

MARCH 2020

VFW

M A G A Z I N E

VFW CELEBRATES
**WOMEN'S
HISTORY MONTH**

ARMY VET ISSUES
CHALLENGE:
**'WRESTLE
LIKE A
GIRL'**

JEWISH TROOPS
CELEBRATED PASSOVER
IN NAZI GERMANY

VFW'S CHIEF VISITS
CORPSMEN TRAINING
AT PENDLETON

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MARCH 2020

Vol. 107 No. 6

COVER PHOTO: Sally Roberts is photographed in 2018 at the CrossFit SoCo gym in Colorado Springs, Colo. Roberts, an Army vet who served in Afghanistan, says the confidence she acquired in the military enabled her to earn honors as a world-class wrestler, skills she passes on to girls who attend her wrestling seminars. (Photo by Allison Daniell Moix)

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18 WOMEN AT WAR

March is Women's History Month. VFW is proud of all its female members and salutes all women who have worn the uniform of the U.S. military. This photographic essay features a few such women who have embraced that noble cause. **BY JANIE DYHOUSE**

'THEIR LIVES ARE IN YOUR HANDS'

VFW Commander-in-Chief William "Doc" Schmitz visited California's Camp Pendleton last year and observed how Navy corpsmen are trained there. It was a familiar location for the former Vietnam War corpsman, as he learned his job there more than 50 years ago.

BY DAVE SPIVA



'HE IS THE BEST THING TO HAPPEN TO ME'

A VFW Auxiliary president and a dog trainer in Virginia teamed up last year to provide a therapy dog to the Post for visiting veterans. The Auxiliary president says the dog has brought the members closer together and urges other Posts to do the same. **BY JANIE DYHOUSE**



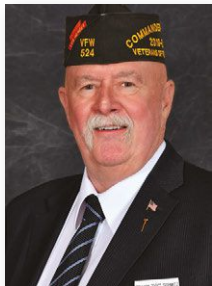
PASSOVER IN NAZI GERMANY

As World War II entered its final months in Europe, GIs from the Army's famed "Rainbow Division" organized a traditional Jewish Passover celebration. Such ceremonies had been outlawed by Nazi Germany, so it was that country's first public ceremony in seven years.

BY PATRICK J. CHAISSON



Benefits of VFW Life Membership are 'Obvious and Significant'



COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
William "Doc" Schmitz

Every VFW member should be a life member. The benefits extend not only to that member, but to his or her Post and the entire organization.

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This makes it much easier on your Post quartermaster because he or she won't have to track you down to collect your annual dues. And your Post commander can confidently count you as a member, which aids the commander's never-ending quest to retain members.

More life members mean more active members. When we lobby for veteran-friendly legislation, a robust membership of politically savvy veterans who hold politicians accountable makes a huge difference on Capitol Hill and in all the state houses around the country.

Becoming a VFW life member also helps VFW National Headquarters save money. Annual members receive multiple dues notices every year. Eliminating that need translates into a significant savings on postage and manpower. This means VFW can devote more funds toward assisting our veterans.

As a VFW life member, you'll help the organization serve more veterans, help strengthen your Post and give you the satisfaction that you made a wise choice. Be smart, save money and reap the rewards. Become a VFW life member today.



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To ensure national security
through maximum military strength.

To speed the rehabilitation
of the nation's disabled and needy veterans.

To assist the widows and orphans
and the dependents of disabled and needy veterans.

To promote Americanism through education in patriotism and constructive service to the communities in which we live.



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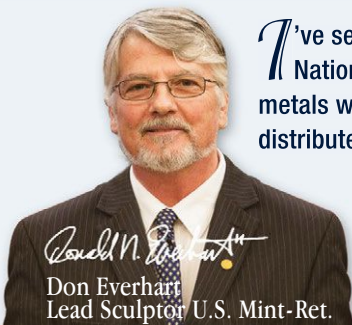
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A 'Just Cause' in Panama

I would like to compliment Jim Servi's story and add some lived-in study and observation

about the future of Panamanian management of the Canal. In my opinion, the Canal gift to Panama was a mistake as huge as the moon. We built it. After all the ingenuity and treasure spent there, we gave it away. Teddy must be spitting fire at the ex-peanut farmer (President Jimmy Carter) for this political blunder of surrendering an important strategic piece of national security real estate to a government with an unstable history in the region.

ANTHONY LOMBARDO
PAWCATUCK, CONN.

Two months earlier in October 1989, I was selected to take a National Guard Mederette to Trinidad, Bolivia, and we RON'd (remained overnight) at Fort Kobe, Panama, during the unsuccessful coup against Noriega. Our 60 troops treated 5,500 Bolivians, created lots of goodwill and were back in Texas in 15 days total time. Within a month, President George H.W. Bush signed a drug control treaty with Bolivia. Then *Just Cause* took care of that narco-traficante (drug trafficking) thug Noriega.

JAMES B. HAYS
EARLY, TEXAS

Blue Water Navy Vets

I must admit that I have some reservations about Blue Water medical claims. In 1967, I was on an amphibious ship (*USS Duluth LPD-6*), and we were transporting Marines to shore by boat. Carrier battle groups were over the horizon, nowhere near coastal waters. The following year, I was on a patrol

boat in the Mekong Delta. There was a lot of defoliating going on.

As an 81-year-old, I'm sure some of my physical problems could be attributed to Agent Orange. This chemical was dropped by cargo aircraft, at a low altitude and fell on foliage as a mist. I doubt that many of the attack aircraft on an aircraft carrier flew through this stuff. My point is, I understand why the VA has thrown in the towel on the legal battles, but many Navy ships were nowhere near mainland Vietnam.

SCOTT ANDERSON
GREEN VALLEY, ARIZ.

Remains from North Korea Returned

I proudly served in Korea from July 1953 to June 1955. I served with the 293rd Quartermaster Graves Registration Company, a search and recovery of remains during *Operation Glory*. I remember we had to provide North Korean or Chinese remains for every one [set of] American [remains] returned. I remember sitting isolated at meals at our own tables because of our smell after spending all day recovering bodies. I got the book *Korea Reborn: A Grateful Nation Honors War Veterans for 60 Years of Growth*. It brought me to tears while also promoting some healing within my soul. It brings me great pride to know that my work brought U.S. soldiers' remains home.

EARL CHICHESTER
ATHENS, MICH.

VFW Revs up at Sturgis

Have you considered an article on The Run for the Wall event? I went in 2019 and it was a very rewarding experience for an old Vietnam veteran. The mission and camaraderie are unbelievable.

There is another mission undertaken by the Patriot Guard Riders and others here on the West Coast. Alaska Airlines employees volunteer their time throughout the year to repurpose baggage carts into Fallen Soldier Carts.

They deliver those carts to airports Alaska Airlines services throughout the U.S. The Patriot Guard Riders then escort the carts to their destinations.

LEN PARSONS
MADRAS, ORE.

MOH Museum Site Announced

For the record, the only designated site for a national Medal of Honor museum as conferred by the 106th Congress is aboard the *USS Yorktown CV-10* in Mount Pleasant, S.C. [A new] \$3 million state-of-the-art national leadership center will house the new Congressional Medal of Honor Museum and will open there in mid-2023.

As a recipient of the Medal of Honor, I have long advocated that museums and memorials should be supported in other parts of the country because not every young person can get to the Charleston, S.C., area. But the federally designated national museum for this purpose remains in Mount Pleasant and will be re-established by a major presence there in short order. It did not move to Texas.

RET. MARINE MAJ. GEN. JAMES E. LIVINGSTON
MOUNT PLEASANT, S.C.

Ohio State SVA

I returned from combat duty in Vietnam in December 1969, where I had been an Army infantry platoon leader. I immediately enrolled at OSU but was not welcome. I remember having coffee at the student union one day with a fellow veteran. A young girl came up and asked how many babies we had killed.

Then I had to live through the spring riots on campus where the campus was subsequently patrolled by Army National Guard units. I have to live with those memories. Your article has given me mental relief since it appears the campus is now veteran friendly.

U.K. SEELER
FLORAL CITY, FLA.



"Mail Call" features letters from our readers in nine issues per year. If you have questions, comments or concerns about any subject or article from our most recent issue, letters can be emailed to magazine@vfw.org, with the subject line, "Mail Call," or mailed to: VFW magazine, Mail Call, 406 W. 34th Street, Suite 523, Kansas City, MO 64111. Letters must be no more than 200 words, and VFW magazine reserves the right to edit letters for clarity, length and accuracy.

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Sport Clips Donates \$1.25 Million

A VFW corporate partner presented VFW with a sizeable donation in December at VFW National Headquarters in Kansas City, Mo. Sport Clips Haircuts, a national hair-cutting franchise, gave VFW \$1.25 million to help support the Help a Hero Scholarship program for active-duty troops and veterans.

Gordon Logan, a VFW life member and CEO of Sport Clips, presented VFW Commander-in-Chief William “Doc” Schmitz with a facsimile check Dec. 9 during a news conference in VFW’s museum at National Headquarters.

Schmitz noted that 165 student veterans were using a Help a Hero scholarship in December. Since 2014, Sport Clips has awarded more than \$6.5 million in scholarships to more than 1,450 student vets.

“Working with veteran-friendly companies such as Sport Clips is one way we can help make the transition from service member to the civilian world easier for veterans and their families,” Schmitz said.

More than \$120,000 of the Sport Clips 2019 donation was raised by Sport Clips’ own \$1 per haircut donation made on Veterans Day last year.

To learn more about VFW’s scholarship programs, visit www.vfw.org/Scholarship. To learn more about Sport Clips — the official haircutter of VFW — visit <https://SportClips.com>.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL EDSON/VFW

VFW Commander-in-Chief William “Doc” Schmitz (far left) and Sport Clips CEO Gordon Logan (far right) are joined by Help a Hero Scholarship recipients Jack Yarbrough and Cris Graif, along with Sport Clips Team Leader Darin Bailey, during a check presentation Dec. 9 at VFW National Headquarters in Kansas City, Mo. Logan, a VFW life member, and his company have been supporting the VFW scholarship program since 2014, donating more than \$6.5 million since then.

Welcome Home Vietnam Vets

A non-profit organization in Florida is inviting all Vietnam War veterans to celebrate National Vietnam War Veterans Day. The national holiday is March 29 after being enacted into law in 2017.

The non-profit Welcome Home Vietnam Vets 2020 says the celebration begins on March 27 with a party at The Tiki



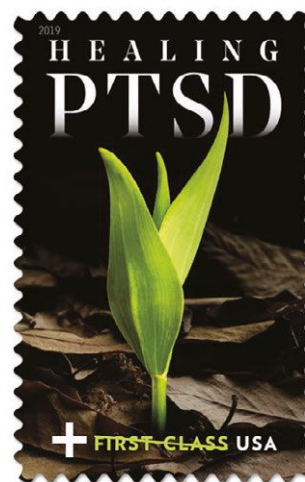
Bar at the Four Points Sheraton in Punta Gorda, Fla., about 25 miles northwest of Fort Myers, Fla.

On Saturday, March 28, the group hosts a parade through downtown Punta Gorda with

a ceremony at The Vietnam Memorial Wall of Southwest Florida. A music festival, headlined by Lee Greenwood, will take place afterward in the city’s Laishley Park.

Veterans are admitted free, but guests will be charged for the concert.

For more information, visit <https://welcomehomevietnamvets2020.org>



Post Office Issues PTSD Stamp

The U.S. Postal Service announced in November that it is selling a new postage stamp that features “a powerful symbol of the healing process” for Americans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A portion of the proceeds from the sale of the 65-cent “Healing PTSD”

stamp will go to VA and the National Center for PTSD.

To purchase stamps, access www.usps.com/shop, call 1-800-782-6724 or visit post offices nationwide.

ABOVE: The U.S. Postal Service released the “Healing PTSD” stamp in November. It features a sprouting green plant surrounded by withered leaves, a design meant to “elicit feelings of growth, healing and hope,” according to the USPS.

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onto the front. Design details include blue rib knit cuffs and hem and a brown button collar closure. The relaxed-style pullover sweater provides a comfortable fit so you can show your patriotic AND military pride in one handsome garment. Imported.

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Military Families Report ‘Negative’ Experiences With Base Housing

PHOTO BY SGT. DAMA CLARKE/US ARMY

VFW RESOLUTION NO. 410: SUPPORT STABILITY AND RELIEF FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

“We call upon the Department of Defense and Congress to review and strengthen programs and policies that support military family readiness and meet our nation’s obligations to those who serve and those who serve alongside them.”

A survey last year showed there are problems with the military’s housing program. Some military families have resorted to testifying to Congress about the issue.

BY DAVE SPIVA

A nonprofit organization’s survey conducted last year shows families living in military housing built by private developers are reporting unsafe conditions at many housing installations across the country.

The Military Family Advisor Network talked to 14,558 individuals who live or have lived within the past three years in privatized housing. The organization found that more than 55 percent of respondents had “negative” or “very negative” experiences with their property’s management. Families of enlisted service members made up about 75 percent of

the respondents and were heavily concentrated in California, North Carolina, Texas, Virginia and Hawaii.

Some of the issues reported in the survey included problems with maintenance, repairs and structural concerns of the homes, as well as mold and filth being present. Many survey participants cited concerns with the poor quality of materials used in their homes, as well as plumbing and leaking issues.

The Military Family Advisory Network also interviewed 40 of the respondents. Some of the concerns families had included the amount of basic allowance the military provides

for housing (BAH) and lack of options outside of military housing. They also said their concerns have gone ignored by housing management and, in some cases, families have had to threaten legal action in order for a company to act on complaints.

In December, military families attended a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on the military’s privatized housing. Officials from the Defense Department and service chiefs were present to hear from current and former military housing residents about some of the issues that happened while living in housing run by private housing companies.

During Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy’s testimony, he said that the Army is responsible for providing quality housing to the service’s families. *(Continued on pg. 34.)*

ABOVE: Army Gen. James McConville speaks to the Senate Armed Services Committee during a hearing on privatized housing on Dec. 3 in Washington D.C. Officials from the Department of Defense’s secretaries and service chiefs were present to hear from current and former military housing residents about some of the issues that happened while living in housing run by private housing companies.

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— J. Fitzgerald, VA



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Veterans, congressional leaders and spouses impacted by the widow's tax celebrate the passing of the *National Defense Authorization Act of 2020* on Dec. 20 at the VFW Washington Office on Capitol Hill. The law eliminates the dollar-for-dollar offset of survivor benefit payments, a long-standing VFW priority goal.

Defense Act Ends 'Widow's Tax'

President Donald Trump's signing of the *National Defense Authorization Act of 2020* on Dec. 20 terminated the long-standing "widow's tax" of surviving spouses of troops.

The law (*P.L. 116-92*) allows surviving spouses of military troops who died during active-duty service or retirees who died from a service-connected cause to keep all compensation from the government. Prior to the new law, surviving spouses who received a Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) paid a dollar-for-dollar offset from their Military Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP).

"This is a momentous victory for the more than 65,000 military spouses who endured the tragic loss of their husband or wife who paid the ultimate sacrifice," said VFW Commander-in-Chief William "Doc" Schmitz. "Without these extraordinary spouses fighting in the trenches with us, the termination of the widow's tax may not have been possible."

For many survivors, the offset com-

pletely eliminated their SBP payments and threatened their financial security.

"There is no justifiable reason why money should have ever been stripped away from our military spouses," Schmitz said.

In May 2019, VFW led the first roundtable discussion with other veterans' service organizations, congressional staffers and surviving spouses affected by the offset to create a legislative campaign to eliminate the widow's tax.

VFW National Legislative Service Associate Director Kyle Kalman said the signing of the 2020 Defense budget "rights a wrong" for military widows and widowers, who were "forced to endure" an offset of survivor benefit payments, as well as other types of compensation.

"We commend the leadership in Congress and the coalition of veterans and survivor organizations that fought alongside us for their commitment to the 65,000 surviving military spouses," Kalman said. "Our military widows and widowers deserved this victory."

Troops Get Biggest Pay Raise in 10 Years

Active-duty troops received a 3.1 percent pay raise as of Jan. 1 thanks to the passing and signing of the *National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2020*. The pay raise is the largest in a decade.

"I am proud to report that we are giving every soldier, sailor, airman, Coast Guardsman and Marine a well-earned pay raise," President Donald Trump said during the signing ceremony for the new law (*P.L. 116-92*) on Dec. 20 at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland.

The *NDAA* also will require DoD to review World War I valor medals for minority military service members who fought in the war. The law encourages DoD to work with the Valor Medals Review Task Force. The project is headed by the World War I Centennial Commission and Park University in Parkville, Mo. The University's George S. Robb Centre for the Study of the Great War currently conducts research to identify WWI veteran service records for the review.

In November, VFW awarded a \$70,000 grant to Park University for its efforts to review the valor medals from the Great War. (Read more about VFW's grant to Park University in the February 2020 issue of *VFW* magazine.)

For the military, the 2020 *NDAA* includes the funding to build:

- Almost 100 new F-35s.
- 24 new F/A-18s.
- 155 new Army helicopters.
- 165 new Abrams tanks.
- Nearly 50 Paladin howitzers.
- 10 new Navy warships — including two amphibious ships, three submarines, three destroyers and three aircraft carriers.

"The 2020 *National Defense Authorization Act* is about making sure our warfighters have the tools, resources, and equipment you need to fight and to win — all the time, to win," Trump said before singing the *NDAA* into law. "We're making our military stronger and more powerful than ever before."



FOR MORE INFORMATION about specific legislation or VA benefits, contact VFW's Washington Office at vfw@vfw.org. A member of VFW's National Veterans Service staff will respond as soon as possible.

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Space Force is Now the 'Sixth' Military Service

The U.S. Space Force is now officially a military service, in line with the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.

The signing of the *National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2020 (P.L. 116-92)* by President Donald Trump established the newly formed Space Force as a military service under the Air Force. The law authorizes the Secretary of the Air Force Barbara Barrett to transfer Air Force personnel to the newly established space-faring service. The budget to start the service was authorized at \$40 million, which is a significant cut from the Pentagon's request of \$72.4 million.

"With my signature today, you will witness the birth of the Space Force, and that will now be officially the sixth branch of the United States Armed Forces," Trump said during a signing ceremony at Joint Base Andrews, in Maryland. "That is something really incredible."

In 2018, Trump directed the Pentagon to create an independent military service to oversee missions and operations in space, citing threats from China and Russia as a reason to create the service.

During the NDAA signing ceremony, Trump appointed Air Force Gen. Jay Raymond as the first Chief of Space Operations, making him a part of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the first member of the Space Force. Raymond served as the commander of the U.S. Space Command before the creation of the Space Force.



Air Force Gen. Jay Raymond was named the **First Chief of Space Operations** in December.

PHOTO COURTESY OF U.S. AIR FORCE



PHOTO BY AIRMAN 1ST CLASS AMBER POWELL/U.S. AIR FORCE

Water at 300 Bases Could Have Been Contaminated by Fire Fighting Chemicals

Hundreds of bases, located in all 50 states, might have water contamination caused by perfluorinated compounds (PFCs). Those chemicals are commonly used for extinguishing aircraft fires on military bases, according to the Environmental Working Group.

Using Department of Defense (DoD) data, the Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit environmental activist organization, released a statement in December stating that of the almost 300 sites, 138 had "not been previously identified" by the organization.

An interactive map from the Environmental Working Group of the affected areas can be found by visiting www.ewg.org/pfaschemicals.

"In addition, 42 of these sites were not included on a list of 401 locations the Pentagon gave to Congress of active and former installations where PFA contamination was known or suspected," according to a press release from the organization.

Last year, DoD identified 401 active and inactive state-side bases that have an area of exposure to PFCs. The water at or near 126 of the reported military bases contain "potentially harmful" levels of PFCs, according to *Military Times*.

DoD found that 61 percent of the

2,668 water wells it tested on or near base communities were above the Environmental Protection Agency's recommended levels.

PFCs, such as Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF), are linked to cancer and proven harmful to fetuses and infants.

In December, Senate members dropped provisions that aimed to reduce PFCs in drinking water in communities around military bases from the *National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2020*. However, the final version of the NDAA did include phasing out the use of the firefighting foam by Oct. 1, 2024, with the exception of shipboard use. The NDAA also immediately prohibited the use of AFFF in military training exercises.

VFW National Legislative Service Associate Director Matthew Doyle said that the presence of PFCs in drinking water at military bases poses "numerous health risks" to service members, veterans and families.

"DoD must take appropriate measures to identify and rehabilitate existing contaminated sites and implement safeguards to prevent future contamination," Doyle said. "The VFW will fight to make sure those impacted will receive the care and benefits they deserve."

ABOVE: Air Force troops and fire protection specialists from the New Jersey Air National Guard's 177th Fighter Wing extinguish a simulated aircraft fire with Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) on June 12, 2015, at Military Sealift Command Training Center East in Freehold, N.J. Perfluorinated compounds, such as AFFF, are linked to cancer and known to be harmful to fetuses and infants.

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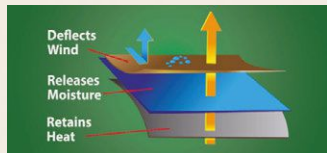


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Afghanistan veteran and founder of Wrestle Like A Girl, Sally Roberts, works with a young woman on the wrestling mat in 2017 during a Wrestle Like A Girl Empowerment Camp. Roberts said she learned to believe in herself while in the military, which is why she created the nonprofit.

ARMY VET CHAMPIONS WRESTLING 'LIKE A GIRL'

Sally Roberts' 2012 deployment to Afghanistan led to the creation of a nonprofit that promotes female wrestling. She says her time in uniform made it possible.

BY KARI WILLIAMS

After a failed Olympic bid, wrestler Sally Roberts set her sights on the Army. If she hadn't, she never would have volunteered for deployment to Afghanistan or met the women who inspired her nonprofit, Wrestle Like A Girl.

"I was incredibly depressed from not making the Olympic team," said Roberts, who joined the Army in 2009 after placing second in the 2008 U.S. Olympic Team Trials. "I knew if I didn't change my physical space, my mental space would never change. The Army gave me the opportunity to re-constitute myself in a new way."

Roberts served with the Army Reserve's 320th Psychological Operations Company out of Clackamas, Ore., from September 2012 to April 2013. During her service, she said, she witnessed a camaraderie she had previously only seen in the Olympics.

Her voluntary deployment to Afghanistan, where her duties included speaking with Afghani women, also reinforced the love she had for her country — and her ability to do a job.

"Little girls would see me, and they saw a soldier [who] was a woman," Roberts said, "and I could feel the awe that they had looking at me."

Roberts said her military career has

been the "most influential experience" in her life, and, at the end of the day, taught her how to lead.

FROM MISCHIEF TO THE MAT

Roberts said she had a "troubled childhood" and by the time she reached eighth grade was given a choice between juvenile detention or an after-school activity. She tried out for "all the girl sports" and was cut every time. Then she found wrestling, a "no-cut sport."

She became the first in her family to graduate from high school and college, secured two world bronze medals in freestyle wrestling and is a three-time U.S. national champion.



WRESTLE LIKE A GIRL MISSION

To empower girls and women through the sport of wrestling to become leaders in life.

Sally Roberts, founder of Wrestle Like A Girl, coaches and mentors young female wrestlers in 2017 at a Wrestle Like A Girl Empowerment Camp. Campers learn wrestling techniques, proper nutrition, hydration and sport psychology.



Wrestling, according to Roberts, had “almost everything” to do with her joining the military.

“If I had made the Olympic team, I would’ve had a heart full of joy,” said Roberts, who was named USA Wrestling Woman of the Year in 2018 by USA Wrestling in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Not making the team in 2008 prompted her to look into the military, and she approached a recruiter with a goal in mind — the “toughest job any girl can have right off the street.”

She also asked to deploy to Afghanistan, and it was there she realized there might be “something left” for her in the wrestling world.

“I volunteered for deployment because I had unfinished business in my heart when it came to representing the United States of America,” Roberts said.

FROM WCAP TO WRESTLE LIKE A GIRL

Once in the Army, Roberts became aware of the World-Class Athlete Program (WCAP). She joined after returning from Afghanistan and finished out her time in the Army with WCAP. For Roberts, WCAP provided a “soft landing” for her transition out of the military.

“From that point, I knew that I could have an impact on the world that was larger than myself,” Roberts said, “and that was where Wrestle Like A Girl came from.”

Had it not been for learning to believe in herself while in the military, she said, she does not believe that she would have created Wrestle Like A Girl in 2016. And those girls she met while serving in Afghanistan factored into the decision.

“If someone’s going to say something about this sport or about girls in America, I want it to be me,” Roberts said.

Through Wrestle Like A Girl, Roberts said she wants to show that women are competent and able to “rise up to challenges each and every day.”

In the nearly four years of the nonprofit’s existence, Roberts said her biggest accomplishment is two-fold — helping female wrestling become the “fastest growing sport” in the U.S. and convincing multiple stakeholders she has worked with that female wrestling has value.

Roberts’ nonprofit work includes coordinating women’s wrestling clinicians who lead “empowerment” camps and clinics that teach wrestling techniques to young female wrestlers. The young women also learn about the importance of proper nutrition, hydration and sport psychology.

To learn more about Wrestle Like A Girl, visit wrestlelikeagirl.org.

EMAIL magazine@vfw.org

Kari Williams is a freelance writer based in Kansas City, Mo.



Wrestle Like A Girl founder Sally Roberts, right, with Talum Smith from Ferrum College last October at the Art of Wrestling Fourth Annual Gala in Washington, D.C. Smith received the 2019 Wrestle Like A Girl Afsoon Johnston Courage Award.



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VFW Salutes Women Veterans

Throughout the history of the nation, women have come forward to serve — even when it was not considered the norm. Women's History Month in March is a time to reflect on sacrifices made by these female trailblazers.

BY JANIE DYHOUSE

While VFW values the service of all veterans, March is a time to pay tribute to the women who have served and are serving our country.

Women like Sharon Ann Lane, who became the only U.S. military woman killed in action in Vietnam, or Jamie Fallon, a member of VFW Post 1503 in Woodbridge, Va., who was killed at the Pentagon in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, need always be remembered.

But so, too, do the women who did not make headlines for their service — the everyday mothers, wives, daughters and sisters who joined the military to serve with pride.

VFW thanks you for your service and is proud to have you in our ranks. Your membership makes us stronger. ★

EMAIL jdyhouse@vfw.org



PHOTO COURTESY OF WOMEN IN MILITARY SERVICE FOR AMERICA MEMORIAL

VFW FILE PHOTO





FAR LEFT, TOP: As a member of the Women's Army Corps, Spec. 4 Esther Gleaton types correspondence in 1968 as a clerk/typist in Long Binh, Vietnam.

FAR LEFT, BELOW: Army 1st Lt. Phyllis Hocking checks a glucose apparatus in the 36th Evac Hospital on Dec. 24, 1944 on Leyte, Philippines.

TOP RIGHT: Army Capt. Jane Thurness puts her helmet to good use as a wash basin in the tent she called home in 1951 during the Korean War.

BOTTOM: Air Force 1st Lt. Kathy Hambleton, the navigator aboard a KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft, checks her charts while on a refueling flight during the Persian Gulf War.



VFW Salutes Women Veterans



ABOVE: Female Engagement Team members Pfc. Kelly Shutka, Pfc. Rachel Miller, interpreter Laila Khoshnaw and Sgt. Richelle Aus prepare to search a woman on a donkey in 2010 in Afghanistan's Zabul province.

RIGHT: Marine Sgt. Jessica Gonzales gives the go-ahead to the crew on a CH-53D Super Stallion helicopter on March 31, 2006, before flying from Al Taqaddum to Al Asad in Iraq.



VFW FILE PHOTO

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Earning the Title ‘Fleet Marine Force Corpsman’

In September, VFW's Commander-in-Chief got a first-hand look at how the Navy is training its corpsmen at Camp Pendleton, Calif. The Chief said it had changed substantially since he was there 50 years ago.



**STORY AND PHOTOS
BY DAVE SPIVA**

Throughout America's history, Navy corpsmen have supported Marines in battle. Through the generations, Marines have relied on corpsmen to keep them alive and fighting, treating corpsmen as one of their own on the battlefield.

But in order to serve alongside Marines, corpsmen have to go through the same rigorous training and abide by the standards expected of Marines.

After Navy hospital corpsman “A” school, sailors selected to be embedded with a Marine Corps unit have to go through additional training at a field medical training school. A sailor will either attend training at Field Medical Training Battalion East, in Camp Lejeune, N.C., or Field Medical Training Battalion West, in Camp Pendleton, Calif., to earn the title of Fleet Marine Force (FMF) Corpsman.

‘DOC’S’ RETURN

On Sept. 23, 2019, VFW Commander-in-Chief William “Doc” Schmitz met with the leadership and soon-to-be FMF corpsmen of Field Medical Training Battalion West. For Schmitz, it was a familiar experience.

Schmitz attended the same school in 1969 in order to be a corpsman with the Marines. Then-Hospital corpsman 3rd Class Schmitz embedded with Golf Co.,

Navy Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Dennis Marin assesses a sailor portraying a patient during a drill that includes participation by Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Lorenzo Quinn (the patient), Hospitalman Apprentice Viktor Presti and Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Bo Taylor on Sept. 23, 2019, at the Field Training Area of Field Medical Training Battalion West at Camp Pendleton, Calif. These sailors are corpsmen training to be a part of Marine units that deploy overseas.



2nd Bn., 26th Marines, and served in the Vietnam War in 1969-70.

"This has been, by far, my best trip I've taken since becoming a VFW chair officer," Schmitz said while touring the school's training grounds. "The professionalism of the leadership and corpsmen of the FMF training school is very impressive. The training these Corpsmen receive is far and beyond anything I ever did to train."



VFW Commander-in-Chief William "Doc" Schmitz hands a personalized Ka-Bar knife to Navy Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Dennis Marin, the leading petty officer of Medical Training Battalion West, on Sept. 23, 2019, at Camp Pendleton, Calif. Schmitz, who trained to be a corpsman at Camp Pendleton in 1969, said he was "very impressed" with the leaders and students of the FMF training school.

Schmitz's trip to Camp Pendleton was a part of his efforts to learn about the training, readiness and morale of troops serving in the military.

"Talking to these FMF corpsmen and their leaders gives us a better idea of what is going on here at the ground level," Schmitz said. "These trips are vital to maintaining a relationship with our armed forces and spreading the word about VFW's advocacy and programs for those who served in the past and are serving now."

PREPARING SAILORS FOR BATTLE

Since 1950, Field Medical Training Battalion West, a part of the Marine Corps Training Command, has been on the Camp Del Mar grounds of Camp Pendleton. Today, the training for corpsmen is eight weeks long, and the course graduates more than 700 sailors every year.

"Our vision here is to produce the best trained FMF corpsmen," said Navy Capt. Michael Enriquez, commanding officer of the west coast's training facility.

The field training includes participat-

ing in tactical combat casualty scenarios, as well as hiking, combat patrolling and navigating terrain. Students also participate in several physical fitness training sessions to ensure they are ready to operate with Marine Corps units, Enriquez said.

While at the FMF training school, Schmitz spoke to many soon-to-be graduating corpsmen about VFW's advocacy for service members, veterans and their families. The Commander-in-Chief also told sailors about services VFW offers troops, such as *Unmet Needs* grants and *Help A Hero* scholarships.

"Most of these sailors don't know about these programs because their leadership doesn't know about these programs," Schmitz said. "I'm here to change that and to let people know of all the great things VFW does for not just veterans, but for the men and women serving in the military."

WORDS OF WISDOM

Before graduating from FMF training, these corpsmen endured a grueling final



VFW Commander-in-Chief William "Doc" Schmitz addresses soon-to-be graduates of Field Medical Training Battalion West on Sept. 23, 2019, at Camp Pendleton, Calif. Schmitz talked to the sailors about services VFW offers active-duty troops, including *Unmet Needs* grants and *Help A Hero* scholarships.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FIELD MEDICAL TRAINING BATTALION WEST



A graduating class of Navy corpsmen poses for a group photo in March 1969 at Camp Pendleton, Calif. VFW Commander-in-Chief William "Doc" Schmitz (top left, back row) is a former Navy corpsman who served with Golf Co., 2nd Bn., 26th Marines, during the Vietnam War in 1969-70.

exercise consisting of an 8-mile hike while carrying about 60 pounds of gear and complete a patient assessment drill. This capstone event ensures that corpsmen are ready to serve alongside Marines on a battlefield, thus earning the title of FMF Corpsman.

Schmitz also gave encouraging words to the corpsmen about to graduate FMF

training. He said Marines will rely on them on the battlefield.

"If you take care of them, they will take care of you," he said. "Don't be afraid of telling a Marine to help you on the battlefield. You are the ones who have to step up and be counted on, because their life is in your hands." ★

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MEETING SAN DIEGO COUNTY'S VETERANS

While in Southern California in September, VFW Commander-in-Chief William "Doc" Schmitz met with members of the San Diego Veterans County Coalition at the Veterans Resource Center in Oceanside, Calif. Schmitz spoke to many of the leaders from local VFW and American Legion Posts in San Diego County.

During the meeting, he encouraged the members to work with each other and collaborate on projects and events for the veterans of San Diego County, which has one of the largest military and veterans' populations in the United States.

ABOVE: VFW Commander-in-Chief William "Doc" Schmitz exchanges challenge coins with American Legion Department of California Commander Ed Grimsley on Sept. 24, 2019, at the Veterans Resource Center in Oceanside, Calif.

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Hillcrest High School English teacher Randy Story addresses a crowd last April at the Wings of Honor Museum in Walnut Ridge, Ark. Story's class interviewed various local veterans for a documentary for the museum and the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project.

Students Learn 'What Legacies Really Are'

A group of high school students in Arkansas interviewed nearly 30 veterans last year for a documentary. The students heard first-hand accounts from veterans about what it's like to serve in a war zone.

BY KEN HEARD

Army Chief Warrant Officer Billy Barber stood atop the Chugach Mountain in 1967 at the Summit Site in Anchorage Borough, Alaska. He looked down at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson and the school where his daughter was enrolled and thought his life was about to change.

Russian aircraft had flown into U.S. airspace — a maneuver Soviet pilots often did in an almost taunting fashion to steal Army radio frequencies. But this time they entered farther than before, sending

Barber and other soldiers into a scramble. They armed the Nike-Hercules missiles and waited for launch orders.

Barber, a member of the U.S. Army's 43rd Air Defense Artillery Regiment, gazed below at his town and then went to work.

"I wanted to take a last look at where we lived," he said. "Then I did what I was supposed to do. We really thought this was the start of World War III."

Barber, now 76, and living in Hoxie, Ark., shared that story last year with a class of 11th-grade English students

at Hillcrest High School in the town of Strawberry in rural northern Arkansas.

The students interviewed 27 area veterans of the wars in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan on camera. Overseen by teacher Randy Story, the students then put the interviews together in a 55-minute documentary that preserves the veterans' recollections of war and their service.

"We went through some hair-raising times," said Barber, a life member and former commander of VFW Post 11300 in Walnut Ridge, Ark. "Kids nowadays think that being in the military



Joseph DeClerk, a member of VFW Post 4556 in Pocahontas, Ark., shakes the hand of Marcus Jackson, a student at Hillcrest High School in Strawberry, Ark., last year. After hearing DeClerk speak about his war time experiences, Jackson said he was inspired to join the military after graduating this spring.

only means being shot at. It takes a lot of effort to make a few things go. Contrary to belief, we are all one country. There are a lot of sacrifices made for the common bond."

PRESERVED IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The interviews will be catalogued by the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project, a program that began in 2000.

"A constant in history is narrative," Story said in explaining the purpose of his project. "I wanted to impart on my students the power of personal narrative, along with what our veterans have done to make our lives better."

Students began taping the interviews with veterans on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, and coincidentally concluded them on Dec. 7, the day the U.S. observes the 1941 bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Many of the narratives are poignant accounts of war. Others were simply heartbreaking.

Earnest Ivy, an Army veteran of Vietnam and the 1991 Persian Gulf War, admitted in the documentary to suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. He broke down into tears when talking about a leave he took to see his wife while serving in Vietnam between 1968 and 1970.

"I met my wife in Hawaii," said

the member of VFW Post 4556 in Pocahontas, Ark. "But I had to go back."

Don Stone, a Marine who served in Vietnam from 1966 to 1970, said people asked him how he adjusted when returning to the states.

"People said we changed," Stone explains in the documentary. "We went in as kids. We were still the same when we came back."

Instead, Stone, a member of VFW's Department of Arkansas, said the country had changed. The assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy in 1968, police clashes with demonstrators the same year at the Democratic convention in Chicago and war protests around the country made America unrecognizable to some veterans.

"I think you had a hard time adjusting to us," he said. "What you had when we left wasn't the same as what we came back to. A lot of us left home and haven't been back since."

INSPIRED TO JOIN THE MILITARY

One interview led to Joseph DeClerk, 70, of Pocahontas, Ark., regaining his lost medals that he had earned while serving in the Army in Vietnam from 1968 to 1970.

During his interview with DeClerk, student Marcus Jackson, 16, learned about how the veteran lost his Purple Heart and Bronze Star during moves

over the years.

"I thought, 'I want to get his medals back,'" Jackson said. "The interview gave me a different perspective about veterans."

Jackson told Story about DeClerk's missing medals, and Story called Arkansas state representatives and military advisors for help. Within a few months, the teacher was able to get new medals for DeClerk, a member of VFW Post 4556.

Jackson presented them in April to DeClerk during a debut showing of the students' documentary at the Wings of Honor Museum in Walnut Ridge, Ark.

"I wasn't expecting that at all," DeClerk said. "I am impressed."

Jackson said the interview experience so moved him that he's decided to join the military after graduating Hillcrest High School in 2020.

Student Ally Martin said she learned stories that she had never heard before when she interviewed her grandfather. Randall Gawf, an Army Specialist 4th class with the 589th Engineer Battalion in Vietnam, told her a harrowing tale of his last day in the war zone.

Gawf told his granddaughter he had already turned his weapon in that day and was at the Tan Son Nhut airport in Saigon waiting transport home when enemy troops began firing heavily on them.

"He said he jumped down and covered up and prayed he would come home," Martin said. "I thought about that and realized if he hadn't come home, I would not be here today."

'KEEP THEIR MEMORIES ALIVE'

In addition to preserving memories, the project also brought families closer together and bridged gaps between the teenagers and their subjects. Students realized that they are only a few years younger than the veterans were during their time in service, said Anita Deason, a retired Arkansas National Guard colonel who serves as the military and veterans affairs liaison for Sen. John Boozman (R-Ark.)



Hillcrest High School English teacher Randy Story introduces a documentary film his students produced about local veterans to a crowd last April at the Wings Of Honor Museum in Walnut Ridge, Ark. The taped interviews will become part of the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress.

Deason said families tend to shy away from talking to relatives about their service, fearing it might trigger bad memories. Veterans, in turn, often think families are not interested in their stories. It creates a cycle of silence, she said.

Deason, who last served as a human resources officer in the military, said Story's project was "amazing."

"I've not seen anything more power-

ful," she said. "We have 16- and 17-year-old kids sitting at the feet of 70- and 80-year-old veterans and sharing stories. We are losing our veterans through time. This is a way to keep their memories alive."

Mickayla Smith, 17, interviewed Bobby Bratcher, 55, of Walnut Ridge, Ark., an Air Force master sergeant. Bratcher, whom Smith knew from her church, served in

both *Operation Enduring Freedom* and *Operation Iraqi Freedom*.

"I got to know him better through this," she said. "I gained a lot of respect for him, learning what he went through and what he was willing to do for us."

Story said his project "exceeded his expectations." He will give copies of the documentary to the Wings of Honor Museum to sell.

"A lot of our kids suddenly became very aware of what generations before them have done," Story said. "It showed them what legacies really are." ✪

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Ken Heard is a former newspaper and television reporter based in Jonesboro, Ark. He currently is the media information director for the Craighead County (Ark.) Prosecuting Attorney's office.

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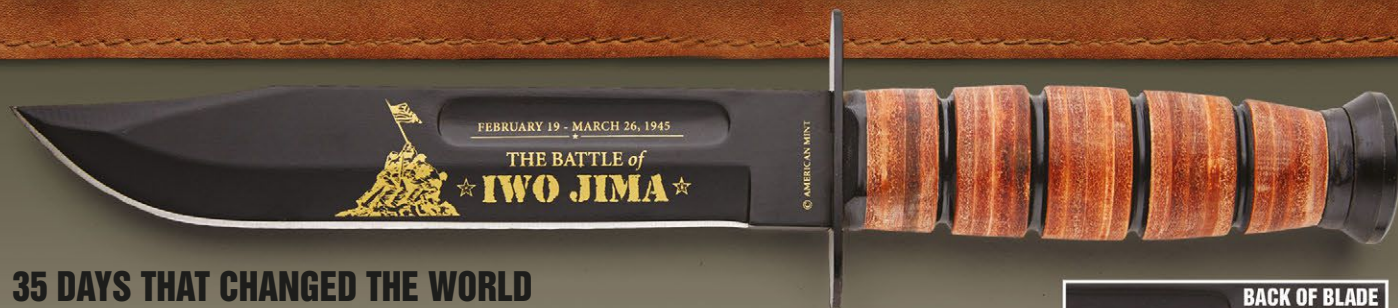
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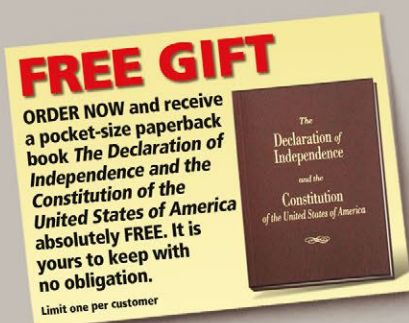
On February 19, 1945, U.S. Marines hit the shores of Iwo Jima after 3 days of pre-invasion bombing. Their objective was a dormant volcano named Mt. Suribachi, which rose 546 feet above the shore. Control of Suribachi meant control of the island.

The climb up Suribachi was fought inch by inch. The Japanese fought from a fortified network of underground bunkers which made gunfire ineffective. The high ground had to be taken using flame throwers and grenades. Finally, on February 23, U.S. forces reached the summit. The raising of the American flag that day provided a lasting impression, inspiring not only the combatants, but also a war-weary nation.

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'We Would All Go to Vietnam'



Five brothers who all served in Vietnam visited the Vietnam Veterans Memorial last October. It was their first trip to The Wall and served as their personal “welcome home.”

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.

For the first time in the five decades since returning to the U.S. from Vietnam, the Miller brothers found themselves together in Washington, D.C.

In front of hundreds of spectators, swallowed by cheers and bottled-up emotion, the five brothers strolled side-by-side, inspecting the names of more than 58,000 fallen Americans etched along the two acres of black granite walls that make up the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at the National Mall.

“It gave us a chance to finally see some of the guys we grew up with in Decatur, (Ala.) that got killed in Vietnam,” said

John Miller, who served with the 1st Bn., 5th Marines in Da Nang from February to November of 1968.

“I picked out one name in particular,” said James Miller, who also served as a Marine in Da Nang. “We had joined as a buddy-plan — his name was John McVay. I was able to see his name and scratch it off.”

The five brothers (Leo, Willie, Thomas, John and James) from Decatur, Ala., joined a group of 28 veterans on behalf of Forever Young Veterans, a foundation founded in 2006 that sets out to fund trips for veterans that include the monuments in D.C.

For the Millers, in particular, the trip quenched a long-awaited “welcome

home” that eluded them for nearly five decades since their return home.

“It was a kind of recognition we didn’t get when we first came back from Vietnam,” said Willie Miller, who served in the Army’s 101st Airborne. “We were treated like a second-class citizen at the time, when all we had done was answer our country’s call.”

The trip also put their unity in perspective. “When we joined the service, we had no idea that we would all go to Vietnam,” James said. “Then we had no idea we would all come back. Now we’re all here together, and it’s special.”

✪
EMAIL irodriguez@vfw.org

ABOVE: (Left to right) James, Thomas, John, Leo and Willie Miller embrace on Oct. 18, 2019, in front of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The brothers all served in Vietnam during the war.

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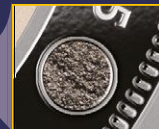
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War Map Leads to MIA Clues

A map that once saved this Vietnam War veteran's life now serves a different purpose in strengthening relations between two nations.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.

A few months after settling back in Southern California last year, Gary LoGalbo and his wife took inventory. They fished through an array of mementos stuffed in cardboard boxes scattered across the garage of their new San Clemente residence.

Among the war memorabilia, old clothes and photographs, the 73-year-old LoGalbo found a tattered map of a foreign land sodden with wounds from two nations still healing from them nearly five decades later.

The map had served its purpose for LoGalbo many, many years ago in Vietnam, helping him steer clear of trouble during the tense years that followed his initial tour in October 1967. But instead of stuffing it back in the box, his wife, a “history buff,” urged him to keep the map breathing above the fold of cardboard.

Then serendipity struck.

LoGalbo, a VFW Post 9934 member in San Juan Capistrano, Calif., and his wife read through *VFW* magazine's October 2019 issue, coming to a halt on page 6. In bold black letters, the map found its postmortem purpose — Do You Have Memorabilia from the Vietnam War?

“It was because of my wife, really,” LoGalbo said. “I didn’t think much of it at first, you know, every time you think back on combat and war, it brings a ton of bad memories. But she talked me into mailing it in, and so I did it thinking it would help.”

A QUID PRO QUO

After sitting in LoGalbo's possessions for 51 years, the map was headed back home.

It traveled from California to Washington, D.C., via envelope, where it landed in the hands of VFW Washington Office Executive Director B.J. Lawrence.

From Lawrence, it quickly passed through the Defense POW/MIA

Accounting Agency and into the possession of U.S. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, who in late November 2019 put it in the hands of Vietnam's Defense Minister General Ngo Xuan Lich.

Unbeknownst to LoGalbo, who had used the map to guide himself around the outlying villages of Bien Hoa while on patrol and convoy excursions for the 7020th Military Police Battalion out of Long Binh Air Base, the map held more than just routes marking potentially dangerous areas for his troops to avoid.

The map, scribbled in cheap ballpoint ink, provided the U.S. military coordinates to an unmarked North Vietnamese gravesite with an estimated “dozen or so of their soldiers.”

In an attempt to add substance to the POW/MIA efforts, LoGalbo's map served as the marquee artifact during Esper's visit to Hanoi. It joined five other North Vietnamese artifacts that yielded identification cards and dog tags belonging to

LEFT: Gary LoGalbo poses at Long Binh Air Base near Bien Hoa in South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. LoGalbo served in the 7020th Military Police Battalion, which saw extensive combat during the Tet Offensive in February 1968.

RIGHT: B.J. Lawrence, executive director, VFW Washington Office, displays Vietnamese artifacts last fall at the VFW Washington Office. The items were presented to Kelly McKeague, director, Defense POW/MIA Accountability Agency, as part of VFW's commitment to help account for all missing Americans.

several missing Americans in return.

The infant stages of this quid pro quo between both nations provides a window of closure on each side. Currently, about 1,592 American service members are unaccounted for as a result of the Vietnam War. For the Vietnamese, the number leaps to nearly 300,000.

"This is a two-pronged effect," said retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Kelly McKeague, who serves as the POW/MIA Accounting Agency's director. "Not only is there potential to find answers that families have sought for many years, but it also advances our relationship with Vietnam. Every time we give them an actionable item, it just raises the level of appreciation."

ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE

In the early hours of Jan. 30, 1968, about 80,000 NVA and Viet Cong troops swarmed 100 cities and outposts in South Vietnam.

Less than 24 hours later, the ambush found its way outside the Long Binh Air Base perimeter, where LoGalbo and fellow MPs sat confined to foxholes fortified by sandbags at the front gate.

LoGalbo had seen little action since his October 1967 arrival at Long Binh, about 4 miles southeast of Bien Hoa Air Base. But on Jan. 31, 1968 — 15 days after his birthday — enemy rockets and mortar rounds rained down from the obscurity of a coffee-black sky, pounding the air-base he was sworn to protect.

Long Binh contained one of South Vietnam's largest ammo dumps, and the NVA incessantly fired at it for three full days, connecting several times during what became known as the Tet Offensive.

The explosions around Long Binh and Bien Hoa swallowed the wailing of sirens and the thunder crack of gunshots,

PHOTO BY TERRENCE HAYES/VFW



unleashing a roar so grand that Saigon felt its wrath about 21 miles away.

"We were in a real bad situation because we were stuck on base, and what they were trying to do was hit the ammo bunkers we protected," LoGalbo said. "Sometimes they did, and explosions were so loud and powerful that we were told it shattered windows in Saigon."

When the three-day attack by the NVA and Vietcong ended on a February morning smoldered in sunlight, LoGalbo remembers peering over the perimeter and catching sight of many dead enemy soldiers scattered across a field sodden with blood.

"There were so many dead, so many North Vietnamese all over the place," LoGalbo said. "I assume that it was the South Vietnamese that buried those bodies in the end."

Following the Tet Offensive, LoGalbo became a squad leader and routinely found himself on convoy excursions and patrols around the villages near Bien Hoa. It was during this time in 1968 that LoGalbo first noticed the map.

"We always had South Vietnamese interpreters with us to help out when we went out to the villages," LoGalbo recalled. "One of them always had this map, and I would ask him about it. Then one day he just offered it to me, saying, 'If you think you need it, then I'll give it to you.'"

The map eased LoGalbo's second tour of duty, helping him guide others around the hollow jungles and obscure villages deep in the countryside and away from Long Binh.

"It really helped me keep out of trouble," LoGalbo admitted. "Without a map or compass, there's no way you can get around a foreign country with a lot of jungle. Utilizing this map at the time kept me alive and out of trouble by outlining areas to go and not go when on convoys."

LAYING THEM TO REST

Vietnamese culture professes that soldiers who die but remain unaccounted for don martyrdom, wandering in purgatory until their bodies are found and given a proper burial.

The fabric of American families torn by war, too, hinges on the healing process that accounting and properly burying their dead fathers, grandfathers and uncles can provide.

The VFW hopes that LoGalbo's map propels other Vietnam War veterans to step forward and submit any artifacts that can help strengthen relations with Vietnam, which can in turn help the POW/MIA agency in recovering any of the missing Americans still beneath foreign soil.

"Our VFW members, and their families, continue to answer the call in this very important effort to bring closure to those who lost loved ones during the Vietnam War," Lawrence said on behalf of the VFW. "This display of diplomacy will only help in our efforts to reach our true goal and promise to our families affected by the Vietnam War — and that's to achieve the fullest possible accounting of those Americans missing from the Vietnam War." ★

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"We must fix the current housing crisis using a house-to-house approach," McCarthy said. "We must also fix the governance model and address underlying issues to ensure systematic change."

After the committee hearing on Capitol Hill, President Donald Trump signed the *National Defense Authorization Act of 2020* on Dec. 20. The new law included a so-called "tenant's bill of rights" for base housing residents. The law puts base and regional commanders in charge of settling disputes between tenants and landlords. 📧

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MILITARY HOUSING PRIVATIZATION INITIATIVE (MHPI)

Enacted by Congress in 1996, MHPI was created to help the Department of Defense improve housing and quality of life for troops and their families. MHPI was set in place to attract private companies to provide housing faster and more efficiently than the military's traditional construction process.

TOP ISSUES REPORTED BY THE MILITARY FAMILY ADVISORY NETWORK

Of the more than 14,000 participants who took part in the survey, the following were the most reported problems.

ISSUE	RESPONSE COUNT	MANIFEST EFFECT
Maintenance, repairs, or remediation	6,166	56.8%
Mold	3,248	29.9%
Filth in homes	2,687	24.7%
Structural concerns	2,343	21.6%
Poor quality materials	2,170	20.0%
Plumbing and leaks	1,912	17.6%
Basic Allowance for Housing	1,898	17.5%
Management	1,775	16.3%
Climate control	1,695	15.6%
Dilapidated and outdated	1,641	15.1%



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An Auxiliary president's pet in Virginia is now a VFW therapy dog. The canine, Shadow, is known to put smiles on the faces of hospitalized vets.



BY JANIE DYHOUSE

'Divine Intervention' Brings Therapy Dog to VFW Post

President of VFW Auxiliary 8545 Cheryl Brown had always wanted to find a way to thank her brother, Lynn Thomas Brown, for his service in Vietnam. So when she got a 10-week-old German Shepherd puppy last year, she knew what she had to do.

Thanks to the generosity of her neighbors in the countryside of Smithfield, Va., Brown was able to purchase the puppy

for less than half what it would normally have cost.

Because of her good fortune in getting the German Shepherd, Brown decided to have her pup, Shadow, trained to be a therapy dog for veterans. She thought it would be fitting to have Shadow at the VFW Post for events, such as when nearby VA hospitals bring patients to visit.

In what Brown calls "divine intervention," she met James Todd, owner of

Todd's K-9 Training, at a VFW breakfast not long after she got Shadow. The pair started up a conversation about training therapy dogs.

"He told me it would cost between \$10,000-\$12,000 to train Shadow," Brown said. "I told him I'd have to think it over and talk with my Auxiliary members about it."

Todd, meanwhile, left the Post, but couldn't get Brown or Shadow out of his

VFW Post 8545 Auxiliary therapy dog Shadow provides comfort for veterans throughout the Smithfield, Va., area. His owner, Cheryl Brown, is the president of the Post Auxiliary.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHERYL BROWN

From left, dog trainer James Todd, VFW Post 8545 Auxiliary President Cheryl Brown and WVEC-TV anchor Mike Gooding in 2019 in Smithfield, Va., after Gooding reported about Shadow the therapy dog. After Brown got Shadow in March 2019, she decided to have him trained as a therapy dog for veterans. Todd waived his fee and trained Shadow for free.

mind. A couple of days later, he texted Brown and told her he would waive the fee to train Shadow.

"This is just one little thing I can give as my thanks to the awesome men and women who give us our freedom," Todd said. "The day I met Cheryl, God told me to talk to her. She told me her story, and I knew I had to help. It is truly a blessing to be training Shadow for Cheryl."

At 10 weeks old, Shadow was in train-

ing to help veterans with PTSD, anxiety and depression. Brown said she was amazed that Shadow really didn't need much encouragement.

"It's like God had been training him for this," she said. "He is the best thing that has ever happened to me. He's so smart. When you put his vest on him, he knows he is going to work."

Brown said she sees the difference the now 1-year-old Shadow makes when he is around veterans. She recalled the meeting between Shadow and a disabled vet named Fred. The veteran was wheelchair-bound and didn't speak and seemed very depressed when he arrived at the Post from the VA.

Fred and Shadow immediately bonded, and when the veteran left later that

day, he had a smile on his face. Brown said Shadow, too, was smiling.

"The attachment of Fred and Shadow actually put smiles on everyone there that day," Brown said. "And I still think about it all the time."

Because the community has been so supportive of Shadow, Brown said, she contacted the Smithfield Police Department in November to offer Shadow's services. He is being trained as a tracking dog and will be used for missing person searches.

"I would like to see every Post have their own therapy dog," Brown said. "Shadow has changed our Post. There is such closeness now. He's not my dog, but our dog."



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AUXILIARY ELIGIBILITY IS 'QUITE EXPANSIVE'

On average, every VFW member has several relatives who are eligible for Auxiliary membership. The larger the number of members, the more powerful VFW's voice becomes on Capitol Hill.

BY JANIE DYHOUSE

For more than 100 years, the VFW Auxiliary has strived to improve the lives and well-being of veterans, service members and their families.

The Auxiliary's nearly half a million members work alongside VFW for the betterment of the communities in which they live.

"VFW is thankful for the Auxiliary," VFW Commander-in-Chief William "Doc" Schmitz said. "But what so many VFW members do not understand is that membership in the Auxiliary is open to more than spouses."

VFW National Auxiliary Secretary-Treasurer Ann Panteleakos said it's a common misconception that only spouses of VFW members are eligible for Auxiliary membership.

"On average, a VFW member has several family members eligible for Auxiliary membership," said Panteleakos, whose eligibility comes from her dad. "Our eligibility wheel is really quite expansive."

Another misconception is that to be an Auxiliary member, you have to be related to a VFW member.

Actually, the veteran need only be eligible for the organization, but not necessarily a member.

Panteleakos noted that step and adopted parents, children, siblings, (and half-siblings), grandparents and grandchildren are considered the same as if they were all biologically related.

Members of the Auxiliary must be at least 16 years old.

Panteleakos said that VFW members have a strong incentive for encouraging

eligible family members to join the community service-oriented Auxiliary.

"Every year when VFW goes to Capitol Hill to testify," she said, "the Auxiliary membership number is counted in with the VFW. The larger the count, the more powerful our voice is."

As a VFW member, if you have someone in your family who would like to join the Auxiliary, there are three ways:

- If your VFW has an Auxiliary, go directly to the Auxiliary and ask for a membership application to fill out. No proof of eligibility is needed in this case.
- If no Auxiliary is available at your Post, go to the Department Auxiliary treasurer. This option would make the individual a Department at-large member. Or the treasurer may suggest another Auxiliary in your area.
- To be a national at-large Auxiliary member, go directly to the Auxiliary's National Headquarters in Kansas City, Mo.

"I encourage all VFW members to ask their parents, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers and grandchildren to join forces with them by becoming an Auxiliary member," Schmitz said. "Growing our voice on Capitol Hill also expands our reach to veterans."

Panteleakos said it's common for someone to ask to join the Auxiliary, but that their veteran has died and no one knows where the veteran's discharge papers are.

She added that a good idea as veterans, is to let loved ones know where such important paperwork is kept.

"We so value our partnership with VFW," Panteleakos said. "We would so love to see our membership grow so that we could continue serving veterans and their families for years to come."

For more information on the Auxiliary, email info@vfwauxiliary.org, call (816) 561-8655 or visit www.vfwauxiliary.org.

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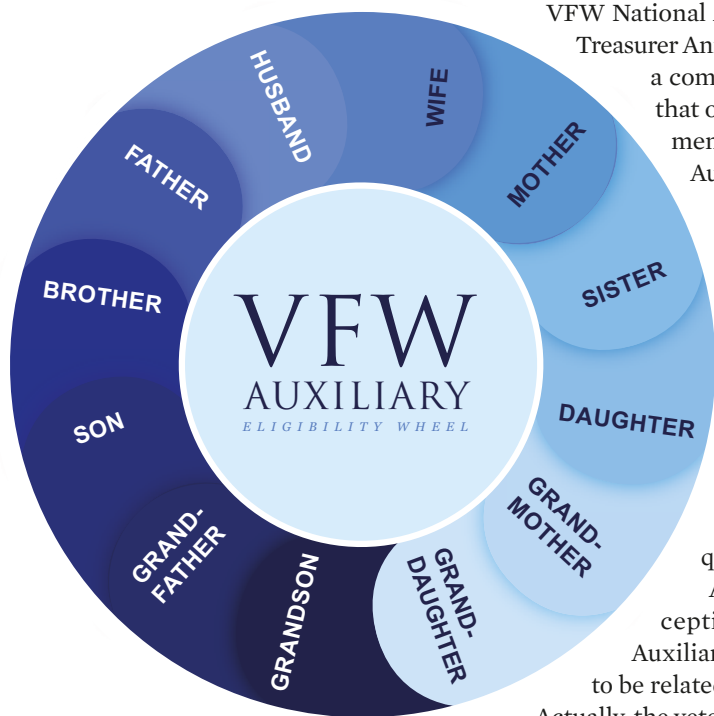


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U.S. paratroopers of the 17th Airborne Division disembark from their gliders on March 24, 1945, near the Rhine River in northwest Germany. They were participants in the largest airborne attack in military history, called *Operation Varsity*, which would lead to allied victory in Europe less than two months later.



The Last Big Jump of World War II

The largest airborne operation in military history was a joint effort of U.S. and British troops. *Operation Varsity* produced three U.S. Medal of Honor recipients and hastened the end of the war in Europe.

BY CRAIG PRICE

Army 2nd Lt. Lou Brough recalled the first moments after his glider crossed above the Rhine River during the last months of World War II.

"We landed near a German command post so we started receiving enemy fire right as we exited the aircraft," the former Army Air Forces glider pilot said in a 2011 newspaper article. "One of the paratroopers got sniped through the helmet and dropped immediately."

So began the first moments on the east side of the Rhine River for Brough. He had just guided his plywood and canvas "Waco" glider to a safe landing in the heart of Nazi Germany. Brough and his fellow soldiers were part of an enormous airborne attack, which was code-named *Operation Varsity*.

Just a few minutes after landing, the intense German fire would severely wound Brough, kill his co-pilot, and destroy his glider's cargo. *Operation Varsity* would become the largest airborne operation in history, and it was the last big jump of World War II.

In two-and-a-half hours on the morning of March 24, 1945, more than 21,000 men of the U.S. 17th and the U.K. 6th airborne divisions jumped and glided across the Rhine River. Although the U.S. First Army had crossed the Rhine in southern Germany two weeks before, the Allies had yet to get into the industrial heartland of northwestern Germany.

Operation Varsity was the airborne prong of British Field Marshal Sir Bernard L. Montgomery's two-part attack. In the first prong, *Operation Plunder*, the British

21st Army Group and the U.S. Ninth Army assaulted across the river in the pre-dawn hours of March 24. The Airborne troopers were to jump and secure the high ground on the far side of the river later that same morning to prevent the Germans from rushing in reinforcements.

The paratroopers rode in two types of aircraft. The older and smaller C-47 Skytrain and the newer, larger and more powerful C-46 Commando. In a design compromised to save weight, the Commando was built without the "self-sealing" rubber-coated fuel tanks included on the Skytrain.

When German fire began to rip through the densely packed formations of aircraft, the horrible consequences of this trade-off became obvious. C-46s hit in the wings leaked fuel, which then

ignited and turned the damaged plane into a fireball. German fire destroyed 19 of the 72 C-46s that flew in that morning, a loss rate of more than 26 percent.

By comparison, the slower C-47s, with self-sealing fuel tanks, had a loss rate of only 3 percent. It is no wonder the surviving aircrew and paratroopers started calling the Commandos “flying coffins.”

'BLOOD RUNNING DOWN THE FLOOR'

Army Col. Lou Coutts, the commander of the 513th Parachute Infantry Regiment, later recalled the moment enemy fire hit his C-46.

“A chunk of shrapnel ripped a large hole in the plane’s fuselage next to my head,” Coutts said. “I glanced back and saw blood running down the floor, so I knew one or more of my men had been hit. Then the plane’s motor burst into flames.”

The pilot of Coutts’s doomed plane, Lt. Col. William Filer of the 313th Troop Carrier Group, immediately turned on the light that signaled the troopers to jump. Though it cost him his life, Filer’s quick action got the last of the paratroopers out just as the airplane exploded.

Although this was their first combat jump, the 17th was battle hardened. They had spent six weeks helping stop the last great German offensive of the war, the Battle of the Bulge. Despite being scattered by their violent ride into the battle, when they hit the ground, they knew what to do and went right to work.

'LET'S GO GET THE BASTARDS'

Across the battlefield, paratroopers were working in small groups to exploit their surprise arrival. In one drop zone, 17th Airborne Division Commander Maj. Gen. William “Bud” Miley gathered up three privates to form a fire team. Together the team crawled under heavy fire to recover a cargo bundle containing a machine gun. They assembled it and began returning fire so other troopers could organize and move toward their objectives.

Nearby, Pvt. George J. Peters of G Co., 507th Parachute Inf., 17th Abn. Div., was pinned down near a German machine gun bunker. Seeing other troopers being cut down by the heavy fire, he began a single-handed assault. Peters lobbed grenades into the bunker and killed its crew. Though he was eventually killed himself, Peters’ actions made it possible for his

unit to move off the drop zone and seize their first objective.

Meanwhile, the troopers of the 513th had organized and were working to expand the landing zone for the inbound gliderborne elements. During an assault on a nearby farmhouse, Pfc. Stuart S. Stryker of the 513th’s E Co., saw an entire platoon of paratroopers get hit by enemy machine gun fire. Determined to rescue his fellow soldiers, Stryker shouted, “Let’s go get the bastards,” and led a counter attack that netted 200 German prisoners and freed three captured American airmen.

As he led the attack, Stryker was hit by German fire and was killed. Peters and Stryker were among the three members of the 17th who received the Medal of Honor for actions during *Operation Varsity*.

Throughout the day, the paratroopers destroyed dozens of enemy artillery pieces and captured hundreds of prisoners. By day’s end, despite heavy German resistance and the confusion of the drop, the soldiers of the 17th Airborne and their British comrades in the 6th Airborne Division had accomplished their goals.

The price of success was high, with the 17th suffering 159 men killed, plus an additional 41 aircrew confirmed dead, and more than 160 missing. The British losses were even greater, numbering at least 1,300 men killed, wounded or missing.

After the war, U.S. Army Gen. Omar Bradley criticized the massive amphibious and airborne assault as “over-kill,” implying that committing so many resources to the crossing was excessive. The target of his critique was British Field Marshal Montgomery, not the soldiers of the 17th Airborne.

It was hard to argue with their courage and success. Their jump paved the way for a smooth crossing of the Rhine by the tanks of the U.S. Ninth Army,



U.S. ARMY AIRBORNE AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS MUSEUM PHOTO

Army Pvt. George J. Peters of G Co., 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 17th Airborne Division, received a posthumous Medal of Honor for his role in *Operation Varsity*. Peters sacrificed his own life when he attacked and destroyed a German bunker, which allowed his unit to move out of a killing zone and seize its first objective.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HONOR STATES

Army Pfc. Stuart S. Stryker, of E Co., 513th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 17th Airborne Division, received the Medal of Honor posthumously for his actions on March 24, 1945, near the Rhine River in northwest Germany. Stryker was killed while leading a counterattack that captured 200 German prisoners and freed three Americans.



U.S. ARMY AIRBORNE AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS MUSEUM PHOTO

Army Tech. Sgt. Clinton M. Hedrick of I Co., 194th Glider Infantry Regiment, 17th Airborne Division, received a posthumous Medal of Honor for his actions on March 27-28, 1945, near Lembeck, Germany. Over the two days, Hedrick inspired other troops as he repeatedly charged enemy positions in and around Lembeck Castle. Although mortally wounded, he was able to cover his fellow soldiers as they eventually took the castle.

which lost less than 50 men during its passage. Upon crossing the Rhine, the Allies began a massive attack across the entire Western Front, crushing all German resistance in their path.

Eight weeks later, the German Army surrendered, and the war in Europe ended. *Operation Varsity* and the 17th Airborne had opened the door for final victory. ★

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Craig Price is a life member of VFW Post 4639 in Williamsburg, Va., and a Marine Corps veteran of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

‘This Will Live in Your Memories Forever’

U.S. Jewish troops fighting with the 42nd Infantry Division in Europe during World War II used a lull in battle to observe Passover. It was the first such ceremony in Germany in seven years.

BY PATRICK J. CHAISSON

Not since 1938 had anyone in Nazi Germany dared to hold a Seder, the traditional religious feast marking the beginning of Passover, a Jewish holiday celebrating the Hebrews’ liberation from slavery in Egypt. For Jews in Adolf Hitler’s Germany, observing Passover was to risk persecution and death.

the “Rainbow Division” for its colorful unit patch, this outfit had just seized the small town of Dahn, about 105 miles southwest of Frankfurt. After enduring weeks of constant combat, the soldiers of the Rainbow Division rested there for several days.

Bohnen saw this pause as an opportunity to celebrate the Seder with his soldiers.

He began by obtaining permission from Division Commander Maj. Gen. Harry Collins. Collins authorized Rabbi Bohnen’s ceremonial meal in a meeting house once used for Nazi party rallies. Chaplain’s Assistant Cpl. Eli Heimberg was responsible for obtaining the food and drink.

“The Seder was attended by over 1,500 soldiers,” Heimberg told the National Museum of American Jewish Military History in 2016. “Since fresh eggs and wine were two essentials to a ritual Seder, we had to travel back into France to get eight carts of eggs and cases of sweet wine. Supervising the preparation for the Seder meal were G.I. cooks who had the local citizenry waiting the tables and cleaning up.”

Essential to a proper Seder is the *Haggadah*, a prayer book written to help worshippers fully appreciate the service. But possession of a *Haggadah* (properly called “The Telling”) had long been banned throughout Germany. How was

Bohnen going to obtain enough copies for over a thousand celebrants?

“Fortunately, we had one copy of a *Haggadah*,” he recalled. “We used the Division’s offset press to print portions of the Seder for the men. This ‘Rainbow *Haggadah*’ was the first Hebrew publication in Germany since the beginning of the war.”

Bohnen also explained how workers readied their printing press.

“The soldiers who did the actual printing told us that when they had to clean the press before printing the *Haggadah*, the only rags available were some Nazi flags, which for once served a useful purpose,” he said.

Wearing a *tallis* (prayer shawl) over his combat fatigues, Bohnen led this hastily-organized Seder on March 28, 1945. Jewish-American soldiers from the Rainbow Division and other U.S. Army outfits filled the meeting hall.

Afterward, Gen. Collins told attendees why the ceremony was so important.

“I am sure this Passover will live in your memories forever,” he said. “You celebrate it in Germany, the land in which Hitler said no Passover would be celebrated for at least a thousand years.”

Those soldiers who observed the Seder at Dahn would soon witness many unspeakable horrors in places like Dachau Concentration Camp. Yet the spiritual support offered them by chaplains such as Rabbi Eli Bohnen strengthened their faith and helped them win final victory over Nazi Germany. ✦

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Patrick Chaisson is a member of VFW Post 8690 in Broadalbin, N.Y. He also serves as historian for the Rainbow Division Veterans Foundation.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE U.S. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM



An unidentified soldier and Capt. Eli A. Bohnen of the 42nd Infantry Division observe Passover on March 28, 1945, in Dahn, Germany. More than 1,500 soldiers attended the historic ceremony after capturing the town in southwest Germany.

By March 1945, though, fast-moving Allied armies had entered Germany on their way to Berlin. Among those fighting to defeat the Nazi regime were many Jewish-American servicemen. To meet their spiritual needs, the U.S. Army commissioned a number of rabbis as chaplains.

Capt. Eli A. Bohnen, a military rabbi from Providence, R.I., served with the 42nd Infantry Division. Nicknamed

ATTENTION VETERANS!

BY THIS TIME TONIGHT

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VFW and Humana Join Forces to Fight Hunger

The two groups aim to provide almost 1 million meals to food-insecure families across America. They hope to reach that goal this summer.

BY DAVE SPIVA

In November 2017, VFW and Humana teamed up to provide healthy meals to Americans in need. By the time VFW adjourns its 121st National Convention in Reno, Nev., this July, the organizations hope to

“This year, the *Uniting to Combat Hunger* program will feed families across the country rather than just a local area,” VFW Foundation Grants and External Relations Coordinator Jason Couch said. “We encourage all VFW Departments to

picked more than 10,000 pounds of corn from a field at Long & Scott Farms in Lake County, Fla., in June, and volunteers at the VFW National Convention in Orlando bagged about 35,000 pounds of potatoes.

In 2018, VFW and Humana provided about 175,000 meals to families in the Kansas City, Mo., area. The original goal was to provide 50,000 to local food banks.

“Meal numbers from each year have far exceeded our expectations,” VFW Foundation Manager Richard Freiburghouse said. “We hope that our work with Humana continues to make a difference in the lives of military and veteran families.”

Humana’s research on food insecurity shows that 25 percent of total active-duty, National Guard and Reserve troops seek aid from food pantries across America. Also, about 1-in-4 veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars are affected by food insecurity (see box below).

Worthe Holt, vice president of Humana’s Office of the Chief Medical Officer, said Humana has a “longstanding relationship” with the military and veterans’ community.

“Our continued support for and relationship with the VFW demonstrate our commitment to providing veterans with the resources, information and guidance to achieve their best health as well as focus on issues such as food insecurity among veterans,” Holt said.

For more information about VFW’s *Uniting to Combat Hunger* campaign, visit www.vfw.org/unitingtocombathunger. ✦

EMAIL dspiva@vfw.org

PHOTO BY DAVE SPIVA/VFW



Kenneth Yount, quartermaster of Post 5820 in Ravenna, Neb., and James Lutz, quartermaster of Post 759 in Kearney, Neb., sort and package potatoes during a *Uniting to Combat Hunger* event at the July 2019 VFW National Convention in Orlando, Fla. VFW and Humana volunteers bagged about 35,000 pounds of potatoes during the second consecutive *Uniting to Combat Hunger* event.

provide almost 1 million meals to families nationwide.

Uniting to Combat Hunger has already provided 496,538 meals to families in the Kansas City, Mo., and Orlando, Fla., metro areas. In its third year, the VFW and Humana campaign will attempt to more than double that number.

be a part of this initiative.”

This will be the third consecutive national convention at which VFW and Humana have provided healthy meals to needy families.

Last year, *Uniting to Combat Hunger* provided 321,538 meals to families in Orlando and central Florida. Volunteers

WHAT IS “FOOD INSECURITY?” It doesn’t just mean that people are going without meals. A person impacted by food insecurity doesn’t have access to healthy foods and fresh produce. Food insecurity affects 1-in-8 people in the U.S., and it’s an issue for people living above and below the poverty line, according to Feeding America, a nonprofit national network of food banks.

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(University of Memphis, 2018)



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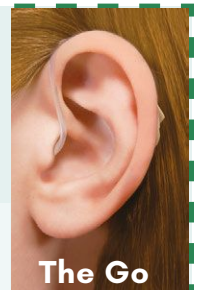
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Pulmonary Fibrosis is Hard to Diagnose

To improve early detection of this lung disease, awareness is vital. Discussing symptoms with a doctor is the first step.

BY JANICE PHELAN

Pulmonary fibrosis, a progressive and debilitating lung disease, impacts at least 200,000 Americans, with potentially thousands more undiagnosed.

The disease, which causes scarring of the air sacs in the lungs, is largely unknown among the general public.

“Low awareness of pulmonary fibrosis is a huge barrier to timely diagnoses,” said Dr. Gregory Cosgrove, chief medical officer of the Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation. “Currently, many patients go years before reaching a diagnosis, which is why it is crucial for those who may be at risk to take the first step and discuss symptoms with their doctor.”

Symptoms of pulmonary fibrosis, often referred to as PF, include shortness of breath; a dry, hacking cough; and fatigue.

“Other symptoms of pulmonary fibrosis include weakness, discomfort in the chest, loss of appetite and unexplained weight loss,” he said. “If an individual has several of these symptoms, especially if they have been ongoing for months, and is 60 years old or older, I would recommend they discuss them with their doctor.”

The most common form of pulmonary fibrosis, IPF (idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis), does not have a specific cause, Cosgrove said.

“However, we do know there are some

factors that put individuals at a greater risk,” he added. “This includes age — 60 years or older — family history of interstitial lung disease, smoking, living or working in areas with mold and being near indoor birds. If individuals have any of these risks, we recommend discussing pulmonary fibrosis with your doctor.”

To minimize the risk of pulmonary fibrosis, Cosgrove recommends that individuals quit smoking and if possible avoid locations with a high mold content or birds.

After a patient is diagnosed with PF, treatment options include oxygen therapy, anti-fibrotic drugs, lung transplantation and pulmonary rehabilitation.

“Pulmonary rehabilitation includes exercise training; breathing exercises; anxiety, stress and depression management; nutritional counseling; education; and more,” Cosgrove said.

“The goal of pulmonary rehabilitation is to restore your ability to function without extreme breathlessness and allow you to exercise safely.”

Although no cure is currently available for pulmonary fibrosis, medical research is ongoing.

“The different approaches to treating PF are constantly evolving, and the research community is aggressively investigating new methods for all forms

of pulmonary fibrosis with the long-term goal to prevent and cure the disease,” Cosgrove said. “In the short-term, researchers are working to control the disease progression and symptoms that patients experience.”

For patients among the more than 50,000 Americans annually diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis, information and support are important. Patients and caregivers are encouraged to connect with the Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation.

Resources include a network of support groups, educational materials and webinars, as well as a patient communication center.

There also is a dedicated call line featuring up-to-date information and an oxygen information line supporting individuals using supplemental oxygen.

In addition, the PF Foundation offers an ambassador program designed to empower patients to be spokespeople for this relatively unknown disease in their own communities.

The Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation also offers comprehensive resources on symptoms and risk factors online at <https://AboutPF.org>.

✪ **EMAIL** magazine@vfw.org

Janice Phelan is a freelance writer based in Lee's Summit, Mo.

A close-up photograph of a middle-aged man with short brown hair, wearing a light gray crewneck sweater. He is coughing, with his right hand held up to his mouth and nose, fingers curled. His eyes are closed and his face shows signs of strain.

SHOULD YOU BE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR **LINGERING COUGH?**

More than 200,000 Americans are
living with pulmonary fibrosis.
Are you?

ARE YOU CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS?

- Shortness of breath
- Dry, hacking cough
- Feeling run-down

ARE YOU AT RISK?

- Current or past smoker
- Age 60 or older
- Family history of interstitial lung disease

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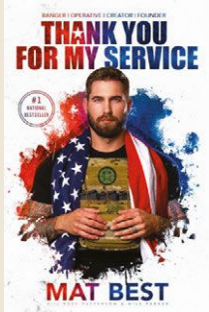


Pulmonary Fibrosis
FOUNDATION

**Pulmonary fibrosis is a progressive,
debilitating lung disease that is hard to diagnose.**

Visit **AboutPF.org** or call **844.TalkPFF** (844.825.5733) to learn more.

STAFF PICK

***Thank You for My Service***

By Mat Best, life member, VFW Department of Texas; Ross Patterson; and Nils Parker

Members of the military's special operations branches share a closely guarded secret: They love their jobs. People don't necessarily need to thank them for their service — the pleasure is all theirs. This memoir by Mat Best gives a glimpse of veterans after the fighting stops, when the enemy becomes self-doubt or despair and they begin to wonder why anyone should be thanking them for anything, least of all their service. For veterans and their friends and families, *Thank You for My Service* offers comfort in the form of laughs and counsel as a blueprint for what to do after the war ends and the real fight begins. *Bantam*

The American Revolution: A Compendium of Terms and Topics

By Paul A. Chase, life member, VFW Post 7589, Manassas, Va.

This reference book can be used as a teaching aide and dictionary for studies of the Revolutionary War. *The American Revolution* contains a helpful index of the book's many subjects regarding the war along with page numbers. *Outskirts*

Loose Ends: Short Stories Started During the Vietnam War

By Jim Zitzelsberger, life member, VFW Post 3153, Chilton, Wis.

A collection of fictional short stories based upon the author's experiences during the Vietnam War, *Loose Ends* is a series of stories linked by the central character, Henry James Barthochowski. His enlistment in the Navy unfolds during a time of social unrest and national uncertainty that even permeates the military. *Moki Lane*

The Nightmare of the Mekong: A True History of Love, Family and the War in Vietnam

By Terry M. Sater, life member, VFW Post 5468, Eureka, Mo.

This book is an account of the Vietnam War from a sailor who manned automatic weapons in intense combat on the rivers, streams and canals of the Mekong Delta. *The Nightmare of the Mekong* contains diary entries by the author and letters to and from home. It is a true story of love, family, war, life and death. *Self-published*

First In, Last Out: An American Paratrooper in Vietnam with the 101st and Vietnamese Airborne

By John Howard, life member, VFW Post 194, Salisbury, Md.

Fresh out of West Point, John Howard arrived for his first tour of Vietnam in 1965. When he returned for a second tour in 1972, Howard became a first-hand witness to both the early

and late stages of U.S. military involvement in the Vietnam War. His two tours provide a lens through one soldier's experience in Vietnam, as well as the country's. *Stackpole*

Fifteen Minutes Ago: A Vietnam War Memoir

By Craig Tschetter, life member, VFW Post 2118, Brookings, S.D.

This memoir is about an 18-year-old who left home to join the military during the Vietnam War. Marine Corps boot camp and training left him filled with fear and uncertainty, as well as pride. Author Craig Tschetter served 20 months in Vietnam as a combat radio operator and was wounded twice. When people ask him when he was in Vietnam, he responds by saying November 1967 to July 1969 — but to him it feels as if it was “15 minutes ago.” *Mill City*

Eating with Veterans

By Michael Lund, life member, VFW Post 7059, Prospect, Va.

These works of fiction are short stories of veterans having a discussion about their military service during a meal. Their companions are family, friends, acquaintances and strangers. In the course of every conversation, an aspect of their service comes to light, and these veterans are reminded of their experience. *BeachHouse*

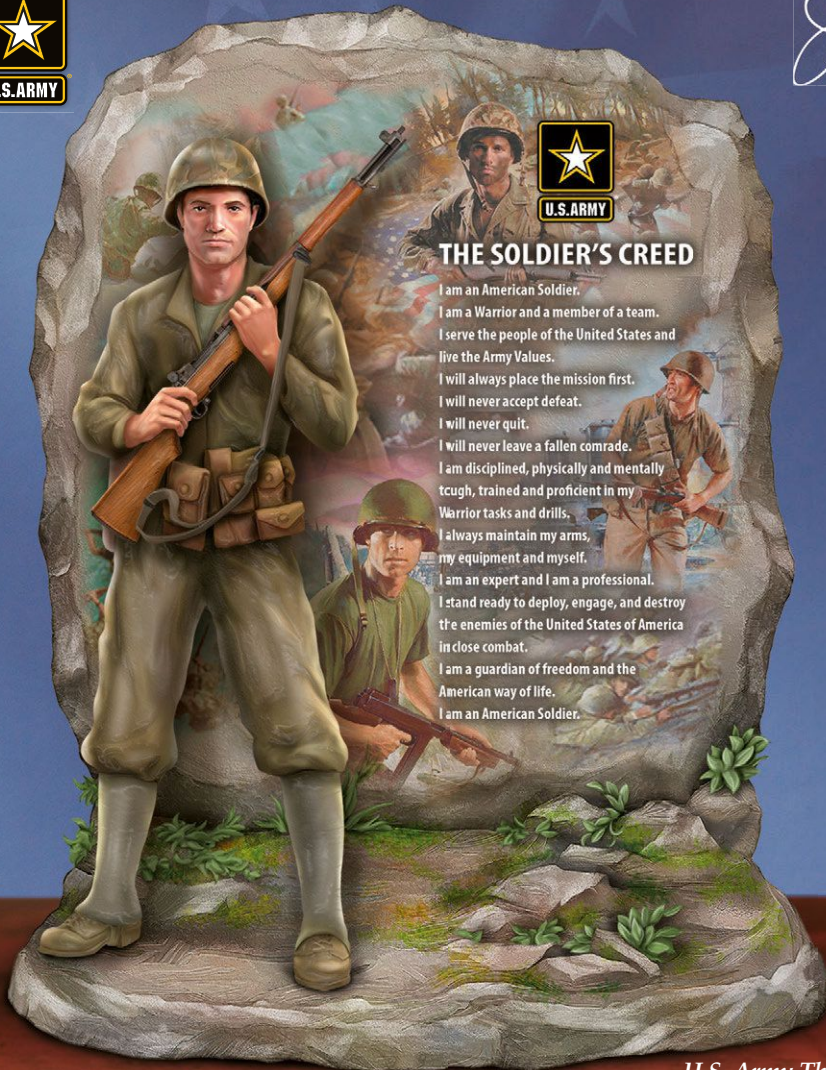
Drafted: Greetings – You Have Been Selected by Your Friends and Neighbors

By Ronald W. Mackedanz, life member, VFW Post 1639, Willmar, Minn.

This true story is about surviving the Vietnam War only to return to a country filled with anti-war sentiment and disdain for veterans of the war. From receiving his draft notice to being discharged after two years of service, author Ronald Mackedanz shares what it was like coming back to civilian life, trying to find work, using the GI Bill and dealing with the stigma of the Vietnam War. *Polaris*

VFW magazine's “Book Corner” features select books written by VFW members. If you have written a book or an e-book bearing an ISBN or ASIN, contact the magazine for guidelines at magazine@vfw.org or by mail at: VFW magazine, Book Corner, 406 W. 34th Street, Suite 523, Kansas City, MO, 64111. The subject of the book must relate to the military or veterans.

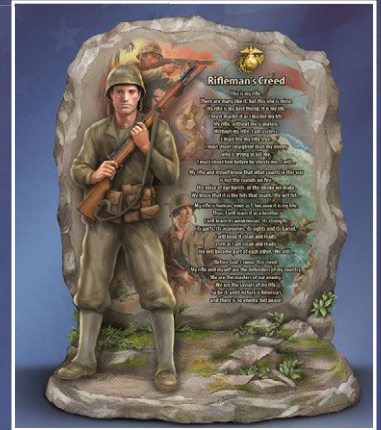
I am an American Soldier.



THE SOLDIER'S CREED

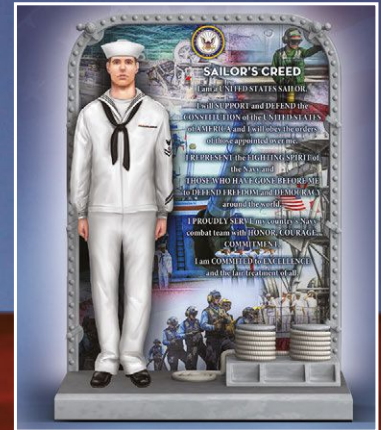
I am an American Soldier.
I am a Warrior and a member of a team.
I serve the people of the United States and live the Army Values.
I will always place the mission first.
I will never accept defeat.
I will never quit.
I will never leave a fallen comrade.
I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my Warrior tasks and drills.
I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself.
I am an expert and I am a professional.
I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.
I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.
I am an American Soldier.

James V. Griffin



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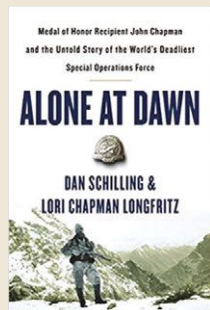
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STAFF PICK

***Alone at Dawn***

By Dan Schilling and Lori Chapman Longfritz

This *New York Times* bestseller tells the story of Medal of Honor recipient John Chapman, who fought valiantly on March 4, 2002, in Afghanistan, despite being outnumbered by Al Qaeda fighters. Air Force Combat Controller Chapman was gravely wounded in the initial assault. Believing he was dead, his SEAL leader ordered a retreat, but Chapman eventually gained consciousness alone — with the enemy closing in on three sides.

*Grand Central Publishing****Second Platoon, Call Sign Hades: A Memoir of the Marines of the Combined Action Company***

By Mark A. Bodrog, life member, VFW Post 713, Westmont, N.J.

This memoir brings readers face-to-face with the rigorous deployment of Bodrog's infantry Platoon of Marines and sailors to the Helmand Province in Afghanistan from May to December 2010. It also details the mission, as well as kinetic, counterinsurgency and humanitarian operations conducted by Bodrog's platoon. *IUniverse*

The Rest is Small Potatoes

By James Gannone, life member, VFW Post 5343, Villas, NJ.

This autobiography captures the author's days from high school to his enlistment with the Marines, Vietnam and the honorable discharge. The story also recollects the anti-war movement and the psychedelic drugs that encompassed the time around the Vietnam War. The author's involvement with the drug culture landed him in a Federal Institution and jeopardized his future career, but he never stopped flying. *SeaGrove Press*

Dear Mom and Dad: Letters from Boot Camp

By Terrence Harper, life member, VFW Post 7823, Middlebury, Vt.

Terrence Harper compiles a narrative of letters he wrote his mom, dad and wife dating from July 25, 1950 to 1959. The narrative captures this sergeant major's personal thoughts about his military career from 1950 to 1971, which includes deployments to both the Korean War and the Vietnam War. *Self-Published*

Tailhooker: Pre-flight to Vietnam

By Willard G. Dellicker, life member, VFW Post 23, Lebanon, Pa.

This memoir recounts experiences of a 20-year-old draftee during the Vietnam War who applies to enter U.S. Navy pilot training. The narrative chronicles Dellicker's training, his assignment as an A-4 Skyhawk pilot in VA-22, deployments to Yankee Station and the "frustrating" air war from 1968 to 1970 that the author experienced during his three tours in Vietnam. *CreateSpace*

Attack on Nui Ba Den: A Viet Nam War Novel

By David L. Allin, VFW Department of New Mexico

The novel tells the story of a real battle that occurred on May 13, 1968, when the Viet Cong overran a U.S. Army radio relay outpost on the peak of Nui Ba Den, an extinct volcano that looms over the plains of Tay Ninh Province in Vietnam. The battle presents the backdrop for Bill Mathis, John Kasperek and Daniel McDaniel as they fight to survive a night of slaughter. *Amazon.com*

Syllables of Rain

By D.S. Lliteras, VFW Post 4572, Wetumpka, Ala.

This novel captures a compelling story of two friends haunted by the experiences, circumstances and choices that have shaped them. Cookie is a man trapped by his own memories. His friend, Llewellen, is doing his best to help, but is himself tormented by memories of Jansen, a Zen Master who, many years ago, left Llewellen with more questions than answers about his life. *Rainbow Ridge Books*

In Liberating Strife: A Memoir of the Vietnam Years Vol. 1, 2

By Steve Atkinson, life member, VFW Post 7555, Roseville, Minn.

The author recalls his personal encounters with love and war during his college years and in the Army during his tour of duty in Vietnam. Each volume captures a different stage of the author's early years, from college to boot camp to his eventual deployment to Vietnam. Both volumes include photographs that illustrate the process with magnificent poignancy. *City Limits Press*

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New Hemp Technology Is 450% Better For Discomfort Relief Than Regular Hemp Oil

Next generation hemp technology soothes joint discomfort, aches and sore muscles 5Xs better than hemp oil; now available in the U.S. without a prescription.

Americans are rejoicing about a brand-new technology that gets the goods on the health benefits of hemp.

A next generation hemp technology is now available across the nation and can be purchased without a prescription.

And the best part, it comes with a new delivery system that's 450% more absorbable than oil.

So you can say goodbye to pills, oils and creams.

Canna LS contains pure "full spectrum hemp," which works to relieve joint discomfort, restore sharp memory, and support a healthy normal inflammatory response, to name a few. And since it has no THC, it heals without the "high."

Exciting new scientific research shows that hemp contains special molecules called cannabinoids which bind to receptor sites in the brain and body. When taken orally, hemp activates these receptors

Why This New Technology Is Better Than Hemp

Unfortunately, most hemp found on the market can't deliver a fraction of these results. "The problem is, most hemp formulas come in oil form," according to Chief Technologist Mi Hwa Kim of The Green Gardener. "Oil doesn't breach the cell membrane, which is where the real healing happens. Our body is 80% water, our cells 90%. And you know what they say about oil and water — they don't mix."

This is why **Canna LS** contains a unique "water soluble" system. The technology is shown to improve absorption in the cells by 450%, quickly boosting the body's cannabinoid levels.

"The other problem is that most of these formulas only contain a single compound extract," says Ms. Kim. "Hemp's full spectrum of cannabinoids are shown to work synergistically. In short, they work better together. It's called the "entourage effect." Most miss out on the full effects because they are missing some of the best rejuvenating compounds within the hemp plant. This is why we've made **Canna LS** with "full spectrum" hemp."

"Finally, most hemp formulas are made on foreign farms with pesticides, or grown using non-organic seeds and processes. We've grown the hemp in **Canna LS** at a 100% organic American farm, under strict agricultural guidelines. It's grown without pesticides or GMOs. And it's grown to contain no THC."

How It Works

The key to hemp's health benefits is the Endocannabinoid System, a network of receptors in the cells. The system is there to maintain homeostasis (balance). In response to toxins in our body, it releases cannabinoids to set things back to their natural state.

"It's really an amazing God-given system that's been completely overlooked," says Ms. Kim. "Our bodies are practically designed to work with the compounds in hemp, which is why we needed a technology like **Canna LS** that unleashes its full potential."

Over time, with aging, the endocannabinoid system eventually burns out. Fewer cannabinoids are released, so the body's levels deplete. The result is, all sorts of symptoms of aging like age-related memory loss, blurry vision, joint discomfort, and much more.

"This is why there's almost nothing hemp can't do and no health concern it can't address," says Mi Hwa. "The trouble is, most hemp formulas are just not absorbable enough for the cell, so they fail to activate the endocannabinoid system. This is why they don't deliver anything close to the full range of potential results."

Fortunately, **Canna LS** is clinically shown to enter the cell membrane 450% more powerfully. This is how it boosts cannabinoid levels fast, helping to relieve joint discomfort... restore foggy memory... and support healthy blood sugar. And what most people really love is that the "pearl" gel is easier to take than taking a pill or oil.

Not Yet Sold In Stores

Full-spectrum hemp, like **Canna LS**, is available nationwide. However, several major pharmaceutical companies are currently testing hemp in clinical settings, which means it may require a prescription in the future. It's advised to get **Canna LS** while you can.



Taking All The Risk Off Consumers

A large percentage of men and women using **Canna LS** experience truly amazing results. That's why it's now being sold with a guarantee that goes way beyond the industry standard. "We can only make this guarantee because we are 100% certain our customers will be satisfied," says Ms. Kim. We want to take full risk off consumers. So in addition to offering substantial discounts for first-time customers, we also make them a huge promise that ensures they don't have to risk a cent."

Here's how it works: Take **Canna LS** exactly as directed, and you must be thrilled with the results! Otherwise, simply return the bottles and any unused portion within 90 days of purchase.

Where To Find Canna LS

This is the official nationwide release of **Canna LS** hemp technology. And so, the company is offering a special discount supply to anyone who calls. An Order Hotline has been set up for local readers to call. This gives everyone an equal chance to try **Canna LS** hemp extract. All you have to do is call TOLL FREE at 1-866-256-2857. The company will do the rest. Use Promo Code VFW0320CAN when you call in.

Important: Due to hemp's growing popularity and recent media exposure, phone lines are often busy. If you call and do not immediately get through, please be patient and call back.

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Paying It Forward

A Florida VFW Post salutes fallen special operations troops by donating thousands of dollars toward their surviving children's education.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.

Swiftly pulling on a tarp, VFW Post 11367 members from Mary Esther, Fla., uncovered a new Harley-Davidson motorcycle that accented the Post's 13th annual Special Operations Warrior Foundation (SOWF) dinner in September.

Serving as the coveted raffle prize, the unveiling of this motorcycle draped in a unique "13-original-colonies" paint job prompted cheers from the 725 guests at the Northwest Florida Fairgrounds.

But the sold-out event, about 45 miles east of Pensacola, Fla., and a few miles north of Post 11367, served an even greater purpose. It contributed around \$55,000 toward college scholarships for the children of fallen warriors.

"We're a very large special operations community, so we're very proud to be able to get this kind of turnout," said Jim Kradel, a former Air Force chief master sergeant and current VFW senior vice commander for Florida's District 1. "We've got our own fallen special operations warriors, and doing this really brings the community together in helping their kids go to college free of cost — as it should be."

The Post's involvement with SOWF began in 2007, inspired by a local widow's decision to sell a used Harley-Davidson Sportster that had belonged to her husband, a special operations aviator who died in Iraq on Memorial Day 2005.

The widow had consulted with Lyndon Poff of Emerald Coast Collision Repair in nearby Fort Walton Beach, Fla., which resulted in an informal charity dinner at Poff's repair shop. Proceeds from the event went to the fallen veteran's family, with the Sportster serving as a "chance door prize," according to Kradel, a former Post commander.

One of the men helping Poff set up the event was VFW life member Steve Connelly, a retired Air Force colonel who also commanded the 352nd Special Operations Group at RAF Alconbury and RAF Mildenhall in England.

Connelly gathered fellow Post 11367 members and active-duty airmen from nearby Hurlburt Field to help advertise, prepare and run the event. His efforts mapped the way for a collective decision to increase involvement the following year, and all the years that followed.

Post 11367 legitimized its involvement in 2012, becoming the lead sponsor and relocating the event from Poff's shop to the Northwest Florida Fairgrounds in order to accommodate the rapid growth.

Since that first informal dinner, Post 11367, with help from Auxiliary members and active-duty volunteers that included student pilots and special operations maintenance airmen, gradually amassed more than \$330,000 in donations toward SOWF.

"This event is so cool, and it's a huge event for a small town celebrating what lives among us," Connelly said. "Winning a prize is a secondary consideration to raising money in support of these kids whose fathers have laid their lives on the altar of freedom."

The Post begins selling the 550 "dinner-for-two" tickets each year on the anniversary of *Operation Eagle Claw's Desert One* — the failed April 24, 1980 operation to rescue U.S. hostages captured during a hostile takeover in 1979 of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, Iran. The mission cost the lives of eight special operators and prompted the SOWF's creation to provide funding for the 17 surviving children.

"We have to remember the sacrifice that started this event," Connelly added. "It feels like a lot of effort to put this together, but it is both payback and pay-it-forward."

Since the inception of SOWF, it has blossomed into a \$2.8 million fund helping more than 363 students graduate from colleges and universities across the country to date.

SOWF provides recipients with financial aid that fully covers tuition, books, fees, room and board. The fund

PHOTO COURTESY OF JIM KRADEL



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TOP: An Auxiliary member of Post 11367 in Mary Esther, Fla., collects donations last September from guests during the 13th Annual Special Operations Warrior Foundation dinner. The event, which supports the children of fallen special operators, amassed \$55,000 in donations.

BOTTOM: Retired Air Force colonel and Post 11367 life member George Ferkes shows off his new Harley Davidson motorcycle, the 13th annual SOWF dinner grand prize. Ferkes was a participant in 1980's *Operation Eagle Claw* and one of the SOWF founding fathers.

currently assists 880 children that are either enrolled in college or still in high school, elementary or preschool. ★

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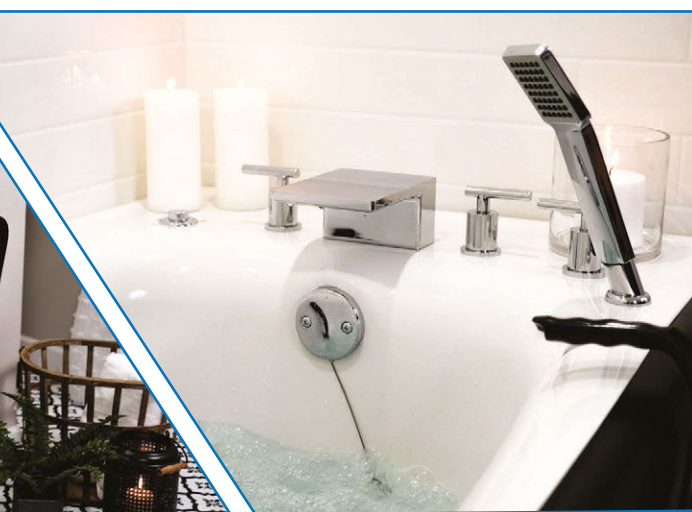
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Membership Program Offers Lasting Legacy

Life members have the opportunity to help veterans in perpetuity through the Legacy Life Member incentive.

BY JANIE DYHOUSE

After VFW Commander-in-Chief William “Doc” Schmitz was sworn in at VFW’s National Convention last summer, he challenged annual members to upgrade to a life membership. He offered a \$50 VFW Store gift certificate to every member who decided to make the change.

That challenge still stands, and the \$50 VFW Store incentive runs through June 30.

According to Corey Hunt, associate director of VFW’s Membership

Department, upgrading makes the most financial sense.

“The true value of a life membership is the cost savings,” Hunt said. “Instead of paying annual dues year after year, a member needs to only make one payment. It can be quite a significant savings to the member.”

Life members also have the opportunity to join the nearly 7,000 who are currently Legacy life members. According to Matt Nute, VFW membership coordinator, only life members can join the ranks of those who have chosen

to leave their legacy with VFW.

“The greatest tangible benefit for a Legacy life member is the perpetual annual endowment,” Nute said. “Long after a member passes, the Post and Department will continue to receive a payment in honor of that member.”

Nute explained that the three levels of Legacy — bronze, silver and gold — each have attractive incentives for members (see chart). The top level — gold — allows for a personalized brick at VFW’s Centennial Plaza at VFW National Headquarters in Kansas City, Mo.

Member Incentives

	Bronze \$400	Silver \$800	Gold \$1200
Plated Engraved Legacy Life Card	●	●	●
Lapel Pin	●	●	●
Hat Pin	●	●	●
Distinctive VFW Store Line for Legacy Life members	●	●	●
Framed Legacy Life membership Certificate	●	●	●
Member Recognition on Internet & Convention Program	●	●	●
Special Legacy Life Plaque	●	●	●
Hat Patch			●
Personalized Brick at Centennial Plaza			●
VFW Store Discounts (for personal use only) *	5%	10%	15%
Increased Level of No-Cost AD&D Insurance *	\$2000	\$3500	\$5000
Annual Endowment: Post	\$6	\$12	\$18
Annual Endowment: Department	\$6	\$12	\$18

* does not apply to Memorial Life Legacy Membership

‘LARGER THAN LIFE’

Furthermore, the Memorial Legacy provides an opportunity for Posts or family members to honor a deceased life member who never became a Legacy member while still living, Nute said.

“This is a dignified way to memorialize a life member after he or she has passed,” Nute said. “This is an option for anyone wishing to honor a VFW life member in death.”

Hunt said that each year, new Legacy life members are recognized in the VFW convention program. And at the Membership booth at the national convention, a large display scrolls the names of all Legacy members.

“Legacy members get to see their names larger than life,” Hunt said. “If their friends aren’t yet Legacy members, they will want to be once they see that recognition and understand what it means to help veterans forever. Also at convention, we honor VFW Posts that have large numbers of Legacy members.”

For questions about becoming a life or Legacy life member or to memorialize a loved one with a Memorial Legacy membership, call the VFW Member Service Center at 1-833-VFW-VETS. ★

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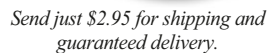
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'Good, Wholesome Educational Content'

Army veteran Matthew Haines has a YouTube show aimed at children. Inspired by the classic Mister Rogers television show, "Bebo and Buggy" strives to teach kids confidence.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.

Once upon a time, a larger-than-life personality named Mister Rogers ushered in the golden age of children's television, doing so in a colorful sweater and a pair of sneakers.

Since "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" aired its final episode nearly 20 years ago, the lasting impact of his lessons stayed with many children who are now fathers and mothers to a new generation.

For Afghanistan War veteran Matthew Haines, who served in the Army's 1st Bn., 28th Inf. Regt., 1st Inf. Div., it took having a son come of age in the modern era of YouTube to "pick up the torch" that Mister Rogers kindly offered his generation.

"I was pretty blind to YouTube until my son got around to watching videos," Haines said. "I started watching some of the shows with him, and I instantly recognized this terrible pattern with the algorithm."

The educational shows that defined his childhood had been replaced by teenage boys wearing neon body suits, dancing and speaking in "squeaks and squawks."

"That's the sort of shenanigans that's getting shown to kids, and I refuse to let my kid watch that kind of stuff," Haines said. "Some of the showrunners on YouTube seem to care more about making money than actually teaching our kids."

Haines confided in his wife and began crafting a blend inspired by classics such as "Blue's Clues" and "Mister Rogers" to introduce "Bebo and Buggy."

"We decided to pull the trigger on it," Haines recalled. "We picked up the torch, incorporating the good, wholesome educational content left behind by shows like 'Mister Rogers' with more modern stuff for kids growing up today."

On screen, Haines transforms into Bebo, a charismatic, easy-going man in a long-sleeve white polo shirt covering an array of tattoos draped on both arms, a yellow vest and a green cap that matches his pants.

"Bebo is the energetic, curious young man who loves to learn and experiment with stuff," Haines said. "He complements Buggy, a bookworm that's withdrawn, but infatuated with knowledge and how the world works."

The duo infuses a dynamic of outdoor adventures tapping into a multitude of essential teachings for children, such as arithmetic, science, manners and controlling emotions.

"It's our response to what I feel is a lack of quality and content on YouTube," Haines said. "I try to steer away from the corrupt system that's feeding our kids biased agendas instead of simply raising them to have bright minds."

The show also sets out to gradually instill the meaning of responsibility, discipline and confidence — all aspects Haines



TOP: Army veteran Matthew Haines, right, poses with Buggy, the co-starring, bookworm-type puppet on the set of "Bebo and Buggy."

Haines is an Afghanistan War veteran who served in the Army's 1st Bn., 28th Inf. Regt., 1st Inf. Div. His YouTube show aimed at children currently has thousands of views per episode.

BOTTOM: Haines, left, poses with a fellow Army infantryman while on duty in Afghanistan. Haines was deployed as a medic from 2012-2013.

himself learned in the military.

"These are all things children should learn," Haines said. "The Army instilled a profound level of confidence that I do try to push in the show with our characters. It all begins with believing in yourself."

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