

OCTOBER 2020

VFW

M A G A Z I N E

**VFW Members
Tell You *Why*
They Vote**

VETERANS

VOTE

**TRUMP AND BIDEN
ANSWER VFW'S
QUESTIONS**

**POSTS AND DISTRICTS
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14 WHY VETERANS VOTE

VFW members take their right to vote seriously. In this article, members of varying ages from different areas of the country explain why this basic obligation of all Americans should be exercised whenever possible. **BY JANIE DYHOUSE**

TRUMP AND BIDEN

This year's presidential candidates — Republican nominee President Donald Trump and Democratic nominee former Vice President Joe Biden — speak directly to VFW members. Here are their answers to questions based on VFW priority goals and current issues.

EDITED BY TIM DYHOUSE



'WE KNOW HOW TO ADAPT'

VFW's first-ever "pro forma" convention was held as a Facebook live event on July 24 from VFW National Headquarters in Kansas City, Mo. Its main feature was a change-of-command ceremony that installed a new VFW Commander-in-Chief.

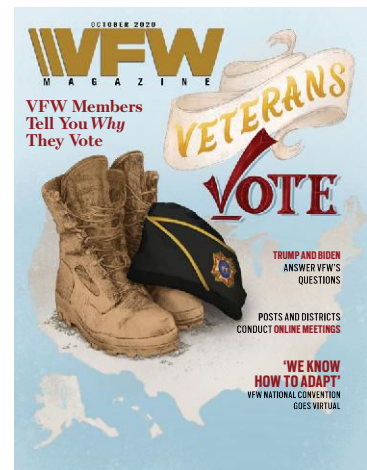
BY JANIE DYHOUSE



STAY CONNECTED WITH ONLINE MEETINGS

Adapting to stay-at-home orders around the nation and overseas, VFW members have embraced the convenience of meeting virtually. Here's how several Posts have been making technology a partner in keeping their members informed.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.



OCTOBER 2020

Vol. 108 No. 2

COVER IMAGE: As the country prepares to vote in next month's general election, veterans, active-duty troops and their families will, if trends hold, vote at a higher rate than the general population. It's a cherished right for those who have worn the nation's military uniform and a duty they embrace. *Illustration by Laura Ballard*

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COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
Hal Roesch II

Exercise Your Right: Vote on Nov. 3

Next month, we, as American citizens, have the opportunity to put into practice one of our most cherished ideals: we select those who will lead us. It's one of the things that makes this country so special. Elections and a peaceful transition of power are the hallmarks of our free society. But that freedom also carries a heavy responsibility.

Former U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who belonged to VFW Post 3279 in Abilene, Kan., once said, "The future of this republic is in the hands of the American voter." Take up that mandate.

As veterans, we intuitively understand and passionately embrace that fundamental right. We demonstrated it in the 2016 general election when 78 percent of those with prior military service voted, compared to 49 percent of non-veterans.

Active-duty troops, veterans and their families vote at a higher rate than those with no connection to the military. Maybe it's because many of us have served overseas, dealing with leaving behind our families and the comfortable life in our great nation.

We've seen first-hand how people in less fortunate, less democratic countries live. It gives veterans an appreciation of how good we have it at home. We care deeply about our communities and realize that our votes and our service to our fellow citizens make a difference.

We took an oath to defend the Constitution, and part of that obligation is to cast votes regularly. It's how we maintain a strong national defense, improve VA healthcare services and compensation programs, and ensure that our elected leaders are reminded that veterans have fought, sacrificed and, in some cases, died protecting citizens back home. The veterans vote is nationwide and powerful, but it is only as strong as the number of those who are willing to participate.

So make your voice heard. Get out and vote on Nov. 3. If you don't think it matters, recall what former President Abraham Lincoln once said: "Elections belong to the people. It's their decision. If they decide to turn their back on the fire and burn their behinds, then they will just have to sit on their blisters."

Heed those words. Exercise your fundamental right as an American citizen and encourage your friends and family to do the same.

We've seen first-hand how people in less fortunate, less democratic countries live. It gives veterans an appreciation of how good we have it at home.



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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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Kirstie Ennis: Climbing for a Purpose

An absolute, incredible story about former Marine Kirstie Ennis. Veterans like her inspired me to write another novel despite a traumatic brain injury in Vietnam.

TONY POWERS-POLICH
WEST DES MOINES, IOWA

Thank you for your increased coverage of women warriors. I congratulate Kirstie Ennis for her ability to overcome her combat injuries and her continued service to raise awareness for our wounded comrades worldwide. I commend Pin-Ups for Vets for their donations to our VA hospitals. However, I am disappointed with VFW magazine's endorsement of this organization. In light of the increased numbers of military sexual trauma, this type of endorsement has no place in our magazine.

DORA VASQUEZ-HELLNER
ASHAWAY, R.I.

In your article you refer to Kirstie Ennis as a former Marine. There is no such thing as a former Marine. She is a Marine and always will be a Marine.

DONALD WILLIAMS
GLADSTONE, MO.

Warriors Still Serving

Post 7916 has long taken great pride in supporting the Occoquan Community. Thank you for filming your VFW public service announcement at our Post as well as your August VFW magazine article highlighting the great work of our Post's "Warriors Still Serving." Of the thousands of VFW Posts you could have chosen to film and write about, you chose us. On behalf of all Post 7916 warriors still serving, thank you!

JEFFREY A. LETT, POST 7916 COMMANDER
OCCOQUAN, VA.

Post Named for WWI Veteran

I especially enjoyed this article. In completing his research, Mr. Felice not only uncovered Cpl. Sahler's history, but also the fact that his name had been incorrectly listed on the award he so deserved for his service to our country.

ROBERT SCHMITZ
JANESVILLE, IOWA

I was affiliated with the Post from 1958 to 1961 when I left for the Air Force. The VFW Post sponsored the Sahler-Sedan Cadets Drum and Bugle Corps back in those days, and I was a member. We competed with other drum corps in field competitions, and I remember going to the VFW National Convention in Detroit in August 1960. Great article!

ANTHONY MCHALE
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Vets in Focus

You mention the high rate of suicides in the service. I have come to wonder how much of these suicides can be attributed to the introduction of "don't ask, don't tell" in the service. As a combat veteran in the Korean War who shared a two-man bunker for months, I'm glad that "don't ask, don't tell" was years away from becoming implemented.

KEVIN WOLFF
HEPHZIBAH, GA.

Editor's Note: Defense Directive 1304.26, also known as "don't ask, don't tell," was repealed on Sept. 20, 2011.

WWII Memorial Vandalized

I strongly object to your characterization of the vandalism of the WWII Memorial as having happened during a "protest." Call it what it was, an out-of-control riot!

TOM VRANISH
BUMPASS, VA.

Better Health

In this article there is a chest radiograph. There is no caption associated with the radiograph, which is that of an adolescent. The humeral head growth plate (epiphysis) is clearly open. Open growth plates are not seen in service-age individuals. An image from a CT or CT 3D reconstruction would have demonstrated the new technology discussed in the article. Otherwise, nice article.

JOHN UHORCHAK
CORNWALL, N.Y.

NATO Adds North Macedonia

I wanted to drop a quick note of gratitude for running this story. They earned this. I had the privilege of serving in Iraq with the Macedonian Special Forces and in Afghanistan with the Macedonian Rangers. They were tough, disciplined and dedicated soldiers and valued members of the team. I made lifelong friends and still correspond with some of them. Proud of this small country making a big impact and working hard to make the world a better place.

MARK S. LESLIE
DERIDDER, LA.

Operation Desert Shield Anniversary

The photo printed on p. 36 has an incorrect caption. It should read: A paratrooper of the 82nd Airborne arrives at Dhahran Air Base in Saudi Arabia in August 1990.

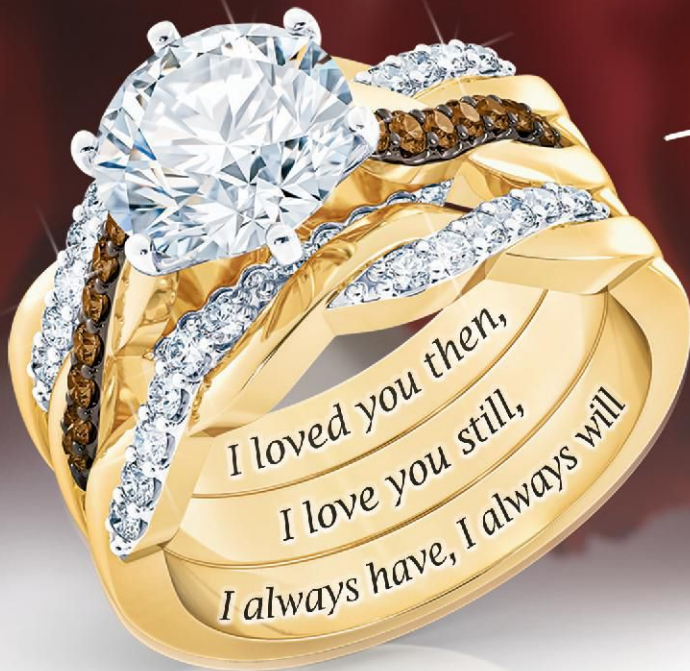


PATRICK CHAISSON
SCOTIA, N.Y.

Editor's Note: Freelance writer Patrick Chaisson, shown above, was a first lieutenant during Operation Desert Shield. Chaisson is a member of VFW Post 8690 in Broadalbin, N.Y.



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



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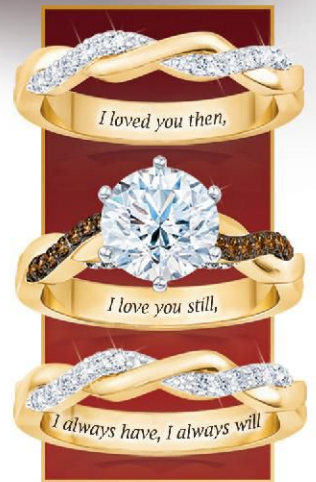
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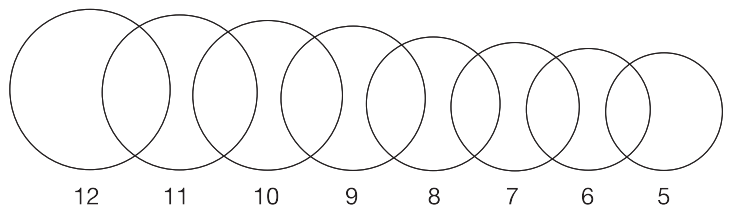
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Numbers of Female Veterans Growing

A report issued in June by the U.S. Census Bureau showed that while the number of veterans as a share of the U.S. population has decreased since 2000, the percentage of women veterans is growing.

The report, *Those Who Served: America's Veterans from World War II to the War on Terror*, looked at the characteristics of the 18 million Americans, or about 7 percent of the adult population, who were veterans of U.S. military service. The data was taken from the 2018 American Community Survey with an average annual sample size of 3.5 million addresses across the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

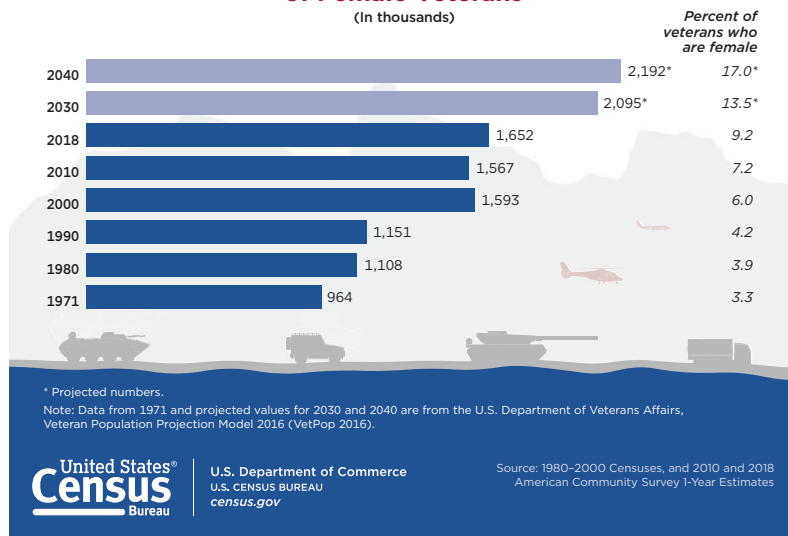
View the entire report at www.census.gov. Here are some highlights of the survey:

- From 2000 to 2018, the number of veterans in the U.S. declined from 26.4 million to 18 million.
- The share of women veterans increased to about 9 percent, or 1.7 million, in 2018, and that share is expected to increase to 17 percent by 2040.
- The largest cohort of veterans (6.4 million) in 2018 were Vietnam-era veterans, defined as those who served between 1964-75.
- The median age of veterans in 2018 was 65. By service period, the median age was 37 for post-9/11 veterans; 71 for Vietnam-era veterans; and 93 for World War II vets.
- Fewer than 500,000 WWII veterans were alive in 2018, down from 5.7 million in 2000.
- The youngest veterans had the highest levels of education. More than three-quarters of post-9/11 and Gulf War veterans had at least some college experience, and more than one-third of Gulf War veterans had a college degree.
- Post-9/11 veterans had a 43 percent chance of having a service-connected disability — after accounting for differences in demographic and social characteristics among veterans — significantly higher than that of veterans from other periods.
- Of those vets with a service-connected disability, post-9/11 veterans had a 39 percent chance of having a disability rating of 70 percent or more — significantly higher than for veterans from other periods.
- The population of veterans is projected to continue declining by 2.5 million over the next decade. By 2040, it is projected there will be about 12.9 million veterans living in the U.S., down from a high of 28.6 million in 1980.

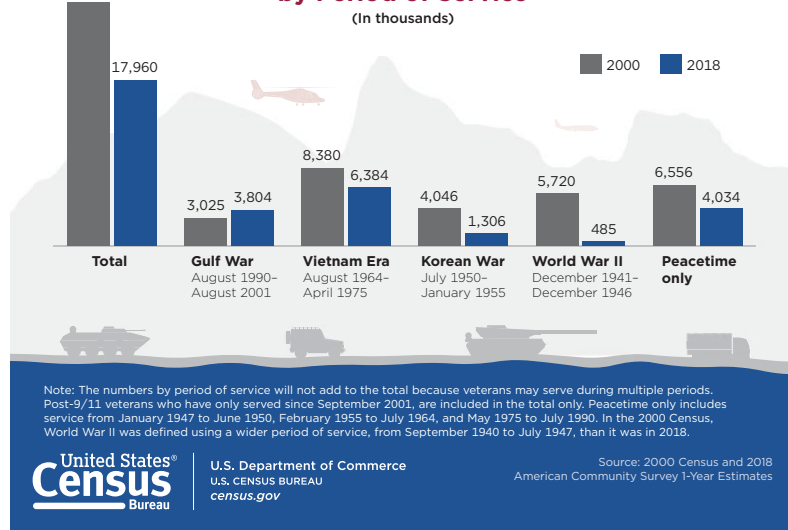


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Historical and Projected Trends of Female Veterans



Number of Veterans in 2000 and 2018 by Period of Service



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Veterans and VFW Members More Likely to Vote in Election

Military veterans and troops take their right to vote seriously. VFW members said in 2016 that they voted at an even higher rate than the overall veterans population.

BY DAVE SPIVA



In a 2016 VFW study, 97 percent of VFW members said they planned to vote in that year's general election. In recent interviews with VFW magazine, members said the right to vote is a cherished obligation all Americans should embrace.

With about a month until the 2020 U.S. election, veterans across the country are preparing to make their voices heard at the polls.

If this year's election is anything like the one in 2016, veterans will be more likely to vote than nonveterans.

According to CNN exit polls from the 2016 election, 13 percent of the voting population were veterans. U.S. Census data claim veterans only made up



about 10 percent of the U.S. adult population that year.

About 55 percent of the U.S. adult population voted in the 2016 election, according to the Bipartisan Policy Center, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank. Also in 2016, about 78% of the mili-

tary voted in the general election.

"This shouldn't be surprising," Navy veteran and Afghanistan War veteran Joe Colangelo said in an opinion article for *Townhall Media*, "considering that the men and women who have worn the uniform have already demonstrated that inconveniences don't stand in their way of working to preserve and defend the United States."

In a 2016 federal election survey conducted by VFW, the combat veterans organization found that about 99 percent of the surveyed members said they were registered to vote, with about 97 percent saying that they planned to vote in the 2016 general election.

The demographics of the survey tracked with the VFW membership demographic of the time, which was about 60 percent Vietnam War veterans, 19 percent post-9/11 veterans and 17 percent Persian Gulf War veterans. ★

EMAIL dspiva@vfw.org

VETERANS POPULATION BY THE NUMBERS

18 million: number of veterans in the United States.

6.4 million: number of living Vietnam War veterans.

1.7 million: number of women veterans (about 9 percent of veterans).

65: median age of veterans.

7: percent of the U.S. adult population who are veterans.

Statistics from the June 2020 Census Bureau report titled: Those Who Served: America's Veterans from World War II to the War on Terror.



Shown much smaller
than actual size of
about 12" H x 10" W

It was February 23, 1945... and an epic moment in WWII. Six Marines climbed Mt. Suribachi and raised our proud American flag, signaling our victory in Iwo Jima. Now, on the 75th Anniversary of Iwo Jima, you can honor these American heroes with a bold new commemorative.

This striking cold-cast bronze sculpture is hand-crafted with the intricate details of the real-life United States Marine Corps War Memorial located just outside of the gates to Arlington National Cemetery. Just like the national treasure, the base is inscribed with "Uncommon Valor Was a Common Virtue" and the dedication to "The United States Marine Corps Who Have Given Their Lives to Their Country Since 10 November 1775," as well as a list of the

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Defense Act Would Add Conditions to Agent Orange List

The House and Senate passed their own versions of the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021* (NDAA) in July, months earlier than usual.

The House-approved version of the bill, which is a proposed 2021 budget for the Department of Defense, was passed 295-125 on July 21, and the Senate approved its proposal, 86-14, two days later. Both versions of the bill would authorize a DOD budget of \$470.5 billion for the armed forces next year.

Each bill includes a VFW-supported amendment to add new Agent Orange presumptive conditions, including bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinson-like symptoms, or Parkinsonism. The amendment is similar to the *Fair Care for Vietnam Veterans Act of 2020* (S. 3444). However, both versions omit hypertension as a presumptive condition, which VFW recommends.

VFW National Legislative Service Deputy Director Matthew Doyle said that VFW urged the inclusion of the amendment to the 2021 NDAA.

“Vietnam War veterans did their part and served with honor,” Doyle said. “Unfortunately, many of them have lost the fight to the health conditions they developed as a result of their exposure to Agent Orange. The scientific community has already determined that sufficient evidence exists linking bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinson-like symptoms to Agent Orange exposure.”

The House and Senate are not expected to settle on a final version of the proposed DOD budget before the 2020 fiscal year ends on Oct. 1, according to an article from *Stars and Stripes*.



An Army UH-1D helicopter from the 336th Aviation Company sprays Agent Orange over farmland in July 1969 in South Vietnam's Mekong Delta. Bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinson-like symptoms could be added to the VA's presumptive Agent Orange conditions list if the current versions of the House and Senate's *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021* is signed into law by President Donald Trump.

14 PRESUMPTIVE AGENT ORANGE CONDITIONS

As of Aug. 10, to qualify for Agent Orange-related benefits, a veteran must have one or more of the 14 conditions VA presumes to have been caused by exposure to the herbicide, which are:

- Chronic B-cell Leukemia
- Hodgkin's Disease
- Multiple Myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
- Prostate Cancer
- Respiratory Cancers
- Soft Tissue Sarcomas
- AL Amyloidosis
- Chloracne
- Diabetes Mellitus Type 2
- Ischemic Heart Disease
- Parkinson's Disease
- Early onset Peripheral Neuropathy
- Porphyria Cutanea Tarda



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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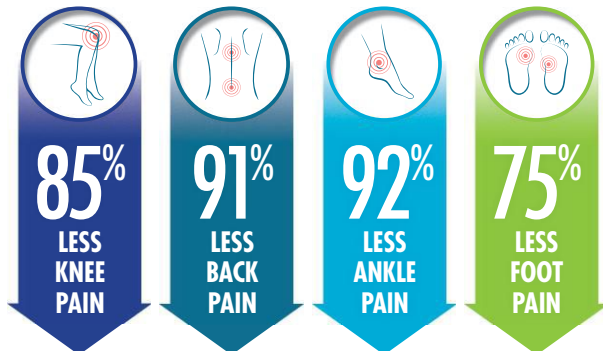
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Senate Passes VFW-Supported Mental Health Legislation

DOD PHOTO



Cmdr. John Scott Hannon

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at 1-800-273-8255.

The Senate passed a VFW-supported bill in August that could make improvements to veterans' mental health care at VA.

The Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019 (S. 785), according to a press release from the Senate VA Committee, aims to do the following:

- Give VA the authority to hire more mental health professionals, offer scholarships to mental health professionals to work at veteran centers and have at least one suicide prevention coordinator at every VA hospital.
- Increase the number of locations veterans can access VA telehealth services and offer grants to non-VA organizations that provide mental health services or alternative treatment to veterans.
- Give every veteran one year to use VA health care when he or she

leaves the military.

- Improve services, such as the Transition Assistance Program, or TAP, that connect transitioning veterans with career and education opportunities.
- Study and invest in innovative and alternative treatment options by expanding veterans' access to animal and outdoor therapy, as well as yoga, meditation and acupuncture.
- Examine how VA manages its suicide prevention resources and how it provides care for veterans seeking mental health care.

The bill is named in honor of the late Cmdr. John Scott Hannon, a retired Navy SEAL, who committed suicide on Feb. 25, 2018. He served 23 years in the military and settled in Helena, Mont., after his retirement. Hannon was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, bipolar disorder and a traumatic brain injury.

VFW-Supported Bills Would Help Military Families

The House and Senate passed three different bills in July that aim to support veterans, troops and their families. Each bill has been sent to President Donald Trump for enactment as of press time.

The three VFW-supported bills passed by the House and Senate are:

- *GI Bill Work Study Improvement Act of 2019 (H.R. 3535)*
- *Ryan Kules and Paul Benne Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act of 2019 (H.R. 3504)*
- A bill to amend the *Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (S. 3637)*

If signed into law, the *GI Bill Work Study Improvement Act* would eliminate VA from having to process work-study claims. It would authorize schools to make payments to students who are enrolled in the VA work-study program. VA would provide a school with the funds.

The signing of the bill would make the VA's work-study program "more reliable for students" and help better align the program with the Department of Education's Federal Work-Study pro-

gram, according to a press release from the Republican House VA Committee.

The *Ryan Kules and Paul Benne Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act*, if signed by Trump, would expand Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) grants for blind and seriously injured veterans. The bill would allow blind veterans to access the SAH grant program and double the number of grants to six per veteran.

Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), who originally introduced the bill to the Senate last year, said that he is "pleased" that the House voted to pass the legislation.

"This modernized and expanded grant program will allow veterans to utilize vital SAH grants in a way that best fits their needs — providing greater support and improving the quality of life for many of our nation's veterans," Moran said. "I look forward to President Trump signing this legislation into law."

According to a press release from Moran, *H.R. 3504* was named after Benne, a retired Army colonel rated 100 percent

disabled by the VA when he retired, and Kules, a retired Army captain. Both retirees used an SAH grant to adapt their homes for their disabilities.

A bill to extend *S. 3637* also is awaiting Trump's approval. The *Servicemembers Civil Relief Act*, passed and signed into law in June, protects military members who were issued a stop movement order from the Department of Defense in the middle of changing their duty stations during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper's stop movement order caused many troops to have house and car leases in different locations.

The bill would protect all military members who were issued a stop movement order on or after March 1, 2020.

"The VFW asks the president to swiftly sign these bills into law," said VFW National Legislative Service Director Patrick Murray. "Veterans, service members and their families will greatly benefit from this bipartisan work done by Congress."

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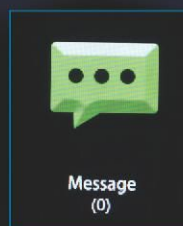
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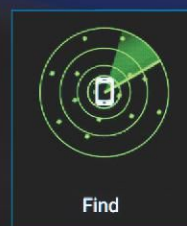
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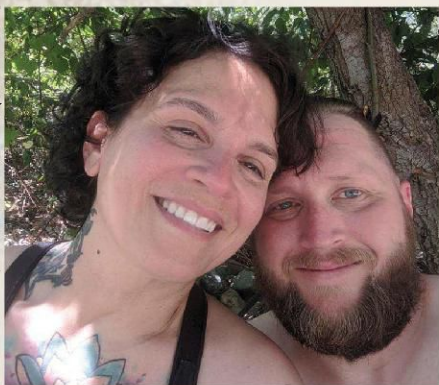
'YOU CAN'T COMPLAIN IF YOU DON'T

VFW members recall the first time they voted and why they continue to do so years later.

VOTE

BY JANIE DYHOUSE

PHOTO COURTESY OF RAQUEL MANGONE



★ Raquel Mangone in Roseville, Calif.



★ Benjamin Vargas in Lenexa, Kan.

PHOTO BY LAUREN GOLDMAN/VFW



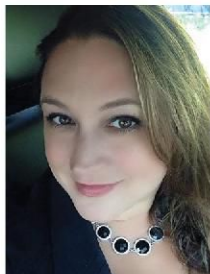


PHOTO COURTESY OF STACYANN CASTRO-TAPLER

Tom Bolinder in
Whitman, Mass. ★

StacyAnn
Castro-Tapler
in Patchogue,
N.Y. ★



PHOTO COURTESY OF TOM BOLINDER



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRIAN WALKER

★ Brian Walker in
Cordova, Tenn.

★ Sam Clay in
Jackson, Miss.



PHOTO COURTESY OF PAULINE DENMAN-WEBB

★ Pauline
Denman-Webb in
Jacksonville, Fla.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HECTOR VALLADARES

★ Hector Valladares in
Ponce, Puerto Rico

With November's general election looming, VFW magazine sought to find out why our members think it's important to vote. From New York to California and areas in between, veterans offered their take on the civic duty of casting ballots. Here are their responses:

Name: Pauline Denman-Webb
VFW Status: Post 1689 in Jacksonville, Fla.
VFW Eligibility: WWII
Service: Army, 308th General Hospital

Why do you vote? I want the right person to be in charge.

How do you think your military service influenced your desire to vote? It didn't influence it because it was so long ago that I first voted. I always vote because that's what we should do. I remember when I turned 21, I was so happy to go and vote. I lived in New York state at the time. (The first presidential election she was eligible to vote in was 1944.)

Why do you think it's important for all Americans to cast their votes? So they can have their voice heard on what they want for the country.

When did you first vote? 1942.

Did you ever cast an absentee ballot? I don't recall that I ever did.

Name: Benjamin Vargas
VFW Status: Post 7397 in Lenexa, Kan.
VFW Eligibility: Korean War
Service: Navy, USS Repose (AH-16)

Why do you vote? It's my duty, and it's everyone's duty. I've learned from personal experiences and events that have happened in my life as well as growing old and seeing things here and there. I take voting seriously. Given everything going on today, people need to realize that not everyone around the world has the right to vote. You can't complain if you don't vote.

How do you think your military service influenced your desire to vote? Growing up, my friends and I listened to the guys who came back from WWII. I'm a first generation Hispanic-American, and I realized that it was important to vote.

Why do you think it's important for all Americans to

cast their votes? Get up off the couch and go vote. You have to put some skin on the table.

When did you first vote? I turned 18 the summer of 1951, and our neighborhood was leveled by the great flood of 1951. I didn't complete my senior year because I enlisted in the Navy. The first time I voted was in a local election, but I don't remember what the issues were. I have always voted in every election I could. In hindsight, I wish I would have gotten more involved and paid more attention to politics earlier on.

Did you ever cast an absentee ballot? No, I sure didn't. When I left here on the train for San Diego for basic training, that never entered my mind.

Name: Sam Clay

VFW Status: Post 9832 in Jackson, Miss.

VFW Eligibility: Vietnam War

Service: Army, 4th Inf. Div.

Why do you vote? It's all about patriotic duty. As an African American, I know the struggles my ancestors endured for me to have the right to vote. It's a hard-earned right to vote.

How do you think your military service influenced your desire to vote? It has a lot to do with my military service. That, along with being a teenager, I was around during the freedom riders movement.

Why do you think it's important for all Americans to cast their votes? Our ancestors endured a lot for us to have the right to vote. They had the poll tax. Just think what they had to go through just to have the right to go vote.

When did you first vote? I registered when I was 18 but didn't vote because I went into the military and on to Vietnam. I served my country before I was able to vote at 22. I was in Vietnam December 1968 to December 1969.

Name: Tom Bolinder

VFW Status: Post 697 in Whitman, Mass.

VFW Eligibility: Vietnam

Service: Marine Corps, Echo Co., 2nd Bn., 7th Marines, 1st Marine Div.

Why do you vote? I fought for the right to vote. I have never missed a presidential election. It's important to me as a citizen, and it's my right and my duty.

How do you think your military service influenced your desire to vote? There's no doubt in my mind that it has influenced it. There are so many things men and women have fought for since the American Revolution.

Why do you think it's important for all Americans to vote? If they want to have a say in the election, they have to get out there. We should care enough even with the pandemic to go in and vote.

Did you ever cast an absentee ballot? I have voted absentee ballot several times but we were required to go to town hall and show an I.D.



Name: Brian Walker

VFW Status: Post 5066 in Cordova, Tenn.

VFW Eligibility: Afghanistan War

Service: Air Force, 379th Air Expeditionary Wing

Why do you vote? I vote because of the sacrifices veterans before me have made, the sacrifices being made today and the effect that those sacrifices have on our communities. And I vote because I have a 5-year-old child, and I'm thinking of the future of the country. It's important to ask ourselves, "What is the best course for the country to go on?"

Why do you think it's important for all Americans to cast their votes? Every American has the same underlying interest, and that is, what is in their bank account. If you vote, you can make an attempt to control where your tax money goes while having your voice heard in the community.

When did you first vote? The first time I voted was in the 2000 election in McCalla, Ala. It was mind-blowing, because as a child I liked going with my parents to vote in Philadelphia. They would go behind a curtain to cast their vote. My first time, I walked into a church gymnasium. They asked for my name and handed me a sheet of paper. You could just go sit down wherever you wanted. There was no oversight. We all have a responsibility to educate ourselves on candidates and issues.

Name: Raquel Mangone

VFW Status: Post 1487 in Roseville, Calif.

VFW Eligibility: Iraq War

Service: Army, 4th Inf. Div.

Why do you vote? I vote because I feel like it's my duty as a citizen and my responsibility to do so. If you don't participate,

Discovered! Unopened Bag of 138-Year-Old Morgan Silver Dollars

Unopened for
138 Years!

Coin experts amazed by “Incredible Opportunity”

The Morgan Silver Dollar is the most popular and iconic vintage U.S. coin. They were the Silver Dollars of the Wild West, going on countless untold adventures in dusty saddlebags across the nation. Finding a secret hoard of Morgans doesn't happen often—and when it does, it's a *big deal*.

How big? Here's numismatist, author and consultant to the Smithsonian® Jeff Garrett:

“It's very rare to find large quantities of Morgan Silver Dollars, especially in bags that have been sealed... to find several thousand Morgan Silver Dollars that are from the U.S. Treasury Hoards, still unopened, is really an incredible opportunity.”

—Jeff Garrett

But where did this unique hoard come from? Read on...

Morgans from the New Orleans Mint

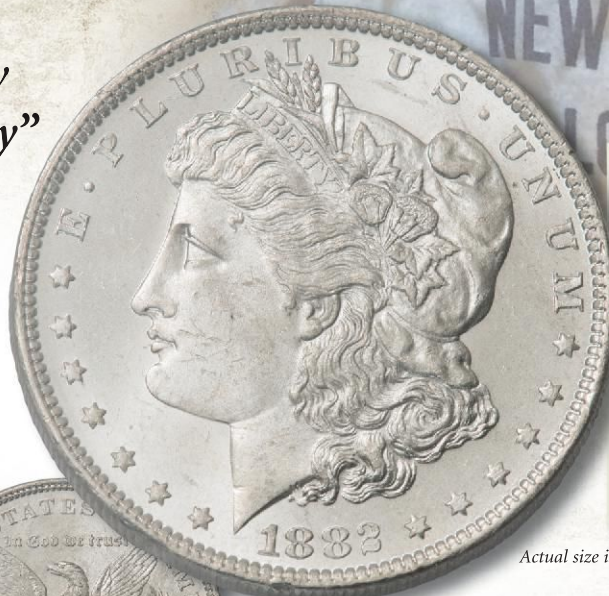
In 1859, Nevada's Comstock Lode was discovered, and soon its rich silver ore made its way across the nation, including to the fabled New Orleans Mint, the only U.S. Mint branch to have served under the U.S. government, the State of Louisiana and the Confederacy. In 1882, some of that silver was struck into Morgan Silver Dollars, each featuring the iconic “O” mint mark of the New Orleans Mint. Employees then placed the freshly struck coins into canvas bags...

The U.S. Treasury Hoard

Fast-forward nearly 80 years. In the 1960s, the U.S. government opened its vaults and revealed a massive store of Morgan Silver Dollars—including *full, unopened bags* of “fresh” 1882-O Morgan Silver Dollars. A number of bags were secured by a child of the Great Depression—a southern gentleman whose upbringing showed him the value of hard assets like silver. He stashed the unopened bags of “fresh” Morgans away, and there they stayed...

The Great Southern Treasury Hoard

That is, until *another* 50 years later, when the man's family finally decided to sell the coins—still in their unopened bags—which we secured, bag and all! We submitted the coins to respected third-party grading service Numismatic Guaranty Corporation (NGC), and they agreed to honor



Actual size is 38.1 mm



- ✓ Historic Morgan Silver Dollars
- ✓ Minted in New Orleans
- ✓ Struck and bagged in 1882
- ✓ Unopened for 138 years
- ✓ 26.73 grams of 90% fine silver
- ✓ Hefty 38.1 mm diameter
- ✓ Certified Brilliant Uncirculated by NGC
- ✓ Certified “Great Southern Treasury Hoard” pedigree
- ✓ Limit five coins per household

the southern gentleman by giving the coins the pedigree of the “Great Southern Treasury Hoard.”

These gorgeous 1882-O Morgans are as bright and new as the day they were struck and bagged 138 years ago. Coins are graded on a 70-point scale, with those graded at least Mint State-60 (MS60) often referred to as “Brilliant Uncirculated” or BU. Of all 1882-O Morgans struck, *LESS THAN 1% have earned a Mint State grade*. This makes these unopened bags of 1882-O Morgans extremely rare, certified as being in BU condition—nearly unheard of for coins 138 years old.

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“I vote because of the sacrifices veterans before me have made, the sacrifices being made today and the effect that those sacrifices have on our communities.”

Afghanistan War Veteran Brian Walker

how can you complain and be upset, you know? When I turned 18, my mom took me and my best friend to the post office to vote. When my oldest two turned 18, I took them to register. I think it's something parents need to pass down to their kids.

How do you think your military service influenced your desire to vote? I don't think it did because I joined the Army at 23. My parents influenced that desire instead.

Why do you think it's important for all Americans to cast their votes? It's important because it reminds you that you also have a responsibility. Yes, we live in a free country, but there are responsibilities that come along with that.

When did you first vote? I first voted in a local election. At first I thought I wouldn't vote because it was just a local thing. But my mom said, “No, it still matters. There are other things

you have to vote for, too.”

Did you ever cast an absentee ballot? When I was stationed in Germany, I had to do that.

Name: Hector Valladares

VFW Status: Post 12064 in Ponce, Puerto Rico

VFW Eligibility: Korea Service

Service: Army, Air Defense Artillery, Joint Tactical Ground Stations

Why do you vote? We signed up to uphold the Constitution of the United States. The greatest freedom we have is to elect our representatives.

How do you think your military service influenced your desire to vote? All service members have paid greatly for the freedoms that we enjoy.

Why do you think it's important for all Americans to cast their votes? If we do not vote, our freedoms will disappear. Then all those lives lost will be in vain.

When did you first vote? In 1983, I voted by absentee ballot from Germany.

Name: StaceyAnn Castro-Tapler

VFW Status: Post 2913 in Patchogue, N.Y.

VFW Eligibility: Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom

Service: Marine Corps, Marine Wing Support Squadron 272

Why do you vote? Because I can. There were many who couldn't vote. Why wouldn't I take advantage of this? It's a right that was fought for us by trailblazers who thought it was important for us to have a voice. Voting is our way to participate and feel like we did something.

How do you think your military service influenced your desire to vote? My military service showed me that voting works.

Why do you think it's important for all Americans to cast their votes? If you have a problem, do something about it. Don't sit there and whine about it. During the last presidential election, I brought my children to vote with me so that they could see the process. No one teaches this anymore. It's important to teach this lesson. ✦

EMAIL jdyhouse@vfw.org



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— J. Fitzgerald, VA

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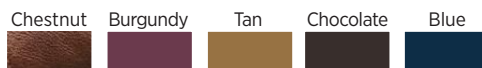
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Trump and Answer VFW's



DONALD J. TRUMP

**2020 REPUBLICAN
NOMINEE**

**U.S. PRESIDENT,
2017-PRESENT**

**CHAIRMAN, THE TRUMP
ORGANIZATION, 1975-2017**

What are your specific plans to reduce the suicide rate of active-duty troops and veterans? We secured record funding for the VA, including \$9.6 billion in 2020. Every VA medical facility now offers same-day emergency mental health. The promised White House VA hotline has fielded more than 400,000 calls, resolving 98 percent of veterans concerns.

In June, we unveiled the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS). We're expanding our partnerships with military and veteran organizations, universities, faith-based leaders, businesses and nonprofits at all levels of government to establish specialized support systems for our veterans.

The PREVENTS Office will work with the greatest scientific minds across our nation to evaluate research to better understand the trauma service members face; identify effective treatments; and communicate their findings to the public.

The PREVENTS Office is currently reviewing the \$1.5 billion of federal funding committed to suicide prevention to make sure research goes where it is most needed in order to save lives.

Will you reinstate the 48-hour review period that allows veteran service officers to provide an independent quality control check of VA rating decisions? Why or why not?

The practice of allowing only veteran service organizations (VSOs) pre-decisional review of rating decisions on disability claims dates back to 1957. At the time, it was necessary due to the paper-intensive claims environment and was useful at a time when VA rating decisions were made through a rating

board. However, this practice did not result in an overall process improvement, as metrics and trends of errors were not captured in a detailed or usable way.

Today, the Veterans Benefits Administration has transitioned from a paper-based claims environment ... to an electronic environment that routes claims efficiently through the national work queue. VSOs and other accredited representatives, with proper access to VA systems, now have equal ability to see claims-related information with the Veterans Benefits Management System.

Under the new *Appeal Modernization Act* [Editor's note: President Trump is referring to Public Law 115-55, the *Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017*], the new decision review process is timely, protects effective dates and gives veterans choice and control.

How will you compensate and care for veterans exposed to toxic burn pits? We are looking carefully at multiple legislative proposals surrounding toxic exposures to ensure the solutions are guided by science and in the best interest of our impacted veterans. Just as we have examined other veteran issues and attacked them with vigor and dedication, we are doing the same here by actively evaluating toxic exposure presumptions.

We do not want and will not have another Agent Orange scenario where our wonderful Vietnam veterans suffered for years without options or recourse. My Administration has never abandoned our veterans, and I don't intend to on this important issue.

How do you plan to expand VA care and services for female veterans? VA has achieved historic trust ratings for female veterans under my Administration, and we will continue to make changes and improvements so that the VA is a welcome home for our female veterans. VA now provides an array of women's services, including comprehensive primary care, gynecology, maternity, specialty care and mental health services.

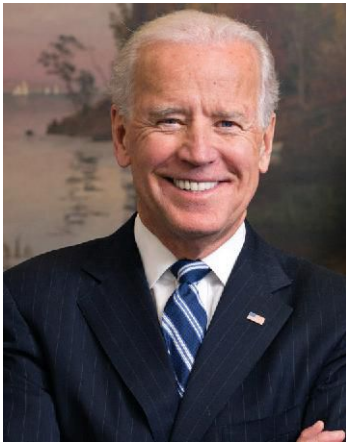
- 30 percent of all new VHA users are women.
- Outpatient surveys from June 1, 2017, to July 20, 2020, indicated that 83.5 percent of women veterans trust VA to provide for their health care needs.
- As of May 2020, 66 percent of VA mental health-specific occupation employees were female.

(Continued on page 22)

Biden Questions

VFW magazine asked the Republican and Democratic presidential candidates where they stand on VFW's most pressing topics. Here are the candidates' responses to questions based on VFW's priority goals and current issues. Answers are edited for space.

EDITED BY TIM DYHOUSE



JOSEPH R. BIDEN

**2020 DEMOCRATIC
NOMINEE**

**U.S. VICE PRESIDENT,
2009-2017**

**U.S. SENATOR, DELAWARE,
1973-2009**

What are your specific plans to reduce the suicide rate of active-duty troops and veterans? Within the first 200 days of taking office, my Administration will publish a comprehensive, public health and cross-sector approach to addressing suicide in veterans, service members and their families.

In my Administration, the Department of Defense and VA will have the resources and staff they need to drastically reduce the suicide rate. We will set the ambitious goal of, within the first year of a Biden Administration, completely eliminating wait times for veterans who reach out for help with suicidal ideation, so that they are immediately taken into care.

My Administration also will tackle the issues that contribute to higher suicide risk, such as PTSD, substance abuse disorder, sexual assault and harassment. We will develop better interventions to mitigate pain and economic vulnerability and address safe firearm storage. And I will enforce full mental health parity, ensuring all Americans have access to high-quality mental health care, regardless of their insurance coverage status.

Will you reinstate the 48-hour review period that allows veteran service officers to provide an independent quality control check of VA rating decisions? Why or why not? Yes. I look forward to a strong partnership between the VA and veteran service organizations (VSOs) to ensure veterans receive the benefits and care that they have earned.

VSO review of rating decisions is critical for quality control and further helps the veteran know that his or her determination is well informed and fair.

How will you compensate and care for veterans exposed to toxic burn pits? We cannot experience another Agent Orange-like crisis. My Administration will expand the list of presumptive conditions to make sure that veterans who experienced a traumatic brain injury (TBI) or were exposed to burn pits or other toxins are able to access care — now, not decades from now.

I also will increase research funding for burn pit exposure and TBIs to push science along. In addition to making sure that we extend benefits to needed areas, I will improve our efforts to cut claim review and adjudication wait times through improved staffing and technology.

In a Biden Administration, I will ensure that VA leadership is open, inclusive and focused on delivering concrete results in these critical areas.

How do you plan to expand VA care and services for female veterans? In a Biden Administration, all veterans will receive the care they have earned, and I will ensure that providers in VA facilities and community care settings are prepared and equipped to provide high-quality and culturally competent care in a timely manner to women veterans and LGBTQ+ veterans.

Additionally, I will ensure that each VA facility has at least one full-time women's primary care physician and a basic suite of OB-GYN services; and, within 200 days of taking office, make available a women veterans training module for community health care providers. I also will ensure that the VA secures funds for research for women's health issues, such as ovarian and breast cancer and for pregnancy care. I will work with Congress to eliminate co-pays for preventative health care for our women veterans so they are able to access a full array of women's health care services.

How do you plan to improve the quality of life for military families? Jill and I remember so clearly what it was like when our son, Beau, was deployed to Iraq. After nearly two decades of sustained warfare, it is our duty to ensure that military families have the support they need. Family readiness is a national security imperative.

A Biden Administration will carry out a feasibility study within its first 100 days on the Department of Defense-

(Continued on page 22)

DONALD J. TRUMP, CONTINUED

- VA now has at least one women's health primary care provider at each of its health care facilities.
- VA has developed mobile women's health training for rural VA sites, reaching 40 sites per year.
- VA is designing its new electronic medical record to track breast and reproductive health care.

How do you plan to improve the quality of life for military families? All too often, military families ordered to move across state lines lose their chance for their spouse to practice their chosen profession and have to go through costly and time-intensive relicensing. This Administration is committed to continuing to fight for military spouse license portability.

The Department of Defense is committed to ... quality housing and fair treatment from Military Housing Privatization Initiative project owners who operate privatized housing. The tenant bill of rights for military families signed earlier this year helps protect our military families.

The most recent *National Defense Authorization Act* improves education, childcare and private housing for military families. It also ends the so-called "widow's tax," which blocked benefits for families of fallen heroes. It included the largest pay raise for the military.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN, CONTINUED

commissioned report from the National Academies of Sciences titled *Strengthening the Military Family Readiness System for a Changing American Society*.

A Biden Administration also will treat military families as the priority that they are by:

- Ensuring that we pay service members a competitive wage.
- Creating and promoting programming to increase economic opportunity and career advancement for military spouses, especially in the acquisition of technical skills.
- Viewing child care in a broader lens that increases opportunities for off-base care.
- Providing resources for military families, caregivers and survivors.
- Prioritizing support for military-connected children, including a stronger focus on EFMP families [Editor's note: Vice President Biden is referring to the Defense Department's Exceptional Family Member Program, for families that have special-needs members].
- Relaunching Joining Forces, the initiative started by former First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden during the Obama-Biden Administration. ★

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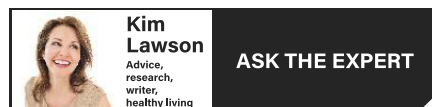
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Do you suffer from **arthritis, sciatica, sport injuries, or any other acute or chronic pain symptoms?**

You'll want to read this right now! We've all tried various pain creams on the market with superficial results at best.

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ASK THE EXPERT

Q. Dear Expert,

I live with chronic aches and pains, but I prefer to avoid prescription drug side effects. I've read conflicting information about CBD for pain relief, but it's hard to know what's fact vs. fiction ... is there a safe solution that's quick and effective with real science behind it?

- Tom

A. Dear Tom,

Great question - you're not the only one wondering the same! In fact, I'm asked that question so often, I felt compelled to research it, especially with all the talk surrounding CBD these days. You'll be happy to know I found the answer - you want something called "BCP" which works synergistically with CBD. You can find them BOTH in an OTC pain relief topical called **LEFA™**.

Read on to learn why BCP combined with CBD is being touted as BETTER THAN CBD ALONE for topical pain management by so many experts.

Due to an old sports injury, I also experience chronic and acute pain while trying to avoid drugs. So, when a friend recommended that I try **CBD**, I immediately researched it, and **THAT'S WHEN I DISCOVERED LEFA.**

LEFA combines the proven pain relief effects of menthol, with the ground-breaking holistic benefits of a **particular blend of panoramic botanical hemp oil. The science behind this blend has never been seen before - its unique oil is bountiful with naturally occurring phytocannabinoids, including CBD and the less famous but more potent BCP!**

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After trying **LEFA** just once, I was sold! I use it for my sports injury and my father uses it for his arthritis. We love it and now only use **LEFA FOR TOPICAL PAIN RELIEF**. Here's the best news of all: I'm pretty sure you can still get a **FREE MONTH SUPPLY** of **LEFA** with your order by calling **1-800-622-9478**, or by visiting **www.TryNewLefa.com**. Plus, **LEFA** is backed by a **30-Day Money Back Guarantee!** So, I highly recommend you call now while **FREE** supplies last. Your joints and muscles will be glad you did!



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VFW Holds Change-of-Command Ceremony

Unable to meet face-to-face due to COVID-19, VFW members met virtually to witness the transition of the organization's leadership.

BY JANIE DYHOUSE

For the first time in its 122-year storied history, VFW did not gather in person for its annual national convention. Instead, on July 24, a “pro forma” convention took place live on Facebook. Due to COVID-19, people came together virtually from around the nation.

While no official business was conducted, the change-of-command ceremony at VFW National Headquarters in Kansas City, Mo., allowed William “Doc” Schmitz to pass leadership to Hal Roesch.

“We are a combat organization, and we know how to adapt and survive,” Schmitz said. “Our employees have done a tremendous job. They have persevered, overcome and adapted.”

Prior to Roesch’s installation, recorded messages from his family members were broadcast as a surprise to the new chief.

Past VFW Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner from Texas conducted Roesch’s installation, while VFW Assistant Adjutant General Kim DeShano affixed Roesch’s official commander-in-chief badge. Roesch’s wife, Beth, was by his side for the ceremony.

“We must make membership paramount,” Roesch said of his year as Chief. “Seize the moment and become that one person to make a difference.”

Before Roesch was installed, VFW National Sergeant-at-Arms Bryan O’Brien conducted the opening ceremony from



Past VFW Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner administers the oath of office for VFW Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch on July 24 at VFW National Headquarters in Kansas City, Mo.

Trinity, Fla., while National Chaplain Jim Jenkins led the invocation at VFW National Headquarters.

From the VFW National Home in Eaton Rapids, Mich., home resident, Brooklyn, led the *Pledge of Allegiance*. In Bloomington, Ind., Tara Baynum sang the *Star-Spangled Banner*.

VFW Auxiliary President Sandi Onstwedder virtually provid-

Be sure to check out the November/December 2020 issue of VFW magazine for the complete listing of VFW’s 2020-21 national officers.



FAR LEFT: VFW Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch receives his commander-in-chief cap from his wife, Beth, on July 24 at VFW National Headquarters in Kansas City, Mo.

LEFT: VFW Assistant Adjutant General Kim Deshano pins Roesch's badge to his lapel.

VFW Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch delivers his first speech as VFW's top officer on July 24 in Kansas City, Mo.



VIRTUAL CONVENTION SCREEN CAPTURE

VFW National Home resident, Brooklyn, leads the *Pledge of Allegiance* on July 24 from the National Home in Eaton Rapids, Mich., during VFW's "pro forma" convention.

ed her well wishes to Roesch prior to the Auxiliary convention. Roesch's first order of business following his installation was to appoint Kevin Jones as adjutant general, Debra Anderson as quartermaster pro-tem, Rosalyn Cox as chief-of-staff, Richard Bell as inspector general and Bryan O'Brien as sergeant-at-arms.

"This was such a success because of the employees that planned and executed it," Roesch said. "Nothing like this had ever been done before, and they were truly up to the challenge. Besides having my wife, Beth, there, watching how it all came together was a real highlight. I didn't get to see the final product until it was happening. The entire day will be a lifelong highlight for me."



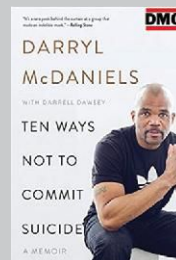
EMAIL jdyhouse@vfw.org

VFW HOSTS #STILLSERVING CELEBRATION

Earlier this year, VFW launched #StillServing to highlight the countless ways in which veterans continue to serve beyond the military.

From July 20-24, VFW hosted a weeklong #StillServing Celebration on VFW's Facebook page showcasing stories of veterans who have remained committed to a life of service, and especially those who've stepped up in the wake of COVID-19.

Throughout the week, members and Post leaders discussed how they've met the many challenges during these uncertain times. Remarks from special guests and celebrity entertainers also were featured.



Celebrities included Darryl "DMC" McDaniels of Run DMC. McDaniels has been active in the field of mental health, advocating for therapy as a way to overcome personal obstacles.

Jon Taffer of the Paramount Network's "Bar Rescue" and VFW spokesman Jesse James Dupree of the band Jackyl also made appearances.

Additionally, VFW members and supporters were provided the opportunity to engage and network with other members from the comfort of their personal computers or devices.

To find out more about VFW's #StillServing Campaign, visit vfw.org/StillServing.

Here's Your Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief



Fritz Mihelcic

Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief

Matthew M. "Fritz" Mihelcic, of Columbia, Ill., was advanced to the office of senior vice commander-in-chief on July 24 in accordance with VFW *Executive Order No. 2*. He is the third veteran from Illinois to hold this office.

Born in Landstuhl, Germany, Mihelcic earned a bachelor of arts degree in philosophy from the University of Illinois

in 1982. He followed that up with a law degree in 1985 from St. Louis University School of Law.

While working as a lawyer and an administrative judge, Mihelcic felt called to give back. He joined the Air National Guard, not in the JAG Corps, but as a security policeman. He served 10 years with the 131st Tactical Fighter Wing based at Lambert International Airport in St. Louis.

Mihelcic earned his VFW eligibility while serving in *Operation Desert Shield* and *Operation Desert Storm*. He was based at Al Kharj Air Base in Saudi Arabia from December 1990 to March 1991, and he received the Southwest Asia Service Medal with two devices.

In 1991, Mihelcic joined a VFW Post in St. Louis, but later transferred to Post 2698 in Sparta, Ill., about 60 miles south-east of St. Louis, where he remains a Gold Legacy Life member.

He recalled receiving a pallet of troop

support items from VFW while serving overseas and vowed to join the organization once he returned home.

Mihelcic served as the VFW Department of Illinois' judge advocate from 1999-2011 and was an All-American Department Commander in 2013-14. He served four times as VFW's national judge advocate general (2003-04, 2007-08, 2011-12 and 2015-16).

An avid scuba diver for more than seven years, Mihelcic belongs to the Professional Association of Diving Instructors. He also is a master scuba diver trainer.

Mihelcic has belonged to the Society of American Magicians for 25 years, where he is a member of Assembly 8 (similar to a VFW Post). He frequently performs magic shows at schools and VA facilities.

With his service dog, Mama Cass, Mihelcic lives about 15 miles south of St. Louis in Columbia, Ill., with his wife, Megan. He has one daughter, Amber Mihelcic.



Timothy "Tim" Borland

Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief

Timothy Borland, of Benson, Ariz., was elected in August by VFW's National Council of Administration to the position of junior vice commander-in-chief. He is the third Arizonan to hold this position.

Born in 1962 in Syracuse, N.Y., Borland joined the Army after his junior year of high school in 1979. He spent that summer training at Ft. Jackson in South Carolina. Following high school graduation in 1980, he returned to Ft. Jackson and completed his training.

During his 28-year Army career, Borland served twice in Germany and single tours in Korea and Puerto Rico.

In 2005-2006, Borland deployed to COB Speicher in Tikrit, Iraq, with the 101st Airborne Division, in support of *Operation Iraqi Freedom*. His permanent assignment at the time was at Ft. Huachuca, Ariz., where he served with the 111th Military Intelligence Brigade.

Included in his military awards are four Meritorious Service Medals, four Army Commendation Medals, eight Army Achievement Medals, a Drill Sergeant Badge, the Korean Defense Service Medal and the Iraq Campaign Medal.

During his time in the Army, Borland had multiple military occupation specialties, ending as an intelligence analyst for his last 20 years.

In 2004, Borland received a bachelor of arts degree, and in 2007, he received a master's of business administration, both from Touro University in Cypress, Calif.

Following his retirement from the Army in 2007, Borland worked for Raytheon in Sierra Vista, Ariz., as a business consultant until 2013.

Borland's VFW career began in 1992 when he joined VFW Post 9972 in Sierra Vista, while still serving on active duty. He served as Post commander from 2005-2006, District commander from 2007-2008, Department commander from 2011-2012 and from 2012-2016, he served on the National Council of Administration.

Borland was awarded the distinguished Triple Crown for achieving All-American status at the Post, District and Department levels in 2012.

Furthermore, this year marks the 17th consecutive year that Borland has recruited at least 100 members for the VFW.

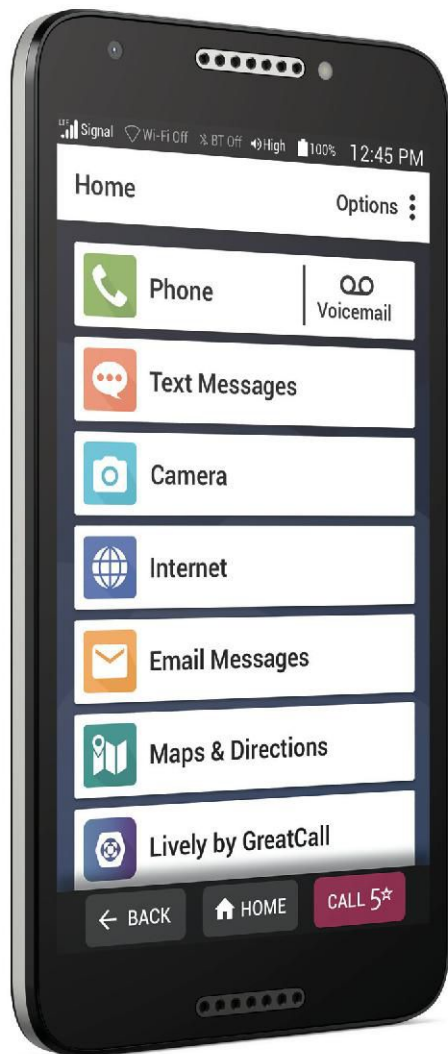
Borland also holds memberships with the American Legion and AMVETS, and a life membership with the Disabled American Veterans.

Borland lives in Benson with his wife, Shannon. Together they have three children. Sons Levi and Jonathan both served in the Marine Corps, and daughter Leah served in the Air Force.

Borland and his wife also have three grandchildren and a fourth on the way.

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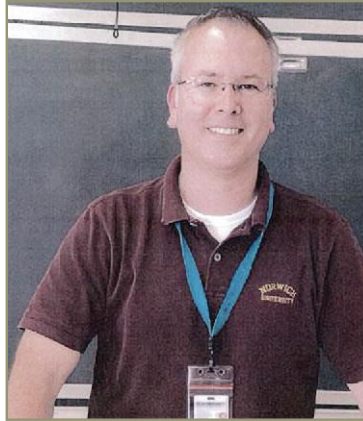
VFW Honors Educators Who Bring Vets to the Classroom

Teachers who won the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Award received \$1,000 for professional development expenses, while their respective schools received an additional \$1,000.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.



Megan Joy Rogers



Michael Russell



Matthew J. Bundy

VFW has awarded the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Award to more than 60 teachers since its inception in 1999. Because this year's VFW National Convention was canceled, the 2020 winners will be recognized alongside next year's awardees at the national convention in Baltimore.

Here are profiles of this year's top VFW educators and how they earned their respective awards.

MEGAN JOY RODGERS / GRADE LEVEL K-5 / BROOKFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL / BROOKFIELD, OHIO

Megan Joy Rodgers, a fourth-grade teacher at Brookfield Elementary School in Brookfield, Ohio, coordinates a school-wide "Wall of Honor" to commemorate veterans, inviting students and staff to submit photographs of family or friends who served or continue to serve as active-duty military. The "Wall of Honor" gets displayed each year in the school's cafeteria.

In the classroom, Rodgers consistently celebrates Patriot's Day with activities that share the events of Sept. 11, 2001, as well as acts of kindness to demonstrate the true spirit of the day. In 2019, Rodgers also had her students create "thank you letters" for local Vietnam War veterans around the community.

As a junior high school advisor, Rodgers coordinates the school's annual trip to Washington, D.C., which includes visits to national monuments around the Mall, the 9/11 Memorial at

the Pentagon and Arlington Cemetery. She oversees 35 students and 45 adults on the trip each year.

Rodgers' computer class students also create cards for active-duty troops in Afghanistan. Her devotion to veterans earned her sponsorship from VFW Post 7538 in Struthers, Ohio.

MICHAEL RUSSELL / GRADE LEVEL 6-8 / BRIDGEWATER-RARITAN MIDDLE SCHOOL / BRIDGEWATER, N.J.

Michael Russell has been an eighth-grade science teacher for 21 years at Bridgewater-Raritan Middle School, where he's led the Veterans History Club for 12 years.

Sponsored by VFW Post 370 in Highland Park, N.J., Russell often welcomed veterans to speak to students about their military experiences. He even interviewed veterans for the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress.

"I am truly honored and humbled to have received this year's middle school teacher merit award from the VFW," Russell said. "I never set out to be recognized for this, but to be acknowledged and celebrated by the VFW at the state and national level has been an incredible experience."

Since creating the Veterans History Club in 2001, Russell has taken students to the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans Memorial and Museum in Holmdel, N.J., where Vietnam veterans lead the tours.

"Having the opportunity for nearly two decades to introduce

students to men and women who have defended our nation has been extremely rewarding,” Russell said. “It has been a way for multiple generations to meet, tell stories, share lessons and inspire one another.”

Russell also provided a flag to be flown over a Marine artillery battery in Iraq, then had the flag certified and returned in person by the unit’s first sergeant.

In addition, Russell organizes multiple school-wide fundraisers, which have raised thousands of dollars for GI Go Fund-Jeans for Troops, The Military Order of the Purple Heart, Wreaths Across America, New Jersey Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation and deployed soldiers overseas.

He also helps create and co-organize veteran displays in the school’s lobby during Veterans Day week, including a wall of veterans photos and a flag display with names and poppy flowers.

Russell also has served many years as an essay judge for the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation college scholarship program. Russell concluded his military service in the Pennsylvania National Guard in 2003 as a sergeant.

MATTHEW J. BUNDY/ GRADE LEVEL 9-12/ MOUNTAIN HOME HIGH SCHOOL/ MOUNTAIN HOME, IDAHO

Matthew J. Bundy is an Air Force veteran, a current city council member in Mountain Home, Idaho, and a teacher at Mountain Home High School.

Sponsored by VFW Post 5423 at Mountain Home Air Force Base, Bundy, who served from 1984-2004, has held many classroom events. The majority of those events have introduced students to congressional candidates, state senators, state representatives, the town’s mayor and its council members.

“As a member of the VFW myself, it was such an honor to be recognized for my contributions in the classroom,” Bundy said. “I have tried to lead a life of service, and after retiring from the military, it has been my honor to learn from and mentor the future leaders of this great nation.”

Bundy, a member of Post 5423, sponsors the page program with the Idaho State Legislature, which has allowed 13 of his students to participate over the past three years. He also serves as a school liaison for American Legion Boys/Girls State events and is a sponsor of a student-exchange program to Germany with more than 50 students from Germany and Idaho participating.

During his time in the Air Force, Bundy deployed to Oman to fly combat sorties into Afghanistan. Bundy’s students often hear his experiences around 9/11.

He was scheduled to fly on Sept. 11, 2001, but was later called out of an aircrew briefing to stand up the Wing Battle Staff. The Wing received deployment orders, and his crew spent the next 85 days deploying.

Each year, Bundy’s students interview local veterans about their 9/11 stories, helping them understand the significance of those events as a result.



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VFW members from across the country sort and pack potatoes at VFW's 2019 National Convention in Orlando, Fla. The members volunteered for the *Uniting to Combat Hunger* event, which has provided more than 1 million meals to families across the country since 2018.

FIGHTING HUNGER DURING COVID-19

UNITING TO COMBAT HUNGER FIGHTS FOOD INSECURITY

The Uniting to Combat Hunger campaign provided more than 1 million meals to military and veteran households across America. VFW and Humana announced their accomplishment in July during VFW's virtual #StillServing celebration on Facebook.

BY DAVE SPIVA

VFW and Humana announced in July that its joint venture to feed military and veteran families across the country has provided more than 1 million meals this year.

Since 2018, VFW and Humana have collaborated to raise awareness about food insecurity, including in the veteran and military communities, through *Uniting to Combat Hunger*. Since the beginning, *Uniting to Combat Hunger* and its volunteers have provided more than 1.4 million meals to families across America.

VFW Quartermaster General Debra Anderson, along with Humana's Director of Strategic Alliances and Veteran Channel Ed Sandrick, made the announcement during the week-long #StillServing celebration on VFW National Headquarters' Facebook page, www.facebook.com/VFWfans.

"We initially planned this year's campaign as a national food drive similar to years past," Anderson said. "However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic

forced us to drastically shift our focus. So now, we are raising donations to support local VA food pantries that have been struggling to keep up with the increasing needs of veterans and military families in their communities."

This year's original goal by VFW and Humana was to provide 500,000 meals to veterans and service members in need by the end of the year. The goal was doubled in only about half the time.

"We are so proud to have been able to do so much for our communities in need during such a trying time," Anderson said.

During the announcement, Sandrick thanked all volunteers who donated their time and money toward improving the health of veterans and their families around the country.

"It's an honor to support veteran and military families during this unprecedented time, as no one should be food insecure," Sandrick said. "Through the *Uniting to Combat Hunger* campaign, we're proud to help feed those who

Food insecurity does not necessarily mean people are going without food. It means many families lack access to healthy foods and fresh produce. VFW Foundation Director Richard Potter said that about one in eight Americans suffer from food insecurity.

"Even more staggering, about 20 percent of households that Feeding America (a nonprofit food bank network) supports has a veteran," Potter said. "Because of this, VFW and Humana wanted to start the *Uniting to Combat Hunger* campaign."

Potter added that about 25 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans suffer from food insecurity.

"Because so many military families have been struggling to put nutritious food on the table, we thought the best way to help was to work directly with VA food pantries," Potter said. "Since the beginning, VFW and Humana have been working together to support the health and wellness of America's veteran community."

have sacrificed so much for our country, and we're thrilled to more than double our goal in collaboration with dedicated partners like the VFW."

For more information about *Uniting to Combat Hunger* and how to help VFW and Humana address food insecurity, visit www.vfw.org/UTCH. ★

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“You’ll never know what this grant meant to me and my family.” - Unmet Needs grant recipient Johnie Wasley

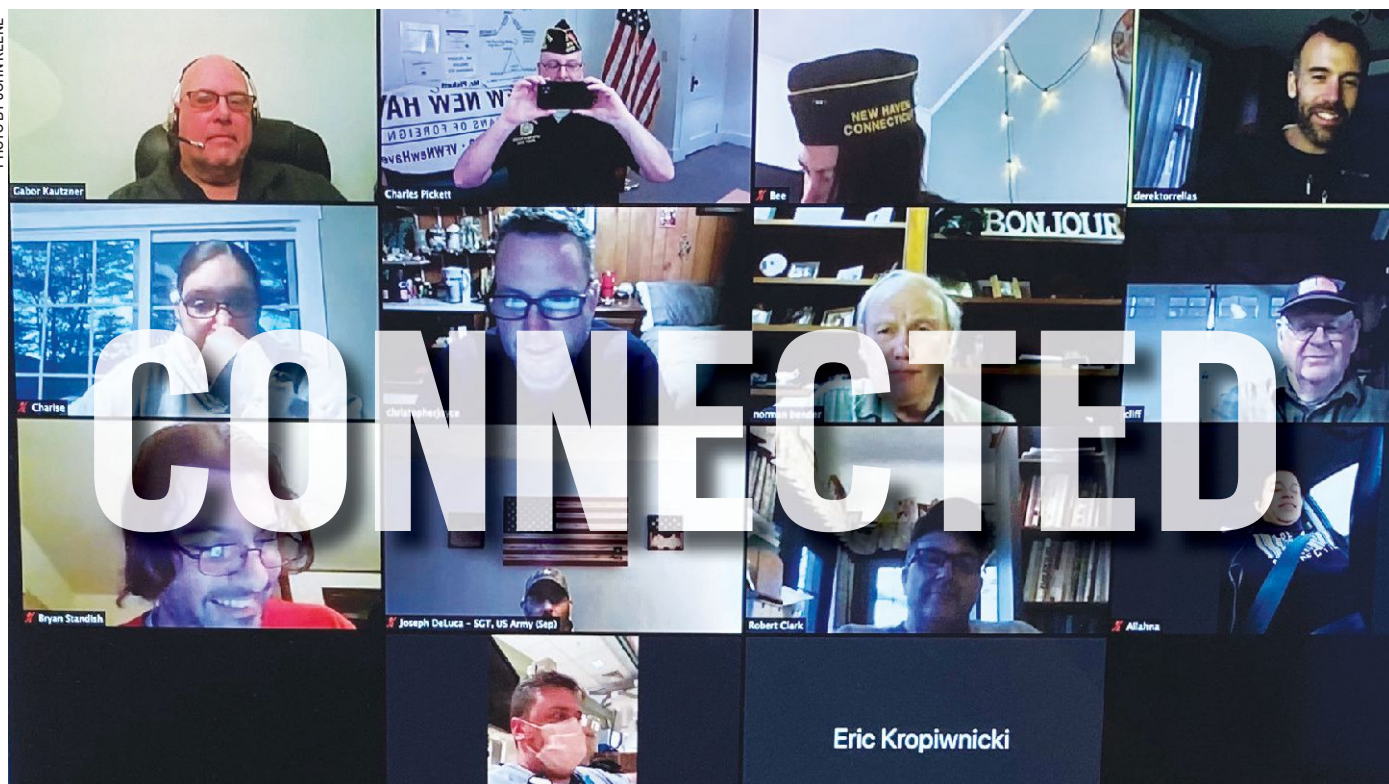
In the first half of 2020 alone, the VFW Unmet Needs program helped over 270 veterans and military families from becoming homeless, going hungry or going without basic necessities during times of service members’ deployment or transition to the civilian workforce. The Unmet Needs program has awarded more than \$11.9 million in assistance to more than 10,800 service members, veterans and their families to prevent dire circumstances since 2004.



For more information, check out vfw.org/SurgeToSupport or contact Foundation@vfw.org.

ONLINE MEETINGS HELP VFW MEMBERS STAY

PHOTO BY JOHN KEENE



To battle the spread of COVID-19, VFW Posts across the country have used video conferencing to keep members connected and help their communities.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.

When the novel coronavirus swept across the globe in the spring, people's idea of reality strained to the point of a near break. And as the virus continued developing and infecting millions of people globally, individuals soon found themselves morphing their daily lives to fight it.

Governments and global health organizations crafted roadmaps to help prevent the spread, an uphill battle that depended on the cooperation of citizens. Social gatherings became a privilege and a risk, prompting leaders to think of ways to keep people connected without a sliver of physical interaction.

By late March, measures within most states in the U.S. consisted of bans on large social gatherings that included educational institutions, entertainment venues, health clubs, bars and restaurants.

In veteran communities around the world, social interactions carry an importance like no other. For many, it's

how they remain connected to the world and its current events. For others, a simple conversation with a fellow comrade can make the difference between a good day and a bad one.

The VFW as an organization stands on several pillars, and one of them is fostering camaraderie among U.S. veterans of overseas conflicts. And despite the ongoing uncertainty amidst the novel coronavirus, VFW continues to serve its veterans, military and communities. It continues to advocate on behalf of all veterans, and it continues to foster such camaraderie.

As a whole, the VFW suffered its own share of losses. This year marked the first time in VFW's history that its national convention was virtual, along with other national assemblies such as the legislative committee meeting in the fall.

Most of VFW's corridors and offices in both the Kansas City, Mo., and Washington, D.C., headquarters remained vacant for more than half a year. Employees found themselves working from home as a pre-

caution against the spread of COVID-19.

And yet, the machine kept churning. The national convention became a virtual breakthrough in light of the troubling times. The organization continued its diligent work to polish those pillars that have stood for more than a century.

At the state and local levels, VFW Departments and Posts have carried these efforts further, aiding and supplying manpower in their respective communities against the novel coronavirus (See the August 2020 issue of *VFW* magazine).

VFW members also have helped foster camaraderie among veterans at a time in which "social distancing" has been preached by government and healthcare authorities.

'IT'S ABOUT DOING OUR BEST WITH WHAT WE'VE GOT'

In New Haven, Conn., about 80 miles northeast of New York City, VFW Post 12150 turned to Zoom video conferencing as a means to keep members in tune

with one another, hosting virtual happy hours and informative seminars.

"We've had to cancel all social and charitable events since May, but Zoom has been able to keep our members together," said Charles M. Pickett, commander of Post 12150 and the Department of Connecticut's District 2. "We started with virtual happy hours and noticed a good turnout. We're mostly post-9/11 veterans, but many of the participants were our Vietnam-era members, who enjoyed our themed Zooms as a way to share stories."

Pickett, who joined VFW in 2008 after deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan with the Army's 814th Multi-Role Bridge Company out of Fort Polk, La., eventually pushed to have Post and District elections held over Zoom as well.

"We had to do this because Connecticut was largely shut down by the pandemic, which hit us especially hard," Pickett said. "Thankfully, we had a full slate of officers nominated in March that were unopposed, so the election was by unanimous consent. We held a few 'pre-meetings' to get members comfortable using the technology before the April elections. Then on the day of the elections, we ended up having 14 comrades show up, including one working his shift in a local hospital and another one who was pulled over in her car."

Pickett also brought VFW National Chaplain Jim Jenkins onboard, hosting an hour-long Zoom seminar to help motivated VFW chaplains learn more about their duties and obligations, while sharing feedback amongst one another.

"It's about doing our best with what we've got," Pickett added. "Many of our Vietnam veterans have hunkered down, so the best way to reach all our members is through this medium. However, Zoom is a tool and not a replacement. You can't serve dinner over a Zoom meeting."

'COFFEE WITH A VETERAN'

VFW Post 2913 Commander Dave Rodgers also pioneered a way to connect local veterans with citizens. Rodgers' method, which he developed in Patchogue, N.Y., involves storytelling.

For the past two years, Rodgers has held a daily "Coffee with a Veteran" session at noon between members of the community and local veterans at Roast Coffee and Tea Trading Co., in Patchogue, about 60 miles east of New York City.

Then the novel coronavirus struck in late March, and its ongoing concerns prolonged the social distancing barriers that Rodgers had fought hard to eliminate between veterans and their communities.

The 14-year Army veteran, however, found himself turning to Zoom in order to maintain the recommended physical distance without socially distancing both populations again.

Rodgers said he wanted to keep people connected as he remembers how hard self-isolation was for him many years ago. He also wanted to remind people that they're not alone during this perilous time.

The Zoom conference meetings online bridged a safe gap between physical and social distance, while continuing to serve as a vehicle for veterans and civilians to share experiences.

Rodgers also has actively held informal VFW meetings on Zoom to keep Post members updated on the current state of virus-related developments.

REMOTE MEETINGS INCREASE ATTENDANCE

Known for its progressive nature, Post 1 in Denver plunged into video conferencing in order to do more than host membership meetings.

Since turning to Zoom in April, Post 1 has used the medium to host elections, install new officers, organize volunteers in the fight against COVID-19 and raise money to feed the overnight staff at the local VA hospital.

"It's been a success so far," Post 1 Commander John Keene said. "In fact, we plan to keep offering a Zoom option whenever we have a chance to go back to in-person meetings because the technology has actually increased our attendance."

Keene added that Zoom has facilitated membership meetings to include members now living or traveling across

different states, thus reaching a larger audience than before the pandemic.

"We have had members join us anywhere from California to Washington, D.C., as well as a local member who was at home recovering from open-heart surgery," Keene said. "I've heard a variety of reasons why someone didn't come down on meeting night in the past, so I see Zoom as a way to offer members who otherwise couldn't participate an opportunity to do so."

The same can be said about VFW Post 8862 in Vicenza, Italy.

When government authorities in Italy ruled on a country-wide lockdown and social distancing protocols in March, Post members found themselves without a way to conduct monthly meetings at their facility within the Caserma Ederle military complex in Vicenza.

Faced with this dilemma, the Post leaders searched and settled on TeamLink, a user-friendly mobile video and web meeting application.

"Through this system, members that had returned to the U.S. before the lockdown were still able to maintain contact," said Rex Shuey, a public affairs officer and life member of Post 8862. "This included our monthly meetings, voting nominations, written acceptance for positions and elections."

The Post also used TeamLink to stay abreast of current events and upcoming ceremonies and activities.

"We used it to interface with our community ahead of local events," Shuey added. "It helped us prepare for events like Flag Day, Saint Michael's Day Ceremony in Vicenza and the POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremony."

From the time Italy underwent changes to battle the spread of COVID-19 in early March, Post 8862 has continued to hold monthly meetings using video conferencing.

Without an ending to the global pandemic in sight, alternatives such as Zoom video conferencing and TeamLink have proven useful, sparking new and innovative ways for VFW Posts to conduct tasks and keep all members connected. ★

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20 YEARS ON: FAMILIES OF USS COLE HAVE JUSTICE

This month marks 20 years since the terrorist bombing of the *USS Cole*, which claimed the lives of 17 sailors and injured 39.

BY DAVE SPIVA

On the morning of Oct. 12, 2000, the *USS Cole* (DDG-67) pulled into a port in Aden, Yemen, to refuel. Shortly after mooring and refueling began, a small boat carrying explosives and suicide bombers came alongside the U.S. warship's port side and exploded. The aftermath was grim.

The attack ripped a 40-by-60-foot hole in the ship's hull along the water line. That day, 17 sailors were killed and 39 were wounded. At the time, it was the deadliest attack on a U.S. Navy vessel since the *USS Stark* (FFG-31) was hit by two missiles from an Iraqi fighter jet in May 1987. (Read about the *Stark* in the May 2017 issue of *VFW* magazine at www.vfw.org.)

The *Cole* returned to the States in December 2000, and sailors worked for more than a year repairing the ship at the Ingalls Shipyard in Pascagoula, Miss. The FBI later determined that al-Qaeda coordinated the *Cole* bombing. The terrorist network went on to mastermind the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in New York City; Washington, D.C.; and Pennsylvania almost a year later.

Through its Adopt-a-Unit program, VFW National Headquarters adopted the *Cole* in 2002. On a more local level, Posts and Districts have participated in recognizing the sailors who perished on the *Cole*. District 20 in Texas is one such example. In 2018, members there held a

wreath-laying ceremony for Fireman Gary Graham Swenchonis Jr.

FAMILIES SEEK JUSTICE

In 2004, family members of sailors who were aboard the *USS Cole* during the attack filed a lawsuit against Sudan, claiming that the nation had a hand in the terrorist attack in Yemen. A federal judge ruled in 2007 that the Sudanese government was liable for the attack on the *Cole*.

After the case was appealed to the Supreme Court, VFW filed an amicus curiae brief in 2018 that supported the sailors who were injured, as well as their spouses, during the bombing. At the time, then-VFW Commander-in-Chief B.J. Lawrence (currently the Washington Office executive director) said, "It is critical that the *USS Cole* victims and their families know that we support their case, particularly when, as here, our own government will not do the same."

In April of this year, Sudan agreed on a \$30 million settlement deal to compensate the families. While officials of Sudan denied any involvement with the attack, they said they are determined to "settle the historical allegations of terrorism left by the former regime."

Today, the *USS Cole* is still in commission and home ported at Naval Station Norfolk in Virginia. ★

EMAIL dspiva@vfw.org

A sailor visits the USS Cole Memorial on Oct. 12, 2018, at Naval Station Norfolk in Virginia during the 18th anniversary of the attack on the warship by al-Qaeda. The memorial is dedicated to the 17 sailors who died aboard the *Cole* while moored in Yemen.

REMEMBERING THE USS COLE TRAGEDY

A memorial in remembrance of the sailors who died in the 2000 *USS Cole* (DDG-67) bombing in Yemen was dedicated on Oct. 12, 2001, at Naval Station Norfolk in Virginia. According to the Navy's website, the contributions from private donations to the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society funded the memorial.

Those remembered are:

- HT2 Kenneth Eugene Clodfelter, 21, of Mechanicsville, Va.
- ETC Richard Costelow, 35, of Morrisville, Pa.
- MS Seaman Lakeina Monique Francis, 19, of Woodleaf, N.C.
- ITSN Timothy Lee Gauna, 21, of Rice, Texas
- SNSN Cherone Louis Gunn, 22, of Rex, Ga.
- SN James Rodrick McDaniels, 19, of Norfolk, Va.
- EN2 Marc Ian Nieto, 24, of Fond du Lac, Wis.
- ET2 Ronald Scott Owens, 24, of Vero Beach, Fla.
- SN Lakiba Nicole Palmer, 22, of San Diego, Calif.
- FN Joshua Langdon Parlett, 19, of Churchville, Md.
- FN Patrick Howard Roy, 19, of Cornwall on Hudson, N.Y.
- ET1 Kevin Shawn Rux, 30, of Portland, N.D.
- MS3 Ronchester Manangan Santiago, 22, of Kingsville, Texas
- OS2 Timothy Lamont Saunders, 32, of Ringgold, Va.
- FN Gary Graham Swenchonis Jr., 26, of Rockport, Texas
- Ensign Andrew Triplett, 31, of Macon, Miss.
- SN Craig Bryan Wibberley, 19, of Williamsport, Md.

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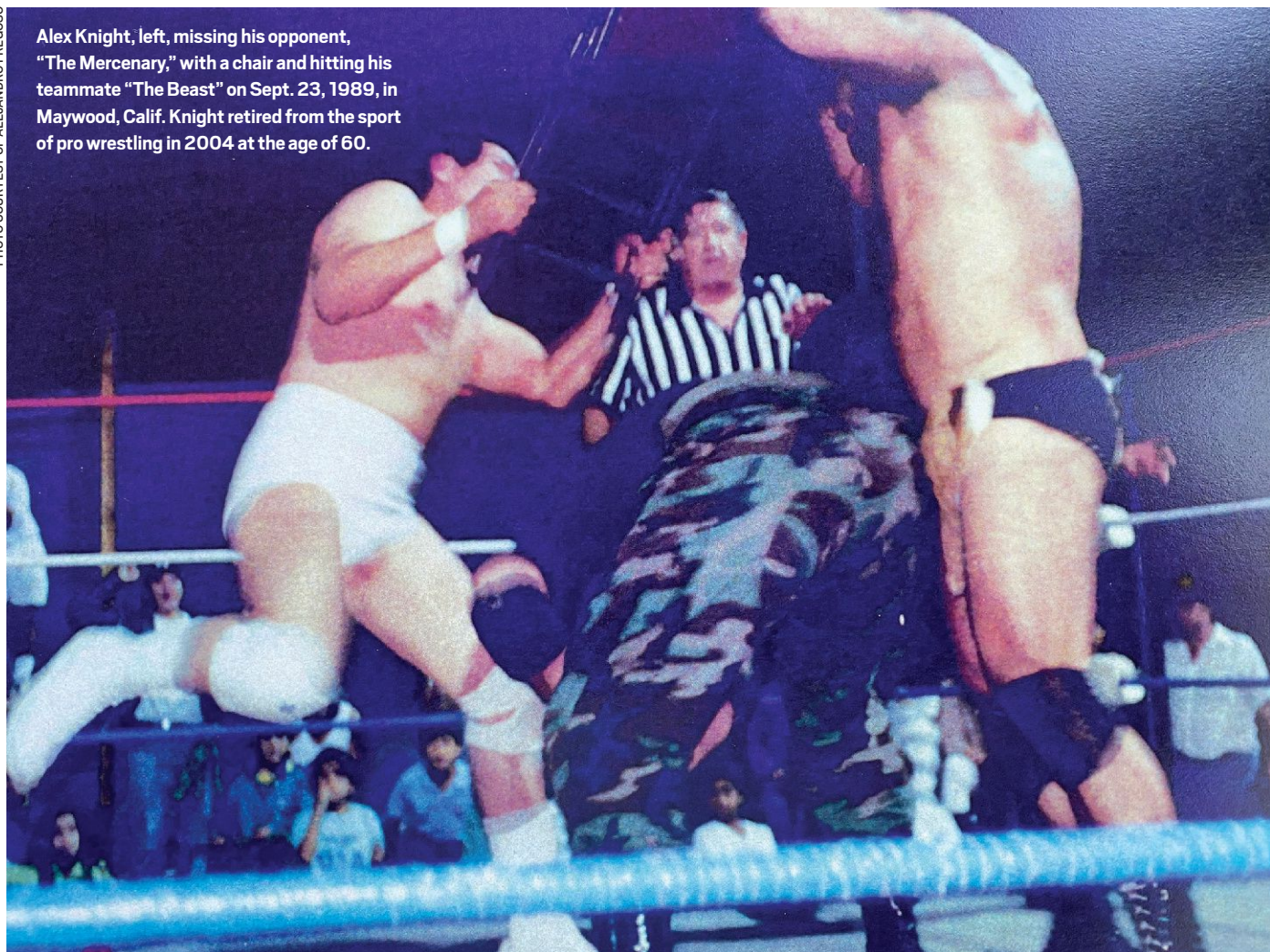
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Alex Knight, left, missing his opponent, "The Mercenary," with a chair and hitting his teammate "The Beast" on Sept. 23, 1989, in Maywood, Calif. Knight retired from the sport of pro wrestling in 2004 at the age of 60.



Grappling With Success

A VFW member and Vietnam War veteran became a star wrestler during the professional sport's golden age. Now retired, this Navy vet shares the story of his award-winning career.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.

When wrestling personality Alex Knight walked off the ring under a diffused sky growing dark on Sept. 18, 2004, the 60-year-old had closed the longest chapter of his life.

It was a 44-year odyssey that began

in El Paso, Texas, for Alejandro Fregoso the man, and ended at the picturesque grounds of MacArthur Park in Los Angeles for Alex Knight the wrestler.

Along the way, Fregoso navigated through the golden age of professional wrestling as well as the war-ridden

waters in the Gulf of Tonkin, located off the coast of North Vietnam in the northern section of the South China Sea.

"It was a long and fun ride that allowed me to meet a lot of good people," said Fregoso, a life member of VFW Post 7734 in Pico Rivera, Calif., about 13 miles

“I got to wrestle against some of the biggest and best men in Southern California in those days.”

Alejandro Fregoso, aka Alex Knight

from Los Angeles. “It’s what still keeps me around the scene today. Most of the wrestlers from my time have passed away, but I enjoy meeting the younger generations of wrestlers that will carry the legacy of my friends.”

Fregoso’s passion began at an early age, sparked by pro wrestling magazines and weekly live shows at El Paso County Coliseum and the Auditorium Municipal in Juarez, Mexico.

The lifestyle and camaraderie among the wrestlers inspired Fregoso to start training for his slice of that world in 1960 at the age of 16. He started at the Knights of Columbus Hall in El Paso, which he later paid homage to by making it part of his stage name.

“It was in a small boxing ring, but we made due,” Fregoso remembered. “I was being trained by National Wrestling Alliance middleweight champ Bassil Battah, and the training was much harder than I had ever expected.”

Under Battah’s tutelage, Fregoso scored his pro debut in 1962 in Deming, N.M., about four hours from El Paso, as Alex The Great. He earned bouts consistently for the next three years, wrestling in venues across New Mexico and Texas.

‘TWO DECKS UNDER THE EXPLOSION AND FIRE’

Then in the fall of 1965, Fregoso put his wrestling career on hold and enlisted in the Navy. He began his basic training in San Diego and soon deployed to the Gulf of Tonkin aboard the *USS Forrestal* (CV-59) as the Vietnam War ramped up.

“I was aboard the *Forrestal* on July 29, 1967, during that explosion on the flight deck that killed 134 men and left hundreds of others missing,” said Fregoso, who was a petty officer at the time. “I remember being stationed two decks under the explosion and fire.”

The infamous explosion aboard the *Forrestal* was later classified as an electrical anomaly that caused a Zuni rocket on an F-4B Phantom to fire, striking an external fuel tank on an A-4 Skyhawk nearby.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALEJANDRO FREGOSO

Alejandro Fregoso, a Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, poses in uniform at the Philadelphia Navy Yard in 1966. He served with the Navy for four years before being discharged and serving two more years with the Navy Reserve in Los Angeles.

Among those like Fregoso who survived the unfortunate accident was future Republican senator and presidential candidate John McCain, who at the time was a naval aviator and lieutenant commander.

Fregoso served overseas for almost four years and was later discharged in 1969. He then served in the Navy Reserve for another two years after relocating to Los Angeles.

‘A SPECIAL PLACE’

Fregoso returned to the pro wrestling circuit in 1974 as Alex Knight, a nod to the gym in El Paso where his passion for wrestling had begun.

“It was a special place to me,” Fregoso said. “And I didn’t just use it for most of my career. I still use the name Alex

Knight on a daily basis.”

In 1977, Fregoso earned a tryout at the renowned Grand Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles with the NWA. The promotion ran wrestling events five or six times per week in an array of Southern California cities, allowing Fregoso to become a household name at the Grand Olympic Auditorium and Strongbow Stadium in Bakersfield, Calif.

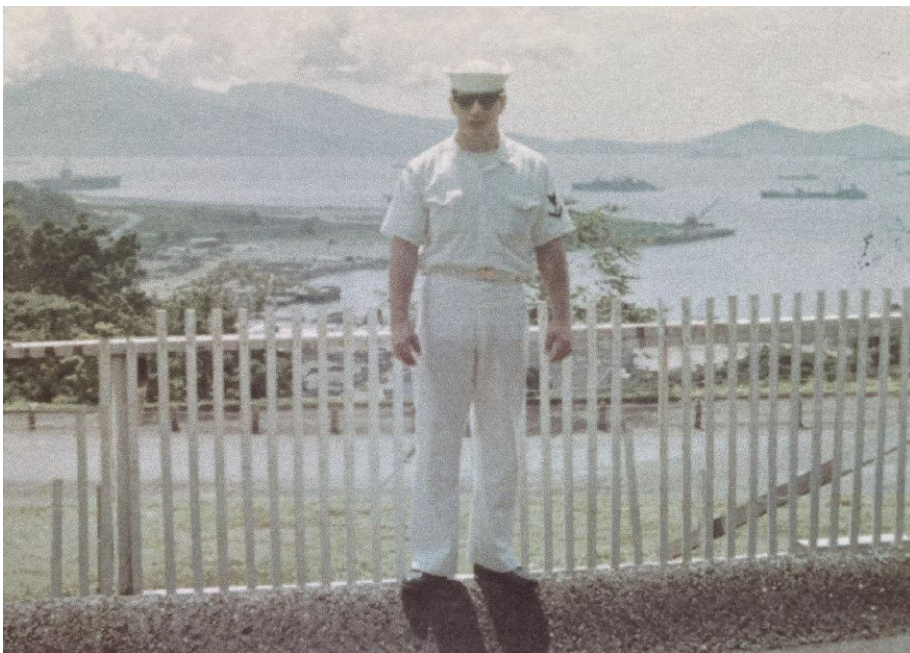
“I got to wrestle against some of the biggest and best men in Southern California in those days,” Fregoso said. “I shared the ring with household names like ‘Apache Bull’ Ramos, Great Goliath, ‘Bad News’ Allen Coage, Victor Rivera, ‘Bad Boy’ Leroy Brown and Pampero Firpo.”

As Fregoso’s profile rose, he was given opportunities to wrestle for coveted



TOP: Alex Knight shakes hands with pro wrestling legend “Mr. Perfect” Curt Hennig in Las Vegas. Knight and Hennig wrestled against each other several times in the 1980s.

BOTTOM: Fregoso poses in his Navy whites in the Philippines in 1967.



belts. By the mid-1980s, he had held titles as the American International Champion and Brass Knuckles Champion.

Through wrestling connections and a growing popularity, Fregoso branched out, wrestling for other promotions such as the National Wrestling Alliance’s Polynesian Pro Wrestling (PPW) in Hawaii at the behest of its promoter, Ofelia “Lia” Maivia, whose grandson is Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson.

“I really enjoyed working for Lia Maivia,” Fregoso said. “She really liked having me, and I got along with the Samoan wrestlers really well.”

Between 1986 and 1988, Fregoso bounced back and forth between shows in Las Vegas’ Showboat Sports Pavilion and several islands in Hawaii. He simultaneously wrestled for Maivia’s PPW and the American Wrestling Alliance (AWA), which ranked as the third largest promotion in the 1980s behind NWA and the World Wrestling Federation (WWF).

During his stint with AWA, Fregoso wrestled alongside Hall of Fame personalities that included “Mr. Perfect” Curt Hennig, Paul De Marco, Mando Guerrero, Colonel De Beers and “The Midnight Rockers” duo of Shawn

Michaels and Marty Jannetty.

He also earned credits as a part-time actor in Hollywood comedies that included “Grunt! The Wrestling Movie” (1985) and “Body Slam” (1986), starring Dirk Benedict, Tanya Roberts and wrestling legend “Rowdy” Roddy Piper.

But Fregoso’s big break didn’t come until the late 1980s, when he earned a role with the WWF, known today as the WWE. The opportunity introduced Alex Knight to a wider audience as WWF ran shows through ESPN’s national programming on weeknights.

“It took me over 20 years to reach WWF, but what a great experience it was working for that promotion,” Fregoso said. “I remember it being so fast. My matches went from being 20 minutes long to being five or six minutes long because it was being broadcast.”

After WWF, Fregoso found a permanent stay within the American Independent Wrestling Alliance (AIWA), where he wrestled out of Los Angeles from 1990 until his retirement in 2004.

“I won titles in singles, tag-team and three-man events in the AIWA,” Fregoso said. “I even wrestled as two other masked characters during that time.”

Fregoso also managed the AIWA promotion in Los Angeles during that time, overseeing more than 110 shows and employing 250 people.

In 2011, the Cauliflower Alley Club, a non-profit fraternal organization comprised of both retired and active pro wrestlers and boxers in Las Vegas, honored Fregoso with its prestigious Men’s Wrestling Award for his contributions to the sport.

Today, Fregoso continues to remain a constant around the Southern California wrestling scene as a spectator, mentor and at times, a referee. ★

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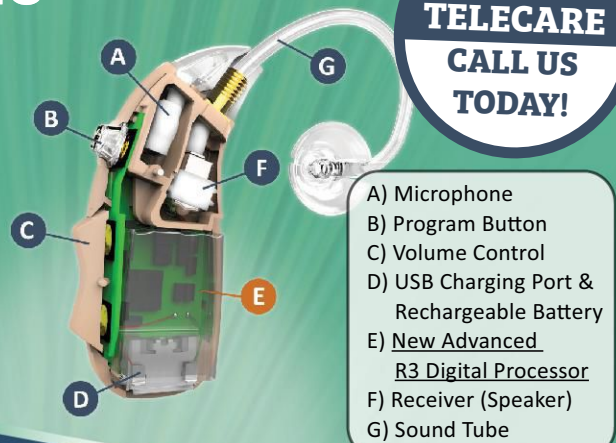
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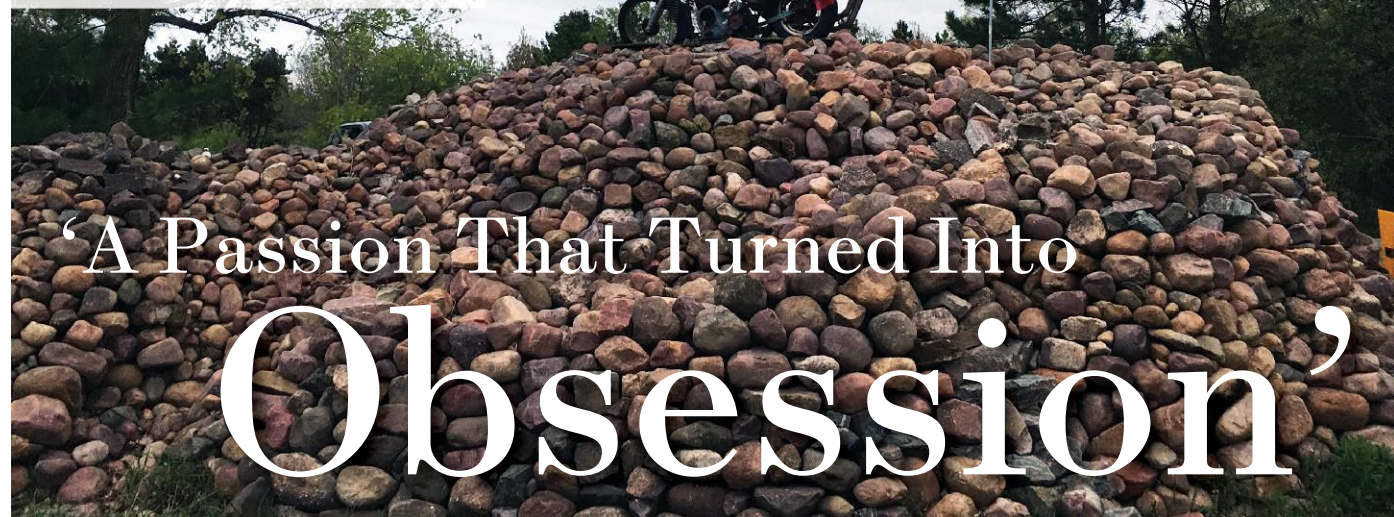

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Former Wisconsin state senator and assemblyman Dave Zein used an array of rocks from all around the U.S. to sculpt "The Rockpile II," a memorial to those who served in the Vietnam War, especially fellow Marines with Lima Co. who were killed in action atop the original Rockpile in southern Vietnam. The Rockpile II sits in Zein's property in Wheaton, Wis., 93 miles east of Minneapolis. It has taken more than 25 years to complete.



A former state senator and VFW member from Wisconsin created a sculpture to honor all veterans, especially those who fought alongside him in Vietnam.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.

It's loomed over Dave Zein's conscience for many years, a jagged 750-foot piece of karst rock erupting from the shaggy jungles of South Vietnam like a toothpick.

Such a place carries the burden of Oct. 9, 1969, a day Zein, then a Marine with Lima Co., 3rd Bn., 4th Marines, 3rd Marine Div., witnessed fellow Marines die as his unit was overrun by NVA sappers while protecting it.

Battling post-traumatic stress disorder and survivor's guilt ever since, Zein has devoted his life to helping all veterans, but especially honoring those killed in action during the Vietnam War.

He delved into a life of politics, pushing for veteran benefits above all else. Zein began his career as Wisconsin's Vietnam Veterans Director from 1977 to 1984 before being elected as a Republican state representative to the Wisconsin

Assembly in 1989.

Zein held his position in the Assembly with the 68th District until 1993, when he ran, won and served in the state senate on behalf of the 23rd District between 1993 and 2007.

"Since being discharged from the Marines in 1970, I have always served veterans," said Zein, a life member of VFW Post 305 in Eau Claire, Wis., who in 1979 served as VFW's National Aide-de-Camp. "In helping them and their families receive deserved benefits, this has been more than a hobby. It has been a passion that turned into obsession."

During his days in the state senate, Zein also began confronting his PTSD by mentally revisiting the looming 750-foot hill of karst rock that he left behind in Vietnam.

It began as a pet project, but soon turned into a 25-year odyssey to pay

homage to members of Lima Co. killed in action.

Rock by rock, Zein began piecing together his replica of the hill in Vietnam, which U.S. troops had dubbed "the Rockpile."

Located at the junction of five major valleys, about 10 miles from the southernmost boundary of the Vietnamese Demilitarized Zone, the Rockpile carried a profound strategic importance for Americans during the war. As a result, more than 126 Marines died protecting it.

In honoring their memory, Zein started collecting and placing a concoction of rocks from all around the U.S. in the early 1990s at his home in Wheaton, Wis., 93 miles east of Minneapolis.

Despite being permanently disabled since 2006 and having his left leg amputated in 2011, Zein continues to sculpt the "Rockpile II" memorial on his property,

which is nearing completion this year.

In recent years, Zein has also received stones from several donors that he plans to place along the northwest and southwest walls of the tribute.

Those donations include Apache Tears and a stone with bore drilling holes for explosives from the Crazy Horse Monument in Custard County, S.D.

There are also local donations from the law enforcement, firefighter, EMT and citizen soldier bridges over Highway 29 in Chippewa County, Wis. — the oldest rock in the Midwest, according to the University of Wisconsin-River Falls and the University of Minnesota.

“It’s really a living, evolving sculpture,” Zein said. “This is a tribute that I hope will empower veterans and their families. It’s also meant for others to emulate our example and continue paying homage to all those brave souls who have fought for our country.”

Post 305 and its Auxiliary members in Eau Claire often guide tours of “the Rockpile II” sculpture on Zein’s property, as well as Wheels of Liberty members.

Zein, who was inducted into the Motorcycle Hall of Fame in Pickerington,

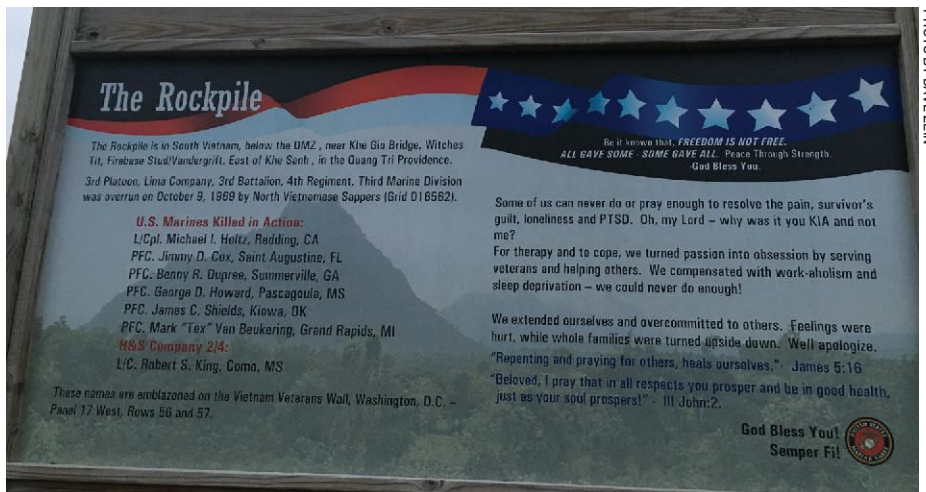


PHOTO BY DAVE ZEIN

Laminated in Dave Zein’s “Rockpile II” memorial are the names of his fellow Marines and Lima Co. comrades killed in action on Oct. 9, 1969.

Ohio, in 2000, will often stroll around the area on a motorcycle sporting full-size U.S. and Wisconsin flags.

The 70-year-old has logged almost 2.9 million miles on his motorcycle, which ranks second in documented lifetime motorcycle mileage in world history, according to Zein.

He finds that riding his motorcycle as well as staying busy helps with the PTSD

and survivor’s guilt that he still suffers from to this day.

“Many veterans display an immense amount of creativity, courage and perseverance after experiencing the horrors of war,” Zein said. “I’m honored to be able to utilize my talents for a good cause, and yet, it just never seems like I’ve yet done enough.”

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Troop Support Project is an ‘Eye-Opening’ Experience

VFW and Auxiliary members in Illinois put together care packages for a unit that was deployed and later stranded due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

BY MADELINE MAPES



VFW and Auxiliary members of Post 4226 in Olney, Ill., assemble care packages in June for troops with the Illinois National Guard's 2nd Bn., 130th Inf. Regt. The unit deployed to Afghanistan earlier in the year but ended up stranded in Kuwait. At press time, the unit had moved to an undisclosed location.

A single care package turned into 20 packages earlier this year when members of VFW Post 4226 and its Auxiliary in Olney, Ill., learned of a project. They got word that their then-commander, Ryan Higginbotham, and his wife, Sarah, were putting together a care package for a deployed soldier stuck overseas because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sgt. Steven Hundley was deployed with the Illinois Army National Guard's 2nd Bn., 130th Inf. Regt., in January, right before the coronavirus outbreak. The unit was supposed to deploy to Afghanistan, but they were stranded in Kuwait because of the COVID-19 travel restrictions.

Ryan said in July the unit had since moved to an undisclosed location. He added that Hundley's wife, Aisha, has been the Higginbothams' only source of information on Hundley and his unit.

"I don't know if they have made it [to

Afghanistan] yet because of the COVID-19 outbreak," Ryan said.

As soon as word spread of the unit's predicament in Kuwait, Post 4226 and its Auxiliary sprang into action.

Sarah and another Auxiliary member did the shopping for the care packages. They gathered toiletries, snacks

"Where they were at, I know that they were not able to get a lot of supplies. That's why we did this."

Ryan Higginbotham, Commander of VFW Post 4226 in Olney, Ill.

and playing cards for each package. The Post also requested one *VFW* magazine per package.

Ryan said the Post also received a donation of toiletries and \$100 from a local individual.

"Where they were at, I know that they were not able to get a lot of supplies," Ryan said. "That's why we did this."

He also said that it is unknown when this unit will return home.

Ryan recalled receiving care packages while he was serving in the Army as a specialist from 2001 to 2004. He served in Afghanistan with the 2nd Bn., 504th Inf., 82nd Abn. Div., from 2002 to 2003 and then in Iraq from 2003 to 2004.

He said the packages were comforting when he had nothing to do. Often, the packages had things that helped pass the time, as well as necessities such as toiletries and snacks.

"It was very nice," he said.

Members of Post 4226 in Olney, Ill., display copies of VFW magazine in June as they prepare care packages for an Illinois National Guard unit. The magazines were included in each box along with essential supplies such as toiletries, snacks and playing cards.

Before Sarah married Ryan, she sent him personalized care packages that included items she knew he would need. But she acknowledged that it is a different process now.

“It has been really eye-opening,” Sarah said. “It’s not as easy as it was when Ryan was deployed.”

Sarah said that when Post 4226 went to ship the packages, they had some trouble with the post office. She described the post office as unaccommodating compared to when she was sending packages to Ryan.

“I can remember going to the post office, and they would do anything and everything to make sure I got that package to him,” Sarah said.

She added it took three trips to the post office to finally get the 20 packages shipped to the 130th Infantry.

Sarah also said it seemed to her that



PHOTO COURTESY OF VFW POST 4226

overall support for deployed troops now is different than it was when she was sending packages to Ryan in the early 2000s when people seemed more supportive of troops.

“It was obvious that they truly needed these packages,” Sarah said.

The Post hopes to send more care packages in the future as the unit needs

more supplies. The Higginbothams are unsure when or if they will need to send more care packages. If the time comes that they get to send more packages, they look forward to it.

✉ magazine@vfw.org

Madeline Mapes is a freelance writer based in Kansas City, Mo.



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Members of VFW Post 3451 in Sterling, Colo., pose next to a dragster at Colorado's Julesburg Drag Strip on June 20. Post 3451 Commander Taylor Amburgey said the event was a "great way" to attract new members.



COMMUNITY RALLIES FOR POST'S DRAG RACE

A VFW Post in Colorado organized a drag race in June to raise money for its facility. The team at the drag strip and other businesses took it upon themselves to put on the event for the Post free of charge.

BY DAVE SPIVA

AVFW Post in the Centennial State helped host a drag racing event in Julesburg, Colo., on June 20.

In October 2019, Post 3451 Commander Taylor Amburgey and other Post members had the idea to have a drag racing event at the nearby Julesburg Drag Strip in northeast Colorado.

Amburgey is an Afghanistan War vet, whose Post is located in Sterling, Colo., about 130 miles northeast of Denver. He said that the VFW Post in Julesburg closed its doors and that Post 3451 is the only VFW Post in the area.

"It's more important than ever to get support from the community," Amburgey said. "This event was a great way to get some new members interested in our organization."

Amburgey, who served in the Army from 2009-12, said that the aim of the

event was to appeal to younger veterans. He added that it's important to "bridge the gap" between generations of veterans.

"It's important to keep this veterans' organization alive," Amburgey said.

Amburgey added that he and his Post members reached out to the team that runs the Julesburg Drag Strip, about 60 miles northeast of Sterling. The team agreed to help with the event. Later on, when Post 3451 was preparing to pay for the cost to use the strip, the organizers at the Julesburg Drag Strip told Amburgey that the event would be sponsored by Todd Perkins, the owner of the Greeley, Colo., business Revelation Steel.

"They told us that we no longer had to pay for the event, and that we just needed to show up," Amburgey said. "They told us that everything would be handled for us."

The proceeds of the event — which

Amburgey said amounted to about \$5,000 — will go toward different Post 3451 projects, as well as building and emergency relief funds. He also said that a portion of the proceeds will go to the Wounded Warrior Project.

"We had about 80 cars participate," Amburgey said one week after the event. "We didn't really know what to expect, but it turned out to be the best event Post 3451 has ever had."

Amburgey also said that Post 3451 would not have been able to pull off this event without "major help" from the people in northeast Colorado.

"The folks at the drag strip have been great to work with," Amburgey said. "They donated their time for us. We wouldn't be able to do this without them. Our community and outlying communities gave us a lot of support for this event." ★

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Flu Vaccine is Important Now More than Ever

With flu season upon us and COVID-19 still prevalent, doctors emphasize the urgency of getting a flu shot.

BY JANICE PHELAN



Given the current COVID-19 pandemic, medical experts say getting vaccinated against the influenza is crucial.

“It will be vitally important this season to get your yearly influenza vaccine and try to protect yourself as much as possible from that, as we will continue to have a significant amount of COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations and deaths,” said Dr. Dana Hawkinson, medical director of infection prevention and control at the University of Kansas Health System. “Getting both of those infections have the possibility to complicate your course and lead to worse outcomes, including death.”

Dr. Jane Kim, chief consultant for preventive medicine at the VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, added that flu vaccines protect veterans, VA healthcare workers and the entire community.

“This will help prevent infections with flu when COVID-19 is already spreading, and when hospitals and clinics are potentially full because of the COVID-19 pandemic,” Kim said. “Some studies suggest that patients with both COVID-19 and influenza may be sicker than patients with COVID-19 alone, and that higher

flu vaccination rates are associated with fewer deaths during the pandemic.”

Since 2010, annual influenza-related deaths have ranged from around 12,000 to 61,000, with hospitalizations between 140,000 and 810,000 each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

“Respiratory failure and death are the major complications of influenza,” Hawkinson said. “Influenza itself can cause these things, but it also may predispose one to secondary or super-imposed bacterial pneumonia.”

Fortunately, you can protect yourself and others from influenza through the seasonal vaccine. CDC studies show vaccines reduce the risk of illness by 40 to 60 percent while also limiting the severity of illness if you do get sick.

The VA and the CDC recommend yearly influenza vaccinations for anyone 6 months and older, Kim added.

“Flu vaccine is safe and has been used for decades,” she added. “It offers the best protection against flu for you, your family and your fellow veterans.”

Kim said now that fall has arrived, it’s time to be vaccinated. Hawkinson agrees.

“I typically tell my patients to try to get the influenza vaccine in late October/early November as this will provide pos-

sible better immunity if the influenza season seems to go longer than normal,” Hawkinson said.

Although vaccination is important for all, some people are more at risk.

“Those populations most at risk of influenza complications include the very young, younger than 5 years old and especially those younger than 2 years old, as well as the elderly, especially those over 65 years old,” Hawkinson said. “Pregnant women, patients with diabetes mellitus, heart disease, chronic lung diseases such as asthma and COPD and those with cancer, HIV and chronic kidney and liver disease are at increased risk also.”

Veterans enrolled in VA healthcare should receive information from their local VA medical facility about vaccine availability.

“Many VA health care locations are planning new ways to safely offer flu vaccines, including drive-through flu vaccine clinics and other flu vaccine clinics, all of which will use strict infection control precautions,” Kim said. ★

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

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Recognizing Department Commanders

Member recruitment is the lifeblood of the organization. And those who lead the membership drives in the Departments should be acknowledged.

Congratulations not only to Department commanders but to all those at the Post level who recruit. We all know it requires a genuine team effort to make a membership drive work.



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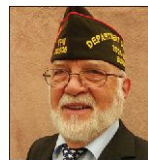
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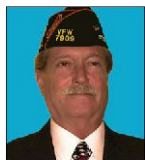
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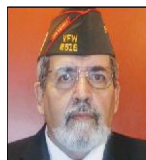
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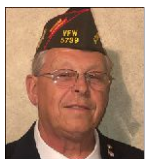
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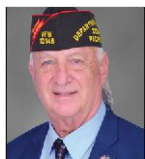
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Finally... a better mobility solution than Scooters or Power Chairs.

The **Zoomer's** versatile design and 1-touch joystick operation brings mobility and independence to those who need it most.

If you have mobility issues, or know someone who does, then you've experienced the difficulties faced by millions of Americans. Once simple tasks like getting from the bedroom to the kitchen can become a time-consuming and potentially dangerous ordeal. You may have tried to solve the problem with a power chair or a scooter but neither is ideal. Power chairs are bulky and look like a medical device. Scooters are either unstable or hard to maneuver. Now, there's a better alternative... the Zoomer.

After just one trip around your home in the Zoomer, you'll marvel at how easy it is to navigate. It is designed to maneuver in tight spaces like doorways, between furniture, and around corners. It can go over thresholds and works great on any kind of floor or carpet. It's not bulky or cumbersome, so it can roll right up to a table or desk- there's no need to transfer to a chair. Its sturdy yet lightweight aluminum frame makes it durable and comfortable. It's dual motors power it at up to 3.7 miles per hour and its automatic electromagnetic brakes stop on a dime. The rechargeable battery powers it for up to 8 miles



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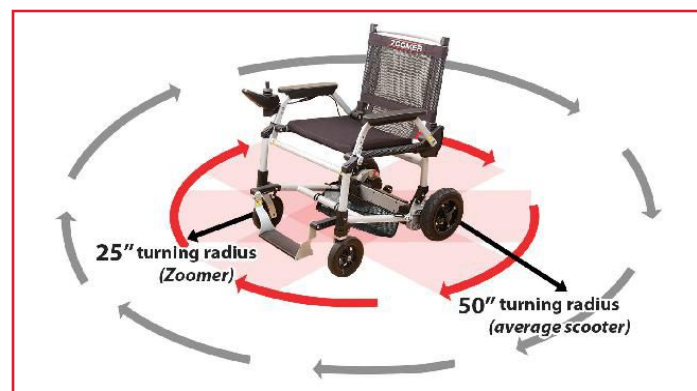
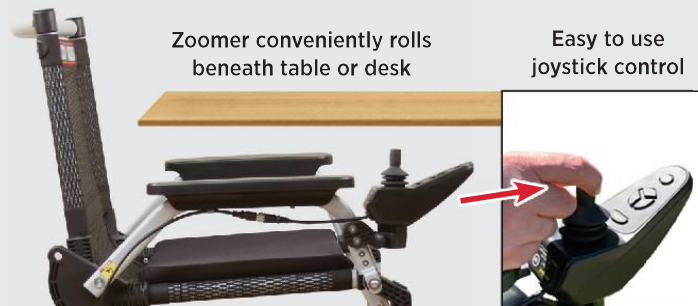
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Martin Culp/1

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Douglas Perkins/1622

Gerry Blake/2122

William Stubblefield/3699

Richard Pauly/4748

Joe Harris/5394

Wayne Yost/9934

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Greek Inventor's Eardrops Could Make Hearing Aids Obsolete By 2023

Startling discovery reported to boost hearing with eardrops, not expensive & embarrassing hearing devices

By Jeffery Noldice
Health Writer

MYKONOS: According to the **National Institute on Deafness**, a staggering 89% of Americans will eventually have to deal with hearing loss. But now, a well-respected Greek inventor claims he's perfected an eardrop that helps you hear better — without needing a hearing aid.

The eardrop is getting a lot of attention. After all, if a low-cost eardrop could reboot hearing, some predict the billion-dollar hearing aid industry could be out of business by 2023.

Hear What You've Been Missing

It's reported that the drops are powerful. Some say they can now hear things they couldn't hear before. Others tell us they no longer struggle to hear the T.V. or ask people to repeat themselves anymore.

Untreated Hearing Loss Often Leads to Depression

Researchers at the University of British Columbia report every 10-decibel drop in hearing sensitivity, the odds of social isolation increase by 52%. Left untreated, the loss of hearing results in feelings of depression and diminished quality of life.

We tracked the inventor of the drops down to a small island just off the coast of Mykonos. He was very protective about his privacy. But the man, (who only goes by the name J.D.) was very excited to openly talk about his eardrop formula.

J.D. cleverly calls his drops **Audiolo-G**. Most users agree it really is remarkable.

"The drops let you hear sounds you may not have heard in a while, like the purring of a cat or the quiet hum of a small fan. But the biggest news is, Audiolo-G works after the very first dose... no matter how bad your hearing is."

But the inventor won't reveal how it works. According to J.D., "Everybody is trying to get their hands on my formula. It wasn't easy to come by and I definitely won't let Big Pharma steal it from me. That's for sure."

The Earthquake That Clobbered His Hearing

For J.D., it all started in 1978 when his whole town was devastated by a massive earthquake. It was the same year he noticed his hearing seemed stuffy and clogged. He kept asking people to repeat themselves. And pretended to be in conversations he didn't hear. It was embarrassing.

Frustrated Friends & Family

Ordinary conversation was impossible. "I'd

make my friends repeat every other word. It got so bad, some avoided me altogether. They would joke. "We can tell J.D. anything. He won't say anything. He can't hear a word you say."

From Desperation to Discovery

J.D. tried every supplement and hearing device he could find. Nothing worked. "Most of the time, my hearing was cloudy. But sometimes I had no idea what was going on." So the inventor began to experiment in his kitchen "science lab."

Old Family Remedy to The Rescue

J.D.'s great-grandmother proudly talked about the secret "miracle drops" too. After all, they were handed down for generations. She was delighted about all the people it helped over the years.

Through many conversations, J.D. learned about the ingredients used in the special ear drops. He discovered which herbs to use and not to use. How they were picked at distinct times of the year... and grown only in special soil.

"It Worked. It Really Worked."

And then one day, "I finally discovered just the right combination." J.D. became his own guinea pig.

He put the drop in his left ear and felt a pleasant WHOOSH. It felt great. Like a great blockage was removed. "I cried tears of joy. I got my clear hearing back!"

In fact, J.D. claims to have restored almost all the elders in his village of weak hearing. And now, he wants to share his joy with everyone. That's why you're reading this article right now.



Now I Watch TV Without Subtitles

"I was totally Depressed. I could only watch TV with the subtitles on. Now it's not a problem," says Sofia K. age 71.



Everybody Stopped Yelling

"I used to think people were speaking low, until I realized I had a problem. But now people don't have to yell for me to hear them and it only took a few drops." Darius K. age 53.

Clinical-Strength Dose

These clinical-strength eardrops can be used safely by anyone with muted or stuffy hearing. You won't need to struggle with insurance companies to try it. And best of all, you won't be embarrassed by an ugly tube hanging out of your ear canal.



Could this inventor's "Miracle Eardrops" be the end of the multi-billion-dollar hearing aid industry? Reported to work no matter how bad your hearing is.

The Great Big Hearing Aid Rip-Off

The dirty little secret about hearing aids is no matter how small they are, they still feel like an ant crawling in your ear. And contrary to the sales pitch... they're embarrassing, because with those wires sticking out of your ears, everybody knows you're hard of hearing.

Plus, they're expensive...average cost is around \$5,000 or more. And the cheaper models just give you an earful of buzzing and whistling noises.

Never Sold in Stores

It's not easy but J.D. purposely keeps his secret recipe from Big Pharma. "They'd like nothing more than to see me go away." So to keep his formula secret, J.D. made arrangements with a small company that agrees to keep the formula secret and the price low. Audiolo-G is never sold in retail stores that rely on middlemen to jack up the price.

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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 **VW1020CAN** 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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Now is the Time to Review 2021 Medicare Options

Medicare open enrollment runs from Oct. 15 until Dec. 20. Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, having knowledge about health insurance options is more important than ever. Changes taking effect to Medicare options this year may impact your current plan's coverage and benefits, so it's a good idea to review all your options.

Here's a refresher on Medicare coverage, according to *Medicare.gov* to help make informed decisions about healthcare.

Advantage plan, which is often referred to as Medicare Part C.

Most Advantage plans give Medicare beneficiaries the option to receive benefits through a private health plan.

The enhanced coverage of Medicare



Advantage continues to be a popular option. According to The Kaiser Family Foundation, enrollment in Advantage plans has doubled over the last decade.

With a Medicare Advantage plan, beneficiaries receive their Part A and Part B coverage plus prescription drug coverage. Many Medicare Advantage plans also provide extra coverage, such as vision, dental, hearing, and health and wellness programs.

MEDICARE PART D HELPS WITH PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Medicare Part D is a prescription drug benefit that helps make prescription drug and prescription drug insurance premium costs more affordable for Medicare recipients. To receive Part D coverage, you must choose and enroll in a plan offered through insurance or other private companies.

When considering Medicare options, the question of prescription drug coverage is key, as the cost of many medications continues to climb.

According to a preliminary report published in *Health Affairs Journal* in March, prescription drug spending will continue increasing by 2.3 percent per year, on average, between 2021–2023, due to rising drug costs and wider usage.

MEDICARE ADVANTAGE PROVIDES EXTRA COVERAGE

Medicare Advantage is enhanced Medicare coverage, often giving you more benefits. Participants must be enrolled in the standard Medicare Parts A and B plans to enroll in a Medicare

MEDICARE SUPPLEMENTAL COVERS THE GAPS

Medicare Supplement Insurance (Medigap) coverage supplements Medicare plans, helping cover gaps in standard coverage. Medigap helps pay for health care costs, such as co-payments, co-insurance and deductibles.

According to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Medigap plans are state-specific, allowing you to choose your own doctors, specialists and hospitals. Medigap also is guaranteed to be renewable each year.

For more information about VFW member benefits such as Medicare coverage, call the VFW Member Benefits Department at 1-833-VFW VETS (1-833-839-8387).



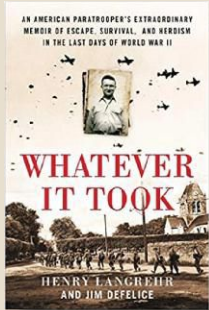
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STAFF PICK

**Whatever It Took**

By Henry Langrehr and Jim DeFelice

This book is a first-person account of an American paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne during World War II. Langrehr, now 95 years old, shares what he and members of the unit experienced. The story of this unit in particular has been dramatized in the major motion picture “The Longest Day,” but Langrehr’s account has never been shared until now. Brought to life with the help of DeFelice (co-author of *American Sniper* and *Every Man a Hero*), the book includes a near-death experience on D-Day, a dramatic escape from a work camp in Czechoslovakia and memories from many of the most significant battles of WWII. *William Morrow, an Imprint of HarperCollins*

BOOK CORNER SUBMISSIONS

VFW magazine’s “Book Corner” features select books written by VFW members. If you have written a book or an e-book bearing an ISBN or ASIN, contact the magazine for guidelines at magazine@vfw.org or by mail at: VFW magazine, Book Corner, 406 W. 34th Street, Suite 523, Kansas City, MO, 64111. The subject of the book must relate to the military or veterans. VFW does not sell books featured in “Book Corner.” Contact the book’s publisher for more information.

Striking Eight Bells

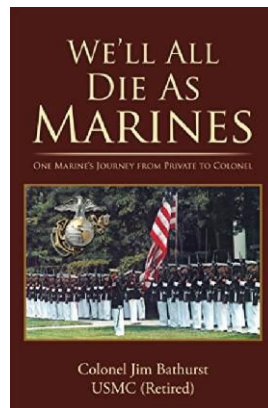
By George Trowbridge, at-large member, VFW Department of Florida.

This memoir recounts the author’s journey from the Midwest to a Navy warship in the Gulf of Tonkin during the closing months of the Vietnam War. Trowbridge details the living conditions onboard a Navy destroyer during this era; the grind for his ship’s crew in supporting ground forces with naval gunfire; the strike attacks his ship made on enemy coastal defenses; and coming home at the end of the war. *Richter Publishing, LLC.*

Captured, Not Conquered

By Greg Eanes, life member, VFW Post 7819, Crewe, Va.

This book serves as a survey history of the American POW experience during World War I. It encompasses U.S. forces as well as Americans in foreign service. It also contains tables, charts and photographs from official records, and it documents more than 100 escapes from captivity at the hands of Imperial Germany. The book outlines German interrogation tactics, techniques and procedures as well as Allied activities, POW life and treatment. *E&H Publishing Co.*

**We'll All Die as Marines**

By Jim Bathurst, life member, VFW Post 1307, Elgin, Ill.

This memoir by Bathurst narrates how the Marine Corps captured his body, mind and spirit. As a 17-year-old dropout from Dundalk, Md., the author fell in love with the Marine Corps right away. In this memoir, he reveals why the Corps was not a job, career or a profession; it was, and still is, a way of life. *iUniverse*

The Nam Within

By Leonard Reese, life member, VFW Post 4002, Longview, Texas.

This memoir by Reese speaks to veterans from all wars who deal with PTSD. It walks the reader through his bouts with depression, the thought of “going crazy” and the crucial part family and friends play in helping the veteran survive. He speaks of his battle scars, those that keep rising to the surface long after physical combat ceases, and how he dealt with them. *Cindystrong, LLC.*

Deep Secrets

By Gerry A. Young, VFW Post 9914, Highland, Mich.

This novel, set in the 1970s, is a Cold War espionage story based on a highly-classified project known as “Outlaw Shark.” Young’s narrator, an ambitious submarine officer, finds his career plans derailed when he’s picked for a counter-espionage assignment. The character, Rick Halsted, finds himself investigating his co-workers and even his love interest, all potential suspects of a Soviet Union plot to destroy the submarine. *Self-Published*

Days of Perfect Hell

By Peter L. Belmonte, at-large member, VFW Department of Illinois.

Belmonte focuses on the Army’s 26th Infantry Regiment, which suffered 50 percent casualties in the bloody Meuse-Argonne Offensive during World War I. The story captures the day-to-day details as the 26th struggled through the hills and woods brimming with German machine guns and artillery. Enduring “days of perfect hell,” the soldiers of the 26th played a vital role in the final victory of the American Expeditionary Forces. The book also examines small-unit action and illustrates the fighting spirit of the American WWI soldier. *Schiffer Publishing, Ltd.*


"Schofield really does have stories to tell, good stories."

Patrick Pauling, *The Press of Atlantic City*

The BOARD WALKERS

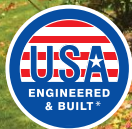
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'Let These Flags Also Serve As A Reminder'

A VFW Post in Connecticut displayed 120 U.S. flags in tribute to its town's fight against a global pandemic.

BY ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ JR.

On an early May morning with uncommon temperatures grazing the low 30s, VFW Post 10201 members in Brookfield, Conn., weathered stifling winds as they journeyed across the town's epicenter.

Joining other local volunteers on May 9 at 4 a.m., Post 10201 members set out to adorn every utility pole across a 5-mile stretch of the town's historic district before daybreak.

Despite the inclement weather, as daylight washed over Brookfield a few hours later, Post members managed to clothe the junction between Route 133 and Route 25 in the proverbial red, white and blue of 120 U.S. flags.

For Post 10201 Commander Joseph Beal, the task was about more than keeping a 19-year annual tradition from snapping as a result of bad weather.

"Our flag has always served as a symbol of unity, courage and fortitude, the very qualities which these past few months have characterized the people in our community," Beal said. "Our effort this year was to pay tribute to the residents, first responders and healthcare workers of Brookfield for all that they've done to help battle COVID-19."

This year also marked the first time Post 10201 led the town's annual tradition after it was handed down by Greg Waldmiller, a retired Brookfield Police Department patrolman who started it back in 2001.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Waldmiller took it upon himself



PHOTO BY JOSEPH BEAL

From left, Frank O'Farrell, Joe Wardenburg, Rick Olivier and Andy Ipovich prepare to hang one of 120 U.S. flags along a 5-mile stretch in Brookfield, Conn., on May 9, 2020. The group was one of five that participated in VFW Post 10201's mission to hang all 120 flags before daybreak that day, a process that began at 4 a.m. under inclement weather conditions.

to hang U.S. flags on utility poles along all the roads radiating from the flagpole at The Brookfield Center Historic District building, which sits about 75 miles north-east of New York City.

"Carrying the tradition meant a tremendous amount to us," said Beal, who became Post commander three years ago and soon after helped a struggling membership reach peak numbers. "The whole town supports it, and doing it gives our community a sense of pride, of togetherness."

Post members led by Beal divided into five separate teams of three, which included drivers, flag handlers and ladder climbers to accomplish the task before daybreak.

With additional support from a few local residents and members of Sokol Lodge 30, a fraternal benefit society, Post members managed to line Route 25 with flags in both directions, northwest toward the downtown area and southeast toward a residential district. The crew also hung flags along Route 133, past the town's

elementary school and toward the high school along parts of Long Meadow Hill and Pocono Roads.

In previous years, the tradition of hanging the U.S. flags has been to prepare for Brookfield's Memorial Day parade and festival, but town leaders canceled the parade this year due to the ongoing fight in stopping the spread of the novel coronavirus.

As a result, the desire in Post 10201 members to display U.S. flags along the traffic arteries of Brookfield in May only strengthened. For them, the flags exemplified more than just national pride. They served as a symbol of national unity needed to overcome adversity during these perilous times.

"Part of our mission at VFW is to foster patriotic activities within the community," Beal said. "But let these flags also serve as a reminder to all who pass under them that as in the past, together we will meet and overcome adversity."



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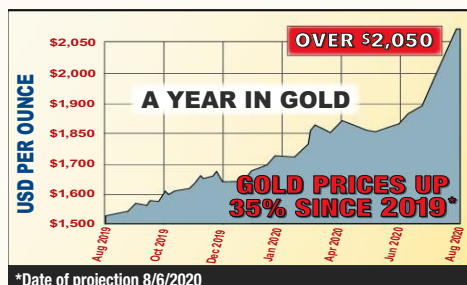
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