” Brantley recalls. “His MO was chaplain's assistant, but his extra duty was playing dinner music for the general. The chaplain was willing to give him up for 30 days, but the general was not.

“The nicest gesture was a communications unit with only 25 men offering five of them for 30 days. They sang a cappella and were delightful guys who could be sent to any situation and didn't need an electrical outlet.”



Sixteen years ago, Holen began looking up his “Fantasticks” castmates. With the help of Ann Kelsey, who ran the Army Special Services library at Cam Ranh Bay, he widened his search to find other CMTS veterans. Nearly 50 attended a reunion in New York, and they traveled to Vietnam in 2001.

After the war, many picked up their careers where they had left off. Kerr became a vocal instructor with his own midtown Manhattan studio, and is currently artistic director for the Fort Salem Theater in upstate New York. Silver's résumé is full of commercials, off-Broadway shows and episodic television. Adamson teaches in the Department of Dramatic Art at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Ellis wrote “Beyond the Wall,” a rock musical based on his experiences in Vietnam.

**Learn more about Rick Holen's
“Theatre Vietnam” documentary:**

✉ rickholen@yahoo.com

Visit Bill Ellis' “Beyond the Wall” site:

🌐 www.btrockmusical.com

Visit John Akers' CMTS website:

🌐 www.vcmts.com

Others went in a different direction. Holeczi retired after 31 years with the U.S. Postal Service, though he continues to play music. Akers spent 21 years on active duty with the Army, then entered the computer industry.

Lorenzen left performing entirely. Prior to being drafted, he had acted and directed theater in Chicago, and did some broadcasting to pay rent. “Everything was about advancing my career and becoming a star,” he says. “I got to Vietnam and started performing for those guys and saw what they were going through. It changed me. All of a sudden, it became about the audience, and the audience wasn't the same. Performing in Vietnam seemed important. Performing here just didn't. No one would miss one less entertainer or actor here. There was no difference to be made.” He went into finance, then publishing and finally consulting.

A retired theater professor, Holen is working on a documentary about CMTS titled “Theatre Vietnam: Stages of Healing.” In interviews, the former entertainers describe what it was like trying to lift troops' spirits even as the war chipped away at their own. They remember the cheers and beers after the shows, but they also think a lot about the men who didn't make it home.

Holen can close his eyes and picture the soldier in a wheelchair whose face turned gray and head fell forward during one show. Akers is haunted by a strike that wiped out advisers and elders in a village where his band had just played. And Holeczi hasn't forgotten the day he arrived by chopper to sing for an Army unit in the delta. Only seven soldiers survived an ambush. He rode back to Bien Hoa aboard a plane with 70 body bags.

For Holen, reconnecting with his CMTS brothers and sisters has strengthened his belief that they did something unique for troops in a difficult and ugly war.

“When we had our reunion, you could pick up a conversation with anybody in that room,” he says. “It wasn't like a high school or college reunion. There was something magical about it because we all had the same kind of frightening, joyful experiences. This has been therapy for me.” 🌿

Matt Grills is managing editor of The American Legion Magazine.



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*Army National Guard
veteran Calie Craddock, 23,
is the commander of Post
400 at North Dakota State
University. Photo by Amy C. Elliott*

The Legion on CAMPUS

New posts are springing up at colleges across the country, reaching out to student veterans.

BY ANDY ROMEY

Kim Mezger saw the value in creating a group in which veterans at her commuter college in Indiana could bond.

Calie Craddock, attending a large university, was determined to engage in community volunteer efforts with others who had served in uniform.

Monte Warren, a faculty member and student at yet another university, wanted to extend his commitment to service by giving back to a younger generation of veterans.

These veterans realized their visions at three of The American Legion's newest posts. Each of these posts – established at a college or university – offers its members something akin to the camaraderie they knew and experienced in the military.

Open to veterans among their school's alumni, faculty and students, these on-campus posts are a welcome support system for members, many of whom are fresh out of the service and looking for guidance with VA claims, education benefits, schoolwork or the general stresses of being one of only a few veterans in a sea of students with no military experience. Additionally, the posts give veterans on campus a unified voice – backed by The American Legion's name – that can speak to veterans issues on campus.

Legion campus posts include University Veterans Post 360 at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), NDSU Post 400 at North Dakota State University in Fargo, and Post 397 at Hodges University in Naples, Fla. All three are bringing together student veterans eager to help others on campus who served.

University Veterans Post 360 Founded in November 2011, Post 360 is the first American Legion post created on a college campus.

Representatives from the Department of Indiana gave a presentation to student veterans attending IUPUI, but instead of trying to recruit them into the state's headquarters post, they pitched the idea of the group forming its own post.

Kim Mezger, an Air Force veteran, was intrigued. She thought a Legion post would be a good fit for IUPUI, given the school's large number of student veterans and commuter culture. Most students drive to the downtown Indianapolis campus for class, then return home when their day is over, spending little time outside of lecture halls.

This kind of arrangement is great for older students and young student veterans who are marrying and starting families. It isn't, however, ideal for building peer groups or making connections with those of similar backgrounds.

"With many of these groups, especially at a school like this, you may never see each other on campus or after you graduate," says Mezger, who serves as Post 360's vice commander.

Already a member of veterans clubs and a veterans honors society at IUPUI, she gathered 15 other student vets who would eventually become the post's charter members. Mezger also recruited her husband, Kevin, an Air Force and Army veteran who has no ties to IUPUI but was willing to take on the role of post commander as a way to assist student veterans.

Kevin remembers the '90s, when he had just separated from the service and felt out of place in a lecture hall packed with teens who were years younger than him.

"I remember sitting in a classroom where there were 200 students, and I was hearing someone talk about their recreational drug use," Kevin says. "I too have gone through coming out of the

military and going right into school, working a full-time job and trying to raise a family. Kim and I understand the struggles and want to help (student veterans) as much as possible.”

With more than 50 members now, Post 360 offers plenty of opportunities for that. Juan Trejo, a recent IUPUI graduate who served in the National Guard, didn't know how to enroll in VA until the commander took him there.

“Kevin helped me get into the VA system,” Trejo says. “I just kept putting it off and he kept telling me I had to do it. Finally he came over – took a whole half day off – and explained it. We went over to the VA and got me hooked up.”

HOW TO BOOST THE LEGION'S PRESENCE AT A NEARBY SCHOOL

- Approach your local university's veterans club and ask to make a presentation about the benefits of starting an American Legion post on campus.
- Invite local student veterans to district meetings, explaining how the Legion can help them.
- Create a mentor-mentee program by which Legionnaires from a nearby post can help guide student veterans through their educational careers and into the professional world.
- Offer American Legion services to nearby colleges and universities. This is especially important if the school is small and lacks resources for veterans, VA claims and education benefits.
- Participate in the school's patriotic, military and veterans events.

Need more guidance? Contact Steve Gonzalez, assistant director of the Legion's Economic Division, at sgonzalez@legion.org.

Post 360's older members help mentor the younger veterans, who are dealing with adult responsibilities while a lot of their classmates are thinking about their weekend plans.

“Having a post like this provides a place for those veterans to talk to people who've been through what they've been through,” says Jose Sandoval, who served in the Army National Guard. “There's an instant brotherhood even without knowing them. Even if they haven't been in the war and they've just been in the military, we have that common bond.”

Clinton Holsinger, another of the post's charter members and a recent IUPUI graduate, says he was relieved to find a group where he could meet other veterans. “In undergrad, I was a full-time student,” he says. “I wasn't working full time. I feel more involved now than I did back then.”

Cultivating this kinship is essential to helping student veterans succeed academically and in life, Kevin says.

“(Veterans) don't learn the same way, or they have trouble because of their experiences,” he says. “Vets are willing to help each other out. They'll meet for a cup of coffee and work their way through it.”

NDSU Post 400 Even on a traditional university campus with dormitories and homecoming parades, an American Legion post has a niche to fill – as members of NDSU Post 400 have discovered.

North Dakota State University has about 15,000 students with an average age of 21. There, a group of young Legionnaires is working hard to reach out to the school's 700 or so veterans.

Though the university has a handful of veterans clubs, what's been missing until recently was one focusing on service to others, says Calie Craddock, the 23-year-old commander of Post 400 and a Army National Guard veteran. While deployed to Kuwait, she and a friend talked about the possibility of starting an American Legion post on campus.

Once Craddock returned to the United States, she did just that, founding NDSU Post 400 last year. The Legion's name and reputation fit best her vision of offering student veterans opportunities for volunteerism.

“We already have quite a few veterans outreach organizations on campus, and the post seemed to be a natural transition into more of a community-based activism program,” Craddock says. “We have had veterans organizations on campus that haven't had the clout necessary. What's awesome about the Legion is ... it's a tried-and-true organization that can support us while we pursue endeavors.”

Post 400 and its 40 members have participated in charity races and other events on campus, along with organizing focus groups to help identify issues facing NDSU veterans. They also joined a



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“It’s difficult to duplicate the camaraderie you had in the service, but a lot of the aspects are there with the post.”

Robert Dillon, Desert Storm veteran and member of Florida Post 397



Photo by Amy C. Elliott

local nonprofit in hosting a fundraiser for a local Guardsman who has a brain tumor, at nearby Legion Post 2 in downtown Fargo.

Post 2 has a membership of mostly Vietnam War and World War II veterans. These Legionnaires have acted as mentors to the members of NDSU Post 400, advising them on how to grow their post and fulfill their mission of supporting their campus and community. Post 400 repaid the good will by lending its younger, able-bodied members to repair Post 2’s roof over the summer.

Through activities like these, Post 400’s members say they’re enjoying, again, that brotherhood they knew in the military.

“We do want to be that beacon of light and give that camaraderie that the service provides,” Craddock says.

That’s what appealed to Megan Tiegs, a Guardsman and NDSU junior, and persuaded her to become a member of the Legion.

“All of my grandparents are very active in The American Legion, actually, in posts around my hometown,” she says. “I thought it would be something cool to join – kind of like a family thing. It really interested me as a college student, to know that there are other people on campus who are going through some of the same things as

me, and who could identify with having come from being on duty.”

Before Army reservist Nathan Paler joined the post last fall, he recognized a few other student veterans in passing, but says he never got to know any of them.

“I’m a little less on edge than I was,” Paler says. “Just walking across campus, you can tell who is in the military. Now that I know a lot more faces, I feel a lot more comfortable.”

Ultimately, Craddock would like to see Post 400 extend the bond of NDSU student veterans beyond graduation, keeping them in touch as alumni and as employment connections. They can support each other as they navigate the professional world, she says.

“We can have longevity in the post but also breed really strong individuals who look out for each other,” she says.

Florida Post 397 At Hodges University, a commuter college split between campuses in Naples and Fort Myers, Fla., it’s typical for students to attend class and never get to know each other.

Last summer, a group of student veterans led by alumnus John Ebling started Post 397 to change that. With about 300 veterans attending Hodges –

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“We can give (veterans at the school) somewhere to go for camaraderie.”

Kenneth A. Worthy, Air Force veteran
and charter member of Post 397



Photo by Amy C. Elliott

about 10 percent of the student population – Post 397 intends to serve as a rallying point for veterans on both campuses who are looking for a place to meet and get to know other students who have served in the military.

“We can give (veterans at the school) somewhere to go for camaraderie,” says Kenneth Worthy, a charter member of Post 397. “We can give them veterans, who they are used to being around. A lot of them have been in the military since they were 17 or 18 years old, gone on to combat and then come out. It takes them a while to adjust, so it’s best for them to be around people who they know.”

Like Mezger at IUPUI, Ebling heard a presentation given by membership representatives – in this case, the Legion’s Department of Florida – to a university veterans club, explaining how a Legion post might be a good fit for a campus like Hodges. Inspired, Ebling went on to found the post and become its adjutant.

“Creating a post on campus is an innovative way of recruiting Legion members,” Ebling says. “A lot of the new veterans aren’t joining Legion posts like they have in the past because they have families and they are looking to further their careers. They aren’t going to join an organization just for the social benefits.”

So far, the post has attracted about 30 members, many of whom weren’t Legionnaires before joining and signed up because they wanted to be part of a veterans-oriented activity on campus.

Monte Warren, a faculty member and student at Hodges, signed up so that he could share his experiences from 24 years of Army National Guard service with the next generation.

“I really want to identify with and convey to future students and future veterans what I went through,” Warren says. “My story isn’t as extreme as some others, but ... I want to be able to assist them and help them with the (transition).”

Helping Hodges’ student veterans is the post’s top priority, whether that means providing peer support or homework assistance.

“It’s difficult to duplicate the camaraderie you had in the service, but a lot of the aspects are there with the post,” says Robert Dillon, an Army veteran. “A lot of us meet in the cafeteria and talk, we help each other with homework issues, we ask each other how things are going at home.”

Andy Romey is an assistant editor for The American Legion.



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A Friendship Rekindled

United States, Philippines mend fences as a deterrent to China's aggressions.

BY ALAN W. DOWD

“It is an irreversible process,” an anonymous U.S. official sighed to *The New York Times* in late 1991, after the Philippines ordered U.S. military forces to leave the strategic archipelago nation. “The bottom line is that we are gone.”

Not exactly. Two decades after that departure, common interests and threats have brought Manila and Washington back together – and opened a new chapter in a fitful relationship.

Deeds China’s behavior is a major factor in the tectonic shift from the early 1990s, when the Philippines sent the United States packing. With the Cold War thawed, Manila saw little need for the U.S. security umbrella, Washington recognized the diminishing returns of force-projection bases in inhospitable countries, and most observers saw China as a benign economic power.

Beijing’s behavior has changed that perception. Ignoring former leader Deng Xiaoping’s advice that China “disguise its ambition and hide its claws,” recent Chinese leaders speak in blustery, bruising language.

In early 2012, for instance, then-President Hu Jintao called on the Chinese navy to “make extended preparations for military combat.” Against whom or what, he didn’t say.

His successor, Xi Jinping, declared last year,

U.S. and Filipino soldiers take part in a joint mock beachfront assault on the shore of Ulugan Bay on Palawan Island in 2012, near a real-life standoff between Manila and Beijing. Getty Images

“We must insist on using battle-ready standards in undertaking combat preparations, constantly enhancing officers’ and troops’ thinking about serving in battle, and leading troops into battle and training troops for battle. And we must insist on rigorous military training based on the needs of actual combat.”

Given Beijing’s skyrocketing military budget, this doesn’t seem to be empty rhetoric. On a percentage basis, the growth in military-related spending by China is unparalleled: from \$20 billion annually in 2002 to an estimated \$180 billion annually a decade later.

According to the Pentagon’s latest report on China’s military power, Beijing now deploys 79 principal surface combatants and 50 submarines and is investing in an array of “anti-access and area-denial weapons,” including bombers, submarines and sea-skimming missiles capable of attacking ships from 1,500 kilometers away, “particularly aircraft carriers in the western Pacific Ocean.”

In short, Beijing’s burgeoning air-sea-missile force is designed to dissuade the United States from coming to the aid of allies and partners like the Philippines.

To be sure, Beijing's military budget is a fraction of Washington's – but as Washington invests less in defense and Beijing invests more, that fraction is getting bigger by the year. Moreover, the United States plays a global role as first responder and last line of defense – China does not – and its military assets are spread around the globe. China's are concentrated in its own neighborhood.

As for China's neighborhood, Beijing has made outlandish claims in the South China Sea, an area that holds some 200 billion barrels of oil. How outlandish? By international convention, a country's territorial waters extend 12 miles from its coastline. Beyond that, nations observe an exclusive economic zone (EEZ), which extends 200 miles off a country's coastline and allows for exploration rights. Beijing expects others to observe its EEZ as sovereign Chinese territory – which it is not – while refusing to respect the EEZs of neighbors like the Philippines, Vietnam and Japan. It even claims waters and islands 500 miles from the Chinese mainland. Its justification: a map created by Chinese cartographers in 1947.

Based on that map reading, Beijing has claimed territories within 50 miles of the Philippines, fired on fishing boats in those waters, and recently earmarked \$1.6 billion to build ports and airfields on islands long claimed by the Philippines. In fact, *The Washington Times* reports that China has eight military bases on reefs so claimed.

“The intrusions are getting more aggressive,” says Secretary of Foreign Affairs Albert del Rosario.

Adds Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe: “The South China Sea seems set to become a ‘Lake Beijing.’”

Dividends The rise of China, however, is only one piece of the shifting security environment in the Philippines' dangerous neighborhood.

Given the sometimes-difficult history between the United States and the Philippines, Manila was not eager to rush back into Washington's arms when Beijing began flexing its muscles. But after 9/11, which exposed a global terrorist network stretching from the Horn of Africa to Afghanistan to Mindanao Island, the United States showed that it was interested in building a more balanced relationship with the Philippines.

Working together, U.S. and Philippines forces have crippled terrorist groups linked to al-Qaida and revived regions once written off as terrorist safe havens. This partnership-oriented approach

not only paid dividends in the fight against jihadist groups but also paved the way for cooperation on security challenges obscured by the smoke and fog of 9/11 – like China.

With Beijing bullying its maritime neighbors, then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared in 2010 that “the United States has a national interest in freedom of navigation, open access to Asia's maritime commons and respect for international law in the South China Sea” – a clear signal that the United States would not tolerate Chinese attempts to dominate international waterways or annex disputed territories.

But words seldom deter aggressors, which underscores the importance of efforts by the United States, the Philippines and other partners to revitalize regional alliances and defenses.

In 2012, Manila offered facilities at Subic Bay and Clark Air Base as servicing hubs for U.S. aircraft and warships. Reuters reports that more than 70 U.S. warships stopped at Subic Bay in 2012. Clark hosts more than 100 U.S. military planes each month. Washington is quietly working with Manila to secure access to other facilities in the Philippines – including bases in the northwest, which would position U.S. assets much closer to China. In addition, some observers conclude that a new seaport under construction by the Philippines in the Spratly Islands will become a jumping-off point for U.S. air, naval and counterterrorism assets.

Even as Washington takes tentative steps back toward Subic Bay and Clark, the Philippines is scrambling to rebuild its woefully underequipped military. (Investing less than 1 percent of its GDP on defense, the Philippines ranks 136th in the world.) President Benigno Aquino III pledges to spend \$1.8 billion over the next four years to beef up Manila's military – a significant amount given that annual defense outlays are just \$2.9 billion. Defense spending was increased by a jaw-dropping 81 percent in 2011.

Yet these new figures cannot cover up the Philippines' deficiencies. Consider the state of the Philippine Air Force, which retired the last of its fighter jets – antique F-5s – in 2005.

Diamonds The United States and other Pacific partners are helping Manila rebuild.

Washington has sent helicopters, cutters and land-based radar systems to enable Manila to monitor its western waters. The two allies are conducting large-scale military exercises. A 2012

exercise, for instance, featured 6,000 troops and mock coastal invasions, perhaps foreshadowing operations to retake an island. Not coincidentally, Manila has deployed 800 additional troops to the Spratly Islands. “It is better to defend than retake islands,” a Philippine general shrewdly observes.

Published reports indicate that Manila and Washington expect hundreds of Marines to rotate through the Philippines annually. “We would like the Americans to come more often,” del Rosario says – a refreshing change from the “Yankee go home” rhetoric of 1991. Washington needs to take Manila up on the offer – and do more to strengthen Philippine defenses. The Obama administration pledged just \$30 million in military aid to Manila last year. Yemen, by comparison, receives \$100 million in U.S. military aid annually.

In a similar vein, Egypt’s not-so-friendly government just received a shipment of U.S. F-16s. It’s worth noting that Manila has also requested F-16s from Washington. “We have the capacity to buy brand-new, but not from America,” Aquino recently announced, underscoring how serious he is about fielding an air force capable of at least putting up a fight. Del Rosario calls it a “minimum credible defense posture.”

Abe envisions “a strategy whereby Australia, India, Japan and the U.S. state of Hawaii form a diamond to safeguard the maritime commons” – and wants to deploy “Japan’s capabilities in this security diamond.” The Philippines can be found inside Abe’s security diamond. Not coincidentally, Tokyo is providing the Philippines with 12 new cutters and recently signed a long-term military cooperation agreement with Manila, enfolded exchanges of personnel and technology. The Philippines is open to hosting Japanese forces and may join the Cope North military exercises, which include the United States, Japan and Australia.

Finally, there may be more help on the way. Just before he left his Pentagon post, then-Defense Secretary Leon Panetta hinted at NATO “helping to strengthen security institutions in Asia.” Likewise, Abe says he wants “Britain and France to stage a comeback in terms of participating in strengthening Asia’s security.”

Deterrence History weighs heavily on the U.S.-Philippines relationship. Consider the poignant story of Adm. Robert J. Kelly, who happened to be commander of the Pacific Fleet when the United States completed its withdrawal from the Philippines in late 1992. During the handover ceremony, as the *Los Angeles Times*

reported, “His deep voice cracked when he said his father will stay behind; he is buried with 17,201 other World War II dead in a U.S. cemetery near Manila.”

Beyond the decades of shared sacrifice, history also reminds us that emerging powers such as China must be handled with care. Like today’s China, the Germany of the late 1800s was rising and restless. Washington was deeply concerned about Germany encroaching upon U.S. interests in the Pacific and the Americas. In fact, one of Washington’s motivations in moving against the Spanish empire’s possessions in the Philippines was to block German expansion. “We could not turn them over to France or Germany – our commercial rivals in the Orient,” President William McKinley argued.

Washington’s concerns were validated by Kaiser Wilhelm II’s provocative deployment of a fleet to Manila after Adm. George Dewey’s victory over the Spanish. Germany’s attempted blockade of Venezuela a few years later almost drew the United States into war.

This episode reminds us of the importance of deterrence, which can work to keep the peace with China – and keep the Philippines secure. A 2008 Pentagon report noted that China has “deep respect for U.S. military power.” But with the United States in the midst of massive military retrenchment, one wonders how long that reservoir of respect will last.

By definition, sea power is an essential element of American deterrent strength in the Pacific. Regrettably, though, Washington is allowing U.S. sea power to atrophy. At the height of the Reagan buildup, for example, the U.S. fleet boasted 594 ships. Today’s fleet numbers just 285. Vice Adm. Tom Copeman, commander of Naval Surface Force, suggests the ships in the surface fleet “don’t have enough people, don’t have enough training, don’t have enough parts and don’t have enough time to get ready to deploy.”

Does that sound like a credible deterrent? Only Xi Jinping and his generals can answer that question. If they don’t believe they would pay a high price for seizing Philippine territories or turning the South China Sea into “Lake Beijing,” then deterrence has failed. And America will have opened the door to what Churchill called “temptations to a trial of strength.”

That’s precisely what we don’t want. 🇺🇸

Alan W. Dowd is contributing editor for The American Legion Magazine.

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Tulsa

AUG. 19-20
Muskogee, Okla.
Riders will end the second
day in Muskogee, Okla.

Pottsboro, Texas
Lunch hosted by
American Legion Post 231

Little Rock

AUG. 20-21
Stephenville, Texas
Riders will end the third
day in Stephenville, Texas

Killeen, Texas
Lunch at the Killeen Civic Center

Dallas

DAY-BY-DAY COVERAGE ON LEGION.ORG

American Legion media staff will be along for the ride once again this year, presenting stories, photos and videos of every leg in the journey from Indianapolis to Houston.

www.legion.org

On Facebook, search for
National American Legion Riders

AUG. 21-22
Seguin, Texas
Riders will end the fourth day
at American Legion Post 245

AUG. 22
League City, Texas
Riders will end the 2013 Legacy Run
at American Legion Post 554.

Houston

San Antonio



AUG. 18

Indianapolis

Riders will begin the 2013 Legacy Run at American Legion Post 64.

Effingham, Ill.

Lunch hosted by American Legion Post 120

AUG. 18-19

St. James, Mo.

Riders will end the first day at the Missouri Veterans Home

The 2013 American Legion Legacy Scholarship Run, sponsored by USAA, rumbles across the nation's midsection Aug. 18-22, raising money to help pay college tuition for young people who lost active-duty military parents on or after Sept. 11, 2001.

The run from American Legion National Headquarters in Indianapolis to national convention city Houston is expected to include nearly 500 motorcyclists, many of whom are American Legion Riders members. Participants can jump in at any time and ride a leg or two, as long as they register, or they can ride the entire route of approximately 1,500 miles.



Amy C. Elliott

The 2013 Legacy Run hopes to raise its fundraising bar for the eighth consecutive year. In 2012, the event brought in more than \$724,500 for the Legacy Scholarship Fund, an all-time record.

The five-day ride passes through Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas before the riders arrive at Post 554 in League City, Texas, near Houston.

Plans are subject to change based on weather, road conditions, or when directed by law enforcement or public safety officials.

REGISTER ONLINE THROUGH AUG. 9

 www.legion.org/riders/registration

The Medicare maze

Options are numerous and can be confusing. Research and compare to choose the right health coverage for you.



BY J.J. MONTANARO


Medicare was established in 1965 as a program to help older Americans pay for their health care. This government-run health insurance is available to those 65 and older who (or whose spouse) paid Medicare payroll taxes for 10 years. Understand your options, because turning 65 means it's decision time:

■ **Part A, Hospital Insurance** This plan covers hospital stays, skilled nursing, hospice and home health care (skilled, not custodial). There is no monthly premium for those who paid sufficient Medicare taxes while working, but there are significant costs. For example, the deductible for an inpatient hospital stay in 2013 is \$1,184 per benefit period. Each benefit period begins 60 days following your last hospital stay. You have to pay this deductible before Medicare kicks in, and you could be responsible for more than one deductible each year. You'll also have to pay \$296 per day for days 61 through 90 of a stay, and your share increases for longer stays.

■ **Part B, Medical Insurance** This plan covers medically necessary doctor visits, outpatient care, durable medical equipment (oxygen, wheelchairs, etc.) and preventive services. In 2013, costs include a monthly premium of \$104.90, typically deducted from Social Security. Individuals with incomes of more than \$85,000 (\$170,000 for a couple) will pay an increased monthly premium for Part B. Because there is a time lag for the IRS to report income, your premium is based on your income from two years earlier. In addition to the monthly premium, there is an annual deductible, which in 2013 is

\$147. Beyond that, you will pay 20 percent of the Medicare-approved amount. There is no cap on how much you could pay.

■ **Part C, Medicare Advantage** Here's where the confusion can begin. While the name, Part C, would seem to indicate a continuation of the hospital and medical insurance provided by parts A and B, it is actually a separate plan that you can use to tap into your Medicare benefits. To choose a Medicare Advantage plan you must first enroll in both parts A and B (sometimes referred to as Original Medicare). Part C plans are offered by private insurance companies. The vast majority operate similar to one of the two types of plans available and familiar to most workers, health maintenance organizations (HMOs) and preferred provider organizations (PPOs). These plans are required to provide the same services as Original Medicare and may offer additional services such as vision or dental. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, 82 percent of Part C plans also offer prescription drug coverage. So if you choose carefully, you will not have to add separate coverage. Most plans charge a monthly premium that, according to Kaiser, was expected to average about \$34 per month for HMO-type plans in 2013. But note that the monthly premium, deductibles, required co-payments, offered services and maximum out-of-pocket cost (by law, no more than \$6,700) will vary from plan to plan. Your choice of physicians and service providers may also be limited if you join a Part C plan. If you're comfortable with the structure and selection of physicians, it could



allow you to save on out-of-pocket health-care expenses compared to Original Medicare. You'll still be required to pay the Part B monthly premium in addition to your Part C premium.

■ **Part D, Prescription Drug Coverage** It's possible to get prescription drug coverage through Part C. But if it doesn't cover prescriptions, or you elect to use parts A and B instead, you can get prescription drug coverage through Part D insurance offered through private companies. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the average cost of Part D is \$30 per month. Premiums, deductibles (\$325 max) and co-payments, as well as covered medications and costs, will vary from plan to plan, so you'll want to do your homework. Like Part B, Part D premiums can increase based on your income. A word of caution: most Part D plans have a coverage gap or "donut hole" between \$2,970 and \$4,750 of prescription drug costs. Within that gap, you'll be required to pay the entire cost of your medications.

Medicare Supplement insurance Individuals covered by parts A and B may want to purchase additional coverage through a private insurer to help pay the costs Medicare doesn't cover. These policies are called Medicare Supplement, or Medigap. Examples of covered costs can include the 20 percent co-insurance as well as various co-payments and deductibles associated with covered services. Supplements also cover some costs not covered by Medicare, such as emergency care when outside the United States. If you are enrolled in a Part C plan, you don't need a Medicare Supplement plan and cannot buy one.

These offerings are standardized and labeled with letters for easy comparison. The plan you purchase will dictate your coverage. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Coverage publishes a thorough guide, "Choosing a Medigap Policy."

A few highlights regarding this coverage: first, you have six months following the first day in which you are both 65 and enrolled in Medicare Part B to sign up for Medicare Supplement insurance without any medical underwriting. If you sign up after this, you may have to pay a higher premium or be rejected for coverage. Second, there are significant out-of-pocket costs associated with your care, and a Medicare Supplement policy can help defray them. Your state insurance department can be a helpful resource in comparing policies and providers in your area.

Medicare enrollment periods

- **Initial** – Begins three months before your 65th birthday and ends three months after you turn 65.
- **General** – Jan. 1 to March 31 each year. Open for those who didn't sign up for Part A and/or B when first eligible. Changes effective July 1.
- **Special** – Those covered by a group plan based on current employment can sign up any time covered by group plan, or during eight-month period following the end of the coverage or employment, without penalty.
- **Open** – Oct. 15 to Dec. 7 each year. Switch in or out of the Medicare Advantage Plan and add/drop Prescription Drug Plan. Changes effective Jan. 1 the following year.
- **5-Star Special** – If you would like to switch to a 5-star-rated Medicare Advantage or Prescription Drug plan, you can do so from Dec. 8 to Nov. 30.

Download a copy of the "Medicare & You" booklet:

 www.medicare.gov/pubs/pdf/10050.pdf

Changing plans During the final quarter of each year, there is an annual enrollment period in which you can adjust your coverage. For example, you could switch from Original Medicare to a Medicare Advantage plan, or add or drop prescription drug coverage. Because costs vary and coverages change, take time to assess your current plan(s) and make adjustments as necessary.

Those with limited income can get assistance through a Medicare program called Extra Help. Individual states also have programs designed to help those in need. Personalized Medicare counseling is available through State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs).

This is a complex topic. But you can save money and avoid headaches by choosing the right coverage at the right time. Plus, your decisions are not "one and done." What makes sense at 65 might not at 70 or 75. Compare your options, and stay on top of your health and health-care coverage. 🌿

J.J. Montanaro is a certified financial planner with USAA Financial Planning Services, one of the USAA family of companies. USAA is The American Legion's preferred provider for financial services.

HAVE MEDICARE QUESTIONS? CALL USAA

For each new USAA member who purchases any product, the company contributes funds to American Legion programs. Join online at www.usaa.com/legion or call toll-free (877) 699-2654.

REMEMBRANCE



American Legion National Commander Jim Koutz and Legionnaire Robert Oeth of Indiana fold the U.S. flag at the end of the day at the Brittany American Cemetery near St. James, France. Photo by Jeff Steffer

A time for honor

National commander among few U.S. officials in Normandy to accept the gratitude of France and pay homage to lives lost there in World War II.

American Legion National Commander Jim Koutz and American Legion Auxiliary National President Peggy Thomas raised the U.S. flag over 9,387 graves of heroes at the Normandy American Cemetery on June 6. The following day, they helped lower Old Glory at the less-visited Brittany American Cemetery, where 4,408 U.S. World War II troops are laid to rest.

Koutz and Thomas were among few U.S. dignitaries in Normandy for ceremonies to honor the sacrifices of the D-Day invasion that led to the Allied victory in the European theater of World War II. For the first time in recent memory, no U.S. military personnel were involved, due to federal budget cuts.

The commander, representing all U.S. veterans, joined the Auxiliary president in ceremonies at the two American

Battle Monuments Commission cemeteries in Normandy and for observances in Ste. Mère-Église – the first town liberated in the invasion of June 6, 1944 – and near La Fièvre Bridge, where one of the bloodiest small-arms battles in the history of U.S. warfare was fought 69 years ago.

Koutz and Thomas received honorary memberships in Amis des Vétérans Américains (AVA), a French organization dedicated to preserving the memory of the liberation. Koutz was also chosen to unveil a new AVA monument at La Fièvre, dedicated to airborne forces who fought in the invasion. On the way to Normandy, the commander and president visited the birthplace of The American Legion in Paris.

Read more about this year's D-Day ceremonies online:

 www.legion.org/commander

GALLERY



Left: American Legion National Commander Jim Koutz and American Legion Auxiliary President Peggy Thomas raise the U.S. flag to begin a day of commemoration on the 69th anniversary of the D-Day invasion in France.

Above: Koutz and Thomas follow Maurice and Henri-Jean Renaud, sons of the D-Day mayor of Ste. Mère-Église, in a wreath-laying ceremony near La Fièvre Bridge on June 9.

Lower left: As a new honorary member of Amis des Vétérans Américains – a local group dedicated to support and remembrance in Normandy for U.S. veterans – Koutz was chosen to join retired Col. Keith Nightingale in the unveiling of a new monument near La Fièvre Bridge.

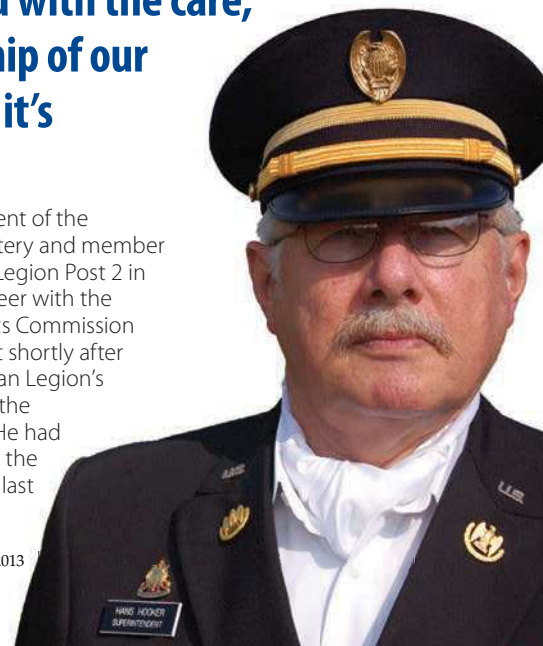
Photos by Jeff Stoffer

VERBATIM

“For me, it’s not a profession. It’s not a job. For me, working for this commission – being entrusted with the care, the custodianship of our nation’s dead – it’s a calling.”

Hans Hooker, superintendent of the Normandy American Cemetery and member of Flanders Field American Legion Post 2 in Belgium, whose 24-year career with the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) ended in retirement shortly after he coordinated The American Legion’s ceremony at Normandy on the 69th anniversary of D-Day. He had served as superintendent at the Normandy cemetery for his last three years with ABMC.

AUGUST 2013



CAPITOL HILL

Good enough for thee but not for me

Congressional leaders from both parties are engaged in behind-the-scenes talks with the aim of exempting lawmakers and their aides from the insurance exchanges mandated by President Obama's signature health-care overhaul, the Affordable Care Act, *Politico* reports.

"If Capitol Hill leaders move forward with the plan," according to the report, "they risk being dubbed hypocrites by their political rivals and the American public. By removing themselves from a key Obamacare component, lawmakers and aides would be held to a different standard than the people who put them in office."

The main rationale for such an exemption is concern that the higher premiums triggered by the exchanges – which could cause each employee's share of health-care insurance costs to leap by thousands of dollars – could cause an exodus of staffers from Capitol Hill.



POLLS

Our fellow Americans

- 6** Percent of registered voters who believe Osama bin Laden is alive
- 7** Percent of voters who say the moon landing was faked
- 11** Percent of voters who believe the government allowed 9/11 to happen
- 14** Percent of voters who believe in Bigfoot
- 21** Percent of voters who believe that a UFO crashed in New Mexico in 1947
- 28** Percent of voters who believe Saddam Hussein was involved in the 9/11 attacks
- 29** Percent of voters who believe aliens exist
- 51** Percent of voters who believe there was a larger conspiracy at work in the assassination of John F. Kennedy



Read more online: www.publicpolicypolling.com

NATIONAL CONVENTION

Workshops, training available

Those attending The American Legion's 95th National Convention in Houston are invited to participate in several mini-workshops, including sessions covering membership, Americanism, Children & Youth, public relations, military outreach and financial planning. Classes will be offered between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Aug. 24 and Aug. 26 in the George R. Brown Convention Center, Hall B, Level 1. Each class will last between 30 and 45 minutes, including time for questions and answers.

Other workshops and events may be open for pre-registration, or may not require it. Updates will be posted online at www.legion.org.

News anchor Cosby, singer Winans to be part of opening ceremony

Television news anchor, radio host and bestselling author Rita Cosby will serve as master of ceremonies for the National Convention Opening Ceremony on Aug. 27. Cosby has worked for Fox News and MSNBC, and has been a special correspondent for CBS' "Inside Edition" since 2007.

Gospel and R&B artist BeBe Winans will perform some of his hit songs. Interviews with Cosby and Winans are posted online.

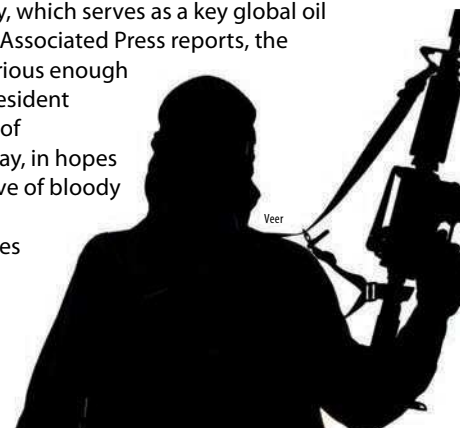
www.legion.org/convention



WAR ON TERROR

Nigeria under siege

It appears that Nigeria is the newest front in the war on terror. Jihadist insurgents are laying siege to several towns in the northeastern part of the strategic country, which serves as a key global oil supplier. As The Associated Press reports, the insurgency is serious enough that Nigeria's president declared a state of emergency in May, in hopes of quelling a wave of bloody attacks that has claimed 1,600 lives since 2010.



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Photo by Eldon Lindsay

LEGION BASEBALL

Legion World Series on ESPN3 Aug. 16-20

The American Legion Baseball World Series (ALWS) – scheduled for Aug. 16-20 in Shelby, N.C. – will be broadcast live on ESPN3.com for the third straight year. The games can be viewed on PCs, Macs and mobile devices free of charge. The streaming service reaches approximately 70 million homes, at no additional cost to those who receive high-speed Internet connections or cable-TV video subscriptions from affiliated service providers.

ESPN3.com is also available to approximately 21 million U.S. college students and U.S.-based military personnel, via computers connected to on-campus and on-base networks.

The ALWS Executive Committee in Shelby is once again adding top entertainment to the event with a community festival and live performances by five award-winning musical acts: Sara Evans, Ronnie Milsap, MercyMe, The Afters and Aaron Shust.

A faith-based concert by MercyMe (returning to Shelby for a second straight year) and featuring special guests The Afters and Shust kicks off the event Aug. 10, along with the 7th Inning Stretch Festival at Uptown Shelby Court Square. Milsap, a North Carolina native and Grammy Award-winning country music singer, will perform during The American Legion National Commander's Reception on Aug. 14. And Evans, an award-winning country music singer and songwriter, performs Aug. 15, following the Banquet of Champions dinner.

See the full schedule of games and events online:

 www.legion.org/baseball

VERBATIM

It's forgotten how to rain down here.



Albuquerque Journal

Phil King, a hydrologist with New Mexico State University and the Elephant Butte Irrigation District, saying that drought conditions in parts of the Southwest are at their worst in years

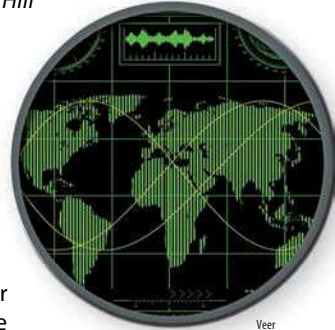
WAR ON TERROR

Changing targets

Even as Pakistan's government rails against U.S. drone strikes, Iraq's government – alarmed by the movement of jihadist fighters into and out of Syria – is considering allowing the drones to carry out strikes along the Iraq-Syria frontier, *The Hill* reports.

The Iraqi government has inquired about drone strikes, according to an AP report. However, Washington is “waiting to respond until the top level of Iraqi leadership makes a formal request.”

U.S. intelligence and defense agencies appear eager to answer any request from Baghdad in the affirmative. According to *The Hill*, “CIA officials have begun assembling targeting intelligence on Islamic militant groups like al-Nusra and AQI in Syria in preparation for possible armed drone strikes against those terror cells.” The CIA has also shifted targeting analysts from operations in Pakistan and Yemen to Syria.



HONOR & REMEMBRANCE

'A true love story'

Bill Angle and Carolyn Heck dated for five years in the 1940s, including the time he served in the Navy.

They kept in touch through letters during the war. But in 1946, they went their separate ways, eventually marrying other people and raising families.

One day – more than 60 years after they broke up – widower Bill read that Carolyn's husband had died. After steeling his nerves for two days, he called her.

They rekindled their friendship, and after a while, Bill asked Carolyn if she'd be willing to return to Illinois. She was, and they wed Sept. 1, 2007.

Carolyn died earlier this year. “It's a true love story,” Bill says on the Legion's Honor & Remembrance web page. “We really loved each other. I think so many people are afraid of marriage. You see so many people alone, and I think that's so sad. We got married when we were 82, and we enjoyed our time together.”



Photo courtesy Bill Angle

Read more Honor & Remembrance stories online:

 www.legion.org/honor

 [Like the Honor & Remembrance Facebook page](#)

DISASTER RELIEF

Legion provides aid for tornado victims

Hours after a deadly tornado swept through Moore, Okla., on May 20, the American Legion committed up to \$1 million through the Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program and National Emergency Fund to assist veterans and their families affected by the storm. Nearly \$500,000 in grants were dispersed to more than 250 families. The twister killed 24 people, destroyed or damaged nearly 13,000 homes and affected more than 33,000 lives.

As dawn broke the day after the storms, the Legion joined Soldier's Wish on the ground in Moore to provide hot meals for storm victims and relief workers, and to help with cleanup and recovery.

This joint effort became the first of a summer-long series of events, sponsored by the History Channel, in



Legionsnaire Frank Froman's home was destroyed by the EF5 tornado that struck Moore, Okla., in May. Photo by Mark Zimmerman

which Legion members work side by side with Soldier's Wish staff to help grant wishes to servicemembers and their families.

To apply for aid or to donate to TFA and NEF:

 www.legion.org/oklahomafund

Read more about Soldier's Wish:

 www.legion.org/soldierswish

EDUCATION

VA work-study program an option



Q: *I am a disabled veteran, and my daughter is entitled to receive Dependents' Educational Assistance benefits under Chapter 35. She is currently enrolled at San Diego State University and is having a hard time finding employment. I heard about VA's work-study program, which assists with the cost of attending school. Is my daughter eligible?*

A: The VA work-study allowance is available to persons training on a full-time or three-quarters-time basis under:

- Post-9/11 GI Bill (38 U.S. Code Chapter 33) (veterans and

transfer-of-entitlement recipients)

- Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (38 U.S. Code Chapter 30)
- REAP participants
- Montgomery GI Bill – Selected Reserve (10 U.S. Code Chapter 1606)
- Post-Vietnam Era Veterans' Educational Assistance (38 U.S. Code Chapter 32)
- Dependents' Educational Assistance (38 U.S. Code Chapter 35) (only while training in a state)
- National Call to Service participants
- Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program (38 U.S. Code Chapter 31)

VA selects students for the program based on several factors, including:

- Ability of the student to complete the work-study contract before the end of his or her eligibility for education benefits
- Job availability within normal commuting distance of the student

The number of applicants selected depends on the availability of VA-related work at the school or at VA facilities in the area. Participants will earn an hourly wage equal to the federal or state minimum wage, whichever is greater.

Valerie Heffner, a Marine Corps veteran and member of American Legion Post 27 in Arizona, is a past vice president of the National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators. askvalerie@legion.org

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GALLERY



F-16A Fighting Falcons and F-15C and F-15E Eagles fly over burning oil fields during Operation Desert Storm, which began on Jan. 17, 1991. U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Fernando Serna

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Gulf War reparations

Twenty-three Augusts after Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, Iraq is still paying its tiny southern neighbor war reparations. Kuwait is owed \$11.2 billion, according to a *Defense News* report. Post-Saddam Iraq is doing its best on compensation, however.

Kuwait received \$1.3 billion in January and \$1.13 billion in April, and Iraq deposits 5 percent of its oil revenues into a special fund for reparations. To date, Kuwait has received about \$30 billion; the United Nations set the total at \$41 billion.

VERBATIM

If you do something, somebody's going to like it and somebody is not going to like it. And if you do nothing, nobody will criticize you. But wouldn't that be a terrible life?

Former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, responding when asked which criticism of him is most ridiculous and which is most valid

U.S. News & World Report



BY THE NUMBERS

Tough times

According to recent polling conducted by Bellevue University in Nebraska reveals:

29

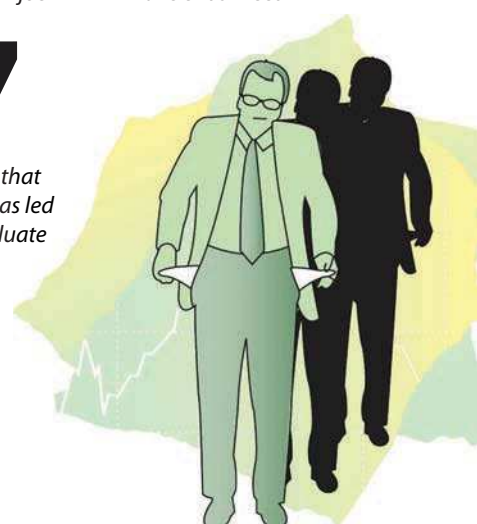
Percent of Americans looking for a new job

28

Percent struggling to make ends meet

47

Percent saying that the economy has led them to re-evaluate their careers



ASK A SERVICE OFFICER

Missed compensation and pension exam



Tracy L. Davis
Department Service Officer, Missouri

Q: I missed my disability compensation and pension (C&P) VA exam. What should I do?

A: After you've applied for C&P, you will receive a letter or phone call telling you when and where to

report for an examination. During a C&P exam, a doctor will evaluate your medical condition or conditions, and then send a report to the VA regional office where your claim will be processed. The office decides your disability compensation and pension eligibility.

VHA has only two options for noting your attendance at a C&P exam: "reported" or "failed to report." If your exam notification was returned by mail, you received notice after the exam date or you didn't attend for various reasons, "failed to report" is still noted in the system. I advise you to ensure that your local VA hospital or clinic has your current mailing address and phone number on file. Otherwise, you may not receive your C&P exam notice.

If you missed your exam, you may be able to reschedule it by calling the C&P unit at the VA hospital or clinic. You can explain in writing to VBA why you missed your exam and request a new one, or contact the VA regional office. If VHA has returned mail or other proof that you were not completely notified of the exam, it can help you in your request to VBA for a new one.

Contact an American Legion-accredited service officer in your state for further assistance:

www.legion.org/serviceofficers

Do you have a question for Department of Missouri Service Officer Tracy Davis about the claims process or veterans benefits in general? Send it to askso@legion.org.

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PERSONAL FINANCE



Avoid debt regret when buying a new car

Last fall, June Walbert and I shared some car-buying tips in this column. These included keeping your car payment(s) to 10 percent or less of your gross monthly income, checking your credit in advance, researching your car choices, understanding the total cost of ownership, and driving the car until the wheels fall off.

All this advice is solid. But recent news on the car-loan front has me back on the subject.

Recently, *The Wall Street Journal* highlighted a disturbing trend in its article "Introducing the 97-Month Car Loan." So with our focus firmly on the loan part of the car-buying process, here are three tips to keep you from disaster.

- **We don't need no stinkin' loan.** Being a cash buyer is the quickest way to ensure that car expenses aren't eating up too much of your budget. Just got a new car? Well, set up a savings account today and start stashing some money for that next vehicle purchase in 2020.

- **Maximize all the benefits.** Interest rates remain low, and you may be able to lock in consumer-friendly rates before you set foot in the dealership. This could free you up to take advantage of a cash-back offer in lieu of accepting the dealer's financing. Even if cash-back isn't available, you'll already have competitive financing in place – financing that the dealer can beat if he wants your business.

FOCUS ON FINANCES



J.J. MONTANARO

- **A 97-month car loan is not the way to make your car payment manageable.** Beyond that, 72- and 84-month loans are now commonplace in the market. According to Experian, the average car note at the end of last year was 65 months. Don't do it. If you use a loan, shoot for 48 months or fewer and don't go any more than 60. The longer the loan, the more interest you'll pay and the more likely you'll become "upside down" on

that loan, driving a car worth less than you owe on it.

To be clear, I'm a car guy. If there's anybody who understands the temptation to break these rules, it's me. But please take my advice. Granted, you may not leave the lot with the Italian racer of your dreams, but you won't be hit with a major dose of financial regret either. Happy shopping!

J.J. Montanaro is a certified financial planner for USAA, The American Legion's preferred provider of financial services. Submit questions for him online.

 www.legion.org/focusonfinances

Learn about USAA's Auto Circle or auto-buying and car-loan programs:

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HONOR & REMEMBRANCE

A surprising discovery at the WWII Museum

When an Indiana woman went to the National World War II Museum in New Orleans earlier this year, she hoped she might see a display or photos depicting her high school sweetheart, a Marine who was killed in the war.

Instead, Laura Mae Davis Burlingame discovered the diary in which Cpl. Thomas "Cotton" Jones wrote about her, *The Associated Press* reports.

"I didn't have any idea there was a diary in there," said the 90-year-old Mooresville, Ind., woman.

Before he was killed by a Japanese sniper's bullet, Jones' last request was for whoever found the diary to return it to the girl he loved. He died on Sept. 17, 1944, the third day of the U.S. assault on the Pacific island of Peleliu. When Jones went off to war, he and Burlingame (then Davis) were a couple but were not engaged.



Photo courtesy National World War II Museum

Burlingame isn't sure why she never received the diary; it had been sent to Jones' sister. His artifacts were donated to the museum in 2001.

Curator Eric Rivet let her take a closer look, using white gloves to protect the old paper from skin oils. "I've never experienced anything quite like this," Rivet said. "I've met other people who were connected to museum artifacts, but they knew the artifacts were there. To meet someone who had no idea that they were featured in an artifact on display was a unique experience for me. But it was truly a pleasure to meet Laura Mae and to witness the event unfold."

Jones' last entry, written aboard USS *Maui* on Dec. 1, 1943, describes winning \$200 at craps. He had a total of \$320, he writes, and if he were back home, "Laura Mae & I would really have a wonderful Xmas." He wondered if he could wire the money to her as a Christmas present.

The museum provided Burlingame with a copy of the diary, after she insisted the original stay there.

A photograph of Burlingame fills nearly all of the diary's 4-by-7-inch back cover. The picture itself is black and white, but the photographer had tinted her cheeks pink and her lips dark red.

She had signed the photo, "Love, Laurie."

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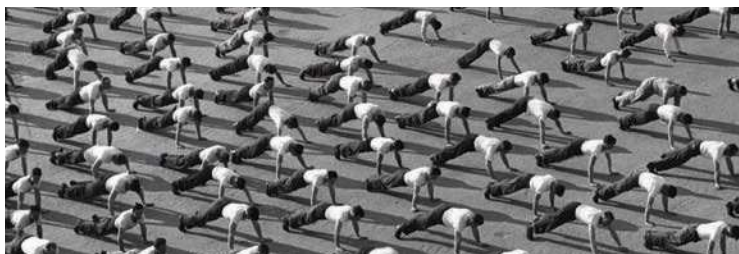
HISTORY

Fitting the military to a T

One of the staples of every American's wardrobe in 2013 is the T-shirt. It is versatile, comfortable and expressive of the wearer's personality. CustomInk, which makes "design online" custom T-shirts for groups and occasions, recently commissioned a survey of 1,000 American adults. Among the results: 95 percent wear T-shirts, and 87 percent say they own at least one T-shirt that they refuse to get rid of due to emotional attachment (the average is 13).

The T-shirt began its American life in 1913, making this year its 100th anniversary. Specifically, T-shirts were first worn in the U.S. Navy, issued as an undergarment to hide sailors' chest hair. The Air Corps Gunnery School was producing logo-printed shirts by 1942, and the Army adopted them in 1948. The T-shirt's use and popularity only grew from there.

CustomInk is celebrating the centennial of the T-shirt throughout the summer with promotions and dedicated web pages. Go to www.tshirtbirthday.com to see a timeline of the garment's history, including its military origins.



Navy sailors exercise in T-shirts in North Africa in 1945. Photo courtesy CustomInk

NATIONAL SECURITY

TSA offers new accommodations for wounded troops, vets

In March, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) developed a new set of protocols to facilitate airport security screenings for injured and wounded servicemembers and veterans.

After flight arrangements are confirmed with the airline, a passenger or representative can contact TSA Cares, which assists travelers with disabilities and medical conditions, at (855) 787-2227 or tsa-contactcenter@dhs.gov. The call center will take down and verify information, then relay it to the airports the passenger will be using. Airport staff will make sure that the passenger's security screening is expedited and conducted with dignity and respect.

Active-duty military personnel can take advantage of TSA Precheck screenings at select airports, using their valid Common Access Card (CAC).

Go to www.tsa.gov and click on "Traveler Information" to learn more about military accommodations.

MEMBER DISCOUNTS

Legionnaires urged to protect hearing during summer

Summertime – the living is easy, and the sounds are loud.

"Oohing" and "aahing" at fireworks streaking across the sky, cheering for a favorite baseball team and mowing the lawn are among the many activities associated with the long, hot days of summer. But these rites of summer can also damage hearing.

Prevention is as easy and inexpensive as a pair of disposable earplugs, widely available at pharmacies and discount stores. When worn properly, earplugs block out dangerous levels of sound while still allowing conversations and music to be heard. Other types of effective hearing protection include custom-made earplugs and earmuffs.

Whichever option is preferred, it's important to have



Call to learn more about
your hearing discount!

1-888-319-9205

hearing protection handy (plugs slip easily into a pocket or purse) and to wear it. Make sure small children are wearing adequate hearing protection, too.

The American Legion has signed an agreement with HearPO to offer a hearing discount program. Members who suspect that they are suffering from hearing loss should contact HearPO providers, who are qualified to test hearing and, if necessary, provide treatment with hearing aids. Call (888) 319-9205 to schedule an appointment.

Legionnaires can share this benefit with family members. Visit www.hearpo.com/legion for more information.

Note: The program, and the products and services offered, are not available by direct mail in the state of Washington.

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Include the branch of service and complete name of the group, no abbreviations, with your request. The listing also should include the reunion dates and city, along with a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Listings are publicized free of charge.

Your notice will appear on our Web site within a week and will remain available online until the final day of your reunion. Upon submission, please allow three months for your reunion to be published in print. **Due to the large number of reunions, The American Legion Magazine will publish a group's listing only once a year.**

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Other notices

"In Search Of" is a means of getting in touch with people from your unit to plan a reunion. **We do not publish listings that seek people for interviews, research purposes, military photos or help in filing a VA claim.** Listings must include the name of the unit from which you seek people, the time period and the location, as well as a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: "In Search Of," P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**, fax (317) 630-1280 or e-mail reunions@legion.org.

The magazine will not publish names of individuals, only the name of the unit. Listings are published free of charge.

Life Membership notices are published for Legionnaires who have been awarded life

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AIR FORCE / ARMY AIR FORCES

4th Ftr Interceptor Wing 334th, 335th & 336th Ftr Interceptor Sqdns and Support Serv, Dayton, OH, 9/18-21, Andy Whipple, (352) 259-7792; **6th BG (VH) (Tinian, 1944-1945)**, Milwaukee, 10/3-6, Rob Ritter, (414) 380-7888, drrb@tds.net; **12th TFW (Vietnam), 12th FEW/ SFW (Korea), 12th FTW (Randolph, 479th FTG Pensacola & 306th FTG USAFA) & Supporting Units**, Pensacola, FL, 4/23-26, E.J. Sherwood, (480) 396-4681, ej12ftw@cox.net; **20th Ftr Wing Assn - 20th FG, FBW, TFW (1930s-2013)**, Charleston, SC, 10/23-28, David Skilling, (770) 429-9955, abbyndavid@aol.com; **36th/585th Air Police K9 Sqd (Bitburg, Germany, 1961-1964)**, Bloomington, MN, 5/15-18, Rich Davey, (952) 212-1950, sadrad13@yahoo.com; **61st Ftr Interceptor Sqdn (Newfoundland, 1950s)**, Branson, MO, 10/24-26, Charles "Chris" Christianson, (763) 295-2861, cncask4it@gmail.com; **317th TCW**, New Castle, DE, 10/17-20, Jim Timmons, (410) 255-2735, jimt0708@aol.com; **366th SPS K-9 (Da Nang AB, Vietnam)**, Harrisburg, PA, 9/12-15, Steven Luz, (209) 667-6010, steveng7963@yahoo.com; **483rd Air Police Sqdn**, Colorado Springs, CO, 9/18-21, Donald Steele, (910) 313-6797, dsteale6@ecr.com; **555th Civil Eng Sqdn Heavy Repair "Red Horse" (Vietnam)**, San Antonio, 8/5-8, Audra Ainsworth, (936) 675-4560, audraains@yahoo.com; **610th Mil Airlift Support Sqdn (MASS)**, San Diego, 8/22-24, Ed Strahan, (530) 527-8422, ed610mass@gmail.com; **781st Bomb Sqdn 465th BG**, Charleston, SC, 11/10-13, Orren Lee, (605) 339-1297, cleel13@midco.net; **Air Weather Recon Assn**, McClellan AFB, CA, 9/25-29, Bernie Barris, (210) 274-9974, bcbarris@aol.com; **Bien Hoa Tact Wing Personnel**, Fairborn, OH, 8/22-24, Buddy Tate, (336) 227-7869, tate4224@bellsouth.net; **F-4 Phantom II Society**, Dayton, OH, 10/21-25, Bill Crean, (856) 461-6637, williamcrean@comcast.net; **TAC Recce Recon Assn**, Fort Walton Beach, FL, 10/9-12, Chris Choate, (850) 279-3037, coyotef15@gmail.com

ARMY

1st FA Obsn Bn Assn (WWII & Korea), Indianapolis, 10/10-13, Ralph F. Mueller, (724) 348-5359, ltrjrm@verizon.net; **4th Inf Div Assn Calif Chpt**, Lake Havasu, CA, 9/22-25, Sheryl Moffat, (562) 443-4829, spetty@wrld.org; **4th Msl Bn 28th Arty**, Lawton, OK, 10/1-5, Doug Schlumbohm, (321) 676-8260, lacrosselma@yahoo.com; **7th Bn 8th Arty (Vietnam)**, Washington, 9/20-23, Wayne Faas, (641) 485-0083, automatic8-faas@mediacombb.net; **11th Abn Div Assn - 11th Air Assault Div, 187th & 503rd Abn RCT**, Fayetteville, NC, 9/22-26, Randy Kuhn, (877) 922-3936, rkoa188@gmail.com; **11th Eng Bn Assn**, Fort Lauderdale, FL, 12/9-14, Joe Papapietro, (717) 818-7331, ocret.aol.com; **14th Cbt Eng Bn Assn**,

St. Louis, 9/19-22, Jess Huckaby, (763) 323-8163, 14thcebasocm@comcast.net; **27th FA Rgt**, Fort Bliss/El Paso, TX, 9/26-29, Hank Parker, (208) 853-1544, hnpark1@msn.com; **31st Inf Rgt 937th Div**, Dayton, OH, 8/8-10, John Howdeshel, (937) 435-0669, mamahowdy@yahoo.com; **40th FA Bn**, Wisconsin Dells, WI, 9/9-12, Ray Farrell, (715) 366-2540, rayfarrell52@msn.com; **68th AAA 508th Ops Det**, Orange Beach, AL, 10/24-27, Herbert Waters, (251) 937-5771, herbertwaters@bellsouth.net; **82nd Abn 507th Parachute Inf (WWII)**, Columbus, GA, 9/18-22, K. Gault, (732) 350-4241, pir507secy1@aol.com; **87th Inf Div Legacy Assn**, Atlanta, 10/2-5, Karen Lilley, (978) 563-1477, klilley71@comcast.net; **99th Cbt Support Bn 9th Inf Div**, Phoenix, MD, 9/11-14, Dean Ayres, (443) 250-7642, deanayres@comcast.net; **189th Inf Rgt Assn 45th Inf Div**, Oklahoma City, 9/26-29, Eric Hanson, (405) 308-6731, ehanson@ionet.net; **192nd AHC & Attached Units**, Washington, 11/7-10, Walt Rockenstire, (518) 608-4827, wrockenstire@nycpar.rr.com; **335th Radio Research Co**, San Diego, 8/22-25, Jim Mossman, (513) 779-7145, jmossman@fuse.net; **416th Theater Eng Cmo (10-Yr OIF Reunion & Annual Meeting)**, Oakbrook, IL, 11/1-3, Larry Slavicek, (708) 485-3619, ljslavicek@comcast.net; **461st Ord Ammo Co**, Richfield, MN, 10/5-6, Dick Anderson, (989) 739-2172, reabaa@charter.net; **512th MP Co**, Sierra Vista, AZ, 9/13-14, B.J. Searcy, (520) 249-9516, dbjsearcy@powerc.net; **709th Maint Bn 9th Inf Div**, Phoenix, MD, 9/11-14, Dean Ayres, (443) 250-7642, deanayres@comcast.net; **HHC 269th Cbt Avn Bn (Vietnam)**, Boston, 10/5-8, Chuck Causey, (360) 653-9603, chuckcausey2@msn.com

COAST GUARD

Eastern Great Lakes All CG Reunion, Oswego, NY, 9/13-15, Rick Kunz, (315) 663-6452, rkunz@twcny.rr.com

MARINES

Delta Co 1/7 Marines (Vietnam), Asheville, NC, 9/19-22, Gorge Schneider, (931) 265-9590, gjschneider2@gmail.com; **Delta/Golf Btry 2nd Bn 10th Mar**, Jacksonville, NC, 7/26-28, Mark Lee, (763) 229-9744, mleeiv70@gmail.com; **Mike Btry 4/12 & 3rd 155 Howitzer Btry (All Eras)**, Myrtle Beach, SC, 9/4-8, Don Brennan, (843) 236-0156, ffduffer@aol.com; **Missouri BB 63 Mar Det (All Yrs)**, Perrysburg, OH, 9/12-14, Matt Dallas, (419) 868-1234; **Short Airfields for Tact Support (SATS/EAF)**, Branson, MO, 9/15-19, Dick Althouse, (760) 741-7629, califayahoo@sbcglobal.net; **TBS Class 4-69, 52nd Special OCC**, San Diego, 9/12-15, Todd Frommelt, (760) 720-9385, toddfrommelt@roadrunner.com; **West Coast Drill Instructor Assn**, San Diego, 9/5-8, Gregg Stoner, (619) 884-9047, greggstoner22@aol.com;

Yemassee Mar Train Depot, Parris Island, SC, 10/18-19, Roy Hughes, (843) 589-3385, howardhostrander@yahoo.com

NAVY

Ajax AR 6, San Diego, 6/9-13, Thomas Judge, (210) 481-3699, tjudge7673@sbcglobal.net; **Atlanta CL 51/104 & IX 304**, Las Vegas, 9/16-20, Clarence E. Smith, (702) 474-4670, prairie1932@aol.com; **Charles P. Cecil DD/DDR 835 Assn**, Branson, MO, 9/29-10/5, Greg Wells, (405) 365-1926, glw513@yahoo.com; **Coral Sea CV 43**, Omaha, NE, 10/10-13, Mil Phillips, (858) 452-0161, milphillip@aol.com; **Davis DD 937**, South Portland, ME, 10/3-5, Pete Lennon, (860) 747-8761, ptlii37@aol.com; **Elokomin AO 55**, Lancaster, PA, 9/24-27, Robert O'Sullivan, (617) 288-3755, theeloman@verizon.net; **Enterprise CVAN/ CVN 65**, Denver, 9/4-8, Robin Spelman, (757) 619-1899, robincspelman@gmail.com; **Escort Carrier (CVEs) Sailors & Airmen Assn, Mar & Naval Air Sqdns, Escorting Destroyers (DDs) and Destroyer Escorts (DDEs) LHA, LHD, LCS(L) 61**, New Castle, DE, 10/18-23, George Manik, (732) 269, 0866, georgejmanik@gmail.com; **Finch DE/DER 328**, Bremerton, WA, 9/19-22, Myron Skubinna, (360) 898-7313, myrons@hctc.com; **Fletcher DD/DDE 445 & DD 992**, Seattle, 10/7-11, Melvyn Gentry, (309) 346-0641, mgentry1801@comcast.net; **Frank E. Evans DD 754**, Virginia Beach, VA, 9/26-29, John Coffey, (706) 335-0724, johnjudyc@gmail.com; **Goldborough DDG 20**, Rapid City, SD, 9/22-27, Gary Buxengard, (507) 498-3461, gnjlbux@springgrove.coop; **Graham County LST 1176**, Little Creek, VA, 9/6-8, Gregory Erway, (717) 512-9047, gregoryerway@yahoo.com; **Grand Canyon AD/AR 28**, Virginia Beach/Norfolk, VA, 10/16-20, Robert Dunn, (317) 881-8866, roberttdunn4217@sbcglobal.net; **Hamner DD 718**, Tucson, AZ, 10/16-19, Jim Tighe, (716) 649-5997, lynp721@gmail.com; **HS-85**, San Diego, 11/15-17, Rob Blicke, hs85reunion@gmail.com; **Latimer APA 152 (1944-1947, 1950-1956)**, Harrisburg, VA, 10/13-17, Helen Witmer, (717) 540-7955, mimpy19@comcast.net; **Lexington CV 16**, Boston, 9/12-16, Bob Dimonte, (850) 492-3483, bobdimonte@cox.net; **Lyman K. Swenson DD 729**, Long Beach, CA, 9/26-29, Lee Aldridge, (931) 296-0881, handlebars@hughes.net; **Mahan DD 364/DLG 11/DDG 42 & 72**, Richmond, VA, 10/9-13, Gary White, (281) 890-7823, gankintx@comcast.net; **Mills DE/DER 383**, Virginia Beach, VA, 10/3-7, Ben Laurens, (252) 504-3733, nriver@ecr.com; **Monongahela AO 178**, Virginia Beach, VA, 5/14-18, Scott Anderson, (757) 620-0833, monongahela_reunion@outlook.com; **Mountrail APA 213**, Pensacola, FL, 10/3-6, Don DiCoio, (973) 696-3725, dicoio44@aol.com; **Nat'l Chief Petty Officers Assn**, Nashville, TN, 10/2-5, Marjorie Hays, (361) 991-2383; **Neosho**, Nashville, TN, 9/26-29, Randy Fleming, (304) 209-9565,

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1st Inf Div 2/28th Inf HQ Co, John Burnett, (270) 862-9591

4th Div A Co (Vietnam, 1966), Fred Brown, (931) 446-9782

12th Ord HM Co Fa (WWII), Mark Eklund, (330) 754-8581

17th Bomb Grp (Light & Tact) 34th Bomb Sqdn (K-9, Korea, & Hurlburt Field, Eglin AFB, FL, 1954-1955), Donald Brown, (724) 452-4445, redon2@verizon.net

58th FBW K-2 (Korea & Itazuke Air Strip, Japan, 1952-1953), Carmen Iuliano, (610) 656-5784, jmglennmills@yahoo.com

82nd Abn, HQ, HQ Co, 3rd Bde (1964-1966), John Urbach, (410) 282-0844, baltoscouter@comcast.net

86th Black Hawk Inf Div Org (Europe & Philippines, 1942-1946), Bob Bookbinder, (954) 974-3511, carconed@aol.com

268th AAF Base Unit (France & Belgium, 1944-1945), James Bass, (615) 735-1122, jlbass@bassandbass.com

532nd Mil Intel Bn 66th Intel Corp Grp (7th Army HQ, Stuttgart & Gliessen, Germany, July 1961-March 1963), Robert Matousek, (415) 435-6241, rmatous@aol.com

535th Anti-Aircraft Arty (WWII), Gary Dimtroff, (919) 750-7327, garydimtroff@hotmail.com

1502nd ATW Personnel Sect (Hickam AFB, HI, 1962-1965), Al Klink, (856) 933-2872, sveikas14@comcast.net

3567th Flt Line & Periodic Maint Sqdn (James Conally AFB, TX, 1954-1964), Archie Boyette, (318) 445-7342, archiefb@aol.com

A Co 506th 101st Abn Div (1956-1958), Donald Davis, (919) 820-6008, majordsdavis@gmail.com

Cbt Eng 299th Div (Geisen, Germany, July 1956-July 1959), Joseph Tranby Sr., (952) 703-5859

Co 1760 (Naval Tng Stn Great Lakes, IL, Dec 1943), George Moran, (413) 442-4035

E Co Recon 4th Bn 12th Inf 199th Inf Bde (Vietnam, 1968-1969), Larry Guthrie, (913) 683-0793, rockycattle@yahoo.com

Fort Carson, CO (Army Inductees Traveling By Bus from Twin Cities, Oct 1961), Harland Vitalis, 2390 110 St., New Richmond, WI 54017

Gen. M.C. Meigs T-AP 116 Wounded GIs (Korea to Japan), Ralph Pisano, 13raprsr@cox.net

Hickam AFB Basketball Team (1962-1965), Al Klink, (856) 933-2872, sveikas14@comcast.net

Optical Sensor Trps TAC RF-4C Sqdns, SAC TR-1 & RS-71, Robert McCollough, (402) 423-5292, rmcollough1@gmail.com

Putnam DD 757 (1968-1971), Larry Craig, (330) 336-5660, lp.craig@hotmail.com

Roosevelt Roads Naval Stn, Puerto Rico (1970-1972), John Cherubini, (772) 349-2309, cat07jay@yahoo.com

TAPS

John J. Flynn, Dept. of California. Dept. Cmdr. 1958-1959, Nat'l Advisory Cmte. to Nat'l Cmdr. Ex-Officio Memb. 1963-1967, Nat'l Conv. Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 1960-1962, Nat'l Distinguished Guests Cmte. Memb. 1953-1954, Nat'l Econ. Cmsn. Memb. 1962-1963 and 1967-1968, Nat'l Econ. Cmsn. Chmn. 1963-1967, Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Memb. 1960-1962 and Nat'l Mbrshp. & Post Activ. Cmte. Memb. 1954-1955.

J. Faye Skaggs, Dept. of Florida. Nat'l & Homeland Sec. Cncl. Vice Chmn. 2005-2012.

Rev. Franklin C. Ward, Dept. of New York. Dept. Cmdr. 1991-1992, Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Alt. Memb. 1995-1997, Nat'l Employment Cmte. Memb. 2000-2013, Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Memb. 1997-1999, Nat'l Finance Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 1998-1999, Nat'l Foreign Relations Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1978-1980 and 1999-2000, Nat'l Internal Affairs Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 1997-1998 and Nat'l Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials Cmte. Nat'l Cmdr. Rep. 1992-1997.



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Opportunity knocked once, but I was in the shower.

A YOUNG NEW YORK ACTOR desperately wanted to perform in “Hamlet.” So he formed a company and went to a small town to put on the play.

When he returned to the big city, a friend noticed that the actor seemed sad.

“What’s the matter?” the friend asked.
 “Didn’t they appreciate the performance?”

“They didn’t seem to,” the actor replied.
 “At all? Didn’t they even ask you to come out in front of the curtain?”

“Actually, they dared me to.”

A CAVEMAN ran into his cave and yelled, “A tiger just chased me across the savannah!”

“Why?” his wife asked.

“Well, I didn’t think to stop and ask it.”

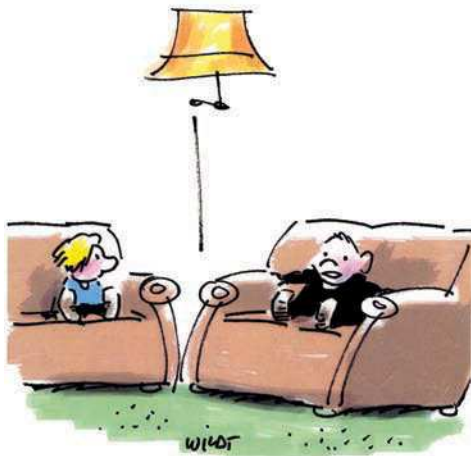
DID YOU HEAR ABOUT the couple found frozen to death in their car at the drive-in? They’d gone to see “Closed for the Winter.”

IF THE MEEK ever do inherit the earth, my advice is to get a good lawyer and fight the case.

AN EMPLOYEE asked his boss for a raise. “Well,” the boss replied, “due to the fluctuational predisposition of your position’s productive capacity as juxtaposed with industry standards, it would be monetarily injudicious to implement an increment.”

“I don’t get it,” the employee said.

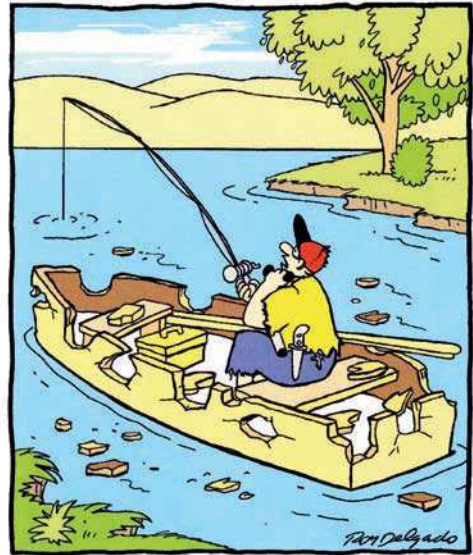
“Exactly.”



“Mischief? Mayhem? General shenanigans? It’s never too early to consider one’s legacy.”



“My door’s always open. Have maintenance fix it!”



“Yes, the fish are biting.”

THE BEST SAFETY DEVICE a car can have is a rearview mirror with a patrol car in it.

I DON’T MIND running into debt. It’s running into my creditors that’s embarrassing.

A HUNTING GUIDE told his group, “We’re lost.”

“How can we be lost?” one hunter exclaimed.

“You said you were the best guide in Maine!”

“I am, but now we’re in Canada.”

IF IT’S TRUE that we’re here to help others, what are the others here for?

“**THIS WEEK** marks the 40th anniversary of the Watergate hearings. For those too young to remember, back then the administration had an enemies list. They were spying on reporters, and they used the IRS to harass groups they didn’t like. Thank God those days are gone forever.” – Jay Leno



DA VINCI SURGICAL ROBOT

DA VINCI SURGICAL ROBOT CAUSING SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH

The Branch Law Firm, an experienced and trusted law firm in products liability suits, is currently investigating lawsuits on behalf of victims of the Da Vinci Surgical Robot. The Da Vinci Surgical Robot, manufactured by Sunnyvale, California-based Intuitive Surgical, Inc., has been used in thousands of hysterectomies, prostate removal surgeries, gastric bypasses, gall bladder removals, and thyroid cancer surgeries.

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- Sepsis
- Excessive bleeding
- Burning of nearby organs, including intestines
- Punctured blood vessels, organs, or arteries
- Burns and/or tears of the intestines
- Severe bowel injuries
- Punctured or cut ureters
- Vaginal cuff dehiscence (reopening of the incision made to remove the uterus and cervix during a hysterectomy)
- Additional surgical procedures following robot surgery
- Wrongful death

If you or a loved one has experienced any adverse effects after a Da Vinci Surgical Robot surgery, please call the Branch Law Firm for a free and confidential consultation at 1-800-828-4529 or 1-505-243-3500 and visit our website at www.branchlawfirm.com.

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