



Volume 16 • Issue 05

VVA Chapter 12 ♦ Newsletter

May 2016

NEVER FORGET



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

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



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-	Show		
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Tony Ponzio, Delegate

Mike Quilty, Alternate Delegate
Dan Higgins, Alternate Delegate

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Bob Parrella	AVVA Liaison	732-303-1689	bobpark4@aol.com
Rob Ford	BITW Editer & Web Master	732-687-3846	nlvva12@gmail.com

Please remember our fellow Chapter members, and their families in your prayers, as they continue to face very serious medical conditions.

Please visit and like our [Face Book](#) page, "Vietnam Veterans NJ Shore Area Chapter 12" for info on what we are doing – photos, and more.

Please visit our Chapter web site – www.vvachapter12.net for photo albums, News Letter Archive's, Chapter History.

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We have been informed that in lieu of specific items to send to troops on deployment, gift cards to the PX would be appreciated. The troops can get almost anything in the PX, but could use the help via gift card. This is also a money and effort saver on our part. Donations to the PX gift card fund are being accepted. **We are also switching from actual food to gift cards for our food bank as this will better serve our veterans in need.**

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Anyone needing a ride to the VA, please contact Ernie Diorio for assistance.

If you are able to provide transportation ,please let Ernie know, so the same people aren't doing it all the time.

If you are looking for a fellow vet that you lost track of, or someone that you served with, that might have information you need, please send it to us and we will put it in the monthly newsletter.

Check this link out if you need help with an appeal, or know a Vet that does. Keep it moving, and pass it on to all other Vets you know. <http://www.vetsprobono.org/index.htm>

Anyone wanting to submit an article, picture, or story please send it to: vva12p@verizon.net or nlvva12@gmail.com by the 25th of each month. Anything received after that will be placed in the following month's newsletter. (Make sure it can be verified)

President's Message

April was another busy month for the Chapter, our School Program has blossomed to its fullest, with 4 High Schools visited during the month, Matawan High, Middletown North, Middletown South and Red Bank Catholic High School, and next month we already have two schools scheduled.

Only a month after a 5 bypass operation, John Aitken returned to lead us in the washing of the Memorial Wall on April 16. It was very well attended by Chapter members and another VVA Chapters members from 688,779,233, 721 and 452. Later that night two Chapter members attended VVA Chapter 452 dinner dance.

On April 23, 2016 John and I met our Home Depot [21] volunteers at the Memorial. On an overcast day, they painted all the railings that surround the memorial.

During the week of the 18th I sent out an Email for help on April 27 to help me stuff and label 4000 envelopes for the State Council's annual 50/50 raffle to help support VVA Service Officers Program. Our members answered the call with strong support of 21 brothers showing up to help. It was great to see some old members and a few new members.

A very special thanks goes out to VFW Commander Jimmy Mack for donating and personally cooking lunch for all the volunteers. What a Great cook and a nice menu for lunch, Burgers, Chicken fingers, Grilled Cheese sandwiches, Hot wings and French fries.

Next week our Chapter will be celebrating 34 years of service helping Veterans. The annual dinner dance will be at the VFW 2179 on May 7, 2016, starting at 6:30 pm cost is \$40.00 per person. For tickets please call Ernie at 732-245-5552.

The Colonel



UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS

The next Chapter meeting will be on Wednesday, May 4th, at 7:30PM. Location is at VFW 2226, 210 Norwood Ave., Oakhurst, NJ.

May 7th, Installation Dinner/Dance

May 15th, Governor's 25th Annual Surf Fishing Tournament

May 24th, VA Claims Clinic

June 11th, 10th Anniversary Rededication of War Dog Memorial

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

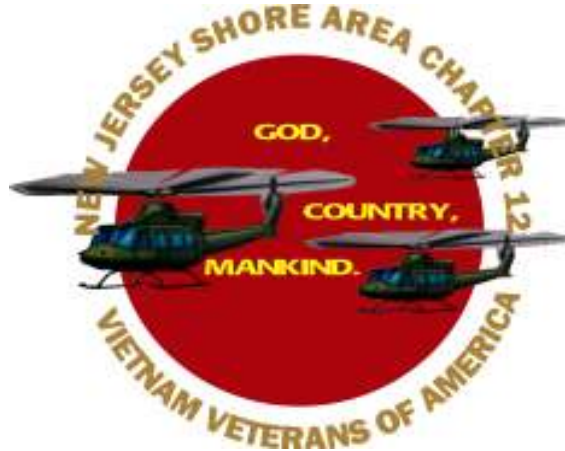
May 12th, Tony & Linda Ponzo Anniversary

May 30th, Tony Ponzo Birthday

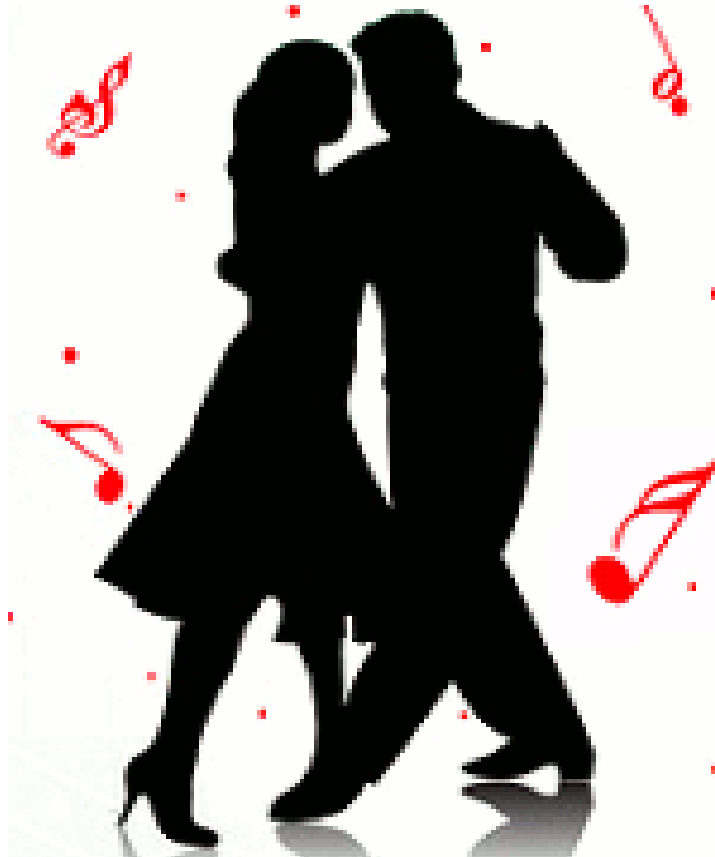
Anyone born in May ?? Please let me know so I can put it here!!

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

VIETNAM VETERANS of AMERICA
NEW JERSEY SHORE AREA
CHAPTER 12



22th ANNUAL INSTALLATION & DINNER DANCE CELEBRATING 34



YEARS OF SERVICE Our Annual Dinner Dance will be held on Saturday,

May 7, 2016, 6:30 pm at VFW 2179, One Veterans Lane, Port Monmouth, NJ

Featuring entertainment by ROCK N RHYTHM

Dennis,

Can we run this in the next newsletter. Also if you know of a disabled veteran that would like to fish the tournament but does not have adequate funds. I will pay the \$20.00 registration fee.

Greg K

Members of Vietnam Veterans of America (Chapter 12) will assist disabled veterans that would like to fish at the Governor's 25th Annual Surf Fishing Tournament, Sunday, May 15, 2016. Special arrangements are made for disabled anglers. Balloon tire equipped beach wheelchairs (capacity 250 lbs.) are available for physically challenged anglers. Volunteers will be needed to assist anglers with special needs who fish on tournament day. To volunteer or to make arrangements for a disabled angler, please contact Greg Kucharewski at [732-785-9278](tel:732-785-9278) or email gkucharews@jcaa.org



The
Department of Veterans Affairs
Claims Clinic

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

Hosted by
Michael Blazis

Director, Newark Regional Office

WHO: Veterans, Service-members, dependents and any organization or individual who works with or on behalf of Veterans

WHAT: Claims Clinic

WHERE: Department of Veterans Affairs

Newark Regional Office

20 Washington Place Newark

NJ 07102

WHEN: ***Tuesday, May 24, 2016/10AM – 3PM***

WHY: To Share information, hear feedback, and answer questions on VA benefits, including compensation pension , vocational rehabilitation and employment, and education benefit programs.

For more information contact Jennifer Myers at 973-297-3384 or jennifer.myers6@va.gov



The United States War Dogs Association

*Cordially invites you to
Attend the 10 - Year Anniversary
Rededication ceremony for the*

*United States War Dogs Memorial
State Of New Jersey*

Saturday, June 11, 2016

11:00 AM

To be held at the:

*New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial
1 Memorial Lane*

Holmdel, New Jersey 07733

Exit 116, Garden State Parkway

(On the Grounds of the PNC Bank Arts Center)

NJVVV - 732-335-0033

USWDA - 609-747-9340

Obtaining Military Records

From: Adjutant JWV Dept NJ <jwdeptnjadi@gmail.com>
Date: April 5, 2016 at 6:29:29 PM EDT
To: undisclosed-recipients;;
Subject: How To Obtain Military Records

MILITARY RECORDS/DD-214 UPDATE 05 ► AVAILABLE ONLINE

IT'S OFFICIAL; DD-214S ARE NOW ONLINE. PLEASE PASS ON TO OTHER VETS. THE NATIONAL PERSONNEL RECORDS CENTER (NPRC) HAS PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING WEBSITE FOR VETERANS TO GAIN ACCESS TO THEIR DD-214S ONLINE: [HTTP://VETRECS.ARCHIVES.GOV](http://vetrecs.archives.gov) OR TRY [HTTP://WWW.ARCHIVES.GOV/VETERANS/MILITARY-SERVICE-RECORDS](http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records). THIS MAY BE PARTICULARLY HELPFUL WHEN A VETERAN NEEDS A COPY OF HIS DD-214 FOR EMPLOYMENT PURPOSES. NPRC IS WORKING TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR VETERANS WITH COMPUTERS AND INTERNET ACCESS TO OBTAIN COPIES OF DOCUMENTS FROM THEIR MILITARY FILES.

MILITARY VETERANS AND THE NEXT OF KIN OF DECEASED FORMER MILITARY MEMBERS MAY NOW USE A NEW ONLINE MILITARY PERSONNEL RECORDS SYSTEM TO REQUEST DOCUMENTS. OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH A NEED FOR DOCUMENTS MUST STILL COMPLETE THE STANDARD FORM 180, WHICH CAN BE DOWNLOADED FROM THE ONLINE WEB SITE. BECAUSE THE REQUESTER WILL BE ASKED TO SUPPLY ALL INFORMATION ESSENTIAL FOR NPRC TO PROCESS THE REQUEST, DELAYS THAT NORMALLY OCCUR WHEN NPRC HAS TO ASK VETERANS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WILL BE MINIMIZED. THE NEW WEB-BASED APPLICATION WAS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE BETTER SERVICE ON THESE REQUESTS BY ELIMINATING THE RECORDS CENTERS MAIL ROOM AND PROCESSING TIME.

VVA Website Launched!

We invite you to check out our recently updated national website. Taking advantage of improved technology, our goal is to create an online experience that is engaging, resourceful and easy to navigate.

Check out our zip code search feature that will allow you to locate VVA chapters more easily.

If you are looking for VVA forms, strategic documents, policies, guides, you will find them under the Resources link at the bottom of every page as well as the <https://vva.org/docs/>

The VA vs Sergeant Major Acosta

03/30/2016 08:33 pm ET | Updated Mar 30, 2016

Shad Meshad Founder and co-author, Vet Center Program; founder, National Veterans Foundation

Army Sergeant Major Jesse Acosta has received notification from the VA that his benefits for a caregiver are ending in 90 days, at the end of May. The letter he received from the VA states “he is no longer appropriate for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers.” They say they are pleased to inform him of this. **According to the VA, even though Acosta, blinded by a mortar attack in Iraq, is still blind, they are excited (with an exclamation point to prove it) to let him know they have determined he’s “graduated,” and no longer needs a caregiver. Seriously?**

Acosta served with distinction from 1975 until his retirement in 2010. In 2003 he joined the Individual Ready Reserve program until he was recalled to active duty in 2005. He deployed to Iraq in August. Everything changed on January 16, 2006 when he was struck by a mortar. His injuries included the loss of both eyes, injury to the frontal and temporal lobes of his brain, loss of part of his jaw and teeth, a back injury, a herniated calf muscle that won’t heal and loss of a kneecap so that one knee is bone on bone. He was not expected to survive when he arrived at the military hospital in Landstuhl, Germany.

But survive he did. Over the course of forty surgeries his jaw and eye sockets were reconstructed but his vision was lost forever. Today he’s a fine-looking man. In good shape, fit, his service dog by his side. You wouldn’t know looking at him that he’s been rated, in addition to his blindness, 70% disability from PTSD and 100% disability from TBI.

Jesse Acosta returned to his employer after Iraq, but he needs some assistance to do his job. Likewise, at home he needs some help. That’s what the caregiver provides: help getting to medical appointments, managing medication refills, help with paperwork and shopping. The daily things that sighted people take for granted. His service dog helps both with mobility and with PTSD. But the caregiver fills an essential need. Whether or not the VA agrees.

When I spoke with Jesse, he told me, “When the VA representative called to tell us the caregiver benefit had been canceled, we were told verbally that ‘the VA does not consider blindness a disability’.” You can understand how the VA might look at him...he’s employed, he has a service dog...and think his blindness does not completely disable him. But how humane is it not to take into consideration the effects of PTSD and TBI? The VA has treated him for both and they have complete records. He can appeal his case, of course. But how long will that take? Based on a 2012 VA report, about two and a half years.

By the way, here are the eligibility criteria from the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act,” Public Law 111-163: Section 1720G (a) (2) ‘(2) “For purposes of this subsection, an eligible veteran is any individual who—

“(A) is a veteran or member of the Armed Forces undergoing medical discharge from the Armed Forces;

“(B) has a serious injury (including traumatic brain injury, psychological trauma, or other mental disorder) incurred or aggravated in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service on or after September 11, 2001; and

“(C) is in need of personal care services because of—

“(i) an inability to perform one or more activities of daily living;

“(ii) a need for supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological or other impairment or injury...”

The act was intended, among other things, to assist members of veterans’ families who have left careers to care for veterans with catastrophic disabilities. However, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is failing to implement the law (Public Law 111163) as Congress intended.

Paralyzed Veterans of America testified on this point on

March 11 before the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Health. Carl Blake, Legislative Program Director for Paralyzed Veterans of America, said, “(VA) said the only way a caregiver will be eligible for this is if the veteran would have otherwise been institutionalized. Blake explained that such an interpretation would lower the number of families eligible for these benefits, such as monthly stipends and healthcare benefits through the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA), to about 840. According to Blake that number is less than 25 percent of what Congress intended.

An article in the Illinois Statesman on Feb. 23, 2016 states that about 7,000 veterans who were receiving caregiver benefits are no longer getting them. "About a third were cut because VA staff members determined that they did not meet medical criteria for the support." The program, passed into law in 2010, was never intended to be a permanent benefit. Only last year did the VA publish an official rule on how the program should be run. Stipends were to be provided to families as long as the veteran's health met certain criteria. If the situation improved, the VA might remove patients from the financial part of the program.

Based on his experience, Jesse says, "I have never been VA friendly, and because I question and challenge the VA process, I truly believe I have been targeted in having this benefit canceled." He was also quick to say he's not the only one receiving this kind of treatment by the VA, and he launched into a story about another vet in the LA area whose VA care came from...are you ready? VA facilities in Long Beach, West Los Angeles, San Diego, Loma Linda, East Los Angeles and downtown LA. This is

Southern California. That's miles and miles of driving, not to mention hours of car time because of traffic, and then the expense on top of that. It's no wonder that so many vets suffering from PTSD and TBI also have anger management problems. I can't help but think the run-around treatment, some of it looking like harassment, that these vets experience from the VA is a factor in the number of veteran suicides. 22 a day. Still.

Sergeant Major Acosta served with distinction in the U.S. Army from 1975 until 2010. Among his many awards are The Legion of Merit, The Bronze Star, The Purple Heart, the Meritorious Service Medal and six Army Commendation Medals.

What's it going to take to get any reform in this mega-bureaucracy? The VA's budget for fiscal year 2016 is \$163 *billion*. The proposed 2017 budget includes an increase for VA funding. Maybe money isn't the problem. Maybe it's the structure of the VA, how large and unwieldy it is. Maybe it's the entrenched culture of no accountability. I'll grant that changes are being made. But how do we explain to the Jesse Acostas who served this country that it's just too much trouble to take their cases individually? That in order to get through the number of cases, there's more investment in blocking treatment than in authorizing it? Because that's how it looks to me. At the National Veterans Foundation, all of us wish that Acosta's case was out of the ordinary.

Unfortunately, it's not. If you know a vet who needs help, here's our LifeLine for Vets:

888.777.4443 FREE. It's vet-to-vet, the only one of its kind.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/shad-meshad/the-va-vs-sergeant-major-_b_9526498.html

VICTORY IN COURT

Court Rules VA Has Shortchanged Veterans Since 2009 By Refusing To Reimburse Them For Emergency Medical Expenses Not Covered By Insurance

U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims Agrees with National Veterans Legal Services Program Argument That VA Failed to Revise Its Reimbursement Regulations to Comply with 2009 Congressional Mandate

On Friday, a unanimous three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims struck down a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regulation that VA had been relying upon since 2009 to deny reimbursement requests from veterans who incurred emergency medical care costs outside the VA healthcare system. The Court's decision rebuked the VA, emphasizing that VA's reimbursement regulation became "wholly inconsistent" with the governing statute when Congress amended it in 2009, but thereafter the VA unlawfully "declined to remedy this inconsistency."

The case, *Richard W. Staab v. Robert A. McDonald*, was brought by the National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP) on behalf of an Air Force veteran who had a heart attack in 2010 and was rushed to a non-VA hospital, where he underwent open heart surgery and incurred approximately \$48,000 in emergency medical expenses. Medicare covered a portion of this medical bill, and the veteran sought VA reimbursement for the portion of the medical expenses not covered by Medicare.


"This is a major win for veterans, and their families," said Bart Stichman, Joint Executive Director of NVLSP and one of the attorneys in the case. "Often veterans have to seek emergency medical care outside the VA healthcare system, and for years the VA has refused to reimburse these veterans for any of the expenses incurred simply because secondary insurance covered a portion of the medical bill. This practice has violated federal law since at least 2009. The court's ruling means the VA will have to amend the unlawful regulations it should have amended in 2009 and do right by these veterans. It's not just a win for one veteran. Veterans who have pending claims for reimbursement will benefit. Plus, veterans whose reimbursement requests were turned down years ago may now be able to get paid by claiming that the previous denial contained "clear and unmistakable error."

April Is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Sexual assault and harassment that occurs during military service is referred to as Military Sexual Trauma (MST). A 2014 study found that about 1 in 20 women and just under 1 in 100 men have been the victim of MST during their time in the military. However, many of those who are affected by MST while serving do not report and are oftentimes worried about the stigma attached to their suffering. This fear can cause increased isolation, making it hard to reach and treat those who have survived MST. Every Vet Center is required to offer free and confidential counseling for service members who have experienced Military Sexual Trauma, regardless of era of service or discharge status. Additionally, the VA has set up sexual trauma programs across the country with specialists that focus on both the mental and physical injuries associated with MST. If you are currently experiencing a crisis, please call the Veterans Crisis Line at [1-800-273-8255](tel:1-800-273-8255), and press 1.

Military Suicides Top OIF War Deaths

According to an April 10 *Houston Chronicle* article by Sig Christensen, the mounting toll of military suicides since 2003, an intractable problem highlighted again last Friday with a murder-suicide at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, has surpassed the number of troops killed in Iraq. The number of suicides in all service branches reached 4,839 for 2003-2015. In the same period, 4,496 American were lost serving in Iraq, according to the latest Pentagon statistics, combined with previously released data.





Vietnam Veterans of America joins lawsuit suing the VA on behalf of Camp Lejeune veterans

PRESS RELEASE

Vietnam Veterans of America

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 27, 2016

No. 16-10

Contact:

Mokie Porter

[301-585-4000](tel:301-585-4000)

Veterans Groups Sue VA for Withholding Information Demanded by Veterans Poisoned by Camp Lejeune's Toxic Water

VA's Controversial "Subject Matter Expert" Program Keeps Public in the Dark

(Wash., D.C.)---Today Vietnam Veterans of America, along with The Few, The Proud, The Forgotten, filed suit under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to compel the Department of Veterans Affairs to produce records on the Camp Lejeune Subject Matter Expert (SME) program. The VA created the SME program in 2012 to evaluate disability compensation claims. Since that time, the public has filed numerous requests for information on the SME program, but VA has largely ignored such requests.

"It is high time the federal government and all of its entities stop lying and withholding evidence on the toxic substances to which veterans and their families have been exposed. To have anonymous subject experts is not the American way, and in a democracy, this lack of transparency is not acceptable," said John Rowan, National President of Vietnam Veterans of America.

Between 1953 and 1987, nearly one million veterans, their families, and civilian employees at Camp Lejeune, a Marine training base in North Carolina, were exposed to toxic drinking water in one of the worst contaminations in U.S. history. Many have since developed illnesses like kidney, bladder, and breast cancer, and many have lost their lives as a result. Thousands of veterans have applied for disability compensation for diseases related to their exposure to toxic water aboard Camp Lejeune. The VA has denied the vast majority of these claims.

Initiated in 2012, the SME program tasks an anonymous group of clinicians with issuing medical opinions on the disability compensation claims of Camp Lejeune veterans. Since the VA created the SME program, the grant rate for these claims plummeted from approximately 25 percent to 8 percent.

From the limited information publically available, veterans groups and medical professionals have identified concerns about the clinicians' credentials, methods, and expertise. SME program clinicians have repeatedly cited scientific reports that VA officials have admitted are outdated. In at least one case, the VA relied on a report by an SME program clinician who cut and pasted a Wikipedia entry to provide a medical opinion on a rare type of cancer.

Veterans groups submitted a FOIA request to the VA in December 2015, seeking comprehensive records on the Camp Lejeune SME program, including policies, procedures, and objectives; fiscal impact; data and statistical information; and training records. The VA has not responded to this request.

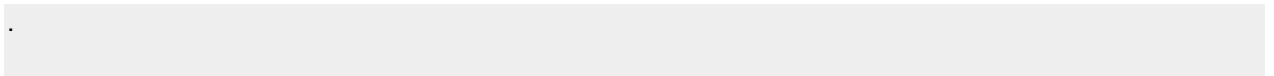
Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), ranking member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, said, "the SME program has been using incorrect and outdated information. The alarming drop in the grant rate of Camp Lejeune claims deserves real, penetrating scrutiny."

"The VA claims it created the Camp Lejeune SME program to assist veterans, but it is adversarial and unjust. Everything we know about the program indicates it should be

scrapped," said retired Marine Master Sergeant Jerry Ensminger, founder of The Few, The Proud, The Forgotten, who lost his daughter at age nine to childhood leukemia linked to exposure to Camp Lejeune's toxic water.

"The VA's lack of transparency is alarming. The qualifications and methodology of the SME clinicians are concerning. Given that the VA has called this program a model for toxic exposure compensation claims in the future, veterans need to understand how this program works." said Rory Minnis, a former Marine and law student intern at the Veterans Legal Services Clinic at Yale Law School.

Vietnam Veterans of America is the nation's only congressionally chartered veterans' service organization dedicated to the needs of Vietnam-era veterans and their families. In keeping with its founding principle, "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another," VVA aggressively advocates for all veterans



AT&T Pictures

Not sure if I sent these pics to you previously, but here they are.

When I worked at AT&T in Holmdel, for a time I was VP of the Veterans Club there. For Memorial Day, 1993, we organized a noon time ceremony with several color guards, including one from VVA Chapter 233. After the ceremony at AT&T, we had a wreath laying at the NJ VV Memorial in Holmdel, which was still under construction. I was very proud to be part of this activity. Some of Chapter 12 may recognize the names/faces of the Chapter 233 guys.

Dan Dawdy
Era vet (Sgt, USAF, '65-'68)

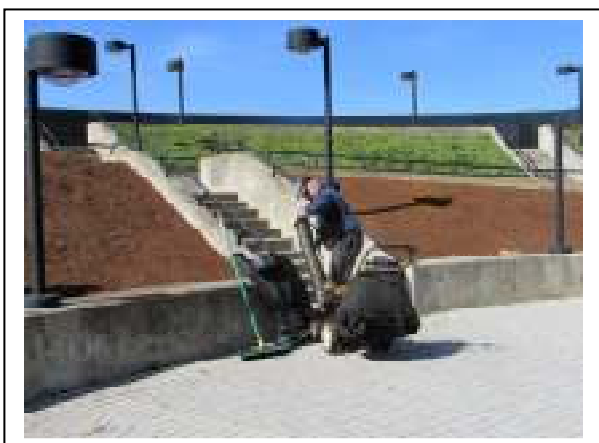


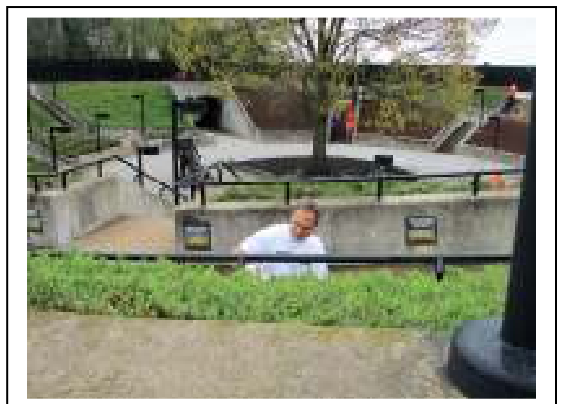
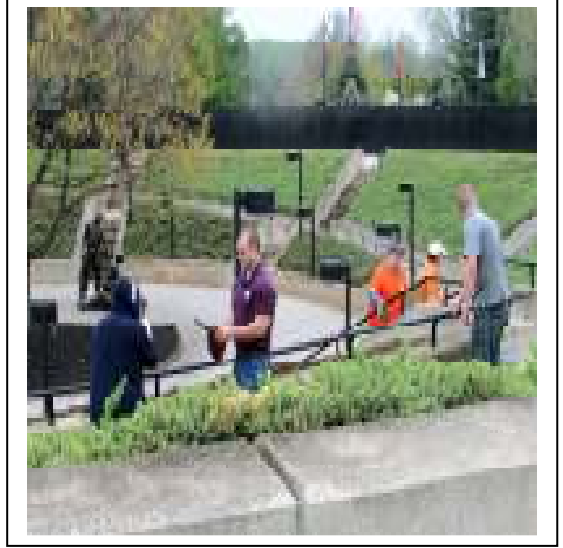






Wall Washing and Railing Painting VVA and Home Depot

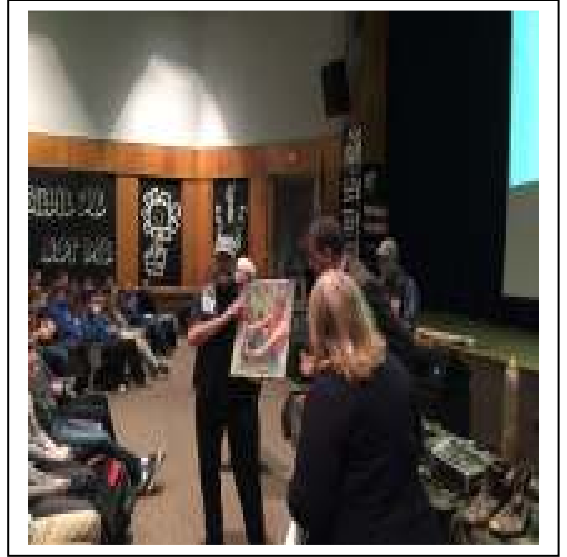




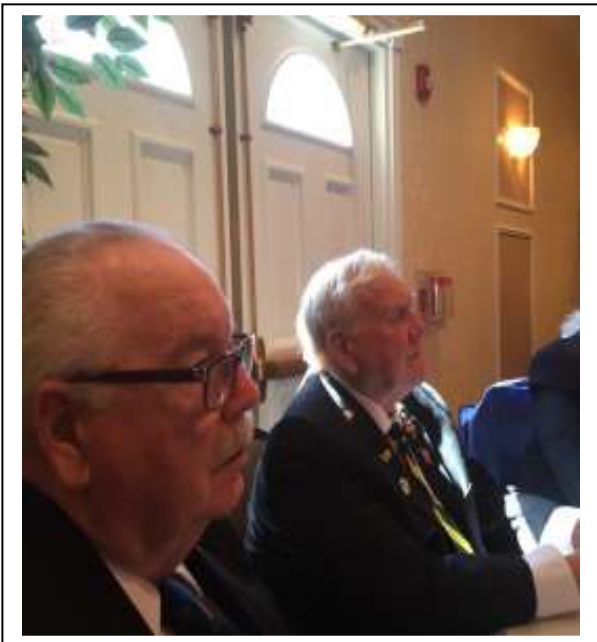


Manalapan High School School Education Program





Jewish War Veterans'
Legislative Brunch



HUMOR

Airport Full Body Scan Status Report

Finally, some useful facts are coming out about all of those airport full body scans!

December 2014 Statistics On Airport Full Body Screening From CATSA :	
Terrorists Discovered	0
Transvestites	133
Hernias	1,485
Hemorrhoid Cases	3,172
Enlarged Prostates	8,249
Breast Implants	59,350
Natural Blondes	3

It was also discovered that 308 politicians had no balls.

Thought you'd like to know.

I am sending a separate E-Mail about "Willy and Joe" that I think everyone will appreciate.

TAPS

Shore Area Vietnam Vets Called Home By The Lord

Ballouz, John William, 71, Atlantic Highlands, USMC

Brown, Gregory, 65, Leonardo, Army

Burian, Richard, 68, Tinton Falls, Army

Cholminsky, Alan, 70, Lakewood,

Ellam, Alexander, 69, Toms River, Army

Fahnholz, Robert, 74, Neptune City, Navy

Lansing, Donald, 66, Point Pleasant Beach, USAF

REST IN PEACE BROTHERS