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# The Patriot Reader

## VETERANS COUNCIL OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY

**CHAIRMAN BILL DUDLEY**

**VICE CHAIRMAN RAY QUINN**

**SECRETARY MICHAEL ROTHFELD**

**TREASURER JOHN MOUNTCASTLE**

Newsletter Editor Michael Rothfeld

Volume 4, Issue 2

Newsletter Date: February, 2015

### Message from the Chairman

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Fellow Veterans,

No doubt you have all seen the recent release in the St. Augustine Record concerning the relocation of the CBOC to a new interim location. The release of this information was distributed to the local community on January 6. One would assume from this announcement that the VA was on track to make the move in a timely fashion so as not to interrupt the health care service of our Veterans. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The VA, conducting itself as it has through this entire abysmal process contacted the County Administration last week asking if they were prepared to continue service for utilities and security for their current location since it would be the end of the summer at the earliest before they would be prepared to move.

Application for permits to begin developing the interim site has still not been requested from the County.

My expectation is this will

eventually wind up in some legal machinations as efforts are made to determine who is liable for the penalties if the VA continues to remain at the current location. My biggest concern is we do not experience any interruption of health care service for our Veterans.

I will keep everyone informed as developments unfold. Rest assured your Veterans Council will stay actively involved in the process.

I would like to thank everyone who came out to assist in the cleanup of wreaths at the St. Augustine National Cemetery on Saturday, 17 January. The number of volunteers was smaller this year than in the past but the enthusiasm and veteran spirit was at the same high level as ever.

Governor Rick Scott was at Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home on Monday, 26 January 2015 to make an important announcement regarding the expansion of additional Veterans Nursing Homes in



Florida. There are an additional 3 Veterans Homes planned as a part of the Governors expansion plan, the first will be located in Port St. Lucie. This is very good news for our Veterans and we are very pleased the Governor selected Clyde Lassen Nursing Home as the sight to make his announcement about the FDVA expansion program.

A big Bravo Zulu to Michael Rothfeld for having his video and documentary, "**Unleashing the Under-dogs: The K-9's for Warriors Story**" selected to be in this year's St. Augustine Film Festival. The film along with many others was shown this past weekend at Flagler College. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> in a series of films and documentaries Michael has done over the past 5 years. Well done, Michael.

Bill Dudley,  
Chairman  
Veterans Council of St. Johns  
County



## **VA announces temporary location for St. Augustine veterans clinic**

**Posted:** January 6, 2015 - 11:15am This article is used with the permission of the St. Augustine Record and its author, Sheldon Gardner

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has announced a temporary location for its local veterans clinic.

The St. Augustine Community Based Outpatient Clinic will be in a modular trailer facility near Southpark Boulevard and Old Moultrie Road.

The VA made an agreement with Hull Property Group on Jan. 1 to use about three acres near the intersection, according to Glenda Powell, VA public affairs officer. The agreement is for 12 months and can be renewed for up to three additional years in 12-month increments.

The VA clinic at 1955 U.S. 1 South has until the end of March to leave its current location. The VA has not released details about a permanent facility.

“We’re pleased that there’s going to be at least a temporary location in the interim until they select a permanent facility,” said Bill Dudley, chairman of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County.

County health and human services agencies will be moving to a new facility on San Sebastian View.

The property at 1955 U.S. 1 was sold to Lowe’s for about \$8 million, according to a previous story.

The construction cost estimate for the new location was \$12 million, and the county paid for the remaining \$4 million with a loan.

The VA has declined the county’s offer for space at its new facility. More details are expected in the spring after the VA awards a long-term facility lease.

VA officials have said there will be no interruption in services for veterans in St. Johns County.

Dudley said he and others are disappointed because the VA has not been more open with veterans about details for a temporary or permanent facility.

VA officials have said they could not release certain information because of laws on competitive bidding. The VA did not provide information about how quickly the clinic will relocate.

Jerry Cameron, assistant county administrator for community services, said he was glad more details have been released.

But he said the county has not received more information about a permanent facility.

The county also has inquired about the VA’s search area for the permanent location — which some county officials believe is flawed based on the veterans population. The VA has not responded.

# Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home

## Patriotism is our Motto



Happy New Year!!!



The organization, "Support Our Troops", donated many, many items for our residents. Walmart donated the truck and the driver to get the supplies here.



Governor Scott addresses the crowd while FDVA Deputy Director Al Carter and Representative Ronald "Doc" Renuant look on.



Governor Scott with resident Don White



Governor Scott with resident Herb Aiken.



## The Jacksonville National Cemetery Greetings from the Support Committee at the Jacksonville National Cemetery!

The Support Committee invites everyone to attend its next scheduled meeting on **Monday, April 6th, 2015** at 7:00pm. The meeting will take place at Community Hospice, 4266 Sunbeam Rd., Jacksonville, FL 32257 in Conference Room A.



JNC SC Chairman,  
Ray Quinn

## Notes from the Support Committee of the Jacksonville National Cemetery meeting:

### New Officers for the 2015 year

Chairman, Ray Quinn, SGM, USA ret.

Vice Chairman, Padraic Mulvihill

Secretary, Kathy Church

Treasurer, John Mountcastle

Assistant Treasurer, Michael Rothfeld

Sergeant at Arms, Joe McDermott, CSGM, USA ret.

Judge Advocate General, Pat Bennett

Historian, Jody Raymond

Chaplain, John Hugus, LTC, USA ret.

### Upcoming JNC events

Missing in America Project, Interment # 5, March 27, 1:00 pm

Vietnam Memorial Dedication, March 28, 10:00 am

Memorial Day Observance, May 23, 9:00 am

### The Jacksonville Ladies

There are now 22 Jacksonville Ladies

in 2014 the Ladies volunteered 1672 hrs. Mon. to Fri.

total all events 1982 volunteer hours

### New Support Committee members voted in:

Kathy Church, Steve Spickelmier

## The Story of Bill by Georgeanna (Jana) Teehan

Bill was a Chesapeake Bay Retriever dog that my mother gave to my father, Lt. (jg) George Addison, for his birthday in 1944. My father was the executive officer of the ship and was at the time, training at Little Creek, VA, and that was when Bill joined the Navy. Bill went through amphibious training as a member of the crew of LSM(R) 198, a landing ship with rocket capacity which had just been commissioned and was about to be deployed to the Pacific.



Bill served aboard the ship making every stop on the way to the Pacific theater, as a member of the crew. According to my father, the crew began to regard Bill as a crewmember. Bill had a few adventures along the way, as my dad's notes in his log clearly show.

Christmas Day, 1944, the ship arrived in Panama and Bill was among the first down the gangway, on liberty. He spent his time swimming and running after a ball, just another sailor on shore leave. After that the ship made its way through the Panama Canal and steamed for San Diego. While the ship was fueling, Bill tried to jump ship and was apprehended at the main gate. His attempt to go AWOL held the ship up for 15 minutes. From San Diego the ship headed for Pearl Harbor and had a layover there and the crew was given liberty. Bill was taken off the ship, walked, played with, took a swim and according to my dad, chased some females. He was put back onboard and told to "stay". Well, Bill decided to go AWOL, slipped down the gangway, and took off for a night on the town. Word got out fast that a crewmember was on unauthorized leave and the "MP"s were alerted. Really! After a short time, Bill was found and actually put in the Marine Brig until quite crestfallen my dad saved him.

As they steamed to Okinawa, his battle station was outside the radio shack and he stayed there faithfully when not chasing birds. One time, while chasing said birds, he fell overboard quite unnoticed. A sister ship, following the 198 spotted him frantically dogpaddling and he was picked up by them. He stayed onboard the 199 until they arrived in the Philippines and Bill was then put on his own ship.

(continued on next page)

During the battle of Okinawa, in which the LSM(R) 198 was fully engage, Bill stayed at his battle station until firing began and then he'd be the first to go below. Bill participated in the Okinawa campaign, the invasion of Kerma Retto and also Agumi Shima, Le Shima, and Ih Shjima. My father had a metal plate engraved and attached to Bill's collar for each island where he came under fire. I know this because I have the collar.

After a trip to the Philippines the war ended for the LSM(R) 198 and for Bill and the rest of the crew. He returned to the U.S. a Navy combat veteran.



Bill is standing in front of my father



The officers and members of the chapter are proud to launch our new website. (<http://www.vva1084.org>).

I invite you to visit the new site and enjoy the information and links. Please remember that this site is under construction and will contain much more information and sponsor links in the future.

Bob Dinkins - President, Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 1084, St. Johns County, FL

904-540-1898

God Bless You and America

[bobdinkins@bellsouth.net](mailto:bobdinkins@bellsouth.net)

[president@vva1084.org](mailto:president@vva1084.org)

# Orange Park vet carves closure for families of deceased soldiers

By Tiffanie Reynolds, Sun, Dec 28, 2014 This article re-printed with permission of its author, Tiffanie Reynolds and the Florida Times-Union

A retired Air Force veteran of 22 years, Mike DelPizzo steps into his Orange Park garage after dinner every evening, “urning it” for soldiers or spouses of soldiers who have died.

DelPizzo has carved at least 170 wooden urns for families of deceased soldiers.

Each case is different. Some pass away from old age or other illnesses. Others were married to a veteran. All are buried in the Jacksonville National Cemetery, which has been DelPizzo's point of contact since he decided to volunteer his skills and time two years ago.

“It's really a great project. And, for me, being a veteran, it gets emotional when I'm there. You can't help but get emotional,” said DelPizzo, 59. “Hearing people who have raised their right hand and promised to defend this country against enemies foreign and domestic, and they passed away and they were forgotten about. Well, they're no longer forgotten about, at least not here in the Jacksonville area.”

The idea to carve urns for soldiers came to him after reading an article in The Florida Times-Union that talked about a man in South Florida who does the same thing.

Looking into similar efforts with his wife, Win DelPizzo, he discovered the remains of many soldiers are given back to families in cardboard boxes.

While soldiers and veterans are guaranteed a spot in a national cemetery, a headstone, an American flag and certificate of appreciation when they die, the families are still responsible to provide a casket or urn. The cost for either is still too expensive for many families, leaving their loved ones to be buried in the box their remains came in.

That detail spurred DelPizzo to action, and he called the Jacksonville National Cemetery.

At first surprised with DelPizzo's request, Cliff Shields, director of Jacksonville and St. Augustine National Cemetery, welcomed any urns he could provide with open arms.

DelPizzo carved four urns and donated them to the cemetery. They were all used within a week. He carved six more after Shields called to ask for more, and they were all used within the month.

Since then, he has carved six urns a week — 10 inches tall, 7 1/4 inches wide and 7 1/4 inches deep — adding details like a small sign of the individual's military branch insignia on one side and a sticker with the person's name and “from veteran to veteran” at the bottom.

It takes about a week to complete an urn, starting with carving it out of clear pine wood. DelPizzo then sands it down, treats the wood, sands the urn again and treats it with a clear finish. He has to wait at least 24 hours between most steps to let the treatment and finish dry, but slightly speeds the



Bruce.Lipsky@jacksonville.com Retired Air Force Master Sgt. Mike DelPizzo works on his table saw building urns for the remains of veterans in Orange Park.

(continued on next page)

process by doing more than one at once.

While six urns cost him about \$100 in wood, DelPizzo considers it a small price to pay it forward for soldiers' families.

Shields, who has worked in six national cemeteries, said this is the first time he has worked with a volunteer like DelPizzo.

When DelPizzo first called him about making urns, "I thought, 'You're going to supply these urns on a continuous basis at no charge. You're going to do this on your own time?' I could not believe it," Shields said.

Before DelPizzo donated urns, Shields said remains were buried in the cardboard boxes or plastic bags families brought them in. While he doesn't keep any record on how many families have used DelPizzo's donated urns, just being able to offer them gives him and the families a chance to bury their loved ones with dignity.

Shields said the offer is often met with tears from spouses or family members who couldn't afford an urn.

Shields said the two have worked together for a little over a year, and he is still amazed how quickly DelPizzo comes to the cemetery with another four to six urns after his call or email requesting more.

DelPizzo also volunteers with Missing in America, a nonprofit that identifies and buries the unclaimed cremated remains of soldiers. The organization works with funeral homes, the medical examiner's office and occasionally hospitals.

Kathy Church, a coordinator in Florida for Missing in America, said DelPizzo's urns have been a huge help. Since the Florida chapter started in 2011, it has identified and buried 150 veterans or spouses of veterans.

"When you find one that might be a veteran ... it just gives you a feeling that if I only found one veteran sitting on a shelf, I've done something," Church said.

DelPizzo and his wife also volunteer as a pallbearer and flag carrier for funerals with the Jacksonville National Cemetery.

Serving in the Air Force until 2000, mostly in non-combat situations, DelPizzo sees his work with the urns as a way of serving his country once again.

It began as a way to help his fellow soldiers, but the first time he held one of his urns as a pall-bearer at the cemetery, the process became personal.

Even if it's only through a carved wooden container, he feels like he is a part of that soldier's life.

DelPizzo said he plans to keep working in his garage, carving urns for more soldiers and their families for the rest of his life.

Tiffanie Reynolds: (904) 359-4450



## "Wreaths Across America"; the job is never done By Michael Isam

St. Augustine, Fla, (January 17, 2015) – As glorious as the St. Augustine National Cemetery appears with a wreath adorning each final resting place; there comes a time when the wreaths must be removed. Saturday, January 17, 2015 was that day.

The early morning was cold. Not a Wisconsin or Arctic cold, but cold enough for coats, scarves, sweaters, knitted caps, and warm gloves to be the order of the day.

At 7:30 a.m., some had already arrived and began gathering wreaths using long poles to gather as many as possible. Later there came a wagon, then a wheelbarrow; one person piled as many as possible on his four-wheeled walker.

About 20 minutes after eight, the unmistakable sound of Harley motorcycles rumbled in the distance. The Legacy Vets had arrived and the real fun began in earnest.

As Bill Dudley, Chairman of the Veterans Council, put it; "The camaraderie between the veterans is always heartwarming". With the jibes regarding the various branches of service flying back and forth, a civilian might think that some of them were more like arrows, but "Nothing could be further from the truth," said one Marine who declined to have his name in print. "When it comes down to it, we have each other's backs. We always have, we always will," he said, adding. "Our humor is just that, ours."

Overseeing the entire operation was Co-chairman Judy Davis. She had arrived well before anyone else and stayed to make sure all was complete. "It has been a long year," said Davis, "My Co-chair, Ray Quinn, and I began soliciting funds in January and we continued even after the period had closed. It is a never ending project." "2015 will be another's chance to come up with fresh ideas for fundraising," she said, "my brain turned to mush many weeks ago."

While the majority of volunteers were gathering wreaths, two other events were happening simultaneously.

One veteran climbed in the dumpster and began to jump up and down to compact the wreaths. He grinned widely as he said, "I would love to see the look on the face of the solid waste worker when the dumpster is tipped up and nothing comes out. It would be one of those credit card 'Priceless' moments." While he was doing that, a continuous stream of volunteers were piling wreaths along the fence line next to the street.

The storage shed was abuzz with activity also. The wreaths are shipped in boxes. Each box contains a plastic sack containing 9 wreaths and some water to keep them as fresh as possible during transit. Those boxes have to be recycled also. Figure 1216 wreaths, 9 wreaths per box computes roughly to 135 plus boxes. It takes a while. According to those in the know, the recycling company who jumped at the chance for the cardboard boxes seemed to disappear into thin air.

"All in all, it was a very smooth operation," said Davis as she attempted to gather the volunteers for a group shot. "Although," she added, "this part is more akin to herding cats."



**This is the 5th Quarterly Gathering of Veterans**..the third being held in the Veterans Memorial Arena. We have had over 75 folks show up from various Veterans organizations that included the VFW, American Legion, Fleet Reserve, Marine Corps League, Korean War Vets Vietnam Vets, Semper Fidelis Society, Montford Point Marines, Purple Heart Society along with many others from Nassau and Duval Counties. Organizations that also support Veterans show up to pass their word and have found it every helpful in reaching out to Veterans. It is growing as the word is passed and there is an opportunity to get free tickets to events at the arena compliments of our partners SMG. This meeting there will be tickets available the JU Kennsaw State Basketball Game being held in the arena at 1430.



The purpose is to unite Veterans organization in the NE Florida area so we can better deal with Veterans issues and work better together to help Veterans and their families. There will be information passed by the city Veterans Services, Veterans Court and others and there will be an opportunity for organization to share information with those in attendance.

I started this over a year ago in order to unite Veterans organization and fill the information void among Veterans Organization. The NEFVC is not providing this service. There is a need to ensure there is better communications between Veterans organizations and to get the word out to Veterans and their organization on a regular basis.

I'm a retired Marine LtCol who has worked in the Veterans community since retiring here in 1995 after 22 years in the Marines. I'm a past chairman of the NEFVC and I am the founder of the Jacksonville Semper Fidelis Society (1999 to 2014). I'm a life member of the Marine Corps League, Vietnam Veterans of America, the VFW...I am also a member of the American Legion.



If you need more information you can contact me at [ra0302@msn.com](mailto:ra0302@msn.com).

There is a Napoleonic Maxim that says move dispersed and fight concentrated...the problem with Veterans organization in the past is they move dispersed and stay dispersed...This is an opportunity to alter that and provide a venue where we can start to concentrate efforts. There are over 60 Veterans organization in the NE Florida area and we can accomplish a lot if we all started coordinating and working together.

<http://www.leatherneck.com/ezine/blogs/5/United-we-stand-Divided-we-fall.html>

R, Bob Adelhelm

## **FVPPI ends after 7 Year Run** by Michael Rothfeld

Florida Veterans Programs and Projects will be closing down in January 2015. It was created in 2008 to help the Coquina Veterans in mailing out "care packages" to our troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. This venture was highly successful as Coquina Crossing resident Patty Worsham led the Coquina group in sending out over 1500 packages. As our role in these countries wound down this portion of FVPPI's Mission ended.

The other Mission of FVPPI was to record the stories of local veterans and to make these stories available to schools, colleges, libraries and museums. This Mission was also highly successful as FVPPI in conjunction with the Veterans Council of St. Johns County produced educational documentaries featuring stories of local veterans who served in WW II, Korea, and Vietnam. FVPPI also produced its highly acclaimed POW documentary, "Stolen Freedom", which tells the story of four local veterans who served in WW II, Korea and Vietnam and how they were able to survive years of torture and go on to live productive lives. All documentaries have been broadcast on WJCT TV, the PBS affiliate in Jacksonville. Additionally its POW documentary was streamed to over 23 million government and military personnel on the Pentagon Channel. Our yearly premieres were attended by thousands.



Flagler College Auditorium

The new documentary, "Unleashing the Underdogs: The Story of K9s for Warriors" will have premiered on Jan. 23rd at the St. Augustine Film Festival and will be broadcast on WJCT TV after that date. It tells the story of how Ponte Vedra based K9s for Warriors trains service dogs to assist veterans from Iraq/Afghanistan who are suffering from PTSD. I want to thank Director Dr. Nadia Ramoutar and editor Robby Word for putting together such a meaningful, education documentary. We could not have completed this project without the full support of K9s for Warriors President Shari Duval, who is an inspiration to all who meet her.

FVPPI has distributed free copies of its documentaries to the Library of Congress, Andersonville National POW Museum, the POW/MIA Museum in St. Louis, MO., the Vietnam Museums in Texas and New Jersey, the WW II Museum in LA., MOSH, the Amelia Island Museum of History, the Orange County Regional History Center in Orlando, the public Libraries in Duval and St. Johns Countys, the Jonge Museum of History at the Univ. of FL., UNF, and the St. Johns County High Schools.

I would like to thank FVPPI's Board of Directors for their assistance in interviewing and organizing the documentaries: Terry Allan, Ray Quinn, Michael Isam, Jim Vanairsdale, Jack Ernisse, Renie Liniuk, and Earl Kidwell. Special thank yous go to Bill Dudley, Joe McDermott, George April, Fred Dupont, Doug Wiles, John Mountcastle and Roger Geronimo for their continued support and their fund raising efforts. Vietnam veteran Tom Waskovich showed everyone what service to your country means. Lastly I want to thank my wife Carol, for putting up with me during these 6 years of retirement, encouraging, correcting and leading me as needed.

Future FVPPI projects will be under the auspices of the Veterans Council.

## FVPPI, A Look Back



## **"Unleashing the Underdogs: The K9s for Warriors Story" on the Radio**

Chairman Bill Dudley and documentary producer Michael Rothfeld appeared on St. Augustine radio to help promote awareness of the problem's todays returning warriors face adjusting to life back home. We were invited to speak by K9 documentary director, Dr. Nadia Ramoutar on her weekly show she co hosts, "Good Vibes with Pete and Nadia".

The documentary was filmed at K9s for Warriors in Ponte Vedra Beach and tells the story of how they select and train dogs they match with post 9/11 veterans in a three week program.

Look for documentary on WJCT TV, the PBS affiliate in Jacksonville in the coming months. The Veterans Council hopes to invite all of you to a free showing of this important story around Veterans Day 2015.

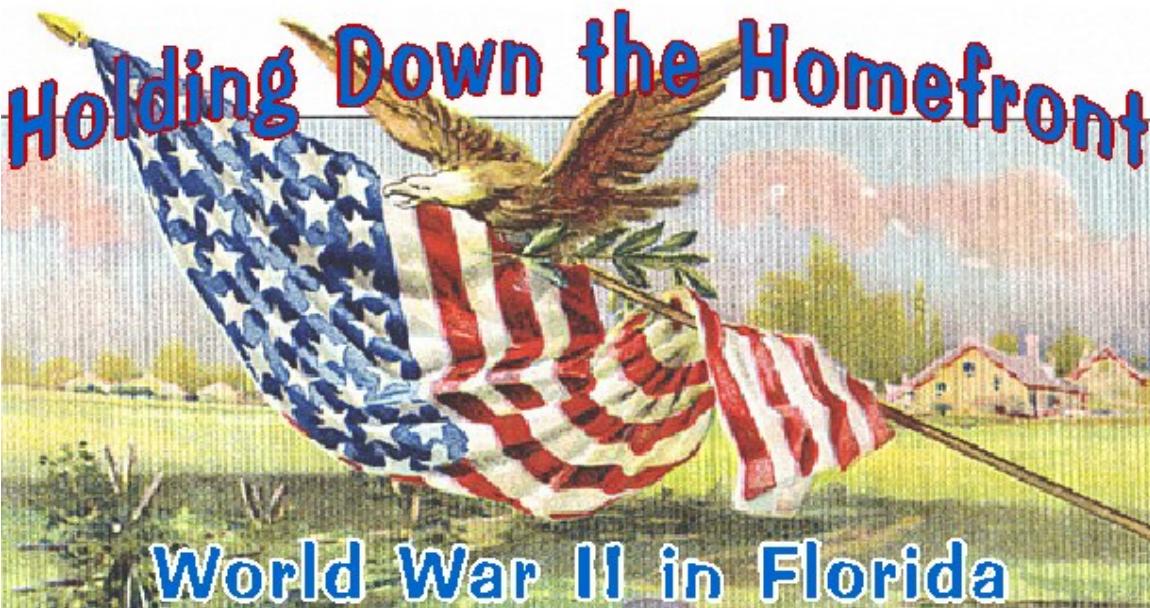


**The Disabled American Veterans Chapter 6, of St. Johns County, has a EZ-Access Modular Ramp System available for a Veteran that needs one that requires a turn, and two ramps to get from the porch to the sidewalk. This ramp cannot be parted out...must be used as manufactured.**

**For more information,  
contact A. J. Sartin (904) 669-1946**



*Tale Tellers of St. Augustine*



## World War II in Florida

"Shortages, Submarines,  
Saboteurs & War Bonds"

**Wayne & Jane Sims**  
The Storytelling Sims

**FEBRUARY 10, 2015**

**7:30 PM General Admission \$10**

**Limelight Studio Theatre - 11 Old Mission Ave**

**Info: 904-471-0179 or 386-446-4909; <http://taletellers.org>**

World War II program developed under sponsorship of Tale Tellers of Saint Augustine  
in partnership with Saint Augustine Historical Society & Florida Humanities Council



K9s For Warriors has challenged everyone to #stop22, since we lose 22 veterans to suicide each day. Stop 22 is similar to the ice bucket challenge - so, get creative! (Kiss a dog 22 times, do 22 push ups, etc.) and then tag your friends and ask them to #OutDoMy22 - use the hashtag #K9sStop22 - when you post!

## Jacksonville library preserves the past with new photo scanning service

By [Tiffanie Reynolds](#) Fri, Jan 2, 2015, this article is re-printed with permission of the FL Times-Union and its author, Tiffanie Reynolds

A picture is worth a thousand words. Justin Keiser, support services librarian for the Jacksonville Public Library, wants the stories of old or heirloom photographs to last a little longer.

Keiser is the head of the library's photo scanning service, started early last month, which digitizes print photographs, negatives and slides, and organizes them in a photo slideshow and burns that along with a digital copy of each picture to a DVD. Headquartered at the University Park branch, 3435 University Blvd. N., it's a service that Keiser has been pushing for the library to adopt for years, due to a combination of requests from the public and his own experience with a similar service.

After receiving pictures from his aunt of his grandfather taken during World War II, Keiser's father took the box of pictures to their hometown library in Ohio and was able to have them all scanned and burned to a disk the same day. Impressed, Keiser thought the service was so efficient and simple that he wanted to offer it in the Northeast Florida area.

"There are other services where you can box these things up and send them off, away, and have them come back to you as digital files. One, that costs money and, two, they have to send their stuff away," said Keiser. "If the library does this sort of thing, someone can, if they are willing to put in the time, do it for no cost other than the storage devices they are going to store the things to, and they can actually learn the process and do it themselves."

The service is free and open to the public, including those in St. Johns and other surrounding counties outside of Jacksonville's library system, and can be used through following these steps:

Make an appointment through <http://jpl.coj.net/lib/photos.html>. One photo scanning session typically lasts two hours.

- Arrive with a jump drive, SIM card or other portable digital storage device. Keiser scans the photos directly to these devices before organizing and burning them onto a blank DVD.

Once images are scanned and uploaded to a portable digital storage device, Keiser schedules a second session to work on the best way to organize the photos and burn them onto a blank disk. He also recommends that the customer provide a blank disk, as the library only has a limited supply. Keiser says he usually organizes photos into a slideshow, but is also open to other ways they can be presented.

The University Park branch is only one of several libraries across the nation that offer a photo scanning service. Keiser wants to shape Jacksonville's program to model after Arlington Heights Library in Chicago, which has a compete scanning station for people to scan, edit and save photos. As the program is relatively new, Keiser is excited to see what direction it will evolve to in the future.    **Tiffanie Reynolds: (904) 359-4450**



Photo courtesy of Justin Keiser: A collection of old photos taken of his grandfather during World War II and later digitized by his hometown library in Ohio gave Justin Keiser the inspiration to help bring the service to the Jacksonville Public Library system.



# Association of the United States Army

VOICE FOR THE ARMY SUPPORT FOR THE SOLDIER

## FIRST MILITIA CHAPTER (FMC), AUSA

### GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING & DINNER

Thursday, 12 February 2015  
Social @ 6:00 p.m. followed by Dinner @ 7:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Mark W. Lance Armory  
190 San Marco Ave., St. Augustine, Florida 32084

Cost: \$15.00      Dress: Casual

#### Guest Speaker:

Kenneth O. Preston, Former Sergeant Major of the Army  
& Director of Noncommissioned Officer & Soldier Programs, AUSA

#### Program:

Spotlight on Enlisted Personnel and Noncommissioned Officers  
Update from AUSA National Headquarters  
Chapter Business Reports  
50/50 Drawing

Dinner Menu: Amici Banquet Restaurant Buffet (Italian cuisine)

#### "Ticket Sales and Procedures"

Tickets must be purchased in advance. Only 200 tickets will be sold, so please purchase your tickets now.

For ticket sales, see one of the following at their location:

RFE - Patty Reyes or Rebecca Gibson  
SFB – Linda Povia  
SFB Annex – 1SG Hinrichs  
USPFO – SFC Torres or CPT Roberge  
HRO – SGM Arena

Last day of sale is 05 Feb 2015. Payments can be made via cash, check or charge (please contact Rebecca Gibson for Credit Card Payments or click the below link to purchase online <http://mkt.com/first-militia-chapter-ausa>). Make checks payable to: First Militia Chapter. For additional information, please call (904) 806-1985 or email [rebecca.i.gibson.ctr@mail.mil](mailto:rebecca.i.gibson.ctr@mail.mil)

Last Day of Sale: Thursday 05 Feb 2015.

## **MIAP – FLORIDA JANUARY 26, 2015**



Now that the holidays have come and gone and we are into 2015 MIAP-FL is back to working full swing.

We have volunteers that have come on board in the Jupiter, Tallahassee and Bradenton areas of FL. These volunteers are in the process of getting set up and starting to make contacts with funeral homes in their areas.

Locally volunteers are reaching out to funeral homes to see if any unclaimed cremains can be located. We have been working with Hardage-Giddens Funeral Homes for the past 3 years and will be completing this part of our project with one of two more interments.

We will hold CALL TO HONOR #5 on Friday, March 27, 2015 at the Jacksonville National Cemetery @ 1:00pm. We are in the planning stages for this service. If you or your organization would like to participate in this service please contact us @ [miapjax@yahoo.com](mailto:miapjax@yahoo.com).

As with any volunteer organization we are in need of active volunteers and funding. There are many ways you can take part in MIAP. Again if you have any questions please contact us at our email address. You can also go to our website [www.miap.us](http://www.miap.us) to read what we have accomplished to date nationwide and sign up as a supporter or volunteer.

### **Our Progress to Date in FL is:**

**Funeral Homes Visited:** 82

**Cremains Located:** 382

**Veterans Interred:** 55

**Spouses Interred:** 16

**Dependents Interred:** 1

**Missions Pending:** 47

Our mission here in Florida is to contact every funeral home, medical examiner's offices, hospitals, etc to locate all unclaimed cremains to identify them as veterans, spouses and dependents. With these numbers and goals you can see why our need for volunteers and funding across the state is imperative.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Church, MIAP – FL State Coordinator, [miapjax@yahoo.com](mailto:miapjax@yahoo.com)

## Local WWII veteran remembers the Sinking of the Leopoldville, 70 years later

By [JAKE MARTIN](#) jake.martin@staugustine.com  
*This article is re-printed in its entirety and used with the permission of the St. Augustine Record and its author, Jake Martin*

Steve Negrey was just 22 years old when the S.S. Leopoldville made her final crossing of the English Channel on Christmas Eve, 1944.

The Belgian passenger liner converted to a troopship was carrying 2,235 men of the 66th Infantry Division from Southampton, England, to Cherbourg, France. About 763 would not live to see Christmas Day.

They were reinforcements for the Battle of the Bulge and just 5 miles off the French coast when disaster struck.

“I’m sitting with a couple of guys up on the deck and I say: ‘Let’s throw a couple of these English pennies in the ocean for good luck,’” Negrey said. “But it wasn’t good luck, it was bad luck.”

A recent lull in U-boat operations had given way to increased activity thanks to the implementation of the Schnorchel, theoretically allowing a U-boat to remain submerged indefinitely.

A torpedo fired from Oblt. Gerhard Meyer’s U-486 struck the Leopoldville at 6 p.m. on the nose.

“That U-boat couldn’t have picked a better time,” Negrey said. “It was just getting dark.”

He had gone below deck when the torpedo struck. Hundreds were killed in the initial blast. In the ensuing chaos, someone called out that he didn’t have his life preserver.

“You don’t think at the time that you’re in danger and I just gave it to him without even giving it a thought,” he said.

Negrey went back out on deck and toward the head of the ship, where another boat in the fleet had pulled alongside. The plan was to jump.

When he looked over the side of the boat, he saw clothing and equipment floating in the water.

“So I don’t want to miss this jump and all I have is nothing but my army jacket,” he said. “But I just timed it perfectly and these two guys on the other side grabbed me and pulled me on board.”

Negrey said that’s all he can remember until hearing later that the ship had sunk at 8:15 p.m. that evening.

### An omission from history

“It was a lost Christmas,” he said. “I don’t even know where I spent that night. I don’t know where I stayed. All I know is that I was on the French coast.”

Negrey said although the world was at war, he didn’t realize at the time he was living through such a historical event.

“It’s a funny thing when you’re in a problem like that because you have no bad thoughts about it,” he said.

As for the fellow soldier he gave his preserver to, he knows nothing of his fate.

“I have no idea what part of the country he was from, no idea how old he was,” he said. “All I know is that the guy said he had no life preserver and I hope to this day he made it.”



CONTRIBUTED World War II veteran Steve Negrey, 93, looks at a certificate from his Purple Heart ceremony as he recalls the events of 70 years ago. He survived the sinking of the S.S. Leopoldville on Christmas Eve, 1944. Negrey earned his Purple Heart in Brittany, France, in May of 1945.

Investigations into the sinking revealed a lack of preparedness on the part of officers and crew members.

Survivors of the incident were instructed not to write home about the incident. Relatives of the dead were given incomplete information and notifications were spread out over months.

Negrey said while he understood the importance of not letting the Germans know they had sunk a boat with so many people on it, he still thought people should know.

In January of 1945, a memo to Gen. George C. Marshall included the observation: "Had this disaster occurred in peacetime, it would have been regarded as a shocking scandal."

Negrey has never been in contact with any of the survivors and wonders how many are left alive.

#### The line of fire

"We were headed to the Battle of the Bulge," he said. "As I understand it, of the bunch that went up there to relieve us, there were none who came out of that alive because that Bulge was really a bad one."

Instead, Negrey sent to Brittany, France, where a group of Germans were left behind and surrounded. It was there that he earned his Purple Heart on May 6, 1945.

"I go out on a patrol one day and I jumped a hedgerow, and then: 'Whammo!' A bullet just grazed the top of my skull," he said. "So I have to thank God for that, I guess."

Negrey, who is turning 93, was born near Johnstown, Pa. He said he'd never thought he would be talking about the war 70 years later.

Though he is proud of his service, Negrey had no choice but to join the war effort.

"They drafted me in July of 1942," he said. "They told me to go home and do my business and come back for training in two weeks or something."

A private first class, he got out of the Army in 1946. During the war, he had made it as far as Koblenz, Germany.

"There were five of us brothers who fought in World War II and we all came back," he said.

One brother served in the Marines, three in the Air Force and one in the Army. By chance, two brothers had met as far away from home as India.

#### Life after war

He met his wife after the war and they moved to Cleveland, Ohio, to find work.

Negrey had worked for General Motors and other factories in Cleveland but decided he didn't like working indoors. He then started an auto repair and tire business.

"I needed a job with fresh air, because maybe in the Army you're out there all the time," he said.

Cold weather and the passage of time brought him and his wife to Mandarin about 37 years ago.

"I can say I've had a good life. I can't complain," he said.

Negrey, who didn't start golfing until he was 42 years old, is the Sunday starter at Cimarrone Golf Club in Jacksonville.

"When I was 88 years old, I went to Bent Creek Golf Club with a couple of friends and I shot a 79," he said. "And they're all younger than me."

For his birthday he requested a cake with 93 candles, because to Negrey, the world remains a funny place.

"I still think God is in charge, though," he said. "There's no way a doctor can tell you how long you're going to live."



On December 1 the Vilano Beach VFW Post 12142 became official and all of our officers were sworn in! I'm excited to serve as our Post Judge Advocate. Pictured in the center, is FL Commander of the VFW, on the right is the District 6 Commander and on the left is AJ Sartin, our new Post 12142 Commander. Present were the Commanders and Officers of the surrounding VFW Posts in District 6, the District 6 leadership, Ladies Auxiliary leaders and members from the District, all of the members and officers of Post 12142.



### **"Honoring the Dead by Helping the Living"**



**I have just finished refurbishing a Go-Go Elite power chair to go to a War Veteran.**

*For more information,  
contact A. J. Sartin (904) 669-1946*

Offered by the Vilano Beach VFW [VilanoBeachVFW@att.net](mailto:VilanoBeachVFW@att.net)

**Vilano Beach VFW collects Walkers, Wheel Chairs, and Power Wheel Chairs for distribution to other Veterans in need.**

#### **VETERANS HELPING VETERANS**

**Go-Go Elite Traveller 3-Wheel**  
by Pride , Model No. SC40E  
**Lightweight, agile, the Elite Traveller.**

18AH battery option for extended drive range

Comes with blue, and red shroud covers

Front frame-mounted seat post offers maximum stability

#### **Key Specs**

Top Speed: 4.25 mph

Drive Range: 10.00 miles (this may vary, depending on charge and life of battery)

Heaviest Piece: 28 lbs.

Rider Weight capacity: 300 lbs.

Weight: 96 lbs.

## **Spotlight: Vietnam Veterans**

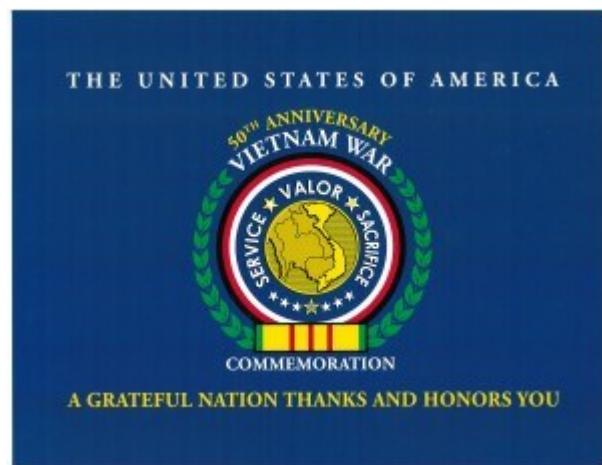
Florida is home to more than 490,000 Vietnam-era veterans, so it is very likely that one in three veterans you meet in the Sunshine State is a Vietnam veteran.

To thank and honor veterans of that war on behalf of a grateful nation, the State of Florida has erected a Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Tallahassee next to the Capitol building. In addition, Florida honors its Vietnam veterans annually during Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day.

The Florida Legislature has enacted laws in which honorably discharged veterans who, as a result of being inducted into any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces and unable to complete their high school education, can be awarded a State of Florida High School Diploma. For more information, call (850) 245-0446 or visit: [www.fl doe.org/workforce/veteran-diploma.asp](http://www.fl doe.org/workforce/veteran-diploma.asp)

Approval for a Vietnam Veterans license plate has passed and you can find out about the license plate here <http://www.flhsmv.gov/specialtytags/miltags.html#vietnam>

We strongly encourage our eligible Vietnam veterans to enroll in health care through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs if they have not already done so. The VA recognizes that service in Vietnam may have exposed veterans to certain cancer causing chemicals and other health problems as presumptive diseases related to exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides. We want those veterans to be identified, treated and compensated for any effects they may be having as a result of exposure. Call (727) 319-7440 for more information.



**For several years, D.A.V. Fl Chapter 6 has furnished the passenger vans for the delivery of Veterans between the St. Augustine Clinic and the Gainesville, V.A. Hospital, and back, Monday – Friday. The Van departs the Clinic every weekday at 0600. Phone (904) 209-3710 to schedule a ride. Drivers furnished by the COA are:**

**Monday – Lonnie Woodard;  
Tuesday – Jack LaLonde  
Wednesday – Floyd Bubba;  
Thursday – Bob Garlander  
Friday – Robert “Butch” Harrison**



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**January 7, 2015**

**Governor Scott Announces Brigadier General Michael A. Calhoun as the Adjutant General of Florida**

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla. -Today, Governor Scott announced that Brigadier General Michael A. Calhoun will become the Adjutant General of Florida on March 29. Major General Emmett Titshaw will retire at the end of March.**



**Governor Scott said, "As a Navy veteran, I am incredibly thankful for the sacrifices of our military, and I am grateful to Major General Emmett Titshaw for his years of service to our state and our country. Brigadier General Calhoun has selflessly served our country for more than 30 years and has proven his commitment to his fellow military men, women and families here in Florida. I am confident he will continue to serve our National Guard well and be an effective leader during any emergency event that may affect our state as the next Adjutant General of Florida."**

**Brigadier General Michael A. Calhoun said, "I'm honored to be appointed Adjutant General of Florida by Governor Scott and to have the opportunity to continue serving my state, nation and fellow men and women of the Florida National Guard. Our state is stronger because of the service of the Florida National Guard, and we will remain dedicated to supporting and safeguarding Florida's families and communities."**

**Major General Emmett Titshaw said, "Brigadier General Calhoun is an exemplary leader with many years of experience who will guide the Florida National Guard to future successes through challenging times. Mike and Sophia care deeply about our Soldiers, Airmen, civilians and families and Gretchen and I offer our best wishes to them as they lead the Florida National Guard into the future."**

**Brigadier General Calhoun has served as Assistant Adjutant General – Army, and Director of Joint Staff since July 2011. He also currently serves as Joint Task Force Commander and Dual Status Commander Designee. Brigadier General Calhoun has served in a variety of leadership roles for the Florida Army National Guard, including five commanding roles since 2006. Brigadier General Calhoun is a recipient of the Legion of Merit Medal, the Bronze Star Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, Florida Distinguished Service Medal, Alabama Commendation Medal, and the Mississippi State Emergency Medal, as well as the Department of Defense African American History Month Recognition Award for his contributions to the Global War on Terrorism. He received his bachelor's degree from Florida A&M University and his master's degree from the U.S. Army War College.**

**###**

By [Steve Hopkins for MailOnline](#)

## Vietnam war veteran is honored with a Purple Heart - 45 years after the explosion that caused him permanent nerve damage



Olive suffered nerve damage to his leg age 21, during an explosion while bravely retrieving ammunition for his comrades while under heavy fire; he 'distinguished himself by heroic actions' again a year later

- Florida resident Patrick Olive was drafted into the Vietnam war in 1968
  - Age 21 he suffered a leg injury after retrieving ammunition while under fire
  - A year later he also 'distinguished himself by heroic actions'
  - He was notified by the army last month that he will be honored
- He will also receive three other medals and his experts badge as a rifleman

More than four decades after an explosion near Chi Chi in Vietnam left Patrick Olive with permanent nerve damage he has been told he is to receive a Purple Heart.

Olive, 66, was drafted into the army in 1968 and after basic training in South Carolina was sent to Vietnam as part of the 25th Infantry Division, which saw heavy fighting in Saigon.

At just 21, Olive suffered damage to his right leg in an explosion, an injury he is finally receiving recognition for. The Florida resident was notified of his award in a letter from the Department of Army last month, which noted that its records 'have now been corrected'.

According to Olive's citation for valor, in November 1968, with complete disregard for his own safety' the soldier exposed himself to heavy fire to retrieve 'desperately needed' ammunition which he then supplied to his comrades

Then, according to a report in the [Sun-Sentinel](#), in April 1969, while in a difficult defensive position, Olive again 'distinguished himself by heroic actions'. Olive volunteered to brave heavy fire to resupply his section on the perimeter.

After being wounded, Olive spent months in hospitals in Vietnam, Japan, Washington and then finally in San Juan, Puerto Rico, at the Veterans Affairs Facility closest to his home in St Thomas.

Olive's met his wife Evelyn, a hospital dietitian, when he was being treated for his injuries. The pair kept in touch after his release and connected a year later. They have now been married for 43 years.

She said: 'When he gets that medal it will be mission accomplished. 'We will all be proud. I will be proud of my hero.'

Vietnam was not a popular war and as a result when Olive returned home, he didn't speak about the atrocities he saw and endured there. Neither did he pursue the Purple Heart or other service medals he was entitled to.

Olive, who spent 30-years chasing drug smugglers in the Caribbean as a U.S. Customs Service agent after the war, said: 'War was a nightmare. 'It was hell. It's nothing you like to talk about.' After years in St. Thomas Olive moved to Miami in the early 1980s, where he and Evelyn had a son, Francisco. He now works for the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The couple then moved to Plantation and Olive retired in 2002. (continued next page)

He wrote to the army about his award last summer, at his wife's urging.

He told the newspaper: 'All veterans deserve to be honored for the sacrifices they and their families gave for this country,' Evelyn Olive said. 'The medal would be an acknowledgment of what he went through. So I said let's go for it.'

In addition to the Purple Heart, Olive will also receive the Army Commendation Medal with a V for valor, a Good Conduct medal, the Vietnam Service Medal, with four bronze service stars, and his expert badge as a rifleman



December, 2014

Dear Veterans' Friend:

The Clay, Duval and St. John's chapters of the VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA are hosting a town hall meeting on March 27, 2015, 6:30 pm, at 7235 Bonneval Road, Jacksonville, FL. This forum will include professional speakers from VVA Headquarters.

The purpose of this meeting is to bring awareness of the health problems associated with exposure to Agent Orange and other toxic chemicals, in addition to their affect on the veterans, their children and grandchildren. Veterans of all wars are subjected to many contaminates and most are not aware of what was being used and what effects these have on their health. Veteran Service Officers will be on site to assist with filing claims.

Our goal is to publicize this meeting to the tri-county community in an effort to make this important forum known to as many veterans as possible.

"NEVER AGAIN WILL ONE GENERATION OF VETERANS ABANDON ANOTHER." This is the founding principle of VVA

Your donation to assist in defraying the cost of this event is greatly appreciated. Please mail your tax-exempt donation to Vietnam Veterans of America, P. O. Box 626, Orange Park, FL. 32067

Any questions, please call Gary Newman, 904-269-1857 or [agrijustice@yahoo.com](mailto:agrijustice@yahoo.com). Thank you.

Respectfully,

Tony D'Aleo, President, Duval Chapter 1046.  
Gary Newman, President, Clay Chapter 1059.  
Bob Dinkins, President, St. John's Chapter 1084

## **Vietnam Veterans Chapter 1046, Jacksonville, Florida has received final approval for JNC Monument**

After a 15 month journey, Vietnam Veteran Chapter 1046 has accomplished an enormous project. The project was to erect a monument at Jacksonville National Cemetery to honor all Vietnam War Veterans. The National Cemetery department in Washington, D.C. has approved our design and we can now proceed with building and dedication.



Over the past year the chapter has raised the money for the project. With the help and support of our friends in the community and across Florida and the country, we are within months of dedication. Our date is now March 28, 2015. This day is significant to Vietnam Veterans as Congress has mandated that date a "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans" day. This year is also part of the 50<sup>th</sup> Commemorative of the Vietnam War. The 50<sup>th</sup> is to recognize the 13 years of operation in Vietnam.

The monument will be placed to honor the sacrifices of all Veterans of the Vietnam War. It not only honors the returning Veterans but also the more than 58,000 Heroes that gave the ultimate sacrifice. It in turn will honor the pain and torture that our POW's went through after capture by the North Vietnamese Army. Their pain and suffering will never be forgotten. It will remember the 1600 plus that are still missing.

We are honored to dedicate this monument to our fellow Sisters and Brothers and to have our legacy as Vietnam Veterans remembered always.



**This month, as we recognize the 24th Anniversary of OPERATION DESERT STORM (17 January 1991 – 28 February 1991), we honor, salute and sincerely thank all the men and women who served our great nation during this time.**

**Welcome Home!**

**To the 146 men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice,  
You Are Not Forgotten.**



# **Do you or someone you know suffer with *Psoriasis?***

We need your help, we are conducting a clinical trial with an investigational topical medication for those with moderate to severe Plaque Psoriasis.

If you are at least 18 years of age,  
please call

**Solutions Through  
Advanced Research  
(904) 619-8157**



14546 Old St. Augustine Rd. Suite 107, Jacksonville, FL 32258  
[www.jaxadvresearch.com](http://www.jaxadvresearch.com)

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*21ST ANNUAL FIRST MILITIA CHAPTER  
AUSA GOLF TOURNAMENT  
APRIL 13<sup>TH</sup> 2015*



**Time:** 7:30 AM Registration 8:30 AM Shotgun Start

**Location:** The Golf Club at South Hampton (CR-210)

**Format:** 4 Person Captain's Choice

**Field:** First 36 Teams



**Entry Fee:** \$75.00 (Includes Green Fees, Cart, Luncheon & Prizes)

**Prizes For:** 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Place

Hole Prizes Include: Longest Drive, Closest to Pin and Longest Putt  
Chipping & Putting Contests (During the Tournament)

**Golf Shoes Must Be Soft Spikes Only**



The Luncheon & Awards Ceremony will be held on-site after the Tournament

TEAM CAPTAIN: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

PLAYER #2: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

PLAYER #3: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

PLAYER #4: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIL ENTRY FORMS & FEES TO:**

**MRS. REBECCA GIBSON, C/O AUSA GOLF TOURNAMENT,  
P.O BOX 3883, ST. AUGUSTINE, FL 32085-3883.**

**MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO FIRST MILITIA CHAPTER - AUSA**

AUSA is an exempt organization under section 501 (c) (3) of the US Internal Revenue Code.



AIR FORCE SERGEANTS ASSOCIATION

## 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Tournament

To be held at Bent Creek Golf Course on March 21, 2015 tee time 0800.

Tournament will be a Captain's Choice Shotgun Start



Registration will begin at 0700 Sat. Mar 21 and fee will be \$75.00. Or visit our website at [www.golfeventpro.com/events/AFSAgolf](http://www.golfeventpro.com/events/AFSAgolf) before Mar 19, 2015 and register early for \$65.00.

Registration includes practice balls cart and lunch.



Join us for some fun



a round of golf, lunch,



various other contests and know that your donation will go to worthy projects.

Funds raised will go to support The Wounded Warrior Project, Wreaths Across America, the Missing In America Project and other programs for veterans.



**Blinded Veterans Association  
Florida Regional Group, Inc., 3801 Coco Grove Avenue Miami, Florida 33133**

### Scholarship Announcement January 2014

Fellow Blinded Veteran:

The Florida Regional Group will offer two \$1000 scholarships for the 2015-2016 academic year, for use by the spouse or child of a Florida blinded veteran. The child may be a minor child or an adult child while the spouse may also be the widow of a Florida Blinded Veteran . Membership in the BVA is not a criterion. At present, grandchildren are not eligible.

The purpose of the FRG scholarship program, which is both need and merit based, is to award scholarship grants for use by the recipient either at a college or university, a trade or vocational school for the 2015-2016 academic year, beginning in July 2015 through June 2016. The money is sent directly to the school where the recipient has already been accepted and may be used by the awardees for tuition, books, and academic fees. .

1 Applications may be requested at: **(305) 446-8008** Email [gstocking@bellsouth.net](mailto:gstocking@bellsouth.net) or writing to the address at the top of this letter. The application must be completed in its entirety, including all supplementary data, and postmarked no later than April 15th, 2015. The selection will be made by the FRG Scholarship Committee.

Sincerely yours,  
George E. Stocking  
FRG Secretary

## **Women Veterans**

The Sunshine State is home to the third largest population of women veterans in the nation, with more than 166,000. Women veterans are one of the fastest growing segments of the veterans' population. Of the approximately 22 million living veterans nationwide, about 1.9 million are women. They comprise nearly 10 percent of the total veterans' population and nearly 5 percent of all veterans who use VA health care services.

Many women veterans don't know that they are eligible for the full range of federal and state benefits, to include special programs for them. Here are some resources for women veterans.

Florida's State Women Veterans' Coordinator is Cynthia T. Brown. She can be reached at [brownnc@fdva.state.fl.us](mailto:brownnc@fdva.state.fl.us).

Larri Gerson, an Air Force veteran who serves as a veterans' claims examiner for the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs and webmaster for the National Association of State Women Veterans Coordinators, was appointed in November 2012 to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee on Women Veterans. Gerson, a former state women veterans' coordinator for the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs, can be contacted at [gersonl@fdva.state.fl.us](mailto:gersonl@fdva.state.fl.us).

### **VA Hotline on Health Care and Benefits for Women Veterans**

1-855-VA-WOMEN (1-855-829-6636)

### **VA Center for Women Veterans**

<http://www.va.gov/womenvet/>

### **Women Veterans Issues**

<http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/topics/women/index.htm>

### **Women Veterans Health Care**

<http://www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/about.asp>

### **Homeless Women Veterans**

[http://www.va.gov/homeless/for\\_women\\_veterans.asp](http://www.va.gov/homeless/for_women_veterans.asp)

### **National Association of State Women Veterans Coordinators**

<http://naswvc.com/>

### **Women In Military Service For America Memorial Foundation**

<http://www.womensmemorial.org/About/welcome.html>

### **V-WISE – Women Veterans Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship**

<http://apps.whitman.syr.edu/vwise/>

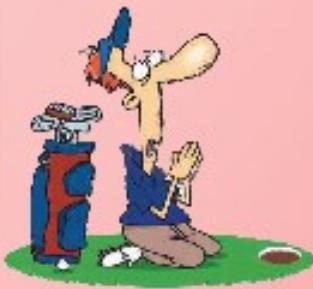
### **U.S. Department of Labor Website for Women Veterans**

<http://www.dol.gov/vets/womenveterans/>

# V.F.W. Post 2391

# Golf Tournament

17th Annual



at  
**St. Augustine  
Shores Golf Club**  
**April 11th, 2015**

Where: St. Augustine Shores Golf Club  
When: Saturday April 11, 2015. 7:00 AM Signup  
8:00 AM Shotgun Start.  
Player Fee: \$45 Per Player, \$180 Per Team  
Hole Sponsor Fee: \$50  
Corporate Sponsor Fee: \$100 +  
Coffee & Donuts

## Prizes & Gifts

- Prizes for 1st, 2nd & 3rd Place
- Prize for Longest Drive
- Prize for Closest to Pin
- Prize for Straightest Drive
- Putting Contest
- Prizes for Gaudy Golfer & Duffer Score
- Chance for Super Prize for Hole-in-One
- Other Prizes to be raffled off and Lunch held at VFW Post



For Further Information Contact: **Debbie Tilley (904) 460-9345**  
or  
VFW Post 2391 at 797-5267

Proceeds to Spencer Youth Activities & Charities

## **WWII veteran, 91, has become the face of VA volunteering**

By [RAY WEISS](#)

THE DAYTONA BEACH NEWS-JOURNAL

DAYTONA BEACH — Orville Swett heads into the small office he shares with two other men and goes to work at a corner desk repairing a pair of eyeglass frames.

Like most weekday mornings this time of year, he shows up around dawn as a volunteer at the Veterans Affairs clinic in Daytona Beach. It's something he's done almost 30 years, helping others the best way he knows how.

Nearing age 92, the retired optician and disabled World War II infantryman gives back to fellow veterans with his hands and his heart. That might mean replacing a broken eyeglass nose pad or temple stem, or simply making a minor adjustment with his shaving bag full of tools — all at no cost.

"I do it because there was a need. The VA had no optician when I started and I had experience. The ophthalmologist hired me immediately," said Swett, who owned an eyeglass shop in Maine before moving to Port Orange in 1985. "I was the first volunteer in the system."

Since then, he has logged more than 38,000 volunteer hours at the clinic.

"I'm here for the veterans," Swett said. "I work for the veterans, not the VA."

The examination and waiting rooms at the clinic on Dunn Avenue are filled with veterans of all ages, men and women dealing with a wide range of medical problems suffered in the wars of the last 70-plus years.

Swett feels a connection to them, even at his age. He suffered a life-altering brain injury and nearly died in combat after the Anzio invasion in Italy during World War II, receiving the Purple Heart. And, while slowing down, he isn't ready to stop helping his fellow veterans.

"This has done more for me than I have done for the vets. It helped keep me alive. It keeps me going," said Swett, a still lucid and engaging man who belies his age. "It's getting harder for me to dress, but I make it. Every day I say, 'This may be my last one.' "

Swett's coworkers have grown accustomed to seeing the man who's the veteran of the veteran volunteers. But his easy smile, playful wit and unwavering dedication are something that one day will be missed.

"He and I go way, way back," said Angie Cook, who oversees about 100 volunteers at the clinic. "He's the face of the structure here. Everyone knows who Orville is. For him, at his age to be as dedicated as he has year after year, is unbelievable. We'd hate to see him go."

Dr. Dianne Kowing, the chief of the clinic's ophthalmology department, echoes those sentiments. She has worked with Swett 15 years, since arriving at the clinic, and says he is an inspiration to young and



David Tucker/Daytona Beach News-Journal -- In this Dec. 9, 2014 photo, Orville Swett a 91- year-old World War II veteran and retired optician, fixes a pair of glasses at the William V. Chappell Jr. VA Outpatient Clinic in Daytona Beach, Fla. Swett has volunteered 38,000 hours in 30 years at the clinic.

old patients and employees alike. Until recently, Swett also volunteered at the local veterans nursing home, adjusting eyeglasses.

Besides repairing glasses, Kowing said Swett provides so much more: a living history of World War II to her 20-something interns.

"He gives them an understanding of their role. He's inspiring to them," she said of working with veterans. "And he has a wicked Maine sense of humor."

Swett, a widower with three children who was married 73 years, returns to Maine for several months each summer, leaving the clinic and its veterans behind.

But while out of sight, they are never out of mind.

That's why he's returned to the clinic as a volunteer every fall for 30 years.

"I am committed 100 percent in helping them," Swett said of his fellow veterans. "I was brought up that way, to help each other out."

#### **Rolling Thunder Washington, DC Inc. with Robert Chavez and 2 others**

1st Lt Sharon Ann Lane, the only American servicewoman killed as a direct result of enemy fire during the Vietnam War

Compiled by: MSgt Rob Wilkins, USAF, Ret....Rolling Thunder Washington DC, Inc. remembers the service and sacrifice of 1st Lt Sharon Ann Lane, from Zanesville, Ohio, the only American servicewoman killed as a direct result of enemy fire during the Vietnam War (seven other American military nurses died while serving in Vietnam). At 0605, 8 June 1969, the 74th Medical Battalion reported a rocket hit between Wards 4a and 4b of the 312th Evacuation Hospital. The explosion killed two and wounded 27 US and Vietnamese personnel. A piece of shrapnel ripped through Lane's aorta, killing her instantly. She died just one month short of her 26th birthday. Her military decoration include the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star with a "V" for gallantry, the National Defense Service Medal, the Nation of Vietnam Medal, and the South Vietnamese Gallantry Cross with Palm. Thank you for your service, ma'am. May you continue to rest in peace..



Rolling Thunder Washington DC, Inc. remembers the service and sacrifice of 1st Lt Sharon Ann Lane, from Zanesville, Ohio, the only American servicewoman killed as a direct result of enemy fire during the Vietnam War (seven other American military nurses died while serving in Vietnam). At 0605, 8 June 1969, the 74th Medical Battalion reported a rocket hit between Wards 4a and 4b of the 312th Evacuation Hospital. The explosion killed two and wounded 27 US and Vietnamese personnel.

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Thank you for your service, ma'am. May you continue to rest in peace.

Lt Lane is honored on Panel 23W, Row 112 of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC.

You Are Not Forgotten.



# VETERANS FARM

## NEW BEGINNING FARMER RANCHER DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

HOSTED BY  
**ANHEUSER BUSCH**

16163 LEM TURNER RD JACKSONVILLE, FL 32218

**MARCH 7TH 10AM - 1PM**

ARE YOU A...

- Military Veteran or Active Duty Military
- Small farmer or rancher
- Woman interested in agri-business
- Beginning farmer or rancher

**AND**

INTERESTED IN FARMING OR RANCHING?

- Agriculture Business Startup
- Business Plan Development
- Possibilities for farming/ranching with a disability
- Financial Funding for agriculture enterprises

WORKSHOP AGENDA

- 10:00 Guest speaker David Nistler UF IFAS extension agent (local resources available to New beginning Farmers)  
10:20 Guest speaker David Bearl (Food Safety) UF IFAS  
10:40 Guest speaker Amy Wagenfeld PHD/Occupational Therapy, Rush University (working with a disability).  
11:00 Guest Speaker Carmen Franz (FOG) Florida Organic Growers Ass. Community Food Project Coordinator (Upcoming training, resources, internships for organic farmers).  
11:20 Wealth Watchers President Carrie Davis (grant opportunities for veterans)  
11:40 Guest speaker FSA Hugh Hunter (FSA loans, grants lending)  
12:00 Guest speaker Regina Thomas Farm Credit (Farm loans, credit, outreach)
- Break out session 10 minutes then guest/veterans will regroup to attend short introductory class presented by local farmers •

SPECIAL TRAINING:

Learn how to make herbal teas with wild edibles by Tim Armstrong "Eat Your Yard Jax"

Learn how to inoculate, grow and sell shiitake mushrooms by Matthew Burke "10 Can Farms"

Learning to raise Alpacas by Susan Greenly

Sign up and register for scholarships and grants. Veterans and new beginning farmer/ranchers learn how you can qualify for grants, loans, and credit through the Veterans Farm, Farm Credit and the USDA Farm service agency. Wealth Watchers to present information on how military veterans can receive assistance for paying for their mortgage/rent and utilities for up to 1 year. Over 40 scholarship and 20 Paid Fellowships will be awarded in 2015. Sign up now!



POC: Adam Burke, Purple Heart, CEO/Founder of Veterans Farm

[www.veteransfarm.org](http://www.veteransfarm.org)

352-217-1662

[info@veteransfarm.com](mailto:info@veteransfarm.com)

9526 Argyle Forest BLVD, STE B2 #321 Jacksonville, Fl 32222



## **MIAP PROGRESS NATIONWIDE as of 1/08/2015:**

Funeral Homes Visited: 1,684  
Cremains Found: 10,174  
Veteran Cremains Identified: 2,452...  
Veterans Interred: 2,246



Daily these numbers are increasing.

To learn more about THE MISSING IN AMERICA PROJECT and to become a volunteer please go to our website. You can also contact me at miap-jax@yahoo.com for more info. Here in Florida we need YOU as a supporter or an active volunteer. [www.miap.us](http://www.miap.us)

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### Progress on Backlogged VA Claims

The Department of Veterans Affairs began 2015 with 519,530 pending veterans' benefits claims, 24 percent fewer than at the start of calendar year 2014. Of the pending claims, 253,522 are older than 125 days, the VA's processing goal. That is 37 percent fewer than at the start of 2014, a sign the VA is not just making progress on cutting claims but has put a significant dent in the oldest claims.

*What to watch: The VA has been promising that the "backlog" of claims – those older than 125 days – would be eliminated in 2015, but that seems an almost impossible task. It takes 182 days, on average, for the VA to complete compensation and pension claims but some regions are slower than others. In Baltimore, for example, claims completed in December took an average of 363 days to complete.*



### Greater Jacksonville Area USO

**ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING OUR LOCAL TROOPS AND FAMILIES?**  
DID YOU KNOW THAT GREATER JAX AREA USO IS AN "INDEPENDENT" CHARTERED USO AFFILIATE  
ORGANIZATION, OPERATING THREE LOCAL USO CENTERS SERVING OVER 250,000 MILITARY  
PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILIES. GREATER JAX AREA USO RELIES TOTALLY UPON DONATIONS  
AND VOLUNTEERS FROM THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND BUSINESSES FOR SUPPORT.  
PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT TO VISIT OUR WEBSITE [WWW.JAXUSO.ORG](http://WWW.JAXUSO.ORG)

 Follow us on twitter #USOJAX  like Us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/JaxUSO](http://www.facebook.com/JaxUSO) 



#### Event Information

- ◆ Date: February 6, 2014
- ◆ Sign In: 9:30 am
- ◆ Time: 10:00—5:00 pm
- ◆ Location:  
UNF Herbert University Center  
12000 Alumni Drive  
Jacksonville, FL 32224
- ◆ Registration:  
[https://www.unf.edu/military-veterans/  
Veteran\\_STAR.aspx](https://www.unf.edu/military-veterans/Veteran_STAR.aspx)
- ◆ Or call MVRC at 620-5130
- ◆ SIGN UP TODAY



Veteran - Skills To Achieve Results  
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#### TO ALL MILITARY VETERANS!!!

Resume writing can be daunting and a difficult task to do.

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Join us in learning from our experts and how to overcome your barriers.

At the workshop you will:

- Learn how to convert your military experience into civilian experience that employers can understand
- The do's & don'ts of interviewing
- How to effectively network to a job

Plus NETWORK SOCIAL with local area employers

This is a Free workshop and includes continental breakfast, lunch, and a professional notebook & pen



#### Military & Veterans Resource Center

1 UNF Drive, Bldg. 57, suite 2700  
(904) 620-5131  
mvrc@unf.edu



# ALR 233 3rd Annual Charity Poker Run

To benefit:

DREAMS COME TRUE,  
dedicated to granting dreams for  
local children with life threatening  
illnesses.



# FEBRUARY 28, 2015



Registration: 9A @ Post 233, \$15 per bike ~  
\$10 passenger (Continental Breakfast)  
KSU: 10A

**STOPS:**

AL Post 250 ~ Middleburg  
AL 202 ~ Keystone Heights  
Cheyenne Saloon ~ Palatka  
Arnold's Cocktail Lounge ~St Augustine  
AL Post 233—Ponte Vedra Bch

LBI: 5P

Dinner/Music: 5P

Ca\$h Prize for Best Hand: 7P

American Legion Riders Chapter 233 \* 560 N Wilderness Trl \* Ponte Vedra Bch, FL 32082  
904-285-2484

legionriders233@gmail.com Facebook groups: ALR 233 Twitter: @ALR233FL



# THANK YOU!



A job for you; a vacation for your pets!



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2013 Lincoln Dealer of the Year



## Wine & War Stories

### IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN VETERANS OF AMERICA (IAVA) VET-TOGETHER

New Owners of The Wine Bar and a recently separated Vet back from Afghanistan team up for a great social networking and community building event at The Wine Bar.

Located on 1st Street, Jacksonville Beach!

This is open to Veterans, Active Duty, and Military Supporters.

We are hosting once a month so come on out meet new friends, bark at old ones and don't be afraid to stick around a little while longer! It is A Wine Bar.

Check out our Facebook Page and Web Site—Events for the next one!

Tweet, Text and Share IAVA VetTogethers for Vets in Jax



For More Information, Please Call  
or Email

Phone: 912-271-5748  
Email: alex@stonefran.com  
[www.facebook.com/  
WineWarStories](http://www.facebook.com/WineWarStories)  
[www.facebook.com/IAVA.org/](http://www.facebook.com/IAVA.org/)

RSVP :  
[www.stonefran.com/  
events/wine-and-  
war-stories](http://www.stonefran.com/events/wine-and-war-stories)

**STONWORK FRANCHISING** is proud to host another **IAVA VetTogether** in Florida. The IAVA (Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America) have dedicated quite a bit to helping vets get back on their feet, find employment, seek education and function within our communities upon separation. This is a chance to speak the lingo and get along with people who understand you.

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Prearrangement Counselor  
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(904) 824-1672  
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**STOP  
22**



**K9S FOR WARRIOR**

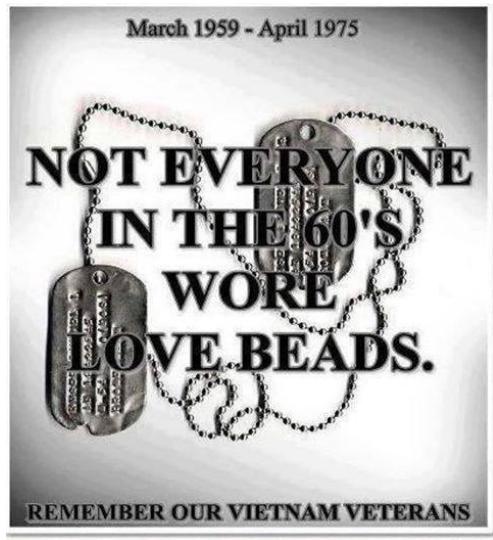
**We Lose 22  
Veterans  
EVERYDAY to  
SUICIDE**

[www.STOP22.org](http://www.STOP22.org)

**Veterans Council of St. Johns County,  
"Helping All Veterans"**

The Veterans Council of St. Johns County welcomes article submissions from all County Veterans & organizations. Articles should be of interest to all and veterans related. Submissions may be edited &/or shortened and used if space permits.

Send to: [mrothfeld@anyveteran.org](mailto:mrothfeld@anyveteran.org)



**The Veterans Council of St. Johns County, Inc. is a  
Not For Profit Florida Corporation.**

Our formation date was July 4, 2001 in a proclamation issued by the St. Johns County Commissioners. It is composed of representatives of the various veterans' organizations within St. Johns County.

The Veteran's Council will work with city and county governments and other local organizations to achieve the mutual goal to provide a central agency to assist in the coordination and presentation of matters concerning veterans and veterans activities in St. Johns County.

The Veteran's Council will endeavor to precipitate, stimulate and assist various organizations as they perform patriotic events. One of the major purposes is the promotion and education of national patriotic matters.

**The St. Johns County Veterans Council meets the last Thursday of the month at 7 pm at the Elks Lodge,  
1420 A1A So., St. Augustine.**

Visit our Website: [www.veteranscouncilofstjohns.org](http://www.veteranscouncilofstjohns.org)

**Veterans Service Office  
1955 US 1 South, Suite 550  
St. Augustine, FL 32086**

(physical location)

The VSO Office is located in the St. Johns County Health and Human Services complex, behind the VA Clinic.

The office is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily, Monday through Friday excluding holidays.

Service is by appointment.  
Phone: 904-209-6160 Fax: 904-209-6161  
Joseph McDermott, CVSO  
Rick Rees, Assistant VSO  
Tammy Shirley, Assistant VSO

*The views expressed in The Patriot Reader Newsletter articles, submissions and spotlights are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County or the editors of The Patriot Reader. It is the purpose of this periodical to share a variety of information that pertain to local veterans and their organizations.*