

SOUND OFF!



VOL. VI, NO 2

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

20 OCTOBER 2010

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

FREEDOM, BY-THE-NUMBERS

Everywhere you turn today you see or hear that we are in Iraq and Afghanistan to “Fight for Freedom”. Since we were also in France, Italy, North Africa, New Guinea, India, Burma, the Pacific Islands, China, Vietnam, Panama, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Kuwait, etc. fighting for “Freedom” one starts to get curious about the meaning of that glorious word in today’s context.

There is no doubt in my mind that in World War II we were fighting for the freedom of our allies, ourselves and all others brought under the heel of the Axis. Today’s world would not be free in any real sense if we had not done so. As time passed, however, the wars we fought seemed to get further and further away from the American concept of freedom.

So what is this “Freedom” we are fighting for today in Iraq and Afghanistan? Even more basic a question is what is freedom in the American view, as supported by our history, and is that what we are fighting for now?

This question should be in the minds of every veteran since not only must we worry about what our sons and daughters and their sons and daughters fight for, but also we must reconcile our own past service to the fight and the meaning of “Freedom” as a part of the truth that we all seek.

When I talk to those who throw the “Fighting for Freedom” phrase around willy-nilly, and who get very angry when I question their meaning of the phrase, I cannot seem to get a coherent answer. I do get a lot of jingoism—flag, Mom, country, etc.—but nothing I can use to satisfy my need for a real answer.

One thing we know is that “Freedom” in its simplest form means an absence of constraint on the ability of an individual or a group to act. We know that

in the case of people and nations “freedom” manifests in many areas of human endeavor, including the physical, the economic, the societal, and the political.

It seems that the only hope that we have to define this less-than-simple subject in its American context is to examine our sources.

All of us are familiar with the “by-the-numbers” routine. No matter your service, the CO had his list of things to be done “by-the-numbers”, and certainly the Sergeant Major, Master Chief or Chief Master Sergeant had their lists, also “by-the-numbers”.

Our predecessors had some lists of the intrinsic parts of “Freedom” that they left us, and from which we can derive what the meaning ought to be today, whether or not that is the case in reality.

In 1775-1776 the Second Continental Congress left, in the preamble to the Declaration of Independence, one of the simplest lists of the constituent parts of the freedom that they sought:

Declaration of Independence of the United States of America July 4, 1776

...We hold these truths to be self-evident, that

1. all men are created equal,

that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are

2. Life,

3. Liberty and the

4. pursuit of Happiness. —

That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, ...

Thomas Jefferson

3rd President; Democratic-Republican

Here we have the first statement of the natural freedoms that we should all enjoy which are stated in the basic concept of rights, and which forever tie the safety of those freedoms and rights to the existence of a government of and by us all.

Now the anarchists on the left and the ultra-libertarians on the right would have us all believe that “government” and “freedom” are antithetical, yet those two concepts are the legacy of our very first statement of what it means to be an American.

So in this very first “by-the-numbers” list we have the concepts of rights and government wrapped up in the declaration of freedom from British rule.

From May to September, 1787 the Philadelphia Convention drafted and passed our Constitution which was subsequently ratified in 1789. The price of final ratification included the drafting of a Bill of Rights, which were in turn ratified in December, 1791. This Bill of Rights is the next list “by-the-numbers” to help us in our definition of “Freedom”, since rights and freedom are forever paired in the American system.

Constitution of the United States ~ The Bill of Rights, December 15, 1791

First Amendment – Establishment Clause, Free Exercise Clause; freedom of speech, of the press, and of assembly; right to petition

Second Amendment – Militias, Right to keep and bear arms.

Third Amendment – Protection from quartering of troops.

Fourth Amendment – Protection from unreasonable search and seizure.

Fifth Amendment – due process, double jeopardy, self-incrimination, eminent domain.

Sixth Amendment – Trial by jury and rights of the accused; Confrontation Clause, speedy trial, public trial, right to counsel

Seventh Amendment – Civil trial by jury.

Eighth Amendment – Prohibition of excessive bail and cruel and unusual punishment.

Ninth Amendment – Protection of rights not specifically enumerated in the Constitution.

Tenth Amendment – Powers of States and people.

James Madison

4th President; Democratic Republican

Besides the listing of specific rights and freedoms, the Ninth Amendment recognized that this was not the final explanation of the concept.

Over the next 140 years the definition got very fuzzy. “Freedom” began to mean the freedom of the plutocrats to act as they saw fit, and the “Freedom” of

the general populace was limited to satisfying the needs and wants of their wealthy overlords.

Government lost sight of the reason why it was “instituted among Men” and really forgot that it “derive[ed its] just powers from the consent of the governed.” The protection of the free-wheeling market became the reason for the existence of government. The “governed” had to assert its rights and freedoms through organizing and the government had to be taught that women were a full part of the “governed”.

At times “freedom” has been just the “free market”. The free market superseded the freedom of the people until the Great Depression brought the market down. After struggling out of that abyss, and in the face of a pending war, the President brought the concept of freedom back to a new, simple “by-the-numbers” list.

State of the Union Address to the Congress, January 6, 1941

“...In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

The **first** is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world.

The **second** is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way--everywhere in the world.

The **third** is freedom from want—which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants—everywhere in the world.

The **fourth** is freedom from fear—which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor—anywhere in the world.

That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation. That kind of world is the very antithesis of the so-called new order of tyranny which the dictators seek to create with the crash of a bomb.”

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

32nd President, Democrat

After the horror of World War II, when the rise of industry was fed by the need for defense, the freedom of the people began to lag well behind the concept of the freedom of the market. The market began to have full sway during the war and was looking for a boost in the post war era. Yet another President believed that the concept of “Freedom” needed another quick list “by-the-numbers” if “the governed” were to get back in control.

Address by President Eisenhower "The Chance for Peace" delivered before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, April 16, 1953.

... the United States [has followed] a few clear precepts, which govern its conduct in world affairs.

First: No people on earth can be held, as a people, to be enemy, for all humanity shares the common hunger for peace and fellowship and justice.

Second: No nation's security and well-being can be lastingly achieved in isolation but only ineffective cooperation with fellow-nations.

Third: Any nation's right to form of government and an economic system of its own choosing is inalienable.

Fourth: Any nation's attempt to dictate to other nations their form of government is indefensible.

And **fifth:** A nation's hope of lasting peace cannot be firmly based upon any race in armaments but rather upon just relations and honest understanding with all other nations.

“What can the world or any nation in it hope for, if no turning is found in this dread road?”

“...The best would be this: a life of perpetual fear and tension; a burden of arms draining the wealth and labor of all peoples; a wasting of strength that defies the American system or the Soviet system or any system to achieve true abundance and happiness for the peoples of this earth.

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children ... This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the clouds of war, it is humanity hanging on an iron cross”

Dwight David Eisenhower
34th President; Republican

*In his 1961 farewell address he warned us of the danger of letting government and industry take away our freedoms and in a draft of that address, used the term **military-industrial-congressional complex**, thus indicating the essential role that the Congress plays in the propagation of the military industry.*

And so, once again we were reminded of the real meaning of “Freedom”, with an even stronger emphasis on the need for freedom for all, “everywhere in the world”, and that freedom must be decided by each nation for itself.

So from these helpful lists “by-the-numbers” and from the acts and policies surrounding them we can define an American kind of Freedom.

In its physical sense it is safety from aggression and felonious acts, which in a modern, global society can only be guaranteed by governments.

In its societal sense it is the ability to lead a happy life with adequate means to raise a family, and to enjoy the society of our neighbors and friends in safe, clean, well-run communities. This sense requires governments to provide those services necessary to the community which we cannot provide individually.

In its economic sense it means the ability to make a living sufficient to enjoy life, and it includes the opportunity to make more than the other guy through exceptional effort and ability, not through greed. This requires a government that protects us individually from exploitation, and which ensures the fairness of the marketplace and the safety of its products and services.

In its political sense it means that we have a government—executive, legislature, and courts—dedicated to the securing of our freedoms and to the establishment of ongoing policies that extend those freedoms to everyone. That government must also, in its relationship with other nations, be respectful of their differences and resist any attempt by any faction to impose our way on others.

So when I ask myself how are we “Fighting for Freedom” in Iraq and Afghanistan in the context of these convenient “by-the-numbers” guidelines that our predecessors of all political factions have willed us, I cannot find an adequate answer. There are threats, but they are local and not in South Asia.

I do not feel threatened physically beyond that which can be addressed by good policy and first-class police work and only as a last resort by force.

I do not feel threatened in my society except by those who restrict my freedoms, particularly as they wish to do so by enhancing their own.

I do not feel threatened economically except by those who would steal from me and my neighbors to enhance their own lives, and who would use government for that purpose. This does not refer to taxation, which is a valid form of raising the money necessary to protect all of my freedoms, rather it refers to rapacity and greed which seem to be increasing by the moment,

Finally I do not feel threatened politically except by the boredom with the process which has arisen in my fellow citizens, and the feeling of helplessness they have developed when faced with a government of both parties which does not seem to cherish the freedom that we have earned and which has been bequeathed us.

So yes, freedom is under assault, but the danger seems to be here at home. **And here at home is where we should be “Fighting for Freedom.” [Ed.]**

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

NEED LEGAL HELP IN AN APPEAL TO THE DVA?

Try these two websites: Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program www.vetsprobono.org/index.htm. United States Court of appeals for Veterans Claims “Public List of Practitioners” are members of the court’s bar www.vetapp.gov/practitioners/. Also this site for west coasters <http://www.chapman.edu/law/programs/clinics/amvets.asp>.

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

VCS - VUFT LAWSUIT UPDATE:

Class Action Suit: On 12 August 2009 we appeared before the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. An article from the LA Times on 24 August summarizes the results so far < <http://latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/healthcare/la-me-veterans-suit24-2009aug24.0.1423297.story>>

.Case Progress to Date:

7/23/2007 Suit filed w/Federal District Court

9/25/2007 Defendant’s Motion to Dismiss

2/11/2008 Motion for Preliminary Injunction

2/25/2008 Preliminary Injunction Hearing

4/21/2008 Trial

6/25/2008 Judgment based on jurisdiction

7/25/2008 Appeal notice filed w/9th Circuit Court of Appeals

12/10/2008 Appeal brief filed

12/15/2008 *Swords to Plowshares* and *Vietnam Veterans of America* file amicus briefs

12/22/2008 *Military Spouses for Change* and *United Spinal Association* file amicus briefs

3/4/2009 Appeal will not be subject to Mediation

4/6/2009 Requested an extension to reply to the DVA response to our brief

4/22/09 Extension granted to 1 May 2009

5/1/09 Appellants’ Reply Brief filed

6/11/09 Oral Arguments Scheduled for 12 August 2009

8/12/09 Oral arguments

9/14/09 Reply on mediation [changed date]

9/14/09 No agreement on mediation. 9th Circuit accepts the case.

10/20/10 NTR [The courts move veeerrrry slowly] There is a rumor that we may yet be heard this session. NOTE: There is no first-in-first-out rule in the Court of Appeals, and there is no time constraint on the court.

Here is a link to the legal documents on the lawsuit. www.veteransptsdclassaction.org/

BE A MEMBER If you are getting this newsletter and have not yet joined, please go to www.vuft.org/membership.html and join. Membership is free. The more our numbers grow, the greater voice we have. It shouldn’t be that way, but it is, so join us and help us take the fight to Congress and the state legislatures. Please encourage your friends who either are veterans, are related to veterans, or who support veterans’ causes to join VUFT, Inc. at www.vuft.org/membership.html

SUPPORTING THE CAUSE If you wish to donate to our work you may now do so via PayPal or Visa on our website “Donate” page at www.vuft.org/donate.html. Every little bit helps. We are a 501(c)(3): your donations are deductible on your federal taxes. You can also buy our handsome pins using the same method.

P L E A S E D O N A T E !

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS [SOME EDITED FOR LENGTH]

None this issue except one brief objection to our support of the repeal of DADT, and which is unquotable here.

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

CLICK THROUGH ON THIS ONE! A TON OF INFORMATION ABOUT THIS ACT

MANY VETS TO BE HELPED BY BENEFITS ACT

Tom Philpott - October 07, 2010

It’s unusual for Congress to pass a comprehensive bill to help thousands of veterans with a final legislative sprint that leaves veterans’ service organizations wondering what just happened. But that’s what the Senate and House did last week. After a burst of closed-door compromises, they agreed to and separately passed the Veterans’ Benefits Act of 2010 (HR 3219), sent it on to the president.

The package has no clear blockbuster initiative. But it improves many veterans' benefits including some allowances for disabled veterans and various veterans' insurance options. Employment protections are toughened for those returning to civilian jobs. <More at: <http://lakeconews.com/content/view/16331/919/>>

111TH CONGRESS ACHIEVES BANNER YEAR ON VETERANS LEGISLATION

WASHINGTON - Oct. 13 - PRNewswire-USNewswire/

Congress may be receiving low approval ratings from the general voting population, but The American Legion says lawmakers have done quite well on veterans issues this year.

"The 111th Congress may be remembered for banner legislation such as health-care reform, financial regulation and the recovery act," said Jimmie Foster, national commander of the Legion. "But, in our view, the real successes were the passage of bills that affected nearly every veteran in America."

Chief among the pieces of veteran-related legislation was the "Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009," which guarantees appropriations for VA health care one full year in advance. Another significant milestone for the 111th Congress was the "Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2010." The bill included substantially increased VA funding for fiscal 2010 – the agency's first budget to exceed \$100 billion.

<More at: www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/111th-congress-achieves-banner-year-on-veterans-legislation-104880484.html>

NEW LEGISLATION GIVES VETERAN STATUS TO RETIRED NATIONAL GUARDSMEN

Lindsey Clark - 9/29/10

The U.S. House of Representatives has unanimously passed Senator Blanche Lincoln's bipartisan bill, "Honor America's Guard-Reserve Retirees Act." The legislation would ensure that all members of the National Guard and Reserves who have served the nation for 20 or more years receive the designation "veteran" under the law. Lincoln introduced the bill in May 2010 after she heard from several constituents who urged her to act on this issue.

<More at: www.todaysthv.com/news/local/story.aspx?storyid=120289&catid=2>

RETREAT – NEWS

US ARMY TO HOLD FIRST HEARING ON GRISLY AFGHAN KILLINGS

Agence France Presse - September 27, 2010

WASHINGTON - The US Army holds its first hearing Monday in a grisly war crimes case that charges five soldiers with killing Afghan civilians for sport and plotting a cover-up. Authorities say the troops opened fire on the Afghan civilians in unprovoked assaults over several months in Afghanistan's southern Kandahar province, with some of the soldiers accused of mutilating corpses and removing bones. <More at: www.commondreams.org/print/60753>

AFGHAN KILLINGS, BODY PARTS AT CENTER OF INQUIRY

9/27/2010

JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD, Wash. — A soldier's videotaped statements describing how he and his colleagues randomly killed three Afghan civilians came under scrutiny Monday at a hearing into one of the most serious war-crimes cases from the war in Afghanistan.

Cpl. Jeremy Morlock of Wasilla, Alaska, is among five Stryker soldiers charged with premeditated murder and conspiracy to commit premeditated murder. In interviews with Army investigators, he described a plot led by Staff Sgt. Calvin Gibbs to randomly kill civilians for sport while on patrol in Kandahar Province.

Prosecutors have also alleged that members of the platoon mutilated Afghan corpses and even collected fingers and other body parts, and that some posed for photos with Afghan corpses. <More at: www.msnbc.msn.com/id/39380805/>

ACCUSED G.I.'S WERE ISOLATED FROM OFFICERS

By ELISABETH BUMILLER and WILLIAM YARDLEY October 15, 2010

WASHINGTON — Soldiers in an American Army platoon accused of murdering Afghan civilians for sport say they took orders from a ringleader who collected body parts as war trophies, were threatened with death if they spoke up and smoked hashish

on their base almost daily. Now family members and the military are asking a central question: How could their commanders not know what was going on?

"I just don't understand how this went so far," said Christopher Winfield, the father of Specialist Adam C. Winfield, one of the platoon members charged with murder. "I've been in management for 20 years; you know what your people are doing."

But interviews in recent days and hundreds of pages of documents in the case offer a portrait of an isolated, out-of-control unit that operated in Kandahar Province in southern Afghanistan with limited supervision and little oversight from senior commanders. <More at: www.nytimes.com/2010/10/16/world/middleeast/16military.html>

ARMY WON'T SEEK DEATH IN AFGHAN KILLINGS

Associated Press - October 16, 2010

SEATTLE -- A U.S. soldier who told investigators in horrifying detail that he and other members of his unit executed three civilians in Afghanistan for sport will not face the death penalty if convicted, the Army said Friday.

... No decision has been made on whether to send the other four defendants to trial or to seek the death penalty, Lewis-McChord spokeswoman Maj. Kathleen Turner said. <More at: www.military.com/news/article/army-wont-see-death-in-afghan-killings.html>

FEMALE MARINES USE TEA AS THEIR WEAPON BUT STILL DODGE BULLETS

ELISABETH BUMILLER - THE New York Times - October 2, 2010 MARJAH, Afghanistan | They expected tea, not firefights.

But the three female Marines and their patrol were shot at late on a recent day, when a burst of Kalashnikov rifle fire came from a nearby compound. The group hit the ground, crawled into a ditch and aimed their guns across the fields of cotton and corn. In their sights they could see the source of the blast: an Afghan man who had shot aimlessly from behind a mud wall, shielded by a half-dozen children. The women held their fire with the rest of the patrol so as not to hit a child, waited for the all-clear, then headed back to the base, survivors of yet another encounter with the enemy.

... Six months ago, Robertson arrived in Afghanistan with 39 other female Marines from Camp Pendleton, Calif., as part of an unusual experiment of the American military: sending full-time "female engagement teams" out with all-male infantry patrols in Helmand province to try to win over the rural Afghan women who are culturally off limits to outside men.

<More at: www.theledger.com/article/20101002/NEWS/10025033/1410?p=1&tc=pg>

WAR VETERANS' CARE TO COST \$1.3 TRILLION

Shaun Waterman - The Washington Times - September 29, 2010

New entitlement an unfunded liability; will eclipse Social Security

The expense of caring for veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars is an unfunded budget liability for U.S. taxpayers that in years to come will rival the cost of entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicare, lawmakers will be told Thursday. The House Veterans' Affairs Committee will hear new estimates of the cost of lifetime medical care and benefits for returning troops disabled by their service — a total of more than \$1.3 trillion.

"It's somewhere between Medicare and Social Security in terms of its potential impact" on the budget, said Rep. Bob Filner, California Democrat and committee chairman. <More at: www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/sep/29/war-veterans-care-to-cost-13-trillion/>

GUESS THIS WILL PROVE TO THE D.C. REMFS THAT THIS IS NOT A LINEAR WAR

SHOTS FIRED AT PENTAGON BUILDING; OFFICIALS SEARCH FOR CLUES

Christy Goodman and Maria Glod – 10/19/10

Authorities Tuesday searched for a gunman who fired shots at the Pentagon in the early morning hours, possibly using a high-powered rifle. No one was injured. The shots were fired shortly before 5 a.m., shattering, but not penetrating, windows on the third and fourth floors, officials said. They also said the walls of the building may have been struck.

<More at: <http://voices.washingtonpost.com/local-breaking-news/crime-and-public-safety/pentagon-locked-down-after-pos.html>>

THESE ARE JUST THE OHIO CHARGES ~ THIS GUY DESERVES LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE OR, MAYBE BETTER YET, A CHANCE TO JOIN THE SEALS AND LET THEM TEACH HIM THE PENALTY FOR USING THE NAVY TO CHEAT OTHERS

MAN ACCUSED OF US NAVY VET SCAM INDICTED IN OHIO

Sat Oct 16,

CLEVELAND – A grand jury in Cleveland has charged the director of a Florida-based charity that purported to raise money for U.S. Navy veterans with corruption and theft charges. The indictment issued Wednesday charges the man who uses the false identity of Bobby Thompson with engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity, theft and money laundering. Authorities don't know the suspect's real name. The Ohio Attorney General's office says the man and a co-conspirator, Blanca Contreras, bilked at least 50,000 Ohio residents out of at least \$1.9 million. <More at: http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20101016/ap_on_re_us/us_navy_vets_fundraising>

MAYBE THEY COULD START BY CHECKING THEIR RECRUITING CRITERIA!

PENTAGON WANTS SCREENING TESTS (AND TROOPS) TO 'PREDICT VIOLENT BEHAVIOR'

Katie Drummond - October 18, 2010 |

If Pentagon brass can draw one conclusion from events like the Fort Hood shooting and the single-weekend suicides of four troops, it's that they desperately need more effective ways to identify unstable service members — not to mention prevent them from resorting to deadly extremes. Now, a task force of civilian experts will review the military's mental health screening programs, in an effort to establish "predictive indicators relating to pending violence."

<More at: www.wired.com/dangerroom/2010/10/pentagon-wants-screening-tests-and-troops-to-predict-violent-behavior/>

WHAT THE HELL WERE THEY TRYING TO COVER UP?

FORT HOOD SOLDIER ORDERED TO DELETE VIDEO OF RAMPAGE

Sig Christenson (AFP) –10/15/10

FORT HOOD, Texas — A US soldier who captured a deadly 2009 rampage at Fort Hood with his cell phone camera testified Friday that he was ordered to erase the video by his commanders. The video could have provided key evidence at the trial of Major Nidal Hasan, a US Army psychiatrist who faces 13 counts of premeditated murder and 32 counts of attempted murder.

<More at: www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iH_812d5DGVvE5Tsp6C5W7jkyW5A?docId=CNG.d4436e9f04d08331279fb14066d6d028_1d1>

MULLEN: U.S. MILITARY NEEDS MORE DIVERSITY

Karen Parrish - Office of the Secretary of Defense Public Affairs - 10/18/10

WASHINGTON - The armed services "can't go fast enough" to increase diversity, Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told a group of senior military leaders here, Oct. 18.

Mullen addressed the Air Force Diversity Senior Working Group, comprised of Air Force senior leaders including more than 50 general officers who were attending a two-day working group aimed at increasing diversity across the armed forces. Bolstering diversity across the military requires fast, direct action, Mullen told the group.

"There isn't anybody sitting in this room ... who won't look back 10 years from now and say, 'I wish we could have gone faster,'" the chairman said. "There are some things we should have done better, more risks we should have taken to get this right. And the demographics are pretty daunting." <More at: www.dvidshub.net/news/58360/mullen-us-military-needs-more-diversity>

FEDERAL JUDGE BARS ENFORCEMENT OF "DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL"

Igor Volsky - Think Progress Report - 12 October 2010

Earlier today, Judge Virginia Phillip — the California federal judge who ruled that Don't Ask, Don't Tell violated the due process clause of the Fifth Amendment and freedom of speech under the First Amendment — granted the Log Cabin Republican's request for a broad injunction against further discharges:

<More at: www.truth-out.org/federal-judge-bars-enforcement-of-dont-ask-dont-tell64148>

MILITARY RECRUITERS TOLD THEY CAN ACCEPT OPENLY GAY APPLICANTS

Adam Levine - CNN 10/19/10

Washington (CNN) -- The Pentagon has advised recruiting commands that they can accept openly gay and lesbian recruit candidates, given the recent federal court decision that bars the military from expelling openly gay service members, according to a Pentagon spokeswoman. The guidance from the Personnel and Readiness office was sent to recruiting commands on Friday, according to spokeswoman Cynthia Smith. <More at: www.cnn.com/2010/US/10/19/pentagon.gays.recruiting/>

VA TOPS \$1B MARK IN RECOVERY ACT DISTRIBUTIONS

October 15, 2010

WASHINGTON -- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has distributed more than \$1 billion in funds made available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, agency officials have announced. Recovery Act funding is being used to modernize and replace existing VA medical facilities, make improvements at national cemeteries and award grants to states for Veterans homes. <More at: www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1982>

"UNDERGROUND" GROUP OF CADETS SAYS AIR FORCE ACADEMY CONTROLLED BY EVANGELICALS

Mike Ludwig - truthout - Report - 30 September 2010

An anonymous cadet at the US Air Force Academy (USAFA) spoke out against alleged religious discrimination at the school last week, saying that some cadets must pretend to be evangelical Christians in order to maintain standing among their peers and superiors. In an email to the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF), the whistleblower stated that he is part of an "underground group" of about 100 cadets who cannot rely on proper channels to confront evangelical pressure.

<More at: www.truth-out.org/underground-group-cadets-say-air-force-academy-controlled-evangelicals63726>

NOT OUR CASE, BUT IT DOESN'T HELP

VETS GROUPS LOSE AT SUPREME COURT

Lee Ross - October 4, 2010

Two veterans groups lost in their effort to have the Supreme Court force bureaucrats in the Department of Veterans Affairs to move more swiftly in processing claims, as the Supreme Court announced Monday they will not hear a case challenging a supposed lack of brevity from the government. <More at: <http://liveshots.blogs.foxnews.com/2010/10/04/vets-groups-lose-at-supreme-court/>>

TO THE COLORS - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
10/21		Nashua NH	Resource Fair	Lisa Jacobus	603-624-4355
10/21	1000-1600	Virginia Beach Convention Center 1000 19 th St., Virginia Beach, VA	Mid-Atlantic Regional Career Expo		Register
10/21-10/24		Washington City Memorial Park Washington City UT	The Wall That Heals	VVA Chapter 961	
10/22		Lernder TX	Resource Fair	Red Towers	512-259-0906
10/22		Fort Walton Beach FL	Resource Fair	Cathy Magnuson	
10/22		Escambia & Santa Rosa Counties FL	Resource Fair	Brunie Emmanuel	850-439-3009
10/22-10/23		Albuquerque NM	Resource Fair	Larry Campos	505-841-851
10/22-11/24		Anderson CA	Stand Down	Kevin C. Marshall	530-225-2194
10/22-11/24		Nashville TN	Stand Down	Bill Burleigh	615-248-1981
10/23		Kansas City MO	Resource Fair	Carla Tillmon	816-285-7233
10/23		Peoria IL	Resource Fair	Vicki Hightower	309-369-8878
10/29		St. Cloud MN	Resource Fair	Nick Johnston	320-253-6212
11/1-11/2		Algonquin IL	Resource Fair	Amy Johnson	815-455-5190

11/4	1000-1600	Houston Marriott 1750West Loop South, Houston TX	Southwest Regional Career Expo		Register
11/4-11/7		Veterans Memorial Park Auburn WA	The Wall That Heals	City of Auburn	
11/4-11/5		Dallas TX	Resource Fair	Kim Havanis Campbell	214-287-0326
11/5		Salt Lake City UT	Resource Fair	Al Hernandez	801-584-1252
11/5		Kansas City MO	Resource Fair	Jennifer L. Gould	816-519-8796
11/6	0800-1300	U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs 351 E. Temple St., Downtown L.A.	Resource Fair	Doris Nickelson	810-545-2937 Register
11/9		Mankato MN	Resource Fair	Susan Sorenson	507-345-8258
11/10		Salem VA	Resource Fair	Gayle Sanford, LCSW	540-982-2463 x-1230
11/11		Chicago IL	Resource Fair	Jeanne A. Douglas	708-383-3225
11/11		TBD Atlanta GA	Southeast Regional Career Expo	Northrop Grumman	Register
11/12-11/14		Huntsville AL	Stand Down	Sandra Childress	256-715-0556
11/17		Ft Worth TX	Resource Fair	Kim Havanis Campbell	214-287-0326
11/18		Mobile AL	Resource Fair	Dan A. Williams	251-450-3345
11/18-11/21		Lake Shores Mall Sebring FL	The Wall That Heals	Highlands County Veterans Association	
11/18		Binghamton NY	Resource Fair	Maribel Asencio	607-771-8888
We are a non-partisan organization. We will advertise all legitimate veterans' events, regardless of purpose or affiliation.					

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

SOME VETERANS FALL THROUGH HUGE CRACKS

By Philip O'Connor - ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH - October 8, 2010

One St. Louis veteran, badly injured in 2005, has yet to get benefits.

ST. LOUIS | Army Reserve Spc. Michael Pyatt mounted a machine gun on the turret of his Humvee in August 2005 for another mission into the volatile city of Hillah, Iraq. As he stepped off the bumper, he landed awkwardly, injuring his hip and back, and leaving him crippled. Back home, he asked for a medical discharge. In July 2007, his unit tried to deploy him a second time, even though he wore a knee brace and used a cane. Just months later, the Department of Veterans Affairs declared Pyatt permanently and totally disabled. Yet today, more than five years after he was hurt, the Army still has not declared Pyatt unfit for duty, which would make him eligible for disability retirement pay and medical insurance for his wife and daughter.

Pyatt, 38, struggles to get by. He is deep in debt and must make frequent trips from his home in Bonne Terre for free treatment at VA facilities in St. Louis. "I've fallen through the cracks," he said. "I've been abandoned."

<More at: www.theledger.com/article/20101008/NEWS/10085025/1410?Title=Some-Veterans-Fall-Through-Huge-Cracks>

SCAM ALERT TAKING AIM AT OLD SOLDIERS

Sid Kirchheimer - AARP Bulletin - October, 2010

Seminars target vets with unwise investments

At community centers, nursing homes and assisted living facilities, their spiel to older veterans goes something like this: We can get you instant eligibility for additional benefits through a quick overhaul of your investments. These self-described "veterans advocates" are in fact unscrupulous investment advisers. ... The usual pitch involves getting a veteran to transfer retirement assets into an irrevocable trust so that the family appears to be impoverished. This helps it meet eligibility requirements for a VA pension and related programs such as Aid and Attendance, which pays an additional benefit to veterans who need assistance with everyday living. ... , "Medicaid does look back," Foster says. "And when they see you've transferred your assets in this manner, it could jeopardize your eligibility for those benefits."

<More at: www.aarp.org/money/scams-fraud/info-09-2010/taking_aim_at_old_soldiers_.htm>

BROKEN PROMISES: THOUSANDS OF VETERANS DENIED CRUCIAL CARE

Mike Ludwig - t r u t h o u t Report - 08 October 2010

The Army tacked a five-month extension on Sgt. Ryan Christian Major's term of military service in 2006, and that November, just five days after his original discharge date, Ryan was critically injured when an underground bomb exploded during a foot patrol in Ramadi, Iraq. Ryan was evacuated from Iraq and brought to a hospital in Germany, where he underwent extensive surgery. His pelvis had been broken, and doctors amputated both of his legs above the knees. He suffered from traumatic brain injury (TBI) and would go on to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). For two months after the explosion, Ryan's family was unsure of he would survive. He did.

... Congress learned about Ryan's sacrifices on September 30 when his mother, Lorrie Knight-Major, told his [story](#) to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

... But Knight-Major was not there to thank Congress for its support of her son's recovery. She was there to tell Congress that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) had fallen short of providing adequate care for a soldier who had given up so much to serve his country.

... Knight-Major said that many crucial components of her son's recovery came from nonprofit groups and not from the government and country he signed up to defend. The group Rebuilding Together renovated their house to make it wheelchair accessible so Ryan could return home. The Independence Fund provided an advanced wheelchair. Paws for Liberty donated Theodore, a highly trained therapy dog that helps Ryan navigate crowded areas and mitigate PTSD symptoms.

"This support should have been provided by the government," Knight-Major said in her testimony.

<More at: www.truth-out.org/broken-promises-thousands-veterans-denied-crucial-care64002>

JOHN YOSSARIAN IN "CATCH-22" WOULD APPRECIATE THIS! SCREWED AGAIN!

TRICARE FOR CHILDREN UP TO 26

October 18, 2010

The passage of the Health Care Reform Act, which requires insurers to provide coverage for dependent children up to age 26, has left many TRICARE beneficiaries asking what that would mean to their older dependent children since the current age limit for TRICARE is 21, or age 23, if the dependent is in a full-time school program. The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) is reporting that Defense Department officials estimate the expansion will cost each member \$2,400 per year to cover each child over age 21 (or 23). **This is a provision [that] would be unique to TRICARE and would not be imposed on non-military parents.** The DoD officials say they have to charge a separate premium because they can't spread the cost among other beneficiaries as civilian insurers do. www.military.com/military-report/tricare-for-children-up-to-26?ESRC=miltrep.nl

RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS, NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS AND HEART DISEASE ON RISE SINCE 2001

Kelly Kennedy - Army times - Oct 18, 2010 edition

Rising suicide rates, musculoskeletal injuries, traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder are the signature medical maladies of this war, and military officials have worked hard to tame them.

But unknown and unseen is a large cache of data showing rising rates of many other illnesses and injuries that thus far have eluded public scrutiny.

A Military Times analysis of military health data from 2001 through 2009 shows:

- The rate of respiratory issues rose by 32 percent.
- Cardiovascular disease rates jumped 30 percent.
- Complications related to pregnancies and births were up 47 percent.
- Neurological conditions, such as multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease, shot up nearly 200 percent.

<More at: www.airforcetimes.com/news/2010/10/military-10-years-force-health-101410w>

'BAD PAPER' DISCHARGES CAN STYMIE VETERANS' HEALTH CARE

Jeremy Schwartz - AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF - Oct. 2, 2010

Diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder before he was kicked out of Marines for failing a drug test, Austinite carries on without counseling.

The drinking began in earnest after his first deployment, when he served as a mortarman in the 2004 Battle of Fallujah, a bloody, savage fight that left him with dead friends and mental scars. After his second tour, this time in Afghanistan, James Karp and his fellow Marines regularly drank to excess to blot out the pain, he said.

"It's numbing," said Karp, a 2003 graduate of Cedar Park High School. "You sleep so much better. There's no dreams. ... It was like, you come back from war, you get drunk. You're having issues? Have a beer."

But Karp's alcohol use took a bad turn one night in early November 2006. He said he was drunk at a party and snorted cocaine for the first time. The drug turned up on a random test, and Karp was promptly court-martialed, sentenced to a month in the brig and kicked out of the Marines with an "other than honorable" discharge for misconduct.

<More at: www.statesman.com/news/texas-politics/bad-paper-discharges-can-stymie-veterans-health-care-950891.html>

VA DEFENDS AGENT ORANGE, HEART DISEASE LINKS

BEN EVANS Associated Press Writer Sep 23, 2010

WASHINGTON (AP) - Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki on Thursday defended an expensive proposal to extend disability payments to Vietnam veterans who get heart disease, saying studies show a significant link between the ailment and the toxic defoliant Agent Orange. Responding to concerns about the costs of a rapidly expanding program, Shinseki told the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee that the law requires his agency to grant automatic benefits for diseases that are scientifically associated with Agent Orange. It leaves him no discretion to weigh costs or other considerations, he said, such as the fact that heart disease occurs commonly in men in their 60s and is strongly linked to smoking, poor diet and other factors. <More at: www.cbs8.com/Global/story.asp?S=13204765>

VA TO REVIEW CASES OF NEARLY 17,000 "BROWN WATER" AND OTHER VIETNAM VETERANS PREVIOUSLY DENIED AGENT ORANGE BENEFITS

Chairman Akaka posts information on committee website to help veterans and advocates

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Following oversight requests from Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Daniel K. Akaka (D-Hawaii), the Department of Veterans Affairs has agreed to review the cases of nearly 17,000 "Brown Water" and other Vietnam Era veterans who claimed disabilities related to Agent Orange. VA had previously denied a number of claims without properly determining whether veterans served in Vietnam's inland waterways ("Brown Water") or otherwise served in locations where veterans may have been exposed to herbicides, such as Agent Orange.

<More at: http://veterans.senate.gov/press-releases.cfm?action=release.display&release_id=4acabc2b-f423-4543-ab3c-e38cece413fc>

AGENT ORANGE: THAILAND MILITARY BASES

Vietnam-era Veterans whose service involved duty on or near the perimeters of military bases in Thailand anytime between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975 may have been exposed to herbicides and may qualify for VA benefits.

The following Veterans may have been exposed to herbicides:

U.S. Air Force Veterans who served on Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) bases at U-Tapao, Ubon, Nakhon Phanom, Udorn, Takhli, Korat, and Don Muang, near the air base perimeter anytime between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975.

U.S. Army Veterans who provided perimeter security on RTAF bases in Thailand anytime between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975.

U.S. Army Veterans who were stationed on some small Army installations in Thailand anytime between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975. However, the Army Veteran must have been a member of a military police (MP) unit or was assigned an MP military occupational specialty whose duty placed him/her at or near the base perimeter.

<More at: www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/thailand.asp>

VA EXTENDS COVERAGE FOR GULF WAR VETERANS

Donna Miles - American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Sept. 29, 2010 – Veterans of the first Gulf War as well as current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan now have a smoother path toward receiving health-care benefits and disability compensation for nine diseases associated with their military service, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced today.

A final regulation published in today's Federal Register relieves veterans of the burden of proving these diseases are service-related: Brucellosis, Campylobacter jejuni, Coxiella Burnetii (Q fever), Malaria, Mycobacterium tuberculosis, Nontyphoid Salmonella, Shigella, Visceral leishmaniasis and West Nile virus.

Shinseki added the new presumptions after reviewing a 2006 National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine report on the long-term health effects of certain diseases suffered among Gulf War veterans. He also extended the presumptions to veterans of Afghanistan, based on NAS findings that the nine diseases are prevalent there as well.

<More at: www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=61053>

AGENT ORANGE USED OUTSIDE OF FORT DETRICK

Katherine Heerbrandt - Staff Writer

Army officials are 'just beginning to grapple with this issue,' scientist says

A 2006 report to the U.S. Department of Defense reveals that Fort Detrick played a primary role in developing herbicides for military operations, the extent of which today's scientists at the fort were unaware of until a few months ago. The report, written by Alvin L. Young of Wyoming, a former professor of environmental toxicology at the University of Oklahoma and a retired U.S. Air Force colonel, reveals that Fort Detrick was active in formulating and testing herbicides, including Agent Orange, for the better part of a decade beginning in the early 1950s.

Taking a lead role in Agent Orange research, Detrick employed aerial spraying of the herbicide to test deployment methods, the report states. That contrasts with what Detrick scientists revealed in August, when they said they believed that herbicide testing was limited to on-base greenhouses, and not used outside of enclosed buildings.

<More at: www.gazette.net/stories/10072010/frednew155356_32544.php>

GI'S BRAINS FRIED BY MILITARY DISPENSED NOSE CANDY

October 2, 2010 posted by Bob Nichols ·

(San Francisco) – Now it is official. Researchers have shown that uranium oxide, or DU, “travels the nerves from the nose to the brain,” in the words of a University of Chicago doctor and researcher. A tiny amount (a milligram) of this radioactive poison quick marches up your smelling nerves right into your brain and keeps firing 1.2 Million bullets a day – forever. That's a bunch.

<More at: www.veteranstoday.com/2010/10/02/gis-brains-fried-by-military-dispensed-nose-candy/>

SOME VETS GET PINK SLIPS INSTEAD OF TICKERTAPE

Eve Tahmincioglu - 0/11/2010

Prolonged wars, poor economy create tough situation for returning soldiers

Last year Mike Vahey returned from a four-year enlistment, including duty in Iraq and Kuwait, where he was a sergeant on an Army diving team inspecting ports for bombs. When he returned home he expected his job as an engineer at a General Motors plant in Newport, Del., would be waiting for him.

“There wasn't a doubt in my mind that my job would be there when I got back,” said Vahey, 40, who had worked for GM since 1997, most recently as a quality launch engineer. “I didn't give much thought to it. I felt I was protected and had nothing to worry about.”

Unfortunately, instead of getting tickertape for serving his country Vahey got a pink slip. Soon after he got back, the plant where he worked was shuttered, leaving Vahey and hundreds of other civilian autoworkers jobless.

<More at: www.msnbc.msn.com/id/39557518/ns/business-careers/>

MANY MILITARY PERSONNEL STRUGGLING FINANCIALLY

Michelle Singletary - Syndicated Columnist - October 14, 2010

Whenever I'm traveling and I see uniformed military personnel, I can't help but become a little teary-eyed. I worry if the service person is shipping out to Afghanistan or Iraq. I appreciate the sacrifice those in the military make, especially the many who are in combat zones.

So it's with no less concern that I'm troubled about the percentage of servicemen and women who struggle financially. A new survey focusing on the financial capability of military personnel has found that while many in the armed forces handle their finances fine, an alarming percentage aren't doing so well. <More at: www.heraldnet.com/article/20101014/BIZ/710149930/1011/biz02

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE TUESDAY 20 OCTOBER 2010

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM/NEW DAWN (2,772 DAYS)

KILLED US	4,426/2
WOUNDED US [10/04/10]	31,934/33
OTHER US CASUALTIES [10/04/10]	40,474/116
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [10/04/10]	217/0
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1
KILLED UK	179
KILLED OTHER COALITION	139
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [11/9/08]	1,182
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY [1/25/09]	≥ 48,874
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [10/18/10]	≥ 107,369 – 1,366,350
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS[9/20/10]	≥ 400K–1.556M
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	2.1M/2.5M

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (3,301 DAYS)

KILLED US	1344
WOUNDED US [8/31/10]	8,530
OTHER CASUALTIES US [10/04/10]	11,364
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [10/04/10]	44
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1
KILLED COALITION	823
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/07)	1,602
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY[7/4/09]	≥ 11,152
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (9/10/2010)	≥ 8,813
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (2/24/2009)	46,322
AFGHAN REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	1.75M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE	\$738,364,118,858
COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE	\$356,988,610,711

NOTE: SOME NUMBERS DO NOT CHANGE BETWEEN ISSUES BECAUSE UPDATED FIGURES ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT PRESS TIME

* This entry has been changed to "Non-mortal casualties" which includes wounded, non-hostile casualties, and diseased where medical air transport was required. ** Includes 280 additional contractor casualties reported in international press but not in US official figures

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ACTIVATED AS OF OCTOBER 12, 2010

This week the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps announced a decrease in activated reservists, while the Coast Guard announced an increase. The net collective result is 2,329 fewer reservists activated than last week. At any given time, services may activate some units and individuals while deactivating others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. The total number currently on active duty from the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 74,390; Navy Reserve, 6,748; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 12,533; Marine Corps Reserve, 4,070; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 693. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 98,434, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated is on line at www.defense.gov/news/d20101012nqr.pdf.

AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

THE LAST DRAFTEE WHO SERVED IN VIETNAM RETIRES

Jeffrey Scott - The Atlanta Journal-Constitution - September 30, 2010

He was a kid who didn't want to be a soldier. There was a war in Vietnam and a peace movement in America.

But then he got the government's letter. So he quit his job at a furniture store, quit thinking about college and found himself on a cold December morning in 1970 standing in front of a post office in Sumter, S.C., listening to a soldier read names off a clip board until he heard his: "Clyde Green!"

... When he retires as a chief warrant officer in a ceremony Thursday morning at Ft. McPherson -- after 39 years, 9 months and 15 days of continuous active duty -- he will be, by the best accounting, the last U.S. Army draftee who fought in Vietnam. <More at: www.ajc.com/news/the-last-draftee-who-645726.html

95-YEAR-OLD NYC MAN GETS MEDAL FOR RESCUING MORE THAN 500 WWII US AIRMEN SHOT DOWN BY NAZIS

VERENA DOBNIK - Associated Press Writer - October 17, 2010

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. government has recognized the World War II architect of a mission to rescue more than 500 U.S. bomber crew members shot down over Nazi-occupied Serbia. It was the largest air rescue of Americans behind enemy lines in any war.

George Vujnovich (VOOY'-noh-veech) is credited with leading the so-called Halyard Mission in what was then Yugoslavia. The 95-year-old New York City man was awarded the Bronze Star in a ceremony Sunday at Manhattan's St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Cathedral. He received a standing ovation from a crowd of several hundred. He's long retired from his job as a salesman of aircraft parts.

Vujnovich says of the honor, "better now than never" — but he regrets most of the men on his wartime mission are no longer alive. <More at: http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/39710702/ns/us_news-life/>

LEAVE IT TO THE BUREAUCRATS!

VETERAN'S FAMILY DENIED WHITE HOUSE TOUR BECAUSE OF SHORTS

NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS (AP) – Sep 30, 2010

SPOKANE, Wash. — The White House apologized Thursday for turning the family of a Medal of Honor recipient away from an exclusive tour last week because the late veteran's 10-year-old grandson was wearing shorts.

Vernon Baker, the last surviving black Medal of Honor winner from World War II, was buried Friday at Arlington National Cemetery after dying in July from complications of brain cancer at age 90. He belatedly received the military's top award from President Bill Clinton in 1997, after historians concluded he'd been wrongly denied because of his race.

On Saturday, his widow and grandson went to the White House for a special tour of the West Wing, which includes the Oval Office and rooms that are in use.

The staffer who was to lead the family wasn't sure whether 10-year-old Vernon Pawlik's attire — shorts and a T-shirt bearing a picture of the boy's grandfather — was considered appropriate, officials said. Another winner of the military's top award, Thomas Norris, also was turned away because he was not previously cleared for the tour.

<More at: www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hMX80tIbRQNU_u3m0MJ3qwdltS9wD9lIF0281?docId=D9lIF0281>

MINI STOR MANAGER MAKES SURE VETERAN GETS A PROPER BURIAL

Matt Kawahara – Sacramento Bee - Oct. 16, 2010

They rumbled up the driveway of a Citrus Heights storage facility at 11:30 a.m. Friday, each of the five motorcycles flying an American flag, each of the six riders wearing a bright yellow vest. They lined up and parked in front of unit 5001. Jerry Petersen, manager of the Mini Stor on Auburn Boulevard, rolled up the orange metal door and lifted a golden urn from some shelving inside.

As Petersen stood in the open doorway, the six riders made a path to the motorcycles for him, three on each side, saluting. Petersen carried the urn to the back seat of a waiting bike, stepped back and gave an emphatic salute. And like that, James Gerald Leach, retired U.S. Air Force senior master sergeant, was on his way to an honorable burial 13 years after his death.

"Very emotional," said Petersen, 51, who served in the Army from 1977 to 1989. "It's something that I wanted to see done since I found him."

It isn't clear how long Leach's ashes sat abandoned in the storage facility before Petersen discovered them a year ago. But what was clear to Petersen when he found them was the Air Force emblem engraved on the urn.

A veteran from a military family, Petersen believed Leach deserved a proper burial. Thanks to his efforts and those of the Missing in America Project, Leach will soon be interred alongside his peers at the Northern California Veterans Cemetery. <More at: www.sacbee.com/2010/10/16/3108309/mini-stor-manager-makes-sure-veteran.html#ixzz12Y2qLOyE>

EVERYONE FORGETS, DON'T THEY – US AND UK INCLUDED?

FILIPINO WWII VETERANS SUE FEDS OVER BENEFITS

By SUDHIN THANAWALA (AP) – Oct 8, 2010

SAN FRANCISCO — A lawsuit claims the federal government is discriminating against Filipino World War II veterans by giving them benefits far below what U.S. veterans receive.

<More at: www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jYXIR9TMx9low75SqSdl6AoywD9INON400?docId=D9INON400>

VETERAN GURKHA SOLDIERS LOSE LATEST COURT BATTLE OVER BRITISH ARMY PENSIONS

The Associated Press (CP) –10/13/10

LONDON — Retired Gurkha soldiers have lost their latest court battle with Britain's military over their army pensions. The former soldiers from Nepal had challenged a High Court ruling earlier this year that rejected their bid to be paid the same pensions as military personnel from Britain. ... They were paid about a third of the monthly pensions given to U.K. soldiers because they were recruited from Nepal and stationed in the Far East.

<More at: www.google.com/hostednews/canadianpress/article/ALeqM5h0VT9GSNaoR26Gi1Gfz3d1eMLN3Q?docId=4830088>

CHARGE DROPPED AGAINST MAN WHO REMOVED TATTERED AMERICAN FLAG

Anthony Colarossi - Orlando Sentinel - October 15, 2010

Prosecutors Friday dropped the theft charge filed against a Winter Park-area man who removed a tattered American flag from a business last year and had the flag destroyed because he was offended by its condition. Now, Karl Edward Baldner will not go to trial as originally expected Tuesday.

"Even though the facts alleged could constitute a theft, this case involves not only theft, but fundamental issues of free speech and overarching patriotic issues," reads a court document released late Friday and signed by Orange-Osceola State Attorney Lawson Lamar, dropping the misdemeanor charge.

... Baldner took the flag down from the real-estate business and left a note saying the condition of the flag "disgraces our nation." He also left his name and number on the note. That's how authorities eventually contacted him.

<More at: www.orlandosentinel.com/news/os-stolen-flag-veteran-charge-dropped20101015.0.3634524.story>

ADD-ON ~ STUFF OF INTEREST

DEADLINE FOR RETROACTIVE STOP LOSS SPECIAL PAY EXTENDED

No. 896-10 October 01, 2010

The deadline for eligible service members, veterans and their beneficiaries to apply for Retroactive Stop Loss Special Pay (RSLSP) has been extended to Dec. 3, 2010, allowing personnel more time to apply for the benefits they've earned.

To apply, or for more information on RSLSP, including submission requirements and service-specific links, go to www.defense.gov/stoploss. <More at: www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=13936>

WIDOWS URGED TO CHECK VA COMPENSATION

The Associated Press - Oct 8, 2010

HONOLULU — Hawaii's U.S. Sen. Daniel Akaka is urging widows and widowers of deceased veterans to be sure they received compensation for the month of their spouse's death. The island Democrat is quoting the Department of Veterans Affairs as saying, 196,000 widows and widowers have received a total of \$124 million in month-of-death back payments since he uncovered a VA accounting error in December 2008.

<More at: www.navytimes.com/news/2010/10/ap-surviving-spouses-va-compensation-100810/>

NOTICE

If at any time you cannot open a link in this newsletter to an article or web page that interests you, please let me know at scook@vuft; I keep a copy of most of the full articles, or can research an alternative route to the information. [Ed.]

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EDITOR'S NOTE: I have been asked what guides my selection of articles. In general, I try to stick with articles that deal exclusively with our target group: serving military, veterans, retirees, and their families. I also favor articles that deal with the effect of Legislative or Executive inaction or bad actions that adversely affect our target group. I try not to pick those articles that have already been beaten to death in the regular press, but rather try to bring the reader articles that he or she might not run across in another medium. While we are non-partisan, I do not believe articles critical of government actions to be partisan as long as they are accurate and fair. Criticism, like dissent, is fair. Finally, I screen hundreds of articles for inclusions and for every article I include, I throw five or six away – good articles, but not as important as the ones selected.

I always appreciate contributions, whether it is opinion in Letter-to-the-Editor form, or articles that the reader believes would be good for our readership. Since I get a chance to vent once in awhile in these newsletters, I will certainly consider Op-Ed copy for inclusion. I always welcome reader comment or complaint. Sandy Cook, Editor <mailto:scook@vuft.org>

If you need to call us, our number is 1.805.530.6417.

The phone is covered by a voice recorder 24 hours a day. We'll get back to you ASAP.