

SEPTEMBER 2020

VFW

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VFW INSTALLS NEW
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

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VICTORY IN JAPAN
ENDS WORLD WAR II

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for Children inspires
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16 'A PLACE OF HEART AND SPIRIT'

VFW's National Home for Children has been a safe, comforting place to live for the orphans and disadvantaged kids of veterans since the 1920s. It also instills in those residents a sense of duty to the nation and patriotism that motivates some, like five profiled in this article, to join the military. **BY JANIE DYHOUSE**



'20/20 VISION FOR VETERANS'

Hal Roesch II of Virginia is VFW's new Commander-in-Chief. The Gulf War veteran and 20-year Air Force retiree has an ambitious agenda calling for an inclusive membership and a more technologically savvy workforce.

BY TIM DYHOUSE



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NATION CELEBRATES 75TH VJ DAY

After nearly four years of bitter fighting across the vast Pacific Theater, U.S. Marines, sailors and soldiers forced the Japanese to surrender in 1945. On the diamond anniversary of this momentous event, VFW salutes all who served.

BY TIM DYHOUSE AND TINA CLARK



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'THE BURNOUT RATE IS HIGH'

Over the last 20 years, a married couple with three children has dealt with the uncertainty and upheaval of the father's frequent National Guard activations and deployments. To help others like them, Kevin and Susan Dellicker have written a book.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.



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COVER PHOTO: Brian Daniels is photographed in June on the campus of VFW's National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Mich. Daniels, an Iraq War veteran and member of VFW's Department of Indiana, lived at the home from 1996 to 2004 before joining the Army.

Photo by Kyle Bultman

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COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
Hal Roesch II

VFW Welcomes All Veterans

It is a distinct honor and privilege to serve as VFW's new Commander-in-Chief. I'm looking forward to continuing our organization's great work of serving America's veterans.

We are at a major turning point in our nation's history. All across our country, men and women are demonstrating and making their voices heard in an effort to end racial injustice. It's imperative that the VFW answer this call and stand alongside these agents of change.

To our African American members, veterans and communities — Black Lives Do Matter, and the VFW stands shoulder to shoulder with you. Your VFW is here for you, but most importantly, we need you to help lead us into 2021, 2031 and beyond as we continue to fight for the benefits and entitlements that our veterans have earned by serving their country with honor and courage.

You know, the VFW has not always been the most inclusive veterans' organization — in fact we were downright exclusive. But we have learned and changed over the years, and we are still learning and changing.

Our doors are open to all eligible veterans, regardless of race, sexual orientation, age or religion, and today I stand here before you and personally invite all of them to join our organization. If you are a member of the VFW

and you cannot treat people with dignity and respect, then I ask you to turn in your membership card and get out.

Let there be no doubt in your minds — if you can't treat people with dignity and respect regardless of gender, race, age, sexual orientation or religion, we do not need you in the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Our members are VFW's strength, and we want all to feel welcome and be working toward a common goal. You and your fellow VFW members make our organization a pillar of our communities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, it was you who opened your Posts and your hearts in times of crisis. You conducted buddy checks, raised money, fed those in need, ran errands for those who could not do so for themselves, but just as important, you showed the nation and the world that the Veterans of Foreign Wars remains resilient.

Be it natural disasters, pandemics or promoting the inclusivity of the spirit that binds all veterans, it is up to you and your fellow veterans to further the great work of this organization.

So, as we prepare to build a "20/20 Vision for Veterans," I ask each of you to stand with me and continue the good fight that our founders started in 1899.

Welcome all eligible veterans into our great organization and live our motto: "No One Does More for Veterans." It is who we are and what we strive to achieve daily.

Our doors are open to all eligible veterans, regardless of race, sexual orientation, age or religion, and I personally invite all of them to join our organization.



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VFW OBJECTIVES

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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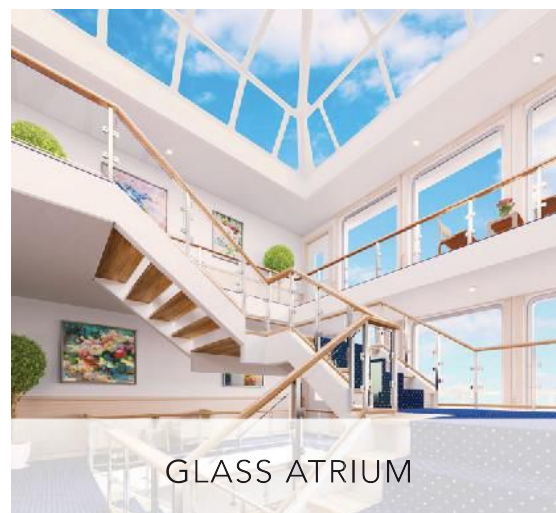

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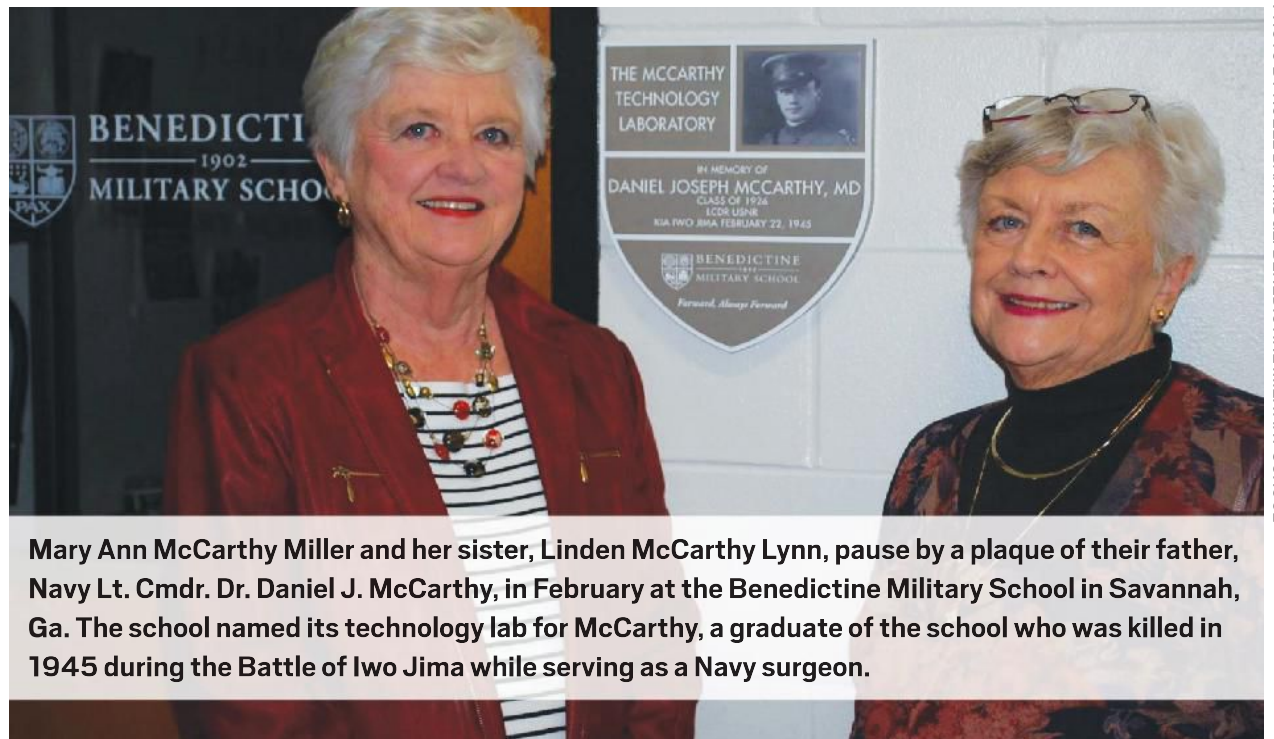


School Lab Named for Iwo Jima Hero

The Benedictine Military School in Savannah, Ga., named its technology lab in February for a military surgeon killed at the Battle of Iwo Jima in World War II. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Dr. Daniel J. McCarthy was serving with the 28th Marines, 5th Marine Division when he was killed on Feb. 22, 1945.

McCarthy, a 1926 graduate of Benedictine, was serving in the Navy Reserve when the war started. The then-36-year-old doctor was remembered in a letter by Marine Chaplain Paul F. Bradley, who served with McCarthy on Iwo Jima.

“The ‘Doc’ and I were very close friends, and his loss was a real personal blow to me,” Bradley explained. “Before we hit the beach, we said the rosary together. Early on the morning of Feb.



Mary Ann McCarthy Miller and her sister, Linden McCarthy Lynn, pause by a plaque of their father, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Dr. Daniel J. McCarthy, in February at the Benedictine Military School in Savannah, Ga. The school named its technology lab for McCarthy, a graduate of the school who was killed in 1945 during the Battle of Iwo Jima while serving as a Navy surgeon.

22, I made the rounds. He went to confession. About an hour later, Col. [Harry B.] Liversedge [commander of the 28th Marines] called me and told me to hurry back, that the Doc had been hit.

“I arrived and gave him the last rites. He was killed instantly as he was about

to leave his station to check up on the battalions. His loss, as I say, was tremendous — he was admired and respected by all the regiment.”

McCarthy is buried in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii.

September is National Suicide Prevention Month

All month, mental health advocates, prevention organizations, survivors, allies and community members will unite to promote suicide prevention awareness.

One day, *World Suicide Prevention Day*, is set aside to highlight the message. This year it is Sept. 10. Additionally, *National Suicide Prevention Week* is the Monday through Sunday surrounding World Suicide Prevention Day. In 2020, it runs from Sept. 6-12.

VFW is committed to helping change the narrative and stigma surrounding mental health in America.

In order to raise awareness, foster community engagement, improve research and provide intervention for those affect-



ed by invisible injuries and emotional stress, the VFW has teamed up with the nationwide organizations Give an Hour and the Campaign to Change Direction, One Mind, PatientsLikeMe and the Elizabeth Dole Foundation to combat this critical issue.

For more information, visit www.vfw.org/assistance/mental-wellness.

VFW volunteers, members and employees gather in Leavenworth, Kan., in 2016 to promote mental health awareness and celebrate VFW's partnership with Give an Hour, a national non-profit that builds networks of volunteers to promote mental health care. The participants are showing a hand signal symbolizing the need to know “the five signs” of emotional suffering displayed by those who might need help.



VFW National Home Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the VFW National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Mich., will be held at 9 a.m. EDT on Oct. 24, 2020. For more information, contact Lynn Bloomer, the Home's Executive Secretary, at lbloomer@vfwnationalhome.org or (517) 663-7023.

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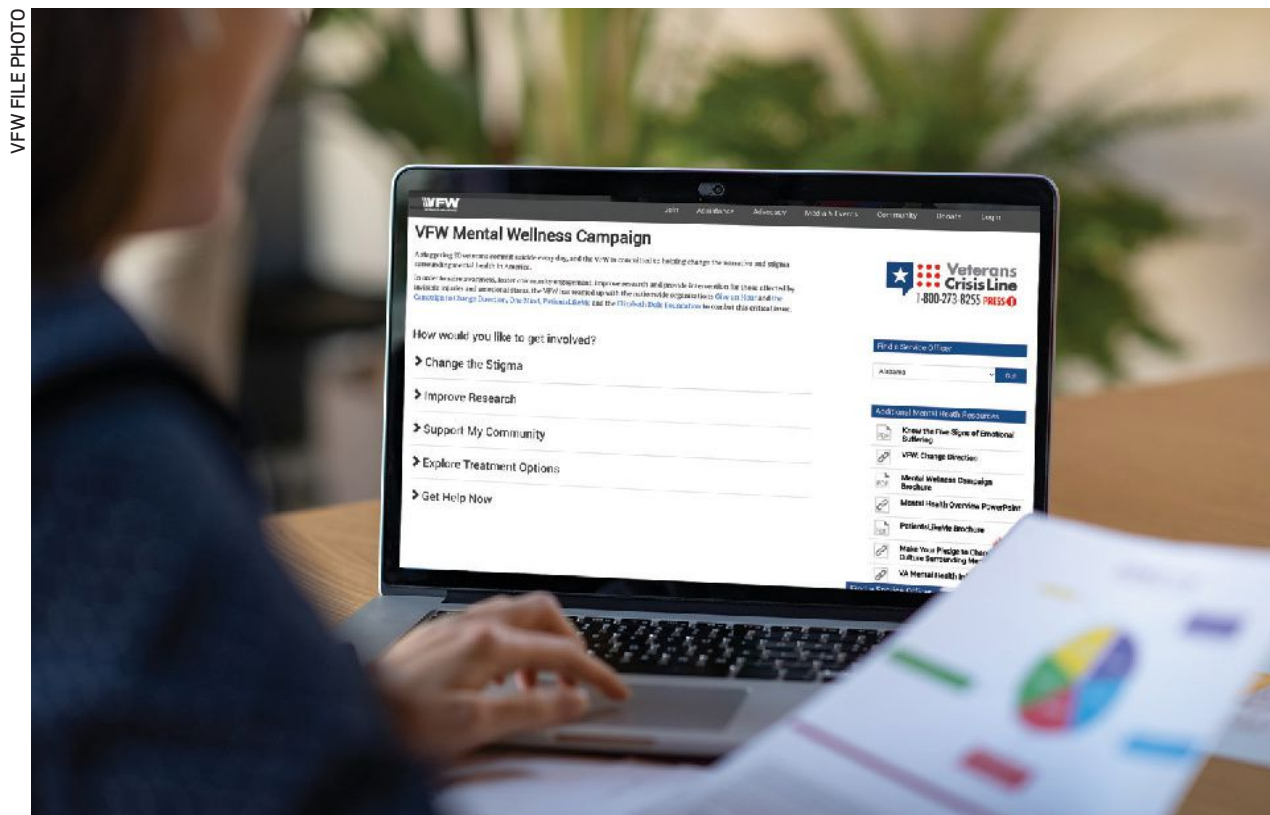
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Suicide Rates for Air Force and Navy Rise in 2019

Last year, the Air Force recorded the most suicides in its history while the Navy's number jumped considerably. The suicide rate in the Marines Corps, however, dropped from 2018.

BY DAVE SPIVA



The VFW website, www.vfw.org, offers resources that gives support to all veterans. For more information about VFW's efforts to raise awareness and change the stigma of mental health, visit www.vfw.org/assistance/mental-awareness or contact VFW's Member Service Center at 1-833-VFW-VETS.

The military suicide rate continued to be a major problem for the Department of Defense through 2019, according to new data released from three of the military services.

So far in 2020, the Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps have released suicide rate data for their respective services.

Last year, a total of 72 active-duty sailors and seven Reserve sailors committed suicide. This is the most sailor deaths by suicide since at least 2006. The Navy reported that the rate for active-duty sailor deaths was at 21.9 per 100,000 sailors. In 2018, the Navy had 68 active-duty suicides and 11 Reserve sailor deaths.

The Air Force had a spike in suicides in 2019. It saw the most deaths since the service was established in 1947.

It reported 84 active-duty troops committed suicide, meaning that about 25.3 per 100,000 active-duty airmen took their own lives. The rate is equal to that

of the Marine Corps.

In 2019, 47 active-duty Marines committed suicide, which is 11 fewer than 2018, a rate of about 25.3 per 100,000 active-duty Marines.

The year prior, the Marine Corps had the highest rate of all the services, with about 30.7 per 100,000 Marines committing suicide, according to the DoD.

According to the DoD's 2018 Annual Suicide Report, 541 active-duty, Reserve and National Guard troops committed suicide in 2018. About 24.8 per 100,000 service men and women committed suicide that year.

Of the 325 active-duty suicides in 2018, soldiers and Marines were 2.5 times, or 150 percent, more likely to commit suicide than sailors or airmen. As of July 1, no data had been released about the Army suicide rate for 2019.

The suicide rate for all Americans, including military and veterans, was 14.2 per 100,000 people in 2018. About 132

people in the U.S., including about 20 veterans and troops, committed suicide each day in 2018, according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

Contact VFW's Member Service Center at 1-833-VFW-VETS, or 1-833-839-8387, if help is needed. ★

EMAIL dspiva@vfw.org

NEED HELP?

VFW offers resources and trained professionals to give all veterans the support they need. Access www.vfw.org/assistance/mental-wellness for more information about VFW's efforts to raise awareness and change the stigma on mental health.

Those in need also can call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 (and press 1 if you are a veteran).

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VFW Involved in White House Suicide Prevention Plan

Members of the VFW Washington Office were invited to the White House on June 17 for the release of a plan that could help fight veteran suicides across the country.

Washington Office Executive Director B.J. Lawrence attended the release of the “President’s Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide,” better known as PREVENTS. It is the Trump Administration’s plan to end veteran suicides.

In March 2019, Trump signed an executive order, titled National Initiative to Empower Veterans and End Veterans Suicide, which aimed to lower the veterans suicide rate by establishing a task force that addressed veterans’ wellness, empowerment and suicide prevention.

Data during the time of the order’s signing showed that an average of 132 U.S. citizens, including about 20 veterans and troops, committed suicide each day, something Trump called a “tragedy” during the unveiling of the PREVENTS roadmap. Trump added that his Administration is “taking steps” to ensure the military’s men and women get the proper care and attention during their “darkest hours.”

The PREVENTS roadmap includes calls for a number of steps to be taken nationwide to “change the culture around suicide and mental health,” according to a VA press release.

The PREVENTS Task Force is co-chaired by VA Secretary Robert Wilkie and White House Domestic Policy Council Director Brooke Rollins. The task force is comprised of government officials, including Secretary of



President Donald Trump displays a signed executive order in March 2019 at the White House that establishes the National Initiative to Empower Veterans and End Veterans Suicide, which aims to lower the veterans’ suicide rate. Current VFW Washington Office Executive Director B.J. Lawrence (far right) was at the order’s signing as then-VFW Commander-in-Chief.

Defense Mark Esper.

Among some of the steps being taken, according to the roadmap, are:

- Launching a national suicide prevention campaign.
- Improving suicide prevention research.
- Building partnerships with organizations across the country, as well as state and local governments.

After the release of the PREVENTS roadmap, Rep. Mark Takano (D-Calif.) said he was “disappointed” with the task force for obtaining “limited input” from veterans’ service organizations, including VFW.

Takano added that he will introduce legislation that will ask VA to “revamp” efforts to improve the transition to civilian life for veterans and “better address” the mental health needs of troops and veterans.

“Tepid calls for more research, inter-agency coordination and meek public education campaigns won’t do enough to end this crisis,” Takano said. “We have much more substantial work to do to prevent veteran suicide and ultimately help save veterans’ lives.”

Some of the specific initiatives outlined in PREVENTS would:

- Develop a public health roadmap that sets a plan needed to lower veterans’ suicide rates.
- Propose a program to Congress that gives grants to local communities, which would increase their ability to provide resources to veterans.
- Develop a strategy to improve research in veteran suicide prevention.

To learn more about the PREVENTS Task Force, visit www.va.gov/prevents.



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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Senate Passes Bill Protecting Troops During Pandemic

A bill that could provide legal protections for military members affected by the COVID-19 pandemic was approved by the Senate on June 10.

The *Servicemembers Civil Relief Act* — also known as SCRA or S. 3637 — was introduced to the senate by Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), the chairman of the Senate VA Committee, and Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.). If signed into law, SCRA would “suspend financial or civil obligations” such as foreclosures, evictions and vehicle repossessions under certain circumstances, according to a Senate VA Committee press release.

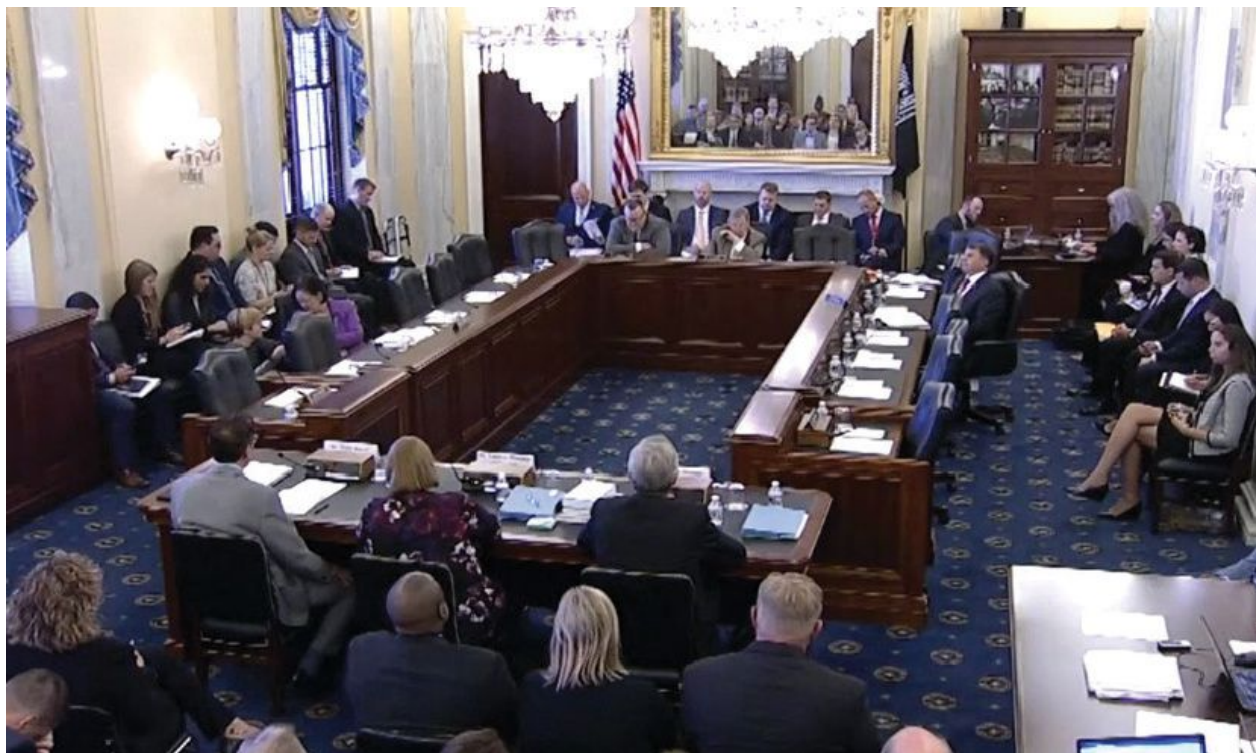
SCRA would protect military members who were issued a stop movement order from the Department of Defense in the middle of changing their duty stations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper’s stop movement order has caused many troops to have house and car leases in different locations, according to the press release.

The decision to allow troops and their families to move was under the local base commander’s discretion as of June 30.

“This legislation will provide additional legal protections and much-needed peace-of-mind for our military families who have financial or civil commitments in two different locations at no fault of their own,” Moran said.

After the Senate’s passage, the House version of the bill was introduced by members of the House VA Committee.

“I’ll keep pushing this bill until it becomes law,” Tester said, “and continue fighting to ensure those serving our country at home and abroad receive the assistance they’ve earned.”



SCREENSHOT FROM SENATE VA COMMITTEE VIDEO

Members of the Senate VA Committee meet on June 17 in Washington, D.C., with veterans’ advocates and VA employees to discuss the effects of toxic exposure on veterans. During the meeting, senators questioned the VA’s delay to adding illnesses — such as bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, Parkinsonism and hypertension — to the Agent Orange presumptive conditions list. VFW National Legislative Service Deputy Director Matthew Doyle participated in the meeting.

VFW Discusses Toxic Exposure with Senators

VFW was present during a June 17 Senate VA Committee meeting on active-duty troops exposure to toxic chemicals.

VFW National Legislative Service Deputy Director Matthew Doyle participated in a roundtable discussion that addressed possible legislative solutions for those exposed to toxic environments during their military service.

During the meeting, senators questioned Patricia Hastings, the Veterans Health Administration chief consultant on post-deployment health service, on the VA’s delay of adding additional illnesses to the Agent Orange presumptive conditions list. Illnesses discussed for possible inclusion on the list included:

- Bladder Cancer
- Hypothyroidism
- Parkinsonism
- Hypertension

Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.) said it’s “obvious” that the illnesses should be added because the National Academy of Medicine said those conditions should be covered by VA.

Doyle reaffirmed VFW’s support of disability benefits for toxic exposure.

“The VFW calls for a permanent framework to grant disability benefits to veterans who have developed health conditions as a result of their exposure,” Doyle said during the committee’s roundtable. “This framework would be evidence-based so that science would drive the granting of benefits, and benefits would not be granted without adequate science.”

VA’S PRESUMPTIVE AGENT ORANGE CONDITIONS

To qualify for Agent Orange-related benefits, a Vietnam War veteran, including “blue water” Navy veterans who served aboard a ship off the coast of Vietnam, must have one or more of the 14 conditions VA presumes to have been caused by exposure.

As of July 1, the Agent Orange presumptive conditions include:

- Chronic B-cell Leukemia
- Hodgkin’s Disease
- Multiple Myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma
- Prostate Cancer
- Respiratory Cancers
- Soft Tissue Sarcomas
- AL Amyloidosis
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VFW's new Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch II is photographed in June at VFW National Headquarters in Kansas City, Mo. Roesch says it is a VFW member's commitment to improving the lives of veterans, active-duty troops and their families that is most important to VFW, not the member's race, gender or sexual preference.

New Chief Focuses His '20/20 Vision' on Equality and Inclusivity

An airman who served in the Gulf War is VFW's new Commander-in-Chief. Hal Roesch II of Virginia says embracing change and encouraging a diverse membership will be the hallmarks of his tenure.

BY TIM DYHOUSE

VFW's new Commander-in-Chief wants all veterans to know that they are welcome and wanted in the organization. Regardless of a veteran's race, gender or sexual preference, Hal Roesch II of Virginia says it is the veteran's commitment to improving the lives of his or her fellow veterans that is most important to VFW.

"In the military, we are taught to work as a team," said Roesch, a 1991 Persian Gulf War veteran who served 20 years in the Air Force. "If you are striving to reach the team's common goal, it is the results that matter, not the individual's race or private lives. We welcome all VFW-eligible veterans who share that vision."

That perspective is illustrated in Roesch's motto — "20/20 Vision for Veterans" — for the upcoming year.

"We are on the cusp of a new era for our organization, for our veterans and our nation," the Chief said. "Our commitment to fulfilling our mission of caring for veterans and their families remains rock steady, but the issues change with the generations. We have homeless veterans who need care. We have our youngest veterans dealing with traumatic brain injuries and effects of burn pits."

"We also have questions and concerns about how our government will pay for the costs of shutting down the country during the COVID-19 crisis. We will not allow veterans to bear the brunt of these costs through reductions in their earned benefits."

A 'FASCINATION' WITH AIRCRAFT

Born in 1961 in Renovo, Pa., Roesch spent his teenage years and attended high school in Titusville, Fla.

A self-described "military brat," Roesch joined the Air Force in February 1982 out of a "sense of duty" to the nation.

"I always wanted to join the Air Force," he said. "Both my mom and dad served in the Air Force, and I always had a fascination with aircraft."

Roesch enlisted in the Air Force's delayed entry program in October 1981 and reported for basic training in February 1982 at Lackland Air Force Base near San Antonio.

From April to May 1982, he studied basic electronics as an F-16 avionics technician at Lowery Air Force Base near Denver.

He then spent more than three years (May 1982-October 1985) with the 16th Fighter Squadron, 388th Fighter Wing at Hill Air Force Base near Ogden, Utah.

From there, he served with the 612th Fighter Squadron, 401st Fighter Wing from October 1985-September 1989 at Torrejon Air Base near Madrid, Spain.

Later in 1989, Roesch was transferred to Shaw Air Force Base near Sumter, S.C., where he served with the 17th Fighter Squadron, 363rd Fighter Wing. It was from Shaw that the Chief deployed in August 1990 to Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for service in *Operation Desert Shield*.

"Morale in the UAE was about as gung ho as possible," the Chief recalled. "This is what we had spent our military careers training for. We hit the ground screaming. We were ready to go. We were the first operational air-to-ground unit in theater. We landed ready to go to war, but we had to sit and wait for four months."

Staff Sgt. Roesch and his unit moved to the Gulf War's forward air base at King Khalid Military City (KKMC), Saudi Arabia, when the war started in January 1991.

"Our jets were based in UAE," he said. "They would fly into Iraq, conduct their bombing missions, land at KKMC two or three times, refuel, rearm, conduct more bombing raids and then fly back to UAE."

Roesch recalled one of his "most memorable" experiences in the war zone while in Saudi Arabia.

"I re-enlisted in the middle of a tarmac surrounded by fully loaded, ready-to-go F-16s," he said. "When we returned to the States, America was so grateful. The mood was just awesome. The Vietnam veterans were bound and determined that we would not be treated as they were when they returned. It meant a lot to all of us. We owe them a lot."

INVESTIGATING KHOBAR TOWERS

After the Gulf War, Roesch deployed another five times before retiring as a master sergeant in July 2002.

One memorable deployment during that time was with the 23rd Logistics Group, 23rd Composite Wing from Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina to Saudi Arabia in June 1996. Roesch arrived at Khobar Towers, a U.S. Air Force housing complex near Dhahran that terror-

ists had just attacked with a truck bomb on June 25, 1996, killing 19 airmen and wounding more than 500.

"I worked on the flight line during the day, and at night I volunteered to help the FBI investigate the bombing," he said. "We spent many nights sifting through sand and mud looking for evidence trying to identify the truck that hauled the bomb."

From October 1996-July 2002, Roesch served at Langley Air Force Base near Hampton, Va. The first three years included a stint with the Air Combat Command, Inspector General Team, as an avionics inspector. In 1999, he was assigned to ACC Director Requirements Division working on the F-35 combat aircraft development program.

During this time, Roesch also earned an associate of arts degree in avionics systems technology from the Community College of the Air Force in 1997.

Roesch said his experiences and lessons learned over his 20-year military career prepared him for success as a civilian.

"Being in the military, besides the patriotism and love of country, putting the level of integrity that is shaped in the military into everything you do is always there," he said. "The sense of doing what's right even when nobody is looking. Service before self. Those attributes have molded my entire life."

VFW: 'I JOINED ON THE SPOT'

Roesch's VFW career began when he joined Post 3034 in 1991 in Sumter, S.C., while still on active duty.

"I had just returned home from *Desert Storm* and got a call from a charity working out of the local VFW Post that was collecting donations to send less fortunate kids to the circus," Roesch recalled. "I got directions from him and drove to the Post. When I got there, sitting inside was my boss who I had just spent nine months with in the desert. He hadn't mentioned VFW the entire time we were over there."

After getting a tour from the Post quartermaster, Roesch found out that the Southwest Asia Service Medal he earned during the Gulf War qualified him for VFW membership.

"He told me I was eligible," Roesch said, "and I joined on the spot."

It opened up a new world for the young airman.

"Quite frankly, in the beginning, I didn't

know what the letters in ‘VFW’ stood for,” he said. “But I knew that I wanted to be a part of the organization.”

Two years later, Roesch received orders to transfer to Pope Air Force Base northwest of Fayetteville, N.C. He transferred his VFW membership to and became commander of Post 4542 in Spring Lake, N.C.

In 1996, he moved on to VFW Post 3219 in Phoebus, Va., when he received a permanent change of station to Langley Air Force Base. Roesch still belongs to that Post, at which he holds a VFW Gold Legacy life membership.

‘LUCKY TO HAVE GOOD MENTORS’

VFW was a good fit for the young airman, and he demonstrated his leadership ability immediately. Roesch was named Junior Vice Commander at Post 3034 within three weeks of submitting his application. He commanded Post 3219 for two years (2003-05) while also serving as Virginia’s District 1 commander at the same time.

He led the state as Department commander in 2008-09, where he earned Triple Crown All-America honors for his leadership at the Post, District and Department levels. Roesch also served a term on VFW’s Council of Administration (2010-12) and a year as national inspector general (2016-17).

“I was lucky to have some good mentors along the way who instructed me about why VFW exists and all the good things we do for veterans and their families,” Roesch said. “I learned about our Washington Office and our lobbying efforts, our National Home for Children and our community service.”

But the “single most important thing” the Chief says he has learned in those leadership positions was how to be an “effective” mentor for those coming up behind him.

“You have to give those you are mentoring the chance to fail,” he said. “If a mistake they make is not going to stop the world from turning, let them try it and fail. We have to give people the opportunity to try something without ridiculing them if it doesn’t work out. Striving for new solutions should be encouraged.”

Appointing younger, more diverse veterans to leadership positions will be a priority during his term, Roesch said.

“One of the first things I did after being elected Department commander

was to appoint a female veteran, Margo Sheridan, as Virginia’s first ‘female veterans advocate’ to be a liaison to women in our state,” he said.

“It was an effort to reach out to eligible female veterans to let them know that we welcome them into the organization and want them to join us. We also reached out to groups like female entrepreneurs because we wanted to understand how we could best serve female VFW members.”

Roesch’s program in Virginia eventually inspired VFW’s national “She Serves” campaign.

“Women who are qualified for VFW membership have obviously earned their eligibility the same as men, but they also have different needs and wants,” Roesch said. “The program definitely got the word out about VFW’s recruitment of women and the need for VA to respond to their specific health care needs.”

‘I KNOW WHAT THEY’RE GOING THROUGH’

While building his leadership skills at VFW and working as a defense contractor for Defense Logistics Agency in Richmond, Va., Roesch, in 2002, began training as a financial advisor. He earned his license in 2003 and is still employed at First Command Financial Planning in Newport News, Va.

“I believe I am a perfect fit for the clientele, which are active-duty troops, their families and veterans,” he said. “I know what they are going through.”

As does his wife, Beth, whom Roesch married on Nov. 22, 1999. Roesch has a daughter, Sara Tricker. She and her husband, Jason, have twin sons, Owen and Max.

The Chief also holds life memberships with VFW’s Military Order of the Cootie, Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS, the American Legion, the Air Force Sergeants Association and VFW’s National Home for Children. He also is a member of the Eagles. He said it is important to help other groups of veterans and learn from them.

Roesch said a leader always should be learning. He recalled the “perfect storm” during his time as Department commander when wounded Iraq and Afghanistan vets and older Vietnam vets began inundating VA’s health care system. He said that helped shape his vision

PHOTO COURTESY OF HAL ROESCH



Air Force Tech. Sgt. Hal Roesch II attends a military ball in October 1996 at VFW Post 3219 in Phoebus, Va., shortly after returning from a deployment to Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia, during Operation Southern Watch. Roesch displayed his leadership ability early in his VFW career with his election as junior vice commander at Post 3034 in Sumter, S.C., only weeks after joining the VFW in 1991.

of what he wants to accomplish during his year as Chief.

“VA was underprepared to take care of female vets,” he said. “With VFW’s and other VSOs’ advocacy, VA took note. Now, my local VA facility — the Hampton VA Medical Center — offers specific care for women vets, as well as Iraq and Afghanistan vets. The more you are able to highlight the needs of certain segments of veterans, the better the response when you push for legislative remedies.”

The Chief says attracting young veterans and giving them the tools for success is imperative for VFW’s effectiveness.

“We must do better at embracing change,” he said. “The last nine months have forced us to change, and we have become better for it. We’re better at using technology, we’re better at listening to the needs of our members and employees, and we’ve found new, more efficient methods of conducting business. We are focused on the future.” ★

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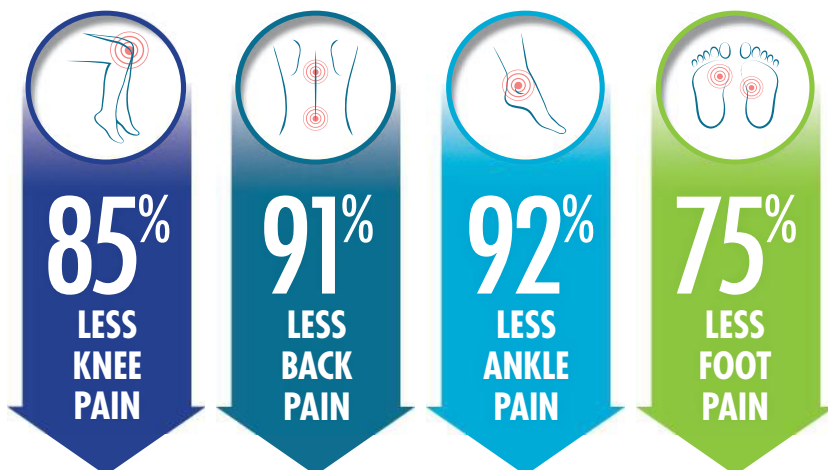
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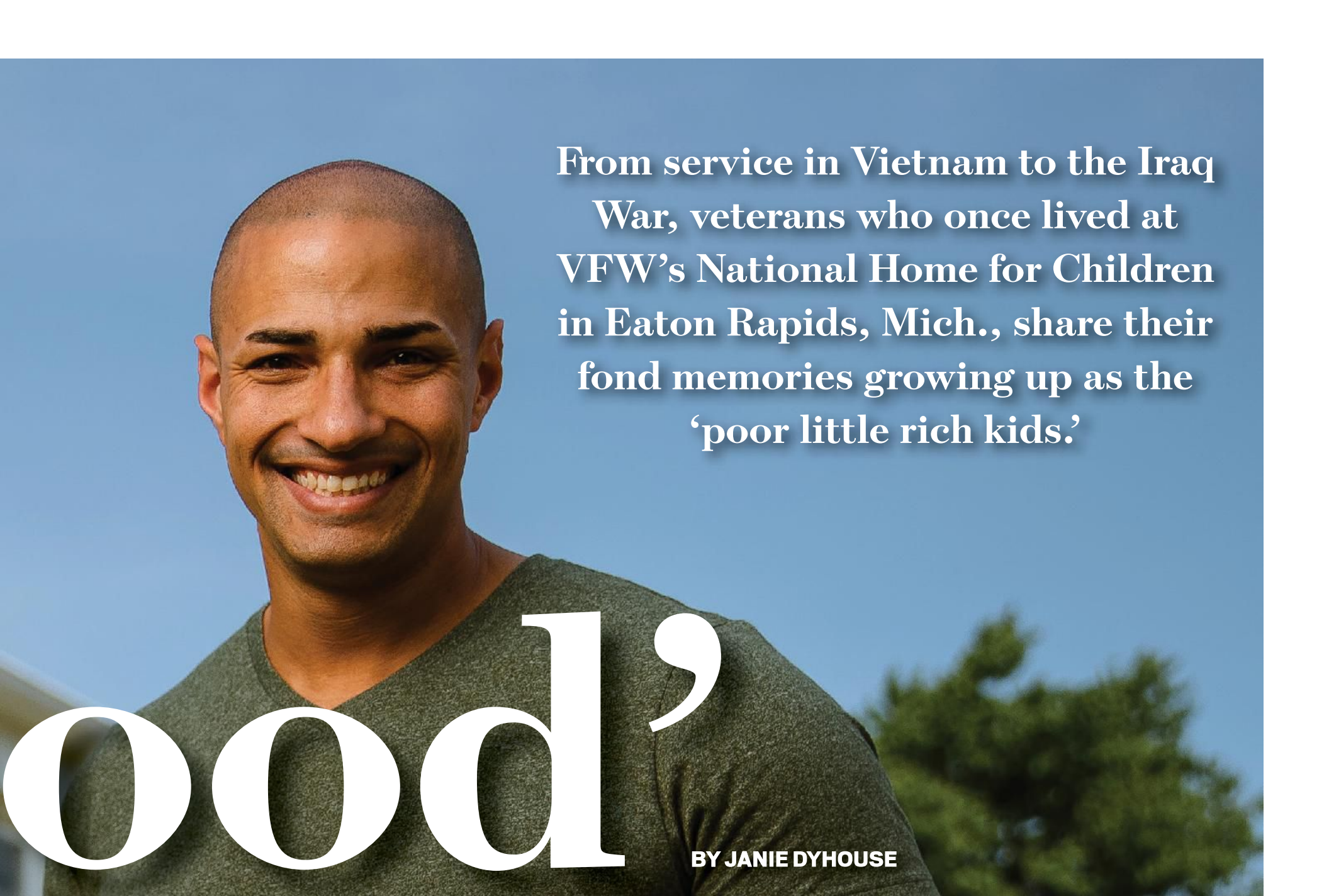
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VFW's National Home 'Gave me a Real Childh

RIGHT: Iraq War veteran and former resident of VFW's National Home for Children Brian Daniels stands in front of the house in which he grew up in June on the home's campus in Eaton Rapids, Mich. A member of VFW's Department of Indiana, Daniels credits the time at the home for his desire to serve in the military.

INSET: Daniels is owner of emPOWER, a boxing gym in Lansing.





From service in Vietnam to the Iraq War, veterans who once lived at VFW's National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Mich., share their fond memories growing up as the 'poor little rich kids.'

ood,

BY JANIE DYHOUSE

In 1996, Brian Daniels was 10 years old and homeless, living out of motels with his mom and siblings. But that is the year everything changed for the better.

Because his maternal grandfather was a Marine, Daniels' family re-located to the 629-acre VFW National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Mich.

"We went from living in a seedy motel to a beautiful home with four bedrooms," Daniels said. "It was unheard of stability for me. VFW gave me a real childhood. I got to go fishing and play in the woods. I had food and shelter."

Daniels' favorite memory of the home is "Cootie Christmas." That's when members of VFW's Military Order of the Cootie host a Christmas party.

"Santa came on a firetruck with a big bag of gifts," Daniels recalled. "I remember at one point in my life, my mom pawned her belongings to pay for our Christmas presents. So this was a really big deal."

Daniels' mom met her future husband — a VFW Post commander — at the home. They eventually married, and the family moved to Grand Ledge, Mich.

"I always knew that veterans were responsible for the home, and I intended to give back," said Daniels, a member of VFW's Department of Indiana. "From middle school on, I knew I was going to join. Then 9/11 happened, and it was set in stone. A friend showed up in his dress greens and I

was like, 'Yep, where do I sign up?'"

In 2004, Daniels enlisted in the Army and by 2005, he was in Iraq with the 1st Bn., 320th Field Artillery Regt., 101st Abn. Div.

On Nov. 15, 2005, while on a combat patrol in Taji, Iraq, Daniels' Humvee rolled over an IED that was immediately detonated by a cellphone.

"Everything around me blew up," Daniels said. "The four guys with me were killed. Spec. Travis Grigg, Staff Sgt. James Estep and Spec. Matthew Holley died immediately — Spec. Alexis Roman Cruz lived for 15 hours."

'I HAD TO LEARN TO WALK AGAIN'

Daniels lost his foot in the blast. He remembers being put on the gurney and his foot slid off it. He felt immense pain. He passed out and when he woke up 16 hours later, he was told everyone else had been killed. Doctors asked if he wanted to try and save his foot.

It would take 12 surgeries to do it, but Daniels' foot was reattached.

"I had to learn to walk again," he said. "I went from a wheelchair to a walker to crutches to a cane. I have a lot of nerve damage and residual pain, but I refuse to take pain meds. Initially, I was a medicated blur. I weaned myself off the medications, and I refuse to take them now."

During the process of rebuilding his body, Daniels

discovered a passion for fitness. Someone suggested he use his GI Bill benefits to become a personal trainer.

He took that suggestion and attended the American Academy of Personal Training in New York City. He also began teaching fitness classes in Manhattan.

During that time, Daniels also became a dad to a baby boy. Daniels and his son's mom decided they didn't want to raise their boy in New York City, so they moved to Michigan.

In Lansing, Daniels opened a boxing gym called emPOWER, which has been open for two years. He also works with the local court system to help children who have been sexually trafficked find their voice and to help build body confidence.

Daniels said he feels "blessed" that his hard work has paid off for him. He hopes to run for Lansing City Council one of these days and to also become active in VFW.

'IT'S WHERE I'M SUPPOSED TO BE'

Daniels is one of thousands who have great memories of living on the campus of VFW's National Home, which opened its doors to war widows and orphans in 1925.

For the National Home Executive Director Fred Puffenberger, his life has come full circle. He grew up in Eaton Rapids and had many good friends who lived there.

"We called them the 'VFW Kids,'" Puffenberger said. "Some have come back to visit me since I got this position last year. My grandfather worked here in the 1920s as a herdsman, and my great aunt also worked here."

Puffenberger fondly recalls the four Nowak brothers who lived in the New Jersey house. He got to spend the night there many times and even saw his first movie in a group setting there — it was the 1960s Alfred Hitchcock thriller "Psycho."

"My history here is as if I lived here myself," he said. "This is where I'm supposed to be. It's kind of cosmic. It's a legacy for me."

Before coming to the home, Puffenberger worked all over the country in various roles. He also worked as a hospice volunteer and served on a board of trustees that oversees children in the foster care system.

During his first full year on the job, Puffenberger said he's worked to really get to know the home's 53 employees, noting that a number of them have been on staff for more than 20 years.

"I like to know what they think and what they would do," Puffenberger said. "I want their ideas. Anybody who works here can come in and tell me what they think."

Puffenberger noted that as of press time, 38 of the campus's 42 homes were occupied. Each home has a different state sponsor. For example, the Colorado house is sponsored by the VFW Department of Colorado and its Auxiliary.

He added that Eaton Rapids businesses also support the home. One example, he said, was a donation of gift cards from a local pizza place to all the families on campus.

LEFT: VFW National Home Executive Director Fred Puffenberger gets hands-on cookie decorating tips from residents of the home during the 2019 holiday season.

BELOW: Puffenberger poses with residents of the home on the campus last summer. Puffenberger grew up in Eaton Rapids, Mich., and had many good friends who lived at the home. He says the National Home is a "place of heart and spirit."





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RIGHT: VFW National Home for Children alumnus and Navy veteran Terry Lewis on a “goodwill cruise” in 1968. Lewis, who moved to the home when he was 3, says growing up there “meant everything” to him.

BELOW RIGHT: Terry Lewis’ sister, Connie, was the VFW National Home for Children’s “Buddy Poppy Girl,” sometime in the early 1960s. The Lewis children moved to the home in Eaton Rapids, Mich., in 1951.

“This is a place of heart and of spirit,” Puffenberger said. “We want this home to be able to flourish. We can change lives; we just have to do it.”

‘THE HOME MEANT EVERYTHING TO ME’

Navy vet Terry Lewis can attest to how his life changed while living at the National Home. At age 3, he moved there in 1951 with his brother, Lynn. Their older sister, Connie, would join them a little later.

Their father — a WWII veteran who had served in France and Germany — suffered from what is now known as post-traumatic stress disorder. After the loss of one of his siblings in a house fire, Lewis said his mom suffered a mental breakdown and was institutionalized.

With no one to care for them, the National Home was the best option, according to Lewis. The VFW Post in Mt. Pleasant, Mich., referred the family to the home.

Lewis said he had a lot of good experiences at the home, including getting to meet Hopalong Cassidy and sit on his horse, Topper, when he was 4. At 5, he passed his swim test at the home’s pool.

One of Lewis’ fondest memories of growing up at the home, though, was the time his father visited and took the kids on a four-day fishing trip.

“That was the longest time that we ever spent with him while we were growing up,” Lewis said. “He also had gas model airplanes, and we flew the planes at the playground.”

Lewis’ mother remarried and lived in Detroit so he and his siblings were able to see her from time to time.

Lewis recalled watching movies in the community center every Saturday night as well as the Cootie Christmas.

He said there was a sleigh with live reindeer and Santa Claus. There was a lot of singing, and each child received a box with peanut brittle, gum, oranges and a box of chocolates.

“We all loved that,” Lewis said. “We were told to wait until we got home and then we could open up the candy. But every year I gave my mom the box of chocolates because I couldn’t shop for her. She just loved that chocolate.”

With the Vietnam War raging, Lewis decided to enlist in the Navy in 1966.

As a sonar technician, Lewis was assigned to the *USS Eugene A. Greene*. In 1968, he spent six months on a “goodwill cruise” to locations such as South America, Africa and the Middle East.

Lewis got out of the Navy in 1969 and went to art school in Grand Rapids, Mich. He later worked for the city of Bay City, Mich., for 27 years.

Today he is married and has a 17-year-old son. He recently authored a children’s book called *Bani: A Butterfly Adventure*.

“My time at the home meant everything to me, and I met so many wonderful people,” Lewis said. “I just don’t know where we would have been without it.”



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TERRY LEWIS





LEFT: Vietnam veteran Stephen Shelden pauses for a photo aboard the *USS Ashtabula* in 1969. Shelden lived at the National Home with his two brothers until he graduated from high school.

BELOW LEFT: VFW life member and former National Home resident Ann Gosnell takes a break in Iraq in 2005 while serving as a medic with the Tennessee National Guard. Gosnell moved to the home at 15 and calls that time in her life “such a great experience.”

JUST GETTING TO BE A KID

One such friend Lewis made is Stephen Shelden, who lived at the National Home from 1953-1968. He lived in the Pennsylvania 3 house with his brothers, Leonard and Merrill.

Hailing from the Chicago suburb of Evergreen Park, the trio lived at the home with a house mother. Shelden was 5 when he moved in.

“My mother was having issues so she was put in a mental institution,” Shelden said. “Dad was in the Army and had served in Hawaii, but he couldn’t take care of us.”

Shelden said he most enjoyed just getting to be a kid. He said he could play in different sports and go swimming and boating.

In high school, Shelden, along with four others, joined the Navy Reserve. Each Wednesday night, they reported to duty. Then their schedule changed to weekends.

“In 1969, I was on the *USS Ashtabula* in the Philippines,” Shelden said. “We would go off the coast of Vietnam to replenish fuel. Once, we experienced a typhoon with 120 mph winds. But at 20 years old, I was out there and feared nothing.”

A VFW life member of Post 701 in Lansing, Shelden retired from the Navy Reserve after 22 years.

“The Navy gave me a way to see places I would have never been able to otherwise,” Shelden added.

‘SUCH A GREAT EXPERIENCE’

In her second semester of her sophomore year of high school, Ann Gosnell was 15. She traveled from her home in Oregon to her new home.

Referred to the National Home by VFW Post 4307 in Enterprise, Ore., Gosnell lived at the North Dakota cottage with house parents Caroline and Ed.

“They were wonderful, amazing people,” said Gosnell, now a life member of VFW Post 4307. “It was all such a great experience. I was captain of the campus fire department, and I played volleyball for the home’s team.”

During her senior year at Eaton Rapids High School, Gosnell lived in an independent living apartment on campus.

“There were three of us girls who got to live there,” Gosnell said. “Basically, we lived there on our own to learn how to budget and buy groceries and just be responsible. It was an excellent experience.”

After graduating high school, Gosnell attended nearby Lansing Community College for a semester and then decided to join the Army.

With three WWII vets as uncles and a father who was a Korean War vet, Gosnell felt the desire to serve.

Originally, she joined the Michigan National Guard, but ended up in Tennessee with the Tennessee National Guard.



She did a total of 18 years.

From 2004-2005, Gosnell served as a medic with the Tennessee National Guard's 278th Regimental Combat Team at FOB Bernstein in Iraq.

On Oct. 12, 2005, Gosnell's unit was 10 days from heading home. She was part of a convoy showing the replacements the route from FOB Bernstein to Camp Anaconda when they hit a roadside bomb.

"This was the first time we were blown up," Gosnell said. "We were very lucky to have never gotten blown up before then."

The blast sent the Humvee in which Gosnell was riding up into the air and slammed it back down. Her knee and shoulder were, and still are, damaged, as is her hearing.

Being a medic, though, Gosnell didn't take time to evaluate the trauma to herself.

"I was worried about everyone else in the vehicle," she recalled. "When we stopped, I climbed on top to check on my gunner in the turret."

It wasn't until she was back stateside and went to the VA that she discovered the extent of her injuries. Incidentally, she's having shoulder surgery this month to help with the pain from the IED blast.

She departed the National Guard in 2006 and worked for the VA in Tennessee for a few years as a phlebotomist. Then she worked for children's services.

Gosnell said she joined VFW as soon as she got back from Iraq. She was the Department of Oregon chaplain for the 2019-2020 year and is now her Post's chaplain.

"The National Home is supporting veterans and families," Gosnell said. "It was certainly there for me."

FINDING A PLACE FOR 11 SIBLINGS

In 1987, Matt Lightner was 14, and his family was in jeopardy of being split up. He and his 10 siblings were going to be separated into foster homes all over the state of Michigan.

A few years before, the family's home in Jackson, Mich., burned to the ground, and they had nothing.

Lightner's parents divorced. The children were living with their paternal grandmother in a trailer park.

"The state was coming in and saying, 'This isn't going to work out,'" Lightner recalled. "My dad prayed, and my grandmother prayed. The pastor of the church came up to my grandmother and said, 'Don't worry, you will be taken care of.' My dad heard about the National Home in the nick of time."

Lightner's dad's Vietnam service qualified the children for residency. Matt lived in the Wisconsin house with some of his siblings and the others lived in another house on campus.

During his first 30 days on campus, Lightner met his neighbor, who had witnessed his parents die in a home fire, but made it out alive with his siblings. Lightner said it was a "humbling" experience for him to hear this.

"I was thinking, 'I've got my parents and my brothers and sisters, and my gripe is that I lost my toys,'" Lightner said. "When you think you have it bad, there's always someone who has it worse."

Lightner said being at the home allowed him to "just be a kid like kids should be." He was always fishing and would sometimes spend all day fishing.

He was a student captain with the fire department. He went



Iraq War vet Matt Lightner prepares for duty in Iraq in 2005 while serving with the Marine Combat Logistics Regiment 25. Lightner moved to the National Home as a teenager with his 10 siblings and says his service to country is attributed to his time at the home.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MATT LIGHTNER

sledding and played ice hockey. If he wanted to participate in after-school activities, transportation was always available.

Lightner joked that at school, National Home kids were known as the "poor little rich kids" because they all came from unfortunate circumstances but ended up being really cared for.

"The staff always had our best interests at heart," Lightner said. "They all had that mission to provide love and care for children. Looking back, we took it for granted as kids."

Lightner was a high school senior around the time of the Persian Gulf War. He said there was a lot of recruiting going on, but serving wasn't on his radar — yet.

"I went to college and met a reservist," Lightner said. "After that first year of college, I joined the Army Reserve and was in from 1992-1994."

Somewhere along the line, Lightner decided that college was boring and so was the Army — so he joined the Marines and stayed with them until 2007.

He deployed to Iraq in 2005 with Combat Logistics Regiment 25.

Today, Lightner is a watch commander for the U.S. Border Patrol in Michigan.

"Every house on the National Home campus has a U.S. flag," said Lightner, a life member of VFW Post 9363 in Flat Rock, Mich. "You learn about patriotism. My service to country is attributed to the National Home."



EMAIL jdyhouse@vfw.org

Meet the Watch That Shook Up Switzerland

A watch that revolutionized timekeeping at a price equally as radical.

In the history of timepieces, few moments are more important than the creation of the world's first Piezo timepiece. First released to the public in 1969, the watch turned the entire industry on its head, ushering in a new era of timekeeping. It's this legacy that we're honoring with the **Timemaster Watch**, available only through Stauer at a price only we can offer.

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—Ariel Adams of A Blog to Watch.

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VFW's Cooties Celebrate

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MILITARY ORDER OF THE COOTIE



Santa Claus visits the VFW National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Mich., in the 1950s for the Cootie Christmas. VFW's Military Order of the Cootie came up with the idea for the National Home in 1923 to help war widows and children. Since then, its members have been ardent supporters of the Home.

100 Years of Service

From their bright uniforms to their fun-loving way of life, Cooties bring smiles and laughter to those “who most need it.”

BY JANIE DYHOUSE

For 100 years, the lives of hospitalized veterans have been made a bit brighter thanks to a fun-loving group known as the Military Order of the Cootie. As an auxiliary to the VFW, Cooties have a slogan that aptly states one of their objectives: “Keep ‘em Smilin’ in Beds of White.”

Local groups, known as Pup Tents, work with VA hospitals and veterans homes to enrich the lives of veterans through entertainment.

The Cooties’ newly elected Supreme Commander, Darin Combs, said his Pup Tent 11 in Phoenix sponsors monthly dog races at the Arizona Veterans Home. Cooties set up a vinyl track on the floor and place six dog figurines on the track. Each dog is assigned to a patient. Dice is rolled and a dog advances. The winner receives some money for use in the commissary.

“We also sponsor a ‘Shells and Bones’ night at the home,” said Combs, a member of VFW Post 9400 in Phoenix. “That’s a steak and shrimp dinner. Anything we can do to help our fellow vets.”

Combs, who served with the 380th Air Expeditionary Wing in the United Arab Emirates in 2004, said his Pup Tent also hosts such events as game night, pizza parties and wing nights.

“Each Pup Tent may focus on a different area,” he added. “My fellow Cootie, Charles Peterson with the Grand of California, his sole purpose is to get an electric wheel-



PHOTO COURTESY OF DARIN COMBS

Members of the Military Order of the Cootie Pup Tent 11 in Phoenix pose with the Cootie Mobile they donated to the Arizona State Veterans Home in 2019. September marks 100 years since the Cooties were first formed in Washington, D.C. They became an official part of VFW in 1921.

chair to any veteran who needs it.”

A HOME FOR CHILDREN

Cootie membership was opened up on Sept. 17, 1920, at the Oxford Hotel in Washington, D.C. The idea behind the ancillary organization was that it would help VFW’s membership grow, which was in the midst of an influx of WWI veterans.

Spanish American War vet Fred C. Madden was the first Supreme Seam Squirrel (the forerunner to Supreme Commander). Some 300 VFW members signed up to be a part of the inaugural group, which promised to offer fun.

A year later, on Sept. 24, 1921, the Cooties officially became a part of the VFW during the VFW Encampment in Detroit.

Cooties take pride in the name, which is derived from the lice that scurried on and around the troops in the trenches during WWI.

Instead of meetings, Cooties have

“scratches.” On the back of their shirt collars, they wear a pin resembling a louse. Their hats are outlandish. And when one is introduced to a crowd of people, everyone offers “boos” as a sign of respect.

Combs said that before the Cooties became so heavily involved in helping hospitalized veterans, they first had an idea in 1923 to help war widows and children.

This idea evolved into the VFW National Home for Children, which opened its doors in Eaton Rapids, Mich., in 1925. Since then, the Cooties have raised millions of dollars for the home.

The group paid to have the athletic field built in 1937 and the swimming pool in 1950. Members raised money for the campus library and fire department as well. The members later ensured that a security system was installed and new computers were purchased, Combs said.

Each year, the Supreme Sr. Vice Commander takes a private tour of the

COOTIES IN THE TRENCHES

The name “Cootie” originated in World War I when allied troops from different countries were massed together on the battlefields of France. Each country represented in WWI contributed to an amalgamation of lice, known colloquially as “cooties.” The common American Greyback, the Black Algerian Schinnels, the great Blue Louse from India, the British Blue Bloods, the Belgian Gold-Striped Heneckers, the French Grey and the Gold Parisian cooties were all thrown together in the trenches.

At once, the lice began to increase and multiply so that by the end of the war some troops said WWI trenches had the most intelligent cooties that could be produced. They were known to bite the soldiers at just the right time to save a soldier’s life — for often when a shell left the German trenches, the cootie would bite the soldiers, causing them to stoop and scratch at just the exact time that the shell would pass over the place where the soldier’s head had been.

Many soldiers lying in their shell holes were saved from death when the highly intelligent cooties, knowing that a shell was coming in their direction, would bite the soldiers, causing such agony that they were forced to retreat to the trenches or other places of safety for “shirt reading” and “seam running” while the shell burst harmlessly in the places they had just vacated.

Courtesy of the Military Order of the Cootie Grand of Delaware

LIFE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
MILITARY ORDER OF THE COOTIE

Name: Bush, George (Type of Post, Last, First, Middle) MOC Life No. 23625

Address: Penna Ave (White House) Wash D.C. (Street and Number, City or Town, State and Zip)

Date of Birth: 12-24-92 (Day, Month, Year) Membership Fee \$ 90.00

Service Record: 1942-1945 (Dates of Induction and Discharge) (Branch of Service) USN

VFW Membership: 155325 (Life Membership Number) VFW Post: (Date Paid to VFW) (Amt.)

Next of Kin: Barbara Bush (First, Middle, Last Name, Relationship) Spouse

As a member of Pup Tent No. 24 Located at: Brazos Foxes (City, State)

Pup Tent Name: Brazos Foxes MOC Annual Card No.

I hereby apply for LIFE MEMBERSHIP as authorized by Section 120 of the Supreme By-Laws and agree to abide by their provisions as now written or later legally amended.

Date: 12/24/92 Signature of Applicant: Awarded by PT 24

I certify that the above named Cootie is a member of this Pup Tent in good standing with dues paid to 12/24/92

Signature of Pup Tent C.C.D.B. Pup Tent No. 24

and transmitted 30 Dec 92 (Date)

Grand of: Texas

Military Order of the Cootie
OF THE UNITED STATES
THE HONOR DEGREE OF MEMBERS OF FOREIGN WARS

LIFE MEMBER
GEORGE BUSH

CARD NO. 23625 GRAND PUP TENT OF TEXAS
BRAZOS FOXES PUP TENT NO. 024 DATE 01-01-93

NATIONAL OR SUPREME PUP TENT RECORD CARD

COOTIE NO. 48 DATE 12-6-72 CONT. SINCE 1948

NAME: Harry S. Truman

ADDRESS: INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

ZIP: 64601

IS A MEMBER OF: ALL FORGET UP

LOCATED AT: SILVER SPRING, MD

MEMBER'S SIGNATURE: John G. Heiman

1973 VFW DUES PAID TO POST NO. 1000

MEMBER'S OCCUPATION: DATE INITIATED

SIGNED: John G. Heiman LOCAL PUP TENT QUARTERMASTER

CHECK WHICH BELOW

NEW MEMBER ☐

CONTINUOUS MEMBER ☒

RE-INSTATED MEMBER ☐

TRANSFER FROM PUP TENT NO.

CITY

STATE

1973

DATE DUES PAID

Presidents George H.W. Bush and Harry S. Truman were life members of the Military Order of the Cootie as illustrated by their membership cards above. Since forming in 1920, the Cooties have financed an athletic field, a swimming pool, a library and a fire department at VFW's National Home for Children.

home and determines what the special project will be during his or her year as Supreme Commander. Combs' project will be remodeling the child-care center on campus.

“The Cooties really do so much for the National Home,” Combs said. “Several of our Grands, which is equivalent to a VFW Department, sponsor annual events. Grand of Ohio sponsors the Easter Egg Roll, while the Grand of Michigan hosts the annual Christmas party.”

The Christmas party features a visit

by Santa Claus, a magician performance and musical entertainment. All of the residents receive gifts, too, Combs said.

The Cooties work in hospitals began in earnest with the outbreak of WWII. Each year, Cootie volunteers rack up “thousands of hours, worth millions of dollars,” Combs said.

“We just bring laughter to those who most need it,” Combs said. “Oftentimes, hospitals are so somber, so what we do is bring a different mentality.”

EMAIL jdyhouse@vfw.org

Stand Up Straight and Feel Better

Discover the Perfect Walker, the better way walk safely and more naturally

NEW

It's a cruel fact of life, as we age, gravity takes over. Our muscles droop, our bodies sag and the weight of the world seems to be planted squarely on our shoulders. We dread taking a fall, so we find ourselves walking less and less—and that only makes matters worse.

Well, cheer up! There's finally a product designed to enable us all to walk properly and stay on the go. It's called the Perfect Walker, and it can truly change your life.

Traditional rollators and walkers simply aren't designed well. They require you to hunch over and shuffle your feet when you walk. This puts pressure on your back, your neck, your wrists and your hands. Over time, this makes walking uncomfortable and can result in a variety of health issues. That's all changed with the Perfect Walker. Its upright design and padded elbow rests enable you to

distribute your weight across your arms and shoulders, not your hands and wrists. Helps reduce back, neck and wrist pain and discomfort. Its unique frame gives you plenty of room to step, and the oversized wheels help you glide across the floor. The height can be easily adjusted with the push of a button to fit anyone from 5' to over 6'. Once you've reached your destination you can use the hand brakes to gently slow down, and there's even a handy seat with a storage compartment. Its sleek, lightweight design makes it easy to use indoors and out and it folds up for portability and storage.



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PHOTO BY U.S. ARMY SIGNAL CORPS, GIFT OF MAUDE HAYMAN, FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL WORLD WAR II MUSEUM



U.S. troops celebrate the news of Japan's unconditional surrender on Aug. 15, 1945, in front of the American Red Cross "Rainbow Corner" in Paris, France. News that the fighting in the Pacific Theater had ended and World War II was finally over set off celebrations around the world.

World War II ended 75 years ago this month with Japan's signing of its unconditional surrender on the deck of the *USS Missouri* (BB-63) in Tokyo Bay. It signaled the end of the momentous four-year conflict that raged around the world and changed the course of history. VFW offers its immense gratitude to its members, as well as all 16 million overseas WWII veterans who served, sacrificed and saved the world from tyranny.

BY TIM DYHOUSE AND TINA CLARK

U.S. ARMY PHOTO



Commander of U.S. Army Forces in the Far East Gen. Douglas MacArthur wades ashore on Oct. 20, 1944, on Leyte in the central Philippines. After a short speech, MacArthur uttered his famous line, “People of the Philippines, I have returned.”

Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal

This medal was awarded to all officers and enlisted men of the U.S. armed forces who, between Dec. 7, 1941, and March 2, 1946, served on active duty in the prescribed area or upon certain ships. The medal provided VFW-membership eligibility for its recipients.



Medal of Honor Recipients by Battleground

Battleground	Medals Awarded
Philippines	47
Solomon Islands	29
Iwo Jima	27
Okinawa	22
New Guinea	19
Pearl Harbor	16
Pacific air war	8
Peleliu	8
Marshall Islands	6
Saipan	6
Coral Sea	4
Guam	4
Tarawa	4
Dutch East Indies	3
Midway Island	2
Japan (off shore)	2
Philippine Sea	2
Tinian	2
Attu, Alaska	1
Bismarck Sea	1
Burma	1
China	1
Gilbert Islands	1
Ie Shima, Japan	1
Java Sea	1
Korea (off shore)	1
Wake Island	1
Total in Pacific Theater	220

A.P. PHOTO/JOE ROSENTHAL



Leathernecks of the 2nd Bn., 28th Marines, 5th Marine Div., hoist the second U.S. flag atop Mt. Suribachi on Iwo Jima on Feb. 23, 1945. Three of the Marines in this famous photo were later killed in action on the island.

U.S. NAVY PHOTO

U.S. troops go over the side of a Coast Guard combat transport in November 1943 and enter landing barges at Empress Augusta Bay during the invasion of Bougainville in the Northern Solomon Islands. Nearly 250,000 Americans served in the Coast Guard — which was part of the U.S. Navy — during World War II.



75TH ANNIVERSARY OF VICTORY IN JAPAN

America's war in the Pacific Theater was stretched across a vast area from the U.S. west coast to present-day India and from Alaska to Australia. It took four years of brutal fighting and the combined efforts of Army infantrymen and Marine riflemen; Army, Navy and Marine Corp pilots and crew; Coast Guardsmen and Navy sailors; Navy frogmen and submariners; Army and Navy nurses; and Navy Seabees. Here's an overview of how they won the war in the Pacific Theater and ended the 20th century's most cataclysmic event.

Pearl Harbor Attacked

On Dec. 7, 1941, Japanese forces attack the U.S. base at Pearl Harbor on Hawaii's Oahu Island. The U.S. lost 2,334 KIA and 1,347 were wounded. The *USS Ward (DD-139)* fires the first shots of WWII for the U.S., sinking a Japanese submarine.

First Sea Battle

On Jan. 23, 1942, the first naval engagement in the Pacific Theater, the Battle of Makassar Strait off Indonesia, takes place. U.S. destroyers sink four Japanese transports.

First Attack on the U.S. Mainland

On Feb. 23, 1942, a Japanese submarine shells oil refineries near Santa Barbara, Calif.

Bataan Death March

On April 9, 1942, 12,000 allied troops surrender. Of the 1,875 Americans who participate in the ensuing 60-mile "death march," at least 600 perish along the way.

Battle of Midway

From June 3-6, 1942, U.S. naval and air forces score a decisive victory at Midway Atoll, some 1,300 miles northwest of Hawaii. It is generally considered a turning point in the Pacific Theater.

Guadalcanal Campaign

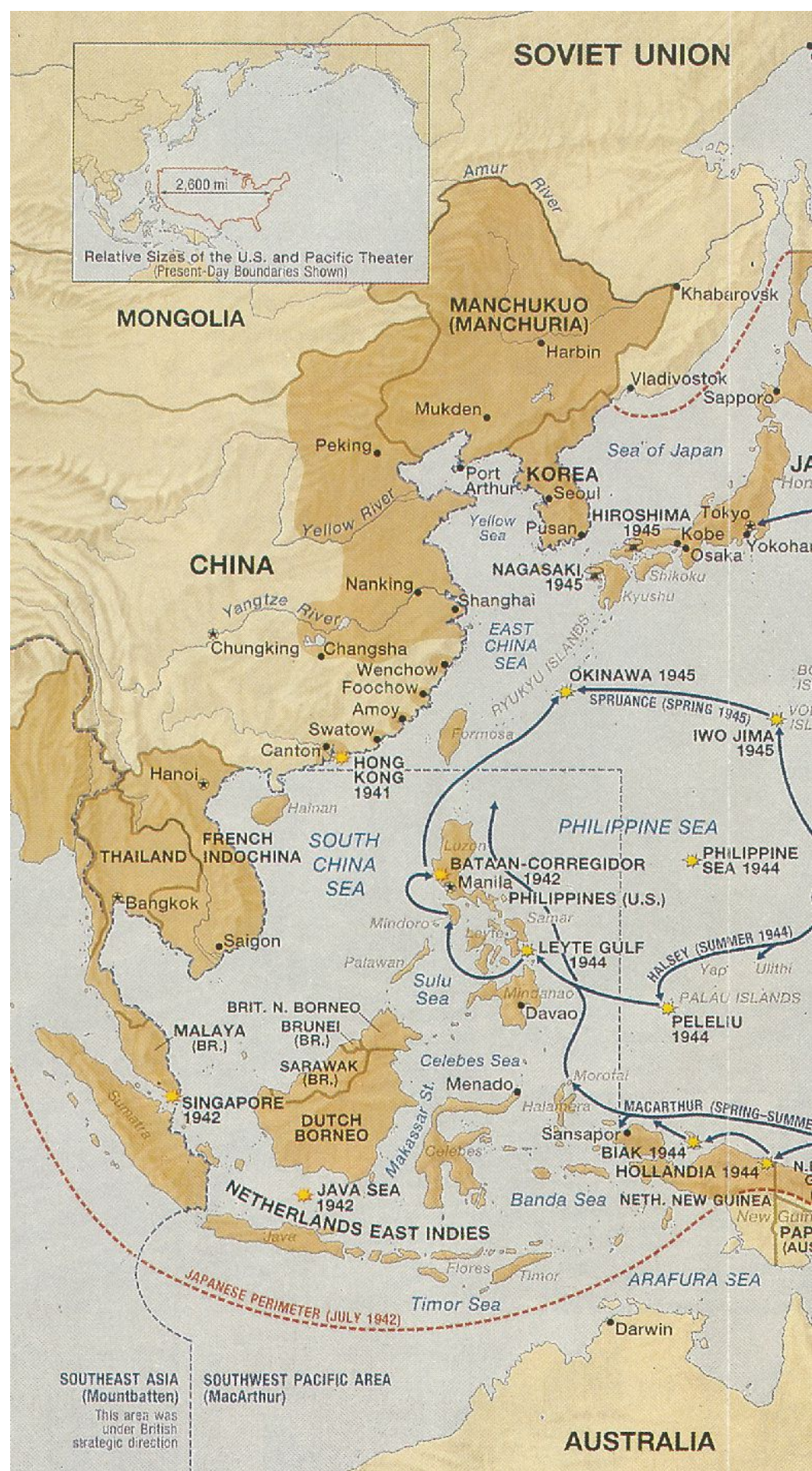
From Aug. 7, 1942, to Feb. 21, 1943, the U.S. Army, Navy and Marine Corps conduct the first major offensive against the Japanese. The decisive U.S. victory in the Solomon Islands was costly for the enemy, which lost about 20,000 troops. U.S. casualties: Navy, 2,191 KIA; Marines, 1,504 KIA; Army, 712 KIA.

Battle of Tarawa

After eight days of fighting from Nov. 20-28, 1943, U.S. Marines take the strategic island of Tarawa, nearly 2,500 miles southwest of Hawaii. U.S. casualties: Marines, 1,085 KIA, 2,292 WIA; Navy, 727 KIA. Eliminating pockets of resistance lasts until Dec. 8.

Battle of Saipan

From June 15-July 9, 1944, U.S. Marines, sailors and soldiers secure the strategic island of Saipan, about 135 miles northeast of Guam. The victory gave the allies an airstrip from which to launch B-29 bombers on Japan. U.S. casualties: Marines, 10,437 (3,152 KIA); Army, 3,674 casualties, mostly 27th Inf. Div.



Battle of Leyte Gulf

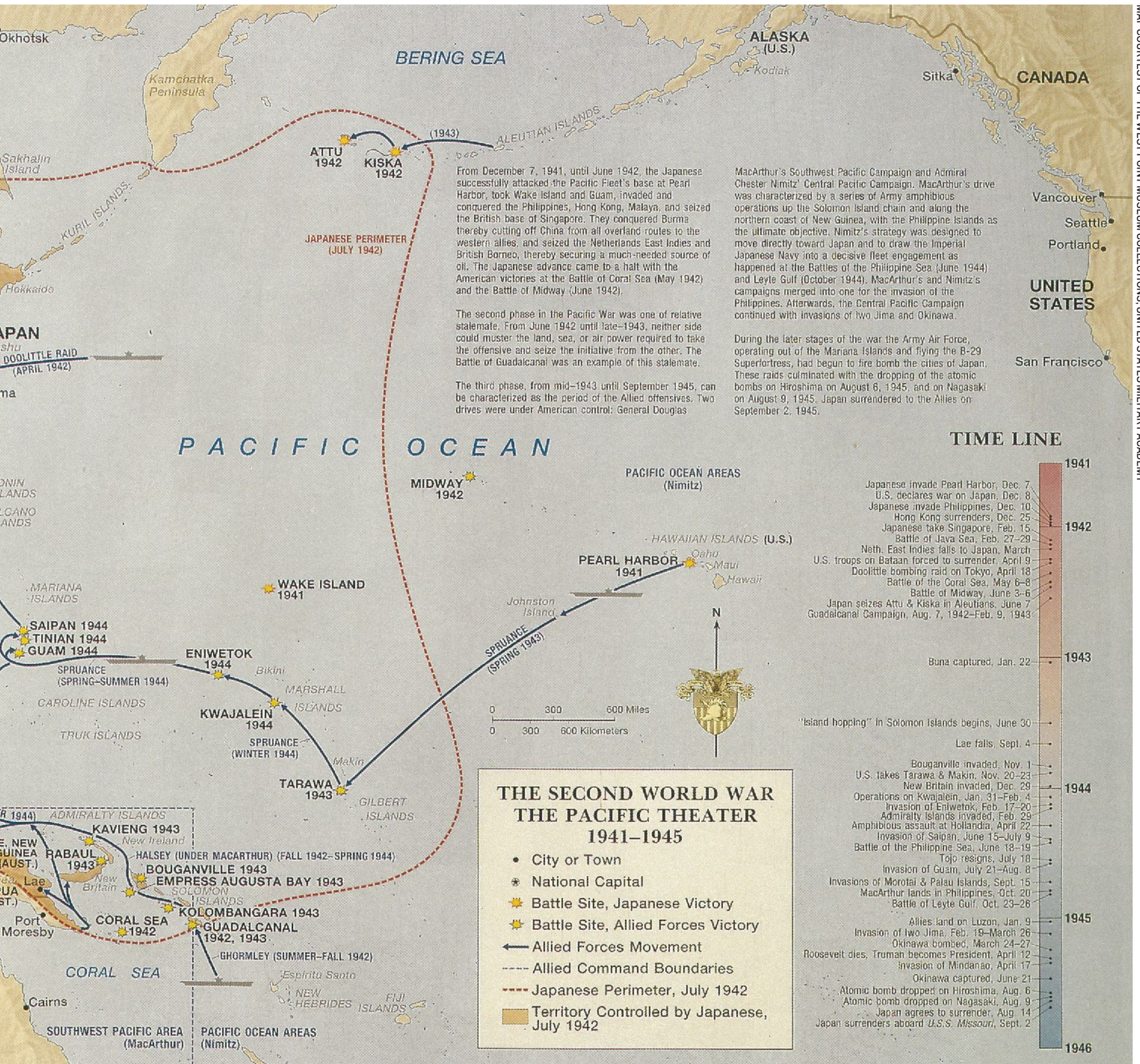
In the largest naval battle in world history, from Oct. 22-27, 1944, the U.S. Navy crushes a large Japanese fleet. The victory cut off Japan from its possessions in Southeast Asia. U.S. casualties: 3,000 KIA.

Battle of Iwo Jima

From Feb. 19-March 26, 1945, U.S. Marines and sailors engage in some of the most bitter fighting of the war. The island, about 750 miles south of Tokyo, represented a decisive step toward ultimate victory. U.S. casualties: Marines, 5,931 KIA; Navy, 982 KIA.

PACIFIC THEATER OF OPERATIONS, 1941-45

MAP COURTESY OF THE WEST POINT MUSEUM COLLECTIONS, UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY



Battle of Okinawa

From April 1-June 22, 1945, the U.S. Tenth Army fights to capture Okinawa on the southern tip of Japan's home islands. The action involves 548,000 Americans. U.S. KIA: Army, 4,718; Navy, 4,022; Marines, 3,443.

First Atomic Bomb Mission

On Aug. 6, 1945, the crew of the B-29 *Enola Gay*, from the Army's 509th Composite Group, 20th Air Force, drops an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan.

Second Atomic Bomb Mission

On Aug. 9, 1945, the crew of the B-29 *Bock's Car* of the 509th Composite Group, drops a second atomic bomb on Nagasaki, Japan.

Cease Fire Announced

At 7 a.m., on Aug. 15, 1945, a cease-fire order takes effect.

Formal Treaty Signed

On Sept. 2, 1945, Japanese officials sign the official surrender document on the deck of the *USS Missouri (BB-63)* in Tokyo Bay. ★

EMAIL tclark@vfw.org

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF VICTORY IN JAPAN

REMEMBERING THOSE WHO PAID THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

U.S. Battle Deaths by Service

While it is popularly assumed that the Pacific Theater was essentially a Navy (which included the Coast Guard) and Marine Corps war, Army ground forces sustained 35 percent of all battle deaths in that theater. Per capita, however, the Marine Corps had a far greater proportion of casualties in terms of the ratio of men fielded in combat to the number killed. Here is a breakdown of total fatalities for each service in the Pacific Theater:

Army: 57,286

Navy: 31,032

Marine Corps: 22,479

Ground Casualties by Division

Listed below are the Army and Marine Corps divisions that endured the most combat deaths.

Army

Division	KIA	WIA
7th Infantry	2,334	7,258
96th Infantry	2,036	7,181
32nd Infantry	1,985	5,627
27th Infantry	1,853	4,980
77th Infantry	1,850	5,935
24th Infantry	1,689	5,621

Marine Corps

Division	KIA	WIA
1st Marine	3,470	14,438
4th Marine	3,345	12,045
2nd Marine	2,795	9,975
5th Marine	2,414	7,159
3rd Marine	2,371	8,045
6th Marine	1,630	7,700

A sailor watches the explosion of the *USS Shaw (DD-373)* on Dec. 7, 1941, at Ford Island Naval Air Station during the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. While the attack was devastating to U.S. forces, within six months they had turned the tide of the war with a major victory at the Battle of Midway.



Navy Sacrificed at Sea

Listed below are the 10 U.S. Navy ships that suffered the most fatalities in a single incident. In total, some 55 ships were involved in battles in which at least 100 of their sailors were killed.

Ship	Type	Battle	Date	Killed
<i>Arizona</i>	Battleship	Pearl Harbor	Dec. 7, 1941	1,103
<i>Indianapolis</i>	Heavy Cruiser	Philippine Sea	July 29, 1945	883
<i>Franklin</i>	Aircraft Carrier	Japan (off shore)	March 18, 1945	724
<i>Juneau</i>	Light Cruiser	Guadalcanal	Nov. 13, 1942	683
<i>Houston</i>	Heavy Cruiser	Sunda Strait	March 1, 1942	655
<i>Liscome Bay</i>	Escort Aircraft Carrier	Tarawa	Nov. 24, 1943	646
<i>Oklahoma</i>	Battleship	Pearl Harbor	Dec. 7, 1941	415
<i>Bunker Hill</i>	Aircraft Carrier	Okinawa	May 11, 1945	396
<i>Quincy</i>	Heavy Cruiser	Savo Island	Aug. 9, 1942	389
<i>Mount Hood</i>	Ammunition Ship	Admiralty Island	Nov. 10, 1944	372

Editor’s note: Much of the information in this article was originally published in *Faces of Victory: Pacific, Fall of the Rising Sun*, VFW magazine’s official account of WWII in the Pacific Theater.

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'I Was Happy

PHOTO COURTESY OF LEE LANPHIER



"Thank God we beat them."

Lee Lanphier, Navy, Signalman 3rd Class, USS Guam (CB-2), Asiatic Sea; VFW Post 2397, Corpus Christi, Texas

"Tied up to a dock next to the USS Missouri, watching all the diplomats walking onto the Missouri, I remember the small limping Japanese man, Shigemitsu. We were all waiting for the signatures. I was only 19 and didn't realize then how significant the event was or how it would become such a mark in history."

Billie H. Bowers, Army, Private First Class, General McArthur Honor Guard, Tokyo Bay, Japan; VFW Post 4777, Idabel, Okla.

"82nd Airborne Division troops were aboard our ship. We were 150 yards from the USS Missouri. I was on watch in the conning tower with binoculars and saw each one sign. At 19 years old, you feel different. I didn't know how important it was, or how excited I should have been."

Clyde Leri, Navy, Signalman 3rd Class, USS LSM-331, Tokyo Bay, Japan; VFW Post 894, Natrona Heights, Pa.

"I remember we had troops aboard headed to Japan, and we were 70 miles off the coast when the bomb dropped. Our Skipper came on and said, 'Don't fire on planes unless fired at.' War was over."

William Stephenson, Navy, Seaman 1st Class, USS Monitor (LSV-5), Tokyo Bay, anchored next to the USS Missouri; VFW Post 10567, Southaven, Miss.

"I knew Morse code from the Boy Scouts, so I was experienced as a radio operator. I heard over the radio 'The Emperor of Japan has graciously consented to give world peace.'"

Donald Kershner, U.S. Army, radio operator, 43rd Signal Co., 43rd Inf. Div., Philippines; VFW Post 10523, Canal Winchester, Ohio

"Elated. All the platoon was dancing. First time I slept with both eyes shut in a long time."

Albert Gagliardi, Army, Corporal, HQ Co., 147th Inf., Iwo Jima; VFW Post 6309, Gilroy, Calif.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN STOKES



"I was quite happy when the war was over. I knew I would get home."

John Stokes, Navy armed guard, SS Louis Weule (Liberty ship), Manila, Philippines; VFW Post 819, San Leandro, Calif.

PHOTO COURTESY OF W. REX KOCHER



"I was at the scope on the deck, and we were about 200 yards off the Missouri. I watched MacArthur and all the Japanese sign the papers. I was so glad to see it was over."

W. Rex Kocher, Navy, Fire Control 2nd Class, USS Wedderburn (DD-684), Tokyo Bay escorting the USS Missouri (BB-63); VFW Post 8317, Benton, Pa.

as Hell,

VFW members who served in the Pacific Theater during World War II recall their thoughts when they learned the war was over.

“When it was announced Japan had surrendered, there wasn’t dancing or celebration. There was a huge relief. We had been under several air attacks including kamikaze planes. Everyone knew that would all stop. No more airstrikes or bombs, no more hazard duty, no more saving men that were blown into the water being attacked by sharks, no more early dawn attacks. Relief was the only feeling we could feel.”

Alfred H. Jepsen, Navy, Machinist Mate 3rd Class, USS Anthony (DD-515), Nagasaki, Japan; VFW Post 10846, Cedar City, Utah



PHOTO COURTESY OF PAULINE DENMAN-WEBB

“We were one of five general hospitals, waiting for them to complete the build of one large hospital to treat all the injured after the invasion of Japan (which never happened). We were overjoyed hearing Japan surrendered.”

Pauline Denman-Webb, Army Nurse Corps, 1st Lieutenant, 308th General Hospital, Tinian Island; VFW Post 1689, Jacksonville, Fla.

“Right next to the USS Missouri, we stood for hours watching the signing. I was a 19-year-old sailor. When I got home, I went back to school and graduated in 1947.”

Thomas J. De Carlo, Navy, Machinist Mate 3rd Class, USS Thetis Bay (CVE-90), Tokyo Bay; VFW Post 3673, Bessemer, Mich.

“I left for Tokyo Bay right after the USS Missouri was finished on my 25th birthday. We came into Tokyo Bay three or four days before the ceremony. We didn’t believe it was over. I was standing under the 16mm guns, back-row, with 100 Marines during the signing. We stayed alert. It was not a celebration.”

Johnnie M. Barr, Marine Corps, Private First Class, 20mm gunner starboard side, USS Missouri (BB-63), Tokyo Bay; VFW Post 10826, Verona, Va.

“I was in a hospital on either Guam or Saipan. I was wounded in the leg in Okinawa by a sniper and my unit was the Honor Guard on the USS Missouri. I heard the war was over on the commercial radio in the hospital. I was happy as hell.”

Carl Beverage, Marine Corps, Private First Class, 4th Marines, 6th Marine Div.; VFW Dept. of West Virginia

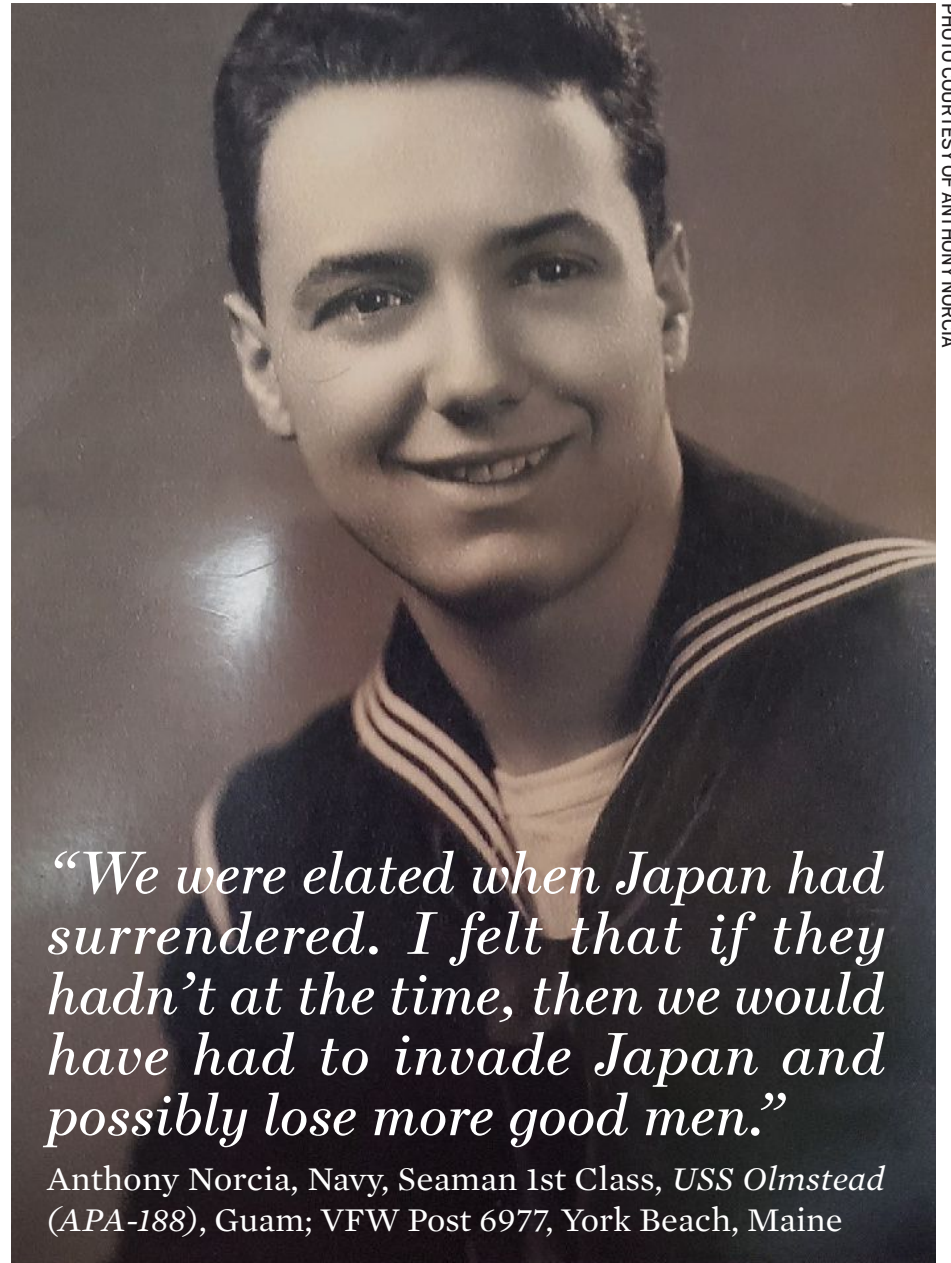


PHOTO COURTESY OF ANTHONY NORCIA

“We were elated when Japan had surrendered. I felt that if they hadn’t at the time, then we would have had to invade Japan and possibly lose more good men.”

Anthony Norcia, Navy, Seaman 1st Class, USS Olmstead (APA-188), Guam; VFW Post 6977, York Beach, Maine

“The loud speakers announced Japan surrendered. We were so excited, we were preparing to invade Japan and didn’t have to. We came into Tokyo Bay on Sept. 2, 1945, and 1,000 aircraft were flying over us. We had the 112th Regt. aboard, quite a strange deal staging troops. I remember hearing, ‘We thank you for your service, but your job is not over.’ We were off to China.”

Clifford Freitas, Navy, Coxswain, USS Clearfield (APA-142), Tokyo Bay; VFW Post 1123, Vallejo, Calif.

“We found out about 2 a.m. I remember excitement and happiness. Everyone shooting shells, mortars and bombs like a fireworks show.”

Roy M. Nicoloff, Marine Corps, George Co., 2nd Bn., 2nd Marines, 2nd Marine Div., Saipan; VFW Post 5864, Greenwood, Ind.

A VFW life member from Pennsylvania and his wife co-authored a memoir that gives insight into the part-time military life of a National Guard service member and his family.

'YOU'RE PROBABLY WRESTLING WITH THESE SAME ISSUES'

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF KEVIN DELICKER



MAIN: VFW life member of Post 8282 in Breinigsville, Pa., Kevin Dellicker and his wife, Susan, co-authored a memoir titled *Twenty-Percent Soldiers: Our Secret Life in the National Guard*. The couple use their personal story to give insight into the National Guard and the lives of the part-time soldier. They also plan on donating the book's net revenue to charities that include the Pennsylvania Wounded Warriors Inc., the 193rd Special Operations Wing Association and the Pennsylvania National Guard Foundation.

INSET: Kevin and Susan stand with two of their three children, Jake (left) and Eli (center), following Kevin's return from *Operation Iraqi Freedom* in 2007. Kevin continues to serve in the Air National Guard as an intelligence officer in the 193rd Special Operations Wing, the most deployed unit in the Air National Guard, according to the memoir.

For about 20 years and counting, Kevin and Susan Dellicker have inhabited a complicated space between military and civilian life.

In their recent co-authored memoir, *Twenty-Percent Soldiers: Our Secret Life in the National Guard*, the couple calculated that 20 percent of their lives together was spent with Kevin on some kind of active military status.

Kevin serves as an intelligence officer in the 193rd Special Operations Wing, the most deployed unit in the Air National Guard, according to the book. As a result, the Dellickers have endured four of Kevin's overseas deployments, which included 2001's *Operation Enduring Freedom* and 2003's *Operation Iraqi Freedom*.

They've also weathered 10 state-side missions, 24 training exercises and 1,549 days on orders, with their children attending a total of 22 different schools.

But they're not alone.

"If you're in the National Guard, this is your life," said Kevin, a life member of VFW Post 8282 in Breinigsville, Pa. "You're proudly getting deployed or have been deployed at some point, but you're probably wrestling with these same issues. It's sort of the new normal."

'WE WANTED TO TELL OUR PERSONAL STORY'

When they sat down separately to write their memoir in the spring of 2018, the Dellickers wanted to give readers an intimate glimpse into the rarely examined life of a National Guard service member and their family from a dual perspective.

They opened a door into their private lives, indulging the reader in everything from humorous stories involving their son to difficult marital and emotional challenges, which includes keeping their technology consulting business afloat a few years ago through sheer perseverance.

"We wanted to tell our personal story to let those family members of servicemen and women in the National Guard and Reserves know that they're not alone," Susan said. "We wanted to educate the general public and the active-duty forces on how the National Guard functions and what our lives are like."

As Kevin added, the National Guard presents a hybrid of both.

"The notion of the citizen-soldier,

being called when you're needed and sent home when you're not, that's what we want others to understand," he said.

Through the interwoven perspectives and experiences of both Susan and Kevin when apart, the book also raises awareness of the family support challenges facing members of the part-time force.

"When you're on active-duty, you deploy as a unit, leaving many people behind," Kevin said. "But those people belong to a community that supports one another. In the Guard, the bases are smaller, and they're a lot more spread out. That's really at the heart of the discrepancy between the National Guard and the active-duty members."

Co-authoring the book as private citizens who live in Heidelberg Township, Pa., about 90 miles from Kevin's National Guard base, the couple deliberately states that Guardsmen and Reservists are not victims. Instead, the Dellickers use their prose to advocate for reforms that can help military families handle the unique routine that comes with a part-time military life. Their persuasive voice pleads with policy makers to fix a family support system that they say currently fails the part-time force.

CLOSING THE GAP

From chapter to chapter, the couple's experiences detail the discrepancy between the support systems for active-duty families and the part-time military life.

The book opens with Susan's point-of-view in the wake of the 9/11 tragedy, an experience that she had to endure alone while six months pregnant with their second child. Far from any military base in a new home in rural Pennsylvania, about 75 miles northwest of Philadelphia, she captures the unnerving disbelief of feeling isolated while simultaneously becoming a "wartime military wife."

Her experience within the first few pages of the book differs, for example, from where they first started as newlyweds traveling to Texas for a year of military training in late August of 2000.

While at Goodfellow Air Force Base in San Angelo, Texas, where Kevin attended Air Force intelligence officer school for nine months, the amenities and like-minded community brought comfort and ease.

As captured in Chapter 5 of the memoir, being on active-duty offered the Dellickers supportive peers, extensive base infrastructure and a strong community bond.

But upon returning to their home in Pennsylvania for part-time service in the National Guard, the Dellickers noticed that except for friends and family, they were mostly on their own.

Kevin and Susan's memoir also debunks the aged myth of the "weekend warrior," which refers to part-time National Guard service members.

"It's not like that anymore," Kevin said. "The bottom line is if you were in the Guard the past 20 years, you probably went overseas to fight a war somewhere, and you might have gone more than once. In fact, a lot of people went more than once."

Without a steady support system in place to help ease in the transition, however, those part-time National Guard members are often left alone in reconnecting with their civilian life.

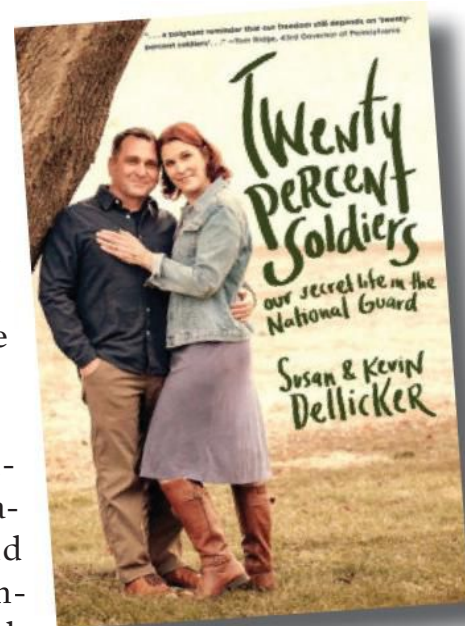
"The burnout rate is high," Susan said. "Without the same family support infrastructure that active-duty members take for granted, most National Guard families find it hard."

Although the military recognizes the discrepancy, the Dellickers noted, things remain at a snail's pace while the need for regional-based services multiplies.

"It's especially relevant today as activations of the Guard and Reserve reach record levels," Kevin said. "That support system is crucial with soldiers and airmen simultaneously supporting overseas combat operations, domestic security missions and coronavirus mitigation efforts."

The Dellickers have vouched to donate the book's net proceeds to charities that include the Pennsylvania Wounded Warriors Inc., the 193rd Special Operations Wing Association and the Pennsylvania National Guard Foundation. ★

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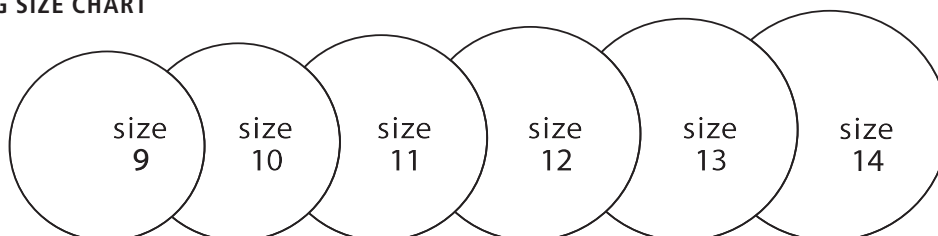
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'MY JOURNEY WAS ABOUT THE CAUSE'

A VFW member from Missouri set out to become the first American to circumvent the globe on foot, raising awareness for veteran suicides every step of the way.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.



Navy vet and VFW member Dustin Johnson of Benton, Mo., attempts to become the first American ever to circumnavigate the globe on foot, while raising awareness for veteran suicides every step of the way. He began his trek in Benton on May 1, 2019, running an average of 30 miles per day. Scheduled to end in November 2020 in Benton, Johnson ran about 11,000 miles before the COVID-19 pandemic ended the journey.

Dustin Johnson thought of ending it all. Transitioning into civilian life after four years in the Navy had left Johnson scrambling to find his footing. Within the first two months after his discharge in 2018, he found himself overwhelmed.

"It was quite the transition," said Johnson, who served aboard the aircraft carriers *USS Ronald Reagan*, *USS George Washington* and *USS Carl Vinson* as a plane captain with Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron 113. "You go from being out at sea for nine months on a Westpac deployment to having to figure out your life all over again."

The 24-year-old grew restless, shuffling back and forth across Missouri in search of a new chapter in his life. In a matter of months, Johnson moved from West Plains in the southern part of the state to Benton in southeast Missouri to eventually landing at the extreme western edge of the state in Kansas City.

While living with his twin brother in Kansas City for six months, he often walked 11 miles to and from work at a security company. Johnson assessed his life on those walks, realizing he wasn't happy.

"I was going through a lot mentally," said Johnson, a member of VFW Post 3174 in Sikeston, Mo., about 18 miles south of Benton. "But I got to reflect a lot on what I wanted to do with my life on those walks."

He soon found himself on the road again, returning to Benton, where he intended to open an art studio instead of settling for another industry job.

Then the fire happened.

On Jan. 21, 2019, Johnson's home in Benton burned down, taking all his art supplies and earthly possessions along with it. The tragedy led to Johnson's spiraling into bouts of depression and suicidal thoughts.

"It was the tipping point, mentally," he said. "I was on a high when I left Kansas City for southeast Missouri, and suddenly I had lost everything."

After attempting to overdose on pills, the Navy veteran somehow survived, to his doctor's surprise. The physician told Johnson that it was his body's will to live that kept him alive.

With a renewed sense of purpose and

a fellow runner's advice, Johnson nursed himself back to health and returned to one of his favorite pastimes — running.

On May 1, 2019, he set out on a quest to become the first American to circumnavigate the globe on foot, while raising awareness for veteran suicides every step of the way. The lofty goal was to encompass 16,400 miles across four continents in a year and six months, ending back in Benton in November 2020.

Unfortunately, complications ended the journey short of the mark.

“Our story got cut short in January because of the wildfires going on in Australia, an unauthorized visa through the Middle East and then the coronavirus,” Johnson said after returning home to Benton ahead of schedule.

The setbacks, however, don't minimize what Johnson accomplished while on foot.

Between May 2019 and January 2020, Johnson ran about 11,000 miles and completed a stretch across the U.S., South America and parts of Europe.

Since beginning in Benton, Johnson ran an average of 30 miles per day, reaching South Carolina in just 35 days before boarding a flight for Lima, Peru, where he continued his trek across South America.

It was in Germany that his journey halted. While in the middle of finishing his trek across Europe, Johnson avoided a collision with a car that led to an injured ankle about 85 miles into his run from Stuttgart to Berlin.

“It was heavy on my heart to have to stop,” he wrote on a Facebook post shortly after the accident. “But I had to make the decision because my body had already been through so much.”

The accident ultimately derailed his plan to become the first American to run around the world in 2020, but it was the support and kindness from fellow VFW members and veterans along the way that made the trip worth it.

“I had some pretty wonderful people do some pretty wonderful things for me throughout the run,” Johnson said. “I was very thankful that the VFW Posts in some of these places I ran through supported me and helped me so much.”

Johnson also added that while he didn't get to break the world record this year, the journey was about more than



PHOTO COURTESY OF DUSTIN JOHNSON



PHOTO COURTESY OF DUSTIN JOHNSON

the accolades.

“Since I will only run 11,000 miles and only across three continents, I will not be eligible for any of the records,” he said. “And I have come to be okay with that because my journey was about the cause and not the records.”

Johnson hopes to reach for another world record later this year. He will attempt to break the record for farthest distance traveled on foot without stopping.

“There will be no sleeping, no sitting down or nothing like that,” Johnson said. “It's a continuous forward progression. Right now the record sits at 412 miles in six days and 12 hours.”

The proceeds from this world record attempt will go to Post 3174 and Stop Soldier Suicide, a wellness nonprofit

TOP: Dustin Johnson stops near a road sign outside of Eduardo Castex, Argentina, some 400 miles west of Buenos Aires, in 2019. Johnson was on his way to Bahia Blanca, Argentina, some 250 miles south of Eduardo Castex.

BOTTOM: Dustin Johnson, center, receives his certificate of completion at Point Mugu Naval Air Station in California alongside his former commanding officer of VAW-113 and Division Chief (now a Senior Chief) in 2017.

organization that offers help to all veterans at no cost.

“After this upcoming attempt, I will look at what comes next. I may attempt the world run again,” Johnson said. “I just want to get back out there and continue fighting for my brothers and sisters.”

✪ EMAIL irodriguez@vfw.org

‘THE BEST DECISION OF MY ENTIRE LIFE’

Navy veteran and VFW member turned counselor uses her experiences to treat fellow vets. She says veteran counseling is a “rarity” in her area of New Jersey.

BY JANIE DYHOUSE

When Heather McPaul was just a kid, she delighted in hearing war stories from her grandfather, Norman Gimpel, who had served as a Navy signalman in the South Pacific during WWII. Her grandpa would assign ranks to McPaul and her brother while they were playing. That planted a seed which would eventually lead to her own service in the Navy.

A VFW member of the Department of New Jersey, McPaul graduated college in 2004 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish language and culture, but found the whole experience to be somewhat of a letdown.

“One day I woke up and thought, ‘Something has to change,’” McPaul said. “That’s when I decided to join the Navy. It was the best decision of my entire life. I met my husband while we were stationed in Japan.”

McPaul spent five years in the Navy as a master-at-arms responsible for law enforcement and anti-terrorism force protection. From 2007-2009, she was based at Bahrain with an Anti-Terrorism Force Mobile Security Squadron. The unit’s job was to protect high-value assets in support of *Operation Iraqi Freedom*



PHOTO COURTESY OF HEATHER MCPAUL

Navy veteran and VFW member Heather McPaul owns Symmetry of Self Counseling Center LLC in West Deptford, N.J., near Philadelphia. McPaul specializes in the care of veterans and first responders. She hopes to “destigmatize” counseling for vets by making it more relatable.

and *Operation Enduring Freedom*.

Additionally, McPaul said they protected civilian contracted ships carrying supplies for OIF and OEF in high-risk areas of the Persian Gulf.

‘NOT IN A GOOD PLACE’

After her time in the Persian Gulf, McPaul was stationed in Sasebo, Japan, where she served with the base police force. In 2011, she departed the Navy.

Having earned her degree and entered the workforce before joining the Navy at 26, McPaul said she didn’t think civilian life would be much of a change. But she

was wrong.

“I had a difficult transition from the Navy,” she said. “It was hard to go from having a lot of responsibility to basically asking myself, ‘What do I do now?’ The military doesn’t prepare you for the emotional shift where you feel like you don’t have purpose any longer.”

McPaul said the first three months out of the Navy made for a hard transition, and by the end of the third month, she was “not in a good place.”

She decided to start writing about her experience in a blog she called “Life After Service.”

The idea was to talk through her transition out of the military with the hope that others going through the same thing wouldn't feel so alone.

"I didn't go through anything super traumatic in the military," McPaul said. "I thought, if this is how bad transition is for me, a lot of other people must have it a lot worse."

McPaul found a job answering phones in a therapist's office and decided to use her GI Bill benefits to pursue a graduate degree in clinical mental health counseling. She found herself working 40 hours a week, going to school and completing an internship.

"The military work ethic I had accumulated is how I was able to do it all at once," McPaul said. "I knew that someday I was going to open a practice just for

veterans. I wanted to be a beacon of 'Hey over here, I can help, and I have been there, too.'"

Fast forward to 2020 just five years after graduating from Walden University, an online college based in Minneapolis, and McPaul opened Symmetry of Self Counseling Center LLC in West Deptford, N.J., which is about 20 miles south of Philadelphia.

While her focus is on veterans, she also works with first responders, since theirs is a similar culture.

"My practice has been crazy thriving, even during the COVID-19 pandemic," said McPaul, who sees about 28 patients a week. "The military teaches a lot of stuff like 'suck it up.' But vets don't have to believe that anymore because we are not in survival mode any longer."

NEEDING 'CAMARADERIE'

McPaul said her military experience has taught her that there is a lot of loss in being a veteran. Whether it's leaving friends behind, losing one's sense of purpose, losing a limb, or not to mention losing battle buddies, it's all related to grief.

Because of her understanding of these types of loss, McPaul also became a certified grief counselor. In treating combat trauma, she uses techniques such as EMDR therapy: eye movement desensitization and reprocessing.

The therapy involves having patients recall distressing images. The therapist then instructs the patients in bilateral sensory input such as side-to-side eye movements or hand tapping.

McPaul also uses trauma-informed expressive arts therapy, because she recognizes how hard it is for some veterans to articulate what they have been going through. She asks them to do things like assign a color and shape to the feelings they are experiencing.

"It's really about tapping into subconscious thoughts," McPaul said. "People put all these things together and notice different things about the picture."

McPaul said for people dealing with trauma, there needs to be a lot of rapport building. That's why she starts slow, getting to know the patient and letting the patient get to know her. Then she teaches basic coping skills.

"I get how hard it is to tell a stranger your whole life story," she added. "We first need that camaraderie."

While most of McPaul's patients are younger as she cannot yet accept Medicare, she said she is working to get a contract with the VA.

McPaul noted that as of 2016, New Jersey had more than 400,000 veterans, and the majority of those are located in the southern part of the state. Gloucester County, where her practice is located, has 6 percent of those veterans.

"Counseling for veterans by a veteran is a serious rarity, especially in this area," McPaul said. "I hope to help destigmatize counseling for this population as well as first responders by making it more accessible and more relatable."

For more information, visit www.symmetryofself.com.

EMAIL jdyhouse@vfw.org

PHOTO COURTESY OF HEATHER MCPAUL



Navy veteran Heather McPaul relaxes with fellow sailors aboard a ship in the Persian Gulf while serving as a master-at-arms with an Anti-Terrorism Force Mobile Security Squadron from 2007-2009. Based in Bahrain, McPaul's unit protected ammunition and ships while they were refueling. She also served with Navy law enforcement in Sasebo, Japan.



'PARTNERS IN PATRIOTISM' SUPPORTS VITAL VFW PROGRAMS

A VFW campaign gives members and others the ability to enroll in a monthly program that saves VFW money.

BY DAVE SPIVA

As a VFW member, you have probably seen multiple appeals for donations to VFW in your mailbox. These are vital to the funding of VFW's National and Department programs.

However, you may not be aware of a better way to donate. There is still a way to support your VFW without solicitations.

The Partners in Patriotism campaign gives donors the ability to enroll in a monthly giving program. Being a part of the campaign is a way for people to continue supporting the organization without receiving as much mail from VFW.

Your participation as a member of the Partners in Patriotism program also helps VFW save money, according to Kelly Jones, manager of VFW's Development department.

"The VFW uses these funds where it's needed most," Jones said. "From helping veterans through VFW's National Veterans Service to ensuring essential benefits are not lost by continuing to testify before Congress, these funds assist in the VFW being able to continue its critical mission. The Partners in

Patriotism campaign gives participants peace of mind that 100 percent of their donation goes to helping those in need."

Being a part of the Partners in Patriotism campaign is easy. Simply contact VFW by calling 1-833-VFW-GIVE, or 1-833-839-4483 and tell a representative you'd like to learn more about the Partners in Patriotism campaign.

"Being a part of the Partner in Patriotism campaign is the most effective way to help veterans and service members," Jones said. "It's a win-win for VFW and its donors."

VFW Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch II said that being a part of the Partners in Patriotism campaign is "important" to him.

"I personally give a donation to VFW through Partners in Patriotism every month," Roesch said. "The more people we have participating in the campaign, the less money goes toward the soliciting of donations. It's also a way to make sure our donations go toward helping our veterans, military and their families all over the world." ★

EMAIL dspiva@vfw.org

ABOVE: VFW National Veterans Service Officer Ron Cherry (right) works with a National Guardsman in Cherry's office at VFW National Headquarters in Kansas City, Mo. VFW's National Veterans Service is one of the many programs funded through the VFW's Partners in Patriotism campaign. To learn how to be a Partner in Patriotism, call VFW Donor Services at 1-833-839-4483.

THREE WAYS BEING A PARTNER IN PATRIOTISM HELPS

Being a member of the Partners in Patriotism program helps VFW assist veterans more efficiently by:

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VA Helps Families ‘Remotely Honor’ Those Who Served

The Veterans Legacy Memorial website now allows users to better remember veterans who are interred at VA cemeteries across the nation.

BY DAVE SPIVA

VA's National Cemetery Administration recently expanded its Veterans Legacy Memorial website to help family and friends share memories of veterans.

According to VA, the Veterans Legacy Memorial website is the first digital platform dedicated to preserving the memory of some 3.7 million veterans buried or interred at VA cemeteries across the U.S. and its territories.

Randy Reeves, VA under secretary for memorial affairs, said that the online memorialization of veterans allows people to “remotely honor” veterans’ service and sacrifice. He also said that veterans registered online will always be remembered.

“In addition, [the Veterans Legacy Memorial] allows people to express their appreciation and gratitude for the dedicated service of our nation’s heroes,” Reeves said.

After creating an account on the website, visitors can leave a “tribute” to any veteran. Veterans can be found by searching their name, military service, war period or cemetery. According to VA, these tributes can be made in three ways:

- As a direct entry on a veteran’s page.
- As a reply to someone else’s tribute on a veteran’s page.
- As a direct entry of a memento or photo on a veteran’s page.

Once a tribute is posted, visitors can share their post to their social media



PHOTO BY DAVID H. LIPP/US AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Kent Kraiter of the North Dakota Air National Guard’s 119th Wing, right, along with his family — including retired Chief Master Sgt. Jennifer Kraiter and mother Paulette — visits the grave of his father, retired Army Sgt. 1st Class Gregory Kraiter, on May 25 at the Fargo National Cemetery near Fargo, N.D. The newly updated Veterans Legacy Memorial preserves the memory of 3.7 million veterans interred at VA cemeteries across the nation.

pages. Other users also can “like” a comment or image on the Veterans Legacy Memorial website. All posts are reviewed by Veterans Legacy Memorial administrators, according to VA.

VFW Washington Office Director of Communications and Public Affairs Terrence Hayes said that using the Veterans Legacy Memorial website is a “great way” to honor fallen troops.

“Memorial Day usually is a time where many of us gather to visit cemeteries to pay respects to our comrades

and loved ones,” Hayes said. “While the COVID-19 pandemic caused us to alter our plans, the Veterans Legacy Program afforded us a unique opportunity to still honor and celebrate the legacy of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in defense of freedom.”

VA operates 142 national cemeteries and 33 soldiers’ lots and monument sites in 41 states and Puerto Rico. To view the Veterans Legacy Memorial website, visit www.va.gov/remember. ★

EMAIL dspiva@vfw.org

VA BURIAL BENEFITS Information on VA burial benefits is available from local VA national cemetery offices, online at www.va.gov/burials-memorials or by calling VA regional offices at 1-800-827-1000. To make burial arrangements at any open VA national cemetery at the time of need, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 1-800-535-1117. For veterans not buried in a VA national cemetery, VA provides headstones, markers or medallions to commemorate their service.

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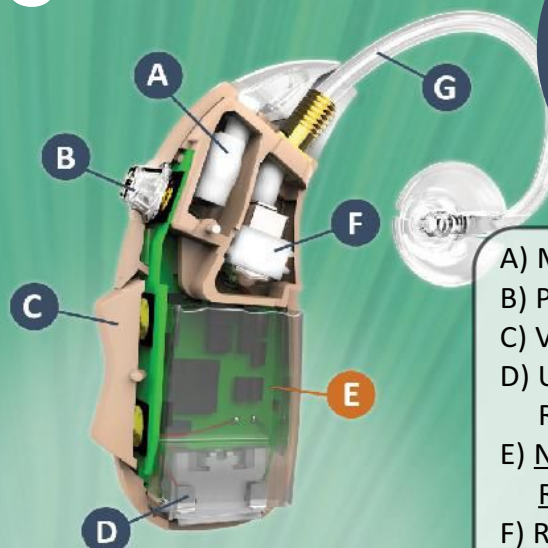
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Veterans with PTSD Encouraged to Speak Up, Seek Help

Talking to others is just one way those with PTSD can better cope. A multitude of non-narcotic options also exist.

BY JANICE PHELAN

After returning home from *Operation Iraqi Freedom* in 2004, Ryan Rogers began experiencing panic attacks and other symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.

“I just knew I was freaking out and had no idea why,” said Rogers, who served with the Army’s 1st Armored Division.

During an economic downturn, Rogers said he lost everything — his successful construction business, his health and his home.

“At one point, I was on 22 different meds,” he said. “They didn’t help. In fact, they nearly killed me.”

Eventually, Rogers found relief for PTSD through non-pharmaceutical therapies such as yoga, horticultural therapy and acupuncture. In addition, he worked with a counselor at a VA Vet Center and participated in a vocational/rehabilitation program.

“There are still times when I have anxiety, but I’ve learned how to bring myself down from that heightened state,” he said.

Today, Rogers is director of business management for the PTSD Foundation of America and a doctoral student in human services. “I found I really loved helping veterans,” he added.

Among adults, the prevalence of PTSD is close to 7 percent, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. For veterans of the Vietnam War, Persian Gulf War and the



wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, approximately 11 to 15 percent have PTSD during any given year, with lifetime rates significantly higher, according to the VA.

PTSD is a diagnosis that frequently has several issues, Rogers said.

“It is imperative to look at every aspect of the veteran’s life and treat the underlying issues related to PTSD,” he said.

The PTSD Foundation has found peer support counseling and holistic care to be especially successful in treating veterans’ PTSD, Rogers added.

“Teaching veterans positive coping mechanisms and taking care of the family is essential for long-term symptom management,” he said.

For family and friends wanting to support someone dealing with PTSD, Rogers recommends patience, love and persistence. The PTSD Foundation also makes a point to work closely with veterans’ families.

Other examples of treatments include cognitive-based therapy and exposure therapy, he added.

One alternative PTSD treatment that has helped some veterans is cannabidiol (CBD) oil and other non-cannabis hemp products.

“CBD helps with anxiety and provides a calming effect without the psychoactive effects that THC has,” said Aaron Augustis, Iraq War vet and founder of Veterans Cannabis Group. “It also helps with inflammation.”

A member of VFW Post 7816 in Novato, Calif., Augustis said effective CBD examples include tinctures and topicals which can be used daily, similar to taking multivitamins.

Although treatment may vary, the most important first step for veterans who believe they might have PTSD is to reach out to others.

“Talk to someone,” Rogers said. “The military taught us to be reliant on a team. Team up with someone you can talk to about what you are struggling with. You don’t have to suffer in silence.”

Since veterans are trained to be in control of their mind and body, PTSD can be especially confusing and difficult.

“Ultimately, there is no shame in talking to somebody about what you’re struggling with — even if you don’t know what you’re struggling with,” Rogers added. ★

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'Reach Out to Your Members'

Good communication at all levels is vital to a successful membership year — as is planning recruiting events well in advance. VFW's Membership Department has tools to help you get started.

BY JANIE DYHOUSE

September finds VFW well into the new membership year. VFW Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch II's motto "20/20 Vision for Veterans" calls for more and better communication at all levels.

"We need to find out who our members are, and how we can best address their needs," the Chief said. "Use all means of communication possible to reach out to your members."

According to Corey Hunt, VFW Membership associate director who is

VFW Membership Deputy Director Rick McKenna also emphasized the importance of planning recruiting events well in advance. If feasible, he suggests working three months out from an event.

Reaching out to communities to see what events are going to happen throughout the year is a good way to get started, McKenna said.

"Make sure, also, to log in to www.vfw.org to access the most up-to-date recruiting materials," he added. "There is no reason to be using outdated material."

Many of the recruiting resources online are available free-of-charge. Under the "Media Room" tab at vfw.org, there are radio spots, sample advertisements, public service announcements and media kits, all available for recruiting events.

"We know from experience that a 90-day planning window is key to successful event execution," McKenna said. "This provides time to engage your community, set realistic but challenging recruiting goals and select those individuals you want to best represent your Post, District or Department at major recruiting events."

The 2020-21 National Membership Program outlines the membership goals and objectives for the year, as well as the membership awards.

McKenna said if you haven't yet read through the program, you can find it at vfw.org under "Membership Quick Links," then "Membership Recruiting and Retention."

There are changes to the Post membership requirements for All-American honors. Refer to page 11 of the National Membership Program for more details.

"We have everything you need to help get off to a strong start this year," McKenna said. "With excellent communication and by working together, we can make this a successful membership year."

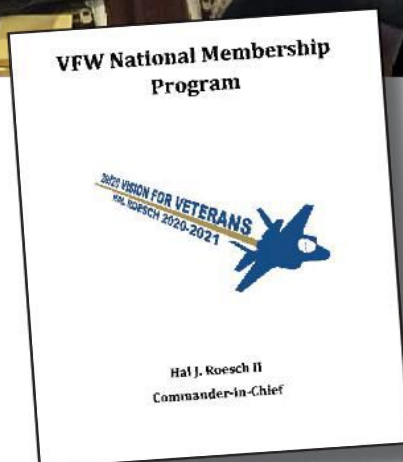
For more information on membership recruiting, call the Membership Department at 1-888-JOIN-VFW. If you need assistance logging into www.vfw.org, call VFW's Member Service Center at 1-833-VFW-VETS.

★ EMAIL jdyhouse@vfw.org

PHOTO COURTESY OF VFW MEMBERSHIP



ABOVE: Lupita Perez, front, Barry Hardman, left, and Coral Porch, back, work a VFW recruiting table at the NRA convention in Dallas. Posts, Districts and Departments are encouraged to plan recruiting events well in advance for a successful execution.



in charge of Post development and revitalization, VFW Posts did a great job of reaching out to members during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We had tremendous engagement toward the end of the last mem-

bership year," Hunt said. "But let's not wait until the end of the year this time. Always strive to actively engage with your members at all levels. And remember that by using the Online Membership System, you can pull up to nine years of unpaid member data."

RIGHT: The 2020-21 National Membership Program is located at vfw.org under "Member Resources," then "VFW Training and Support." It outlines the membership goals and objectives for the year, as well as the membership awards.

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to tables or desks. The controls are right on the steering lever so it's simple to operate, and its exclusive footrest swings out of the way when you stand up or sit down. With its rugged yet lightweight aluminum frame, the **Zinger** is sturdy and durable yet convenient and comfortable! What's more, it easily folds up for storage in a car seat or trunk. Think about it, you can take your **Zinger** almost anywhere, so you don't have to let mobility issues rule your life. It folds in seconds without tools and is safe and reliable. It holds up to 275 pounds, and it goes up to 6 mph and operates for up to 8 miles on a single charge.

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Today's Americans too often find that their life insurance benefits diminish as they grow older, but their family still needs coverage. As you age, you might find that you need additional life insurance coverage.

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PROTECTING FINANCIAL SECURITY

Senior Term Life Insurance plans can often provide a reliable safety net to help you add to your family's financial protection and peace-of-mind when you're gone.

It is important to look into all the details when selecting a Senior Term Life Plan to ensure that it is the right fit for you and your loved ones.

How does a Senior Term Life Insurance plan work? Plans vary by insurance carrier, but the general concept is that if you pass away, your loved

ones or beneficiaries will receive a payout at the benefit level you have chosen.

Senior Term Life Insurance plans typically:

- Supplement any existing insurance you may have.
- Reinforce a safety net that's diminished in value because of inflation as you get older.
- Add important extra coverage to help pay off a mortgage, medical bills or final expenses.

Can I be turned down for a Senior Term Life plan? This, too, can vary based on the plan that the insurance provider has set up. Some plans offer guaranteed acceptance, even if you have had health problems in the past. Other plans, however, might have you take a medical exam and answer health questions to determine if you qualify for coverage.

What are the rates like for a plan like this? Costs vary depending on the type of insurance plan and provider. Rates typically depend on items such as your age, gender and health status, as well as the benefit level you are choosing.

When too many plans start to cut back on benefits or eliminate coverage, you should know that there are plans out in the market that could potentially boost your family's coverage.

For more information regarding Senior Term Life Insurance, call the VFW Member Benefits Department at 1-833-VFW-VETS.

Weird Herb Shocks Doctors With Relief of Leg and Feet Pain, Burning, Tingling, Numbness

6 clinical studies show it is effective. Lost but now re-discovered. Thousands of new users report amazing relief from leg and feet problems in just 30 to 90 days – with no side effects. Available in all 50 states without a prescription.

A re-discovery from the 1600s is causing a frenzy within the medical system. A weird herb has been shown in six clinical studies (and by thousands of users) to be very effective for leg and feet pain, burning and numbness – with no side effects – at low cost – and with no doctor visit or prescription needed.

This weird herb comes from a 12-foot tall tree that grows in Greece and other countries in Europe. In the old days, people noticed that when their horses who had leg and feet problems ate this herb – it was almost like magic how quickly their problems got much better. They called it the “horse herb”. Then somehow with Europe’s ongoing wars, this herbal secret got lost in time.

“It works for people who’ve tried many other treatments before with little or no success. Other doctors and I are shocked at how effective it is. It has created a lot of excitement” says Dr. Ryan Shelton, M.D.

Its active ingredient has been put into pill form and improved. It is being offered in the United States under the brand name Neuroflo.

WHY ALL THIS EXCITEMENT?

Researchers have found an herb originally from Greece that has been shown in six placebo-controlled medical studies (543 participants) to be effective and safe. This natural compound strengthens blood vessel walls and reduces swelling to stop the pain and suffering.

Poor blood flow in the legs and feet is one of the common problems that develops as we age. Millions of Americans suffer from neuropathy and chronic venous insufficiency (CVI), edema, and other leg/feet problems – millions have these but are undiagnosed.

Today’s treatments don’t work for a high percentage of people – and they have side effects that make them hard to tolerate or that people do not want to risk. This includes prescription drugs, over the counter pain pills, surgery and compression.

Already popular in Europe, this natural

herb is taking America by storm since it was announced last week.

HOW IT WORKS

Here’s why you have pain now: Your arteries have weakened. Your arteries can’t carry enough blood, nutrients and oxygen down to your legs and feet. This damages your nerves and causes your burning, tingling and numbness.

The herbs in the pill Neuroflo strengthen your arteries that carry blood, nutrients and oxygen to your feet and legs. It improves your circulation so oxygenated blood goes to the nerves and repairs them. This makes your nerves grow stronger so your pain fades away and your legs and feet feel much younger again.

Until now, scientists could not combine these herbs into one pill without losing their full potency, but finally, they have succeeded.

Katerina King from Murrieta, California says, “I had hands and feet tingling and snapping and burning feeling. It made my life very uncomfortable. I had a hard time walking, my legs felt like they each weighed 50 pounds. Once I got in my car and my feet felt so heavy I couldn’t even drive the car. With Neuroflo I have no more tingling, cold or burning painful legs and feet. It went away.”

WHAT DOCTORS ARE SAYING

“Now I finally have a natural solution I can recommend to my patients who suffer from leg and feet problems and pain. I’m delighted because previous treatments were not effective, but Neuroflo has worked for every one of my patients with no side effects” says Dr. Eric Wood, N.D.

Dr. Ryan Shelton, M.D. says “This is new and different. It works for people who’ve tried many other things before. It is natural with no side effects. Don’t give up hope for your leg and feet pain, burning, tingling and numbing. This pill



RE-DISCOVERED LEG AND FEET PROBLEM SOLUTION: In Greece in the 1600s, this herb was originally called “horse herb” because it was fed to horses with ailing legs. It has now been re-discovered and is giving soothing comfort to Americans who have leg and feet pain, burning, tingling and numbness.

is working for countless people after other treatments have failed them. I highly recommend it.”

“Neuroflo is a terrific choice for people with leg and feet issues. The clinical trials in support of this herb show it is very effective for safe and fast relief,” said Dr. Wood, a Harvard trained doctor who has appeared on award winning TV shows.

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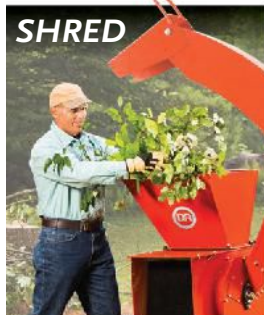
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New Hemp Technology Is 450% Better For Discomfort Relief Than Regular Hemp Oil

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 **VW0920CAN** 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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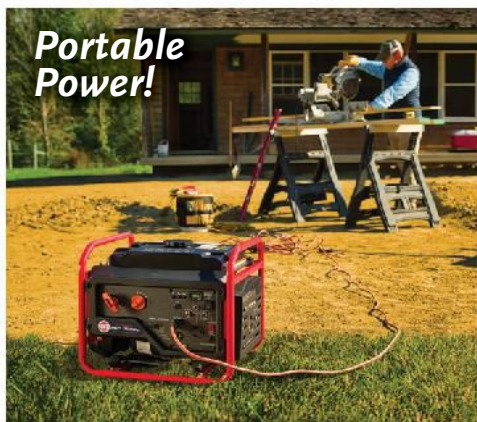
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‘The Terrifying Intimacy of Hand-to-Hand Infantry Combat’

VFW Post 2535 members hosted a meet-and-greet event featuring Medal of Honor recipient and New York native David Bellavia. The MOH recipient thrilled attendees with his unit’s exploits during the Iraq War’s Battle of Fallujah.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.

On a cool Wednesday night earlier this year, the historic Palace Theatre in Lockport, N.Y., welcomed a marquee name as big as those basking in the venue’s prime slot surrounded by neon lights.

It was Jan. 15, and VFW Post 2535 in Lockport, about 30 miles north of Buffalo in Niagara County, N.Y., had secured the venue for Medal of Honor recipient David Bellavia.

Bellavia, a native of nearby Lyndonville, N.Y., took the stage in front of a throng of veterans and VFW members filling row upon row of the theatre to the brim.

Met with a standing ovation, the Army veteran, whose legend extends far beyond upstate New York, spoke for 40 minutes. He opened up to his fellow veterans about his experiences in November 2004’s Battle of Fallujah during the Iraq War — all of which are captured with poignant detail in his recent memoir titled *House to House*.

“He gave us an up-front and personal picture of the stairways and alleys of the besieged city, where his bravery under fire and self-sacrificing attitude ultimately led to him being awarded the Medal of Honor,” said Hank Nevins, a Vietnam veteran and life member of Post 2535.

Bellavia, who was awarded the MOH by President Donald J. Trump in June 2019, also spoke about leadership. He opened up about leading his Third Platoon, Alpha Company, into a lethally choreographed kill zone.

“He really brought to life the terrifying intimacy of hand-to-hand infantry combat,” Nevins added. “Just like in his book, he thoughtfully painted mental images of the cast of characters with whom he fought side by side, not all of whom would make it out alive.”

For his actions during the Iraq War, Bellavia also was awarded the Silver Star, Bronze Star and nominated for the Distinguished Service Cross. In 2005, he received the Conspicuous Service Cross and was inducted into the New York State Senate Veterans’ Hall of Fame.

After his 40-minute insight into frontline combat and the



PHOTO BY HENRY NEVINS

Retired Army Staff Sergeant and Medal of Honor recipient David Bellavia speaks in front of a packed crowd of veterans and VFW members at the Palace Theatre in Lockport, N.Y., in January. The event was presented by VFW Post 2535, which also donated to a foundation Bellavia created to support former members of his infantry unit.

perils of war, Bellavia opened the floor for a 20-minute question-and-answer session with the audience.

Bellavia also signed copies of his memoir after the event, shaking hands and basking in the camaraderie shared with his fellow veterans, which included Department of New York Commander Tom Todaro.

After the event, VFW Post 2535 Commander Roger Cordle thanked the MOH recipient by donating \$4,000 toward Bellavia’s foundation, which supports former members of his infantry unit.

Post 2535 plans to use the \$10,000 in proceeds from the event for repairs and improvements to the Post’s hall and clubroom, according to Club Manager Ray Pierce. ★

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