

Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - PO Box 18631 - Milwaukee, WI 53218

In Service to America

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Meeting Notice

19 April 2017

Elks Lodge 5555 W. Good Hope Rd.

Board Meeting 6:30 p.m.

Chapter Meeting 7 - 8 p.m.

Future Meetings 2017

17 May, 21 June, 19 July, 16 August,

20 September, 18 October,

15 November, 20 December

Chapter web page: www.vietnamvetschapter324.com

National web page: www.vva.org

ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD AT THE APRIL MEETING

MEMBERS MAY NOMINATE CANDIDATES

BY CONTACTING A CHAPTER OFFICER

OR BY ATTENDING THE CHAPTER MEETING

Your Help Is Needed

Chapter Fund Raising, Miller Park

Brewers vs Cincinnati Reds

Saturday, August 12 - Negro League Tribute game (game time 6:30)

Sunday, August 13 - American Legion Day (game time 1:10)

The Brewers allow us to ask for donations in the parking lots.

Parking lots open 3 hours before game time.

Parking fees reimbursed. Drinks and refreshments provided.

This our main fundraising activity for the year.

The more people helping, the more we earn to help vets.

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
Milwaukee Chapter 324
March 15, 2017

Meeting called to Order at 7:00 pm by President Pat Ciofani

A Moment of Silence was observed for our brothers and sisters no longer with us, for all POW/MIA's and their families and for all serving our country

Pledge of Allegiance

Attendance – Dennis Szymanski, Oliver Williams, Pat Ciofani, John Morgan, David Titter, John Zutz, Dennis McCormack, Joe Herbert, Pat Moore

Minutes – Due to not having a Quorum in February, there were no minutes

Treasurer's Report – **Pat Moore** - \$2499.41 balance in our checking account

Communications – Received parade invitations for Memorial Day, 4th of July and South Milwaukee Days parades

COMMITTEE REPORTS

VVA Membership – **Joe Herbert** – Holding steady

Allied Veterans Update – We will host the lunch in April

Fund Raising – Miller Park dates are August 12th & 13th

Website – Contact Pat Moore to post items of interest

OLD BUSINESS

Membership Roster – Discussion on National's new policy for obtaining membership rosters

Veterans Treatment Initiative Court – Moved and passed to donate \$250

NEW BUSINESS

State Meeting – March 18th

Financial Report – Will be sent to the IRS and National

Memorial Day Parade – Moved and passed to donate \$100.00

Adjournment – 7:20

SAVE THE DATE & SPREAD THE WORD!

**MILWAUKEE VA WILL HOLD
A 150TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION**

JUNE 3, 2017

This all-day event will feature re-enactors, our history and current, world-class healthcare, plus lots more fun treats!

Dr. Orange: The Secret Nemesis of Sick Veterans

Mike Hixenbaugh and Charles Ornstein 11 November 2016 co-published with The Virginian-Pilot

Editor's note: This large article has been divided because of space considerations. The opening sections can be found in the March newsletter.

In 2006, under contract for the Defense Department, Young had produced an 81-page historical report listing everywhere Agent Orange had been used and stored outside of Vietnam, and emphasizing that even in those places, "individuals who entered a sprayed area one day after application

... received essentially no 'meaningful exposure.'" Among the scholarly references cited were several of his own papers, including a 2004 journal article he co-authored with funding from Monsanto and Dow. That conflict of interest was not acknowledged in the Defense Department report.

In an interview, Young said the companies' financial support essentially paid the cost of

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publishing, but did not influence his findings. He and his co-authors, he said, “made it very clear” in the journal that Dow and Monsanto had funded the article. “That doesn’t mean that we took the position of the companies.”

The Pentagon also hired Young to write a book documenting its history with herbicides. Published in 2009, the book made Young Agent Orange’s official biographer.

In 2011, facing the new claims involving South Korea and Okinawa, the Defense Department asked Young and his son to search historical records and assess the evidence. In both cases, they concluded that whatever the vets thought they’d seen or handled, it wasn’t Agent Orange. Young’s son did not respond to a request for comment.

Alvin Young dismissed the claims of House and other vets from Korea, saying he found no paperwork that showed the herbicide had been moved to their base. “Groundless,” Young told the Korea Times newspaper in 2011.

In Okinawa, Young was similarly dismissive, even after dozens of barrels, some labelled Dow Chemical Co., were found buried under a soccer field. The barrels were later found to contain high levels of dioxin. But Young told the Stars and Stripes newspaper, they were likely filled with discarded solvents and waste.

Young never spoke to the vets in either case.

“Why would I want to interview the veterans, I know what they’re going to say,” Young told ProPublica, saying he focused on what the records showed. “They were going to give the allegation. What we had to do is go and find out what really happened.”

In 2012, Young’s firm was hired again, this time by the VA, in part to assess the claims of other groups who believed they’d been sickened by their exposure to Agent Orange. One was led by Carter, a man whose determination appeared to match Young’s.

“Mr. Carter,” Young recalled recently, “was a man on a mission.”

From almost the moment, Carter came upon Young’s name in the Air Force documents, he’d been consumed by the scientist’s pivotal role. He began documenting Young’s influence on a blog he’d set up to keep fellow C-123 reservists informed. “Memo after memo from him showed exquisite sensitivity

to unnecessary public awareness ... what he calls ‘misinformation’ about Agent Orange. Best to keep things mum, from his perspective,” Carter wrote in a July 2011 post.

An Agent Orange activist who heard about Carter’s efforts sent him an email exchange between Young and a veteran named Lou Krieger. Krieger had been corresponding with Young about herbicide test sites in the United States and had mentioned that he believed the controversy over the C-123 aircraft represented “another piece of the puzzle.”

In a flash of anger, Young had written back, “The only reason these men prepared such a story is that they are hoping they can cash in on ‘tax free money’ for health issues that originate from lifestyles and aging. There was no exposure to Agent Orange or the dioxin, but that does not stop them from concocting exposure stories about Agent Orange hoping that some Congressional member will feel sorry for them and encourage [the VA] to pay them off.

“I can respect the men who flew those aircraft in combat and who made the sacrifices, many losing their lives, and almost all of them receiving Purple Hearts,” Young wrote, “but these men who subsequently flew them as ‘trash haulers,’ I have no respect for such freeloaders. If not freeloading, what is their motive?”

Young’s response offended Carter. He pressed his Freedom of Information Act campaign with renewed vigor, requesting a slew of new records from the Air Force and the VA. He later filed lawsuits, with the help of pro-bono lawyers, against the agencies for withholding documents. The government eventually gave him the records and paid his lawyers’ fees.

Carter worked the non-military world as well, soliciting letters from doctors, researchers and government officials who had expertise with toxic chemicals, some of whom had clashed with Young in the past. Several responded with letters supporting his cause, even a few who worked for federal agencies.

The head of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, a part of the CDC, wrote in March 2013 that based on the available information, “aircrew operating in this, and similar, environments were exposed to TCDD [dioxin].”

And a senior medical officer at the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences wrote, “it is my opinion that the scientific evidence is clear”

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that exposure to dioxin is not only possible through the skin but has been associated with a number of health conditions, including cancer, heart disease and diabetes.

Carter also found support in Congress from Sen. Richard Burr, R-North Carolina, and Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Oregon, who began writing the VA regularly to advance Carter's cause.

He sent missive after missive filled with his findings and the letters of support he'd received to the prestigious Institute of Medicine, a congressionally chartered research organization hired by the VA to assess the science behind the claims of Carter and other C-123 vets. If the VA was going to grant them benefits, Carter realized, he had to first convince this group of researchers that he was right.

"It didn't take long to realize that the VA had a lot of resources working against us and we found none working for us," he said.

One of those resources was Young, whom the agency had given a \$600,000 no-bid contract to write research reports on Agent Orange.

Young had approached the VA in 2012, offering to assess vets' claims that they'd been exposed to herbicides outside of Vietnam and weren't covered by the Agent Orange Act.

Over the next two years, Young and his son wrote about two-dozen reports examining issues such as whether vets who served in Thailand, Guam or aboard Navy ships off the coast of Vietnam could have been exposed. In most cases, they concluded exposure was unlikely. The reports buttressed the VA's rejection of claims by members of those groups, just as Young's Pentagon reports were cited to deny those of individual vets.

In November 2012, Young turned in the first of several reports discounting the claims of Carter and his group. "All the analytical and scientific studies suggested that if they were exposed, that exposure was negligible," he wrote. Although some samples taken from the C-123s showed minimal traces of dioxin, it was nothing to be concerned about, Young wrote, since dioxin sticks to surfaces and was unlikely to affect anyone who came in contact with the planes.

Though Young dismissed the vets' claims, Carter's campaign clearly bothered him. In a June 2013 email to a VA staffer, Young criticized the Air Force for releasing all of his correspondence to Carter.

A couple months later he wrote: "You and

I knew that the preparations of these investigative reports were going to show that in most cases the allegations are without any evidence. We can expect much more media interest as more and more veteran claims are rejected on the basis of the historical records and science."

Young's contract with the VA and emails were later disclosed to Carter as a result of his FOIA requests and a lawsuit against the VA. The emails showed that Young had also discounted the opinions of other experts, including the VA's own researchers when they linked Agent Orange to prostate cancer.

"It is clear the VA researchers do not understand what really occurred in Vietnam," he wrote in May 2013 to several VA leaders, "and that the likelihood of exposure to Agent Orange was essentially negligible."

For three years, Carter and Young had circled each other. Carter in his blog and in at least one intemperate email; Young in dismissive reports and notes to the VA. Finally in June 2014, they were face to face in Washington D.C. where an Institute of Medicine panel would weigh the evidence to determine which man was right.

They lived just 45 minutes apart -- Young in Wyoming and Carter in Colorado -- but had never met. Now they sat next to each other to deliver testimony.

Carter, who was now in a wheelchair, told panel members that their task should be straightforward: Did the evidence show -- more likely than not -- that he and his crewmates had been exposed? "I'm probably the only bachelor's degree person in this room, but I know the airplane," he said.

Young, who followed him, gave a rundown on the planes' uses during the Vietnam War and their return to this country. He then defended the destruction of the planes, leaving out his role as the consultant who told the military to do it.

"Those aircraft had been out there for almost 25 years. How long do you maintain an aircraft?" he said, adding later, "Those aircraft had a stigma."

Young had been at odds with the IOM before. An earlier panel had embraced a method to estimate troop exposure to Agent Orange, angering Young and his allies who didn't believe it was possible.

But the hours-long hearing on C-123s, in which an array of experts spoke, ended with no hint of which way the panel was leaning. As the months wore

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on without a decision, Carter began to wonder if he had wasted the past few years of his life. "I wasn't a grandpa or a retiree or a hobbyist or a churchman, the things that usually follow in retirement," he said. "I was ill and I was tired. It's a lot of money. Every time I went back to Washington, there goes another fifteen hundred bucks."

Finally, on a January morning in 2015, the IOM was ready to announce its decision. Carter and his wife Joan had flown in and now they sat holding hands in a conference room. Joining them were VA and Air Force officials, members of the IOM staff and journalists. Lawyers who had helped him showed up too, as well as supportive congressional aides. Young, the man who'd fueled his quest, wasn't there.

At the front of the room, Emory University's nursing school dean began to deliver the results of the institute's report. Carter heard the words "could have been exposed," and knew he'd won. "That was the moment that I really understood." Carter and his wife squeezed hands, then hugged with happiness and relief when the meeting ended.

The committee had rejected Young's position that the dioxin residue found on interior surfaces of the C-123s would only have come off with a chemical wipe, dismissing that claim as "conjecture and not evidence-based." His argument that dioxin wouldn't be absorbed through a crew member's skin was also wrong, the committee determined, and appeared to be based on an irrelevant Dow-funded study of contaminated soil. Further, Young's overall description of the chemical properties and behavior of TCDD, a dioxin contaminant, were "inaccurate."

Joan Carter said it was her husband's most meaningful mission, "a kind of a legacy of some good work, some definitive good work that he could leave behind." It allowed him to help "a far greater circle of fellow veterans, most of whom he never met."

Within weeks, Young protested to the IOM that it had "ignored important historical and scientific information ... some material was misinterpreted, and there was a failure to focus on the science instead of who or what agency provided the information."

The IOM stood by its findings, and several months later, the VA approved disability benefits for the ailing C-123 veterans. In a statement, VA Secretary Robert McDonald called it "the right thing to do."

In an interview, Young said the IOM panelists got it wrong -- a retort he's used for decades whenever

his findings have been challenged.

"Unfortunately," he said, they "did not have a good handle on the science."

The IOM's dismissal of Young's findings has not dampened the military's reliance on him.

The Pentagon once again has signed Young on as a consultant, this time to track where herbicides were used at bases in the United States.

Pentagon officials declined to answer detailed questions about Young's work, including how much he's been paid. Spokesman Lt. Col. James B. Brindle would only say that Young is the "most knowledgeable subject matter expert" on Agent Orange and that his personal views "are not relevant to the historical research he was contracted to perform."

While the VA didn't renew Young's contract when it expired in 2014, a VA official said the department wouldn't hesitate to hire him again if he was the most qualified person. Flohr, the VA senior advisor, said Young was chosen for his expertise -- not his position on the vets' exposure. "It was purely scientific, the research he did," he said, "no bias either way on his part or our part."

In a subsequent statement, the VA said it makes decisions on Agent Orange "only after careful and exhaustive reviews of all the medical/scientific evidence. ... Our obligation remains to the veterans we serve."

Young's continued work for the government comes as a surprise to those who squared off against him a generation ago. "As a physician, as a dioxin scientist, as an Agent Orange researcher, as a Vietnam-era veteran, I'm just appalled by that personally," said Dr. Arnold Schecter, who has written a major textbook on dioxin and who has feuded with Young.

Today, despite his loss to Carter, Young is unwavering in his belief that his research is "great." Among his few regrets: Putting controversial opinions -- such as calling C-123 reservists freeloaders -- in emails that could be obtained through public records requests.

Young said he, too, was exposed to Agent Orange while testing the chemicals over the years, and in that way has a deeply personal interest in the research.

"Give me some credit," Young said. "Hell, I've got 40 years working out there on these issues. I have a great deal of experience.... Am I wrong? I could be wrong. I've always said I don't understand it all."



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