



# The Sentinel

Vol. 6 No. 8

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

August 2019

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

President: John Harrigan

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

Secretary: Carl Ohlson

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

Chaplin: George Burns

Treasurer: Owen Martin

Sergeant at Arms: Ted Andrews

## **FROM THE MINEFIELD:**

*Submitted by John Harrigan*

I would like to Thank all the Chapter members who came out to work the Chapter Table at the Fair. This was not an easy thing trying to get 90 members to show up to do it but it happened. This year was really great weather except for 2 storms that popped up. Once again we did pretty well with the Raffle sales and also our Hats and Walking Sticks. I'm sure Owen and Teri will be giving us a report on our sales. Upcoming can shakes are listed in our Newsletter.

Some Chapter Members attended the Flag Retirement Ceremony at the Veterans Cemetery in Sparta and after the service we all spread the Ashes from the Flags that were retired last year. Thanks to Sussex County Municipality Authority and also Abby Glen Pet Cemetery this has become a yearly event. In November of this year they will be taking about 800 to 1000 pounds of Flags that were collected by the Authority this past year over to Abby Glen to be destroyed and then we again will spread next year at the Cemetery.

The American Legion Riders from Post 132 Franklin and Post 157 Branchville, Motorcycle run for the Cemetery is scheduled for Sunday September 29<sup>th</sup> with Registration for those riding from 9am to 11am. Remember you can still attend the Barbecue and games and enjoy music by Felix and The Cats at Post 132 in Franklin even if you do not ride. This event is open to everyone.

Lastly our Christmas Party will be held here at St Francis on December 7<sup>th</sup> at 2pm. This is the one big event that we have and I hope all of you can make it. We

will start putting the sign up sheet's out so we can order the Food.

That's it for now see you at the meeting.

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

*Submitted by John Brady*

Another fair has come and gone for the year. I don't have any figures to report but we dis sell most of our hats and all the walking sticks. Thanks Matt for taking the time to carve the sticks and donating them to the chapter to sell. I don't think we did as well as last year selling our 50/50 scholarship tickets but I believe it was still a good showing. Of course a big thank-you to all our members who volunteered and manned the table for the length of the fair.

Since August is almost over and Fall will be upon us soon we should start looking forward to upcoming events in the coming months.

First up is September 11th, our country's second "Day of Infamy". Don't forget all the people who were killed on that day and all the members of the Armed Services who fought and sacrificed as a result of this event.

Next we jump to Sunday, November 3rd when the county has it's Salute to Veterans Parade. It's a short parade at the Sussex County Fairgrounds and we've had a good showing in the past. Even if you aren't able to march (more like walk) in the parade come out to support the chapter and your fellow veterans. There's also free hot dogs, coffee and soda as an added incentive.

Our next chapter event is the Veteran's Mass on Sunday, November 10, at St. Francis de Sales Church at 14:00 (2 P.M.). For those who have yet to attend this

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

Mass, it's specifically dedicated to all veterans. There is the presentation of colors at the beginning, the lighting of a candle for each branch of the service and veterans are given the chance to place a flag in the vases of sand in front of the altar. As in the past the upcoming Confirmation class will provide refreshments after mass. They usually outdo themselves from year to year.

The next day is Veteran's Day. A day to honor all veterans no matter when or where they served. Of course there's also the free breakfasts, lunches and dinners being offered by various restaurants.

Finally, there is our annual Christmas Party on Saturday, December 7 at St. Francis de Sales Church which is free to all our members. We do ask that you plan on signing up in advance so we will know how much food to order and have enough table and chairs available.

There will be more information about all these events on our website and at our meetings as the time for each one draws near.

## **SERVICE OFFICER:**

*Submitted by Skip Kays*

If you want any further information, or have any suggestions you can contact me at 973 459-9392 or at [skays1@embarqmail.com](mailto:skays1@embarqmail.com)

All of us are in same rough age group and grew up in the "shadow" of, and the movies and media representations of WWII. Mostly on television but the movies were still being made throughout the 50's, 60's and some still in the 70's. I can remember many books showing up on the racks in the variety stores. All of these had an impact on me, in one form or another.

I wasn't old enough to understand all of them of course, in the popular media it was frequently a "hardware war," the planes, ships, weapons, etc. that were used, oh, and the men (for the most part) were there in a supporting role.

Here are a couple of things that I experienced growing up that hit me and affected my thoughts on joining the military.

When I was 13 or so the family spent a week on Cape Ann in Massachusetts. We had a cabin on the rocky "beach" facing the bay. We would go out with the kid next door who fished for lobsters, swim in the harbor, etc. visited the Coast Guard facility, and generally run all over the place. One day we were sitting on the porch and a very large cabin cruiser was cruising in towards the bay and right in front of us when all of a sudden a Navy

fighter, a Vought Crusader, dove out of the sky at a fairly steep angle, buzzed the cruiser and then shot up in the sky and disappeared. I am guessing that the cruiser was about 100 yards off at most, so we had quite the view. If you weren't there at the right time you missed it.

Most kids at some point wanted to be a pilot and I was no exception. This was a positive reinforcer for me but I knew with my eyes that wasn't going to happen, in the military anyway.

I read "The Caine Mutiny" in high school, though I don't believe I saw the movie until years later. Two things I specifically remembered from the book, both of which came back on point when I was in the Navy.

One of the main points of the book was made after the trial when the attorney Greenwald chewed out the principals at the party when he said that Captain Queeg represented the guys in the Navy who were out there protecting the country while he and the rest of them were in college or pursuing their careers and "knew that you didn't make any money in the service." Sometimes it was hard, but I always remembered that all the lifers (career men), for whatever their personal reasons, were the guys doing the job and keeping the service going.

The second point I remembered was that somewhere in the book, probably when Willie was assigned to the Caine, a minesweeper, one of his fellow officers mentioned that no ship sailed in front of a minesweeper.

That one came back sharply when I was assigned to a minesweeper out of gunnery school. We had another saying that mirrored the same point, "Any ship can be a minesweeper once."

## **VA Updates the Schedule for Rating Disabilities:**

VA has updated three portions of the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities: infectious diseases, immune disorders, and nutritional deficiencies.

The VA started to rewrite all of the fifteen regulations in 2017 in order to reflect modern medicine as the regulations have not been updated since the original code was written in 1945.

Any claims in these three areas pending on Aug. 11, 2019, will be considered under both the new and old rating schedule with the more favorable rating result going to the veteran. All claims filed on or after Aug. 11, 2019 will be rated on the new standards.



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## Advocates plead to keep widow's tax repeal in military policy measure

**In a letter sent Tuesday signed by 64 Senate colleagues, Sens. Doug Jones, D-Ala., and Susan Collins, R-Maine, pushed the chairmen of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees to keep the "widow's tax" repeal in the massive defense policy bill during negotiations in coming weeks. (John Hughel/Oregon National Guard)**

Advocates who pushed lawmakers to include a repeal of the military "widow's tax" in the annual defense authorization bill earlier this year are now urging Senate leaders to keep it in the measure.

In a letter sent Tuesday signed by 64 Senate colleagues, Sens. Doug Jones, D-Ala., and Susan Collins, R-Maine, pushed the chairmen of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees to keep the repeal in the massive defense policy bill during negotiations in coming weeks. They called it an issue of fairness and justice for military families.

"As a result of the widow's tax, tens of thousands of surviving spouses are prevented from collecting the full insurance benefits from the Department of Defense for which their military retiree spouses paid," the letter states. "We have an obligation to make sure that we are taking care of our military families who have sacrificed so much. This problem goes back decades, but this year we can finally solve it once and for all."

At issue is how the government treats two separate military survivor payouts. The first, the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation program, awards around \$15,000 a year to survivors of veterans or troops who die of service-related causes. There is no cost to troops or families to enroll.

The other, the Survivor Benefit Plan, gives families of military retirees who enroll up to 55 percent of their loved ones' retirement pay after the veteran dies. The life insurance-type payouts are subsidized by DoD, but require enrollees to pay-in part of their retirement benefit to be eligible.

File this on under "Hello, I'm from the government and I'm here to help you."

From Military Times

## Investigators find \$53 million in improper medical bills for veterans

Lawmakers are demanding answers from Veterans Affairs officials after a new investigation found more than \$53 million in emergency room costs for veterans improperly rejected by department officials.

In a letter to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie this week, the bipartisan group of 35 House and Senate members asks for an explanation for how more than 17,000 veterans were left with unpaid, unjustified medical bills and what plans the federal bureaucracy has to correct the mistakes.

"Facing a medical emergency can be stressful for any patient," the letter stated. "However, the financial toll on veterans when VA erroneously denies or rejects payment can also be devastating. Hospitals may send veterans' emergency care bills to collection. Non-payment can bankrupt and destroy veterans' credit histories."

At issue is a report from the VA Inspector General released earlier this month which found \$716 million in improperly processed payments in cases involving veterans who sought medical care outside the department's health system during the spring and summer of 2017.

Not all of the mistakes lead to denied payments, but investigators estimated about 7 percent of the total resulted in veterans receiving bills that should have been covered under existing VA rules.

Investigators found cases of claims being incorrectly rejected because paperwork was filed too late, because of errors in outside-care eligibility, and because processors missed clinical records ordering the outside care. They also found lax oversight within VA, with numerous cases of supervisors not reviewing decisions for quality or accuracy checks.

“It is critical that VHA staff process claims for non-VA emergency care in an accurate and timely fashion,” the report stated. “Inappropriately denied or rejected non-VA emergency care claims present a risk of substantial, undue financial burden on veterans.”

Complicating the problem was mistakes in VA’s process of notifying veterans about their rejected medical payment claims, which lead to thousands of veterans missing out on a chance to appeal the decisions.

VA officials in response to the report said they have already put numerous fixes in place to deal with the problems from two years ago and should implement the rest of the Inspector General’s recommendations later this year.

They also promised to review patient cases as far back as April 2016 to ensure that veterans improperly denied medical coverage are helped. Letters informing those veterans of possible avenues of appeal or redress will be sent out in coming months.

Lawmakers in their letter say they want more details of that promise, to ensure similar mistakes aren’t made in the future.

They also asked department officials to report “whether VA is appropriately resourced — in terms of staffing and technology — to implement requirements associated with emergency care claims adjudication.”

Inspector General officials said if proper fixes aren’t fully implemented, the unexpected costs to veterans seeking outside care could grow to more than \$500 million over the next five years.

## **WOMEN VETERANS:**

*Submitted by Walt Hazelman*

### **Military Sexual Trauma Is Skyrocketing The Rate Of Women Veteran Suicides**

BY MATTHEW RUSSELL

Veteran suicide has become an undeniable outcome of military service in the United States, with more than 20 vets taking their own lives every day. Many of those deaths are women.

Reported on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Fact Sheet, the suicide rate for women vets decreased between 2015 and 2016, but **women vets are still 250% more likely to commit suicide** than civilians.

Physically, the challenges service members face may be equal, but mentally and emotionally, they are much different between men and women. Experts attribute many suicides involving women veterans to military sexual trauma (MST).

According to the study, “Military Sexual Trauma and Suicide Mortality,” between 2007 and 2011, 5,991,080 men and 360,774 women were screened for military sexual trauma by the VA. Only 1.1% of the men reported experiencing sexual trauma, while **more than a fifth of the women said they were sexually traumatized** during their service.

“Military sexual trauma represents a clinical indicator for suicide prevention in the Veterans Health Administration,” wrote the team of doctors and researchers who conducted the study. “Results suggest the importance of continued assessments regarding military sexual trauma and suicide risks and of collaboration between military sexual trauma–related programs and suicide prevention efforts. Moreover, military sexual trauma should be considered in suicide prevention strategies even among individuals without documented psychiatric morbidity.”

There are more than 2 million women veterans in the United States. They make up the fastest growing veteran population, yet many still live without the same network of support their male counterparts have relied on for more than two centuries.

According to the Military Times, a majority of women veterans were deployed during the past 18 years. When they return home from service, many of those **women report feeling unwelcome in public places and the veterans halls** built to help them socialize. There are limited services and care systems for women veterans, both in the non-profit sector and government. Meanwhile, the challenges and health risks those women face are arguably greater.

A lack of social support is one contributor to feelings of helplessness and suicide. Still, it does not outweigh the impact MST has on wellbeing.

As Rand reports, **MST has been identified as the biggest factor in the increase in suicides involving women veterans**, even greater than combat post-traumatic stress disorder.

Former RAND researcher Rajeev Ramchand, now with the Cohen Veterans Network, interviewed responders on the Veterans Crisis hotline who had heard many different women veterans voice their pain and frustration.

“Late at night, they would get calls from women who were just overwhelmed,” Ramchand said. “The first thing we heard a lot about was military sexual trauma. A lot of women veterans were calling in because they had experienced military sexual trauma. And (for these callers) something recently had happened that had triggered thoughts of that experience.”



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If there's a way to reduce the number of suicides among our women veterans, it surely lies in reducing the occurrences of MST.

"Ultimately, (that) will have an impact on female veteran suicide rates," Ramchand said.

## POW/MIA:

*Submitted by Bob Gilbert*

No report.

## AGENT ORANGE:

*Submitted by Owen Martin*

No report.

## COMMUNITY/PUBLIC AFFAIRS:

*Submitted by Lou Storms*

No report.

## Scheduled Meetings:

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

### 2019

25<sup>th</sup> August (Picnic)

22<sup>nd</sup> September

27<sup>th</sup> October

24<sup>th</sup> November

7<sup>th</sup> December (Christmas Party)

## Calendar of Events:

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

### 50/50 Scholarship Can Shake Schedule for 2019

8/24 Jumbo Land – Branchville 4-?

9/7 Mac & Lindys – Vernon 9-2

9/21 Jumbo Land – Branchville 4-?

10/5 Mac & Lindys – Vernon 9-2

10/19 Walmart – Franklin 9-2

Any and all questions please direct them to the can shake coordinator, **Teri Deaver**.

### Other events

3<sup>rd</sup> November - Salute to Veterans Parade at the Sussex County Fairgrounds

10<sup>th</sup> November - Veteran's Mass at St. Francis de Sales Church at 14:00 (2 P.M.)

## NEW MEMBERS:

### "WELCOME HOME"

No report.

## PASSINGS:

No report.

## Homeless Committee (new):

*Submitted by John Drinkard*

### Catholic Charities

Catholic Charities works to prevent homelessness by providing financial assistance and long-term support and strives to resolve issues that may lead to homelessness. From quality project real estate development to conducting homeless outreach, Catholic Charities sees the emotional, physical and financial toll being levied upon



millions of families and individuals as a result of America's affordable housing crisis.

A safe and decent home allows parents to maintain jobs, children to stay in the same schools, and the local economy to be supported. Having a home also underscores the inherent dignity of the persons who live there.

According to national data, on a single night in January 2018:

- 553,742 people were experiencing homelessness in the United States
- 33% of the homeless population are families with children
- 40,056 veterans were experiencing homelessness in the U.S.

Catholic Charities owns/operates over 35,000 units of permanent housing.

Catholic Charities operates more permanent supportive and rapid re-housing beds (11,000) for formerly homeless individuals – more than other national nonprofits.

Over half of Catholic Charities affordable housing was listed for the elderly.

To contact Catholic Charities in our area:

**Catholic Charities**

- Address: 234 Somerville Rd, Bedminster, NJ 07921
- Phone: (908) 234-9380
- Website: [catholiccharitiesusa.org](http://catholiccharitiesusa.org)

b. What is the difference between Nursing Homes, Assisted Living and Medical Foster Homes?

c. What if I need help in the home? What am I eligible for? What about my spouse?

Join us Monday, August 26, 2019, from 10:00 am – 11:00 am at the Lyons Campus of VA New Jersey in the Planetree Suite, Building 6- Second Floor, 151 Knollcroft Road, Lyons NJ 07939 for Long-Term Planning

2. Advanced Care Planning- Learn about Health Care Directives and complete your own

a. Complete a Health Care Directive that lets your providers and family know what your personal values are

b. An Advanced Directive lets you make known your preferences about your health care

c. Determine who will speak for you if you cannot speak for yourself

d. Available for Veterans, spouses, and family

Join us Monday, August 26, 2019, from 11:00 am – 12:00 pm at the Lyons Campus of VA New Jersey in the Planetree Suite, Building 6- Second Floor, 151 Knollcroft Road, Lyons NJ 07939 for Advanced Care Planning (this class follows the Long-Term Planning class)

Seating is limited. RSVP IS REQUIRED! You MUST call the following Social Worker:

Julia Danishek, LCSW, VA PACT Social Worker, (908) 647-0180, ext. 6502

**PLEASE DO NOT RESPOND TO THIS MESSAGE! YOU MUST CALL TO RSVP.**

## **CONGRATULATIONS/CONCERNS:**

Happy September Anniversaries:  
Sharon & Jack Ratzer

Happy September Birthday's:  
Joseph Siems  
United States Air Force Sept 18, 1947  
"AIM HIGH, FLY FIGHT WIN"

## **MEMBERS CORNER:**

*Submitted by Owen Martin*

### **Advanced Directive Planning Classes at Lyons Campus of VA New Jersey**

Two classes are being offered at the Lyons Campus of VA New Jersey

1. Long-Term Care Planning class will help you answer these questions:

- a. What will happen if I need a Nursing Home? Who will pay for me?

## **MISCELLANEOUS:**

1. **Special Note: If you are a veteran in emotional crisis and need help RIGHT NOW, call (toll free 24/7) 1-800-273-8255 and tell them you are a veteran. All calls are confidential.**
2. Jackets (\$60 (summer) & \$70 (winter)); t-shirts (\$15); hats (\$10); golf shirts (short sleeve \$28; long sleeve \$33) are still available. See Owen Martin for purchases or to place an order (pre-payment for orders are appreciated)
3. Important note to families of deceased veterans, and/or requestors: *Submitted by Bob Caggiano*  
It is the right of every deceased Veteran to have a Military honors team attend the graveside service, to present the Flag at no charge to the family. Honors Teams are sent out, at the expense of the US Government.  
In January 2000, Congress passed legislation guaranteeing Veterans the right to at least two uniformed servicemen, a flag ceremony, and the



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playing of TAPS at their funeral. Unfortunately, there are not enough buglers to play TAPS, so the historic melody has been played on a CD player at many Veterans' last ceremony, or more currently on a bugle that plays Taps using an electronic insert. The volunteer organization "Bugles Across America" (a.k.a. BAA) was created to honor the service of veterans by providing Taps live by a bugler using a real instrument (such as a bugle, trumpet, cornet, or flugelhorn) at funerals or any other ceremony requiring a bugler. There are currently over 7500 volunteer buglers nationwide in all 50 states, and some overseas who stand ready to serve. BAA volunteers perform Taps as a free service.

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



## **Editors Corner:**

By Linda Skellenger (AVVA)

Please have information to be included in the September newsletter to me by Sunday, September 15<sup>th</sup> by email: [skelle@ptd.net](mailto:skelle@ptd.net) or by snail-mail to:

Linda Skellenger  
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Sussex, N.J. 07461