



Florida Veteran

Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida, Inc.

2304 Woodland Drive, Edgewater, FL 32141
www.vvof.org – 386-424-1989 – E-Mail Hdwizrd7@aol.com

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Florida's 26th Annual Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion

Sunday, April 21st The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall, The Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom Tribute Panels Walls will be escorted from Brevard Community College Cocoa Campus, Clearlake Road at 10 am. Be there an hour earlier for line up. We are going to need help at the Wall Escort selling T - Shirts, flags, and help with the parking lot control. If you would like to help, please contact Greg at 321-501-6896 or e-mail at vets2gether@cfl.rr.com.

BCC has always been a big supporter of the Reunion and they said we could use their parking lot forever if we clean it up when we are done, so please help police it up before you pull out. There will be coffee & donuts available that morning for a donation courtesy of the USA River Rats. More than 1500 motorcycles and vehicles took part in the escort last year and several joined in along the way. **The escort route will be the same as it was last year: from the BCC parking lot, we will head North on Clearlake (left), East on Michgian to US 1 and South to Parkway Drive in Melbourne.** We should arrive about 11am at Wickham Park. At the back pavilions the VVB will host a covered dish picnic, grilling hamburgers & hot dogs to feed the many volunteers there to help set up the memorial displays. Please bring a covered dish or snack foods to share. Anyone with large drink containers are asked to please bring them filled with iced tea, lemonade, Kool-aid or even water to share with the many hot & thirsty workers. We will have plenty of cups, plates and napkins. There is so much to do, but with everyone pitching in it is easily accomplished. The sign-up book will be at the Wall Set-up, please remember to volunteer some of your time throughout the week.

Opening Ceremony is Monday evening April 22nd starting with the Wreath presentations at 6 PM with the guest speakers starting at 7:00pm and will feature the presentation of colors, several speakers who support the Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion, a rifle salute and taps. The memorials will be open to the public 24 hours a day through April 28th. It will be a busy week and we will need lots of help this year to set up the tents, generators and light trees.

The Tentative schedule of events is listed to the right.

"THE VETERANS: HOMETOWN HEROS"

2013 Tentative Schedule of Events

Sunday- Apr 21

10:00am Wall Escort from Brevard Community College Cocoa To Wickham Park
12:00pm Doc Holiday, Covered Dish Picnic and Wall Set-Up

Monday- Apr 22

6:00pm Presentation of Wreaths
7:00pm Opening Ceremonies at The Wall

Thursday- Apr 25

6:00pm Doc Holiday
7:00pm **The Big Daddy Band**
8:30pm Doc Holiday
9:00pm **Absolute Blue**

Friday- Apr 26

1:00pm Doc Holiday
2:00pm **Two of Diamonds**
3:30pm Doc Holiday
4:00pm **Elgin Hooper**
5:30pm Doc Holiday
6:00pm **Greg and Brian**
7:00pm Doc Holiday
7:30pm **Pocketchange**
9:00pm Doc Holiday
9:30pm **Viva Rock Band**

Saturday- Apr 27

11:00am Opening Ceremonies/Massing of the Colors/LZ Helicopter Landing
1:00pm **Two of Diamonds**
1:00pm Suncoast Vietnam Vets "The Last Patrol" at The Wall
2:30pm Doc Holiday
3:00pm **John Steer**
4:00pm Doc Holiday
4:30pm **Different Worlds Band**
6:00pm Suncoast Vietnam Vets "The Last Patrol"
6:30pm Doc Holiday
7:00pm **Viva Rock Band**
8:30pm Doc Holiday
9:00pm **Pocketchange**

Sunday- Apr 28

10:00am Church Services By *Rev. John Steer*
10:30am Patience Mason at the Wall Pavilion-Recovering From The War-PTSD
11:00am Doc Holiday
1:00pm **The Country Legends Band**
3:00pm Doc Holiday
4:00pm **GatorBlues**
6:00pm Melbourne Municipal Band at The Wall
7:00pm Closing Ceremony at The Wall

Monday- Apr 29

9:00am Cleanup Wickham Park and Wall Take Down

Brought to you by the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard, Inc.

PLEASE - NO COOLERS, GLASS OR PETS IN REUNION OR MEMORIAL AREA

Schedule is tentative and subject to change

The Vietnam and all Veterans of Florida State Coalition would like to recognize the following members/organizations for awards that were presented at our Annual Banquet held this past January. Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard Reunion Committee- Organization of the Year, Greg Welsh- Veteran of the Year, Roberta Voisey- Neitzel and Maureen Welsh - Members of the Year, and Fineline Printing - Business of the Year. A special award was presented to Tony Cartlidge for his dedication to the welfare of veterans.

In addition, our 2013 executive board members are: Robert "Doc" Neitzel, President, "Big" Al Diaz 1st Vice President, Ralph Earrusso 2nd Vice President, Roberta Neitzel, Secretary, Jacque Earrusso, Treasurer and Ken Wakefield, Sgt at Arms.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

On behalf of the Vietnam and All Veterans State Coalition, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all to the 26th Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion. The membership of the VVB has been hard at work all year to bring this Reunion to fruition once again and I would like to thank each and every one of them for their dedication to helping and honoring ALL veterans. This is why they received the recognition of the Coalition as Organization of the Year.

As I begin my second term as the President of the Coalition, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all members once again for giving me the distinct honor of representing them as their President. The Executive Board has already set several goals and will strive to attain them.

With so many important issues facing all veterans today and the uncertainty of our present economic and political times, now, more than ever, is the need for all veterans to band together as we basically all have the same goals: obtaining benefits for our veterans through

the VA, getting medical services in an efficient and expedient manner, fairness in distribution of VA funding, the increase in homeless veterans (including families with young children), supporting our troops and their families who are currently serving our Country, fighting increases in Tricare deductibles, current legislation that is attempting to limit the amount of pension payments to those who are also receiving disability payments, changes to criteria for disability through the VA to name a few.

If we cannot agree amongst ourselves as to the importance or priorities of these issues and direct these to our politicians, then our voices will never be heard by our State and Federal Legislators. If we as organizations cannot unite on issues pertaining to all of us, and cannot determine the best way to fund these issues, then we fail as organizations as our goals outlined in most of our charters and/or by-laws have fallen to the wayside and have been long forgotten.

I would like to invite all to discuss with their general membership joining the State Coalition, to participate in our quarterly meetings held throughout the State of Florida and to take advantage of all the information that is disseminated from our member organizations. I believe you will find as I have stated, that the goals of the State Coalition are not so different from yours and we need to unite - We all served together, fought together and we are now all fighting for the rights of veterans - shouldn't this be a united front ?

Respectfully yours,
Robert "Doc" Neitzel
President, Vietnam and All Veterans
of Florida State Coalition



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As President of the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard I have been asked to write a spot for the State Coalition. I want to start by welcoming all the Coalition members to the 26 Annual Reunion in Melbourne Florida and hope that you enjoy yourself while here. A lot has happened in the

Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard the last year, we have a new manager at our Transitional Housing Facility and Audra is doing a great job helping our homeless vets. That is one place I wish we could close maybe in time our homeless problem will end. In December we elected new officers thanks to all of last years for their hard work, and thanks to the new ones.

As you read this if your group or organization is not part of the State Coalition I would encourage you to come to a meeting and share in the information we pass on to the members, and become part of us. Information on joining can be found in the newsletter.

Again enjoy the Reunion and remember those we have lost

Remember The Troops.

Greg Welsh
President

Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard

The Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard---About Us

A small group of Vietnam veterans in Central Brevard started to meet in 1985 to help each other to deal with lingering issues from the Vietnam War. In 1986 it developed a philosophy and a purpose to attract other Vietnam vets and formally organized. The primary goal was to assist other veterans. The camaraderie was the glue that developed into a program to help those with PTSD symptoms and the concomitant problems associated with it such as substance abuse and homelessness.

An area of great concern was the POW/MIA unresolved problem and the actions of the government to deal with it honestly. It is still a frustrating matter that we continue to pursue.

Within two years, the VVB organized and hosted its first Vietnam Veterans Reunion. This event eventually became famous throughout the country and today is *the* premier event of its kind. After the Gulf War it became evident that the problems faced by Vietnam veterans were not much different than those faced by subsequent generations and we began a systematic effort to welcome all veterans into the VVB. We changed our name in 2000 to reflect that commitment at that year's reunion and by 2003 the Vietnam Veterans of Brevard officially became the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard (we still abbreviate to VVB to, well, to abbreviate).

From the start efforts were made to find a place for distressed veterans to go to regroup and get back on their feet. The story cannot be told in this brief synopsis but suffice it to say, we stumbled our way to it. In fact, we did it ourselves and the hard work and perseverance of those who got it off the ground cannot be understated. We call it

the Veterans Transitional Facility and since 1990 it has helped thousands of local vets, which include their families, get back on track. Today the program houses 20 vets and their family members at any given time and sets the pace for a smooth transition back into the mainstream of life. Those that have taken advantage of the opportunity never forget.

Our Reunion depended on various organizations to provide the sacred centerpiece, a mobile Memorial Wall. Getting those commitments coordinated were sometimes nail bitingly scary. In 2005 we came close to not having one; so we decided to build one. In less than a year, with the committed efforts of several local businesses, Brevard citizens, a laid off vet and other VVB volunteers we had our own Wall on display at our Reunion in 2006. In addition, we make The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall available for other events throughout the country.

Those are the stars of the VVB but in no way are the only services we offer to the veteran community here in Brevard and even beyond. We have a Color Guard and Rifle Team who manage to come together for local events and memorials in spite of the fact that they must coordinate their own work schedules to accomplish those duties. We provide veterans to speak to school students about the experience of war firsthand, beyond what they find in the history books. There is a mobile museum available for community events where citizens can touch the experience; even smell it. Our newsletter has been published since day one and is the source for other events, projects and activities in which we and other veterans groups are involved.

So what about membership? The most common theme heard at reunions for not joining is—I'm not a Vietnam vet. But that isn't a requirement to join. We are an organization dedicated to the support of our local *veteran community*. A veteran who served in peacetime, a veteran's family and any citizen that wishes to lend hands-on support of veterans is part of that community. The Vietnam veterans who started the VVB never intended it to be an exclusive club. They recognized that family members and friends were also affected by the times in which the War took place and as we grew, new generations and their families were welcomed as their own Eras unfolded.

The only requirement for membership in the VVB is a \$20.00 check and a desire to support your veteran community. Many members will assist at the reunion. Others find they're best suited for other activities. So if you like what you've read so far, give our Membership Chairman a call. Information can be found on our website shown below.

For more about us and our work check out the website at www.vietnamandallveteransofbrevard.com

VVB Mailing Address
Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard, Inc.
PO Box 237225
Cocoa, FL 32923-7225

The Wall Report

We did thirteen events in 2011 and a total of eighteen events in 2013. The schedule was quite grueling and there was no time to decompress after each trip. Several events were a first for the Wall. We were in Cherokee NC for the Cherokee Festival – We were the first traveling wall to be displayed on an Indian Reservation. The Elders and tribes people treated us like gold. We were escorted by the tribal police. We were also at the Marine Corps Convention at in Mobile Alabama and it was the first time we sent up inside a convention center. We were in Monroe LA for Veterans Day; two years ago 10,000 people came when we were there and this year there were 15,000 people and 600 school children. We are hopeful to up these numbers next time we are there in 2014. For 2014 Memorial Day and Veterans Day are already booked. We did a total of six events in Florida this past year and are planning a total of 13 or 14 events this year. We will be in Kentucky twice and back to the windy city in McHenry Illinois, and our first time in South Carolina followed by North Carolina. We started The Wall refurbish in January and it will be ready in time for the Reunion.

See you on the Road.
Greg

You can check our schedule at www.travelingwall.us

FLORIDA DUSTOFF ASSOCIATION



**Dedicated Unhesitating Service To Our
Fighting Forces**

“So Others May Live”

On behalf of Florida Dustoff Association I would like to take a moment to say “Welcome Home.” The Florida Dustoff Association is comprised of Dustoff Medics, Pilots, Corpsmen, Donut Dollies, Med-Evacs and many whom themselves have been

“dusted-off” from the Vietnam, Desert Storm, and the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars. Please stop by our campsite in Camp Ground B at this year’s coming reunion if you are one of the above to say hello, or are interested in joining our organization. **ALL ARE WELCOMED AT DUSTOFF!!**

This past years elected officers are: Brett Brookins President, Robert Neitzel Vice President, Elizabeth Brookins, Secretary, Roberta Neitzel, Treasurer and Doc Combs, Chaplin.

Members of Florida Dustoff participate in numerous veterans related events in conjunction with other local organizations...Stand downs, Welcome Home programs, packages to our troops, Wreaths Across America, to name a few. We all strive for the same end result...taking care of our fellow brothers and sisters. I would like to Congratulate to all recipients of awards last year: Member of the Year – Steve Doan. Certificate of Appreciation for Service to Dustoff – Harry Newman, Adele Chambers, LaPlaya Resorts, Ron “Doc” Custer, Jon Riggs, Patches, Bob Gallagher, Fineline Printing, Skip and Francesca Aberns, Ken Wakefield, Al Diaz, Bobbi Jo Dino, Michelle Wakefield and Rose Fantaccione as well as the USA River Rats Honor Guard. In addition, I was brought to tears with the presentation of a past Presidents award to myself.

As many of you may be aware, our founding father, Hoss passed away this past August. Hoss had a way of touching lives all around him. The past few years his health had been failing and he struggled quite a bit. Most of us all have very fond memories of the big guy, may be it at the reunion, phone conversations or e-mails. When I think of Hoss, I picture him sitting in his chair at the campground, talking with everyone, in his maroon dustoff jacket and his dustoff cap – laughing and having a great time, mug in his hand, or “bombing” the 101st with water balloons.

The past few years the biggest thing Hoss looked forward to was our Annual Reunion and the National Dustoff Reunion – he wanted to be with his brothers more than *anything*. Being with his brothers and the camaraderie made him happiest.

Dustoff is dedicating this year’s reunion to Hoss. Chris Hamrick has been working diligently on preparations. He has purchased and donated a 10 x 10 enclosed canopy and this will be set up all weekend to honor Hoss. It will contain a static display with items being brought by Art and photos. A memorial is planned for Friday night after dinner. Anyone wishing to attend the service or drop by anytime during the weekend to pay their respects, or share fond memories with us is more than welcomed. At the time of this writing, the Hamrick family is mourning the loss of Chris’ ex-wife Terri, mother of his children and making arrangements, so if you have any thoughts or would like to make a suggestion, please contact Bob Neitzel at 386-424-1989.

Hoss had his demons – he was haunted by the memory of the crew of Dustoff 90. He carried a burden as large as he was - guilt all these years as he should have been on this flight and changed places. On the evening of February 12, 1968, Aircraft Commander 1LT Jerry Lee Roe, call sign Dustoff 90, and his crew: WO2 Alan Gunn, pilot, Sp/5 Wade L. Groth, Crew chief and their Medic, Sp/5 Harry W. Brown departed Ban Me Thuot in their UH1H for an Urgent Medevac at the Gia Nghai Special Forces Camp. They were part of the 50th Medical Detachment (HA), normally stationed at Tuy Hoa, and were on standby at Ban Me Thuot in support of Special Forces Operations in the area. At approximately 2019 hours, Dustoff 90’s blip disappeared from the USAF Tac Control Radar Screen never to be recovered or heard from again.

So I would like to say – Hoss you can rest easy and I know the feeling of guilt you carried all these years has been lifted – I know that you are looking down smiling at all of us and you are as young, pain free, happy and laughing as you were back on February 11, 1968. The burden has been lifted as you have been

reunited with Jerry, Alan, Wade and Harry your brothers and comrades – We love you and miss you and we will celebrate your long awaited reunion with the Crew of Dustoff 90

Robert Neitzel –Vice President Florida Dustoff

“WHEN I HAVE YOUR WOUNDED”



USA RIVER RATS

WOW I can't believe it is **2013** already. Where has the time gone? We have our usual events that include Easter Dinner at Vista Manor Nursing Home, an Easter Egg Hunt for the children in the community, March Stand down at the Cocoa Armory and lots more. Please check out our website for any and all updates at **“usariverrats.com”**. More will be added as the year progresses. We will be hosting the VVOF meeting on April 6th at the VFW Post 4228 in Titusville. This past year we had our 2nd Annual **“Ken Baker Wall Run”** and are already looking forward to our 3rd Annual on November 2nd. All proceeds were donated to the VVB for the Traveling Wall. We are looking forward to the reunion. We will be having our usual Rib Dinner at our campsite on Wednesday April 24th. Tickets are available for \$10.00 if you are interested please contact one of our officers listed below to reserve your dinner. We will be having entertainment by Bones. We will be planning some events to raise funds for The Medal of Honor Park. Check our website for updates.

If you have questions or comments you can contact any of our officers.

USA RIVER RAT OFFICERS 2013

President	Al “Big Al” Diaz	321-863-0575
1 st . Vice	Rose “Rosebud” Fantaccione	321-403-5875
2 nd . Vice	Ken “Radioman” Wakefield	321-693-4762
Treasurer	Norm “Hound Dog” Pamplin	321-228-6576
Secretary	Michelle “Screamer” Wakefield	321-323-4382
Chaplain	Francesca “Lilo” Abers	321-501-2847
Advisor	Robert “Dust Off” Neitzel	386-527-5445
Advisor	Wayne “Wayneo” Smith	321-698-6989
Historian	Francesca “Lilo” Abers	321-501-2847
Quarter Master	Janis “Bubette” Worrell	321-698-0659
Service Officer	Ron “Ronbo” Saxby	321-914-9046
Sr Sgt @ Arms	Skip “Grease Monkey”	321-431-3352
Sgt @ Arms	Bobbi Jo “B.A.G.”Dino	321-302-4781
Asst Sgt @ Arms	Jerry “Wolverine” Celona	321-431-3352
Asst Sgt @ Arms	Andrea “LitBit” Howard	321-544-1230
Asst Sgt @ Arms	Nicole “Luv Bug” Morin	407-234-5907
Asst Sgt @ Arms	Bill “Chapy” Chapman	321-403-4518
Asst Sgt @ Arms	Rob “Salmander” Lessard	321-302-9163
Asst Sgt @ Arms	Richard “Woodchuck” Gilliland	321-636-5538
Asst Sgt @ Arms	Linda “Radar” Patricks	321-427-5756

We are looking forward to another great year helping our veterans. We would like to thank everyone that made donations last year for the commemorative 25th Reunion Dog Tag. We were so pleased that we sold out of them and were able to give the proceeds to the VVB Traveling Memorial Wall. This year, the USA River Rats will be selling Reunion Bumper Stickers with all proceeds going to the

VVB Traveling Memorial Wall, so please track us down to make a donation to the Wall.

Getting ready for Escort and Reunion and looking forward to seeing lots of you there for your usual good time and camaraderie.

USA RIVER RATS

Michelle “Screamer” Wakefield
Secretary



KWA Mid-Florida
Chapter 173

This chapter has the objectives that ALL Korean War and Korean Service Veterans (service after January 31, 1955) will never be “Forgotten.” We take pride in participating in programs for Memorial Day, Veterans Day and the Annual “Wreaths Across America” program and other civic and military holidays and events remembering those who served with us and before us.

We honor the active duty, reserves and national guard members by supporting the “Operation Christmas Soldier” annually with the Orlando VA Medical Center and monthly with support of KISS “Kids in Support of Soldiers” with articles and donations for mailing packages to troops in harm’s way in Iraq, Afghanistan and other locations around the world. Our Chapter is an ardent supporter of the Wounded Warrior Project, making quarterly contributions from the 50/50 drawing at each meeting.

As I mentioned in December and January, everyone needs to belong to the Association or you are no longer a member of a Chapter. A few members are holding out and now is not the right time for it. They say that the Association can’t do that but I assure you, they can. I was told along with the rest of the Department that the Association has passed a rule that all members MUST belong to the Association or they are no longer members of any KWVA Chapter, It was passed last year at the convention.

I have tried to hold it off as long as possible but I or any other Chapter President can no longer stop it. I have posted this many times. It has been taken out of my control. We have 6 Annual and 7 Life, and 2 Associate Members that need to send in their dues for the Association Membership or be dropped from our records. I do not want this to have to happen and BEG everyone of you to submit your dues payment to Bob Johnson or any other Board Member so that we can fulfill our obligation to the Association and keep our Chapter whole. We don’t want to lose anyone. Bob and I are discussing how long we can hold out before we have no choice and drop you from our roles.

We have to decide soon so that we don’t lose OUR Charter. Our Charter is in jeopardy of losing our Chapter if we don’t follow what the Association says. PLEASE, I beg you to send in the dues requirement. If you already have sent it in, THANKS. If not, please do. Remember, we are only good with the help of all, not just one or two. “THE TIME IS NOW”.

Remember, ALL other veterans organizations had to go through this. It is now KWVA’s turn.

Yours in Comradeship
Chuck Travers



SEMPER FIDELIS AMERICA, INC

Semper Fidelis America Inc. was started by Founder and President James R. Martina (Papa Smurf) who did six tours in Vietnam and was one of the few U.S. Marines attached to help at Hamburger Hill. His vision was to help other veterans in need. Today Semper Fidelis America holds numerous yearly functions to help raise money for our military brothers and their families. Our group reaches out to many other organizations. Semper Fidelis America Inc. is a not for profit organization.

Our mission is to support the VA Convalescent home located in Baldwin Park at 5201 Raymond Street Orlando, Florida. We hold numerous yearly functions in order to raise money to help these veterans. Our organization is not for profit, so all the proceeds from our functions go to veterans in need and their families. We also work together with other organizations such as Vietnam Veterans of Central Florida caretakers of National Vietnam War Museum also located in Orlando. Youth organizations, such as Orlando Devil Dog Young Marines, which always help with our yearly dinners for disabled veterans.

**JOHN MURPHY
PRESIDENT**



VETERANS COUNCIL OF MARTIN COUNTY

The Veterans Council of Martin County Inc. is a federally tax-exempt charitable organization providing services to all military veterans in Martin County, Florida. Members of 13 local organizations, including Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion and AMVETS posts, are members of the Veterans Council. All members serve on a voluntary basis so 100% of the proceeds received by the organization go to helping Martin County veterans.



VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA CHAPTER 1041 - MARTIN COUNTY

The Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1041, Martin County, is comprised of 100% active duty Veterans of the Vietnam era. Almost all are combat veterans and many have disabilities of one form or another from their combat duty. However, we consider ourselves "The Lucky ones". Our mission is to bring honor, respect, and aid to veterans of all eras. We have no payroll, we pay no rent, we give of ourselves to aid other veterans, and nearly 100% of the money we raise goes to fulfill this mission in the local community.

Below are some of the projects we are currently working on or have planned:

Veterans Homeless Prevention Rapid Response Fund:
A fund of money that can be taped into in a matter of hours to prevent eviction of veterans and their families giving them time to work out a more long term solution and by working with the Martin County Office of Veterans Services.

Long Term Housing for Paralyzed Veterans:
Working with other agencies we hope to remodel single family homes so they are suited for the special needs of physically handicapped veterans.

Memorial Brick Markers:
Working with the City of Stuart to relocate existing Memorial Brick Markers and provide for new Memorial Brick Markers as part of the remodeled Veterans Memorial Park in The City of Stuart we are expanding the number of memorial brick pavers and providing a lasting tribute to those that have served and sacrificed for their country. If you wish to purchase a brick paver to honor and remember a veteran please visit our website to download an application at <http://www.vva1041.org>.

VA Mental Health Care Update

Veterans who have trouble getting timely mental health care from Veterans Affairs hospitals and clinics should also have access to thousands of health care providers who care for military personnel and their families, says the Republican chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs. The proposal by Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL) borrows from the playbook of Republican Mitt Romney, who raised the idea of tapping into the military's Tricare network of doctors during the course of the presidential campaign. "We can double overnight the number of providers for those who are in need," Miller said in an interview. "Eighteen veterans a day commit suicide in this country. Nobody thinks that is acceptable." The VA has beefed up its mental health staff over the years to try to keep up with the needs of soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, but a critical inspector general's report last year found that about half of those seeking care for the first time waited about 50 days before getting a full evaluation. The VA had been reporting that the vast majority of those patients were getting care within 14 days.

Shortly before that report was released, the VA announced it would be adding 1,900 mental health professionals to its staff. VA officials said the department has made good progress on the hires, but they couldn't provide specific numbers yet. Miller says tapping into Tricare's network of psychologists and psychiatrists would allow many veterans to get care closer to home, particularly those who live in rural communities. He doesn't have an estimated price tag yet, but says that whatever it is, that's part of the cost of war. His proposed expansion would only apply to mental health care. Still, even a modest increase in spending could make Miller's proposal a tough sell at a time when Congress is focused on cutting the federal debt and dealing with the threat of across-the-board spending cuts to defense and discretionary programs. Asked about Miller's proposal, VA spokesman Josh Taylor said the department is "committed to providing high-quality, comprehensive care directly to veterans, instead of leaving veterans to navigate complex, unconnected providers who might not be experts in veterans' unique healthcare needs."

Miller acknowledged that veterans groups are traditionally wary of relying on health professionals outside the VA system because they view it as the first step to tearing it down. The congressman said he agrees veterans get excellent care from the VA — when they can access it. "We simply want to expand a very capable system," Miller said. In some instances, the VA already contracts with local doctors in rural settings to treat VA patients, but that represents a tiny fraction of the patient visits that occur each year. The number of veterans getting mental health treatment from the VA has been steadily rising: from 927,052 in 2006 to more than 1.3 million in the fiscal year that ended 30 SEP. Nearly 22 million veterans live in the United States, but fewer than half are enrolled in the VA system. It's generally reserved for those who have a disability or illness stemming from their service. Also, all returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are eligible for VA care during their first five years back from deployment.

The Tricare program serves those currently in the military, their families and those who retire from the military. The two health systems are quite different. The doctors at VA-run facilities are government employees paid a fixed salary for the work they do. Doctors in Tricare agree to participate in a managed care program

and are reimbursed at a rate set by the insurer. Under Miller's proposal, the VA would pay that rate without additional costs to the veteran.

Days after Romney proposed giving veterans access to Tricare for mental health treatment, President Barack Obama issued an executive order that requires the VA to set up a minimum of 15 pilot projects focused on contracting with local providers to meet the mental health needs of veterans. Miller's proposal is more sweeping. Sen. Bernie Sanders, an independent and the new chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, said he's open to the idea. "While we must do everything that we can to greatly expand the VA's mental health capabilities, I am open to exploring options outside of the VA for contracting services with public and private mental health providers, including Tricare," Sanders said.

Veterans groups are noncommittal at this early stage. They traditionally prefer beefing up the VA's capacity rather than going outside the system. "It's a fantastic system," Joe Davis, a spokesman for Veterans for Foreign Wars, said of the VA. "For contracted-out care, we will only concede to that for extremely rural areas, or for specialized care, when that type of care is not readily available at the VA." With that caveat, Davis said the suggestion is worth a look. Dr. James Tuorila, a clinical psychologist in St. Cloud, Minn., who also advises the VFW on mental health issues, said he's afraid many of the doctors who see Tricare patients still don't have the specialized training the VA offers its psychiatrists and psychologists for treating such illnesses as post-traumatic stress disorder. "Being a veteran myself, there was an affinity to working with other veterans. The VA needs to step up on training and on offering internships so it can hire more of these professional veterans in the mental health area," Tuorila said. [Source: Associated Press article 29 Jan 2013 ++]

VA Blue Button Program

Blue Button is the personal health record inside the My HealtheVet self-service platform and through My HealtheVet, VA Blue Button enables Veterans to download an electronic file that contains their personal health information. VA released an enhanced VA Blue Button, adding several new categories of information from the VA Electronic Health Record. "We are excited to introduce these new features of VA Blue Button, advancing the quality health care we give Veterans daily. The paradigm of patient-centered care means fully engaging patients in their health and care," said Undersecretary for Health Robert A. Petzel, M.D. "Enabling patients to have better access to their health information is an important step in supporting them as active partners." Previously, Veterans with a premium My HealtheVet account could access appointments, allergies and adverse reactions, chemistry/hematology laboratory results, immunizations and wellness reminders. Improvements include:

- Vet access to the VA Continuity of Care Document (VA CCD), which contains a summary of the Veteran's essential health and medical care information. The document can be exchanged between providers and read by a growing number of computer applications. The VA

CCD uses recognized standards that support the exchange of information between health care systems and providers for effective continued care of the patient.

- Vet access to VA OpenNotes, which 'opens' clinical notes, allowing Veterans to read their health care team's notes from appointments and hospital stays. VA OpenNotes provides Veterans the ability to read and discuss notes with their health care teams, family and caregivers, offering them greater control over their health care.
- Vet access to demographics, problem list, admissions and discharges (including discharge summaries), laboratory results (microbiology), pathology reports (surgical pathology, cytology and electron microscopy), vitals and readings, radiology reports, and a listing of Electrocardiogram (EKG) reports.
- In addition, self-reported food and activity journals are now also available for inclusion in the VA Blue Button.

These improvements showcase VA's continued efforts to expand the types of information available to Veterans who have an upgraded or Premium My HealthVet account, which is easily obtained at no cost through the website at: <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>. [Source: VA News Release 29 Jan 2013 ++]

Gulf War Syndrome Update

Veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan may be suffering from the 20-year-old set of symptoms known as Gulf War Illness, according to a new report released 23 JAN by the federal Institute of Medicine. "Preliminary data suggest that (chronic multisymptom illness) is occurring in veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars as well," the report says. This may be the first time that the symptoms suffered by veterans of the 1991 Gulf War have been linked to veterans of the current wars, which started in 2001 and 2003, said Paul Rieckhoff, CEO of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. It also means the Department of Veterans Affairs' definition of who qualifies for Gulf War veterans' benefits should include those who served in Afghanistan, said Paul Sullivan, a 1991 Gulf War veteran and founder of Veterans for Common Sense. Because Wednesday's report associates the symptoms with deployment, Sullivan said, the VA "should expand the geographical definition of the current Gulf War to include the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan."

The researchers were to investigate treatments for Gulf War illness, including any existing research, to see what worked for veterans. Their research included traumatic brain injury, which is caused by blunt force to the head or proximity to an explosion; post-traumatic stress disorder, which must involve exposure to trauma; respiratory problems, fibromyalgia and chronic pain. Chronic multisymptom illness was formerly called Gulf War Syndrome, the Institute of Medicine report said. It includes symptoms in at least two of six categories: fatigue, mood and cognition issues, musculoskeletal problems, gastrointestinal problems, respiratory difficulties and neurologic issues that last for at least six months. About one-third of Gulf War veterans — or 175,000 to 250,000 people — have Gulf War illness. The symptoms are too broad for any one treatment, the report said. "Based on the voluminous evidence we reviewed, our committee cannot recommend using one universal therapy to manage the health of veterans with chronic multisymptom illness, and we reject

a 'one size fits all' treatment approach," said committee chair Bernard M. Rosof, chairman of the board of directors at Huntington Hospital in Huntington, N.Y., in a statement. "Instead, we endorse individualized health care management plans as the best approach for treating this very real, highly diverse condition."

Researchers also said there may be no specific cause for the illness. "Despite considerable efforts by researchers in the United States and elsewhere, there is no consensus among physicians, researchers and others as to the cause of CMI," the report states. "There is a growing belief that no specific causal factor or agent will be identified." Anthony Hardie, a Gulf War veteran and advocate, disagreed. "They've lumped together so many ill people that it's impossible to come up with one treatment," Hardie said. Other recent research has shown possible causes for some of the symptoms suffered by Gulf War illness. A large-scale study done by Robert Haley, chief of epidemiology at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, showed veterans have damage to their autonomic nervous system caused by exposure to nerve agents after the U.S. Air Force bombed a chemical factory. Beatrice Golomb of the medical school at the University of California-San Diego tested the value of giving doses of the coenzyme Q10 to Gulf War veterans and found that "every single" veteran found improvement from 20 symptoms.

For current war veterans, scientists have connected chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder and bronchiolitis to exposures in Iraq and Afghanistan, including to garbage pits that burned as much as 240 tons of waste in an open pit a day, as well as to dust proved to be laden with bacteria and heavy metals. Denise Nichols, also a Gulf War veteran and advocate, said she fears the report will add to Americans' belief that the symptoms are "all in our heads" — even after numerous reports have come out saying the disease is physical and real. "We need true treatment modalities," Nichols said, "that address the physical brain damage and other body organ damage from the exposures we endured." [Source: USA Today | Kelly Kennedy | 23 Jan 2013 ++]

VA Compensation & Pensions Update

Inspectors say the most stubborn, chronic mistake made by Veterans Affairs claims examiners while trying to dig their way out of a growing backlog of cases is overcompensating some veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs overpaid 12,800 veterans \$943 million from 1993 to 2009, according to projections by the VA's Office of Inspector General.

And if the error isn't corrected, inspector general auditors said another \$1.1 billion could be wasted by 2016. The VA says the projections are significantly overstated, but is fixing the problem. The House Veterans Affairs Committee plans to hold a hearing on the issue in February. The mistakes occur in a narrow batch of cases where veterans temporarily receive a 100% disability rating while undergoing surgery or debilitating treatments and convalescing. Claims examiners have repeatedly failed — often in two out of three sampled cases — to seek a follow-up medical exam to determine if the veteran's condition has improved and the temporary 100% disability rating should be reduced accordingly, inspectors said. The results are veterans who improve or recover, but receive hundreds of thousands of dollars in compensation over years for a level of disability they no longer have, inspectors said. "That (rating) will run forever until somebody like us stumbles upon it," said Brent Arronte, a director of inspections.

The 100% rating legally bars the VA from recouping overpayments that inspectors say have occurred, the department said. A common error involves cancer treatment where the disease stabilizes or goes into remission, according to inspector general reports. In one case, a veteran who improved after being treated for non-Hodgkin lymphoma was overpaid \$237,000 over 71/2 years until the mistake at a Cleveland VA office was caught by inspectors, according to a September report.

Inspectors said that claims examiners either fail to schedule follow-up exams when the disability rating is put in place, or fail to act when alerted that one is necessary. "We're a little frustrated," Sondra McCauley, deputy assistant inspector general for audits and evaluations, said of the overpayments. "It's a human error thing." Inspectors say one challenge is growing workloads for claims examiners. "People have told us there is some pressure for them to meet their production goals," Arronte said.

The VA said fixes were put in place last July to help ensure follow-up exams are scheduled. In addition, the claims process is to become fully automated this year and claims examiners will automatically be alerted that exams may be necessary, said Lois Mittelstaedt, VA benefits administration chief of staff. "We don't want any more (payments) slipping through the cracks that we find 10 years later we should have stopped," said Thomas Murphy, VA compensation service director.

"There's a lot of taxpayer dollars at risk here and we want to make sure we get the process right." A January 2011 inspector general audit first projected more than \$1 billion would be lost over five years if the temporary disability problem was not fixed, and all 42 regional office inspections since then still show errors. VA claims examiners handled 1.1 million compensation requests last year and took an average of 260 days to complete cases. The VA pays out about \$40 billion a year in compensation to veterans for service-connected disabilities. "When you're projecting \$1.1 billion over the next five years could be spent on inaccurate benefits," said Linda Halliday, assistant inspector general for audits and evaluations, "That's a lot of money ... (that) could potentially be used to serve other veterans' benefits."

[Source: USA Today | Gregg Zoroya | 23 Jan 2013 ++]

VA Expands Dates of Agent Orange Exposure in Korea from 1968-1969 to 1968-1971

Veterans who served along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in Korea during the Vietnam War now have an easier path to access health care and benefits. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) expanded the dates when illnesses associated with exposure to Agent Orange can be presumed related to their military service

Previously, VA recognized exposure for service between April 1968 and July 1969. VA now presumes exposure for service between April 1, 1968, and August 31, 1971, if a Veteran served in a unit determined by VA and the Department of Defense to have operated in an area of the DMZ where Agent Orange or other herbicides were applied. The expanded dates took effect on February 24, 2011 (see www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/korea.asp).

This presumption simplifies and speeds the application process for Veterans of the Korean DMZ. VA encourages Veterans who believe they have health problems related to Agent Orange to

submit their applications for VA health care and disability compensation benefits.

To apply for health care benefits, apply online at www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez, or contact the nearest VA health care facility at **1-877-222-VETS (8387)**.

To file a claim for disability benefits, apply online at www.ebenefits.va.gov, or contact the nearest VA regional office at **1-800-827-1000**.

Veterans who served along the Korean DMZ may also be eligible for a free Agent Orange Registry health evaluation (see page 7). The regulation expanding the dates for eligible service in Korea is available on the Office of the Federal Register website at www.regulations.gov#!documentDetail;D=VA-2009-VBA-0021-0007

VA Studies High Blood Pressure, Chronic Lung Disease Among Vietnam Veterans

VA researchers are studying U.S. Army Chemical Corps (ACC) Veterans who handled or sprayed herbicides in Vietnam to find out if they have higher rates of high blood pressure (hypertension) or lung disease than other Veterans. For lung disease, researchers will look at chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

Researchers are asking about 4,000 Veterans who served in the ACC during the Vietnam era (1964-1975) to participate. The study will compare ACC Veterans who served in Vietnam with those who did not. ACC personnel represent the largest group of Vietnam-era Veterans who had the greatest potential exposure to herbicides.

How this research helps Veterans: The study will help VA understand the relationship between herbicide exposure in Vietnam and a Veteran's risk of developing high blood pressure or COPD.

Background: VA researchers have been following this group of ACC Veterans since the 1990s. An earlier study found that those who sprayed Agent Orange or other herbicides were more likely to self-report having high blood pressure. Based on this and other studies, a 2008 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report added high blood pressure to the category of "limited or suggestive evidence of an association," meaning there could be a link with Agent Orange exposure, although only some of the studies show this. Researchers also noted a possible association between Veterans who reported spraying herbicides in Vietnam and those who had respiratory problems such as COPD.

Study Methods: VA is contacting ACC Veterans to ask if their physician has diagnosed them with high blood pressure or COPD. Researchers are also reviewing medical records and will measure the blood pressure and lung function of a smaller sample of these Veterans. Researchers cannot accept volunteers, but encourage Veterans who are contacted to participate. To learn more about this latest study, go to www.publichealth.va.gov/epidemiology/studies/vietnam-army-chemical-corps.asp.

Are you involved with an organization or know of an organization that sends care packages to our troops? If so, please contact Al Diaz @ Bigalchico@yahoo.com. We would like to have this information available to share with individuals or organizations that may like to make a donation, or submit a name of a soldier to receive a care package.

INTERESTED IN JOINING THE COALITION?

There are many benefits to join the Vietnam and All Veterans State Coalition. A voice of many is heard above a voice of one. The coalition meets quarterly at various locations in the State of Florida and we discuss and disseminate information pertaining to veterans and their benefits. To obtain information regarding joining the coalition either as an Organization, or an individual, please visit our website at VVOF.ORG coalition either as an Organization, or an individual, please visit our website at VVOF.ORG

If you, or your organization is already a member of the coalition, and there has been a change in officers, please immediately advise the coalition of these changes, including mailing addresses, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers so we may keep you up-to-date with all pertinent information

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All inquiries, questions or comments may be directed to the President, Vice President, Secretary or Treasurer. All articles printed in our newsletters are strictly the opinion of the submitter and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida State Coalition or its member organizations. Updated September 17, 2006

THE VIETNAM TRAVELING MEMORIAL WALL



About Our Wall

Our Wall is a 3/5 scale of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC, it stands six feet tall at the apex and covers almost 300 feet from end to end. The Memorial Wall is sponsored by The Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard (VVB). Work to build our Wall was started in April of 2005. The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall was completed and first shown to the public April 24, 2006.

This Traveling Memorial stands as a reminder of the great sacrifices made during the Vietnam War. It was made for the purpose of helping heal and rekindle friendships. The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall also allows people the opportunity to visit loved ones in their home town, who otherwise may not be able to make the trip to Washington.

The names on The Wall were painstakingly researched from five different data bases and cross-referenced with the Department of Informational and Organizational Reports (DIOR) in Washington, DC, and is one of the most correct and up-to-date traveling wall in the country.

Feel free to take a look at our website www.travelingwall.us, read about what we have to offer. Please contact us with any questions you might have in regards to The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall coming to your town.

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Officers 2013

Bob Neitzel President (VVB, Dustoff
Roberta Neitzel Secretary & River
Rats)
2304 Woodland Drive
Edgewater, FL 32141-4320
386-424-1989 Home 386-527-5445 (cell)
Hdwizrd7@aol.com

Al Diaz 1st VP (USA River Rats)
& Rose Fantaccione
3737 N Highway US 1
Cocoa, FL 32926
321-863-0575
Bigalchico@yahoo.com

Ralph Earrusso, 2nd VP (VVB)
Jacque Earrusso, Treasurer
4905 Secluded Way
Merritt Island, FL 32953-7967
321-453-7498
Daydrmr333@aol.com

[Ken Wakefield – Sgt of Arms \(USA
River Rats\)](#)
[Michelle Wakefield](#)
[328 Robyn Street](#)
[Cocoa, FL 32927](#)
[321-693-4762](#)
radioman@cfl.rr.com

Organizations

Florida Dustoff Association
2304 Woodland Drive
Edgewater, FL 32141
Hdwizrd7@aol.com
bbrookinsretired@gmail.com

**Combat Veterans Motorcycle
Association**
1693 Laramie Cir
Melbourne FL 32940
colesd@cfl.rr.com

**Mid Florida Korean War Veterans Ch.
#173**
250 Mira Way Apt 208
Altamonte Springs, FL 32701
Gunship442@aol.com

**National Veterans Homeless Support
Corp**
725 S DeLeon Room 118
Titusville FL 32780
info@nvhs.us

Native American Veterans Information
5170 Patricia Street
Pt. St John, FL 32927
rrbold@bellsouth.net

USA River Rats
4411 Capron Rd
Titusville, FL 32780
bigalchico@yahoo.com

Some Gave All, Inc.
3810 Murrell Road #168
Rockledge FL 32922
kewico48@aol.com

Semper Fidelis America, Inc.
4416 Usher Avenue
Orlando, FL 32822
jmurphy@semperfidelisamerica.org

Veterans Council of Martin County
PO Box 1994
Stuart, FL 34995
Veterans Council of MartinCountyInc.

Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard
PO Box 237225
Cocoa, FL 32922
vets2gether@cfl.rr.com

Vietnam Brotherhood
PO Box 1073
Venice, FL 34284
spooky@ac-47.com

**Vietnam Veterans of America State
Council**
PO Box 212348
Royal Palm Beach, FL 33421-2348
Jimrufino@yahoo.com

VVA # 1041
1 Sewalls Point
Sewall Point, FL 34996
jerrdsmith01@comcast.net

**Vietnam Veterans of Florida
Association**
2304 Woodland Drive
Edgewater, FL 32141-4320
Hdwizrd8@aol.com

Vietnam Veterans of Wakulla
21 Shoreline Drive
Ochlocknee, FL 32346
USMC-VIETNAM-GRUNT@att.net

**Vietnam and All Veterans
of Florida, Inc.**

2304 Woodland Drive
Edgewater, FL 32141-4320

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