



The Sentinel

Vol. 5 No. 7

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

September 2018

Website: www.VVA1002.org

President: John Harrigan

1st Vice President: John Brady

Secretary: Carl Ohlson

2nd 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 everyone who came out to help out at the Sussex County Fair this year as it was a really good one for the Chapter and the Scholarship fund. We sold about \$2,500.00 in Raffle Tickets for the Scholarship and made about \$1,400.00 for the Chapter with the sale of Hats and Walking sticks. Matt Fredericks made about 55 walking sticks and donated them to the Chapter and we did very well with selling them. As there are too many people to Thank (about 50 different ones) I just want to say Thank you to all who helped out.

As everyone knows we did not have a meeting or newsletter last month as it was our annual Chapter Picnic. Once again we were blessed with great weather and our Members and their families had a great time. I would like to Thank Matt Fredericks for helping me cook the Hamburgers and Hot Dogs, Ray Buell for getting there about 10 am to start the Corn and also help out on the grill and Bruce Blair who helped out with whatever we forgot about.

On September 15th some of our Chapter members and their wives attended the Half-Way to St Patrick's Day event at the Irish Cottage where after a short walk into the cottage our Chapter was introduced as the Grand Marshall for the 2019 St Patrick's Day Parade in Newton. This is the first time that an organization has been honored with being the Grand Marshall. Chapter members are invited to the Irish Breakfast in February and also the Mass, and also the Luncheon at the Irish Cottage where we will name the organization that the money raised will be donated. As I receive more information in the future I will keep you updated. I do not

have the date for the parade in Newton yet but as we are the Grand Marshall I hope we can have the largest showing for a parade that we have ever had. For those of you who have difficulty walking we will try and have cars there also. Remember come out and stand on the reviewing stand and watch the parade go past.

Some of our members attended Chapter 327 POW-MIA vigil at the Vietnam Veterans Monument in Lafayette where we had the reading of the names that are engraved on the wall that is there. For those of you who don't know this Monument was donated by Chapter 327 to honor our Brothers who served from Sussex County and never made it home. It is the same granite as the Wall in Washington.

I know it seems we just had Summer and our Picnic but we only have 2 more meetings before our Chapter Christmas party, so we will start putting out the sign-up sheets at the October meeting.

That's about it see you at the meeting.
John

1st VICE PRESIDENT:

Submitted by John Brady

It's hard to believe that it's been 17 years since September 11, 2001. 17 years since the worst terrorist attack in the United States. Yet for myself I have a personal perspective of that day.

Our first grandchild was born on September 9, 2001. He was coming home on that fateful day from the hospital. My wife and I were at our daughter's house in Connecticut that morning awaiting their arrival when she called and said to turn on the TV. We could hardly

Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another!

believe what was happening and wondered what kind of a world was our grandson born into.

Now 17 years later he is a senior in high school, playing on the varsity soccer team and just got his driver's license. While he had no experience of that day he has grown up with other terrorist attacks and our military at war and of all the increase security in our schools. He is contemplating joining the service after high school which as a veteran and a Marine makes me both proud and apprehensive having experienced what it is to be in war. I will of course support any decision he makes but have to consider my feelings because of what happened 17 years ago.

On September 14 my son and his wife gave us a granddaughter. This was a miracle baby as they were not supposed to be able to have children. It is also related to 9/11 as my son at that time was an EMT in Vernon and was part of a team sent to wait at Giant's Stadium to see if they would be needed. Fortunately, they were not sent and so were not exposed to the toxic chemicals and fumes like so many of those heroic first responders were. Many are now suffering or have died from this just as our fellow Vietnam brothers and sisters are suffering and dying from Agent Orange.

I'm sure many of us have personal memories or experiences from that day that we could relate. So, let's remember and not forget those innocent people and first responders who died that day. Remember those who have been affected by the after effects. Let's remember all the family members and friends who lost loved ones that day and in the days and years that followed.

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

On John Wayne

The Duke is an iconic presence in America, and held a special place in the minds of military personnel. Like most of us in this group, I grew up seeing his movies, westerns where he first made his name, and as he won WWII on the screen.

Somewhat ironic as he never served in the military, and part way through WWII he obtained a family hardship deferment. Depending on which account your read, usually written by people who did not know him, he either pussied out, or had a heartfelt concern for his

family. Having been born in 1907 it was unlikely that he would have been drafted, but if he had he would have still been making movies instead of serving on the front lines. Director John Ford, a friend and the man who helped Wayne become John Wayne, is said to have been disappointed in Wayne not "signing up."

I came to see Wayne's movies in a new perspective while I was in the service, I specifically remember "The Cowboys," the first I saw that I realized as very different from the older flicks.

On my boat, Chief Larry Hoss was telling me one day about his hero, JW. He told me that Wayne was a Captain or Admiral in the Navy Reserve, and was known for his non-traditional way of doing things. He told me that Wayne was supposed to be performing an inspection on a ship and instead of going up the brow with his staff onto the quarterdeck in the usual manner, he decided to surprise the crew and climbed up the anchor chain (in his dress whites) and caught them unawares on the bow and went about his business. The Chief loved JW, and would have sailors down in his quarters to watch the movies he always seemed to have delivered to the ship when in port.

At the time I did not know if any of that was true, it sounded like BS, especially anyone climbing up a greasy anchor chain in whites, but I believe he believed it and he was a good man and I saw no need to question his stories.

I am sure there were many other stories making the rounds over the years in all of the services.

DOD to Allow Purple Heart Recipients to Transfer GI Bill Benefits

The Pentagon has granted an exception to policy for active duty Purple Heart recipients, which will allow them to transfer their GI Bill education benefits without incurring an additional four years of service. This change comes in the wake of a larger policy issued in July of this year that prohibits service members from transferring this benefit without extending their service, including service members who were severely wounded and undergoing the medical retirement process. Because transferability was intended to be a retention tool and not a benefit of service, it is encouraged that service members who are currently eligible to designate a family member as a beneficiary do so prior to separating from the service.

VA steps up fight against plan to extend benefits to 'blue water' Vietnam vets

Veterans Affairs leaders are increasing their efforts to sideline legislation that would extend disability benefits to "blue water" veterans from the Vietnam War, saying the move would set a problematic precedent for future complaints.



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“We know it is incredibly difficult to hear from Blue Water Veterans who are ailing and ill, and we have great empathy and compassion for these veterans and their families,” VA Secretary Robert Wilkie wrote in a letter to the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee last week.

“However, we urge the committee to consider the scientific evidence, impact on other veterans, and costs associated with this legislation.”

The legislation, passed overwhelmingly by the House in June, would grant presumptive exposure status to nearly 90,000 veterans who served in ships off the coast of Vietnam during the war.

Veterans who served on the ground or on ships traveling inland waterways are already given that presumption of exposure to Agent Orange, fast-tracking their disability claims for a host of cancers and rare illnesses connected to the chemical defoliant.

Advocates have argued that individuals who served on the seas just a few miles away deserve the same treatment.

But VA officials have argued that the scientific-based methods they use on such cases doesn’t back up the blue water veterans requests. In their letter last week and at a Senate hearing last month, they argued the presence of Agent Orange on those ships “cannot reasonably be determined” and the presumption of exposure should not be automatically granted.

Veterans who develop the illnesses can receive medical treatment from VA regardless of their benefits status, and can still file to prove their sickness is connected to their military service.

But the elderly veterans say VA has systematically denied any connection between their health and the chemical exposure for decades, even as they develop health problems that mirror veterans who served on shore.

Wilkie also argued that the proposed funding for the resulting influx of new claims — a new fee of VA-backed home loans — is unfair for other veterans and insufficient to cover the expected costs.

House officials had estimated the new fee would generate about \$1.1 billion over 10 years, enough to pay for the blue water benefits. But Wilkie in his letter

estimates the cost to be closer to \$5.5 billion, including thousands more veterans who could also receive eligibility and additional costs for staff to handle the claims.

“The changes proposed in this legislation will have a greater effect beyond what we believe Congress intends,” Wilkie wrote.

“The creation of a new statutory presumption that is not adequately supported by scientific evidence will encourage increased pressure on both Congress and VA to create and expand additional presumptions under a similarly liberal approach.”

Rather than studying the health of Blue Water Navy vets for another 10 yrs while those vets sicken & die from diseases related to exposure to herbicides, Congress must grant Agent Orange presumptions to the thousands of sailors who served their country off the shores of Vietnam.

Wilkie’s stance is at odds with his predecessor, former VA Secretary David Shulkin, who last fall stated that the blue water veterans “shouldn’t be waiting any longer” for a solution and said that a reasonable decision on the issue “will not be guided by scientific evidence” because of the decades that have passed since the potential exposure.

Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee officials have not made any public announcements on when the legislation may move ahead. House Veterans’ Affairs Committee ranking member Tim Walz, D-Minn., called the latest VA opposition to the issue unacceptable.

“Now, Blue Water Navy veterans who have been stuck waiting for 40 years could be left waiting even longer,” he said. “Our nation owes it to these veterans to get this done.”

“I will continue to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and in both chambers to make sure that happens, even if we have to drag the administration along kicking and screaming to do so.”

If Congress fails to pass any legislation on the issue this year, VA could still be forced to award the benefits to blue water Vietnam veterans based on an ongoing lawsuit in federal court. Arguments on that proceeding aren’t

expected to move forward until later this year.

Watchdog Report: The VA Benefits Backlog is Higher than Officials Say

As reported September 10 by Leo Shane for the Military Times, the benefits backlog at Veterans Affairs is worse than leaders there have acknowledged, according to a new investigation from the department's top watchdog. In a report released Monday, the VA inspector general found tens of thousands of benefits cases omitted or ignored by department officials that "significantly understated the number of claims awaiting decisions for over 125 days." Investigators estimated that the reported backlog only covers about 79 percent of relevant cases, with a host of others misclassified, mistakenly excluded, and in some cases, only acknowledged as overdue after the files had finally been processed.

In response, VA officials said they are "reviewing how best to supplement or adjust reporting on the rating-related backlog." New training and standards are expected to be put in place by the end of this year.

The VA claims backlog was a major scandal during President Barack Obama's administration, as frustrations grew over the slow pace of VA's ability to handle an ever-growing number of disability claims.

The backlog — the number of ratings cases that took more than 125 days to complete — swelled to more than 611,000 in March 2013 before being drawn down to about 70,000 in September 2015. Officials at the time credited a combination of more staff hires, new processing systems and new electronic medical records for the drop.

Former VA Secretary Eric Shinseki had made a public pledge to bring the backlog down to zero before 2016, but officials later acknowledged that was an unrealistic and potentially problematic goal. Some claims take longer than four months due to complexity or updated paperwork.

The backlog has hovered between 70,000 and 100,000 cases each week for most of the last three years, even as the total number of claims applications have continued to rise. Last week, the backlog was 86,001 cases, according to VA records.

But the inspector general, citing a review of cases from the first six months of 2016, said about 63,600 overdue cases that required ratings decisions were left out of those records for unclear reasons, and nearly 10,000 more were incorrectly recorded by staff.

In some instances, VA staffers acknowledged lengthy waits on cases only after the files were finalized months later.

The report found that while the average days pending for basic disability claims now sits at less than 90 days,

other more complex cases are taking more than 200 days to complete.

VA officials said much of the claims backlog rules and oversight has remained unchanged since 2009, and officials are reviewing other potential updates by the end of the year.

WOMEN VETERANS:

Submitted by Walt Hazelman

Women Veterans in Vietnam

After one of the most futile conflicts in the history of war, scorned by flag burners and shunned by citizens, G. I's returned to find respect for our troops hitting an all-time low. The reaction of the American people to our military was despicable. It has taken years for many servicemen and women to get over it- and some have not. What is truly unconscionable in the annals of American military history is the fact that little or no data exists on the women who served and, yes, were injured or killed, in Southeast Asia during the Viet Nam era. Accurate records on how many women were there, what decorations they earned, where they served - and most important - what after effects they have suffered - and continue to suffer - are nonexistent.

However, from anecdotal reports, letters, from books by those who were there, from research papers by military historians, and from the excellent text "Women in the Military - An Unfinished Revolution", by Major General Jeanne Holm, USAF (Ret), we can glean the following overview. Over five hundred WACs were stationed in Vietnam. Women Marines were in Vietnam. Over six hundred Women in the Air Force were there. Army, Navy and Air Force Nurses and Medical Specialists numbered over six thousand. Untold numbers of Red Cross, Special Services, Civil Service and countless other women were there.



Da Nang, South Vietnam, 1968..United States Navy nurse Lieutenant Commander Joan Brouillette checks the condition of Pfc. Charles Smith as she makes her daily rounds of the intensive care ward at the United States Naval Support Activity Hospital.

Women served in Vietnam in many support staff assignments, in hospitals, crewed on medical evacuation flights, with MASH Units, hospital ships, operations



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groups, information offices, service clubs, headquarters offices, and numerous other clerical, medical, intelligence and

personnel positions. There were women officers and enlisted women; there were in their early twenties with barely two years in service and career women over forty. Women suffered the same hardships as the men in many cases and were often in the line of fire from rockets and mortars, particularly during the Tet offensive with the Viet Cong attacks on Saigon.



Vietnam. 1st Lt. Elaine H. Niggemann changes a surgical dressing at the 24th Evacuation Hospital.

The accomplishments of the military nurses and their dedication in saving innumerable lives has barely been recorded for future generations. Yet women were there - they sloshed through the same mud and blood as the men, witnessed the same horrors of war, and suffered the same ignominious treatment and indignities upon their return to the country that sent them there.

Almost ten thousand women were there.

Women were awarded the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star, Commendation Medals, and Unit Citations. And yes there were casualties.

POW/MIA:

Submitted by Bob Gilbert

MIA-POW REPORT for SEPTEMBER 2018

Sept. 14, 2018

Soldier Accounted-For From World War II (Drovis, S.)

WASHINGTON — Army Sgt. 1st Lt. Seymour P. Drovis, killed during World War II, was accounted for on September 4. In July 1944, Drovis was a member of Company A, 105th Infantry Regiment, 27th Infantry Division,

Sept. 13, 2018

Soldier Killed During World War II Accounted For (McBride, E.)

WASHINGTON — Army Sgt. Eugene G. McBride, killed during World War II, was accounted for on September 10. In January 1945, McBride was a member of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 311th Infantry Regiment, 78th Infantry

Sept. 13, 2018

Soldier Killed During World War II Accounted For (Ashley, F.)

WASHINGTON — Army Pfc. Fred W. Ashley, killed during World War II, was accounted for on August 27. In May 1945, Ashley was a member of Troop C, 2nd Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Group, on a

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DPAA Families/VSO/MSO Quarterly Call and Update (Thursday, July 19, 2018, 2:00 PM)

Washington — Summary: Keeping the families of our missing as well as veterans informed is a primary objective of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's (DPAA) mission. This update is intended to provide an

Aug. 28, 2018

Marine Killed During World War II Accounted For (Murphy, R.)

WASHINGTON — Marine Corps Reserve Staff Sgt. Richard J. Murphy, killed during World War II, was accounted for on July 25. On June 15, 1944, Murphy was

a member of 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, which

Aug. 28, 2018

Marine Killed During World War II Accounted For (Schade, L.)

WASHINGTON — Marine Corps Capt. Lester A. Schade, killed during World War II, was accounted for on July 26. In April 1942, Schade, a member of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, when he was captured by

Aug. 28, 2018

Marine Killed During World War II Accounted For (Carlsen, H.)

WASHINGTON — Marine Corps Reserve Tech Sgt. Harry A. Carlsen, killed during World War II, was accounted for on June 4, 2018. In November 1943, Carlsen was assigned to Company A, 2nd Amphibian Tractor Battalion, 2nd

Aug. 28, 2018

USS Oklahoma Sailor Killed During World War II Accounted For (Shelden, E.)

WASHINGTON — Navy Fire Controlman Edward J. Shelden, killed during the attack on the USS Oklahoma in World War II, was accounted for on July 26, 2018. On Dec. 7, 1941, Shelden was assigned to the USS Oklahoma,

Aug. 28, 2018

USS Oklahoma Sailor Killed During World War II Accounted For (Jordan, W.)

WASHINGTON — Navy Seaman 1st Class Wesley V. Jordan, killed during the attack on the USS Oklahoma in World War II, was accounted for on July 8, 2018. On Dec. 7, 1941, Jordan was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which

Aug. 28, 2018

USS Oklahoma Sailor Killed During World War II Accounted For (McKissack, H.)

WASHINGTON — Navy Seaman 1st Class Hale McKissack, killed during the attack on the USS Oklahoma in World War II, was accounted for on July 26, 2018. On Dec. 7, 1941, McKissack was assigned to the USS Oklahoma,

AGENT ORANGE:

Submitted by Owen Martin

Ebenefits Development Letter Sent



What does Development Letter Sent mean on Ebenefits?

Development letters are sent in the early stages of your claim. It acknowledges your claim and asks for additional evidence if you have any. The VA is legally required to send this letter to you.

The letter may ask for things that aren't applicable to your case, like buddy statements, or it may ask for things you've already submitted, like medical records. The development letter will also contain blank forms. Most likely, you filled out all the required forms already.

The blank forms are only attached if you have additional evidence you want to submit. You do not have to send in everything the VA asks for; you only have to send in anything you haven't already submitted.

What do the "3 Phases of Claim Status" mean in Ebenefits?

- **Development** – This is the initial part of the claims process. The claimant is provided information as to what information is needed for the claim and an opportunity to provide or identify any additional evidence to support the claim. All appropriate evidence is gathered and reviewed.
- **Decision** – All information and evidence are carefully reviewed to ensure we have everything we need to make an informed decision on the claim. If something is missing, the claim returns to the *development* phase to obtain that missing information. If all the needed evidence is received, a proposed decision will be made.
- **Notification** – Once the decision is reviewed carefully and approved, a notification *letter* is sent to the claimant.



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COMMUNITY/PUBLIC AFFAIRS:

Submitted by Lou Storms

As I had mentioned previously, I had been waiting to find out if Inserra Supermarkets would be extending their sponsorship of our meal service to Lyons Hospital. They

just informed me on September 14th, that they would be providing the meals for another year. As it was too late to make the scheduled 9-11 date, we will be going in October. I will let you know the date as soon as I have it and anyone wanting to join us can sign the sheet up front or contact me.

Scheduled Meetings:

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

2018

23rd September

28th October

25th November

1st December – Christmas Party (TBD)

Calendar of Events:

Visit www.VVA1002.org for information on upcoming events.

50/50 Can Shakes:

Sept. 22

Oct. 6

Oct. 20

Walmart – Franklin

Acme – Vernon

ShopRite – Warwick

NEW MEMBERS:

“WELCOME HOME”

No report.

PASSINGS:

No report.

CONGRATULATIONS/CONCERNS:

Happy Belated August Birthday to:
Aug. 4, 1790, U.S. Coastguard
"SEMPER PARATUS"

Happy September Anniversaries:
Sharon & Jack Ratzel

Happy September Birthdays:
Sept. 18, 1947, U.S. Air Force
"AIM HIGH, FLY FIGHT WIN"

Joseph Siems (17th)

Happy October Anniversaries:

Don & Kathy Schulz

Linda & Andy Skellenger

Bea & John Harrigan

Happy October Birthdays:

Oct. 13, 1775, United States Navy
"A GLOBAL FORCE FOR GOOD"

Teri Deaver

Lenny Weakland

MEMBERS CORNER:

Nothing submitted this month.

MISCELLANEOUS:

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

Submitted by Bob Caggiano

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

In January 2000, Congress passed legislation guaranteeing Veterans the right to at least two uniformed servicemen, a flag ceremony, and the playing of TAPS at their funeral. Unfortunately, there are not enough buglers to play TAPS, so the historic melody has been played on a CD player at many Veterans' last ceremony, or more currently

on a bugle that plays Taps using an electronic insert. The volunteer organization "Bugles Across America" (a.k.a. BAA) was created to honor the service of veterans by providing Taps live by a 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.



Editors Corner:

By Linda Skellenger (AVVA)

Please have information to be included in the October newsletter to me by Sunday, October 21st by email: skelle@ptd.net or by snail-mail to:

Linda Skellenger
174 Lewisburg Rd.
Sussex, N.J. 07461