

Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - PO Box 18631 - Milwaukee, WI 53218

In Service to America

Chapter Elections will be held at the April Meeting. Consider a holding an office.

Meeting Notice

15 January, '14

Elks Lodge

5555 W. Good Hope Rd.

Board Meeting 6 p.m.

Chapter Meeting 7 - 8 p.m.

Meetings are held on the third Wednesday each month. You are also invited to join members for conversation and discussion after the meeting.

Chapter web page :

National web page: www.vva.org

Future Meetings

19 February, 19 March, 16 April, 21 May,
18 June, 16 July, 20 August, 17 September,
15 October, 19 November, 17 December

Chapter 324 Officers

President -

Vice President - Pat Moore 354-2533

Secretary - Dennis Symanski 453-3600

Treasurer - Kent Draper 963-0375

Director - Pat Ciofani 702-7734

Director - Ron Coppersmith 262-255-2832

Director - John Morgan 871-9274

Director - Joe Murray 262-389-7325

Director - Oliver Williams 538-4416

Thanks for your service (1)

“Chaptered Out”: Kicking disabled veterans out while they are down

<http://www.projectcensored.org/chaptered-kicking-disabled-veterans/>

The US military has been engaged in a policy of forcing wounded and disabled veterans out of service to avoid paying benefits and to make room for new able-bodied recruits. Identifying injured combat soldiers as delinquent and negligent has led to a practice called “chaptering out” which results in those soldiers being forced to leave the military without an “honorable discharge.” Because of this, thousands of soldiers have been chaptered out, losing federally sponsored benefits including health care, unemployment and educational programs.

Dave Phillips, a reporter for the Colorado Springs Gazette, exposed this practice through his story of Purple Heart recipient Sergeant Jerrald Jensen. Jensen, a decorated two-tour Afghanistan war veteran and recovering active-duty Sergeant, was forced from the Army without benefits for what Army officials called “a pattern of misconduct.” Jensen failed to pass a urine test after being prescribed drugs for his injuries. He was also written up for being late to an appointment. Jensen made numerous attempts to be

retested but was chaptered out by his superiors. “They told me that I didn’t deserve to wear the uniform now, nor did I ever deserve to wear it,” Jensen told Aljazeera America.

Phillips has followed several stories like this. “Many have been diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and some also have traumatic brain injuries (TBI), both of which can influence behavior and judgment,” said Phillips. He estimates that 76,000 soldiers have been chaptered out since 2006. That number has grown each year since war in Iraq began.

An insider from the U.S Army Medical Command confirmed that this does happen. According to Phillips, “These commanders are stuck in this position where if they try to get them out medically, they are still stuck with them, maybe for a long time. If they decide to kick them out for misconduct instead, they could be out in weeks.” Some soldiers like Jensen have had success appealing their discharges but many others are left without any support from the nation they served.

Thanks for your service (2)

Rep. Paul Ryan defends cuts to military retirement in budget bill

By Jacqueline Klimas The Washington Times Monday, December 23, 2013

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/dec/23/rep-paul-ryan-defends-cuts-military-retirement/>

Rep. Paul Ryan, Wisconsin Republican, defended controversial cuts to military retirement pay in the budget deal, saying that the need for military compensation reform is “undeniable.”

“For me, there’s simply no choice between responsible reforms of military compensation and making what our military leadership has called ‘disproportionate cuts to military readiness and modernization,’ ” Mr. Ryan wrote on a USA Today oped. “Every time we kick the can down the road, we put our troops’ combat readiness at risk. This agreement put forward one reform option, and I invite others to do the same.”

The two-year budget deal that passed Congress last week increases spending now in exchange for savings later and reduces the deficit by \$23 billion over 10 years. The deal, authored by Mr. Ryan and Sen. Patty Murray, Washington Democrat, also cuts the cost-of-living adjustment to one percent below the consumer price index for military retirees younger than 62 and goes into effect in 2015.

While Sen. John McCain, Arizona Republican, said that all military service leaders support the bill because of the \$63 billion in sequestration relief it provides, veterans groups demanded last week that President Obama veto the budget bill. A White House petition to veto the budget bill has more than 18,000 signatures as of Monday morning.

“Military retirees have risked their lives, sacrificed normal family life, and given their prime earning years to defend this nation,”

the We the People petition says. “One of the primary motivators for military members to spend an entire career in the military is the promise of a retirement benefit that cannot be made worthless by inflation. The Ryan/Murray proposal breaks that promise.”

Last week, the White House gave no indication that the president would not sign the bill into law. Military groups have claimed that these cuts balance the budget on the backs of those who have risked their lives for the country, but Mr. Ryan wrote that these much-needed reforms benefit service members by pumping money back into the military to increase readiness and also put a sustainable retirement system in place that veterans can rely on.

“To be clear, the money we save from this reform will go right back to the military,” Mr. Ryan wrote in the USA Today oped. “Veterans aren’t Washington’s piggy bank. They deserve fair compensation. And we owe them a benefit structure they can count on.”

The budget deal also cuts retirement benefits for wounded vets, a mistake in the law that both Mrs. Murray and Mr. Ryan have vowed to amend before the cuts go into effect in 2015.



The LITTLE DITCH BOY and the BUDGET COMPROMISE

PTSD Authors in Milwaukee

Jennifer Percy and Dr. John Liebert, Friday, January 24, 7 pm, at Boswell.

What were you doing 65 minutes ago when a U.S. military veteran committed suicide? What will you be doing 65 minutes from now when another veteran takes his or her own life?

Forensic neuropsychiatrist John Liebert is joined by author Jennifer Percy in sharing complementary journeys into PTSD: one through scientific research and practice; the other through the complexities of the human heart. This profound combination of journalism, compassion, new scientific discoveries, and bold ideas, offers a vital approach to addressing the rapidly growing epidemic affecting ever greater numbers of returning veterans, their loved ones, and our communities.

Percy's unforgettable, affecting work of nonfiction, *Demon Camp: A Soldier's Exorcism*, reveals to us the human side of PTSD, with intelligence and compassion. Caleb Daniels is a Special Ops soldier who loses his best friend and seven members of his unit when a Chinook helicopter that he should have been on, crashes in Afghanistan, killing all sixteen men on board.

Upon returning home, he struggles with dark visions--memories colliding with the ghosts of his comrades--while trying to adjust to daily life among family and friends. Haunted by what he refers to as the "Black Thing," Caleb sets out to find healing,

eventually landing in a tiny Georgia town where deliverance from demons is part of daily life.

Percy's clear, direct prose, supplemented by the heartbreaking stories of other soldiers, brings the terror of Caleb's reality clearly into ours. Dexter Filkins, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Forever War* praises *Demon Camp*, calling it "a tale so extraordinary that at times it seems conjured from a dream...a great narrative about redemption, loss and hope."

In *Wounded Minds*, Dr. Liebert (with his co-author, William J. Birnes) unravels the mysteries of the illness, explains why it is on the rise, and offers pragmatic solutions to stemming this epidemic both within the military and in society. Through dissecting several high-profile cases of violence by military personnel, the authors paint a clear picture of the very real threat PTSD poses to individuals and society.

They also explain how to diagnose and understand the brain abnormalities associated with PTSD, the diagnostic problems confronting military medicine today, and both immediate and ongoing medical solutions. Liebert, a practicing psychiatrist, served as a flight surgeon in the Vietnam War, as chief resident in psychiatry at the Seattle VA Hospital, and was retained by the US Army in 2008 to assess returning soldiers in "Fitness for Duty."

Vet Hiring Fair in Milwaukee

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Assn 13 Oct 2013

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce's (USCC) Hiring Our Heroes program employment workshop is available in one hour before the fair. These workshops are designed to help veterans and military spouses and include resume writing, interview skills, and one-on-one mentoring.

To participate, sign up for the workshop in addition to registering for the hiring fairs which are presently scheduled for the next 8 weeks. For more information about the USCC Hiring Our Heroes Program, Military Spouse Program, Transition Assistance, GE Employment Workshops, Resume Engine, etc. visit the USCC website at <http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/events>

Note: A key tactic that most job-seekers overlook when attending a job or career fair is to Stop

at every table! One mistake we all make on occasion is to generalize. For example, people assume that health-care companies are only hiring health-care workers, or that insurance companies only need agents. So when they encounter these tables or displays, they typically say nothing and keep moving. Also, sell yourself! Be an extrovert and your own agent! Finally, your mission is fact-finding and networking. By spending time at each table, one learns to overcome stereotypes that lead to erroneous assumptions [Source: ++]

Date: Jan 16, 2014 10a.m – 1p.m.

Event: Milwaukee, WI

Event URL: <http://uscham.com/1aVr35E>

Address: Goodwill James O. Wright Center for Work and Training, 6055 North 91st Street, Milwaukee, WI 53225

Thanks for your service (3)

Discharge Status Upgraded in Lawsuit Settlement

The Associated Press | John Christoffersen | 4 Nov 2013

A Vietnam veteran who received the Bronze Star and later was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder will have his discharge status upgraded under a settlement with the U.S. Army, his representatives announced 4 NOV. John Shepherd Jr., a 66-year-old New Haven resident, said the Army agreed to resolve his lawsuit by upgrading his original other-than-honorable discharge to an honorable discharge.

The change will allow Shepherd to receive disability benefits he had been denied, according to Yale Law School students who represented him. Shepherd has said he battled alcoholism and struggled to stay employed for 40 years, but was not diagnosed with PTSD until 2004. "I didn't know if this day would ever come," Shepherd said in a statement. "Good thing I'm a fighter, because it took years of fighting to receive recognition of my sacrifices and service in Vietnam. But there are thousands of guys like me who also deserve better from the DOD. Their

fight is still going."

The Army awarded Shepherd a Bronze Star after his unit came under intense fire and he entered an enemy bunker and threw a grenade that killed several enemy soldiers, according to the lawsuit. He developed PTSD symptoms after blowing up the enemy bunker and later witnessing the gruesome deaths of several comrades, according to his lawsuit.

Shepherd began to act strangely and was found wandering around a base in a confused state. He eventually reached a breaking point and refused to go back into the field, the lawsuit says. He was charged with failure to obey an order and was discharged. Shepherd unsuccessfully applied four times to the Army to upgrade his discharge status. He filed a proposed class action lawsuit last year, accusing the Army of failing to properly consider evidence of PTSD when deciding discharge upgrade applications from Vietnam veterans.

Thanks for your service (4)

Forgotten Soldiers: The Lobotomy Files

By MICHAEL M. PHILLIPS Wall Street Journal

Roman Tritz's memories of the past six decades are blurred by age and delusion. But one thing he remembers clearly is the fight he put up the day the orderlies came for him.

"They got the notion they were going to come to give me a lobotomy," says Mr. Tritz, a World War II bomber pilot. "To hell with them."

The orderlies at the veterans hospital pinned Mr. Tritz to the floor, he recalls. He fought so hard that eventually they gave up. But the orderlies came for him again on Wednesday, July 1, 1953, a few weeks before his 30th birthday.

This time, the doctors got their way.

The U.S. government lobotomized roughly 2,000 mentally ill veterans—and likely hundreds more—during and after World War II, according to a cache of forgotten memos, letters and government reports unearthed by The Wall Street Journal. Besieged by psychologically damaged troops returning from the battlefields of North Africa, Europe and the Pacific, the Veterans Administration performed the brain-altering operation on former servicemen it diagnosed as depressives, psychotics and schizophrenics, and

occasionally on people identified as homosexuals.

The VA doctors considered themselves conservative in using lobotomy. Nevertheless, desperate for effective psychiatric treatments, they carried out the surgery at VA hospitals spanning the country.

The VA's practice, described in depth here for the first time, sometimes brought veterans relief from their inner demons. Often, however, the surgery left them little more than overgrown children, unable to care for themselves. Many suffered seizures, amnesia and loss of motor skills. Some died from the operation.

Mr. Tritz, 90 years old, is one of the few still alive to describe the experience. "It isn't so good up here," he says, rubbing the two shallow divots on the sides of his forehead, bracketing wisps of white hair.

The VA's use of lobotomy, in which doctors severed connections between parts of the brain then thought to control emotions, was known in medical circles in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and is occasionally cited in medical texts. But the VA's practice, never widely publicized, long ago slipped

Continued next page

Lobotomy continued

from public view. Even the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs says it possesses no records detailing the creation and breadth of its lobotomy program.

When told about the program recently, the VA issued a written response: “In the late 1940s and into the 1950s, VA and other physicians throughout the United States and the world debated the utility of lobotomies. The procedure became available to severely ill patients who had not improved with other treatments. The procedure disappeared within VA, and across the United States, as safer and more effective treatments were developed.”

Musty files in the National Archives show VA doctors resorting to brain surgery as they struggled with a vexing question that absorbs America to this day: How best to treat the psychological crises that afflict soldiers returning from combat.

Between April 1, 1947, and Sept. 30, 1950, VA doctors lobotomized 1,464 veterans at 50 hospitals authorized to perform the surgery, according to agency documents rediscovered by the Journal. Scores of records from 22 of those hospitals list another 466 lobotomies performed outside that time period, bringing the total documented operations to 1,930. Gaps in the records suggest that hundreds of additional operations likely took place at other VA facilities. The vast majority of the patients were men, although some female veterans underwent VA lobotomies, as well.

Lobotomies faded from use after the first major antipsychotic drug, Thorazine, hit the market in the mid-1950s, revolutionizing mental-health care.

The forgotten lobotomy files, military records and interviews with veterans’ relatives reveal the details of lives gone terribly wrong. There was Joe Brzoza, who was lobotomized four years after surviving artillery barrages on the beaches at Anzio, Italy, and spent his remaining days chain-smoking in VA psychiatric wards. Eugene Kainulainen, whose breakdown during the North African campaign the military attributed partly to a childhood tendency toward “temper tantrums and [being] fussy about food.” Melbert Peters, a bomber crewman given two lobotomies—one most likely performed with a pick-like instrument inserted through his eye sockets.

And Mr. Tritz, the son of a Wisconsin dairy farmer who flew a B-17 Flying Fortress on 34 combat missions over Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe.

“They just wanted to ruin my head, it seemed to me,” says Mr. Tritz. “Somebody wanted to.”

The VA documents subvert an article of faith of postwar American mythology: That returning soldiers put down their guns, shed their uniforms and stoically forged ahead into the optimistic 1950s. Mr. Tritz and the mentally ill veterans who shared his fate lived a struggle all but unknown except to the families who still bear lobotomy’s scars.

Mr. Tritz is sometimes an unreliable narrator of his life story. He describes himself as “mentally injured, not mentally ill.” For decades he has meandered into delusions and paranoid views about government conspiracies.

He speaks lucidly, however, about his wartime service and his lobotomy. Official records and interviews with family members, historians and a fellow airman corroborate much of his story.

It isn’t possible to draw a straight line between Mr. Tritz’s military service and his mental illness. The record, nonetheless, reveals a man who went to war in good health, experienced the unrelenting stress of aerial combat—Messerschmitts and antiaircraft fire—and returned home to the unrelenting din of imaginary voices in his head.

During eight years as a patient in the VA hospital in Tomah, Wis., Mr. Tritz underwent 28 rounds of electroshock therapy, a common treatment that sometimes caused convulsions so jarring they broke patients’ bones. Medical records show that Mr. Tritz received another routine VA treatment: insulin-induced temporary comas, which were thought to relieve symptoms.

To stimulate patients’ nerves, hospital staff also commonly sprayed veterans with powerful jets of alternating hot and cold water, the archives show. Mr. Tritz received 66 treatments of high-pressure water sprays called the Scotch Douche and Needle Shower, his medical records say.

When all else failed, there was lobotomy.

“You couldn’t help but have the feeling that the medical community was impotent at that point,” says Elliot Valenstein, 89, a World War II veteran and biological psychologist who worked at the Topeka, Kan., VA hospital in the early 1950s. He recalls wards full of soldiers haunted by nightmares and flashbacks. The doctors, he says, “were prone to try anything.”

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— Elliot Valenstein, VA biological psychologist in the early 1950s

Sign Up Now With Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 324

Anyone can join! Membership Options:

Vietnam Veterans (A copy of your DD214 must be included):

- Individual Member - 1 year \$20 • Individual Member 3 year \$50 • Life Member \$250
- Life Member Installment Plan (\$50 Deposit; \$25 per month for 8 Months)

Anyone Else:

- Associate Member - 1 year \$20 • Associate Member 3 year \$50 • Associate Life Member \$250
- Associate Life Member Installment Plan (\$50 Deposit; \$25 per month for 8 Months)

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Name _____ Membership # _____

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I would like to help Chapter 324 by donating \$ _____

Make checks payable to VVA324 and mail with this application to:

VVA Chapter 324 - Membership, PO Box 18631, Milwaukee, WI 53218



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