

SOUND OFF!



VOL. I, NO 18

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

10 APRIL 2006

FIRST CALL - THEME OF THE ISSUE AND/OR CLIPS & QUOTES

WAITING ON THE LIVING

As many of you know who have stuck with us through this first year, we have been proposing legislation to ease the plight of our serving brothers and sisters and their families. The proposed legislation called for an emergency commission made up of veterans to examine the results on the ground of how well or poorly services and benefits were getting to veterans and families, and to recommend solutions which the Legislature and the Governor would then be required to fund and implement. We proposed this legislation in the California Assembly because we know this legislature and its procedures better than others. We thought that by establishing a solid model in California we would then have a good chance of exporting it to many of the remaining states.

It has been a long trudge so far. A bill finally came out after one year that was to be considered by the Assembly Veterans' Committee. We read the bill, and liked what we saw as far as it went. We also felt that some strengthening was needed, and communicated those feelings in writing to the sponsor and to the nine members of the board. The areas that needed to be strengthened were:

- Timeliness – we asked for 6 months to completion, the bill called for two years
- Objectivity – we asked for neutral parties on the board, the bill called for the current providers to man it
- Action – we called for an action plan, the bill called for a report
- Sacrifice – we called for the broad support through taxation or transfer of general funds from all of the citizens of the state, the bill called for no specific future action or funding

Your chair, Bob Handy, two other members and I attended the Veterans' Committee meeting at 1600 on 4 April 2006 in Sacramento. This involved an 800-mile round trip for Bob, and something less for the rest of us. When we got to the session in the Capitol, our bill had been pulled from the calendar by the sponsor five days before with no explanation.

Since we had been in communication with the sponsor's office throughout the process, we went to that office and asked politely why we had not been informed of the change. The legislator was not there. Unfortunately, and amazingly, his principal staffer threw us out of the office – we were not asked politely to leave, we were berated and thrown out, loudly and rudely.

So as it stands, we have been told that there will be another session of the Committee on 25 April, but it has not yet been scheduled and we have no idea if this bill will be on the agenda.

Needless to say we are disturbed by this untoward treatment of the bill and of us. There can be no progress without legislative action, and it takes courage to take on the status quo. We are hoping to find that combination of action and courage somewhere in the vast system that our target beneficiaries, the veterans and their families, face every day alone.

It seems so easy to get politicians to support bills about flags, and memorials, and grave markers, and headstones – all worthy causes, but all without any real cost to them; but they love to be able to pump this stuff into their Memorial Day speeches.

Unfortunately, these easy tasks all support the dead rather than the living. If the dead could be heard, I think that they would say, “We never leave our wounded comrades on the battlefield – don't leave the living wounded on the battlefield of life.”

In Alice Duer Miller's poem *The White Cliffs of Dover*, the character Lady Jean Ashwood says, upon being told, while she is sitting in a military hospital writing letters for the wounded, of her eldest son Percy's death in World War I: -

**“She dropped her eyes. 'I am needed here.
Surely you know
I cannot go
Until every letter is written. The dead
Must wait on the living,' she said.
'This is my work. I must stay.'
And she did— the whole long day.”**

We must likewise tend to the living who have been wounded by war, inaction, bureaucratic ineptitude, and political inattention. This is our work – we must stay - we cannot leave them wounded on the battlefield. [Ed.]

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS

WAKE UP! SPREAD THE NEWS!

MEMBERSHIP IS OPEN, FREE, AND VERY WORTHWHILE! GET YOUR FELLOW VETERANS, AND VETERANS' FAMILY MEMBERS TO JOIN VUFT! WE ARE BEGINNING TO BE HEARD, AND WE NEED YOU TO HELP US GET THE MESSAGE OUT. IF EACH OF US WOULD BRING IN ONE NEW MEMBER EVERY MONTH, WHAT AN IMPACT WE COULD HAVE!

CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE!

PLEASE CHECK THE WEBSITE AT WWW.VUFT.ORG. CHECK OUT THE "CANDIDATES" PAGE, WHICH IS OUR EFFORT TO LIST ALL VETERANS RUNNING FOR STATE-WIDE AND FEDERAL OFFICE IN THE U.S.; IT IS BEING UPDATED DAILY. PLEASE HELP US MAKE THIS AS COMPLETE A LIST AS POSSIBLE BY SENDING CANDIDATE INFO TO SANDY.COOK@VUFT.ORG.

"VETERANS HELPING VETERANS" VA HOSPITAL SURVEY GAINING STEAM; VETERANS GET A CHANCE TO RATE VA SYSTEM

April 05, 2006 04:06 PM US

BOSTON--(BUSINESS WIRE)--April 5, 2006--Veterans advocacy group "Veterans Helping Veterans" is a nationally recognized veterans group established to help fellow veterans obtain VA benefits. Veterans Helping Veterans handles all types of disability claims. Veterans Helping Veterans is conducting a nationwide Veterans Administration satisfaction survey on their website www.netbo.org that asks veterans ten simple questions pertaining to the delivery of services from the nationwide Veterans Administration Medical System. "The survey will be conducted from now through May, 2006," said Ken Smith, director. We are attempting to capture responses from veterans of all branches of the military and all service eras including veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan to allow for a comprehensive accounting of the current services delivered by the Veterans Administration. Veterans from around the country are encouraged to voice their opinions.

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

NEW MEMBERS are joining us every week. If you are getting this newsletter and have not yet joined, please go to our website at www.vuft.org/membership.html and join. Membership is free. The more our numbers grow, the greater voice we have with legislators. It shouldn't be that way, but it is, so join us and help us take the fight to Congress and the state legislatures.

SUPPORTING THE CAUSE

If you wish to donate to our work you may now do so via PayPal or Visa on our website "Join" page. Every little bit helps. You can also buy our handsome pins using the same method.

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

Dear Comrades,

I will be joining Brian Willson on his ride to Seattle. This is an action consistent with the Commander in Chief's declaration that we are addicted to oil. While it is a long time until we leave, there is a lot of organizing and conditioning involved, so it is necessary to put out the word and seek an organizer at this time. PLEASE POST THIS TO YOUR LOCAL LISTS AND PUT IN NEWSLETTERS Ideally we would have rides from different directions converging on the vets for peace convention in August, so even if you live inland or east of Seattle, pass the word on. This is a moment in history where the consequences of the American Way Of Life (AWOL) have become so painful that we may be able to cultivate a new sense of sacrifice in the public consciousness with this ride. Its worth a try!

In solidarity,

Lane Anderson Vietnam Service 1967 & 1968 Lifetime Member of Disabled American Veterans, VFW and VVA
Member, VUFT

Original Message:

From: Brian Willson <bw@brianwillson.com>

To: Rural Organizing Project

The national Veterans For Peace convention in 2006 will be held in Seattle, Aug. 11-14. There are a few of us at this point who plan to cycle (in my case I hand-cycle with my arms) from Arcata, CA (80 miles below the border with Oregon on the coast) to Seattle, obviously through Oregon, a distance of about 600 miles. Because we believe that lifestyle changes, i. e., shrinking our

footprint on the earth, is important as part of extricating ourselves from complicity with the causes of war, we strive to model alternative travel such as moving ourselves without using petroleum.

This is an initial inquiry to discern whether your organization, individuals within your organization, or references to others in Oregon, might be able and wanting to help us in this adventure. It requires lots of organizing and arranging relating to

- (1) the best routes to take;
- (2) where to sleep and bathe;
- (3) access to cycle maintenance help if needed;
- (4) access to healthy water and food and bathroom facilities; etc., as well as
- (5) planning community political events along the way.

Because in my personal case I can only travel (with arm power versus use of legs) about 40 miles a day, it will take us at least 15 days to get to Seattle, maybe a little longer. Much of our time we will be moving through your state of Oregon.

In essence this journey combines themes of sustainability, modeling alternatives, anti-war sentiments, peak-oil issues, physical fitness, organic food, local community reliance with the participation of veterans and community folks alike in uniting efforts to recover our power as human beings from having for too long given deference to vertical authority structures at the expense of local vision and responsibility -- in essence we have been living at the expense of a sustainable world made of sustainable communities made of conscious people. We are choosing to become conscious so that we might live with justice as the only authentic foundation for a secure, healthy life: compassion, not greed.

Please consider if you can seriously help us in this adventure. Though I am initiating this effort, I will not be able to be the organizer, just the initial contact person.

Brian Willson, member, Humboldt Bay Veterans For Peace, Ch. 56, Arcata, CA Northern CA contact for Vietnam Veterans Against the War USAF, 1966-1970 (VN 1969), Captain Member, Arcata Nuclear Free Zone and Peace Commission

"Sow Justice, Reap Peace -- Strategies for Moving Beyond War"

2006 VFP Annual Convention August 10-13, Seattle, WA <http://vfpnationalconvention.org/>

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

You received the recap of legislation in Congress several weeks ago. Please follow the bills that concern you, and work with your Congressperson to get some action going. Get action going in your state legislature to ameliorate the failures of the feds. Don't let them all get away with dropping a feel-good bill and then walking away. I'll update that table with the June 25 issue.

The opening page of this issue let's you know the kind of treatment you can get when you expect something far different. I hope that your experience is better than ours.

RETREAT - NEWS

IN CASE YOU FORGOT WHY YOU JOINED THE AIR FORCE

AIRMEN GET NEW SKILLS FOR WAR

Peter Spiegel - Times Staff Writer - April 10, 2006

The Air Force adds ground combat to basic training. Afghan and Iraqi deployments, plus military gaps, drive the drastic cultural change.

LACKLAND AIR FORCE BASE, Texas — For a service usually stationed so far from the front lines that it has earned the sobriquet "Chair Force," some of the scenes now unfolding at the Air Force's primary training base almost seem blasphemous.

New recruits are being trained to use rifles. They are being taught hand-to-hand combat skills. They are being prepped as battlefield medics. The new regimen is part of a complete revamp of basic training ordered by Air Force commanders in somewhat belated recognition that their airmen, once sent to large isolated bases with hundreds of thousands of troops between them and enemy forces, are now regularly in harm's way.

In Iraq, the Air Force has taken over supply convoys to ease the burden on the Army and Marine Corps, and specialized forces have been used in Army-like combat patrols, conducting raids and seizing suspected insurgents outside such facilities as Balad air base, north of Baghdad. Commanders estimate that about a third of all Air Force personnel have been deployed to the Middle East and Central Asia since Sept. 11, 2001.

<More at: www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-airforce10apr10,1,7507062.story>

GUESS THE ARMY WILL HAVE TO HIDE BEHIND THE AIR FORCE AND NAVY

ARMY BANS PRIVATELY BOUGHT ARMOR

Associated Press | March 31, 2006

WASHINGTON - Just six months after the Pentagon agreed to reimburse soldiers who bought their own protective gear, the Army has banned the use of any body armor that is not issued by the military. In a new directive, effective immediately, the Army said it cannot guarantee the quality of commercially bought armor, and any soldier wearing it will have to turn it in and have it replaced with authorized gear.

Army officials told The Associated Press on Thursday the order was prompted by concerns that soldiers or their families were buying inadequate or untested commercial armor from private companies - including the popular Dragon Skin gear made by California-based Pinnacle Armor.

"We're very concerned that people are spending their hard-earned money on something that doesn't provide the level of protection that the Army requires people to wear. So they're, frankly, wasting their money on substandard stuff," said Col. Thomas Spoehr, director of materiel for the Army.

Murray Neal, chief executive officer of Pinnacle, said he hadn't seen the directive and wants to review it.

"We know of no reason the Army may have to justify this action," Neal said. "On the surface this looks to be another of many attempts by the Army to cover up the billions of dollars spent on ineffective body armor systems which they continue to try quick fixes on, to no avail." <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,92859,00.html>

SORRY TO PICK ON THE ARMY (MY SERVICE) THIS ISSUE BUT THEY ARE IN TROUBLE AND ARE COVERING IT LIKE A CAT IN A LITTER BOX

ARMY FACES A MAJOR OFFICER SHORTAGE

04/08/2006 - Sig Christenson - Express-News Military Writer

Army Capt. Jeanne Hull put in her walking papers after 10 months in Bosnia and logging back-to-back stints in Mosul and Baghdad that ran two years. Tired of war and ready for something new, the West Point graduate set her sights on graduate school. She wasn't alone.

"A lot of my classmates, if they are not out already, a lot of them want to get out," said Hull, 27, of Colorado Springs, Colo.

The Army expects to be short 2,500 captains and majors this year, with the number rising to 3,300 in 2007. These officers are the Army's seed corn, the people who 10 years from now should be leading battalions and brigades.

"We're ruining an Army that took us 30 years to build," Republican maverick Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-Neb., told a group of reporters at a recent conference.

<More at: www.mysanantonio.com/news/military/stories/MYSA040806.17A.retention_bump.12f4345e.html>

YOUNG OFFICERS LEAVING ARMY AT A HIGH RATE

Thom Shanker April 10, 2006

WASHINGTON, April 9 — Young Army officers, including growing numbers of captains who leave as soon as their initial commitment is fulfilled, are bailing out of active-duty service at rates that have alarmed senior officers. Last year, more than a third of the West Point class of 2000 left active duty at the earliest possible moment, after completing their five-year obligation.

It was the second year in a row of worsening retention numbers, apparently marking the end of a burst of patriotic fervor during which junior officers chose continued military service at unusually high rates. Mirroring the problem among West Pointers, graduates of reserve officer training programs at universities are also increasingly leaving the service at the end of the four-year stint in uniform that follows their commissioning. <More at: www.nytimes.com/2006/04/10/washington/10army.html>

ARMY LOWERS RECRUIT STANDARDS

Jeff St. Onge and Jon Steinman - Bloomberg News

It is accepting more from a reject pool and granting more waivers for criminal convictions and drug use.

WASHINGTON - The Army is taking increasing numbers of applicants it once judged substandard. The percentage of recruits once rejected - and now accepted - on account of criminal convictions, drug use or medical conditions rose to 15 percent in fiscal 2005 from 10 percent in 2001, service statistics show.

The Army also is taking more recruits from a pool it judges least-qualified, based on education and scores on a cognitive aptitude test. Army Secretary Francis Harvey said up to 2,873 of these applicants would be taken this year, 16 percent more than the 2,476 in fiscal 2005 and an increase of 131 percent over the 1,245 taken in 2001.

The practice runs counter to the Pentagon's plan to increase its numbers of Special Forces, skilled technicians and linguists - soldiers able not only to defeat an enemy but also to stabilize conquered nations through cultural awareness and street-level diplomacy.

"They're quietly trading quality for quantity in the interest of getting their numbers up," said Cindy Williams, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor specializing in military personnel policy. "It's a very troubling trade-off."

<More at: www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/nation/14282888.htm>

NOTHING LIKE LOWERING GOALS BY 20% TO SHOW A 15% INCREASE!

ARMY SURPASSING YEAR'S RETENTION GOAL BY 15%

4/9/2006 - Tom Vanden Brook, USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — Two of every three eligible soldiers continue to re-enlist, putting the Army, which has endured most of the fighting in Iraq, ahead of its annual goal.

The Army was 15% ahead of its re-enlistment goal of 34,668 for the first six months of fiscal year 2006, which ended March 31. More than 39,900 soldiers had re-enlisted, according to figures scheduled to be released today by the Army.

Strong retention has helped the Army offset recruiting that has failed to meet its targets as the war in Iraq has made it harder to attract new soldiers. The Army fell 8% short of its goal of recruiting 80,000 soldiers in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, although it is exceeding its goal this year. Army recruiting figures for the first half of the year are to be released today.

<More at: www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2006-04-09-army-re-enlistments_x.htm>

VETERANS LOSE A REAL CHAMPION IN CONGRESS

U.S. REP. LANE EVANS' STATEMENT ON RETIRING

Associated Press

U.S. Rep. Lane Evans' statement on his retirement:

"This is a tough day for me. I am announcing that I will not run for re-election and will retire at the end of my current term in the U.S. House of Representatives.

"When I announced in 1998 that I had Parkinson's disease, my doctor said that this condition would not interfere with my work and that I would be able to perform at a high level for a number of years. That window of opportunity is now closing.

"I fully expected that I would continue my work for the foreseeable future following this current break from the office. But I have come to recognize that the time needed to address my health makes it difficult to wage a campaign and carry out my work as representative. I will return soon and to the best of my ability complete the important work of this term in my roles as representative and ranking member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

"This decision is especially tough because this job means so much to me. I believe strongly in serving people and working to make a positive difference in their lives. Every day has been rewarding and I'm proud of what I've been able to accomplish and the fights I've made.

"I thank my family and everyone who has worked with me - great friends, terrific colleagues, a dedicated staff, fellow vets. And I appreciate the support of people I never met before who would ask how I was doing and tell me to keep up the good fight. I'll be doing that in the weeks and months ahead and look forward to thanking every one of you personally for all you have meant to me."

"To my constituents and veterans across this country, it is an honor and privilege to represent you.

"Semper fi,

"Lane"

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

| Date | Time | Where | What | Who | Purpose |
|--------------|------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| 4/15 | 1100 | Woodley Park, Encino, CA Area #2 | Packages for Troops | Various Groups | |
| 4/20 – 23/06 | | Pleasanton/Camp Parks, CA | AUSA Spring Symposium | AUSA 6 th Region | Periodic Meeting |
| 4/21 | 0600 | New Orleans, LA | Veterans & Family Council | DNC | First Meeting |
| 4/25-26/06 | | Washington DC | Veterans March | Various Groups | VA funding |
| 4/25 | 0800 | Nationwide – state capitols | Veterans March | Various Groups | VA funding |
| 6/23-6/24 | | Chicago Armory - North Ave | Veterans Stand down | VVAW | Homeless Vets |
| 8/10-8/13 | | Seattle. WA – place TBD | National Convention | Veterans for Peace | Periodic Meeting |

Let us know about meetings and gatherings and we will advertise them

Note: We are a non-partisan organization that does not take a position, as an organization, on this war. We will, however, advertise all veterans' events, regardless of purpose.

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

THE MAIN SUBJECT OF THIS ISSUE IS VETERAN UNEMPLOYMENT. IT IS A HORROR STORY, AND I CAN ONLY INCLUDE A FEW OF THE STORIES HERE.

SO YOU THOUGHT THAT USERRA WORKED IF YOU WENT TO WAR? EXCERPTS FROM AN OUTSTANDING SERIES IN THE CHICAGO SUN-TIMES BY CHERYL REED – SEE THE FULL SERIES AT www.suntimes.com/output/news/cst-nws-vetjobs27.html IT'S WORTH THE READ

WHERE ARE ALL THE JOBS?

March 26, 2006 - Cheryl L. Reed - Staff Reporter

In two tours in Iraq as a Marine sergeant, Angelina Summerfield supervised up to 50 switchboard and radio operators whose job was to monitor U.S. spy planes and report sightings of roadside bombs. Now back in civilian life and living in Blue Island, Summerfield, like thousands of other veterans returning home after serving in Iraq, is finding it tough to get a job despite her military experience.

"I've filled out dozens of applications," said Summerfield, 28. "They say you need a college education to do these jobs. Yet I was a supervisor in the military."

She has been scanning the classifieds, interviewing for security jobs and hunting for work at a couple of malls, where she applied for security work and also to be a sales clerk or a cashier. "I'm not even good at retail," she said, "but I'd do it for a paycheck." Summerfield said she has faced tough challenges before and come out fine: She boxed in the Marine Corps' women's league, winning seven of 10 bouts. But, after three months on unemployment, she said, "I'm finding it hard to adjust."

Three years into the war in Iraq, Americans who leave the military are coming home to face a problem most never expected: Veterans are having a hard time getting hired. <More at: www.suntimes.com/output/news/cst-nws-vetjobs26.html>

FROM THE FRONT LINE TO THE UNEMPLOYMENT LINE

March 26, 2006 - Cheryl L. Reed Staff Reporter

Mark Wirth Jr., a 21-year-old from Orland Park, figures the skills he learned as a combat Marine are too valuable to waste waiting tables. But back in civilian life now after serving two tours in Iraq, Wirth isn't getting any offers for the jobs he wants, the jobs he thought the military had trained him to do -- in law enforcement or security consulting. He says the only job he has been offered, through the state's job bank, is as a truck driver.

"I know how to drive a Humvee," said Wirth, who's aiming for a job that pays at least \$13 an hour. "But I don't know how to drive an 18-wheeler." "It's kind of upsetting"

He's like thousands of other U.S. military veterans who, having served in the Iraq war, expected to come home and find a job that employed skills he learned in the military. Instead, he faced the worst job environment for young vets since the early 1980s. After four years in the Marine Corps, Wirth got out Jan. 29. He signed up for unemployment benefits on Valentine's Day. He has been looking for a job in law enforcement or security consulting since then.

<More at: www.suntimes.com/output/news/cst-nws-vetjobside26.html#>

HIRE A HERO

Military.com - Mar 31, 2006

Washington, D.C. -- America's soldiers, sailors, airmen, Guardsmen and Marines are in near constant combat against brutal, committed adversaries. Yet, in nine trips to Iraq and Afghanistan covering U.S. military operations for FOX News since 2001, I've never seen our troops bested in battle. But it turns out that not all the fights are on foreign soil and sometimes the outcome depends on unusual allies. Last month, on March 6th, the Supreme Court handed our Armed Forces a major victory when it ruled in *Rumsfeld v. Forum for Academic and Institutional Rights*, that colleges accepting federal funds had to permit military recruiters access to campus. Unfortunately, that's not the only battle that needs to be fought and won on the home front.

While preparing a documentary on the medical treatment our wounded warriors receive, a representative of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) told me, that while health care and rehabilitation for those who have been injured has vastly improved since the Vietnam era -- the "real scandal is how many veterans of this war are unemployed." I initially thought he was referring to those who had been injured by enemy fire -- but he quickly educated me: "You don't have to be wounded in action to be 'unemployable.' Just to have served in this war makes it tougher to get a job."

Unfortunately he's right. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the national unemployment rate is hovering around 4.8 percent. But for veterans of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), the unemployment rate is more than three times higher -- 15.6 percent. Why? <More at: www.military.com/opinion/0,15202,92792_1,00.html>

NOT ONLY USERRA, BUT ALSO VETERANS' PREFERENCE IS FAILING

SENATORS CONCERNED BY VETERANS' PREFERENCE LOOPHOLES

Karen Rutzick

Two senators voiced concern Thursday over loopholes in policies giving veterans preference for federal jobs.

By law, veterans are given a leg up when competing in federal agencies for open jobs and for keeping their jobs during reductions in force. But some agencies may be employing a type of "designer RIF," where managers target certain employees for layoffs outside the civil service's merit rules by forcing them to move locations, or to quit their jobs, the senators said.

"I have heard from employees ... that their agencies appear to use involuntary reassignments to circumvent veterans' preference in a RIF," said Sen. Daniel Akaka, D-Hawaii, at a hearing Thursday before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce and the District of Columbia. Akaka is the ranking member of that subcommittee.

Richard Weidman, director of government relations for Vietnam Veterans of America, told the panel that there are numerous incidents in which veterans inappropriately lose their jobs through involuntary repositioning, such as "taking somebody who has family ties for four generations in the state of Ohio and repositioning them" to another state, knowing they will not move.

<More at: www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0306/033106r1.htm>

ANOTHER FROM CHERYL REED – SOMEONE GETS IT!

SHERIFF'S OFFICE TO HIRE 350; VETS GET 1ST SHOT

March 31, 2006 - Cheryl L. Red - Staff Reporter

The Cook County sheriff's office begins taking applications today for 350 corrections officer jobs, but only veterans and reservists who have recently been released from active duty can apply. Concerned after reading a Chicago Sun-Times series that detailed how young Illinois veterans are having difficulty finding work, Sheriff Mike Sheahan ordered his staff to open hiring to new veterans and reservists returning from active duty.

"Some of those stories I read -- I can't believe that these kids fight for the country and they come back and there's not an opportunity for them," Sheahan said. "I thought: Why don't we reach out?"

The sheriff's office usually offers applications only once a year in November. But Sheahan consulted with his merit board and decided to open applications today for those who were on active duty between November 2004 and November 2005 and unavailable to apply for jail jobs at the time. <More at: <http://www.suntimes.com/output/news/cst-nws-vetjobs31.html> >

THERE WERE TWENTY-FIVE GOOD STORIES ON PTSD THAT I HAD TO PITCH – JUST NOT ENOUGH ROOM. THIS ONE I JUST COULDN'T LET GO

VIETNAM, IRAQ WARS CITED FOR MINISTER'S SUICIDE

February 22, 2005 - Mike Lewis - Seattle Post-Intelligencer Reporter

He wrote that the latest conflict brought back unbearable horrors

WENATCHEE -- He never was inclined to talk much about the damage, at least not to his wife and children. They knew -- it was obvious -- that a land mine in Vietnam took large portions of both of the Rev. Alan McLean's legs 38 years ago.

They knew that the single detonation in 1967 triggered ongoing waves of psychological temblors when McLean heard helicopters or when war footage appeared on the news. They knew that the decorated veteran was profoundly distressed by the Iraq war, an anxiety that ran as deep as the former Marine's patriotism.

But they didn't know about the .45-caliber pistol. Or the suicide note in his laptop, written but never printed out, seven days before he used that pistol. In it, McLean, the popular rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church here, apologized to his wife, Betsy, and his children for not being stronger. The war in Iraq, he said, unbearably amplified his nightmares.

He said he'd had enough.

"35 Marines died today in Iraq, only slightly more noticed than my legs," the former second lieutenant typed on Feb. 4. "I did not get any of my Marines of Charlie (Company) killed. It is possibly a sign of God's presence there. Certainly not of my ability."

With his final decision to call 911 from his church office and turn his pistol to his chest on Feb. 11, McLean, 62, became a casualty of two wars, his family members said.

"I underestimated the power of the war to take his life," said his daughter, Mary Watkins, 29, of Tacoma. "And I really feel that though my dad's been in Wenatchee, the war in Iraq killed him."

Betsy McLean, Alan's widow, agreed.

"That is why he killed himself," she said while sitting in the family home as relatives, friends and visitors drifted in and out. "Noticeably, it had become a burden, the frustration about what was being said. He was anxious about the soldiers coming home." <More at: http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/213046_priestsuicide22.html>

WE COVER MANY OF OUR RETURNING SOLDIERS FOR 6 MONTHS AND IF THEY HAVEN'T EXHIBITED SYMPTOMS BY THEN WE CUT THEM LOOSE FOREVER.

EIGHTEEN MORE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION MEDICAL CENTERS ARE UNDER THE AX

David Robert Crews - Mar 27, 2006 - From Magic City Morning Star Millinocket, Maine

Ft. Howard Maryland Veterans Administration Medical Center is the first VA property that will be turned into a veteran and non-veteran independent, assisted living and geriatric care housing project. Eighteen more VAMCs are targeted for the same drastic changes. If you are an American military veteran, or someone who cares about veterans issues, and one of these VAMCs is not near your home, or is not your or your loved one's source of medical care, it is still important for you to be aware of what is happening. Your VAMC could be next. ...

Here is a list of the eighteen Veterans Administration Medical Centers that are under the ax:

| | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Big Spring, TX | Livermore, CA | Poplar Bluff, MO |
| Boston, MA | Louisville, KY | St. Albans, NY |
| Brooklyn-Manhattan, NY | Montgomery, AL | Waco, TX |
| Canandaiga, NY | Montrose/Castle Point, NY | Walla Walla, WA |
| Gulfport, MS | Muskogee, OK | West Los Angeles, CA |
| Lexington, KY | Perry Point, MD | White City, OR |

<More at: http://magic-city-news.com/article_5560.shtml>

REMEMBER WHAT THEY SAID? "WHEN WE GET THIS NEW AUTOMATED MEDICAL RECORDS-KEEPING SYSTEM IN PLACE EVERYTHING WILL BE OK"

PATIENT ACCESS DROPS

Tom Philpott | April 07, 2006

With AHLTA, Doctors See Fewer Patients, Longer Days

Rollout of AHLTA, the Defense Department's electronic medical record-keeping system, has reduced patient access to many military outpatient clinics and has lengthened workdays for many doctors, say physicians and system administrators. Dr. Michael Nelson, a civilian staff pediatrician at Naval Medical Center San Diego, said that instead of four patients an hour he now only can see three because AHLTA is so slow to accept data.

"It takes on average two to four times more time to document in AHLTA than it did when we used paper," Nelson said. "For a simple visit like pink eye, patient time can take as little as three to four minutes to diagnose and explain to parents. On a good day [it] takes another three to four minutes to document in the computer."

<More at: www.military.com/features/0,15240,93457,00.html>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

DAVID BLEAK, 74; WON MEDAL OF HONOR IN KOREA

Washington Post - March 31, 2006

David B. Bleak, an Army medic during the Korean War who received the Medal of Honor, has died. He was 74. Bleak died March 23 at Lost Rivers District Hospital in Arco, Idaho. He had emphysema, Parkinson's disease and complications from a broken hip.

<More at: www.latimes.com/news/obituaries/la-me-bleak31mar31,1,4868205.story>

DESMOND DOSS, 87; WWII HERO WHO REFUSED TO CARRY A GUN

Dennis McLellan - Times Staff Writer - March 26, 2006

Desmond T. Doss was an unlikely World War II hero. A conscientious objector who served as an Army medic in the Pacific, he was ridiculed and cursed in boot camp by fellow soldiers for refusing to carry a weapon. Instead he carried a pocket-size Bible on Guam, Leyte and Okinawa and when not treating the wounded, the Seventh-day Adventist from Virginia would read Scripture. But although his religious beliefs forbade his taking of lives, Doss did what he could to save the lives of comrades.

For his heroic actions on Okinawa, including braving heavy enemy fire to single-handedly rescue 75 wounded infantrymen and lower them one by one down a cliff to safety, he received the nation's highest military award — and he did it without ever firing a shot. <More at: www.latimes.com/news/obituaries/la-me-doss26mar26.1.2066255.story>

MICHAEL NOVOSEL, MEDAL OF HONOR HOLDER, DIES

Jim Tice - Times staff writer

Michael J. Novosel Sr., a veteran of three wars, a Medal of Honor recipient and a major figure in Army aviation history, died April 2 at Walter Reed Army Medical Center after a long battle with cancer. The 83-year-old retired chief warrant officer 4 earned the Medal of Honor for actions on Oct. 2, 1969, when he completed 15 hazardous combat extractions in a UH-1 Huey helicopter, saving the lives of 29 South Vietnamese soldiers who had been surrounded by enemy forces along the Cambodian border.

<More at: www.armytimes.com/story.php?f=1-292925-1663288.php>

LEONARD NEFF, 80; DOCTOR DIAGNOSED VETS' STRESS

Jocelyn Y. Stewart - Times Staff Writer - Los Angeles Times - April 9, 2006

On a summer day in 1974, a Vietnam veteran wearing combat gear took a rifle and climbed a hill in Griffith Park. There he took three men hostage, then requested to speak with his psychiatrist, Dr. Leonard Neff. Police shut down the park, and nearby freeways were jammed, so Neff arrived by helicopter. For the next three hours Neff talked to the veteran, finally persuading him to release the hostages and surrender. The incident ended peacefully but became part of an emerging discussion on the needs of Vietnam veterans, many of whom returned home with mental health problems.

Neff joined a nationwide push to add an accurate definition of the disorder afflicting veterans to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders used by healthcare professionals. The effort added a new dimension to the debate on Vietnam — and the wars that would follow.

"It will give people some idea how much it costs to pick up the pieces after a war, economically and psychologically," Neff told the Los Angeles Times in 1976.

Neff, a noted psychiatrist whose early work helped define what became known as post-traumatic stress disorder, died March 26 at his home in Sherman Oaks. He was 80. More at: www.latimes.com/news/obituaries/la-me-neff9apr09.1.4184099.story>

NATIONAL GUARD (IN FEDERAL STATUS) AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF APRIL 12, 2006

This week, all the military services posted a decrease in the number of reservists on active duty in support of the partial mobilization. The net collective result is 2,935 fewer reservists mobilized than last week.

At any given time, services may mobilize some units and individuals while demobilizing others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. Total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization for the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 87,416; Navy Reserve, 5,510; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 7,690; Marine Corps Reserve, 6,639; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 405. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel, who have been mobilized, to 107,660, including both units and individual augmentees.

A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel, who are currently mobilized, can be found at www.defenselink.mil/news/Apr2006/d20060412nqr.pdf.

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE WEDNESDAY APRIL 12, 2006

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

| | |
|---|-----------|
| KILLED US | 2,364 |
| WOUNDED US [EST. NO DoD UPDATE SINCE 7 FEB] ≥ | 17,269 |
| KILLED UK | 103 |
| KILLED OTHER COALITION | 105 |
| WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION | 600 |
| KILLED CONTRACTORS | 314 |
| KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY | ≥ 34,447 |
| KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS | ≥ 38,164 |
| WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS | ≥ 139,262 |

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------|
| KILLED US | 284 |
| WOUNDED/INJURED US | 711 |
| KILLED COALITION | 71 |
| WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION | 393 |
| KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY | ≥ 8,619 |
| KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS | ≥ 3,525 |
| WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS | 32,034 |

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

TO SEE THE DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ON THE CASUALTIES GO TO WWW.MILITARYCITY.COM/2000CASUALTIES/

AFTERTHOUGHTS

NOW I KNOW THAT IT IS A DIFFERENT WAR!

LIVING WITH SPOUSE IMPROVES IRAQ DUTY

Stars and Stripes | By Jeff Schogol | April 10, 2006

CAMP ANACONDA, Iraq — When Sgt. 1st Class Miguel Guajardo, 34, learned that his wife would be deploying to Iraq, he volunteered to go with her.

Miguel Guajardo, of the 84th Engineer Combat Battalion, said he was slated to go to Iraq with a different unit at a different time, meaning the two would be separated.

"I realized in order for us to stay together, we would have to come to Iraq together," said the Corpus Christi, Texas, native.

Afterward, he learned that he would not only be able to serve with his wife, but live with her as well.

Lt. Col. Mark Toy, battalion commander, said he allows married couples such as Miguel and Delilah Guajardo to live together because he recognizes that his soldiers are professionals and know how to act.

<More at: www.military.com/features/0,15240,93829,00.html>

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

EXTRAS FOR YOUR USE:

VA PERFORMANCE IN YOUR AREA – WHAT TO EXPECT

Knight-Ridder Washington Bureau's "Discharged and Dishonored" page. On the bottom half of the page is a map of the US on which you can click to find out the performance of your VA Region.

Since I live in California, and we have almost 10% of the living US veterans in our state, I took a snapshot of California's three VA Regional offices. My conclusion –if I need these guys I'm screwed, but then, so is everyone else.

San Diego is a little better than the other two, probably because it is such a strong Navy and Marine town, and quite a few of the VA counselors are either former or retired sailors or marines.

Note particularly the percentage waiting over a year for their initial decision, the number of those who appeal that decision, and the number of days they wait on average for that second decision.

In California I have a 1-in-6 chance of getting a negative decision, and a 25% greater chance of having that decision be wrong than in the rest of the country. Even if I win on appeal, I will probably wait somewhere around 910 days to get that positive decision. Even then, in an area where the median house price is 230% of the national average, and rents are roughly twice the U.S. average, my payment will probably be 5% less than it would be anywhere else.

Hope I don't need that payment this coming Friday for medicine, or food, or rent.

Take a look at www.realcities.com/mld/kriwashington/news/special_packages/veterans/ and see how you will probably fare in dealing with the VA.

| Comparison | Oakland | Los Angeles | San Diego | U.S. | CA Experience vs. US Average | |
|--|---------|-------------|-----------|-------|------------------------------|---------|
| Error rate on benefit rating | 14% | 13% | 22% | 13% | 16% | 125.64% |
| Percentage of cases granted | 81% | 82% | 87% | 80% | 83% | 104.17% |
| Average monthly disability payment | \$757 | \$607 | \$651 | \$701 | \$ 672 | 95.82% |
| Percentage of veterans waiting 1 year or more for a decision | | 27% | 22% | 19% | 25% | 131.58% |
| Average days pending, appeal | 668 | 592 | 399 | 440 | 553 | 125.68% |
| Veterans satisfied with the process | 59% | 56% | 68% | 59% | 61% | 103.39% |
| Veterans who said claim handled 'fairly' | 54% | 52% | 59% | 54% | 55% | 101.85% |
| Veterans who appealed decision | 16% | 28% | 15% | 20% | 20% | 98.33% |
| Veterans who said VA 'not at all helpful' | 10% | 8% | 4% | 7% | 7% | 104.76% |