The Army is moving ahead smartly with its XM25 shoulder fired, semi-automatic 25mm grenade launcher with plans to spend $34 million on further development in 2011 and a production start slated for 2012, according to service budget documents. The Army plans to buy at least 12,500 of the weapons beginning in 2012, enough to put one in each infantry squad and special forces team, according to PEO Soldier.

The futuristic looking XM25 fires a “smart” High Explosive Airburst round out to around 600 meters. The smart round is a “counter defilade” weapon’s micro-computer accounts for air pressure, temperature and the open. The Army calls the weapon a “leap ahead” technology.

The XM25 uses a laser rangefinder to target the enemy, then the weapon’s micro-computer accounts for air pressure, temperature and the open. The Army calls the weapon a “leap ahead” technology.

 Soldiers can secure, sight and fire the XM25 with either eye, and it feeds that information to a microchip in the round itself programming it to detonate directly over the target. With a 600 meter effective range, it would provide small teams greatly enhanced lethality well beyond that of rifles and machine guns. The Army claims that tests showed the XM25 with the high-explosive round is 300 percent more lethal than current squad level weapons.

The XM25 could prove enormously useful to troops in Afghanistan battling Taliban insurgents that typically fire from the cover of tree lines and from behind mud walls. This is the first weapon, at least that I have seen, that could provide infantry with a lethal, accurate and effective grenade launcher that exceeds that of the ubiquitous RPGs carried by insurgent groups around the world.

One potential weakness I’ve noticed is that the XM25 only has a four round magazine. The Army believes the weapon’s lethality will come from its pinpoint accuracy rather than rate of fire.

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Army spends big on smart grenade rifle

February 2, 2010 | Greg Grant

The Army is moving ahead smartly with its XM25 shoulder fired, semi-automatic 25mm grenade launcher with plans to spend $34 million on further development in 2011 and a production start slated for 2012, according to service budget documents. The Army plans to buy at least 12,500 of the weapons beginning in 2012, enough to put one in each infantry squad and special forces team, according to PEO Soldier.

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Marines Buy Mobile Mortar

February 9, 2010 | Greg Grant

Turning to Marine Corps procurement, the Marines are requesting $9 million next year to buy 62 -120mm towed mortars along with the small jeep like vehicle that hauls them around and accompanying ammo trailers. The total package is called the Expeditionary Fire Support System (EFSS) and includes the mortar, the hauler, ammo trailer, fire control equipment and an ammunition supply vehicle. Built by General Dynamics, the rifled mortar can send rounds out to 8 kilometers, and more than 13 kilometers if they use the rocket assisted round. The mortar package and vehicle is designed to be light enough to fit inside the Marine’s big lifters, the CH-53 helicopter and the MV-22 Osprey tilt rotor. Agility and lethality were key design parameters. The mortar isn’t new, in fact its in use by a number of NATO countries.

The Marines say the EFSS is a key piece of their “distributed operations” puzzle. That’s the new operating concept that calls for small, highly mobile teams, usually company or smaller, to operate independently over a large battlespace. The concept is still being fleshed out, but recent exercises show promise.

For those who are familiar with the military’s 1980s-90s love affair with “maneuver warfare,” think of distributed operations as the same idea just with infantry as the basic unit of maneuver instead of tanks and armored personnel carriers.

It’s like having your own 5” artillery at your beck and call.

Letter from the President

By the time that this issue of the Sponson Box is on the street, the VTA Board of Directors will be getting together for our annual meeting to work on positive changes for the organization as well as hammer out solutions to any impending problems that we may have encountered in the past year.

As always, any time a member has an issue that they feel is worthy of discussion and seeking a possible resolution, they should contact any board member for inclusion in the next Board meeting.

In just over a year from now, we will be packing our bags and heading to San Diego for our seventh biennial reunion. I am just now coming down from the fun & excitement of our time last year in Charleston, and I am very much looking forward to meeting & greeting all of the attendees (new and old) on August 16 – 21, 2011. It does not seem possible that it was just twelve years ago when we met as a group for the first time since we were together In-country so long ago. Time is passing us by seemingly faster and faster. What do they say about life being like a roll of toilet paper? The closer it gets towards the end, the faster it seems to go! My advice to everyone is to find a long lost tanker buddy and get him to join the organization, then make sure that he attends the next reunion with you.

If anyone has a qualified Vietnam Marine buddy or acquaintance that is not a current member, he should contact any Board member...or our National Recruiter, Robbie Robinson, so that we can have a recruitment package (with a sample of the Sponson Box and a membership application) mailed to the prospective member. Also, in order to keep finding new members and building the membership roster, we have re-enacted a 2010 – 2011 Membership Recruiting Contest. The VTA member in good standing who recruits the most members from January 2010 to July 1, 2011, will have his San Diego reunion registration fee paid by the association. Please get busy!

I am happy to report that more and more of you seem to be breaking out your old Vietnam photos & other memorabilia from your time in-country and sharing them with your buddies and with the organization to be published in this magazine. I cannot encourage you enough to keep this up. I have recently received a few phone calls from members who report that, as a result of a marriage split up, their ex-wife had taken all of their photos and threw them away or destroyed them in a fit of rage or retribution. What a sad turn of events! This is a good example of the importance of those who still have them to share them. We can archive them for recording our history as well. That way they’ll be safe from any vindictive ex-wives of the future!

Sadly we still have roughly half of the current membership who has not paid their 2010 dues. Please make your $30 check to “USMC VTA” and mail them to: USMC VTA, 5537 Lower Mountain Road, New Hope, PA 18938. Of course, we are a 501 (c) 19 IRS-approved nonprofit organization, so any additional tax-deductible donation that you may send with your membership dues payment will be very much appreciated.

Semper Fidelis,

John

“Your love of liberty – your respect for the laws – your habits of industry – and your practice of the moral and religious obligations are the strongest claims to national and individual happiness.”

[George Washington]
Col. Ray Stewart, USMC (Ret.) (1802/03/02/02) joined the Marine Corps as a Private in 1955. He was commissioned a 2nd Lt. USMC in 1964 upon graduation from the University of Idaho under the Naval Enlisted Science Education Program (NESEP). Stewart served two and a half tours in Vietnam. The first extended tour (‘65–‘66) was with the 1st and 3rd Tank Battalions as Platoon Commander, 3rd Plt., Bravo Company in support of BLT 3/7 (Operation Starlite) at Chu Lai and then Ass. S-4, Da Nang. Stewart extended his tour 6 months by joining the Second Battalion, Fourth Marines as a Platoon Commander, 1st Platoon, “F” Company and then as the Company Executive Officer, F/2/4 from Da Nang to the DMZ. Returning to MCAS, El Toro, CA and after a year at Arab Language School in Wash., D.C., he served C.O., H&H Company 2nd Radio Battalion at Camp Lejeune, N.C. and served in Afghanistan. Stewart attended Amphibious Warfare School (AWS), Quantico, VA before returning to RNV. During his second tour, Stewart was the Operations Officer of the Da Nang Defense Battalion (S-3, 1st Military Police Br). He returned to CONUS via the Bremerton Naval Hospital on the way to I&I duty, Rome, GA. Stewart was promoted to Major in Rome, GA and posted to AWS as an instructor and seminar leader. From Quantico, he was assigned to the Foreign Area Officer Studies Program, Beirut Lebanon, followed by a tour with the Navy’s Commander, Middle East Force, Bahrain as the Force Plans Officer (N5). After a short CONUS tour at Camp Lejeune, N.C., Stewart returned to the Middle East for 3 years as the Defense and Naval Attache and Security Chief accredited to the Sultanate of Oman. He retired a Lt. Col. in 1983 after a tour as the Arabian Peninsula Desk Intelligence Officer (J2) with the U.S. Central Command, Tampa, FL.

Stewart has been awarded the Bronze Star Medal w/Combat “V”, Meritorious Service Medal w/Star and Clasp, Navy Commendation Medal w/Star and “V”, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry w/Bronze Star, with 2 Silver Stars, and Palm, the Combat Action Ribbon w/2 stars, and the Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal w/2 stars. Ray has mastered degrees in Education, Middle East Studies, National Security Management, and Business Administration. He is retired from The Boeing Company as an Education & Training Manager. He is married to the former Julia Lynn Austin of Spokane, WA and has two adult children and four grand children. His daughter is a Secondary School Teacher in Arlington, VA. Ray’s son is an Attorney who practices law in Tacoma, WA. Ray is President of Mountain View Counseling, an educational company, a Marine Corps historian; a published author; and a nationally certified counselor in the field of chemical dependency and substance abuse. Ray is President of the Marine Corps Vietnam Tanker Historical Foundation, a nonprofit organization, with the mission of writing and archiving the personal histories of Vietnam War-serving Marine Tankers.

Meet Your Board of Directors

A feature that provides some history about one of our Board members.

Raymond A. Stewart
Dear John,
I am not just trying to catch up with my mail. I have been hospitalized from 20 Sep 09 until 24 Dec 09 with complications resulting from foot surgery at the VA Hospital in Minneapolis - St. Paul. I am now free of cast, but have to wear a support boot for a couple of more months. Three feet from my heart! I’ll live...
Please thank the VTA for the flowers they sent me while I was incarcerated at the Three Links Care Center after leaving the VA Hospital. Good to be home, but too cold to get out and walk like I use to do before I decided to get my ankle squared away.

Col. Bruce M. Mac Loren USMC (Ret.)
1014 Division Street South
Northfield, MN 55057
Phone 507-301-2289.
Email: grumpycol@charter.net
Spern Fi
Mac

Dear John,
I read an article in my local paper today that caught me off guard. It concerns Marines that served at Camp Lejeune from around July 1948 to 1992 and were exposed to benzene in the drinking water. An environmental contractor under-reported the level of a cancer-causing chemical at Camp Lejeune, then omitted it altogether as the Marine Corps Base has been a Federal health review. The Marine Corps had been warned nearly a decade earlier about the dangerously high levels of benzene, which was traced to storage leaks from fuel tanks at the north of the base on the North Carolina coast. This was an eye-opener to me because of the lung fibrosis I am now living with. I will be asking my doctor a lot of questions when I see him. I suggest that anyone with a lung cancer or any lung disease makes their doctor aware of this finding.

The article I read came from the Minnesota Star Tribune, February 18th.

Jim Littman
Champlain, MN
(763) 323-1481

Editors Note: We have done three warnings on this health issue over the last 18 months. Three feet from my heart! I’ll live...

Dear John,
I saw a story at the Tuscaloosa Veterans Hospital this past Thursday, so Friday when I went back I made sure to take my camera and took the two attached photos.

I think this is very good for the VA to give us veterans who don’t see so well anymore a good aiming point.

Take care and God bless,
Spern Fi

Chris Spencer

Dear John,
The Vietnam Veterans Memorial — The Wall — is the most visited memorial in our nation’s capital and a powerful symbol of courage and sacrifice. An exciting new project will make the stories behind the 58,261 names on The Wall come to life to ensure they are never forgotten.

Nearly half of the visitors to The Wall were born after the Vietnam War. To them, the names cut in the smooth black granite have no context, there is no connection.

The new Education Center at The Wall in memory of those who gave their lives for their country.

I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for the article on the 2010 edition of the Sponson Box. It was very nice of you to take an interest in our family. Leroy is doing fine, even with his ankle he is able to drive and get around on his own. We are holding on and doing what we need to do to get by. This snow has been horrible this winter but Leroy has been our shoveling the yard for the dogs, the sidewalk and for getting the cars out. He does not mind being active. Sometimes his back starts getting him down, but once he starts, he keeps right on pushing. I guess that’s his Marine Corps training kicking in—never give up and keep on pushing. Sometimes I just think the Corps made him nuts and that’s why he does it... IOL

I sent a check for his 2010 VTA membership today.

Thanks again, John

Semper Fi

Semper Fidelis

Leroy & Lois Kramer
capitcbride@verizon.net

Hi John,

I love the last issue of the Sponson Box and the soft cover design. It has to be one of the best veterans information “newletters” ever done; and I should know as I have published newsletters for the local chapters of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA).

Keep up the good work.

Mike Burnett
khesahn068@aol.com

Hi, John,
Sorry to be late with my annual dues. I’ve included an extra amount due to my tardiness. Please buy a case of “Special Ale” for the Board for all of their great USMC VTA work. Again, excellent reunion in SC and excellent 1st trimester 2010 edition of the Sponson Box, most especially all of the helpful and informative information on Veterans’ Benefits.

Hey! Pete Rich in his letter gave me a chuckle when he embellished my conversation with him on hitting AP mines. My platoon has a total of hitting 12 mines but I only hit two myself! The reason I am correcting his account of this conversation is that I don’t want to be known as “the FNG in 3d Tanks with the super magnet ast!”

You can print this correction in the next Sponson Box so I am not known as the member who largely approves Nam incidents.

Semper Fi

Bob Skeeth
(860) 659-2164
robftskeeth@aol.com

Hi, John,

Just got my Sponson Box and saw (to my surprise) my story “Charge” in it. I love the last issue of the Sponson Box and the soft cover design. It has to be one of the best veterans information “newletters” ever done; and I should know as I have published newsletters for the local chapters of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA).

Keep up the good work.

Mike Burnett
khesahn068@aol.com

Bob,
I just wanted to take advantage of the spirit moving me to tell you what a happy, proud, able, fine godson I have become. I can’t put it down until I read it from cover to cover. It’s all good!

The Charleston reunion was good but the Philly reunion was “gooder” and my first. Keep up the good work. Just like to let you know you’re appreciated.

Semper Fi

Marshall “Jamie” Jameson
C & H&S Co., 1st Tanks 1967 – 69
Seven Springs, NC

Editor’s Note: Your note was a pleasant surprise and really appreciated, Bob.

John,
The latest issue of the Sponson Box (Jan - April 2010) was most outstanding! The photos and articles, especially from 1968 when we were over there, made me so excited and happy to see them. You guys are doing one heck of a great job! You get a major “atta boy” from me!

Maj Frank Box, USMC (ret)
Volcano, Hawaii
(808) 987-0631
waxball@cox.net

Hi John,

I planned to write in again (leaving out some of the details of the original ) and sent it in again for posting under “Sea Stories”.

Now that I see it in the Sponson Box, I think it is best there and not under Sea Stories at all. More readers will read it now, etc.

Thanks for putting it in there! Makes me feel as though I have contributed a little, and hopefully some of the members will get a kick out of it!

Semper Fi...

Greg Kelley

John,
The Sponson Box got here today. What a nice job you guys do with this thing! A great magazine. Congratulations. My wife was very impressed. You made the ‘Sponson Box’ good being included. I recognize some of the pictures and I’ll read the articles

(Continued on page 9)
Looking For

OCEANVIEW - JULY, 1968
Looking for the tank crew that fired a couple of beehive or canister rounds one night in early July using their searchlight at Oceanview. The famous photographer Henri Huet was also there and may help jog someone’s memory. We were at the antarctic CO on the hill that night.

Richard Lennon
170 N Shelmore Blvd
Mt Pleasant, SC 29466
843-856-3216
frlennon@aol.com

Letter to the Editor

(Continued from page 7)

If you can please pass on my congratulations to the editor and staff who compile the Sponson Box magazine. The last two issues – Charleston and Going Back - were outstanding. And the memories of swim call to China Beach still remain with me today.

Semper Fi,
Wayne Young
Hudson, NC
usmc658@hotmail.com

Hi John,
When I saw the picture of Hill 43 in the last issue of the Sponson Box, it brought back some old memories. Way back when I was a motor transport platoon sergeant and we were in support of Alpha Company, 1st Tank Bn, 1st Mar Div. We had to go to TAM KE on a daily basis to get supplies. We rotated who would go on the “water run” (as we called it). On the return trip there was a very nice place to swim and we normally took full advantage of the cool water. One day it was my turn to go on the mission, but for some reason I had to stay in the Alpha company area. On the way back my two trucks hit mines (and the engineers had just swept the road!!). GOD was with me that day since I was not able to make the run... and PRAISE GOD, no one was hurt in the mine detonation. SEMPER FI To all my brothers

SEMPER FI
To all my brothers
S/Sgt William “Bill” Cotton

Editor’s Note: Bill sent in several pictures that we were unable to run due to their small size. Thanks for trying, Bill.

We usually send flowers to a down comrade, but after our illustrious leader broke his wrist, which required surgery, we instead sent flowers to John Wear’s wife with the following note:

“To Jeanne - From all of us, we express our sorrow at having to put up with John’s whining. Our condolences go out to you. From your USMC Vietnam Tankers Association family.”

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Looking For

MGySgt E. D. Dial was a magnificent Marine, tanker, and leader. Tough as nails but had a fabulous sense of humor once you got to know him. He had a tremendous ability to cut through the chaff to get to the wheat on every issue of substance. He had a model to emulate. He had a major impact on developing leaders within our tank community. May he rest in peace.

Semper Fidelis,
Kevin Flynn

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To the Great Tank Park in the Sky

E.D. DIAL

I’m sad to report that MGySgt E. D. Dial passed away in his sleep on Friday night, 2/14/10. After weeks of thrashing red tape, Mrs. Margie Dial got a hospital bed provided by the VA at their home. E. D. had been in and out of the hospital and caretaker home and was in pain the past 15 months. They just had the bathroom remodeled for wheelchair access and they were looking forward to having him at home. He had come home on 2/3/10.

He was a very special Marine. I knew him as the driver on A-32 and later as A-32’s TC. He was a great asset in keeping the platoon’s morale at a high level. He is probably most remembered for the black and white fur hat he wore in the field during the Korean Valley “as my tank came upon him the morning just before the gooks hurt in the mine detonation. There was a memorial service at the Chapman Funeral Home in Brunswick, GA on Wednesday, April 28.

Semper Fidelis,
John

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JACK WILDER

I got word today (4/20/10) that one of our own, Jack Wilder, passed away after putting up a valiant fight with an advanced case of diabetes. There was a memorial service at the Chapeman Funeral Home in Brunswick, GA on Wednesday, April 28.

Semper Fidelis,
Roger Chaput

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I remember the first time I saw Jack. The look on his face, wounded and leaning against the hull of his busted up tank in “Ambush Valley” as my tank came upon him the morning just before the gooks found the range on our relief column. He was a great Marine.

Semper Fidelis,
Ben Cole

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Editors Note: Bill is the author of ”Man in the Doorway” which appeared in the last issue.

I read PR Emmitt’s article about his encounter with TJ Siva with great interest. When I reported in to Charlie Co, 1st Tanks in 1962, TJ had been a staff sergeant and through some disciplinary action had just been made an E-5. When on duty, he was a squared away as any Marine but ABSOLUTELY NOT politically correct. At a point in time in early 1963, TJ would only be given liberty at the end of the month and, under the watchful eye of Charlie Company members, usually to no avail. When I departed Charlie Co in late ’63 for 3rd Tanks in Okinawa, Sgt Siva had become Cpl Siva. He was definitely an old school Marine, enormously talented but he just had a problem with liberty. If anyone else had pulled the stunts that he did on liberty they would have been out of the Marine Corps.

Semper Fidelis,
Kevin Flynn

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Editor’s Note: Thanks, Russell. It’s a privilege to be associated with such outstanding people. Enclosed is a check for my annual dues. I can’t find anything to indicate any paper work that is necessary for my first renewal. I got my latest issue of the Sponson Box and want to say “Thanks” for the outstanding job that you folks have done putting it together. Keep up the good work!

Semper Fi,
Russell Walters
Tura Beach, Australia
rw7304@bigpond.com

Editor’s Note – Thanks, Russell. It’s addresses like yours that makes us an international publication. Bob
**Special Story**

**The Creation of Vietnam Vets**

When the Lord was creating Vietnam veterans, He was into His 6th day of overtime when an angel appeared.

“You’re certainly doing a lot of fiddling around on this one.”

And God said, “Have you seen the specs on this order? A Nam vet has to be able to run 5 miles through the bush with a full pack on, endure with barely any sleep for days, enter tunnels his higher ups wouldn’t consider doing, and keep his weapons clean and operable. He has to be able to sit in his hole all night during an attack, hold his buddies as they die, walk point and say, “You’ll make it” — when he knows he won’t.

“Lord, rest, and work on this tomorrow.”

“I can’t,” said the Lord. “I already have a model that can carry a wounded soldier 1,000 yards during a fire fight, calm the fears of the lastest FNG, and feed a family of 4 on a grunt’s paycheck.”

The angel walked around the model and said, “Can it think?”

“You bet,” said the Lord. “It can quote the morality of the War, and still keep his sense of humor. The Lord gazed into the future and said, “He will also endure being vilified and spit on when he returns home, rejected and crucified by the very ones he fought for.”

Finally, the angel slowly ran his finger across the vet’s check, and said, “There’s a leak...I told you that you were trying to put too much into this model.”

“That’s not a leak,” said the Lord. “That’s a tear.”

“What’s the tear for?” asked the angel. “It’s for bottled up emotions, for holding fallen soldiers as they die, for commitment to that funny piece of cloth called the American flag, for the terror of living with PTSD for decades after the war, alone with it’s demons with no one to care or help.”

“You’re a genius,” said the angel, casting a reassuringly at his bleeding, fellow soldier home, rejected and crucified by the very people he fought for.”

The angel shook his head slowly and said, “6 pairs of hands...no way.”

The Lord said, “It’s not the hands that are causing me problems. It’s the 3 pair of eyes a Nam vet has to have.”

“Just Stay”

Submitted by Ted Wunsch

A nurse took the tired, anxious serviceman to the bedside. “Your son is here,” she said to the old man. She had to repeat the words several times before the patient’s eyes opened.

Heavily sedated because of the pain of his heart attack, he dimly saw the young uniformed Marine standing outside the oxygen tent. He reached out his hand. The Medal of Honor wrappered his jiggling fingers around the old man’s limp ones, squeezing a message of love and encouragement.

The nurse brought a chair so that the Marine could sit beside the bed. All through the night the young Marine sat there in the poorly lighted ward, holding the old man’s hand and offering him words of love and strength. Occasionally, the nurse suggested that the Marine move away and rest awhile.

He refused. Whenever the nurse came into the ward, the Marine was oblivious of her and of the night noises of the hospital - the clanking of the oxygen tank, the laughter of the night staff members exchanging greetings, the cries and moans of the other patients.

Now and then she heard him say a few gentle words. The dying man said nothing, only held tightly to his son all through the night.

Along towards dawn, the old man died. The Marine released the now lifeless hand he had been holding and went to tell the nurse. While she did what she had to do, he waited.

Finally, she returned. She started to offer words of sympathy, but the Marine interrupted her. “Who was that man?” he asked.

The nurse was startled. “I thought he was your father,” she answered.

“No, he wasn’t,” the Marine replied. “I never saw him before in my life.”

“Then why didn’t you say something when I took you to him?”

“I knew right away there had been a mistake, but I also knew he needed his son, and his son wasn’t here. When I realized that he was too sick to tell whether or not I was his son, knowing how much he needed me, I stayed.”

“I came here tonight to find a Mr. William Grey. His Son was Killed in Iraq today, and I was sent to inform him. What was this gentleman’s name?”

The Nurse, with tears in her eyes, answered. “Mr. William Grey...”

The next time someone needs you...just be there. Stay.

Editors Note: Ted Wunsch is the brother of Fallen Hero, Captain Michael Wunsch, 3rd Tanks.

**Khe Sanh Reunion**

The 2nd Bn 1st Marines fought alongside Marine tanks in Vietnam and they are the grunt tankers who would like to come. So far I know Rick Oswood, Rene Cerda and I are attending.

If you served with Sgt. Robert Embesi’s Dual Reunion

2nd BN 1st Marines Reunion

Gunner Embesi’s Dual Reunion

If you served with Sgt. Robert Embesi in B Co during 1966, or with him on his second tour as a Sgt & Platoon Sergeant with 2nd Platoon, Bravo Co, 5th Tanks in 1968, he is holding a reunion in Conner, Montana at his place on July 8, 9 & 10. Barbecue is his specialty and you’ll get a chance to see the beautiful Bitter Root Valley. For more information call Bob Embesi directly at 406-821-3075.

If you recall a few years back, Harris Himes and a few of us tankers who fought in the May 19th fight held a small reunion in Washington, D.C. to celebrate and remember that fateful day. About 15 to 20 Marines from 2/1 also attended and it was outstanding to share what had happened from both perspectives.

19th fight held a small reunion in Washington, D.C. to celebrate and remember that fateful day. About 15 to 20 Marines from 2/1 also attended and it was outstanding to share what had happened from both perspectives.

Here’s the detailed information regarding the grunt reunion in Texas:

**Reunion 2010**

November 6 - 12

Holiday Inn El Tropicano Riverwalk

110 Lexington Ave
San Antonio, TX 78205

Room Rate $95 (same rate for single, double, triple or quadruple)

Reservation Code: 2nd BN 1st Marines Reunion

Toll Free 866-293-1842

Tankers are invited and encouraged to attend.

**Service in 1967 Through 1977**

You are credited with $300 in additional earnings for each calendar quarter in which you received active duty basic pay.

**Service in 1978 through 2001**

For every $300 in active duty basic pay, you are credited with an additional $100 in earnings up to a maximum of $1,200 a year. If you enlisted after September 7, 1980, and didn’t complete at least 24 months of active duty or your full tour, you may not be able to receive the additional earnings. Check with Social Security for details.

The information in the link below will be of interest to veterans!

http://www.ssa.gov/retire2/military.htm

Don’t forget your DD214 if you go to apply.

**Special Extra Earnings for Military Service**

Since 1957, if you had military service earnings for active duty (including active duty for training), you paid Social Security taxes on those earnings. Since 1988, inactive duty service in the Armed Forces reserves (such as weekend drills) has also been covered by Social Security. Under certain circumstances, special extra earnings for your military service from 1957 through 2001 can be credited to your record for Social Security purposes. These extra earnings credits may help you qualify for Social Security or increase the amount of your Social Security benefit.

Special extra earnings credits are granted for periods of active duty or active duty for training. Special extra earnings credits are not granted for inactive duty training.

If your active military service occurred

- From 1957 through 1967, we will add the extra credits to your record when you apply for Social Security benefits.

- From 1968 through 2001, you do not need to do anything to receive these extra credits. The credits were automatically added to your record.

- After 2001, there are no special extra earnings credits for military service.

**How You Get Credit For Special Extra Earnings**

The information that follows applies only to active duty military service earnings from 1957 through 2001. Here’s how the special extra earnings are credited on your record:

- **Service in 1957 Through 1977**
  - You are credited with $300 in additional earnings for each calendar quarter in which you received active duty basic pay.

- **Service in 1978 through 2001**
  - For every $300 in active duty basic pay, you are credited with an additional $100 in earnings up to a maximum of $1,200 a year. If you enlisted after September 7, 1980, and didn’t complete at least 24 months of active duty or your full tour, you may not be able to receive the additional earnings. Check with Social Security for details.
What Members are Doing

Dick Carey
VTA Life Member Richard (Dick) Carey was the guest speaker at the Marine Corps Ball held on Cape Cod in his hometown of Sandwich on November 10th, 2009.

Carey spoke about the actions that took the life of his 3rd Tank Bn company commanding officer, Daniel Kent, and the brave actions of then Corporal Harry Christensen who was awarded the Silver Star. Richard also participated in the cutting of the cake ceremony. The local Marines presented him with a K-Bar knife.

Richard is the Founder and President Emeritus of the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association and Co-Founder, Director of Public Affairs and Web Master for the Marine Corps Vietnam Tanks Historical Foundation.

Chris Spencer Veteran of the Year

Yesterday morning was the awards day at the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center and, as I’ve told all of you earlier, they for some reason chose to name me the Veteran of the Year for 2009.

I had several friends and fellow Marine Corps League detachment members there, and I very much appreciate all of you coming out on a very cold and rainy morning. My preacher, Mike Griffin, and deacon Foster Abernathy were there from my church, Grants Creek Baptist, also Gary and Forrest Fitts, Jim Buech from my Marine Corps League (I feel like I’m forgetting someone, my apologies if I have), and my dear friend Kay Stephens. Plus I know many of the VA employees and a lot of them were there. I thank you all for being there.

It was a very humbling experience. When I thought about all the honorable veterans who had been named Veteran of the Month in 2009, it humbles me to be selected from such a noble group. They all deserve this more than I. I tried to say a few words of thanks but got choked up. I did manage to say that I did not see this as an individual award, but it was for ALL the veterans who come there for their medical care.

And there was another award that was a complete surprise. I am also a member of the American Legion. Herb Champion, the commander of Post 208, was there and presented me with a check for $100. He also told me he had nominated me for Veteran of the Year for the State of Alabama American Legion. I asked him before we left if the Legion has a scholarship fund and he said yes, so I asked him to take the check back and donate it to that fund.

Tricia Hill, a retired Navy Chief and VA employee, made the presentation. She got back into her dress uniform for the occasion, she said, because she knew the Marines would be all dressed up. And Tricia, I thank you for everything you did.

I got only 2 photos with my camera, but April Jones, the VA photographer, got several that I’m sure she will email to me soon.

In this one photo are L-R, Tricia Hill, me, Jim Buech, one of my fellow Marine Corps League members, Kay Stephens and Herb Champion. The other is just photos of the awards. I was told they are going to make a new one for this because it says the same thing as the Veteran of the Month award and they felt it should say more, or at least something different for the Veteran of the Year award. Both are fine with me now.

I just wanted to share all this with y’all. It has been a very humbling experience and none of it could have happened without the grace and blessings of our loving God. Thank you all for your support and, most of all, your friendship.

Love and God bless,

Chris Spencer, second from left, receives Veteran of the Year Award.

Lieutenant Colonel Willard F. Lochridge was raised in Scarsdale, NY.

Belmo Gets Award.

John, It was great speaking with you. I hope that arm heals up fast and that all is well. As we both agreed, for Marines it sure is tuff getting old. But, much like that old saying, “we may not be as lean nor near as mean but we’re still Marines”.

Per our discussion regarding my experience at the fire on 1/29/10, it shows that at times that old saying has a lot of truth to it. You can take the Marine out of the Corps, but the Corps stays in the Marine.

I have as you requested attached a copy of the two letters of commendation that The Marine Corps League Detachment Commandant, Mike Nicolet (2/4, 67-68), received from the City of South San Francisco, and an account of what happened. I appreciated the thanks from the City, but I know that you or any of our brothers would have done the same thing. It is all about who we are and what we do so, no biggie for us, but for others I guess it is.

John, as you may recall I am now rated as 100% disabled by Social Security due to my back and knees, and at times I actually have to use the cane they gave me, but not too often. Anyway, my point is what amazes me is that the apartment that was on fire was on the 4th floor, and at no time during the entire event did I once feel any

He enrolled in the United States Marine Corps in April 1961. Upon graduation from Western Carolina University in 1965, he was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant.

While in the Marine Corps, he served two tours of duty in South Vietnam, with 3rd Tank Battalion, 3rd Marine Division; 1st Tank Battalion, 1st Marine Division; and USMC Combined Action Program (CAP). He also served as Battalion Assistant S-3 Officer, S-5 Civil Affairs Officer, and Southern Sector (DaNang) Reaction Force Commander. Returning to the U.S. in December 1967, he was transferred to the Office of the Secretary of Defense as a Systems Analyst. Shortly thereafter, he became Executive Officer, Guard Company, HQ USMC, and later became Commanding Officer of H&S Company, HQ USMC.

LtCol Lochridge joined the NY Naval Militia in 2000. In the aftermath of the attacks of 11 Sep 2001, he served for 51 days as Military Liaison Officer to NY City’s Office of Emergency Management (OEM). Later, he was assigned as Officer in Charge of maritime security at the Indian Point Nuclear facility.

In 2002, he was tasked to develop specifications for high speed patrol boats that eventually became the Naval Militia’s Military Emergency Boat Service (MEBS). Over the next five years he launched ten state-of-the-art patrol boats and trained a number of personnel to crew them.

LtCol Lochridge’s personal decorations include: Silver Star Medal; (2) Bronze Star Medals with Combat ‘V’ for Valor; Purple Heart Medal; US Coast Guard Commendation Medal with Operational ‘O’ device; and, Combat Action Ribbon.

In civilian capacity, LtCol Lochridge was Vice President, Federal Computer System Division, Motorola Inc. in Washington, DC. Prior to that position he was a founding Vice President for GRiD Systems Corporation.

LtCol Lochridge is married to Ms. Kirsten Hansen Lochridge. They reside in Averill Park, NY.

(Continued on page 15)
Can anyone ID the tanker on the right?

A Vietnam Corpsman from Kilo, 3/9 sent this great photo to us. He got it from a Doggie M42 “Duster” commander who took it in ’67 - ’68 around Ca Lu on Rt 9, west of the Rockpile. The tanker on the left is Tom Wharton but does anyone know who the tanker on the right is?

Guess Who Contest Winner

Last issue’s photo contest winner was a member from the Phoenix, AZ area whose name the editor lost. Please call Bob Peavey again so we can get you your “priceless” prize. The winner correctly ID’d Guy Wolfenbarger as the second person from the left. It is also interesting to note that the individual in the very back is Frank Vinning who passed away just a few years ago.

What Member Are Doing!
(Continued from page 13)

pain or inability to function below the normal 200% that would have typically been expected of us when we served in our Corps. I wish someone would make something that would make me feel like that all the time.

By the way, we got so focused on talking about so many other things before you had to leave for physical therapy that I forgot to give an update on my son, Dominic.

This photo was taken during the 65th Anniversary of the Battle for Iwo Jima Memorial Luncheon that was held at the Marines Memorial Club in downtown San Francisco in February 2010.

From left to right: Me, Lt. Gen. Snowden USMC (ret); Iwo Jima Marine Dale Cook; Vietnam Marine Mike Nicolet (4th Marines ’67 - ’68) and Korean War Marine Marlin Gill (’50 - ’53).

Gen. Snowden was a rifle company commander in battles on the Pacific islands of Roi-Namur, Tinian, Saipan and, Iwo Jima. He later served in Korea (1953) and Vietnam (1966).

Semper Fi,

Mike “Belmo” Belmessieri
zippoF11@aol.com

Challenge from Apeldoorn.

Enclosed please find my donation for this year. I might refer to it as a response to the “Doc Forsyth request for Life members to continue to contribute” letter of 2009. I think it is a great idea and proudly continue to contribute.

Semper Fidelis,

Bruce MSgt Bruce C Van Apeldoorn,
Sr., USMC (ret)
73 Stanton Street
Rochester, NY 14661
bvanaapeldoorn@gmail.com
(585) 640-6564

Well, we actually have someone other than Belmo who did something this tri-mester – Doug Scrivner got a Fatboy and his own plate! Cool!
This is an unusual but true story out of the pages of the Viet Nam war. It doesn't involve a firefight or an ambush or a tank hitting a mine. But it does involve a "KIA". Remember, this incident happened over forty years ago. My recollection of the event may differ from those that were also on the scene observing this tragic event.

As I recall, it is April 23, 1967. The remainder of the 1st Tank Battalion boarded the USNS LST 715 De Kalb County in Chu Lai to travel to Da Nang. Along with the 1811's and other Marines is a United States Navy Corpsman attached to 1st Tanks; one Jake "Doc" Keasling. Doc is tall, lanky with a mustache, and a kind and gentle person. A person that you would think could not be involved with a KIA. But, as war will have it, this kind and gentle Navy corpsman became involved in a major event that has remained with this writer for over forty years. Our paths did not cross again after my tour in Viet Nam until our association began. I saw his name on the roster and wondered if this could be the same Doc Keasling. So I picked up the phone and called. I said this is the same Doc Keasling that was with me on the LST from Chu Lai to Da Nang. After confirming it was we recalled the events about the KIA.

On that April day in 1967, several of us tankers and Doc Keasling were on deck getting some fresh air. Doc was of all things fishing. Of course we ribbed Doc about how a sailor couldn't catch a fish. We loved Doc but you know how it goes between Marines and the other part of the Department of the Navy. Well out of all things Doc makes a catch. It wasn't the biggest fish I had ever seen but it would do. Matter of fact, I guess it is considered a fish. It was a sardine.

As the story is recalled, I believe Doc was challenged to eat the whole sardine alive. This meant he couldn't upcheck it or anything. Eat the sardine alive and keep it down. The bet was around $20.00. Now remember this is 1967 in Viet Nam. Twenty bucks is a big deal. How much was combat pay?

So not wanting to be shown up, Doc took up the challenge. He took one good look at the sardine and down it went. Kind of. A little bit at a time. His eyes were watering and they got bigger and bigger as the sardine struggled not to meet its maker. Hand to mouth combat ensued. The struggle was on.

Over the years I've read many books about Viet Nam: military, political, fiction and fact. Maybe I missed the few that dealt with the grunt's fight with a different enemy, infection.

The infection I am talking about was, at the time, given a general moniker known as 'Jungle Rot'. I have no idea who had it, how many had it, or, how prevalent it actually was among the troops. I only knew that I had it, and I didn't like it.

All these years later I thought to investigate jungle rot and its causes. I started by checking out the definition on-line and was puzzled to find more information about a mid-west rock band by the same name. Now, there's a bad mental image.

Wikipedia terms jungle rot as a 'tropical ulcer' that normally occurs below the knee.

Someone must have not noticed that hands and arms were not below the knee. My layman diagnosis is that it is simply a bacterial infection which occurs in tropical weather with conditions such as poor hygiene, diet, and, the lack of an insulated metal container. Scrumptious, 'hot chow' came in a large canned stuff was delicious~

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WRITTEN BY: DIANA WEST
Tuesday, February 02, 2010 2:57 AM

Someday, civilian and military leaders responsible for these rules of engagement, this policy of sacrificing American troops to make the barbarians of Afghanistan “like us” should come before at the very least a Congressional hearing, but at this point an out-for-blood people’s tribunal seems more appropriate. What they are doing to our military, our treasury, our power and our prestige is an unconscionable national betrayal.

The following news story describes the toll these rules, the rules that all but ban the bravest young men -- amebas in a Petri dish to the mad, see-no-Islam social engineers masquerading as American statesmen and generals.

From the Telegraph:

On a base near Marjah, a Taliban stronghold in Helmand province, Marines are grieving the deaths of a sergeant and corporal killed by the remote-controlled bombs that have become the scourge of the long-running conflict.

Commanders try to keep the men’s rage in check, aware that winning over the population – a no-win, perpetual work in progress that more closely resembles dhimmi servitude than military action.

He is too frustrated, accusing the Taliban of manipulating the rules of engagement by using women and children as shields and shooting from hidden positions before dropping their weapons and standing out in the open.

"They know we can’t shoot them if they don’t carry guns or without positive identification. They are fighting us at another level now," MacLean said.

MacLean recently led his unit on a routine foot patrol near Marjah, which is expected to be the scene of a major offensive this month.

What the Marines encountered was a likely precursor of the battle to come.

They were met by fierce gunfire from Taliban gunmen who pinned them down for three hours at the expense of two of their men.

One corporal stepped on an improvised explosive device (IED). Military intelligence officials say that it is possible that 90 per cent of foreign soldiers’ lives are currently being lost in this way.

The corporal’s legs were blown off and he was thrown meters into the air.

The whole of Afghanistan (and you can throw in Iraq) aren’t worth those two legs. Certainly not this.

A second IED killed a sergeant who rushed to the corporal’s aid as bullets flew everywhere, MacLean said.

Three others were wounded in the clash, making it one of the bloodiest days for US Marines since President Barack Obama’s announcement in December of a fresh troop surge in the war to eradicate the Taliban.

The death toll of foreign soldiers fighting in Afghanistan under US and NATO command reached 44 in January - the most in a month since the war began more than eight years ago. In January 2009 the figure was 25.

The number of Americans who died last month in the conflict now in its ninth year was almost double the number for January last year, at 29 compared with 15, according to the casualties.org website, which keeps a running tally.

The US and NATO currently deploy 113,000 troops in Afghanistan, with another 40,000 due this year as part of a renewed strategy that emphasizes development and the “reconciliation” of Taliban fighters.

Most of the incoming troops will be deployed in Helmand, which along with neighboring Kandahar province has been the hub of the insurgency since the Taliban regime was removed from power in late 2001.

MacLean’s unit contains some of the first Marines to be sent into Helmand since the surge was announced.

On the day of the ambush, Marines hunkered down in tents inside the camp as information about the encounter came in.

Some had tears in their eyes as the names of casualties were made known.

Others held tightly to their weapons and yelled at their enemy on the horizon.

“We were attacked treacherously. We came under fire from everywhere, but the rules of engagement prevent me from doing my job,” said Lance Corporal Mark Duzak, who was in the unit that was ambushed.

The rules of engagement prevent him from doing his job – under attack in the midst of an ambush that lasted several hours in which two men were grievously wounded and killed. The people behind this order, this whole heinous policy should be summoned to testify in Congress today.

Outside a tent housing the Marines’ unit responsible for firing mortars stands an improvised cross bearing the inscription: “Here lies the 81st, death by stand down.”

Last year was the worst yet for foreign troops fighting in Afghanistan, with 520 soldiers dead, up from 295 in 2008. More troops will mean more casualties, military experts say.

For the Afghans too 2009 was the deadliest, with the UN putting civilian deaths at 2,412 for the year, compared to 2,118 in 2008.

While most are caused by the Taliban, the insurgents exploit civilian casualties to spread distrust among the public for foreign and Afghan troops.

Bogus, bogus, bogus. To quote the unlambed GWB: You’re either with us, or you’re against us. Period.

As the nature of the fight has changed, with the Taliban increasingly using suicide attacks and IEDs, there had been no traditional winter hiatus and General Zahir Azimi, a defense ministry spokesman, said that spring is likely to be ferocious.

“We will have the most intense clashes come the spring, and will shed the most blood this year,” he said.

Editor’s Note: The similarities of our war and one that today’s Marines find themselves in are too many NOT to publish this story. Yige Borne said it best: “It’s déjà vu all over again.”

FROM A DOC’S POINT OF VIEW

As a Corpsman in green and not Navy blue, I offer this poem from a Doc’s point of view.

We’ve been honored by stories, poems and such
By Marines we have served with and respected so much.
They speak of our honor, bravery and skill,
And the cry, “Corpsman up” still gives me a chill.

When a Marine goes down, what will it be?
A trash? Tie off bleeders? Start an IV?
Only one thing is certain as we rush to the scene,
Our ass will be covered by our Brothers in Green.

You see we’ve adopted, “Sons of the Corps,”
No more “Anchors away” – “Semper Fi” evermore!
It’s true when you’re wounded your life in our hands,
And we’ll treat and protect you to the very last man.
For you are our pointman, our cover, our shield,
And we count on your skills all our days in the field.
Many a grunt laid his life on the line
to make sure Doc got to the wounded in time.
So, my brothers, I thank you, as all us Docs Should.
It’s YOU who make us Corpsmen look good!

“Semper Fi,”
Doc Hutch – Alpha 1/5
2nd Platoon 68 - 69, An Ha Oasis

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“Semper Fi,”
Doc Hutch – Alpha 1/5
2nd Platoon 68 - 69, An Ha Oasis
My job as a volunteer “visitor guide” was to help people find names on the Moving Wall Vietnam Veterans Memorial. More importantly, I gave visitors a chance to talk. While searching the directory or leading a visitor to the name they sought, I would quietly ask “Was he a friend or a relative?”

Over the six days, I began conversations that way with several hundred people. Only a handful gave me a short answer; almost everyone wanted to talk. Each conversation was a different story to tell. For some, the words poured out as if the floodgates of a dam that had been closed for thirty years had just burst open. For others, the words came out slowly and deliberately between long pauses. Sometimes, they choked on the words and they cried. I also cried as I listened, asked more questions, and silently prayed that my words would help to heal, not to hurt.

“I came to see my son’s name.” I heard those and similar words from several parents who came to the Moving Wall. Some son had died in a war that divided our country like no other event since the Civil War. He died in a war that some Americans had blamed on the soldiers who were called to fight it. Some young men had no choice; they were called by a sense of duty to their country.

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Ballplayer, sportscaster, baseball team manager, Marine Corps aviator—former New York Yankees second baseman Jerry Coleman succeeded at all of these.

Guess which one he prizes most? “By any standard, I’ve had a great career,” he insists. “But my years on active duty left me with a heightened sense of perspective—about life, about my career, and about the preciousness of life itself. The memories of the guys I flew with in World War II and in Korea have never faded, and neither has my pride in the Corps. I was lucky to get home alive. And I was lucky to have been a Marine.”

“Answering the Call” is a monthly series of short articles by prominent men and women discussing the impact of their time in the military on their later achievements.

When I came back from Korea, I found myself dealing with the same question that every veteran asks: Why was I returning, when my buddies weren’t? I wasn’t that great a pilot. No one was. But God let some of us come back, and called others. The Yankees’ publicity department gave me a hero’s welcome, but I was uneasy about it.

One of my most disheartening experiences was when, just before a game at Yankee Stadium, I met the wife of Major Max Harper, a great guy who had been my tent-mate in Korea. Max had gotten hit during a raid over North Korea and went straight in. There was nothing anyone could do.

Max’s wife showed up, distraught, on the morning of “Jerry Coleman Day,” which the Yankees had set up to honor my military service. Mrs. Harper had been hoping that Max had been captured and might still be alive. She wanted to know whether he really had died, and said she wouldn’t accept it from anyone but me. I was flying right behind Max. She was devastated when I told her he was dead.

In truth, I left a lot in Korea. I never was as good on the ball field as I’d been before the war. I’d lost my depth perception, and I couldn’t hit anything. A year after I returned home, I broke my left hand. I was 37. By then I was too old to play baseball anymore, I became a sportscaster—first for the Yankees and later for the Padres. In 2005 I was elected to the broadcast wing of the Baseball Hall of Fame.

I still look back at my military service as the most important thing I’ve ever done. Sure, it’s a thrill to play part-time. And to have your comrades ahead of everything else—what a gift that makes you put your responsibility to your comrades ahead of everything else—not only while you’re in uniform, but for the rest of your life. The friends I made in the Corps have been like brothers all these many years—and they’ll remain so for life.

My years on active duty left me with a heightened sense of perspective—about life, about my career, and about the preciousness of life itself. The memories of the guys I flew with in World War II and in Korea have never faded, and neither has my pride in the Corps. I was lucky to get home alive. And I was lucky to have been a Marine.

“Answering the Call” is a monthly series of short articles by prominent men and women discussing the impact of their time in the military on their later achievements.
After reading all the stories about DI’s I had to relate my experience. I landed in San Diego in May 1969 and like all other recruits I was standing on the yellow foot prints in the receiving area at MCRD. After a night of pure hell we were turned over to our three DI’s at Platoon 1089. SSgt Frank Accosta was the senior drill instructor. SSgt Accosta had record of producing honor platoons and would take nothing but the best from everyone or he would kill you getting the best out of you . . . at least we thought he would kill us.

Our Jr. Drill Instructor was SSgt Dennis West. SSgt West had a mean and vicious streak and employed it. We all had fear in our eyes when he was in charge. However, SSgt West was the finest instructor in drill that I had ever seen. He made us such a fine tuned machine that we had the highest drill score in more than four years on our final drill during boot camp. I remember the Sgt Maj of our battalion coming out of his office to watch us as we marched by in the evening. He would have each squad going in different directions and bring us back together in perfect drill formation.

The Drill Instructor I am writing about is SSgt Jim Donner. We were SSgt Donners’ first platoon. He had just graduated from Drill Instructor school. SSgt Donner came out of nowhere and whispered in my ear that he would see me in the duty hut that evening. Later as everything was winding down. I and another recruit were summoned to the duty hut. After knocking and announcing our selves we were given a dressing down about falling asleep in class.

Thinking that just getting our asses chewed would be the worst thing that would happen. SSgt Donner told us that we were going to watch TV. Watching TV requires holding your body up by your elbows on the top of a wall locker. After a couple of minutes your arms will be so numb that all you want to do is fall off. After 15 minutes we were told to get on our heads. Getting on our heads is a push up position with your head on the floor, your legs spread and your rear end up in the air. For me this wasn’t a problem because I had a flat spot on the top of my head. The other guy had a rounded head and he was in misery the whole time. Did I forget to say that the floor was concrete? After 15 minutes of this exercise we were told to get in push up position. On our knuckles! I had bruised knuckles for more than a week. Another 15 minutes went by both of us in extreme agony all the while we are being instructed in the errors of our way by SSgt Donner. Finally, we were instructed to stand at attention with our backs to the wall lockers. We were then introduced to the “hammer”. The hammer is a black leather glove which fits over the DI’s hand and gives love taps to the dog tag area of your chest while you are being instructed in the proper Marine Corps procedure of not nodding off in class. All of our DI’s employed the hammer at one time or the other.

Fast forward a few months. I’m with 1/5 in Vietnam. We have been humping in Arizona for a couple of weeks. Every night we were on 50% alert after running patrols or sweeps during the day. It seemed like when I went to my time to sleep we would get hit or go to 100% alert. One pitch black night during this time I was on watch and it was so dark I couldn’t see anything in front of my bunker. I felt myself starting to get sleepy and immediately thought of SSgt Donner and was wide awake instantly. Charlie made a mistake that night by trying to come through my position as I was the most wide awake Marine on the line. Charlie paid big time.

So thank you SSgt. Jim Donner where ever you are. Not only did you save my life with your lessons to a young recruit but you saved the lives of the other guys in my unit. You are one hell of a Marine.

Sgt Daniel J. Connolly
H&S 1/5
Vietnam 1969-70

The “Hammer"

By Daniel J. Connolly

The first time I saw this was about two years ago in a different format. I knew it caused me to alter my charitable giving since some of the buddies were ews I routinely sent money to.

In its tally files, Help Hospitalized Veterans reported paying more than $4 million to direct-mail fund raising consultants. The group also has run television advertisements featuring actor Sam Waterston, game show host Pat Sajak and other celebrities. Bennett Weiner, chief operating officer of the Better Business Bureau, said the agency has 20 standards for reviewing charities, including that a charity’s fund raising and overhead costs not exceed 35 percent of total contributions. The American Institute of Philanthropy, a leading charity watchdog, issued a report card this month for 29 veterans and military charities. Letter grades were based largely on the charities’ fund raising costs and the percentage of money raised that was spent on charitable activities. The charities that received failing grades are in RED type.

Air Force Aid Society (A+)
American Ex-Prisoners of War Service Foundation (F)
American Veterans Coalition (F)
American Veterans Relief Foundation (F)
AMVETS National Service Foundation (F)
Armed Services YMCA of the USA (A+)
Army Emergency Relief (A+)
Blinded Veterans Association (D)
Disabled American Veterans (D)
Disabled Veterans Association (F)
Disability Assistance Foundation (F)
Freedom Alliance (F)
Help Hospitalized Veterans/Volunteer to Salute America’s Heroes (F)
Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund (A+)
Military Order of the Purple Heart Service Foundation (F)
National Military Family Association (A)
National Veterans Services Fund (F)
National Veterans Veterans Committee (D)
Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (A+)
NCOA National Defense Foundation (F)
Paralyzed Veterans of America (F)
Soldiers’ Angels (D)
United Spinal Association’s ‘Wounded Warrior Project’ (D)
USO (United Service Organization) (C+)
Veterans of Foreign Wars and Foundation (C-)
Veterans of the Vietnam War & the Veterans Coalition (D)
Veteran Veterans Memorial Fund (D)
VietNow National Headquarters (F)
World War II Veterans Committee (D)

EDITOR’S NOTE: It seems that the organizations that have the most compelling names are the ones with the worst rating.
On July 1st, 1968 while serving as Platoon Commander of 3rd Platoon, Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 727th Marines. I received orders for a mission. It was a four-day, three-night patrol to establish various PBs (Platoon Patrol Base), and then conduct numerous small unit patrols out of them. Shortly thereafter I convened a meeting with my squad leaders and my Platoon Sergeant (Sgt. Charles Kalka) to plan that mission. We were going to a part of the TAOR (tactical area of responsibility) that I was unfamiliar with due to my being “in country” less than a month. Since we would be leaving just before dusk my team was concerned about some critical navigation issues. We decided on the lead squad (with our best point man). Then Sgt. Kalka suggested that he and I switch places... that he would go with the lead squad and I would go with the 3rd squad (the opposite of our usual procedure)... since he was very familiar with that patrol area. Initially I rejected that suggestion, but eventually acquiesced when Kalka persisted and all the NCOs endorsed Kalka’s idea. It was best for his Platoon.

Ten minutes after leaving the 3/27 base we were ambushed. Sergeant Kalka, in the exact position where I was supposed to be, I recited my usual introduction, “I’m alive because of your brother Charles”. I then proceeded to tell her that Charles was a courageous, brave, dedicated, and devoted Marine. She cut me off with a question... “Did he suffer?” came through the handset. I responded “Absolutely not. He died instantly. I was by his side within 5 to 10 seconds. He did not suffer.” There was a silence on the other end of the phone line for about 5 seconds followed by an audible sigh. She then said “Thank God. I’ve always wondered all these years.”

It had never occurred to me that I could bring any solace or comfort to his family after all these years. For that I will be eternally grateful. I am as glad that I am alive and my family can still see it today. When you’re alive it never leaves you. I am alive and my family exists because of Sergeant Charles Kalka, USMC. I have thought about that quite frequently since my return from combat. Due to the sentiment in the Country in late 1969 and the “reception” accorded Vietnam Veterans, many of us just buried and resumed... we just moved on... trying unsuccessfully to not think of the memories, although we were quite successful about not speaking of them. So it was some 30+ years later that I started a quest to try and contact Kalka’s family. I felt a strong need to tell a family member that I was alive as a result of Kalka’s dedication, devotion, and selflessness. At the same time I was reluctant to “open old wounds” and cause the family any emotional pain. It was a long and unsuccessful search involving many phone calls, false leads, and fruitless Internet searches. Often I thought of giving up... wondering if I was being selfish, that I had nothing to offer his family but painful memories. Although often quitting for periods of time, I always seemed to return to the search.

Then one night as I called yet another number, a young lady answered and I recited my usual introduction. “I’m looking for the family of Sgt. Charles Kalka, a Marine who I served with in Vietnam”. She said, “wait a minute”, muffled the phone and I heard her call out “Mom”. An older woman got on the phone and I recited my intro. She replied, “That was my brother Charles”. With my heart in my throat I said, “I’m alive because of your brother Charles”. Thenasoniclostmyselfinahouseofthismemory.

This “In Memory” needs to be told as it is something a grunt had to face up to, I mean it happened. I will not use the exact medevac chopper call sign, I have the call sign etched in my mind and will never forget it. I will also never forget the conversation with that medevac chopper that night. Myron Olson and I looked for this pilot while we were in Nam. Myron was a Marine medevac chopper driver temporarily attached to Golf Company. So with that out of the way I wish to pay respect to my friends.

Ricky Dycus was a California surfer boy type, his nick named “Surfer”, he was married to a great looking blond. Ricky had gotten in country just after I did in July, as it sometimes happened my orders to go home had Ricky’s name on it even though he was KIA. I still have a copy of those orders. Ricky was botched, the Hillbilly and he had a couple of knock down drag out fight’s.

Billy Bloomfield, well we called him “Big Red”, we had to distinguish between Big Red and Little Red, because we had both. Big Red, yep, fire red hair, freckles, and about 6’2” but had the coordination of a water buffalo. I did not know Big Red too good, he had gotten in country May 8th of 69. I was showing over 10 months in country on my short timer calendar and did not hang with the new guys, had Karma.

We had about 5 days into Operation Pipestone Canyon, basically was going on we had a funnel of Marines for about 10 miles leading to Gô Nôi Island. As I have mentioned before is Golf Company was the point of the operation. We had 4 tanks moving with us, 3 Gun Tanks and one Zippo Tank, now I always hated tanks, they attracted B-40’s and RPG’s and always got stuck in the paddies, so generally they were a pain in the ass. We were walking the 10 miles flushing the NVA, southwards through “Dodge City” and “The Arizona” towards Gô Nôi Island. We had a few brief fire fights but no real contact and had walked about 10 miles. We were off on the morning of June 2nd and had moved about 1/2 mile when we came upon a river. The tanks could not cross, so we left a platoon with them and the remaining two platoons of Golf Company crossed the river. The tanks and our platoon were going to move to find a crossing the tanks could get across and catch up to us.

We had moved about a mile from the river and were slowly crossing some dried up paddies. We had not expected it so soon but the NVA had decided to quit running and fight us rather than the blocking forces who were dug in. It was mid morning when they sprang their ambush on us, a ambush well laid, they opened up first with their RPM machine guns, 3 12.5’s and then started in with their mortar’s. It’s hard to describe to someone who has not experienced it, how you want to just pull the ground over your head when you are caught out in the open. We had some cover from the paddy dikes but the machine guns and 12.5’s were slowly destroying the cover. I remember hearing the tanks come up asking what was happening, they had found a crossing and they thought they were about 3/4 of a mile from us, and that they were coming fast.

Don’t know how long it was but the next thing I remember we were tanks, those beautiful, noisy, pain in the ass, fucking tanks. Just like the movies, dust and black diesel smoke flying behind them, haulin’ ass and turning to positions in front of us to get the machine guns off us. They had no sooner pulled up to a stop when their 90’s started workin’ out, the Zippo was torching NVA bunkers and flushing the NVA out. I guess the NVA broke and ran south, I think because of the tanks, when it was all over I could not believe it, we had survived with only 5 wounded. I called the medevacs, send in the sit-reps, got a resupply going and we thanked ourgrunt Gods. Battalion came back and told us to dig in there for the night, wait for resupply and they were chasing the NVA south with chopper gunships.

We set up for the night with the tanks facing forward or south, along about 21.00 the NVA hit us hard. They started with their mortars first then the machine guns and they started on the tanks with their B-40’s and RPG’s. I think they (Continued on page 28)
Most of the below is my radio transmissions of that night, as long as I live, I will never forget those transmissions.

Golf 28 is this Golf 22 Do you have a visual? Blondie 22 this is Golf 28 I have your lights, vector 120 degrees relative, approximately two miles.

Golf 28 is this Golf 22 Is the LZ secure I see lots of muzzle flashes from both directions, are you in heavy contact? Blondie 22 is this Golf 28 NVA at the 180 degree 100 to 200 yards from us, LZ will be 300 yards to the north of our position, am lighting up LZ now, contact is light, your LZ will be secure.

Golf 28 is this Blondie 22 Be advised have spotted 12.5 muzzle flashes and RPG’s – you got a Bell of a firefight going on down there, Blondie is aborting. Blondie 22 is this Golf 28 If you abort the WIA’s will be KIA before I can get another bird, LZ is secure, I say again LZ is secure, swing around and approach from the north, the north is secure, I say again negative contact to north, the north is secure.

Golf 28 is this Blondie 22 Sorry your LZ and area looks too hot for approach at this time. Blondie 22 is this Golf 28 The fire fight is 400 yards to he south of your the LZ, we will get the tanks to work out when you come in, your LZ will be safe, I say again your LZ will be secure.

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say that I wanted that responsibility is not quite right, because being a Marine officer is not about one’s self, assets or needs; it is about guiding the young 18 and 19-year-old Marines fighting this country’s wars on our behalf. I decided that serving them was the highest honor and responsibility I could have at this point in my life. As one speaker at my commissioning ceremony explained: “As second lieutenants, you must have a strong sense of the great responsibility of your office; the resources which you will expend in war are human lives. This is not about you anymore. This is about the young Marines who will place their lives in your hands. It is your job to take care of them, even when that means placing them in mortal danger. That awesome responsibility – the weight which now rests on you – is reflected in those gold bars which you will soon place on your shoulders.”

That is why the plaque hanged in every portal through which we pass – You Joined Us. We chose to bear this responsibility and we must make absolutely sure we are prepared to fulfill it, because young American lives are at stake. If that means being cold and miserable; studying for ungodly hours; and going for days without sleep, then so be it. That is the price of the salute we receive from our Marines.

Five months into my service commitment, I have not regretted my decision for a moment. I already have unforgettable memories from my experience and new friendships with diverse and exceptional peers from all over the country. We have had moments of pure fun together and laughed harder than I ever thought possible. We have also been humbled by the stories and portraits of brave Lieutenants – those who fought and died after traversing the very balls where we now stand and their portraits hang. Most of all, I am immensely proud to bear the title of “United States Marine,” an honor that I will carry with me my entire life. Semper Fi.

The Ammo Can

BY TOM FENERTY

No one was ever decorated with a medal or a ribbon for carrying ammo. But I know that those who did this thankless job performed an essential task in less than desirable conditions without even an ‘atta boy’.

Even a squad size patrol needed firepower when engaging the enemy. The M-60 team (gunner, assistant, & humpe) always made the trip because they could fire 900 rounds in 2 minutes if they had to.

After two minutes was there any more 7.62 ammunition left? Can the squad carry extra just in case? This is where those cans come in...a can of 7.62 contains 200 rounds. Those 200 rounds won’t last very long in a firefight. More cans please.

One possible breakdown—gunner has 300, a gunner and humper have 400 each, each of the two fire teams carry another 800, if it looks like a pacer day 1600 (that’s a load). Worst case 2700 rounds. That’s 12 cans plus 3 belts ready for use by the gunner.

The ‘extra’ cans of ammo were normally distributed throughout the squad in a tradition that I was to follow. The belts stayed in the can until needed because they would stay clean and be usable if and when needed. The amount was never the problem—it was the can. It just kicked your ass all day long. Didn’t seem to matter how it was carried: by the handle! No thanks, knuckles on the ground in no time—not to mention the ability to scratch places on your back that you never reached before by the end of the day. A harness type contraption slung over the shoulders attached to the cans was the method most observed. Those cans were always with you and moving with you, but those freaken corners digging in with every slap. It made the ammo cans and your own gear was slick as ice and moving up (or down) with you.

Sponson Box / USMC Vietnam Tankers Association
BEWARE
THE GUNNY

The Gunny doesn't sleep with a night light. The Gunny isn't afraid of the dark. The dark is a fear of the Gunny.

The Gunny’s tears can cure cancer. Too bad he’s never cried.

The Gunny once visited The Virgin Islands. They are now called The Islands.

The Gunny once counted to infinity . . . twice!

The Gunny frequently donates blood to the Red Cross, just never his own.

Superman owns a pair of Gunny pajamas.

The Gunny has never paid taxes. He just sends in a blank form and includes a picture of himself.

If the Gunny is late, then time had damn well better slow down.

The Gunny has the greatest Poker Face ever. He once won the 1982 World Series of Poker despite the fact that he held only a Bullet, a 2 of clubs, a 7 of spades, a Monopoly Get-Out-Of-Jail card, and a green number 4 UNO card.

The Gunny once sold his soul to the devil in exchange for his 105mm guns, and includes a picture of himself.

If you come home and find the Gunny in bed with your wife, it would be a good idea to fetch a glass of water in case the Gunny gets thirsty. There is no future in any other course of action.

The Gunny can slam a revolving door.

If the Gunny ever calls your house, be in! The Gunny doesn't leave messages; he leaves warnings.

If you have ever been the target of close incoming artillery rounds, you know the sound of them coming in is absolutely

(Continued on page 34)
An Ontos Story
(Continued from page 33)

I was thankful to be reminded.

Chrysler, our Ontos was equipped with a small 25 mm cannon and a .50 caliber machine gun. The turret crew consisted of a Tank Commander, a Gunner, and a Loader. The Tank Commander was responsible for the overall operation of the tank, the Gunner was responsible for the .50 caliber and the Loader was responsible for the 25 mm cannon. The Ontos was a mobile gun platform and was designed to be mobile and quickly deployable. The Ontos was a single-man crew and was designed to be a low profile, low observable, mobile gun platform. It was a versatile vehicle and was used for a variety of missions such as anti-tank, anti-personnel, and anti-aircraft missions.

In 1942, the U.S. Army Subsistence Department was looking for a suitable can opener for the American soldier. The P-38 can opener was designed by W.R. Wrigley Jr., the owner of the Wrigley's chewing gum company. The P-38 was a simple, one-piece design that was easy to use and was durable. It was made of stainless steel and was designed to be used with a variety of rations. Veterans carried it to Korea, Vietnam, and the Middle East, and with its elegant simplicity, indestructibility and versatility, it was treasured by soldiers.

Mr. Wrigley's invention was a result of a need for a can opener that could be produced quickly and cheaply. The P-38 was produced for WWII, and at least a billion was produced for Vietnam to the present. The P-38 was phased out. Today, the Speaker Corp. manufactures electrical lighting components for vehicles, but still has about 100,000 P-38s in stock. Or you can buy one at most Army surplus stores for about 50 cents.

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This article on the P-38 can opener was submitted to the Officer Revier Magazine by Col. Fremont Piercefield from the Chicago, Illinois Chapter. His comments are as follows: "I read the enclosed article (see above). I can remember some being known as the 'P-38' to literally millions of American servicemen beginning in 1942 until probably 2001. It brought back to me possibly 30 years of mostly pleasant memories that I may not have had reason to recall. After reflecting on what I had read, I felt that the article should be shared with your many readers, who undoubtedly will recall the many times the P-38 came into play in peace and war. Often times the P-38 was hung on a chain with the dog tags so as to be readily available at meal time. It took me a bit of rummaging in my memorabilia to find my surviving P-38. I was thankful to be reminded."

As an aside, Major Thomas Denney USA was the center of the P-38 can opener.

Decade after decade, a Milwaukee-made can opener served generations of soldiers.

Even with billions of dollars spent annually on defense technology, the most iconic piece of military equipment might be a 1.2-cent can opener.

BY EVERETT L. TUNGET

Small Wonder

WONDER 7: The Can Opener

WONDER 7: The Can Opener

The can opener is an iconic piece of military equipment. It was designed in 1942 by W.R. Wrigley Jr., the owner of the Wrigley's chewing gum company. The P-38 can opener was designed to be a simple, one-piece design that was easy to use and was durable. It was made of stainless steel and was designed to be used with a variety of rations. Veterans carried it to Korea, Vietnam, and the Middle East, and with its elegant simplicity, indestructibility and versatility, it was treasured by soldiers.

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Beginning in World War II, the P-38 was standard issue in every box of rations. Veterans carried it to Korea, Vietnam and the Middle East, and with its elegant simplicity, indestructibility and versatility, it was treasured by soldiers.

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Even with billions of dollars spent annually on defense technology, the most iconic piece of military equipment might be a 1.2-cent can opener.
One of my beloved Vietnam Veterans, Michael Galindo, sent me an email the other day in response to a truly ridiculous idea for a T-shirt. If the Vietnam Veteran lost the Vietnam War, how come we don’t speak Vietnamese?

I laughed. It was logical, it was reasonable, and it was unanswerable. But it got me to thinking a lot about my Vietnam Vets. Actually, the real time war coverage of Gulf War II had already started to bring it all back before me were so many of the impossible paradoxes that these men had tried to deal with 30 years ago, played out in full color with no end in sight.

What had caused the Vietnam Vet to shed many a bitter tear and fight for his broken heart with a vigor unique to hisゴールドメンたるの余り оборудたるがためこもるに、 Pleasure, I would listen to the moral dilemmas presented to these good and decent young American boys-stories of the VC using civilians as human shields, dressing up as civilians or worse, forcing women and children to do their dirty work! – and pretending to be innocent by-standers just long enough for one of our boys to let his guard down and pay for it with his life, terrifying and demoralizing those who saw it, rendering them impotent as they struggled between the innate human need for their own self-preservation, and that decent, Godly side of Americans which can scarcely bear to see an innocent person lowered to that level.

Oh what a wrenching, horrible thing to ask of young men raised in a land of Judeo-Christian principles, a love for the individual human life, and the freedom to choose between right and wrong.

I remember, even with the limited understanding of a little girl, thinking as the soldiers tried to present their side, begging us to try to comprehend the situation they were in: They’re right.

What are they supposed to do when the enemy uses civilians as attackers, pretending to be just a pawn in the war one-on-on moment and murdering them the next? It was an impossible situation, confusing and terrifying, and one that called for empathy, understanding, answers, help, or at least forgiveness, but was instead misrepresented and outright lied about to the world back home by the malevolent media and the Hollow Heads of Hollywood for decades to come.

What we Americans chose to ignore—then and now—is the fact that the enemy will always use our strengths against us, not just our weaknesses. And the American love for human life and the innocent face of war is a well-known and glorious strength... The best illustration of this was the treacherous and fabricated No Gun Ri story from the early days of the ongoing Korean War. I never saw a single report that even came close to explaining the truth of that situation—and certainly no stories that would go on to receive the now-tarnished Pulitzer Prize!

I had long heard from my Korean War Veteran who wrote there in the early days of the Korean War, that the Korean War Army was ordered to go into villages as they scoured south, forcefully conscript the young men, and then use the elderly, women, and children to form circles around them from which they would fire upon the Americans and RK soldiers. Kim Il Sung – Fearless Leader and Major Dic – understood the “foolish sentimentality” that American soldiers attached to the individual human life. “They will hesitate to fire upon unarmed and screaming civilians,” he explained to his generals. “We will use their hesitation to gain the upper hand right from the start.”

It is for his sacrifice, his pain that I say this now: My brothers who fought in Vietnam, you were right: America was wrong. Forgive us, Vietnam Vets. Forgive us for allowing ourselves to be manipulated and lied to by Walter Cronkite and CNN and Martin Scorsese and Hanoi Jane. Forgive us for defying logic and reason and asking you to make impossible choices for which there is no answer. Forgive us for pretending to be accountable. Forgive us for being so easily led, even in the face of logic and truth. Forgive our cowardice in not fighting for your memory when you were young and the suffering that would have been so very hard for what we had taught you to believe. Forgive us for setting you up, abandoning you, and then being too gutless to admit it and carry some of your burden for you that you might heal and move on. Forgive us for accusing you of being cry-babies, whiners, and cowards when all you wanted was for us to see what you had no choice but to see.

This was our failing, our sin, not yours, but we made you carry it anyway. I am so sorry that I had my perception of you colored by the left-controlled media and entertainment industry who went to any means—and gleefully so—to hammer the final nail in your coffin. In spite of such treachery, you not only survived, but banded together like the brothers that you are, and did what we should have done: recognized and appreciated one another and what you tried to do and remembered, honored, and revered those who knew because they were there. And still are. You served America and freedom gloriously; we failed you miserably, and I am so very sorry.

There can be no denying now, as we watch the children of the Vietnam generation acting reasonably in the face of our “Murderfest” to wear Vietnam Veterans jackets and grandfathers faced. It is because of the determination of the Vietnam Vet that this new generation of American men and women will be cheered, not vilified. It is because of technology and the mistakes we made with these past vets who had their gift bastardized that we see what they see, face what they face, react the way they react. This is a new war, a new field, but an old and at long last vindication for those who tried in vain to get us to understand what we now watch on FOX. It is for this-today’s war and yesterday’s agony—that I humbly thank and beg the forgiveness of those who fought and weren’t allowed to win, and had to pay so heavy a price. You deserve this peace, this rest that should at least partially come with this vindication. You will never get it from Hollywood Hell or the Perverted Press, but we would hold you brutally and unyieldingly accountable. Forgive us for being so easily led, even in the face of logic and truth. Forgive our cowardice in not fighting for your memory when you were young and the suffering that would have been so very hard for what we had taught you to believe. Forgive us for setting you up, abandoning you, and then being too gutless to admit it and carry some of your burden for you that you might heal and move on. Forgive us for accusing you of being cry-babies, whiners, and cowards when all you wanted was for us to see what you had no choice but to see.

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**People in photo Identified**


Third standing (L to R) Carroll George, Bill J. J. Carroll, Charles Potzete and standing in the back is Ed Herbold.

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**Charlie Co. 3rd Tanks Platoon Roster & Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Zip</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brook, John B.</td>
<td>6 Payson Rd.</td>
<td>Belmont</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>00178</td>
<td>WA July 27, 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buchmann, Henry O</td>
<td>need to locate</td>
<td>Globe</td>
<td>AZ</td>
<td>85547</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carroll, William F.</td>
<td>2396 Heath Ave. N.</td>
<td>Oakdale</td>
<td>MN</td>
<td>55128</td>
<td>WA Sept 2, 1967 - Retired Sergeant Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark, L. A.</td>
<td>need to locate</td>
<td>Memphis</td>
<td>TN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English, Richard B.</td>
<td>3724 Border Avenue</td>
<td>Joshua Tree</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>92252</td>
<td>WA July 27, 1967 - Retired Sergeant Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haney,查找去下</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamsby, Aiken L.</td>
<td>16224 2nd Street</td>
<td>Channelview</td>
<td>TX</td>
<td>77530</td>
<td>WA March 6, 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbold, Edward J.</td>
<td>RD 3 Box 158</td>
<td>Limesville</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>16424</td>
<td>WA July 27, 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holmes, Johnny L.</td>
<td>9295 Rogers Rd.</td>
<td>Darlington</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>29632-7549</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurlings, Walter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MD</td>
<td></td>
<td>KA March 6, 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson, Michael M.</td>
<td>need to locate</td>
<td>Las Vegas</td>
<td>NV</td>
<td></td>
<td>WA July 10, 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knoosky, Ronald W.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyser, Warren D.</td>
<td>19120 S. Badge Dr.</td>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>WI</td>
<td>53205</td>
<td>WA July 27, 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langley, Richard G.</td>
<td>991 W. Hickory Ave.</td>
<td>Lompoc</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>93456-6505</td>
<td>WA March 6, 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ludwig, Raymond J.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wilmington</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td></td>
<td>KA July 27, 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milos, Joseph Louis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NY</td>
<td></td>
<td>KA March 6, 1967</td>
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<tr>
<td>Otto, Dan L.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ellenwood</td>
<td>MN</td>
<td></td>
<td>KA March 14, 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potteete, Charles M.</td>
<td>3124 Blazer Rd.</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>TN</td>
<td>37064-9444</td>
<td>WA July 8, 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ragsby, Robert M.</td>
<td>need to locate</td>
<td>Simi Valley</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>93063</td>
<td>Retired Master Sergeant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritter, William E.</td>
<td>need to locate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>WA July 10, 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberts, Roger W.</td>
<td>110 Washington St.</td>
<td>St. Marys</td>
<td>GA</td>
<td>31558</td>
<td>Retired Master Sergeant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sellers, Robert B.</td>
<td>Box 2</td>
<td>West Union</td>
<td>WV</td>
<td>26956</td>
<td>WA May 17, 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semion, Lee B.</td>
<td>P.O. Box 1457</td>
<td>Lake Wales</td>
<td>FL</td>
<td>33859-1457</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siva, T. J.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CA</td>
<td></td>
<td>WA March 6, 1967 (Deceased)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutherlin, Carl H.</td>
<td>291 Club Ln.</td>
<td>Oceanside</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>92054</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you want to make a correction to this list, call Bill Carroll (JJ) at 651-773-3497 or Email: sgtmajwfc@aol.com

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**VA Proposes Change to Aid Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange**

Proposed Regulation Change Adds Illnesses to List of Diseases Subject to Presumptive Service Connection for Herbicide Exposure

WASHINGTON - Well over 100,000 Veterans exposed to herbicides while serving in Vietnam and other areas will have an easier path to qualify for disability pay under a proposed regulation published by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) that adds three new illnesses to the list of health problems found to be related to Agent Orange and other herbicide exposures.

“This is an important step forward for Vietnam Veterans suffering from these three illnesses,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “These warriors deserve medical care and compensation for health problems they have incurred.”

The regulation follows Shinseki’s October 2009 decision to add the three illnesses to the current list of diseases for which service connection for Vietnam Veterans is presumed. The illnesses are B cell leukemias, such as hairy cell leukemia; Parkinson’s disease; and ischemic heart disease.

The Secretary’s decision is based on the latest evidence reviewed and may be eligible for retroactive payment, and all who are not currently eligible for enrollment into the VA healthcare system will become eligible.

Over 80,000 of the Veterans will have their past claims reviewed and may be eligible for retroactive payment, and who are not currently eligible for enrollment into the VA healthcare system will become eligible.

During the Vietnam War, the U.S. military used more than 19 million gallons of herbicides for defoliation and crop destruction in the Republic of Vietnam. Veterans who served in Vietnam anytime during the period beginning January 9, 1962, and ending on May 7, 1975, are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides.

To make a comment, visit www.regulations.gov and search for docket number 09-130. Comments on the proposed rule will be accepted over the next 30 days. The final regulation will be published after consideration of all comments received.

Even though this is a proposed rule, VA encourages Vietnam Veterans with these three diseases to submit their applications for compensation now so the Agency can begin development of their claims and so they can receive benefits from the date of their applications once the rule becomes final.

Comments on the proposed rule will be accepted over the next 30 days. The final regulation will be published after consideration of all comments received.

“We must do better reviews of illnesses that may be connected to service, and we will,” Shinseki added.

“Veterans who endure health problems deserve timely decisions based on solid evidence.”

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During the Vietnam War, the U.S. military used more than 19 million gallons of herbicides for defoliation and crop destruction in the Republic of Vietnam. Veterans who served in Vietnam anytime during the period beginning January 9, 1962, and ending on May 7, 1975, are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides.

Used in Vietnam to defoliate trees and remove concealment for the enemy, Agent Orange and other herbicides left a legacy of suffering and disability that continues to the present.

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**People in photo Identified**


Third standing (L to R) Carroll George, Bill J. J. Carroll, Charles Potzete and standing in the back is Ed Herbold.
The new rule will bring the number of illnesses presumed to be associated with herbicide exposure to 14 and significantly expand the current leukemia definition to include a much broader range of leukemias beyond chronic lymphocytic leukemia and non-Hodgkin lymphoma to the report of VA. In practical terms, Veterans who served in Vietnam during the war and who have a “presumed” illness don’t have to prove an association between their illnesses and their military service. This “presumption” simplifies and speeds up the application process for benefits.

Other illnesses previously recognized under VA’s "presumption" rule as being caused by exposure to herbicides during the Vietnam War are:

- AL Amyloidosis,
- Acute and Subacute Peripheral Neuropathy,
- Chloracne or other Acneiform Disease consistent with Chloracne,
- Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia, (now being expanded)
- Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2),
- Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma,
- Porphyria Cutanea Tarda,
- Prostate Cancer,
- Respiratory Cancers (Cancer of the lung, bronchus, larynx, or trachea), and
- Soft Tissue Sarcoma (other than Osteosarcoma, Chondrosarcoma, Kaposi’s sarcoma, or Mesothelioma).

Additional information about Agent Orange and VA’s services for Veterans exposed to the chemical are available at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange.

To view the proposed rule go to: http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/2010-6549.htm

VA Health Care Enrollment Update 02: Title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) Section 1722c (as previously recognized by VA) requires that on 1 January of each year, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs increase the means test (MT) threshold amounts by the same percentage the maximum rates of pension benefits were increased under 38 U.S.C. Section 512(a) during the preceding calendar year. The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) has announced that there will be no increase in VA pension for 2010. Thus, there will be no increase in VA Means test thresholds in Calendar Year 2010. The following new Means Test (MT) thresholds are effective 1 January 2010, through 31 December 2010:

Veterans with No Dependents:

- (a) Below MT Threshold: $29,402.
- (b) Above MT Threshold: $29,403.

Veterans with One Dependent:

- (a) Below MT Threshold: $35,284.
- (b) Above MT Threshold: $35,285.
- (c) Above MT Threshold by 10% or Less: $38,612.
- (d) Above MT Threshold by more than 10%: $38,813.
- (e) Above MT Threshold by more or less than 10%: Calculate using GMT Threshold at GMT Web site.

Veterans with Two Dependents:

- (a) Below MT Threshold: $37,304.
- (b) Above MT Threshold: $37,305.
- (c) Above MT Threshold by 10% or Less: $41,034.
- (d) Above MT Threshold by more than 10%: $41,035.
- (e) Above GMT Threshold by more or less than 10%: Calculate using GMT Threshold at GMT Web site.

Veterans with Three Dependents:

- (a) Below MT Threshold: $39,324.
- (b) Above MT Threshold: $39,325.
- (c) Above MT Threshold by 10% or Less: $43,256.
- (d) Above MT Threshold by more than 10%: $43,257.
- (e) Above GMT Threshold by more or less than 10%: Calculate using GMT Threshold at GMT Web site.

Veterans with Four Dependents:

- (a) Below MT Threshold: $41,344.
- (b) Above MT Threshold: $41,345.
- (c) Above MT Threshold by 10% or Less: $45,478.
- (d) Above MT Threshold by more than 10%: $45,479.
- (e) Above GMT Threshold by more or less than 10%: Calculate using GMT Threshold at GMT Web site.

Veterans with Five Dependents:

- (a) Below MT Threshold: $43,364.
- (b) Above MT Threshold: $43,365.
- (c) Above MT Threshold by 10% or Less: $47,700.
- (d) Above MT Threshold by more than 10%: $47,701.
- (e) Above GMT Threshold by more or less than 10%: Calculate using GMT Threshold at GMT Web site.

Veterans with over Five Dependents add $2,020 for each additional dependent.

Veterans who qualify under Title 38 U.S.C. 1710(e)(1) who are combat Veterans are not required to report their financial information for conditions potentially related to their combat service. However, unless otherwise exempted, combat Veterans must either provide their financial information or decline to provide their financial information and agree to make applicable co-payments for hospital and outpatient care that VA determines to have resulted from a cause other than their combat service. (NOTE: While income disclosure by a recently discharged combat Veteran is not a requirement, this disclosure may permit VA to determine if the Veteran is eligible for additional benefits such as beneficiary travel reimbursement, cost-free medication and/ or cost-free outpatient or hospital care for services unrelated to combat). On 15 May 09, the Department of Veterans Affairs published a rule in the Federal Register which added additional sub-priorities within enrollment priority category 8. This rule became effective on 16 June 09, and required VA to begin enrolling Veterans into priority category 8 whose income exceeded VA’s National or geographically-based income thresholds by 10% or less. [Source: VA Directive 2009-072 dtd 29 Dec 09 ++]

VA Claim Error Rate Update 02: A new report from the Veterans Affairs Department inspector general will help fuel complaints about an error-filled disability claims process. Investigators looking at claims processing at the VA regional office in Roanoke, Va., found that 25% of the case files they closely studied had serious mistakes. Some veterans were denied benefits they deserved, and disability compensation was given to others who were not eligible. Many errors involved Vietnam veterans with disability claims related to exposure to the defoliant Agent Orange. In one case, a veteran was underpaid $21,657 because the claims staff did not properly consider a physician’s opinion that coronary artery disease was a complication of service-connected diabetes. In another, a veteran was overpaid $15,640 for a diabetes-related amputation below the knee that he said was related to exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam. His claims folder contained no evidence that he had served in Vietnam, the IG report says. The report, released in mid-JAN, found similar problems with claims involving traumatic brain injuries. In addition to reviewing claims, investigators looked at the work stations of claims employees to determine if they were following strict rules to protect veterans’ personal information, and they also looked at mail handling procedures. Problems were discovered in both areas, the report says. Thirty percent of the desks inspected contained information that should not have been left unsecured. Investigators found six boxes of unsecured returned mail, about 4,200 pieces in all, containing personal information on veterans. In response to the report, VA officials opened refresher training on handling personal information and stepped up inspections of work stations to make sure policies are followed. More training also is being arranged for claims processors, the report says. [Source: ArmyTimes Rick Maze article 20 Jan 2010 ++]

SBP Lawsuit Update 06: The Veterans Benefits Act of 2003 restored eligibility for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) to military surviving spouses who remarried after age 57. However, DoD continued to apply the offset to these widows – until three of them, NAUS members Patricia Sharp and Margaret Haverkamp along with Iva Dean Rogers, won a recent court decision. The decision restores full SBP and DIC if a widow has remarried after age 67. The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) finalized the implementation and repayment plans for the original three widows and another approximately 800 known survivors who fall into the category. All SBP annuitants who are entitled to both DIC and SBP because of their remarriage after age 57 are currently being identified. DFAS will no longer deduct DIC payments from annuities’ monthly annuity that meet these criteria and they will begin receiving their full monthly SBP and annuity entitlement in addition to the full monthly DIC. The first group of eligible annuitants will have their SBP annuity increased in FRV 2010. Following are answers to some frequently asked questions these widows may have:

- Is common-law marriage considered valid for this change? Yes, it is recognized by the state in which the marriage occurred. For entitlement to this benefit is based on a common-law marriage, sufficient proof of a valid marriage will be required.
- Do I have to apply for this new benefit? You will automatically be notified if DFAS can determine your eligibility. If your SBP annuity payment is not increased and you believe you may be eligible to have your SBP payments adjusted due to a remarriage after age 57, you will need to provide DFAS proof of status and request a review of their record.
- Will I be able to apply online? There is no application process for DFAS will determine from existing records whether an individual is eligible. Eligible annuitants will be notified if additional documentation is required.
- Will this benefit be retroactive? If so, what is the date? This benefit becomes effective on the date of remarriage, but not earlier than 1 JAN 04, which is the effective date of the enacting legislation.
Will I be taxed on any retroactive SBP? Yes. Any refund of SBP premiums, not previously recovered by DFAS, will be collected first from the VA because the post-57 remarriage ended prior to 16 DEC 03, then you are not eligible to receive full SBP without withhold in an amount equal to 10% of the retroactive amount.

How do I get the taxes back that I paid on the partial refund of premiums? Will I have to repay the partial refund of premiums that I received? Yes. Any refund of SBP premiums, not previously recovered by DFAS, will be collected first from the VA because the post-57 remarriage ended prior to 16 DEC 03, then you are not eligible to receive full SBP without withhold in an amount equal to 10% of the retroactive amount.

If I remarried after the age of 57, but before the effective date of the law, will I qualify to receive this benefit? Provided, you made application to the VA to restore Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) before 16 DEC 04 and were granted such entitlement by the VA, however, if your DIC payments were restored because the post-57 remarriage ended prior to 16 DEC 03, then you are not eligible to receive full SBP without offset for DIC.

If my first husband died in 1990 and I remarried after 57, but my 2nd husband died will I qualify? If you qualified under the criteria of the previous question, the death of your second spouse will not result in loss of entitlement.

If I remarried after 16 DEC 03 and after the age of 57, and my second marriage is terminated, will I continue to receive full SBP and DIC? The entitlement to DIC by reason of remarriage after age 57 is the single criterion for entitlement to SBP without offset. If you qualify based on remarriage after age 57, dissolution of your subsequent marriage will not result in loss of DIC. In the event of remarriage, however, upon investigation, the circumstances of the remarriage reveal intent to defraud the government.

Is there a web site that I can track the progress of my claim? There is a website that can track the progress of your claim, but it does not have complete information on the court ruling (there are about 800 widows affected) there will not be a dedicated web site. However, DFAS has posted some information at http://www.dfas.mil/retiredpay/survivorbenefits/dicandsbp.html, and will communicate progress and status through NAUS, SMW and other military survivor organizations.

[Source: Gold Star Wives & NAUS Weekly Update 29 Jan 2010 ++]

Veterans' organizations of pro bono program: In 1991, the US Court of Veterans Appeals, later to be renamed US Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, responded to the problem of its large pro se caseload by asking Congress to reallocate part of the Court’s own budget into efforts to secure representation for needy claimants. As a result of the ensuing and subsequent legislation, a consortium of four organizations received a grant to operate a pro bono program. The program recruits attorneys willing to volunteer to represent needy individuals at the Court. The program screens appeals so that pro bono representation can be provided in meritorious cases, and offers comprehensive training and support to participating attorneys. The organizations comprising the consortium are The American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans, the Veterans of America. Upon request veterans and their qualifying family members who have an appeal pending at the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (Court) will be provided attorneys at no charge to review their BVA decision and their Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) claims file. Applicant must meet all of the following criteria:

• You are a veteran (or qualifying family members of a veteran);

• You have received an advance decision from the Board of Veterans’ Appeals (BVA);

• You have appealed BVA decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (the Court);

• You do not have an attorney to help you; and

• You ask them for their assistance and you meet your program’s financial eligibility guidelines;

• At least one meritorious issue to be argued before the Court can be identified.

The program will not:

• Provide general legal advice or information about the VA or the Court;

• Provide legal advice or representation concerning a claim pending at the BVA or at the VA regional office;

• Provide general legal advice or representation concerning a Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) claim;

• Provide general legal advice or representation concerning correction of military records or upgrading a military discharge.

To request assistance go to www.vetsprobono.org/newsite/forms.htm and download, complete, sign the Retainer Agreement and Power Of Attorney Form plus the Financial Disclosure Form and mail to: The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program, 701 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 131, Washington, DC 20004. To contact the Case Evaluation and Placement Component send mail to the same address or call (202) 628-8164; (888) 638-7727; or Fax: (202) 628-8169.

Appellants who wish to contact the Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program via electronic mail at mail@vetsprobono.org should use the phrase “Veteran’s Request for Assistance” in the message subject line to avoid blocking by the Program’s security software. If a docket number has already been assigned by the US Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, that number may be included. [Source: www.vetsprobono.org Jan 2010 ++]

VA Claim Denial Update 06:

A leading Republican senator on 16 MAR asked Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki to explain why so many veterans’ benefits claim are wrongly denied, resulting in a high rate of reversal on appeal. Charles E. Grassley of Iowa, top Republican on the Senate Finance Committee, said that figures cited in a case argued before the Supreme Court last month showed that between 50% and 70% of veterans’ benefits claims had been unjustifiably denied. In a letter to Shinseki, Grassley asked what the Department of Veterans Affairs is doing to improve the quality of VA claims decisions and reduce unnecessary appeals. Grassley said: “After providing substantial increases in taxpayer dollars to the VA to address the claims backlog, it’s clear that devoting more money alone is not the answer. The VA needs to tackle the problem head on, because without substantial reform, thousands of veterans will continue to face needless delays and red tape.” Veterans who are wrongly denied benefits often suffer significant harm, Grassley said, even if they eventually prevail. So does the taxpayer, he added, because when the government loses on appeal, it must not only pay the benefits in question, it also must cover the veteran’s attorneys fees when the court finds the government’s position to be unjustified. [Source: CC Politics News 16 Mar 2010 ++]

VETERAN SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS:

Vetaran service organizations (VSOs) are designed for the benefit of the veteran and community. Most areas of the country have VSOs, such as American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of America, or Veterans of Foreign Wars post/chapter. There are many more service organizations, such as the Marine Corps League, Viet Nam Veterans of America, Non-Commissioned Officers Association, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Fleet Reserve Association and others geared to particular groups of veterans. Each organization has its own individual requirements for membership, of which some are more stringent than others. The requirements range from becoming a service member, service during any conflict, in a combat zone to requiring a service-connected disability.

These VSOs welcome any eligible member, regardless of age, race, religion or gender. Many of these organizations host auxiliaries so that spouses and other family members can also participate. These organizations provide countless hours of local community service. You’ll see veterans proudly marching with our nation’s flag at the forefront of parades or dinners, on television news or radio spots. The long-time squad and the person who presents the flag at a military funeral are members of veteran service organizations. Sometimes it’s a simple as going to the VA hospital to play cards or bingo with the patients. Although they are all separate organizations, there is commonality in their goals:

• They are a voice for returning and currently deployed service members and their families;

• They monitor and lobby for legislation that directly impacts our veteran community;

• They help to develop the next generation of patriotism through character-enhancing programs. VSOs sponsor Boy Scout troops, Badger Boy’s State, Legion Baseball, scholarships and the annual oratorical contests.

Virtually all of our veteran’s legislation has been driven by these VSOs or the combined efforts of 36 of them through the military coalition (TMC). The United States wouldn’t have the GI Bill if not for them. Each of these groups has service officers who assist and advocate for veterans’ claims and service-connected disabilities and negotiating the ways of the Veterans Administration. VSOs are responsible for getting post-traumatic stress disorder and the Agent Orange related diseases, among others, recognized by the Veterans Administration. VSOs are at the forefront of public policy related to national defense, services for homeless veterans, adequate funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs, concurrent receipt of retirement pay and disability compensation by disabled military retirees, veterans employment and training, POW/MIA accountability and flag protection.

What can you do for them? Simply put, join one and participate. Contribute your time, energy, and assets. Take advantage of the camaraderie unique to military veterans. Help out at a fundraiser. There is strength in numbers. When the National Commanders go to Congress to lobby for veteran-friendly legislation, numbers count. Large organizations have clout. Nationwide, memberships in veteran service organizations are down. In order for these organizations to be around when you need them, they must be self-perpetuating. Joining one is something to consider the next time you are concerned about a veteran.
related issue. They are a voice for all of us. [Source: Jackson County WI Service Officer Randy Bjerve article 24 Mar 2010 ++]

**VA SPINA BIFIDA PROGRAM:** The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides monetary allowances, vocational training and rehabilitation and VA-financed health care benefits to certain Korea and Vietnam Veterans’ birth children who have been diagnosed with spina bifida. For the purpose of this program, spina bifida is defined as all forms or manifestations of spina bifida (except spina bifida occulta), including complications or conditions that resulted from an auto accident, slip-and-fall injury, or the result of an injury to the back or cranium resulting from the birth of a child with spina bifida. While administration of the program is centralized to VA’s Health Administration Center (HAC) in Denver, Colorado, applications must first be made through the Denver VA regional office. The beneficiary may call 1-888-820-1756. Once the Denver VA regional office determines eligibility, spina bifida awardees (or guardians) are automatically contacted by the Health Administration Center and registered for healthcare benefits. Beneficiaries receive detailed program material from HAC specifically addressing covered and noncovered services and supplies, preauthorization requirements, and claim filing instructions. Once registered, the HAC assumes responsibility for all aspects of the spina bifida healthcare program, including the authorization of benefits and the subsequent processing and payment of claims. At their Hotline number (1-888) 820-1756 Vietnam veterans can get their questions answered about health care benefits for their children who have spina bifida. Callers can speak to a benefits adviser M-F 1000 to 1330 and 1430 to 1630 EST.

If you are the birth child of a Vietnam veteran and you have been diagnosed with spina bifida you may already be receiving monetary allowances, vocational training or rehabilitation due to your condition. However, might also be entitled to VA-financed health care benefits. To be qualified you must be diagnosed with spina bifida as the VA defines it, basically, as all forms or manifestations of spina bifida (except spina bifida occulta), including complications or conditions that resulted from an auto accident, slip-and-fall injury, or the result of an injury to the back or cranium resulting from the birth of a child with spina bifida. Healthcare benefits you would receive under this program are limited to those necessary for the treatment of your spina bifida and related medical conditions. You should however, be aware that this program is not a comprehensive healthcare plan and does not cover medical services related to spina bifida. In general, the program covers most healthcare services and supplies that are medically or psychologically necessary for the treatment of a condition related to spina bifida. While some services require specific advance approval or preauthorization, the following services are specifically excluded from coverage:

- Care unrelated to spina bifida.
- Care as part of a grant study or research program.
- Care considered experimental or investigational.
- Drugs not approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for commercial use.
- Services, procedures or supplies for which the beneficiary has no legal obligation to pay, such as services obtained at a health fair.
- Services provided outside the scope of the provider's license or certification.
- Services rendered by providers suspended or sanctioned by a federal agency.

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**TRICARE HELP:** How can Tricare help you apply to your personal situation? Tricare Help, Times News Service, 6883 Commercial Drive, Springville, VA 22159; or tricarehelp@ militarytimes.com. In e-mail, include the word “Tricare” in the subject line and do not attach files. You can also get Tricare advice online at www.militarytimes.com/tricarehelp. For basic information refer to the latest Tricare Handbook at www.tricare.mil/mybenefit/Download/Forms/Standard_Handbook_Lores.pdf or your regional contractor.

Following are some of the issues addressed in recent weeks by these sources:

(Q) Do I have to sign up for Medicare Part B to get TFL? I am still working with job related health insurance? I got Tricare when I turned 60, and now I’m signing up for Medicare and Tricare for Life. Medicare told me that because I’m still working and have health insurance from my job, I don’t have to sign up for Part B until I retire. Then, the Navy told me that is true, but that I cannot get Tricare for Life until I sign up for Part B. The only coverage I will have will be my employer’s plan and Medicare Part A. I’m confused by the mixed messages. Who is right, Medicare or the Navy? (A) Both are right. You’re dealing with two different laws concerning Part B enrollment — and you must choose between them. The Medicare law says that if beneficiaries have a creditable health insurance policy through employment, they can delay enrolling in Part B without penalty for as long as they work for the employer who sponsors the insurance. A creditable health insurance policy is one whose benefits Medicare agrees are at least as good as Medicare’s standard policy. Just choose that way that if they feel their employer’s plan meets their needs, because they can avoid having to pay for Part B’s monthly premium. But they must understand that when a retiree, or a retiree family member gets Medicare, Tricare law requires immediate Part B enrollment in order to retain Tricare eligibility. Without Tricare eligibility, they can’t have Tricare for Life. They have only Part A and their employer’s insurance plan, as you were told. To be eligible for Tricare for Life, Medicare beneficiaries must be enrolled in Medicare Part B. That way, they will have their employer’s plan as their primary coverage, Medicare Parts A and B as secondary and Tricare, which is always last, as required by law. Only you can decide what is best for you. If you’re married, your loss of Tricare eligibility (if you decide not to enroll in Part B yet) will not affect your spouse’s Tricare eligibility in any way.

(Q) How does coordination of benefits work for medical care and prescriptions if my spouse has her own civilian health insurance? I’m a retired reservist with Tricare For Life. My wife has her own civilian health insurance for her own employment, she is a federal employee. Standard, since I am her sponsor. Her drug plan has higher copay for some drugs than Tricare has. Can she use Tricare to get the lower co-pay, or does she pay the higher co-pay and file a claim with Tricare to get the difference? And can my wife and I use the Tricare mail order drug plan? (A) As required by federal law, Tricare is always last payer to all other health insurance, medical plans such as an HMO, or medical payments such as one might receive for medical bills resulting from an auto accident, slip-and-fall injury, or the like. The beneficiary must file first with all other plans. When the other health insurance (OHIC) has paid its maximum and issued the beneficiary an Explanation of Benefits, a Tricare claim may be filed. The only exceptions to the rule making Tricare beneficiary are if the OHIC is a bona fide, specified, written Tricare supplement, or if the OHIC is a welfare-related plan such as Medicaid (not Medicare), Indian Health Service, and the like. Your wife must use her OHIC first for all medical and pharmacy services. For medical care, to file with Tricare as second payer, she must do the following:

- Complete an official Tricare Claim Form DD2642.
- Attach copies of exactly the same bills (the same sheets of paper) that were sent to the OHIC.
- Attach a copy of the OHIC’s Explanation of Benefits that reports details of each processing of their each charges.

- Make copies of all the documents for your records.
- Send Tricare’s copy of the package to the proper Tricare claims processing contractor for your Tricare Region.

Your wife must use her commercial plan’s pharmacy benefit first. To be reimbursed a portion of the OHIC’s pharmacy deductibles and copayments, contact Express Scripts at 1-877-363-1303 for instructions. Note that because of the way federal law requires pharmacy benefits to be coordinated, Tricare beneficiaries who have OHIC are not eligible to use the Tricare Mail Order Pharmacy Plan.

(Q) Social Security says if you were born from 1943 through 1955, you must be 66 to receive monthly Social Security payments. Tricare says we have to join Tricare for Life and have Medicare Parts A and B at age 65. How can you get around that one-year gap in coverage? (A) Congress changed only part of the Social Security law. Only the age required to receive Social Security payments was changed. The age for Medi-care entitlement was not affected — that still begins at age 65. People who apply on a timely manner will become entitled to Medicare on the first day of the month of their 65th birthday. If they were born on the first day of that month, their Medicare entitlement will begin on the first day of the previous month. That is true regardless of when they became entitled to Social Security payments. If Tricare beneficiaries are properly enrolled in Medicare Part A and Part B, and if their Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System registration is properly updated, DEERS will report their eligibility for Tricare for Life effective on the same date their Medicare entitlement is effective. Medicare will bill beneficiaries every 90 days for their Part B monthly premiums. If the Social Security beneficiaries become old enough to receive monthly benefit payments, the Part B premium will be deducted monthly as an allotment.

[Source: NavyTimes James E. Hambly Jr. column 1 Apr 2010 ++]  HELP WANTED

We are looking for someone who can post articles to a new website we are developing. It does not take a computer guru to do this. If you know how to copy and paste articles on a word document you can apply to be our new webmaster. We need news articles and already filled out forms posted to the new website about once a month. It shouldn’t take a couple of hours a month. If you can help us, please Call John Wear, 215-794-9052. The new format we will be using makes it very easy and doesn’t require any web experience.

[Source: NavyTimes James E. Hambly Jr. column 1 Apr 2010]
Come, visit my grave

I am a veteran laid under the sod
I’m in good company; I’m up here with God.
Come to my grave and visit with me,
I gave my life so you could be free.

Today is Memorial Day throughout this great land
There’s avenues of flags, parades and bands.
I can hear music, the firing squad and taps.
Here come my comrades, the legionnaires, the bluecaps.

One of them just put a flag by my stone,
Someday he’ll have one by his own.

Some think of this day as just a day free from toil,
While others are busy working the soil.
They say they have plans, other things to do,
Don’t put us aside as you would an old shoe.

Come visit my grave in this cemetery so clean,
What is this memorial day means.
There are many of us lying in wakeless sleep,
It’s sad that for many who fought so brave.

There are soldiers, sailors and airmen up here,
Our children are free, you should be glad.
That a father’s best gift to children is love.
I wish you could all hear me from above,
I gave my life so you could be free.

This is what memorial day means.
Somebody’s here too, dad’s little man,
Always love your country, do it for what you can.
There’s one thing that really did bother,
Is seeing you grow without the aid of a father.

My wish you could all hear me from above,
I wish that a father’s best gift to children is love.
And what better way to prove my love to the end,
That’s father’s gift to children is love.

It is what memorial day means.
Call it the Medal of Honor run, but the Corps intends to make
It a thing of the past by training and equipping engineers with a
new Assault Breacher Vehicle designed to keep them safe in the
midst of a minefield.

“It’s basically a tank with a different turret on it and
protection and vehicle survivability while having the speed and
mobility to keep pace with the maneuver force.”

“The big thing is our combined arms, and mechanized
breaching is a pretty dangerous business,” Gill said. “As a young
lance corporal, when I trained to mark minefields, I would run
behind the back of an amtrac through a breach lane, putting my
field marker poles in the ground.

Though combat engineers also specialize in bridging and
construction, it’s their role as demolition experts that puts them
at most risk because “you’re dealing with live minefields and you assume
an enemy obstacle is always covered by observation and fire,” Gill said.

Gill, who begins instructor training in August to prepare for
his first students, said the combat engineers he’ll train as operators this
year will get 53 days of classroom and field instruction on each of the
vehicle’s mechanisms, followed by a weeklong exercise in the field. Once
they graduate, they will earn an
ABV-specific military occupational specialty as a skill designator. The
engineer equipment mechanics slated to maintain the vehicles will
earn their own skill designator MOS after a 35-day course familiarizing
them with the parts of the ABV that
differ from the Abrams tank.

“My first couple classes are going to be a mix of
(noncommissioned officers) from the fleet and privates coming out of engineer school,” Gill said. Once the ABV arrives in the fleet, maintenance will be a joint effort between the engineer equipment mechanics and Marines who keep the Corps’ tank
battalions rolling.

The fielding plan for the ABV begins next month, when the first
two vehicles arrive at the schoolhouse at Fort Knox, said Marine
authorized full-rate production of another 31 ABVs that will arrive at fleet commands beginning in February, with delivery
expected to be completed by September 2009, Carey said.

The Corps’ combat engineer battalions at Camp Pendleton,
Calif., and Camp Lejeune, N.C., will each receive five ABVs under the fielding plan. Six will be sent to the enhanced
equipment allowance pool in Twentynine Palms, Calif., and the remaining 15 will be dispersed throughout the world as part of
the Corps’ maritime pre-positioning force, Carey said.
If you haven’t already, please send your 2010 dues ($30) to:
John Wear, USMC VTA, 5537 Lower Mountain Road, New Hope, PA 18938