



TEXAS Vietnam Veterans NEWS

Member of the Texas Community Newspaper Association

"VVA Newspaper of the Year 2000, 2002 and 2003"



Volume 2 Issue 1

January-February 2012

Texas State Council Meeting Feb3-5, 2012 Galveston, Texas

Some of the VVA and AVVA members from 33 of the 36 Texas VVA Chapters began arriving in Galveston for the Winter Meeting of the VVA Texas State Council on Thursday, February 2nd with the remainder arriving Friday to attend the Texas State Council Meeting at the Hilton Hotel, located at 5400 Sea Wall Blvd which was being hosted by VVA Chapter 685. The Saturday State Council business meeting had plenty of information passed on to the state council delegates on VVA, Veterans Benefits, POW/MIA and homeless veterans. Beside the TSC Delegates other guests were VVA National President Fred Elliot and his wife Marie, VVA National Secretary Bill Meeks; VVA Region 7 Director Allen Manuel and his wife Norma, VVA At-Large Director Richard DeLong, LA State Council President Dennis Andreas, AVVA Region 7 Director Kathy Andras, Nate Washington (former OK SC President); Terry Burkett with the Texas Capitol Vietnam Veterans Monument committee and the Vietnam Veterans Assistance Foundation of Texas Board of Directors.

The Silent Auction held during the Saturday TSC meeting brought in \$1422 of which half went to Chapter 685 for hosting the state council meeting.

The Vietnam Veterans Assistance Foundation of Texas (VVAFT) met on Friday afternoon at 4 p.m. for their semi-annual business meeting that held on Friday afternoon at 4:00 pm. Guests in attendance were VVA Region 7 Director Allen Manuel, VVA At-Large Director Richard DeLong, Louisiana State Council President Dennis both from Louisiana. Nate Washington from Oklahoma, Bill Smith from VVA Chapter 137.

The VVAFT Business Meeting focused on cost cutting measures that needed to be implemented because of the poor economy which has reduced the revenue of the foundation. The Foundation also approved their FY 2012 Budget

The Board voted to reduce the Texas VV News to two issues a year for the foreseeable future to help reduce expenses which will allow the foundation to have funds to provide RFP grants and donations during 2012. Each issue of the newspaper costs the foundation approximately \$5200, which includes layout & design, printing and mailing to the Texas VVA & AVVA members. Postage rates also went up and the Texas VV News mails out 4600 copies of the newspaper. Those receiving the newspaper are Texas VVA & AVVA members, VVA National Officers, State Council Presidents, and a copy to every Chapter in Region 7 (Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma & Texas), as well a VIP mailing roster.

The Texas AVVA State Council held their meeting on Friday evening at 7:00 p.m. in the Tower Room after VVAFT finished their meeting.

Chapter 685 VVA and AVVA members opened their hospitality room Friday afternoon. The chapter proved an assortment of food and beverages for the VVA delegates and AVVA representative and guest to enjoy.

The guest speaker at the Saturday night banquet was Jerry Patterson, the Texas Land Commissioner, a life member of Chapter 685.

The Live Auction brought in \$2730 for the scholarship fund. The skit for the Live Auction was WWF/VVA Live Auction – Rumble-on-the Gulf. Participants were: TSC President Buster Newberry as Hulk Logan; TSC VP Don Kennedy as Carlos Ventura the ring announcer; TSC Secretary Kerwin Stone as Space Cowboy; VVAFT President & VVA National Secretary Bill Meeks as Bad Billy Babs; Paul Washington (VVA 343) the Bellringer and Ernest Matthews (VVA 685) as Hillbilly. Other participants were Percilla Newbery, Gina Mathews, Bailey Beck (Greg Beck's grand-daughter) and Morgan Lapel (Buster Newberry's grand-daughter).

NOTICE

The VVAFT Board of Directors due to the rising cost of printing and postage has decided to only publish two issue of the Texas VV News in 2012. To replace the 3rd issue there will be 2 Texas State Council Newsletters. February & July 2012

Continued on page 4 (Photos on page 4 &5)

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 VVAFT President

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 Affairs (AVVA 574)

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Bill Meeks, Jr.

VVA Region 7 Director

Allen Manuel

AVVA State President

Marilyn Rose

AVVA Region 7 Director

Kathy Andras

Texas VV Newsletter – is the official publication of the VVA Texas State Council. All VVA members, Chapter and other interested parties are invited to submit articles, pictures and opinions for publication on subject matter that is relevant to veterans' affairs issues. The newsletter staff reserves the right to edit for length and grammar only, and reject any material that is libelous or obscene.

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www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml .

TEXAS VVA STATE COUNCIL CHAPTERS

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| VVA Chapter 137 Dallas | VVA Chapter 278 Texarkana |
| VVA Chapter 292 Beaumont | VVA Chapter 297 Amarillo |
| VVA Chapter 343 Houston | VVA Chapter 348 Orange |
| VVA Chapter 366 San Antonio | VVA Chapter 379 Big Spring |
| VVA Chapter 404 Borger | VVA Chapter 457 San Angelo |
| VVA Chapter 574 El Paso | VVA Chapter 685 Galveston |
| VVA Chapter 734 Conroe | VVA Chapter 844 El Paso |
| VVA Chapter 854 Hallettsville | VVA Chapter 856 Harlingen |
| VVA Chapter 863 Kerrville | VVA Chapter 870 Schulenburg |
| VVA Chapter 898 Victoria | VVA Chapter 910 Corpus Christi |
| VVA Chapter 915 Austin | VVA Chapter 920 Denton |
| VVA Chapter 922 Baytown | VVA Chapter 923 San Marcos |
| VVA Chapter 929 Beeville | VVA Chapter 931 Nacogdoches |
| VVA Chapter 932 Tyler | VVA Chapter 937 College Station |
| VVA Chapter 973 Sherman | VVA Chapter 987 Longview |
| VVA Chapter 991 Palestine | VVA Chapter 1000 Killeen |
| VVA Chapter 1009 Corsicana | VVA Chapter 1010 Waco |
| VVA Chapter 1013 Grand Prairie | VVA Chapter 1029 Yorktown |
| | VVA Forming Chapter Fort Worth |

TEXAS STATE COUNCIL COMMITTEE CHAIRS

- | | |
|---|---|
| Audit: Don Mathews (379) | State Agent Orange Coordinator: John Cook (137) |
| Constitution & By Laws: Bill Meeks (343) | State Legislative Coordinator: John Miterko (915) |
| ETABO: Al Navarro (343) | State Homeless Veterans Coordinator: Greg Beck (278) |
| Finance: Alan Hill (863) | TSC Chapter State-up Coordinator: Mike Dawson (1000) |
| Government Affairs: John Miterko (915) | Veterans Benefits: Jim Hallbauer (137) |
| Minority Affairs: Paul Washington (343) | Veterans Incarcerated: Special Advisor Lynda Greene |
| Membership: Jim W Boyd (TSC Treasurer) | Women Veterans: Eilleene Grozier (574) |
| Nominating Committee: Greg Beck (278) | TSC Special Ad Hoc Committees |
| POW/MIA: Don Boling (379) | Chapter Subsidy Fund/Silent Auction: |
| PTSD: Joseph Boatman (915) | Lynn Kennedy (AVVA 1000) & Gina Mathews (AVVA 685) |
| Public Affairs: Buddy Farina (685) | Live Auction: Special Advisor Percilla Newberry |
| Special Advisor Sandra Womack (AVVA 292) | AVVA –TSC Project A.M.I.G.O.: |
| Scholarship: Don Kennedy (TSC VP) | Marilyn Rose (AVVA SC President) |
| Special Advisor Percilla Newberry (AVVA SC VP) | Nancy Smith (AVVA 137) |

Vietnam Veterans Assistance Foundation of Texas, Inc.

Officers

President Bill Meeks (2011-2013) / Vice President Don Kennedy (2011-2013) / Secretary Kerwin Stone (2011-2013)
 Treasurer Jim W. Boyd (2011-2013) - **Board of Directors:** Greg Beck (2011-2013) / Victor Flores (2010-2012) /
 Al Navarro (2011-2012) / Luther Newberry (2011-2013) / Robert Rangel (2011-2013) / Dennis Thomas (2010-2012)
 Hal Thompson (2011-2013)

TSC President Report

Buster Newberry

My Brothers and Sisters, The State Council Meeting in Galveston was a huge success with thirty three Chapters being represented. A big thanks to Jim and Marilyn and Chapter #685 for their hospitality. Also a big thanks to all that attended for being so genres in the Live and silent auctions. A new record was set in the Live auction, over \$2,800.00.

Now that election time is upon us, I would urge you to please consider running for an Office to support your Chapter or State Council. If your Chapter is loosing membership or participation, new leadership might be a way to bring it back. I will be running for another term as State Council President at our June State Council Meeting in Denton. If you want to run for a State Council office just send a letter of intent to Greg Beck, at PO Box 6606, Texarkana, TX. 75505-6608 or email - usmcgreg@aol.com.

Semper Fi

Buster Newberry

VVAFT President's Report

Bill Meeks, Jr.

The 7th Annual Operation ED-U-CATE Project is funded by VVAFT's "Lucio Moreno Educational Fund" and will be a contest between Texas VVA Chapters to achieved excellence in their overall general operation and each applicant must have accomplished the following contest criterion to be eligible for the final grant awards:

1. Must be in "Good Standing" with VVA, the VVA Texas State Council, State and Federal regulations
2. Must meet the submittal deadline
3. Must provide chapter web site address or three copies of their chapter newsletter or both for evaluation
4. Must provide a five-hundred (500) word essay on a community or veteran based program the chapter has established and provide minimum of two photos of chapter participation in the program
5. The contest entry (chapter program) must be a current event in the previous 12 months prior to the deadline (June 20, 2012)

Submittal Deadline: On or By June 20, 2012

Postmark Delivery: 29419 Fox Run Blvd, Spring, Texas 77386

E-mail Delivery: VVAFT1@aol.com

All entries will be judged by the VVAFT Board of Directors. The content of the chapter applicant's web site or newsletters or both and the merit of their chapter program will determine the final grant awards. The top two awardees will have their essay and photos published in the Texas VV News for recognition of their outstanding work.

Grant Awards:

- 1st Place - \$500
- 2nd Place - \$300
- 3rd Place - \$200
- 4th Place - \$100

The decision of the grant awards by the VVAFT Board of Directors are final and will be announced during the '2012 Summer Meeting of the VVA Texas State Council.

AVVA State President Report

Marilyn Rose – AVVA President

HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE. The year 2011 was a very busy year for all AVVA members and chapters. To everyone that missed the February 2012 Texas State Council meeting that was hosted by VVA Chapter 685, Galveston County, at the Hilton Hotel in Galveston, TX. you missed a great one. VVA Delegates from 33 chapters out of 36 chapters attended. The AVVA Regional 7 Director, Kathy Andras was also there. It is always nice to have our Regional Director with us and THANKS Kathy for the 2 King Cakes you brought us from Louisiana. As for the AVVA we only had 17 Chapters represented.

We also held our seminars on Saturday that covered Benefits, Elections, PTSD, and Agent Orange. Everyone left with lots of information on everything we covered.

AVVA Chapter elections are coming up in April. You can elect a Chapter Representative for one (1) or (2) years. If your election is due this year, you need to go to the AVVA National website (www.AVVA.org), then to Policies & Procedures, Chapter Elections and follow the rules. You can go to Forms and print out the forms for Chapter Elections. The rules for sending me the forms have been changed; you need to get them to me within 30 days after your election. If you have any questions, please contact me. If you only have 1 AVVA member in the chapter you are affiliated with, that person can be elected as the AVVA Chapter Representative. Also, the elected chapter rep. can now vote in the National Election. If you do not elect a chapter representative for the chapter that you are affiliated with, you do not have a voice in Texas nor National.

Continued page 4

TSC Meeting continued from page 1

Texas State Council Meeting

The TSC President Buster Newberry called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Saturday morning and the Presentation of the Colors was by members of Chapter 685; National Anthem was sung by delegates and guests followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation. Humberto Nevarez , Chapter 574 conducted the POW/MIA Table Ceremony.

Chapter 685 President Jim Rose welcomed the delegates and guests to Galveston and introduced the Mayor of Galveston.

TSC President Newberry introduced the guests in attendance to the delegates to the state council meeting in Galveston. (listed on page 1).

President Newberry asked any newly elected chapter delegates to come forward to introduce themselves and take the oath of office so they could be seated as delegates on the Texas State Council.

AVVA State Council President Marilyn Rose gave her report to the VVA Texas State Council delegates. The AVVA Project A.M.I.G.O. recipient was to the Resource & Crisis Center of Galveston County, .

The chapters present gave oral and written reports of what each chapter has been doing since the June 2011 TSC meeting in Borger, Texas followed by Committee Reports, Unfinished and New Business.

Under new business the following state council meetings were confirmed:

- TSC June 2012 meeting – host Chapter 920 Denton
- TSC April 2013 meeting – host Chapter 863 Kerrville
- TSC October 2013 meeting – host Chapter 366 San Antonio

VVA Texas State Council Awards nominations forms were handed out to the delegates for awards to be presented at the June state council banquet in Denton cutoff date for submission April 5th.

VVA Texas State Council scholarship applications were also handed out to the delegates.

Continued on Page 8

AVVA Presidents Report
So Please Hold an Election in the Month of April and Elect a Chapter Representative.

The AVVA Project A.M.I.G.O. recipient was the Resource Crisis Center of Galveston County, Inc.

The next Texas State Council meeting is being held in June, 2012 in Denton, TX.

Please make arrangements to attend this one. Chapter Representatives must attend at least one State Council Meeting a year. Also the National Leadership Conference is being held in Irving, TX in August this year. Please make an attempt to attend this one. Lots of information can be learned at a Leadership Conference, I look forward to seeing everyone in June and also August.

Texas State Council Meeting Photo Spread

All Photos by Susie Moreno –TVVN Assistant Editor & Photographer



VVAFT Board of Directors Meeting – Friday, Feb 3, 2012

AVVA Meeting Feb 3, 2012



VVA Chapter 685 Hospitality Room



VVA National Vice President Fred Elliot, his spouse Marie, VVA Region 7 Director Allen Manuel & his spouse Norma, and Buster Newberry (Hulk Logan).



TSC VP Don Kennedy – announcer as Carlos Ventura



Paul Washington (343) Bell Ringer & Don Kennedy, Morgan Lapel and Baily Beck



L-R: Live Auction Cast Ernest Mathews-Hillybilly; Morgan Lapel, Paul Washington, Don Kennedy, Buster Newberry & in background Bill Meeks



Left Photo: Bill Meeks – BAD Billy Babs – Center: Buster Newberry-Hulk Logan - Right: Kerwin Stone – Space Cowboy

Veteran's Fake Military Record Raises Questions About Charity Where He Worked

Published February 12, 2012

A veteran's fake military record is raising questions about the charity he served, the Houston Chronicle reports.

Paul Schroeder claimed he shot and killed a machete-wielding child during a secret mission in Rwanda, and said he earned a Silver Star, Purple Heart and Combat Infantryman's Badge, among other decorations.

Last week, Schroeder confessed to the paper that he had embellished his record.

In reality, he served 10 years as a military policeman in New York, Texas and Panama before leaving the military in 2001.

His admission, according to the Houston Chronicle, raises concerns about vetting procedures at PTSD Foundation of America, the faith-based nonprofit for veterans in Houston where Schroeder had worked as director of counseling since 2010.

Tax records show PTSD Foundation has been in the hole for at least three years and is carrying more than \$200,000 in debt, the paper reports.

The Chronicle first questioned Schroeder's record after interviewing him almost a year ago. He said at the time that he served three combat tours in Afghanistan and one in Iraq, as well as secret missions in Africa and Central and South America.

The newspaper asked to see his discharge papers, but he never produced them. When pressed again this month, he said they were top secret.

Until Schroeder called the Chronicle to confess Wednesday, PTSD Foundation Chairman Gene Birdwell and its director of operations, Pastor David Maulsby, stood steadfastly by Schroeder.

When told by the Chronicle that Army records contradicted Schroeder's claims, Birdwell replied, "OK, so what? ... I'm only concerned about the job. He's doing a great job."

After Schroeder admitted lying and resigned, PTSD Foundation issued a statement Friday, saying that everyone involved in the nonprofit's work was shocked. <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2012/02/12/veterans-fake-military-record-raises-questions-about-charity-where-worked/#ixzz1mBme09e4>

Your Average Vet is Not a Whacho Rambo

By Bob Brewin 01/09/12

But, to read the coverage of the killing of Ranger Margaret Anderson on Jan. 1 at Mt. Rainier National Park by Benjamin Colton Barnes, a 24 year-old Army Iraq veteran, you would think every Afghanistan or Iraq war veteran was an emotional powder keg ready to explode in a murderous rage.

Alex Horton, an Army Iraq veteran, torpedoed this ill-informed coverage in a post on the Veteran Affairs Department's Vantage Point official blog titled "The Mt. Rainier Shooting and PTSD: How the Media Got It Wrong." Horton did some good reporting in this piece, and points out that Barnes served his Iraq tour in a headquarters communications company and did not receive a Combat Action Badge "indicating he probably never came under fire in Iraq."

So much for the PTSD-crazed combat vet theory.

Horton took particular exception to reporting by M. Alex Johnson at MSNBC, who linked Barnes' rage to conditions at Joint Base Lewis-McChord near Tacoma, Wash. Johnson described that base as "the most troubled base in the entire U.S. military, with multiple criminal and military investigations under way into troops' behavior and the quality of the medical and mental health care for service members returning from the war."

Horton, who served his entire Army tour with units stationed at that base, commented in his blog:

"I was based at JBLM my entire Army enlistment. And I know dozens of those just like me -- representing a larger sample than that from which Johnson and his cohorts seemed to draw. All of us are men and most of us are between 25 and 35 years old, like Barnes. And many of us dealt with the residual effects of combat trauma, like hyper-vigilance, an inconveniently short temper, and substance abuse. As far as I know, none are guilty of murder or any violent crimes."

Horton concluded, "Unless evil spirits inhabit the base, I see no connection between that facility and the murderous tendency of one of its former dwellers."

Amen, Alex.

The ill-informed reporting on Barnes is déjà vu for me. When I came back from service in the Marines in Vietnam, I confronted the same kind of media stereotyping of vets. Let's call a halt to this practice -- immediately.

Texas Drivers Licenses Veterans Designation

The Texas Department of Public Safety has been at work since the bill passed making rules, developing the software, and training employees for the new licenses, and it is now available to the public. Although normal fees for license renewal or duplication apply, there are no additional fees to add this optional designation.

The Dept of Public Safety shall include the designation "VETERAN" on the face of ANY class or type of Texas driver licenses issued to a veteran in compliance with Section 531.1235 of the Texas Transportation Code.

The National Veterans Wellness & Healing Center

The National Veterans Wellness and Healing Center (NVW&HC) in Angel Fire, N.M., will offer free, weeklong retreats this summer for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and their spouses. The retreats, which started on a pilot basis in 2010, are sponsored by the wellness center and the State of New Mexico Department of Veterans Affairs, but are open to veterans nationwide. Lodging, meals and therapy are provided at no cost in a truly awesome setting, nestled in the Sangre de Cristos Mountains. The retreat includes individual and couples counseling as well as non-traditional therapies including acupuncture, yoga and massage therapy. To qualify, veterans must be diagnosed with PTSD, must be in or have been in counseling, and must have been referred by a VA vets center. For more info you can contact Hoot Gibson, vice president of the wellness center, at (575) 377-1082.

At <http://www.veteranswellnessandhealing.org> you can download an application from the center's website

Continued: Texas Veterans Driver License Designation

"Veteran" means a person who has:

- Served in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard of the United State.
- Served in the Texas National Guard as defined by Section 431.001, Government Code, which includes veterans who served in the Texas Army and Air National Guard but does **not** include individuals who have served in the Texas State Guard only; and
- Been **Honorably** discharged from the branch of service in which the person served.

Veterans who are not U.S. citizens but served and received an honorable discharge from one of the services listed above **are eligible** to receive the "Veteran" designation on their Texas driver license upon request.

NOTE: The "Veteran" designation is **not available** on a Texas identification card at this time.

Establishing proof of Veteran's military service

Every person who has previously served in the military will have a discharge status. There are five basic types of military discharges:

- **Honorable;**
- **General (under honorable conditions);**
- Other than honorable;
- Bad conduct and;
- Dishonorable

To be eligible for the veteran designation to be placed on their driver license, the veteran must present a DD-214 or DD-215 (correct copy of DD-214), signifying they received an **honorable or general (under honorable conditions) discharge** from the branch of service in which the person served.

Process to add Veteran designation of driver license

Continue on page 11

CHAPTER NEWS

VVA CHAPTER 1000 FT. HOOD AREA ACTIVITIES**FORT HOOD RETIREMENT DAY: October 30-31**

Chapter members Bill Whittaker, Donnie Kennedy, Willy Williams, Cliff Baldwin, Lupe Lopez, Dennis Farmerie, and Alan and Marge Dicus set up a booth with their collection of Vietnam memorabilia, membership apps, and National and Texas VVA newspapers.

VETERAN'S DAY PARADE, KILLEEN: November 11

Chapter members participated in the parade and made the front page of the Killeen Daily Herald. Next year they hope to be riding in their M-37, 1963 Model, Radio Truck that is being restored.

PROJECT: "SERVING THOSE WHO SERVE"

Chapter members, Bill Whittaker, Willy Williams, Dennis Farmerie, and Cliff Baldwin along with AVVA member, Lynn Kennedy went back to the Soldier Readiness Center on Fort Hood, November 1 after a very slow October. However, October gave the SRP staff time to get ready for the large numbers of soldiers coming in from Iraq. The Chapter 1000 "Crew" served record numbers (500-800) every Tuesday in November and December. On the other hand, the chapter members also served the North Carolina National Guard (363 strong) as they were processing out to Kuwait to start loading military equipment to be shipped home or to Afghanistan.

SUPPORTING SOLDIERS IN AFGHANISTAN

The Chapter is currently supporting two soldiers that are from Fort Hood and are serving in Afghanistan. They are part of the 1-21 Fire Strike, MMTA 41st Fire Brigade. The soldiers are:

Sp Jonathan Sharpless and Sp Nelson Rodriguez

Chapter member, Willy Williams, arranged for the chapter to support these soldiers and is in charge of sending them packages throughout their tour of duty.

Men's Health Network and Dallas Cowboys

By Jim W. Boyd, TVVN Editor

On Saturday, November 12, 2011 I represented the VVA Texas State Council at the men's health fair at the Dallas Cowboys Stadium. Jim Hallbauer, the Texas State Council chief veteran's service representative represented Chapter 137 Dallas and Ray Bush, President Chapter 1013 Grand Prairie along with seven chapter members represented the chapter. The 1013 members were Ray Bush, Anita Cordero, Bill Deleon, Bob Mickels, Don Hogland, Chuck Kinsey, David Glassener and Irma Barthold.

Anita Cordero an office supervisor, was representing the Texas Veterans Commission office at the Fort Worth VA Outpatient Clinic (she is a member of Chapter 1013).

We had to be out there at 0700 to set up and the health fair ran from 0800 to 1600. I left at 1230 after all of my newspapers and VVA literature had been picked up by those interested in VVA. I don't know how long everyone else stayed from the two VVA chapters.

Both Chapter 137 and 1013 had requested that their tables be side by side. The VVA tables were just outside the entrance of the Dallas Cowboy's locker room where the health fair was conducted. I had asked VVA National to send me membership applications, and brochures on PTSD, Women Veterans and other brochures and Jim Hallbauer brought out literature on the VA. I also brought seventy-five newspapers from my last issue to hand out, which we shared with Chapter 1013.

The health fair was for men, veterans and their families. It was estimated that around 700 people came through to participate in the health fair, getting their blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, and bone density checked. If there were problems they were sent into another room where they met with doctors, who told them what they needed to do to correct the problem(s).

When I had received the email from Washington, DC about the health fair, I printed out 40 of the flyers and took them to the VA Outpatient clinic here in Fort Worth. The clinic sent out someone and they had a table set up as well. The Dallas Methodist Hospital sent out quite a few staff and were handing out literature. The only other veterans organization there was a VFW Post. The Vet Center in Arlington sent out Judith Fields a Readjustment Counseling therapist.

The Dallas Cowboys provided us with snacks, coffee, bottles of sodas and water as well as provide us lunch, that consisted of roast beef, turkey, cheese to make sandwiches, salad, fruit and a variety of different homemade cookies (made somewhere at the stadium).

There were also 4 high school football games going on at the same time. We could walk up to the glass doors where the Cowboys would come out on to the field during their football games and view the field and Cowboy bench. If you participated in the health fair you were given a ticket to come back at a later date to take a tour of the stadium.

Texas State Council Nominating Committee Report

According to the VVA TSC By-Laws, we elect our Texas State Council Officers-President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer at our June meeting in even numbered years – In Denton at the June meeting to run for one of these positions, you must meet two (2) requirements:

1. You must be a member in good standing with VVA National and VVA in Texas (Dues paid up and a copy of DD-214 on file with the TSC Secretary or your Chapter). Nominating committee must verify DD-214.
2. You must file a Letter of Intent for the desired position and send a copy of your DD-214 and a signed SF-180 to the Nominating Committee.

Nominations will be accepted from the floor. Nominees must meet the two requirements above before the balloting process. (Letter of Intent, DD-214 & Signed SF-180).

Since the TSC Secretary does not keep DD-214's as they are required to be on file with each chapter secretary a copy is required to seek office.

To vote, a Certified Delegate Registration form must be on file with the VVA TSC Secretary Kerwin Stone. As official delegates of whatever VVA Chapter they are representing.

A Chapter is authorized two (2) delegates to the VVA TSC. Two delegates present—two (2) votes. One (1) delegate present—one (1) vote. No proxy voting.

To run for one of the elected positions, PLEASE SEND A LETTER OF INTENT, DD-214 & SIGNED SF-180 TO:

Greg Beck
Nominating Committee Chair
P.O. Box 6608
Texarkana, TX 75505-6608
Before May 30th to be placed on the Ballot.

Texas Vet Property Tax Update

A full homestead property tax exemption that began in 2009 to help totally disabled military veterans or those who are considered unemployable by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs will extend to their surviving spouses after 1 JAN. Senate Bill 516 allows the exemption if a surviving spouse does not remarry after a disabled veteran dies and the property remains the homestead of the surviving spouse. Surviving spouses would have to apply for the tax exemption through their county appraisal district. The application is available at:

<http://www.window.state.tx.us/taxinfo/taxforms/50-114.pdf>.

POW/MIA REPORT

As of February 12, 2012, according to the National League of Families and the Department of Defense, there are still 1,678 Americans still unaccounted for from the Vietnam War, down from 1,689 since the last state council meeting in June 2011.

Of these, 107 are from Texas. Since the end of the war in 1975 there have been 905 American remains returned and identified, another 63 U.S. personnel recovered post-incident and identified before the end of the war, bringing the total to 968. Sixty eight (68) of these were from Texas. Of the 1,678 still missing: Air Force 537; Army 534; Navy 366; USMC 212 and Civilians 32.

Of the 1,678 unreturned Americans, 90% were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Laos or Cambodia under Vietnam's wartime control: Vietnam -1,287 (NV-472, SV-815); Laos – 326; Cambodia – 58; Peoples Republic of China – 7.

There are still 3,347 Americans unaccounted for from World War I; 73,690 from World War II, 7,967 from Korean War (451 are from Texas), 120 from the Cold War (7 from Texas), one (1) from Operation Iraqi Freedom (Almed Altaie), and one (1) from Afghanistan (Bowe Berghal).

Some websites pertaining to POW/MIAs;

www.pow-miafamilies.org

www.pownetwork.org

www.dtic.mil/dpmol

LEST WE FORGET

Arlington National Cemetery

Thousands of grave markers at Arlington National Cemetery may need to be replaced or added to accurately account for the dead, following a meticulous Army review of each of the nearly 260,000 headstones and niche covers on the grounds. In a report to Congress on 22 DEC, the Army found potential discrepancies between headstones and cemetery paperwork on about 64,000 grave markers — about one in four. Congress ordered the review last year following reports of misidentified and misplaced graves that led to the ouster of the cemetery's top executives. The report found no further evidence of misplaced graves, though it cautioned that its review is not complete and that some errors could have gone undetected. There are potentially thousands of minor errors, including misspelled names, or incorrect military ranks and dates of birth and death. The Army compared information on every headstone to its internal records, scouring handwritten logs of the dead from the Civil War and a hodgepodge of other records to verify accuracy.

VA Service Connection

A chronic residual from an illness or injury that happened to the veteran while that veteran was on active duty may qualify as a service-connected (SC) condition. A veteran did not have to serve in a war or during a period of wartime, to have a SC condition. For any medical condition to be service-connected, the first thing a veteran has to do is submit their claim to the VA for adjudication. If it is the veterans first application for benefits, they need to complete VA Form 21-526. The VA has created an alternative to submitting the paper form. Veterans can actually apply on-line by going to <http://www.va.gov>. On that page, place the cursor over Veteran Services. That will cause a sub-menus to display. Click on the link to Disability Compensation. The apply on-line link is on this page. If you are mailing in your form and have any of the following material, attach it to your application:

- Discharge or separation papers (DD214 or equivalent)
- Dependency records (marriage & children's birth certificates)
- Medical evidence (doctor & hospital reports)

Once the VA Form 21-526, or on-line application, is submitted, the VA will notify the veteran the application has been received. The veteran will then be scheduled for a Compensation and Pension (C&P) examination. The VA will arrange for this examination. The examination may be at a VA Hospital or the VA Regional Office may refer the veteran to a non-VA provider. Either way, the VA will pay the veteran for travel to their appointment. Make sure you either get your travel pay or submit the appropriate paperwork for it to be mailed to you before leaving your appointment. After all the medical information has been received, and all supporting information has been obtained, the VA will adjudicate the claim. Three elements must be met in order for a condition to be SC.

1) **Evidence of in-service relationship.** What actually happened on active duty that caused or contributed to the current medical condition? Was there an injury? Was this a disease? Was the veteran exposed to something? The burden of proof is on the veteran to establish this relationship.

2) **Current diagnosis.** This is pretty straight forward. What is the actual diagnosis? The veteran needs to ensure they received a diagnosis by a licensed provider if they are using a non-VA provider and the veteran should be diagnosed by the appropriate discipline. If the veteran is seeing a Dentist and asks them about a heart condition, the VA may not find the condition service-connected.

3) **Medical nexus.** What is medical connection between the current diagnosis and the in-service occurrence. This is quite often the part of the claim that will or won't connect a condition to service.

Once all three elements have been answered, the VA adjudicator can determine the claim. If the condition was related to active duty and the physician finds the current diagnosis is at least —as likely as not— related to active duty, then the claim may be service-connected.

VA Automobile Grants: Financial assistance, in the form of a grant, is available to purchase a new or used automobile (or other conveyance) to accommodate a veteran or service member with certain disabilities that resulted from an injury or disease incurred or aggravated during active military service. The grant may also be paid, if disabilities are a result of medical treatment, examination, vocational rehabilitation, or compensated work therapy provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The grant is paid directly to the seller of the automobile for the total price (up to \$11,000) of the automobile. The veteran or service member may only receive the automobile grant once in his/her lifetime. A veteran or service member must have one of the following disabilities to qualify for the automobile grant: a) Loss, or permanent loss of use, of one or both feet; b) Loss, or permanent loss of use, of one or both hands; or c) Permanent impairment of vision in both eyes to a certain degree.

Those qualified for the automobile grant, and veterans or service members with ankylosis (immobility of the joint) of one or both knees or hips resulting from an injury or disease incurred or aggravated by active military service may also qualify for the adaptive equipment grant. Adaptive equipment includes, but is not limited to, power steering, power brakes, power windows, power seats, and special equipment necessary to assist the eligible person into and out of the vehicle. Contact should be made with your local VA medical center's Prosthetic Department prior to purchasing any equipment. The adaptive equipment grant may be paid more than once, and it may be paid to either the seller or the veteran.

You can apply for the automobile and/or the special adaptive equipment grant by completing VA Form 21-4502, Application for Automobile or Other Conveyance and Adaptive Equipment and submitting it to your local VA regional office. The instructions on the VA Form 21-4502 contain a list of adaptive equipment that has been pre-approved for particular disabilities. After you complete and submit Section I of the application, VA will complete Section II and return the original to you. You are responsible for obtaining the invoice from the seller, updating Section III, and submitting the form to your local VA regional office for payment. If you are entitled to adaptive equipment only (i.e., service connected for ankylosis of knees or hips) you should complete VA Form 10-1394, Application for Adaptive Equipment - Motor Vehicle and submit it to your local VA medical center. Additionally, VA Form 10-1394 should be completed for approval of equipment not specified on the VA Form 21-4502. For More Information, Call Toll-Free 1-800-827-1000 or visit <http://www.va.gov>.

Stolen Valor Update

The National Association for Uniformed Services (NAUS) and 24 other military associations and veterans service organizations joined an *amicus brief* (i.e. Someone, not a party to a case, who volunteers to offer information to assist a court in deciding a matter before it.) filed before the United States Supreme Court to reverse an appellate court decision finding the Stolen Valor Act unconstitutional. *United States v. Alvarez*, U.S. Sup. Ct. No. 11-210. The Stolen Valor Act, 18 U.S.C. §704, makes it a crime for individuals to falsely claim they have been awarded a military decoration or medal authorized by Congress for the Armed Forces. The Stolen Valor Act was signed into law in 2006. In this case, Xavier Alvarez claimed at a meeting of the Three Valley Water District in Pomona, California, that as —a retired Marine of 25 years| he was —awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor,| the highest decoration awarded by the United States. Alvarez never served in the military a day in his life.

Alvarez was convicted under the Stolen Valor Act, fined, and sentenced to three years' probation and 416 hours of community service. He appealed his sentence and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled the Stolen Valor Act unconstitutional. As the Amicus Brief states the associations —share a strong interest in preventing pretenders from appropriating for themselves, and enjoying the benefits of, the tremendous goodwill and prestige associated with military awards. Michael T. Morley, of the Washington, D.C., office of Winston & Strawn LLP, is representing the military associations in the Amicus Brief on a pro bono basis. A decision is expected in the spring of 2012. [Source: NAUS Weekly Update 16 Dec 2011]

Agent Orange Okinawa Update

The Okinawa local government said 17 DEC it will test water near a popular public beach for traces of Agent Orange following allegations by a U.S. veteran that barrels of herbicide were buried in the area during the Vietnam War. Testing will focus on a waterway that empties into the ocean between Arah Beach and Chatan park, recreation land that was once the U.S. Army's Hamby Airfield and is nearby two Marine Corps bases, a spokesman for Chatan city government said. An unnamed Army veteran told the Japan Times last month that he took part in burying dozens of barrels of Agent Orange, a powerful herbicide linked to cancer and other serious health problems, on the former Army land in 1969. The U.S. government and U.S. Forces Japan have repeatedly denied that Agent Orange was ever present on the island. —The survey, which is expected to start in January, will be mainly water testing, taking water samples from three different locations in a nearby river,| a spokesman for Chatan city said.

The Hamby airfield was decommissioned in 1981 and eventually redeveloped into one of the island's most popular beaches and tourist attractions, which are a short walk from Marine Corps headquarters on Camp Foster as well as a hospital and family housing on Camp Lester.

(continued next column)

Continued AO Okinawa

Magnetic surveys and soil sampling were done when the property was redeveloped and there were no reports of the herbicides being discovered, according to the city. —It has been about 30 years since the redevelopment and until this day there has been no report of any health damages from the local communities,| the spokesman said. The claims have raised some doubts among city officials because the site identified by the veteran appears to be the former runway of Hamby Airfield. It would be unlikely that soldiers were ordered to stop air traffic and bury barrels of herbicide on or near the runway, according to the spokesman. The unnamed veteran told the newspaper that the barrels were offloaded from a transport ship that had run aground and were then buried in a 150-foot trench on the old airfield. The exact location of the alleged trench is now uncertain because the area has been transformed by growth in recent decades, the newspaper said.

The former soldier is one of more than 20 veterans who have recently claimed Agent Orange was sprayed or stored on Okinawa in the 1960s and early 1970s when the military was still using it to kill vegetation as part of the war effort in Southeast Asia. Similar allegations of Agent Orange use have also recently surfaced in South Korea and Guam. Vietnam War-era veterans have claimed herbicide use in those areas have caused long-term health problems that are not being covered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. They say the VA is unfairly barring their claims because the military refuses to admit the dangerous herbicide was stored or used in those countries. The VA does provide disability compensation and health care benefits to veterans who can prove they are exposed to Agent Orange and have herbicide-linked illnesses that include leukemia, diabetes, Parkinson's disease, lung cancer and heart disease. [Source: Stars & Stripes Travis J. Tritten and Chiyomi Sumida article 17 Dec 20011]



Continued from page 6 Texas Veteran Designation
Process to add Veteran designation on Driver License:

- The veteran will visit a driver license office and initiate the request to have the veteran designation placed on their driver license.
- Upon the initial request, the veteran will provide military documents (DD-214, DD-215) signifying they received an honorable discharge. Once the veteran status has been recorded in DLS, military documents will not be required to maintain the veteran designation on subsequent transactions.
- A duplicate transaction fee will be applied to obtain a duplicate driver license reflecting an added or removed veterans designation
- For disabled veterans. However, the veteran will not be charged an additional fee to add/remove the veteran designation while applying for: 1) an original driver license; 2) a renewal; 3) Modification or upgrade of the class of their driver license; 4) Change of Address; or 5) replacement of a lost or stolen license.

Out of State/Country Veterans

Veterans who are out of the state may request the veteran designation by mail for a driver license only by providing the following:

- A complete out of state/country application (RIS-50);
- A copy of DD-214 or DD-215;
- Proof of Social Security number;
- DL-43 (TX driver license or ID card renewal – duplicate application);
- DL-63 (Explanation of Eye Specialist) if renewing a driver license; and
- Required fee.

Mail all required documents along with the payment. We will accept check, money order or cashier's check payable to the Texas Department of Public Safety:

**Texas Department of Public Safety
 PO Box 15999
 Austin, TX 78761-5999**

Information regarding disabled veterans

Disabled veterans who provide proof of a service-related disability of at least 60% **will not** be charged a fee for any driver license or identification card transaction.

John Miterko, TSC Government Affairs Committee Chair & State Legislative Coordinator



Continued from page 7 **Men's Health & Cowboys**



Chapter 1013 members at the Health Fair: Ray Bush, Anita Cordero, Bill DeLeon, Bob Mickels, Don Hagland, Chuck Kinsey, David Glazener & Irma Barthold. Everyone not in photo. Photos by Jim W Boyd

Commissary Elimination Update

A congressional proposal to combine the commissary and exchange systems under one, self-supporting retail store is likely dead for now, but could easily pop-up again next year, said a lobbyist who was been working against the issue. —This very well could become part of the budget debate ... next year, said Tom Gordy, president of the Armed Forces Marketing Council, which represents over 300 manufacturers who supply the commissary and exchange systems. —It’s one of those things that, as long as it’s out there, it very well could find itself attached to any piece of legislation.

The measure, most recently floated by Oklahoma Republican Sen. Tom Coburn, would have required the disassembly of the Defense Commissary Agency, known as DeCA, which now provides military shoppers with steep discounts on groceries in exchange for a five percent surcharge. If the bill became law, groceries would instead be provided under the military exchange model, which offers products for retail prices competitive with off-base stores but does not charge sales tax.

The three current exchange systems – the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, Marine Corps Exchange and Navy Exchange – would also be combined under the same new system. Unlike the commissary system, which receives an annual appropriation from Congress of about \$1.3 million, the exchange system is currently self-sustaining. Coburn had offered the measure as an amendment to the 2012 Defense Authorization Act, which funds Defense Department activities. The amendment was not included in the final version of the bill and has not been attached to any other legislation. The idea to combine the commissary and exchange systems was originally floated as a cost savings measure by the Congressional Budget Office, tasked with finding cost efficiencies within the federal budget. Analysts found that combining the programs would give the government a net annual savings of about \$1 billion by 2016. They said that Congress could make up for the additional cost of groceries to active duty families under the new system by issuing a \$400 annual grocery stipend.

Opponents of the legislation, including the National Military Family Association, warned that any such measure would effectively gut the commissary benefit, leaving shoppers paying about thirty percent more for their groceries. The annual stipend to active duty service members would come nowhere near covering the higher cost of groceries for under the new system, they said. And retirees, surviving family members, National Guard members and Reservists would be forced to cover the cost increase on their own. —There are no winners or losers with the way the benefit works today. Everyone has an equal opportunity with savings regardless of how much money you make, said Gordy. —A family of four currently saves about \$4,400 a year at the commissary. That’s huge. But when they are only covering \$400, that doesn’t even touch it.

While the Defense Department has not issued an official statement on the plan, the Army’s highest ranking enlisted Soldier, who sits on the Army and Air Force Exchange advisory board, early this month said the plan might not be such a bad idea. Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond Chandler said that because the exchange systems currently give annual support to Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs, a combined system could increase those funds, giving a boost to programs that are facing the chopping block under the current budget crunch.

You have to open your mind at least to all things, Chandler said.

I’m definitely interested. But Gordy said the MWR payout would likely also suffer under the proposed changes. He said the cost of combining the three exchange systems and DeCA would force the resulting agency to raise prices at least seven percent for all exchange goods. That cost spike could drive customers to civilian stores, lower the dollar amount the new exchange system could bring in and potentially eliminate any exchange support to MWR programs.

For me to go to the commissary, I have to drive 30 miles. Why would I take extra time to do that if all I’m going to be saving is just a few dollars? Gordy said. —It’s just shortsightedness to think ‘Oh we can just raise prices.’

You’re not going to end up with increased MWR dividends; you’re probably going to end up with less. Candace Wheeler, government relations deputy director with the National Military Family Association, agreed. She said her organization opposes the measure because it would take away a valuable benefit while not saving the government any money over the long run. —Our whole point is that we do not see this as a cost savings, she said. —Everyone is trying to be a good steward of money and if that’s what they are trying to do ... this not a good way to do it. Officials with Senator Coburn’s office did not respond to repeated calls for comment.

[Source: Military.com] Amy Bushatz article 12 Dec 2011]

Top 25 VVA Chapters in Membership

Chapter	Members	Chapter	Members
1. MD 172	1,007	15. NY 82	340
2. MD 451	682	16. CA 223	296
3. TN 203	614	17. NY 49	279
4. MI 154	610	18. NY 32	262
5. NY 77	570	19. FL 1036	261
6. NY 20	524	20. PA 266	257
7. PA 862	520	21. WV 628	256
8. TX 137	494	22. CA 47	252
9. CA 391	467	23. TN 240	250
10. CA 982	461	24. WI 224	247
11. OK 751	420	25. NJ 12	246
12. NY 11	388	Region 7 VVA 6570 AVVA 812	
13. IL 299	382	TX VVA 4082 AVVA 513	
14. MO 317	367	as of January 12, 2012	

VVA National Leadership Conference 2012
August 8 - 12, 2012



OMNI  HOTEL

221 East Last Colinas Boulevard
Irving, Texas 75039

Standard Guest Room - \$95 + 15% tax

For Reservations call 1-800-THE-OMNI (843-6664)

Cut-Off Date: July 16, 2012 (5 pm Central Time)

We suggest you sign up for the OMNI Select guest . It is program. It is FREE to sign up and you will receive many perks. Go to:

<http://www.omnihotels.com/SelectGuestProgram/MemberBenefits>

Tuesday – August 7

Welcome Home Party
Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday-August 8

Opening ceremony
Seminars

Thursday – August 9

Seminars
Off site entertainment

Friday-Aug 10

Seminars

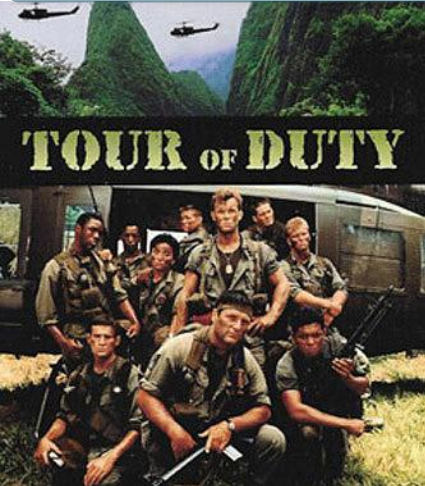
Saturday – August 11

Seminars
Awards Banquet

Celebrities Scheduled to Attend

SSG Zeke Anderson - Actor Terence Knox played SSG Clayton “Zeke” Anderson in the TV series Tour of Duty. The show ran on CBS for three seasons, from September 1987 to April 1990. It followed an American infantry platoon on a tour of duty during the Vietnam War, and was the first TV series to regularly show Americans in combat in Vietnam.

Playboy Playmate of the Year 1965 Jo Collins "G.I. Jo" - Jo Collins was Playboy magazine's Playmate of the month in December 1964 and Playmate of the Year for 1965. She was nicknamed “G.I. Jo” in honor of her many USO tours to Vietnam to entertain the troops. Both Terence Anderson & Jo Collins will receive the VVA’s President’s Award for Excellence in the Arts at the Saturday night Awards Banquet, and take part in the Saturday afternoon autographing session and book signing.



Playboy Playmate of the Year 1965 Jo Collins

She first went to Vietnam in 1966 to deliver a copy of Playboy in person to Army Lt. Jack Price of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, who had availed himself of an offer from Playboy that anyone getting a lifetime subscription to the magazine would receive the first copy from a Playboy Playmate in person.

For more photos go to www.vva.org (events) Leadership Conference



1st Lt. Jack Price, commander of the 503rd Infantry Regiment's "Bravo Bulls," gets his unit's lifetime subscription to Playboy magazine from playmate Jo Collins, right, and her Far East tour chaperone, Joyce Challecki, at the Army hospital at Bien Hoa.



Camp Pendleton Memorial Cross

California Rep. Duncan Hunter has waded into the battle over the so-called Camp Pendleton cross -- put up by leathernecks in honor of four buddies killed in Iraq -- by asking the commander of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton to let the cross stay. "Honoring those and other Marines with a memorial at Camp Pendleton is a fitting tribute that represents the fighting spirit of the Marine Corps and (those Marines') extraordinary personal sacrifice," wrote Hunter, according to a report in the Los Angeles Times. The cross, which was erected without official authorization, has come under fire by several groups, including Americans United for Separation of Church and State. "We've pointed out all along that the cross does not memorialize all the men and women who serve in the armed forces," spokesman Rob Boston said. "It is explicitly a Christian symbol and the military is made up of people of many religious beliefs and no religious beliefs." The 13-foot cross was raised on Veterans Day by several Marines, as other Marines and family members watched. A previous cross on the site burned in a brush fire in 2004.

The LA Times reported that Hunter, a veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, served alongside one of the four Marines during the battle of Fallujah in 2004. Though the cross was put up specifically in memory of Maj. Ray Mendoza, Maj. Douglas Zembiec, Lance Cpl. Aaron Austin and Lance Cpl. Robert Zurheide, of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, supporters say it also honors other Marines. According to the Times, Mendoza, Zembiec and Zurheide were part of the group that in 2004 took the original cross to the site. Austin and Zurheide were killed in Fallujah in 2004, the paper said, while Mendoza was killed in Al Qaim in 2005 and Zembiec in Baghdad in 2007. In addition to Americans United, the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers [MAAF] and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation [MRFF] have called for removing the cross. "U.S. Marines, and all armed forces members take an oath to protect and defend the United States Constitution and not a particular religious faith's symbol such as a cross, Star of David or Crescent Moon," MRFF founder Mikey Weinstein said. "Those brave Marines died for our country's beautiful Constitution and not as warriors for Christ or any other religion's central figure."

The American Center for Law Justice and the Thomas More Law Center say the cross should remain in place. "The Constitution does not prohibit honoring fallen troops through the use of a historic symbol merely because that symbol also carries religious significance," wrote Jay Sekulow, chief counsel for the ACLJ. "In fact, the Constitution forbids excluding religion from every aspect of public life, precisely the goal of the MAAF and other atheist groups." [Source: Military.com Bryant Jordan article 14 Dec 2011]

Veteran Support Organizations: Though technology has helped make huge strides in military support, some old-fashioned methods are still bringing smiles. Care packages are a popular way for the public to show troops they are appreciated and to offer them some comfort. Operation Gratitude assembles and ships approximately 100,000 packages a year, providing opportunities for Americans across the country to donate time and resources. Each package is personally addressed to an individual, which Carolyn Blashek, the organization's founder, says has several benefits. —The recipient feels special; he or she is not just a number but an honored individual, she explains, adding that, —Receiving their own package in their own name lets them know they are not alone in the world. Other benefits include the ability to establish ongoing correspondence with the writers of letters included in the boxes and ensuring no one in a unit feels unloved or left out because everyone receives a personal package. Operation Gratitude also supports families through its Battalion Buddy program that provides stuffed animals to the children of deploying service members. For information on Operation Gratitude refer to <http://www.operationgratitude.com> or call (262) 674-7281. To request a package email <mailto:opgrat@aol.com> and to request a Battalion Buddy email <mailto:battalionbuddy@gmail.com>.

For additional veteran assistance programs refer to:

- **Homes for Our Troops** - Builds specially adapted homes for wounded veterans. Call (866) 787-6677 or go to www.homesfourtroops.org.
- **Blinded Veterans Association** - Promotes the welfare of blind veterans. Call (800) 669-7079, email mailto:bva@bva.org, or go to www.bva.org.
- **Cause** - Offers activities for members of the U.S. military recuperating physically and mentally from injuries received in Iraq and Afghanistan. Call (703) 750-6472 or go to www.cause-usa.org.
- **Veterans Crisis Hotline** - Confidential support for veterans, troops and their loved ones. Call (800) 273-8255 or go to www.veteranscrisisline.net.
- **Pelican for Patriots** - Free protector cases for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans to carry prosthetics. Go to www.pelican.com/PFP



Military History Anniversaries: Significant U.S. Military Events in Jan & Feb are:

- Jan 02 1966 – American forces move into the Mekong Delta for the first time (Vietnam War)
- Jan 06 1967 – Vietnam: Operation Cedar. Over 16,000 U.S. and 14,000 Vietnamese troops start their biggest attack on the Iron Triangle, northwest of Saigon.
- Jan 07 1975 – Vietnam: Vietnamese troops take Phuoc Binh in new full-scale offensive.
- Jan 11 1967 – Vietnam: Operation Deckhouse Five", a combined USMC and ARVN troop effort in the Mekong River delta ends in failure.
- Jan 13 1968 – Vietnam: U.S. reports shifting most air targets from North Vietnam to Laos.
- Jan 15 1973 – Vietnam: Citing progress in peace negotiations, President Richard Nixon announces the suspension of offensive action in North Vietnam.
- Jan 18 1962 – Vietnam: The United States begins spraying foliage with herbicides in South Vietnam, in order to reveal the whereabouts of Vietcong guerrillas.
- Jan 21 1968 – Vietnam: Siege of Khe Sanh begins as North Vietnamese units surround U.S. Marines based on the hilltop headquarters.
- Jan 21 1977 – President Jimmy Carter pardons nearly all American Vietnam War draft evaders inclusive of those who had immigrated to Canada.
- Jan 23 1968 – North Korea seizes the USS Pueblo, claiming the ship had violated their territorial waters while spying.
- Jan 23 1973 – Vietnam: President Richard Nixon claims that Vietnam peace has been reached in Paris and that the POWs would be home in 60 days.
- Jan 24 1982 – Vietnam: A draft of Air Force history reports that the U.S. secretly sprayed herbicides on Laos during the war.
- Jan 28 1966 – Vietnam: Operation White Wing, a search and destroy mission, begins.
- Jan 31 1968 – Vietnam: Tet Offensive begins as Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldiers attack strategic and civilian locations throughout the South including the ancient imperial capital of Hue.
- Jan 31 1968 – Vietnam: Battle of Hue begins
- Feb 01 1968 - Vietnam: U.S. troops drive the North Vietnamese out of Tan Son Nhut airport in Saigon.
- Feb 05 1968 - Vietnam War: Battle of Khe Sanh begins. Feb 07 1968 - Vietnam: North Vietnamese use 11 Soviet-built light tanks to overrun the U.S. Special Forces camp at Lang Vei at the end of an 18-hour long siege

- Feb 08 1971 - Vietnam: South Vietnamese ground forces, backed by American air power, begin Operation Lam Son 719, a 17,000 man incursion into Laos that ends three weeks later in a disaster.
- Feb 09 1965 - Vietnam: The first United States combat troops are sent to South Vietnam.
- Feb 10 1954 - President Dwight Eisenhower warns against United States intervention in Vietnam.
- Feb 11 1973 - Vietnam: First release of American prisoners of war from Vietnam takes place.
- Feb 15 1967 – Vietnam: Thirteen U.S. helicopters are shot down in one day in Vietnam
- Feb 22 1836 - Mexican General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna began his 13 day siege of the Alamo Spanish mission in San Antonio, Texas.
- Feb 23 1967 - Vietnam: U.S. troops begin the largest offensive of the war, near the Cambodian border.
- Feb 24 1968 - Vietnam War: The Tet Offensive is halted; South Vietnam recaptures Huế.

Texas State Veteran's Benefits

The state of Texas provides several benefits to veterans. To obtain information on these refer to the —**Veteran State Benefits TX** attachment to this Bulletin for an overview of those benefits. Benefits are available to veterans who are residents of the state in the following areas:

- Veteran Housing Benefits
- Veteran Financial Assistance Benefits
- Veteran Education Benefits
- Veteran Employment Benefits
- Other State Sponsored Veteran Benefits

[Source: <http://www.military.com/benefits/content/veteran-state-benefits/texas-state-veterans-benefits.html> Jan 2012]

Continued on Pages 17 & 18



Texas State Veteran's Benefits

Texas Veterans Land Board Programs

The Texas Veterans Land Board (VLB), a division of the Texas General Land Office, administers three veterans' loan programs:

- The Land Loan Program;
- Veterans Housing Assistance Purchase Program; and
- Veterans Home Improvement Loan Program.

Additional information on these programs is available on the VLB website <http://www.glo.texas.gov/vlb/veterans-benefits/veteran-loans/eligibility.html>.

Texas Financial Assistance Programs

Tax Exemption for Veterans

Disabled veterans who meet certain requirements, their surviving spouses and the spouses and minor children of a person who dies on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces are eligible for property tax exemptions on the appraised value of their property. The exemption is mandatory and applies to taxes levied by all taxing authorities in the State. A veteran, whose service-connected disabilities are rated less than 10% by the Department of Veterans Affairs, or a branch of the Armed Forces, is not entitled to a property tax exemption.

Visit the Texas Veterans Commission website <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/> for contact information and benefits assistance.

Texas State Veteran Education Benefits

The Hazlewood Act

Wartime veterans who were legal residents of Texas at the time they entered military service, and *Home of Record is listed as Texas* on the DD214, are entitled to a waiver of tuition and some fees at State-supported/public (taxpayer 2 supported) colleges and universities. This benefit is also available to children of Texas servicemen and women who died or were killed in military service, and to children of Texas military personnel who are shown to be missing in action or prisoners of war. Also eligible are children of members of the Texas National Guard or the Texas Air National Guard killed since January 1, 1946, while on active duty either in service of Texas or the United States. Learn more about Texas Education Benefits (the Hazlewood Act) at <http://texas-veterans.com/education/hazlewood>

Texas Veteran Employment Programs

Veterans Preference

Wartime veterans have preference in employment with State agencies or offices, as do widows and children of those killed on active duty. State agencies must practice veterans' preference until they have reached 40% veteran employment. Non-retired veterans who are employed by the State of Texas are entitled to claim their active duty military time toward retirement, provided they present a proper request and pay to the Retirement System the specified amount of retirement contribution for up to 60 months' military credit. Such contribution is paid at the rate which was applicable at the time the employed veteran first was covered by the state Retirement System, plus any accrued interest. A link to the State Law regarding veterans' preference laws is <http://texas-veterans.com/employment/veterans-preference>. Additionally, a veteran is entitled to reemployment rights with his last employer when he is released from the Armed Forces of the United States, providing his absence is not longer than four years. The right of reemployment is available regardless of whether the veteran was, prior to service, employed by the State, county or city government, or by private industry. Reemployment rights of veterans are now provided by both State and Federal laws.

Visit the Texas Veterans Commission website <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/> for contact information and benefits assistance.

Other Texas State Veteran Benefits

Texas State Cemetery Program

In the November 2001 statewide elections, voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 7, a constitutional amendment that authorized the creation of up to seven state cemeteries for veterans and their eligible dependents. The cemeteries will be built and operated through a partnership between the Texas Veterans Land Board (VLB) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA). The USDVA will fund up to 100 percent of the construction and equipment costs. The state will own and operate the cemeteries and fund most of the cost of operations.

Visit the Texas Veterans Commission website <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/> for contact information and benefits assistance.

No-Cost Medical Records

Under the Health and Safety Code, Chapter 161.201 Subchapter M, Medical or Mental Health Records, Texas veterans are eligible for no cost medical records when they are obtained to file a claim for a disability against the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA). The health care provider or health care facility is not required to provide more than one complete record for the patient or former patient without charge. Also, it should be noted, that some medical facilities will charge a small administrative fee for obtaining the records

Free Drivers License for Disabled Veterans

Under Texas Transportation Code Title 7, Chapter 521, Section 521.426, Texas drivers licenses may be furnished free of charge to veterans who have service-connected disabilities rated 60% or more by the VA or by a branch of the Armed Forces of the U.S. Application must be made prior to the time present drivers license expires. Application forms may be obtained from Department of Public Safety's license examining offices located throughout the State. A link to the to the Texas Department of Public Safety's **Drivers License information** website is:

<http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/DriverLicense/index.htm>. Application forms should be completed by the veteran and forwarded to the VA for verification of service-connected rating of 60% or more. If a veteran was disability-retired from military service and has no VA claim file, proof of disability must come from their respective branch of military service.

Fishing and Hunting Licenses for Disabled Veterans

Disabled veterans are eligible for special hunting and fishing licenses, at a reduced cost. A disabled veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States is one who has a service-connected disability, as defined by the Department of Veterans Affairs, consisting of the loss of use of a lower extremity or of a disability rating of 60% or more, and who is receiving compensation from the United States for the disability. A resident veteran as described in the law may hunt wild turkey and deer without a resident hunting license if he has acquired a resident exemption hunting license.

A link to the Texas Parks and Wildlife website is <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/>.

Free Park Admission for Disabled Veterans

Free admission to Texas State Parks is available to any veteran who has a service-connected disability, which is rated 60% or more by VA, or a service-connected disability, which has resulted in the loss of a lower extremity. Application may be made at the headquarters office of any Texas State park by providing satisfactory evidence of service-connected disability. If such evidence is not readily available, it can be obtained from the VA regional office where the claims folder is located. The Texas State Parklands Passport is available to any veteran who meets the disability requirements, whether or not he or she resides in Texas. The Passport provides only free admission to the State parks, and does not exempt anyone from payment of other charges, such as camping fees, etc. A link to the Texas Parks and Wildlife website is <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/>.

Free Recording of Discharges

Under Texas State law, Local Government Code Sec. 0192.002, the County Clerk in each County is required to record, free of charge, the official discharge of each veteran who served in the Armed Forces of the United States of America. This free service is very important as it provides veterans with a ready source from which they can obtain a certified copy of their discharge whenever it is needed. **It is the veteran's responsibility to have the DD214 or Discharge recorded. Please also note that if you do record your DD214 with the County Clerk, it then becomes a public record.** See "Safeguard Your Discharge (DD214)" at <http://www.tarrantcounty.com/eveterans/cwp/view.asp?A=776&Q=432386>. Also note that the Texas Veterans Commission does not keep a record of your DD214 or Discharge.

Special License Plates

Disabled Veterans, Former Prisoners of War, Pearl Harbor Survivors, Purple Heart and Medal of Honor plates are among the special license plates available to eligible veterans and their survivors for personal use on their automobile or light commercial vehicle of one ton or less. Disabled veterans must have a service-connected disability rating of 50% or more or 40% due to amputation of a lower extremity. Former prisoners of war are eligible if they were captured or incarcerated by an enemy of the United States during a period of conflict with the United States and at the time of the capture, were citizens of the United States. Eligibility is for both former members of the Armed Forces and civilian U.S. citizens who were captured by an enemy of our government. For further information, contact either the nearest vehicle title registration office or your county tax office. We have provided a link to the **Texas Department of Transportation's** website <http://www.dot.state.tx.us> for your convenience.

Visit the Texas Veterans Commission website <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/> website for benefits assistance.

[Source: <http://www.military.com/benefits/content/veteran-state-benefits/texas-state-veterans-benefits.html> Jan 2012]

