

Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - PO Box 18631 - Milwaukee, WI 53218

In Service to America



Meeting Notice

21 July, '10

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

2010

18 August, 15 September, 20 October, 17 November,
15 December

Chapter 324 Officers

President - Bob Rugg 412-3849

Vice President - Pat Moore 354-2533

Secretary - Dennis Symanski 453-3600

Treasurer - Kent Draper 963-0375

Director - Pat Ciofani 332-7734

Director - John Borkowitz 427-0977

Director - Ron Coppersmith 262-255-2832

Director - John Morgan 871-9274

~ Second Notice 1 ~

Chapter 324 is moving into the 21st Century.

The last general mailing of this newsletter will be the August issue.

We intend to begin sending this newsletter via e-mail in September, 2010. You should have received a letter from the chapter telling you about this change. This will accomplish a number of things.

The chapter will save money which will then be available for helping veterans. We will also save much time and effort in folding, stamping and addressing 150 newsletters every month.

Chapter 324 wants to stay in touch with you.

If you want to continue to receive the chapter newsletter you must do one of two things:

• Send an e-mail to john@zutz.org with the subject "324 newsletter" and the message "subscribe."

Privacy notice: Your e-mail address will be used only for VVA business.

• If you don't have e-mail, send a letter to the chapter PO Box and let us know you want the newsletter by mail.

If you do not do one of these things your last newsletter will arrive in August.

~ Notice 2 ~

The August 18 Meeting will be held at the Zablocki VA Medical Center at 7 p.m.
in room #3435 - the 3rd floor gym/meeting room

BREWER FUNDRAISER NOTICE

We will be doing one last brewer fundraiser on August 6th. We will be in the parking lot of Miller Park with our orange blossoms from 4:00 pm to approximately 7:00 pm. Afterwards, we will have a tailgate party from all those who attend. Meeting place is right in front of gate 10 will call window. It is located to the right of the WTMJ radio van that is always at the games. This is a major fundraiser for us so please all that can attend please do so. It is on a Friday night with the Brewers playing the Houston Astros. Attendance at the game should be fairly heavy. Thank you all for your support.

Bob Rugg

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

Milwaukee Chapter 324

June 16, 2010

Meeting called to order by President Bob Rugg at 7:00 pm.

A moment of silence was observed for our brothers and sisters no longer with us and for all POW/MIA's and their families.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Self-Introductions – Dennis Szymanski, Kent Draper, Pat Ciofanni, Jim Michelfelder, John Zutz, Ronald G. Seidner, John Morgan, Casey Beamon, Gary Pochert (guest), Kearney Bennet, Milan Mursec, Paul Javins, Janice Dahlke, Joe Herbert, Pat Moore, Bob Rugg.

Minutes of May 19, 2010 meeting reviewed and accepted.

Treasurer's Report reviewed and accepted.

Communications read by Bob Rugg.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

VVA Membership Update – Joe Herbert – Holding steady – 105 VVA members – 28 Associates – Voted to allocate necessary funds to purchase business cards to pass out to potential members with chapter information on them.

Stand Down – Moved and passed to donate \$300 to Stand Down organizers instead of having a table at next Stand Down.

Volunteering and Activity at the VA – Received final check of \$341 from State VVA for volunteering.

Fund-Raising – Kent Draper – Aug. 6th Brewer Fund Raiser – Moved and passed to purchase 2 boxes of Orange Blossoms – Pat Moore and Kearney Bennet will join Kent on fund raising committee as Ron Coppersmith steps aside for health reasons.

OLD BUSINESS

Operation Freedom – July 3rd at the Zoo.

Wauwatosa Parade – July 5th at 9:00 am – Staging begins at 7:30 – We will assemble in the Mayfair parking lot behind Boston Store.

Newsletter – 45 Responses so far – Thanks to 2 members who sent donations to help defray mailing costs.

NEW BUSINESS

State Fair – Moved and passed to send letter to organizers expressing displeasure over rules changes and treatment last year – No decision was made on whether we will participate this year or not.

For the good of the Chapter.

Adjournment – 8:17

REMEMBER THE AUG.18 MEETING IS IN RM 3435 AT THE VA HOSPITAL



Chapter 324 color guard in the 2010 Memorial Day Parade.

Marty Manser, Thomas Hartman, Ken Menz, Gregg Sunder

A message to your e-mail address bounced. Please reconfirm your e-mail address by sending a message to john@zutz.org

Please include your full name in the message, and include 324 in the subject line.

From the Editor

President Bob Rugg has complained about a photo (on right) that ran in the June issue of this newsletter.

He felt that it showed disrespect to Eva Bennet, who's death notice ran next to the photo. Eva was the wife of member Kearney Bennet. I believe Bob is right, and though it was unintentional, I sincerely apologize to Kearney and the Bennet family.



Bob also felt the photo made him look “unpresidential.” I’ll let you be the judge.

UB Study Finds

Agent Orange Linked to Graves' Disease in Vietnam Veterans

<http://www.buffalo.edu/news/11493#> Release Date:
June 28, 2010

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- Vietnam War-era veterans exposed to Agent Orange appear to have significantly more Graves' disease, a thyroid disorder, than veterans with no exposure, a new study by endocrinologists at the University at Buffalo has shown.

Ajay Varanasi, MD, an endocrinology fellow in the UB Department of Medicine and first author on the study, garnered first prize in the oral presentation category for this research at the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists annual meeting held in Boston in April.

"Our findings show that Vietnam veterans who came in contact with Agent Orange are more likely to develop Graves' disease than those who avoided exposure," says Varanasi.

"The autoimmune disorder was three times more prevalent among veterans who encountered the dioxin-containing chemical. We also looked at other thyroid diagnoses, but we didn't find any significant differences in thyroid cancer or nodules."

Agent Orange is a defoliant that was used in Vietnam to destroy crops and reduce jungle foliage that could shelter enemy combatants. The herbicide contains dioxin, which has chemical properties similar to the thyroid hormones.

Graves' disease is an autoimmune disease associated with overactivity of the thyroid gland. This gland releases the hormones thyroxine (T4) and triiodothyronine (T3), which control body metabolism and are critical for regulating mood, weight, and mental and physical energy levels.

Varanasi and colleagues assessed the prevalence of major thyroid diagnoses in the Veterans Administration electronic medical record database for upstate New York veterans born between 1925 and 1953, the age group that would have been eligible for military service during the Vietnam era. They conducted the research at the Buffalo VA Medical Center.

They compared the frequency of diagnoses of thyroid cancer, nodules, hypothyroidism and Graves' disease in veterans who identified themselves as being exposed to Agent Orange (23,939) or not exposed to Agent Orange (200,109).

"Analyzing data on thyroid conditions, we found no difference in the prevalence of thyroid nod-

ules or cancers between the exposed and non-exposed groups," says Varanasi. "Graves' disease, however, was three times more prevalent in the exposed group. "Interestingly, hypothyroidism [lower than normal thyroid] was less common in the exposed group."

Varanasi says that in view of the known effects of dioxin on the immune system, further research should be conducted on the increased prevalence of Graves' disease in Vietnam veterans. His research group is planning to continue this investigation either in vitro or in animal models.

Additional authors on the study are Toufic Abdo, MD, David Kasinski, Amy O'Donnell, MD, and Stephen Spaulding, MD, all associated with UB.

The University at Buffalo is a premier research-intensive public university, a flagship institution in the State University of New York system and its largest and most comprehensive campus. UB's more than 28,000 students pursue their academic interests through more than 300 undergraduate, graduate and professional degree programs. Founded in 1846, the University at Buffalo is a member of the Association of American Universities.

Contact

Lois Baker ljbaker@buffalo.edu 716-645-4606

VA Lists Navy and Coast Guard Ships For Presumptive Agent Orange Exposure

6/10 – The Department of Veterans Affairs Compensation and Pension Service has issued 2 lists of naval vessels it has verified conducted operations on the inland "brown water" rivers and delta areas of Vietnam. The lists also identify certain vessel types that operated primarily on the inland waterways. If a veteran's service aboard one of these ships can be confirmed through military records during the time frames specified, then exposure to herbicide agents (e.g., Agent Orange) can be presumed.

Several other vessels and time frames of operations are included in these lists. See list issued 1/10, and list issued 6/10.

http://www.naus.org/news/documents/VA_CP_BulletinJan10.pdf

PTSD & “Bad Discharges”

From Vietnam Veterans Against the War

Many veterans suffering from PTSD are denied VA benefits because of their less than honorable military discharges. This is based on the presumption that there was “dishonorable service” which bars benefits. Often the VA personnel tell these vets that they must get their discharges upgraded before the VA can help them. **THIS IS A LIE!!** Let me repeat this: Vets with service connected PTSD can get all VA benefits (except educational benefits) and VA personnel who say otherwise or misinformed, ill-trained or lying. There are VA regulations that enable the VA to provide these veterans with healthcare and monthly disability checks.

The VA has two branches; the VA Healthcare Administration and the VA Benefits Administration. They each have their own rules that allow them to serve vets with an old UD (Undesirable Discharge), an OTH (General discharge under conditions Other Than Honorable) and BCD (Bad Conduct Discharges) given at a Special court martial (not a General CM).

VA Healthcare

According to the VA Healthcare “Fact Sheet 16-8, October 2008,” when a vet with an OTH/BCD comes in for PTSD treatment, they are supposed to register the vet, place the vet in “pending verification status” and make an application to the VA Regional Office for an “administrative decision” regarding the ‘character of service’ for VA health care purposes. VA employees are directed to VA Manual M21-1, Part IV, Chapter 11 “Special Determinations and Administrative Decisions.” A separate character of service determination by the VARO is needed to pay disability benefits. The veteran is entitled to healthcare until the VARO denies service connection. This window of opportunity may allow the veteran the time needed to get a psych evaluation which can be used to overcome the “dishonorable service” bar. (see below)

VA Disability Claims

VA Disability Claims

One of the most immediate and severe symptoms of PTSD is just the kind of behavior that can result in UCMJ charges and a discharge for misconduct. Following the directions in their M21-1 Manual Part III, Subpart v, 1, B.11.a, the VARO can decide that

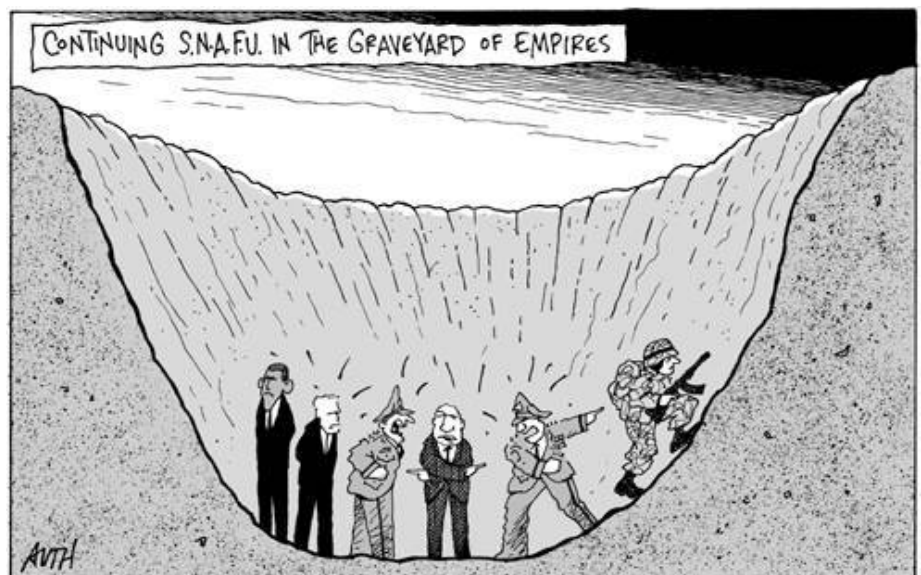
there is no ‘dishonorable service’ to bar benefits. The ‘insanity’ definition in 38 CFR 3.354 allows the VA to see that there was no ‘dishonorable service’ for eligibility purposes.

A psych evaluation explaining that the service connected PTSD caused the misconduct is needed. It can also be argued that the military is responsible for the misconduct because they failed to provide treatment for the PTSD.

So the psych evaluation needs to say that the vet served honorably until the service connected PTSD (or any other mental disorder) affected the vet’s “ability to serve honorably,” so there was no ‘dishonorable’ service. (It is also possible to get ANY diagnosis (like depression, anxiety or bi-polar disorder) ‘direct’ service connection if the symptoms were present during service or within one year of military discharge.)

The VARO will likely deny the claim at the beginning and force the vet to request a “character of service determination” even if the psych eval has already been submitted. When the eligibility issue is won, the VARO will then make a decision on service connection and degree of disability. They could do all at once, but expect delays, under-ratings and appeals.

After winning VA compensation, the vets will have the free treatment and monthly checks which will allow a long battle to get an accurate discharge. The BCMR can change a discharge to a medical retirement discharge. This means the monthly checks come from the DoD budget not the VA’s, which means less money for bullets and more money for helping vets.



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)

Please Print

Name _____ Membership # _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone_(_____) _____ E-mail _____

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

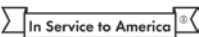
Make checks payable to VVA324 and mail with this application to:
VVA Chapter 324 - Membership, PO Box 18631, Milwaukee, WI 53218



Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324

PO Box 18631



Milwaukee, WI 53218

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