

Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - PO Box 18631 - Milwaukee, WI 53218

In Service to America



Meeting Notice

No meeting

5555 W. Good Hope Rd.
Board Meeting 6:30 p.m.
Chapter Meeting 7 - 8 p.m.

Future Meetings TBA

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National web page: www.vva.org

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John is listed in the phone book - good luck finding one

NO MEETINGS TILL FURTHER NOTICE

VA outperforms community hospitals on outcomes for a coronary procedure

Sep. 2, 2020 VA Press Release

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today study results, published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, found Veterans undergoing an elective percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) for stable angina at community hospitals had an increased chance of dying following the intervention than Veterans who underwent the procedure at VA hospitals who had better outcomes.

At community hospitals Veterans had a 143% increased chance of mortality within the first month following PCI and a 33% increased chance of death within the first year. PCI is a non-surgical procedure that uses a flexible tube to place a metal scaffold (stent) into a narrowed coronary artery to allow blood to pass through more easily.

“Our dedicated health care professionals often lead the nation in innovative procedures and quality of patient care — the results of this study reflect the dedication and level of attention provided by VA medical centers,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie.

“Veteran trust in VA is at an all-time high with VA seeing more patients than before and studies showing VA compares favorably to the private sector on wait times and quality of care — many times VA exceeding them.”

The analysis included a review of 9,000 enrolled Veterans who were actively receiving care in the VA health care system who subsequently underwent elective PCI at either a VA medical center or a community hospital. The data available on patients treated in community facilities is largely limited to administrative billing records. Therefore, it is possible more complex procedures were performed in that setting.

The researchers concluded further study is needed to determine the most effective means to improve Veterans’ access to medical care while also maintaining quality. The analysis was conducted by the VA Clinical Assessment, Reporting and Tracking (CART) Program in the VHA Office of Quality and Patient Safety.

VA Debt: Vet Billing to Restart in JAN

Nikki Wentling, Stars & Stripes, December 11, 2020

The Department of Veterans Affairs will start billing veterans again for medical debts in January, after pausing collections for nine months because of financial hardships caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Last weekend, the department sent letters to veterans, notifying them of the balances they owe. Bills will start arriving in January. The billing is scheduled to restart at a time when many Americans are set to lose financial assistance, such as unemployment benefits and rent relief, unless Congress can soon come to a deal on more pandemic aid. VA Press Secretary Christina Noel said veterans will be given an option to make smaller monthly payments on their debt. Veterans facing financial hardship should work with the VA to make special arrangements, she said.

Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D-Z) questioned VA officials about the decision to restart billing during a Senate hearing 9 DEC. “We do not have the authority to waive” debt payments, said Richard Stone, executive in charge of the Veterans Health Administration. “We have delayed the collection of those debts until January, and it remains to be seen whether the economy will have been stabilized to the

point where that’s appropriate.” President Donald Trump said 2 APR that the VA would postpone debt collections because of the pandemic. In August, the department said the suspension would end 31 DEC.

Sinema argued Wednesday that debt relief should continue for veterans. Millions of Americans have lost jobs during the pandemic, and food and housing insecurity have increased significantly. The veteran unemployment rate rose in November to 6.3% from 5.9% in October. In March, before the economic effects of the pandemic took hold, veteran unemployment was 3.8%.

Meanwhile, the pandemic continues to rage throughout the United States, with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention predicting between 12,600 and 23,400 news deaths during the last week of December. On Friday, the VA had 17,757 active cases – the most cases it has ever reported at one time. The department also reported 5,542 total deaths, an increase of 100 in the past two days. “Given the status of the pandemic right now, I think it’s reasonable to assume the financial situation in our country will not be better in January than it is now,” Sinema said. “I believe debt relief should be granted.”

WWII MRE ► Field Ration Connoisseurship

By Adam Linehan Task & Purpose, April 4, 2017

Here’s something that may sound odd or disgusting to anyone who’s ever served in the military: Field ration connoisseurship is a real thing. In fact, there’s a whole subculture around collecting meals ready to eat. Like, really — people pay good money for old MREs and then they eat them...because they want to. The man in the video at https://youtu.be/hm8f5Kj_CrY, who goes by the YouTube handle Steve1989, is something of a celebrity in the MRE world. Steve is like Anthony Bourdain, except that, instead of traveling the world sampling exotic cuisines and meeting interesting people, he hangs out in his bedroom and eats dehydrated food. He has fans, lots of them. Many of his videos go viral.

Steve doesn’t smoke stale government-issued cigarettes and stuff his face with decades-old crackers and sardines to shock people. He genuinely enjoys MREs. The older and more obscure, the better. In this episode — which is one of 105 videos he’s posted to YouTube — Steve treats himself to a World War II U.S. Army Field Ration C B Unit, and gives us, the viewer, a little history lesson along the way. “The

C-ration’s original objective was to provide the soldier with a readily carried ration, which he could use in combat, independent of outside sources of supply and central preparation facilities,” Steve explains.

The real fun begins when Steve finally cracks open the ration. “Wow, check that out,” he says as we get our first glimpse at what’s inside the tin can. “What a time capsule. It smells kind of fruity and wholesome.” Then, unable to restrain himself any longer, Steve digs in, beginning with a piece of a 75-year-old biscuit. “Mm, that is so crisp,” he says. Adding, “This oldie is making me shake already.”

Steve discovers what appears to be mold as he prepares his meal, but that doesn’t stop him. He eats the entire ration, and savors every morsel. His final assessment: “Absolutely amazing.” If Steve has somehow managed to make MREs seem appetizing to you, check out his website, MREinfo.com. There you can get all of the information you need to find and purchase MREs, which apparently average \$45-\$60 a case. Worth it? That depends on how much you enjoy being really, really constipated.

Human toll of incendiary weapons documented in new report

RAHIM FAIEZ, [Associated Press](#), •November 9, 2020

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — A new report released Monday documents the use of incendiary weapons and their horrific human cost on civilians over the past decade in conflict zones like Afghanistan, the Gaza Strip and Syria, with Human Rights Watch and Harvard's human rights clinic calling on nations to close loopholes in international law and stigmatize their use.

The report says the weapons, which may include white phosphorus, inflict excruciating burns and can lead to infection, shock and organ failure. Often, medics also do not have adequate resources in war zones to assist victims with serious burns.

White phosphorus burns until it's gone. It can burn right down to the bone, leaving victims in chronic pain and with permanent disabilities and scarring.

The report by Human Rights Watch and Harvard Law School's International Human Rights Clinic notes that burn victims sometimes need to be intubated in order for intensive wounds to be treated and dead skin scraped away. They may also require multiple surgeries and intense physical therapy to regain mobility.

In one incident detailed in the report, an 8-year-old Afghan girl named Razia sustained burns on up to 45% of her body from a white phosphorus attack outside of Kabul in 2009. Razia's family had just finished breakfast when two white phosphorus shells crashed into their mud-brick home in Afghanistan's northeastern Kapisa province. Fire and smoke consumed the house, immediately killing two of Razia's sisters as they slept side by side.

Razia was rushed to a local Afghan army base, which could do little to help. A car drove the family to a nearby French base, which also was unable to

provide the needed medical assistance. A medivac helicopter eventually transported the young girl to a U.S.-run hospital at Bagram Air Base.

She ultimately survived with the help of extensive and painstaking medical care, but the report notes she lives with the emotional scar of losing two of her sisters and with the physical pain of excruciating burns over almost half her body. Although it's been 11 years since the attack, her father says she is embarrassed to be seen in public and is reluctant to leave the house.

U.S. and NATO troops used white phosphorus to illuminate targets in Afghanistan, but military officials said at the time they could not be certain whether it was their own round behind that attack.

That same year, Israeli forces launched artillery shells containing white phosphorus in the northern part of the besieged Gaza Strip during the 2009 war with Hamas. The Israeli shells smashed through the roof of the Abu Halima family home, where 14 members of the family, ranging in age from six months to 45 years old, were seeking refuge from the fighting.

Five died in the attack, burned alive in the fire caused by white phosphorus. Among those killed were three brothers, ages 14, 11 and 10. Other family members were seriously wounded.

As recently as 2013, Syrian government forces attacked a building near a school in northern Aleppo province. When students in Urum al-Kubra hurried outside to see what had happened, an incendiary bomb landed

among a group of them, immediately killing five, with more dying later from their injuries.

The report said the ongoing human suffering caused by incendiary weapons underscores the need for stronger international law. It urged countries to take concrete action at next year's conference on the Convention on Conventional Weapons to condemn and continue to raise awareness about the use and harm of such weapons, as well as to block loopholes in existing protocols.



Cities Where Renting Is Cheaper than Owning

Elizabeth Lotts, MoneyTalksNews, June 17, 2020

Ed note: This article has been edited to exclude markets other than Milwaukee

Americans' homeownership rate is 65.3%, according to the latest U.S. Census data. It comes with responsibility for maintaining the home, paying property taxes, carrying insurance, paying utilities and keeping up with community commitments such as paying association fees. These costs add up quickly, so it's important to weigh the advantages and disadvantages before you buy.

LendingTree, the online loan marketplace, recently compared rents with mortgage payments in the 50 largest U.S. metros and concluded "renting is cheaper than owning in each of the nation's 50 largest metros" if you're still paying off your mortgage. Following are the metros where renting is cheaper by

more than \$700 a month, beginning with cities with a smaller advantage for renters.

13. Milwaukee

➤ Median monthly gross rent: \$885

➤ Median monthly housing costs (for homes with a mortgage): \$1,599 ➤ Renting saves: \$714

Housing sales in metro Milwaukee were down 25.2% in May 2020 versus a year before, with a lack of homes for sale cited as a drag on the market. The average sale price of a home in the metro area rose 8.3% in April versus a year before, to \$266,922, the Milwaukee Business Journal says. Milwaukee's \$714 gap between the costs of renting and buying landed it the No. 13 spot on LendingTree's list.

Why the Army Booted Jerry Garcia 60 Years Ago

'Completely Lacking in Soldierly Qualities'

By Chad Garland, Stars and Stripes, 4 Jan 2021

Recruit Jerome J. Garcia's staunch resistance to the strictures of military life six decades ago got him discharged just months into his enlistment.

Five years later, he founded the Grateful Dead and Jerry Garcia would go on to be the namesake of both a pot brand and an ice cream flavor.

It may seem obvious in retrospect that the founder of one of the biggest psychedelic rock jam bands of the 1960s wouldn't have been cut out to serve "the man," and his commanding officer made that clear in a December 1960 discharge recommendation.

"Garcia has steadfastly maintained a defective attitude toward superiors, authority, and military life in general," wrote Capt. John H. Downey of the 30th Artillery Group (Air Defense) headquarters battery at Fort Winfield Scott at the Presidio of San Francisco.

The legendary musician's official military personnel file came to the attention of fans and music publications after Eric Schwartz, host of the Lone Star Dead program on Dallas radio station KNON, posted images from it to social media this year. Digital scans have been available on the National Archives website since November 2016 and have been considered public record since August 2005, 10 years after Garcia's death, archives spokeswoman Laura Sheehan told Stars and Stripes by email earlier this year.

The files show Garcia didn't make a good first impression on the battery's 1st Sgt. Walter L. Heller, either.

"During the first two weeks of his assignment here, Garcia came to my attention because of his personal uncleanliness and the filthy condition of his personal billeting area in the barracks," Heller wrote in a formal statement.

An Army psychiatric evaluation determined Garcia was emotionally unstable and held an "intense hostility towards [the] regimentation of the Army."

Born in San Francisco in 1942, he was raised in the Bay Area, at least partly by his grandmother, he told Rolling Stone in a 1972 interview, describing how he'd played music from a young age with his brother who would go on to serve four years in the Marines.

Garcia began experimenting with pot when he was 15, the same year he got his first electric guitar, he told the magazine. About two years later, things at home weren't "working out" and he dropped out of high school, looking to the military as the only option to "get away from everything."

"Yeah, 17. I joined the Army, smuggled my guitar in," he said. "I just wanted to be some place completely different."

But the Army didn't end up taking him all that

Continued next page

far from where he'd grown up, and he didn't serve anything near to the three years he signed up for in April 1960.

"I lasted nine months," he told *Rolling Stone*. "They transferred me to the Presidio in San Francisco ... a beautiful, lovely spot ... overlooking the water and the Golden Gate Bridge and all that and these old barracks and almost nothing to do."

After arriving in August, he got into the

function connected with the military."

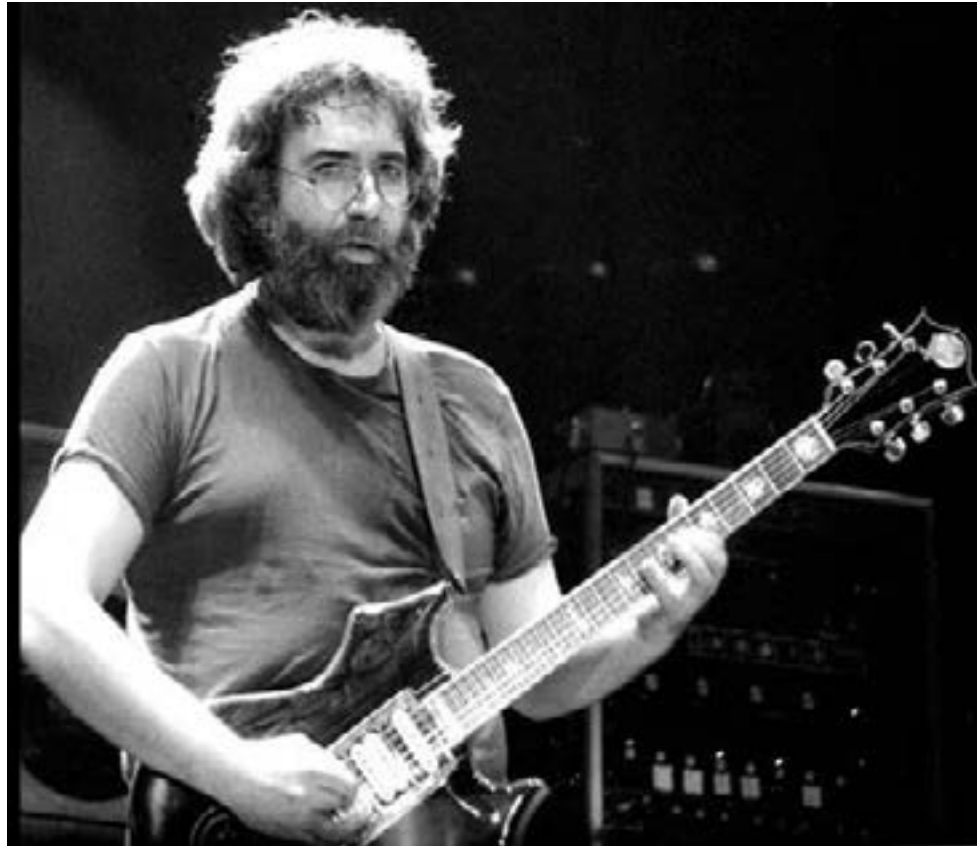
Capt. Levin F. Magruder, an Army psychiatrist, found him to be a "soft spoken, pleasant young man" who lacked "motivation for compliance with the rules and regulations that did not fit into his personal code of right and wrong," his evaluation shows. It was nothing the Army could fix, Magruder wrote.

After receiving a general discharge, Garcia went to Palo Alto, where he befriended fellow Army veteran Robert Hunter, who would later write lyrics for the Dead. Both were living out of broken down cars in an empty lot, he told *Rolling Stone*.

"Hunter had these big tins of crushed pineapple that he'd gotten from the Army ... and I had this glove compartment full of plastic spoons, and we had this little cooperative scene eating this crushed pineapple day after day and sleeping in the cars and walking around," he said.

After a few years of playing in coffee houses and giving lessons at a music store, he formed a jug band with Ron "Pigpen" McKernan, Bob Weir and Bill Kreutzman. They later added Phil Lesh and began calling themselves the Warlocks.

They attended the first public Acid Test convened by author Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters in November 1965, exactly five years since Garcia's second AWOL



Jerry Garcia plays during the Grateful Dead's European tour stop at the Walter Koebel Halle, in Ruesselsheim, Germany, Oct. 1981. Garcia joined the Army in April 1960, but received a general discharge just nine months later. (STARS AND STRIPES)

acoustic guitar — and into trouble.

In the span of a couple months, he racked up three NJPs — including one for willful disobedience and two for going AWOL — and a summary court-martial for breaking restriction, which got him busted from private plus 30 days' hard labor and \$50 docked pay, records show.

When counseled, he told his leaders he didn't plan on shaping up.

"I have found Garcia to be unreliable, irresponsible, immature, unwilling to accept authority, and completely lacking in soldierly qualities," Downey wrote. "Garcia's only interest appears to be getting out of the Army. He shows no interest in any

incident. They debuted as the Grateful Dead a week later at another of the weekly LSD-fueled events.

Garcia's resistance to the military's rigidity seems characteristic of the group's musical free-spiritedness.

"The Dead has always been about more than Rock and Roll, about artistic curiosity and freedom," Bruce Hornsby said during the band's 1994 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction. "These guys have truly always gone their own way."

Just as Garcia had gone AWOL from the Army a few times, he skipped the induction ceremony to the rock and roll pantheon. He died the following year of a heart attack in a rehab clinic, days after turning 53.



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